HUNGRY BUT SILENT:

A content analysis of media reporting on the 2011-12 famine in Somalia

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the degree of

Master of Arts in Media Studies

Richard Stupart

G10s2659

Supervised by Prof. Larry Strelitz

”Lucky are the people of Yugoslavia and Somalia as the world’s eyes rest on them. Condemned are the people of Juba … It may be a blessing to die in front of a camera – then at least the world will get to know about it. But it is painful to die or be killed, without anybody knowing it.”

Hand-written letter smuggled out from the besieged Southern Sudanese town of Juba, August 1992.

Abstract

This dissertation examines media coverage of the 2011-2012 famine in Somalia by the websites of BBC News, CNN and Al Jazeera. Using both quantitative and qualitative content analyses, it asks why coverage of the famine began as late as it did, despite ample evidence of the coming famine. It further surveys the famine-related news reports for evidence of four paradigms through which the causes of famine can be understood; as a Malthusian competition between population and land, as a failure of food entitlements as conceived of by Sen (1981), as critical political event (Edkins, 2004), or as an issue of criminality (Alex de Waal, 2008). Findings include a dramatic silencing of victim's accounts of famine, despite a reliance on their photographic images, as well as an overwhelming preference for Malthusian accounts of the famine. Late media coverage is explored via a new-values paradigm which links the sudden outburst of media coverage for the famine to a formal UN declaration, and suggests that this may have created a new elite-relevance to the event which did not exist before, and therefore making it of relevance to domestic publics.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dissertations do not write themselves, and I am indebted to those who supported and pushed me in this endeavour, and who let me talk to them at length about a topic for which – as is the nature of postgraduate studies – they almost certainly did not share the same levels of enthusiasm. To my partner Katherine, my mother and my brother, for coaxing me out of procrastination innumerable times, I am profoundly grateful. To my supervisor, Prof. Larry Strelitz, thank you for your endless patience during my long silences between chapters, and for allowing me the leeway to pursue what may have appeared at the time as an odd choice of research field. This has been a challenging dissertation, but one which – in reflection – has been a joy for me to write.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Stories matter. Both those that are told and those that could be, but aren't. Taken together, they can form narratives substitutable for reality when they describe people, places and situations that audiences cannot experience first-hand. Like war and other grand states of exception, famine is one such event.

Developed world publics can typically only understand what a famine is and how it is caused from the news reports of journalists able to experience and describe the situation in their stead. This coverage cannot help but reduce social, historical, political, economic and environmental complexities into simplistic accounts. Simpler stories which – taken together – may form the basis for audiences back home to respond to a reality that may be over- or incorrectly simplified.

Furthermore, just as stories of famine can provoke a response by creating an awareness of when one is occurring, so too are they complicit in channelling public understanding of what has gone wrong to produce images of the starving and accounts of hunger and suffering. Did a famine happen because the rains did not fall? Or because of an on-going conflict? Why were farmers whose crops could not grow unable to purchase food from elsewhere?

These questions highlight that famine is a multi-causal, complex event whose roots may lie as deeply in history and economics as in the vicissitudes of the weather. Equally, responding to a famine requires not simply the physical provision of food, but possibly deeper economic, political, and even legal interventions. Which of these responses appear as 'common sense' depends a great deal on the manner in which the famine is described. Legal culpability makes little sense where a crisis is described as being primarily a lack of nutrition, just as emergency feeding would seem an insufficient response to the potentially criminal acts of armed groups attempting to starve a population.

This research is concerned with this intersection between stories and responses in the case of famine. That is to say, it asks why famine reporting begins when it does, and how famine is represented by news organisations when it is being covered.

1.1 Research Context

Singer (1972) claims that citizens of developed world nations and their representative institutions bear a moral responsibility towards the suffering of those afflicted by famine, however distant and normative that responsibility may be. Indeed, this view has been expanded on as far as to argue that privileged citizens of the developed world have a responsibility to address unfair structures which make poverty and famine a possibility, beyond simply providing stopgap assistance (Pogge, 2003). Moyo (2010), in rebuttal to moral responsibility to aid in the case of Africa, has argued against developmental assistance to the continent, though this position has been widely criticized as being unclear (Edozie, 2010), and having a naïve disregard of the philosophy and political economy of aid and existing critiques against the neoliberal development agenda (Amin, 2009; Hilary, 2010). Wide-ranging criticisms of the anti-aid position notwithstanding, Moyo (2010) herself excludes emergency assistance from the categories of assistance that she believes should be withheld.

This research thus progresses from the consensus that assistance to those less fortunate is – to some degree - a moral duty for developed-world publics, and that this is even less ambiguous during moments of crisis. Assistance, however, requires that we are aware of suffering in time to respond to it[1], and that we conceive of it correctly[2]. To what extent the media successfully enables us to fulfil these criteria in the case of responding to famine is the focus of this research.

1.2 Advance warning of famine: the status quo

Despite large investments in advance planning and being able to accrue and store aid resources ahead of likely disasters (FEWS, 2011; Omamo, Gentilini, Sandström, & Ouattarra, 2010), many humanitarian agencies, such as the World Food Programme (WFP) (as the largest representative of the food aid provision system (Ross, 2007)), rely on being able to raise sufficient funds from government donors for specific crisis events in order to make

[1] Since being aware of suffering too late to act to mitigate it necessarily deprives us of the opportunity to do so.

[2] Since it is highly unlikely that we can respond correctly to an event we do not sufficiently understand. Except possibly by chance. Which, in the case of an event as complex as famine, seems implausible.

interventions possible (Maxwell, 2007)[3]. In the particular case of the WFP, governments are the principle donors to the WFP (Ross, 2007; World Food Programme, 2012), making their support for famine relief critical in providing assistance.

In the case of such disasters, there is evidence that media attention can exert a degree of pressure on government policy towards a crisis, as well as promoting increased donations to aid organisations (Brown, 2004) engaged in ameliorating its effects. This 'CNN effect' (Gilboa, 2005a) appears to occur where news coverage is empathetic towards suffering and where government policy towards the crisis is not yet clear (Robinson, 2000). Early response to famine by the media would likely be able to satisfy both these imperatives better than delayed coverage would[4]. Furthermore, assistance to the affected may take months to arrive once donations are pledged (Maxwell, 2007), making the task of encouraging early donor support a critical one. Chapter 2 explores the current evidence for this media/aid relationship in full.

In the case of the recent famine in the Horn of Africa, media organisations alerted the public to the pending disaster too late (Campbell, 2011; Gill, 2011). Despite data from the Famine Early Warning Systems Network[5] that predicted a likely food shortage occurring as early as March 21st (FEWS, 2011), an initial scan of media coverage[6] indicated that it was late in developing, only starting around late July, after the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) issued a warning that up to ten million people in the region were in need of humanitarian assistance (UN OCHA, 2011). Furthermore,

---

[3] By way of example, over 90% of WFP food aid deliveries in the period 2008-2012 were government funded (World Food Programme, 2012).

[4] The earlier that coverage can be generated, the more likely it is that government policy towards a particular famine will still be undecided and therefore open to contestation. That famine coverage would take an empathetic view of suffering is taken for granted, given the strong historical precedent for it. In the second case, that of the time to deliver food aid, earlier government policy decisions to assist would in turn make earlier assistance possible. If such decisions were taken sufficiently early, they may even result in assistance arriving at or before times of peak need.

[5] http://www.fews.net/ - a project run jointly between USAID and the UN's FAO to monitor food security threats

[6] Using Google's news results search tool.

media coverage of the famine appears to have been short lived - ballooning for approximately one month from July to August before coverage declined substantially[7].

Ultimately, policy pressure for humanitarian action would prove insufficient, and the WFP could only reach 49% of beneficiaries[8] due to a lack of donor support, and much of this assistance arrived well after the famine had begun[9]. Nevertheless, early reporting remains a worthy goal, and it is an open historical question as to whether media response has always been as tardy as superficially appears to have been the case in Somalia, and whether it might be possible to report earlier in future. In the case of the famine in Somalia too, the pattern of media coverage remains to be fully described and analysed. When and for how long various organisations covered the famine is of importance not simply as a contribution towards chronicling media response from famine to famine, but also in the very practical matter of establishing how long NGOs responding to such a crisis can expect public awareness of the issue to be reinforced by popular news reports.

1.3 NEWS VALUES THEORY IN HUMANITARIAN MEDIA COVERAGE

Understanding when the media does and does not report on a story has been a preoccupation of Media Studies scholars since Galtung & Ruge's (1965) analysis of the criteria that make foreign stories attractive as news items. Their twelve proposed news values determining the importance of a story included its negativity, magnitude, unambiguity and consonance with the audience's existing worldview (Galtung & Ruge, 1965).

In discussing the Somali famine of 1991-93 in terms of news appeal, Moeller argues that "It takes the spectacle of open mass graves and children sobbing over their dead mothers to prick American interest in Africa" (1999. p.126). This argument is informed by the notion that without satisfying key news values of negativity, scale and unambiguity, these catastrophes would simply not appeal to the media as news. Subsequent work by Harcup & O'Neill have expanded on Galtung & Ruge's original news values to introduce, inter alia, the news value of

---

[7] http://www.google.com/insights/search/#q=somalia%2Cfamine%2Caid&date=1%2F2011%2013m&gprop=news&cmpt=q

[8] http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2011/aug/03/somalia-famine-aid-operations

[9] Taking the OCHA announcement as being close to the beginning of the famine proper, and the likely delay of 5 months or more in delivering substantial aid once the necessary donor commitments had been secured (Maxwell, 2007, p35).

picture opportunities (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001). This demands that the event lend itself to unusually captivating photographs before it can be taken up as a story by the media (Moeller, 1999). This implies that such events are only represented *once they become* amenable to representation in terms of recognizable images of suffering. Evidence from both the 2005 famine in Niger (Loewenberg, 2005), and the 2011-12 famine in Somalia[10] suggests that despite being aware of impending famine, it was only after it became a massive, negative (and visual) event that it made headlines and provoked an international response. These issues are explored further in chapter 2.

1.4 Describing a famine

Straightforward as it may seem, the task of reporting the details of a famine 'correctly' is actually fraught with ambiguous, discursive decisions. Chapter 3 explores some of the major themes in explaining and understanding famines present in the literature.

Early understandings of famine saw it as the necessary consequence of a Malthusian doctrine of too many people and insufficient food (de Waal, 1997). This view ignores the reality that in a stable system of functioning markets, it is possible for many to secure food from alternative sources via free exchange (Leathers & Foster, 2005; Sen, 1981). Later work by Sen (1981) and de Waal (1997) broadens understandings of these economic explanations of famine. Edkins (2000) takes this trajectory further, arguing that the economic causes of famine are themselves the result of specific political and social regimes, which should be critically interrogated if famine is to be structurally prevented.

A preliminary examination of reporting on the famine in the Horn of Africa suggests that much media coverage of the famine has described it as having either neo-Malthusian environmental[11] or economic[12] causes. By contrast, understanding the famine in critical terms as the product of a specific social and economic order, appears to be absent from most media accounts. This suggests that popular coverage of famine may well follow the pattern

---

[10] See *Thinking Images v2.0: Famine Iconography as a sign of failure* http://www.david-campbell.org/2011/07/16/thinking-images-v-20-famine-iconography-failure/ for s discussion of the Somali case.

[11] http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2011/jun/28/africa-drought-kenya-somalia-famine, for example.

[12] http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/08/16/us-africa-famine-manmade-idUSTRE77F6QN20110816, for example.

identified by Edkins (2000) of constructing famine as a technical and environmental problem requiring scientific interventions, rather than a necessary consequence of a prevailing economic and political order.

1.5 Research goals

This research project has two goals, both seeking to further the critiques of the media in facilitating humanitarian responses to famine, as outlined above. In the first instance, this research seeks to investigate the speed and duration of reporting on selected famines that appeared in selected media. It asks how long a representative set of large media organisations typically takes to build momentum in their coverage after a famine should reasonably be known to be imminent. It also seeks to assess to what extent theoretically accepted news values can account for the observed pattern of coverage. Of particular interest are those of photographability (Bloch-Elkon, Lehman-Wilzig, & Gan, 2005), negativity and accessibility (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001).

Secondly, this research examines the degree to which reporting on the famine in the Horn of Africa (as the most recent example of such coverage) is complicit in concealing critical understandings of what a famine is and how it occurs. In particular, it seeks to examine the extent to which the causes of, and solutions to, the 2011-12 famine in Somalia is described in technical terms, and to what extent the famine is attributed to environmental explanations, rather than political and economic regimes.

1.6 Methods, Procedures and Techniques

This research project will make extensive use of content analysis using texts from selected news organisations. It will adopt a mix of both quantitative and qualitative content analysis methods, whose implementation is discussed in detail in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 2: MEDIA AND FAMINE

Given that it is the media's presumed role in influencing humanitarian action that justifies the questions posed in this study, it is necessary to make explicit the nature of the relationship between such coverage and the actions of governments and publics towards those famines. To the extent that the media plays a role in influencing when and how publics and governments respond to humanitarian emergencies, questions of the speed and nature of its coverage of such events is of significant research importance.

Firstly, this study holds that media coverage can exaggerate humanitarian giving, particularly with respect to public donations towards disasters and complex emergencies. As mainstream media become saturated with coverage of a disaster, so funding committed to the humanitarian organisations responding to the crisis increases. Secondly, the study holds that the media serves as an accelerant for humanitarian response. That is to say that the sooner the media picks up on and creates widespread coverage around a famine, the sooner a response (of some kind) will occur.

Finally, the study is grounded in the notion that media coverage – more so for publics than for governments – serves to frame the perceived reality and enumerate the possible responses available to humanitarian emergencies. That is to say that by representing a distant and unknowable event as an environmental disaster, a product of mismanagement, a crime, or something else, the media serves to define the ways in which it is possible for publics to understand and respond to it. In effect, by framing humanitarian emergencies in particular ways, the media serves to elevate certain causes, for which particular responses to be considered, whilst concealing others.

2.1 EXAGGERATING HUMANITARIAN GIVING

When a humanitarian disaster strikes and the institutions of the affected nation(s) are unable to respond, assistance is typically rendered from abroad. This may take the form of either direct technical assistance in the form of international humanitarian NGOs such as Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and others. It may also be provided as resource assistance, such as the donation of funds and/or food and other material support to both these NGOs and to the institutions of the affected nation, in order to provide them

with the resources to respond to the emergency as effectively as possible (Cohen & Pinstrup-Andersen, 1999; Stoianova, 2012).

2.1.1 PRIVATE GIVING

These donated resources are provided both by governments and by sympathetic publics in foreign nations who may donate to foreign causes for a variety of reasons, such as a commitment to the public good, seeking public approval (Rege, 2004), as a form of signalling wealth (Glazer & Konrad, 1996) or as a means of receiving a "warm glow" (Brown & Minty, 2012, p11) from affirming one's principled altruism.

Government donations are frequently many orders larger than those of the public, as in the example of the World Food Programme, where government funding in the five years to 2012 totalled US$15 billion – dwarfing private donations of US$478 million in the same period (World Food Programme, 2012). Nevertheless, these private donations remain important even if comparatively smaller. This is particularly true in the case of smaller, more agile NGOs such as MSF, which are able to respond faster to risky situations than would be possible for aid behemoths such as the WFP. MSF, as the leading example, receives the overwhelming majority of its funding from private donations – around 90% of its annual total (Medicins Sans Frontieres, 2010). For NGOs excluding UN agencies and the Red Cross, 57% of income is estimated to come from private (non-institutional) sources (Stoianova, 2012). Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that private funding has historically allowed humanitarian NGOs to target responses to areas, such as Niger and the Central African Republic, for which government funding may not be available (Stoianova, 2012). This makes such sources of income strategically important in allowing NGOs a freer hand to spend more widely than circumscribed official funds might allow.

Private giving appears to disproportionately favour smaller NGOs that are not part of the United Nations or government bureaucracies (Stoianova, 2012); a fact which has not escaped the notice of many humanitarian NGOs, who have learned to court media exposure as a route to securing donations from the public (Vestergaard, 2008). The idea of humanitarian NGOs cooperating with the media has a long and distinguished pedigree, stretching at least as far back as the Ethiopian famine of 1984, when BBC correspondent Michael Buerk famously telexed the Oxfam press office in haste:

> Help. Have had request from BBC in London relating to an appeal to be televised next Thursday entitled 'Famine in Africa' ... need urgent advice on where I can leap in and out quickly with pictures of harrowing drought victims etc. to be edited and satellited ... money no object, nor distance, only time. *(in Franks, 2006, p. 297)*

The public response to Buerk's newsreel of starving Ethiopians catalysed an unprecedented public response, culminating in Bob Geldof's famous Live Aid concert, broadcast simultaneously in London and Philadelphia (Jamieson, 2005). The publicity around the famine generated massive public donations to groups - including Oxfam - who were involved in relief operations in the country (Franks, 2006a). Unsurprisingly, many NGOs now pay special attention to courting private donations through deliberate branding exercises and by producing crafted media packages that can be supplied 'ready-filmed' to news agencies in the hopes of provoking echoes of the public response that the BBC's 1984 broadcast inspired (Cottle & Nolan, 2007a).

There is evidence in prior research on the phenomenon of public giving in response to (well-publicised) humanitarian crises that confirms this link between media exposure and public donations. Stoianova (2012), for instance, has observed a correlation between annual totals of public giving and the number of high-profile crises that year. Brown and Minty's (2012) investigation of the public funding responses to the 2004 Asian tsunami has even gone so far as to calculate the average value of each additional minute of evening news coverage of the disaster in the US (approximately $47,029) (Brown & Minty, 2012). Olsen, Carstensen, & Hoyen (2003) have argued for this effect being present in explaining levels of assistance to the Mozambique floods of 2000 and the war in Kosovo in 1999, while others (Rothberg & Weiss, 1996)(Robinson, 2005; Rothberg & Weiss, 1996) have argued for this effect theoretically. In addition, Jakobsen (2000) illustrates the corollary in pointing out that many humanitarian crises that the media ignore experience a related lack of donated resources, regardless of their actual size or need. And finally, Hawkins (2011) extends similar observations to argue that media absence may contribute to a lack of policy pressure and national interest in general.

2.1.2 GOVERNMENT GIVING

If there is a sound theoretical link between public giving and levels of media exposure, the degree to which this is true of governments remains to be discussed. In the case of international humanitarian crises, governments are a more complex object of study, in that they appear to assist, or decline to, in a number of different ways. Governments may provide humanitarian assistance in cash or goods, but they may be equally inclined to intervene directly, as NATO did in the Balkans in 1999 (Robinson, 2000) or the US did in Somalia in 1992, leading to the infamous Black Hawk Down incident (Carr, 1993; Crocker, 1995) and a nadir in US enthusiasm for humanitarian military adventures lasting for many years afterwards.

There is much debate, however, as to whether the media is as determining of government policy towards humanitarian disasters in general as it appears to be with respect to public donations. The theory that the media can play a decisive role in forcing policy decisions by governments is known as the 'CNN Effect' (Gilboa, 2005b) and has its roots in the perceived influence that the newly-launched 24-hour, global news channel CNN had on decisions taken during the 1991 Gulf War (Gilboa, 2005). Lending anecdotal support to the idea, UN secretary general Boutros Boutros-Ghali was quoted as complaining in 1995 that ''CNN is the sixteenth member of the Security Council'' (Minear, Scott, & Weiss, 1996, p. 4).

There is a broad consensus among media theorists that the core claim of the CNN effect is that extensive, dramatic media coverage of international crises can play a role in 'forcing' government policy in particular directions (Gilboa, 2005b), though there is much disagreement both as to whether this effect exists, and how strong it is if it does. Robinson (2000) offers a credible model for media influence on government policy based on the argument that media influence will be strong only when there is a lack of policy consensus amongst government elites, and media representations are sympathetic to suffering victims (Robinson, 2000, 2005). Other views have tended to argue that media effects on policy, if present at all, will remain subordinate to other traditional foreign policy concerns. These include the relevance of a crisis to a state's security interests, the presence of a pre-existing humanitarian lobby in the affected nation (Olsen *et al*., 2003), likely casualty estimates if an intervention is staged, and the presence of an exit strategy (Jakobsen, 2000).

Gilboa (2005) provides an overview of the debate, highlighting the shift over time from Pollyannaish claims of a new 'mediapolitik' and 'telediplomacy' (Ammon, 2001) in the years

after the Gulf War to more recent, considered approaches which suggest that the 'CNN effect' is unlikely to be determining on government policy, though exceptional circumstances may be possible (Gilboa, 2005b). Robinson (2005) offers a middle ground in this regard, arguing that the 'CNN Effect', if present during the gulf war, may have been the result of the media taking advantage of global macro-policy uncertainty at the end of the Cold War – uncertainty which would gradually disappear as new policy outlooks asserted themselves and, ultimately, the events of the September 11 attacks on the US forged a new macro-political agenda in the US administration. Post 9/11, US foreign policy now enjoys a high level of elite consensus, which has substantially narrowed the scope for media influence (Robinson, 2005).

In sum, the uncertainty surrounding the influence of the media on government policy makes it unsuitable as an assumed effect of media coverage of famines. Therefore, out of caution, this study will not assume a determining or powerful effect of media coverage on the policies of foreign governments, though such an effect – to the extent that it may yet be shown – would only serve to make an analysis of media coverage towards humanitarian crises more relevant.

It is important, however, to point out that a lack of media influence on the *content* of government policy – the core claim of the 'CNN effect' - is conceptually distinct from a lack of media influence on ensuring that there *is* a government policy, or government attention generally. There is a compelling correlation between levels of media coverage of major humanitarian crises and the levels of policy engagement by governments (Hawkins, 2001, 2011) which strongly suggests that while the media may not be able to dictate *what the policy is*, their focused attention on particular crises appears to ensure that there is policy attention of some kind.

Beyond questions of the 'CNN effect', however, this study does assume that media coverage of crises has a similar effect in prompting increased humanitarian assistance from governments to that observed in the donation patterns of western publics in the preceding section. Whilst evidence for the broader 'CNN effect' claim for policy coercion – particularly for armed interventions – is tenuous, there is fairly consistent agreement that in the narrower context of providing resource assistance, there is a strong correlation between media coverage and levels of humanitarian assistance (Olsen *et al*., 2003; Rinehart, 2002). Jakobsen

(2000) goes so far as to argue that this may be considered a negative consequence of media attention to crises, and that:

> …the media contributes to an irrational allocation of resources and to a channelling of resources from long-term development and regeneration projects to short-term emergency relief by demanding that funds be given to emergency 'X' one month and to emergency 'Y' in the next. (Jakobsen, 2000, p. 139)

2.2 An accelerant to response

The correlation between the media coverage and humanitarian assistance is not only one of volume (i.e. large-scale coverage prompting larger assistance), but is a correlation in time as well.

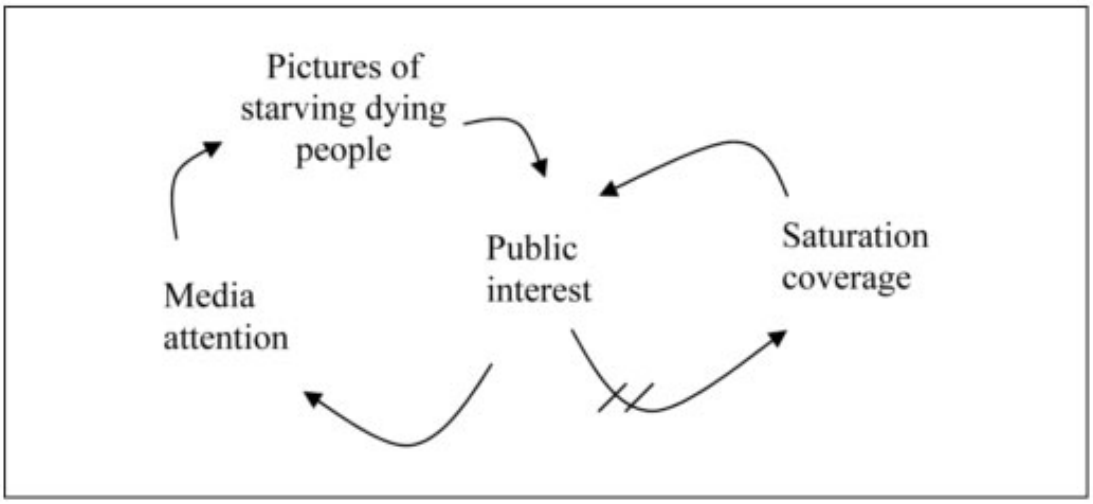

FIGURE 1 MEDIA FRENZY ARCHETYPE - REINFORCING AND BALANCING LOOPS

Howe (2010) conceives of the media response to famine as being the outcome of interactions between two related processes (figure 1). The publication of sensational stories or images of calamity creates a public interest around the emergency that the original news agency and competitors subsequently race to fill, causing coverage to ramp up exponentially (Howe, 2010). Balancing the escalation of this effect is the reality that this news coverage will eventually reach a saturation point at which no new stories can be told, all of the novel perspectives are exhausted, and public news appetites begin to seek interest elsewhere, possibly being captured by a new disaster or major story elsewhere (Howe, 2010).

Howe (2010) offers the example of the Sudan famine of 1998 and the Nigerien famine of 2005 as evidence of this escalation/de-escalation in coverage occurring, while Campbell (2011) and Gill (2011) have observed a similar trend in early coverage of the 2011 famine in the Horn of Africa. The same media response curve has been observed in nightly news coverage of the 2004 tsunami by a range of evening news channels (Brown & Minty, 2012).

The obvious implication of media coverage and humanitarian response being linked in time is that media coverage of a crisis that occurs after some critical point will mean that sufficient assistance will not arrive in time to assist those most in need. The reality is even more pernicious, as an incorrectly timed media frenzy and subsequent outpouring of food aid can actually serve to exacerbate the damage wrought by the initial famine. Since the delay between deciding to act and the arrival of food aid is rarely less than three months in most cases (Howe, 2010), such assistance may often arrive too late to assist the acute malnutrition that the media reported on. Instead, it may enter local markets at precisely the point that people are leaving relief centres to return home in time for local harvests. The prices of these crops are then driven down by the influx of outside grain (Howe, 2010), essentially demolishing the opportunity for people to rebuild assets sacrificed for survival during the preceding famine. In such an event, the late media frenzy might arguably be worse than no media attention at all.

2.2.1 THE ROLE OF NEWS VALUES IN DELAYING COVERAGE

If media reporting is to follow this 'frenzied' model of a rapid build up of coverage which serves to boost humanitarian assistance before waning, then it is important to shift our focus to questions of whether it is possible for this coverage to occur early enough that assistance, even if delayed, can arrive in time to mitigate the consequences of the coming famine. In asking why a famine becomes a story at one time and not another, we are applying one of the most basic questions in media studies – what is it that makes the story newsworthy in the first place?

This is a question of news values, first introduced by Galtung & Ruge (1965) in their seminal study of the key characteristics that make foreign news stories of sufficient interest to be published. Their original study identified twelve factors influencing the news value of a story

(Galtung & Ruge, 1965) which have been influential in much of the news values scholarship that has been performed in the decades since their original analysis. These news values have been added to over time, including the work of other academics arguing that *photographability* should be included in an assessment of news values, since the opportunity for dramatic images appears to be just as strong an influencing factor in determining whether an event is newsworthy (Bloch-Elkon *et al*., 2005; Campbell, 2011; Harcup & O'Neill, 2001; Olsen *et al.*, 2003).

Hawkins (2001) also makes the case for including *accessibility* in an assessment of why certain humanitarian emergencies receive much greater attention than others. Journalist-friendly countries close to bureaus in Nairobi or Johannesburg, for example, are likely to see far more coverage than those that are harder to access due to distance or other restrictions. Olsen (2003) and others (Carlos, Gutiérrez, & García, 2011) similarly echo this point in observing that countries with a strong humanitarian NGO infrastructure are generally better able to facilitate an early response to pending disasters. This infrastructure may take the form of technical and logistic assistance, such as Oxfam's famous assistance in getting BBC reporters to Wollayita to film the Ethiopian famine in 1984 (Franks, 2006a), but it may just as often be informational. Where organisations such as the UN and MSF are present, or where structures such as FEWS are engaged in monitoring activities, journalists will have far easier access to specialist opinion and data on economics and nutrition than would be the case in their absence. Given the importance of media exposure to the funding of most NGOs (Vestergaard, 2008), it seems reasonable to assume that countries with such infrastructure in place will be able and willing to facilitate journalist's access to various sites. For journalists, shrinking news budgets, and cutbacks to foreign staff has made collaborating with in-country NGOs and their informational resources ever more economically attractive (Cottle & Nolan, 2007b; Douma, 2005).

News value analysis is not without criticism as a framework for understanding what makes a story newsworthy and a method for investigating specific stories, however. The theory as conceived of by Galtung & Ruge is based on the notion of an objective world 'out there', in which discrete events occur that may possess particular news value dimensions (McQuail, 1994). In reality, questions of whether an event inherently possesses one of the twelve original news values plus photographability and accessibility (in this discussion) are subjective ones. Whether a famine in Somalia affects elite nations, for example, depends on whether a

link is drawn between them (e.g. linking the famine to political instability and piracy in the gulf of Aden, which in turn affects shipping traffic on a strategic route).

Progressing from Hall's equally authoritative work around communication as a paradigm of encoding and decoding activities on the part of the message producer and consumer (Hall, 1992), questions should also be asked about whether the news values being interrogated are those of the media producer, or those of the consumer (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001). When we are talking about consonance or unexpectedness, for example, are we referring to the event being unexpected to the journalist, the reader, both, or neither?

Furthermore, there are epistemological questions about what exactly constitutes an event, with Vasterman (1995) arguing that journalists are in fact engaged in the construction of a reality, rather than strictly reporting on it. In the case of an event, such as a famine, which is located in a particular historical-political-economic context, questions of how to 'accurately' represent the bounds of the event are not only practically difficult to answer, but reflect the politicized construction of reality inherent in describing (or, rather, constructing for the public imagination) such events. Hall (1973) points to news values as an area of analysis for examining the ideological work being done both in asserting the relative importance of some events over others, and in dictating what about those events is important.

Nevertheless, while being open to these difficult questions, news value theory can still be a valuable tool for analysis without claiming that the question of 'what makes an event newsworthy' has been authoritatively answered, and all possible news values enumerated (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001). It is also true that, for certain stories, particular news values become increasingly less amenable to ambiguity. While the degree to which the Somali famine accords with the news value of unexpectedness may be a matter of argument, the degree to which images of thousands of starving accords with conceptions of negativity is not.

Returning to our original question then, of why the media response to a famine occurs when it does and no earlier, these news values are one possible explanation as to why the events comes to matter. In the case of negativity and photographability, Campbell (2011) makes a compelling theoretical argument that famines – even when predicted with confidence – simply cannot become news until people start dying spectacularly and in great numbers, thereby dramatically fulfilling these news values. If correct, this points to an ironic structural

limitation in reporting famine, as the disasters would generally always need to happen before being able to raise enough support to prevent them. Other news values, such as accessibility, may exert pressure in the other direction however, since NGOs present in certain countries would be more anxious to solicit coverage in the months prior to a disaster. This, at least in theory, should cause media attention to peak earlier in countries that possess more sophisticated NGO infrastructure, such as Ethiopia, for example.

An analysis of the media coverage of a variety of different famines in various countries will be required if tentative answers to such questions are to be pursued.

2.3 Framing causes and defining responses

This analysis of media and famine has thus far explored both a theory seeking to explain when and how a story becomes news, as well as outlining the relationship between the media and action – in terms of humanitarian assistance. What remains to be explored is the space between reality becoming news, and the actions of the reader to influence that reality. That is to say, by what mechanism does the representation of a different and generally remote reality of 'famine' evoke one particular response (such as humanitarian aid to the suffering, for example) and not another (calls to end economic exploitation, armed intervention, or seeking trial at international courts). As will be discussed in chapter 3, there are a range of different possible understandings as to what a famine is, and what causes one. Each of these understandings suggests different possibilities for responding on the part of a concerned public.

This study is informed by notions of framing as a theory of media effects, and the acknowledgement that the manner in which the media and other sources of information choose to language distant and otherwise unknowable realities has a material effect on our understanding of them. This paradigm seeks to accommodate both deterministic, structural accounts of media influence, and the agency of individuals to renegotiate that influence (Scheufele, 1999). The media, seen within this approach, has a strong impact in terms of constructing a shared social reality through relaying (McQuail, 1994). Within these structured accounts of reality, however, the reader is free to (re)negotiate meaning in a variety of ways, through combining media accounts of an event with a range of alternative sources and other areas of knowledge that they may have (Hall, 1992). Social constructivism therefore seeks to

balance the reality of media's structuring effects with an individual's limited capacity for agency within those confines.

Framing is one of the primary means by which the media is able to influence public opinion, and privilege particular agendas over others (Boaz, 2005). A clear account of how this effect is understood to operate, and its interaction with the possibility for individual agency in renegotiating meaning (Hall, 1992), is therefore necessary

2.3.1 STRUCTURING EFFECTS OF MEDIA FRAMING

Framing in the media is generally understood as a theory of media effects focusing on the media's ability to exert influence over an audience's understanding of reality through the activities of selection and salience:

> To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (Entman, 1993, p. 52)

The first of these processes, *selection*, exerts a communicative power through constraining what possibilities are included in accounts of an issue (Entman, 1993) and also, necessarily, through the non-inclusion of alternative positions or relevant facts. Sniderman *et al.* (1991) documented this effect on audiences who were asked to provide their opinions on mandatory HIV testing through a survey deliberately constructed to provide either a civil liberties or public health frame in the manner in which the question was posed. It is, of course, possible for an individual to have access to alternative frames to those provided - through, for example, prior education or experiences that provide an alternative frame (Entman, 1993). Nevertheless, the effect on audiences of selecting specific frames over others has been observed or argued for in a range of different examples as diverse as civil liberties questionnaires (Sniderman *et al.*, 1991), conference registrations (Gächter, Orzen, & Renner, 2009) and policies of development and peacebuilding in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (Autesserre, 2012).

Even when more than one frame may be provided, the second framing strategy of *salience* may be employed to de-emphasise key ideas or frames in favour of others. Prominent

placement and repetition of key words and terms are an obvious strategy for increasing their salience for readers (Entman, 1993), but the salience of particular ideas may also be increased where an otherwise obscure part of the text resonates particularly intensely with the reader's existing belief systems (Entman, 1993). A dedicated Marxist, for example, might attach abnormal significance to discussions of class or capital in a text that are not repeated, positioned or otherwise given abnormal salience in the document. As such, the realized salience of terms and ideas may be as much a combination of the interaction between the text and the receiver as an independent part of the text's structure.

2.3.2 THE CAPACITY FOR AGENCY WITHIN THE MEDIA FRAME

While selection and salience can – and frequently do – exert an influence on how a given message is understood, these textual strategies may be defied by readers in particular circumstances.

Scheufele (1999) identifies three possible dimensions in which recipients of media material may seek to negotiate alternative meanings. Active processors will seek out alternative sources of information to a particular story, reflective integrators will think about what they have read and compare thoughts with others, and selective scanners will look only for items that are of specific relevance to them (Scheufele, 1999).

In all cases, the readers of framed texts are involved in a process of reconstituting meaning for themselves (Hall, 1992). This may occur by attempting to infer implications from the contents of the message (Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997) or by supplementing the provided information with additional perspectives from alternative media, personal experience or perceived popular wisdom (Scheufele, 1999).

Renegotiation by inference from the facts and frame in the text is a logically dependent process, which may add new understandings to a situation. Inference and extrapolation do not appear to allow for divergence from the overall framing, only perhaps for an increased nuance of understanding within the given frame. Price *et al* (1997) observed that participants in a news framing experiment were able to apply themselves to extrapolating from a supplied text, but that their responses remained strongly in the overall direction of the frames they were presented with.

Renegotiation of meaning through supplemental experience offers a stronger possibility for transcending textual frames, as it allows for the possibility that a reader may come across otherwise invisible frames through personal experience, conversations with others, or alternative media. In order to transcend supplied frames through such activities, however, these alternative frames need to first be available for discovery. Where a limited set of paradigms are hegemonic in the media, and few opportunities exist for individuals to experience the described reality first-hand, the ability to access alternative frames via conversation, experience, or media diminishes rapidly.

In practice, coverage of distant suffering in humanitarian disasters frequently relies on the close collaboration of journalists and humanitarian NGO workers (Carlos *et al.*, 2011). As privileged sources, such NGOs exert a considerable influence on the framing of stories about such disasters, such as minimizing the salience of longer-term development processes and providing sparse detail on the underlying politics and history (Cottle & Nolan, 2007b). This process of framing is reinforced through its embrace by both the journalists and their humanitarian sources. The appetite of the international news media for stories of extravagant disaster - "a terrible calculus of death" (Cottle & Nolan, 2007a) – has become ubiquitous, through which humanitarian disaster stories are valued for precisely their ability to facilitate massive, anonymous and voyeuristic stories (Franks, 2006a; Moeller, 1999). For their part, humanitarian NGOs have increasingly embraced this media logic in order to simplify and brand their operations (Cottle & Nolan, 2007a), reinforcing the dominance of simple, stereotyped narratives intended to solicit sympathy, rather than foster deeper understanding of humanitarian crises. That a hegemonic framing of distant suffering (particularly in Africa) exists has been observed or argued for by a range of researchers (Campbell, 2011; Carlos *et al*., 2011; Clark, 2009; Edkins, 2000a; Franks, 2006a; Moeller, 1999).

Returning to our discussion as regards the power of the individual to renegotiate frames present in the media, it seems likely that such agency will be severely limited in the case of frames relating to distant suffering. Few individuals in the publics of the developed world will have alternative personal experiences of humanitarian disasters such as famine. Nor will they generally have ready access to interrogate the perspectives of those who have. Finally, where the media coverage of humanitarian disasters consists of a limited and hegemonic 'humanitarian' frame, it is unlikely that individuals will come across alternative frames through different media.

As such, while framing as a theory of media effects should be understood as existing in a dynamic relationship with individual processes of meaning-making, this agency will be abnormally limited in the case of interpreting the realities of distant suffering. As a consequence, the effects of framing in defining reality will likely be far stronger than might ordinarily be theoretically acceptable, making an investigation of the available and hegemonic frames an important task in understanding how understandings of famine by developed-world publics are constructed.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTIONS OF FAMINE

For the purposes of examining media coverage of famine, I shall be using four broad paradigms, or possible framings. These provide the frameworks for understanding what is occurring when 'famine' happens, and each suggests responses that may differ substantially from those made possible in other frames. It is not my intention to claim that these four frames constitute a complete set of all those possible, since the universe of possible frames is potentially infinitely large. And whilst it includes many possibilities that may be theoretically interesting (such as representations of gender in famine reporting, for example) I have elected to constrain this study to a selection for which substantial, famine-specific discussions already exist.

3.1 INTRODUCING THE FOUR PARADIGMS

The first of these that I shall discuss is a Malthusian understanding of famine occurring as a result of expanding population encountering an environment unable to support it, and the related, recent neo-Malthusian resurgence of such ideas in the form of post-Cold War concerns about 'environmental security' (Urdal, 2005) and the climate change movement (Buttel, Hawkins, & Power, 1990). Second is an understanding of famine based on the work of Amartya Sen (Sen, 1981) that characterises famine as a failure of economic entitlements by individuals, grounding the causes of famine in market failure, and dysfunctional economic systems. Third is the critical approach to famine, pioneered by Edkins (2000a), and responsible for rethinking famine in critical terms as the necessary outcome of existing unequal political and economic relations, rather than being a 'crisis', or 'breakdown' of the system. Finally, de Waal (2008) and others argue for an approach informed by international justice, and the recognition of famine as a crime against humanity similar to genocide (Marcus, 2003).

The Malthusian and economic frames perform, inter alia, two political functions that should be highlighted. In the first instance, they serve to legitimate a fundamentally biopolitical process of reducing victims of famine to a homogenous, politically voiceless group requiring to be sustained through technical interventions by humanitarian aid groups. Secondly, these discourses work to produce a famine victim without a famine aggressor. That is to say that victims of famine are constructed as requiring assistance, rather than justice or protection

from a defined predator, since the causes of famine are rooted in the apolitical laws of the environment or markets, rather than bearing the visible human fingerprints of any specific class or ruling elite (Edkins, 2002).

That the causes of famine could be imagined to be otherwise is illustrated by the third - and less widely adopted - understanding of famine as described by Edkins (2000) and Urdal (2005). In this view, critical questions are asked of Sen's ideas of famine as rooted in the economic, pursuing questions of how the economic order is constructed and who benefits from that arrangement. From such a perspective, famine is the *necessary* result of the sound functioning of an unequal economic structure, rather than a consequence of its dysfunction. Furthermore, famine must be seen as political insofar as the economically exploited classes are disproportionately exposed to its effects, and that famine is ultimately a manifestation of an elite perpetuating an unequal economic hegemony. The fourth - and most recent - view argues for establishing the category of famine crime in international law, as it serves to take these critical concerns about a fundamentally abusive system and recast them in the language of justice and law. Through this, the apolitical logic of feeding the hungry and supporting the resumption of the status quo gives way to political concerns about the accountability of the state to its citizens, and whose economic and political interests famine in fact serves.

These four paradigms are important, as they exemplify a range of circulating understandings about what causes famine. Each of which constrains the logic of possible responses, reconstituting the questions of what should be done during a famine in ways that may serve to conceal, or expose, particular interests. Just as Sen's entitlement approach privileges questions of food *access* over food *availability* by examining how markets enable trade for food, so it conceals from its view the specific political arrangements within a society work to structure food access and the accumulation of capital (and the food security it provides) in the interests of particular elites. It is the critical paradigm that enables this further questioning of the hegemony *behind* the market mechanism.

Which of these paradigms are reflected in media coverage of famine will, in turn, contribute to framing the causes of famine and, by extension, the types of responses that are discursively possible. It is for this reason that we should examine the implications of each.

3.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF 'FAMINE'

De Waal (1997) describes the gradual migration of the term 'famine' from one referring to a period of general dearth, through to its more familiar, contemporary usage, broadly indicating widespread death attributable to starvation or, malnutrition and its many related diseases. Nevertheless, despite broad agreement that a modern understanding of famine contains these elements at minimum, a more detailed definition of what constitutes a famine remains a fertile area of disagreement. Devereux (1993) surveys at least five variations of what constitutes a famine, each with a different focus on famine; as food shortage, mass starvation or changed social behaviour as a result of economic pressure. Alternatively - returning to the ethnographic work of de Waal in the Sudanese famine of 1984 - there exists a conception of famine based on understandings of it in the local languages of affected African regions, as a period of scarcity or dearth more akin to the pre-modern European understanding of the term (de Waal, 1997).

In translating understandings of famine into the procedures for diagnosing one, the issue of when a famine is and is not occurring becomes a slippery and often politicised contest over the severity of the event being observed and the political considerations of humanitarian agencies present at the time[13]. Declaring famine – like declaring a genocide - has stubbornly remained a reluctant, politicised action (Alamgir, 1981), despite detailed quantitative schemas for measuring the relative scale and degree of malnutrition (FAO, USAID, & NET, 2011; FAO, 2005).

Ultimately, understandings of what constitutes a famine must be recognised as being the result of political, discursive struggle, rather than simple technocratic diagnoses about malnutrition and death thresholds. Not all mass death scenarios are accepted as being famines by those who might assist, and situations that have not yet progressed to widespread malnutrition and starvation may be identified as 'famines' by those affected. The term serves

[13] See the IRIN analysis of "What is a famine?" for examples where humanitarian agencies have held back from declaring a famine under political pressure not to obligate the international community, or because it was felt that the term should be reserved for more severe, or more widely spread, instances of starvation-related death.

http://www.irinnews.org/Report/89121/Analysis-What-is-a-famine

different purposes and may express a range of meanings, which is why when media reports speak of a 'famine', they are in fact choosing one, or many, of a plurality of 'famines'.

3.3 THE MALTHUSIAN CONCEPTION OF FAMINE

Ever since the publication of his *Essay on Population* in 1978, Thomas Robert Malthus has been irrevocably linked with the idea that population growth is unavoidably in conflict with the capacity of nature to provide for it (Winch, 1987). Malthus argued that there exist natural constraints to growth – or 'positive checks' - in the form of famine, war and other population-reducing events. This concept of reactive checks on population growth has come to permeate a range of different intellectual movements, even as Malthus' original formulation of this contest has been pilloried over the decades (Price, 1998).

In essence, Malthus saw a tension between population growth and available resources - that the expansion of population was an exponential function whilst the growth of resources to support such a population, such as agriculture, would be linear at best. When these two factors came into conflict, Malthus argued that population would necessarily be constrained in a manner that could only entail "misery and vice" (Winch, 1987, p. 19). Famine, in particular, is one such positive check on population growth that Malthus explicitly contemplated, and is the one with which this research is primarily concerned.

The essence of the Malthusian view – that there are finite limits to population growth, and that mass death is a necessary result of extending to this boundary – has resurfaced stubbornly in the centuries since *Essay on Population* was published. In recent decades, this thinking has been foundational to the arguments behind many of the debates on climate change and environmental politics more generally (Buttel *et al*., 1990; Prudham, 2009). It has also been reconstituted in post-Cold War security discourses that persisted from the 1970s to the 1990s, centred on the environment as a potential source of conflict (Urdal, 2005). Under the guise of 'human security', 'environmental security' and so on, notions of an intractable (and imminent) conflict between population and resources remains active in analyses of climate change as a contemporary security issue (Barnett, 2001; Floyd, 2008). Finally, it has also proved popular in humanitarian understandings of famine as a 'technical malfunction', requiring intervention by doctors, agronomists and other technical specialists in order to repair (Baro & Deubel, 2006 p.523).

There is some evidence that the case for climate- and nature-induced conflict may be overstated (Barnett, 2001; Olssen, 1993), but the more pertinent critique of this modern Malthusian logic lies less in the degree to which it is 'true' or not, but in the discursive work that it undertakes in concealing critical questions around events such as famine. The key contribution of Malthus is to root understandings of events such as famine in "bioeconomic laws of population and subsistence" (Watts, 2000, p.77). Such thinking is necessarily classless, since population – in this construction – is a purely scientific population count, and subsistence is the nutritional means for its survival. It is not surprising, then, that many humanitarian responses to famine have developed as biopolitical and technical processes of maintaining the bare life of the starving, whilst simultaneously stripping them of history and political life in the process of constituting them as victims of nature (Edkins, 2000a). The refugee camp and feeding station is merely the final step in creating *homo sacer* from the famine-afflicted (Edkins, 2000b).

Beyond the biopolitical work of famine responses informed by the ghost of Malthus, the Malthusian approach to understanding famine works to conceal critical questions of agency, responsibility, and indeed *culpability* for famine. That is to say, the idea that it might be possible for individuals, groups and governments to *commit* famine, or profit from it, in the manner of other crimes against humanity such as genocide (Edkins, 2004). In the Malthusian view, famine is the necessary outcome of nature and population abstractly interacting to create scarcity and consequently hunger. Yet the assumption that scarcity has occurred as a natural event folds into its definition important questions that may be asked about *how* scarcity might in fact be a historical – and therefore social – construction, rather than a situation that simply happens (Floyd, 2008).

Malthusian logic, therefore - to the extent that it informs understandings of the causes of famine - serves both the function of reconstituting famine's victims as biopolitical subjects, and defining them as requiring of assistance, without invoking questions of a perpetrator, or questions of justice.

3.4 THE ECONOMIC CONCEPTION OF FAMINE

An alternative understanding of famine to Malthus' conflict between population and nature was influentially outlined in Sen's (1981) approach to seeing famine as an economic event. Sen rebuts Malthus' twin notions that a decline in food availability, or an increase in

population is either necessary or sufficient for the intensification of hunger. It is possible, as was the case of the 1974 famine in Wollo, Ethiopia (Thurow & Kilman, 2009) for there to be sufficient food being produced in a region, yet to have a famine occur when specific classes of people find themselves unable to purchase enough for themselves from the market.

"Starvation", Sen explains, "is the characteristic of some people not *having* enough to eat. It is not the characteristic of there not *being* enough to eat" (1981, p. 1). This approach to the causes of famine argues that the key to understanding lies not in the total quantity of food available in a system overall, but the parcels of food that individuals are able to command for themselves through trade or production. In the case of a peasant farmer, for example, they may be able to produce food directly – what Sen refers to as a 'direct entitlement' (Sen, 1981, p45) – or trade what they are able to produce via the mechanisms of the market for a different bundle of goods, possibly including food.

An individual's tradable bundle may consist of arable land, trade skills, entitlements to welfare from the state, or other items that they are legally recognised as owning. This bundle may then be converted through a range of possible exchange entitlements into alternative bundles of goods, some of which may include food – what Sen refers to as an 'exchange entitlement mapping'. For Sen (1981), starvation will occur when an individual's set of potential entitlements contains no possible bundle with enough food for survival.

This outcome may occur in one of two ways. In the first, an individual may experience a decrease in the value of their initial ownership bundle, such that it is no longer sufficient to trade for an alternative with sufficient food at the normal rate of exchange in the market. Alternatively, for the initial ownership bundle that an individual has, the rate of exchange for that bundle may vary in a manner that prejudices the value of that bundle, such that it cannot be exchanged for an alternative with sufficient food. Rapid inflation in the price of food would be one example of such a change (Sen, 1981).

What should be noted is that in both instances, the fundamental cause of starvation is an inability to command a legal entitlement to enough food – whether because of insufficient tradable goods, or a decrease in their value. The focus has shifted from a Malthusian preoccupation with total availability of resources (in this case, food) and total population, to a more specific focus on the economics of food *ownership*. This more specific view of famine arising from market-related causes is able to account for instances of famine such as occurred

in Wollo in 1974 (Sen, 1981; Thurow & Kilman, 2009), where food left Wollo (where it was needed) for the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, where it could fetch a higher price. Inhabitants of Wollo, unable to match or better this price, were therefore left unable to command sufficient food to survive.

It would not be possible within the Malthusian paradigm to conceive of a famine during a time when the local markets held sufficient supplies of food. It is the ability of Sen's model to explain such a class of famine, as well as to more precisely situate understandings of famine on issues of *access* to food instead of sufficient *presence* of food, that has led to famine monitoring and prediction systems coming to include livelihood and market price information in their early warning models (Baro & Deubel, 2006).

In terms of the discursive work that the entitlements approach performs, compared to the simpler Malthusian understanding, it becomes clear that the biopolitical work that a Malthusian understanding enables is not possible within an entitlements paradigm. Entitlements depend explicitly on agreed norms of what can be owned, and what can be traded for at what rate. Thus, they are necessarily grounded in a specific legal and economic order and, subsequently, in the laws and norms that govern that particular economic environment. As Sen puts it, "The law stands between food availability and food entitlement. Starvation deaths can reflect legality with a vengeance." (1981, p. 166). The necessary inclusion of the famine-affected individual, with their freedom to trade, within a structure of prevailing norms and laws is antithetical to the state of exception in which the voiceless Malthusian famine victim finds themselves. Entitlement-based understandings are necessarily incompatible in this regard with the politics of Malthus.

Sen's original entitlement approach lends itself to operating only within a system of legal ownership and structured trade, as Sen himself explains:

> …while entitlement relations concentrate on rights within the given legal structure in that society , some transfers involve violation of these rights, such as looting or brigandage. While such extra-entitlement transfers are important, the entitlements approach to famines will be defective. (1981, p.49)

Sen (1981) consequently moves to exclude famines in an environment of legal failure from his theory, on the grounds that such environments – such as warzones, for example - would lack the legal order necessary to ensure a functioning market. Instances of famine that occur in societies bereft of stable legal regimes and, on the surface of things, functioning markets such as the case in Somalia during the years since the fall of Siad Barre in 1991, would appear to have *prima facie* human perpetrators in the form of those responsible for the 'brigandage' and the state-level breakdown of legal structure and markets. The entitlements paradigm, in its original form as posited by Sen, restricted its analysis to exclude such failed systems of widespread 'brigandage'. It claims to be inappropriate for explaining such famines since market mechanisms cannot be assumed to be functioning reliably, and requires that we seek other explanations for famine in such places.

Devereaux (2001) points out, however, that though war may distort the structure of an otherwise free(er) market, this effect can in many instances be included as constraints within Sen's model. Put differently, the lack of a functioning formal legal regime – or even a government – does not *necessarily* imply a lack of accepted property and other rights in practice. Mubarak (1997) has observed, for example, how many local markets have continued in Somalia in spite of the lack of a functioning central government or the centralized, national provision of public goods. Even in what is ostensibly an on-going warzone, property rights can be recognized, markets can function, and Sen's analysis remains pertinent.

To the extent that Sen's entitlements paradigm is valid in analysing the distribution of food within a particular context, the theory does not ask critical questions as to the origins of, and interests served by the prevailing legal and economic system. Instead, it assumes the legal and economic order as pre-existing and unquestioned, and thereby conceals the culpability of specific groups and individuals in creating and sustaining an economic order that is necessarily prejudicial to the entitlements of certain classes (Edkins, 2000a; Plotnik, 1964). Through this, the entitlements paradigm denies questions of justice and culpability though an implied exclusion from consideration in the same manner as Malthusian explanations of famine.

In both paradigms, no human hand is contemplated to be behind the natural or economic/legal forces that cause famine. Yet through these questions of the prevailing economic order, the entitlements approach exposes itself to a further, and critical, turn in understanding (Plotnik, 1964).

3.5 THE CRITICAL CONCEPTION OF FAMINE

The critical conception is a relatively recent theoretical development in understanding the causes of famine. It owes much to the work of De Waal (1997) and Edkins (Edkins, 2000a) in viewing the famines through a critical framework as being the product of specific histories and politics. Rather than seeing the primary cause of famine as environmental/biological (as Malthus did), or economic (as is the case with Sen), the critical approach is concerned with analysing famine in critical political terms. It asks questions about who benefits from a famine, and who may have had a hand in creating or sustaining one. It attempts to understand a famine within the historical and political context of the society it occurs in.

The critical paradigm builds on Sen's entitlement analysis, in an attempt to take his observations regarding the economic and legal norms that produce unequal entitlement distributions a step further, towards the class-based critiques of economic power typical of Marxist thought (Plotnik, 1964). That is to say, famine is a "politico-socio-economic process" (Rangasami, 1985) whose affects are felt differently by different classes, and may even produce benefits for some.

This understanding of famine begins with the assumed position of Sen's entitlements perspective in which entitlements to food are determined by the prevailing legal and economic norms. As such, food entitlements are class-based in practice, with those classes that possess greater economic power being more insulated from the shocks that may plunge those in poverty, or close to it, into a situation of food insecurity (Sen, 1981). To those working in humanitarian aid, it is not news that famine does not affect all individuals equally (Edkins, 2004). Indeed, certain classes may even derive benefits from a famine situation, in which those in a weaker position are forced to sell off productive assets such as tools and livestock at prejudicial prices. Equally, the most affected and least food secure households may be forced to take loans to weather periods of scarcity on terms that serve to cement not only unequal economic relations, but social and political relations too, creating situations in which household debt serves as a means of political control (de Waal, 1989).

In such situations, the critical view argues that famine is not simply a single, cataclysmic event, but rather the fundamental arrangement of the normal economic order laid bare (Edkins, 2000a). Famine serves, in effect, to highlight that an economic system far from being the fair neoclassical panacea that should ensure a sufficient distribution of basic resources

(M. Watts, 1991). Furthermore, famine should be seen as being one point on a historicised political and social continuum – the necessary end point of a specific, unequal economic order, rather than its breakdown or malfunction (Edkins, 2002; Rangasami, 1985) . The inequalities in entitlements that make certain classes more prone to famine are not rooted in sudden meteorological shocks, or even rapid fluctuations in the market price of essential goods. They are embedded in the historic politics of a society and the manner in which it has struggled to the current economic order out of successive victories and defeats between classes (Rangasami, 1985).

The critical approach, in this first tradition, therefore requires that famine be interrogated in terms of class relations, and seen as a political-economic order that makes certain classes more vulnerable to destitution and starvation than others. Even within a famine, certain class interests are served over others, and their predation on the desperate and unfortunate may be concealed under rhetoric about the legal and economic norms. The critical turn requires that these are identified and interrogated as such.

3.6 THE JUSTICE CONCEPTION OF FAMINE

Emerging from the critical understanding of famine as being the result of a specific legal, social and economic regime, and that governments and other groups are actively engaged in creating and sustaining those regimes, comes the most recent theoretical turn – the possibility of a *famine crime*. This approach to famine analysis produces the possibility of *faminogenesis*, or famine as an actively perpetrated crime, either as a specific instance of the currently-existing crime of genocide (de Waal, 2008), or deserving of definition as a new instance of a crime against humanity (Marcus, 2003).

Such thinking goes radically beyond benignly interrogating the structural power relations that lead to famine susceptibility. It applies the rules and norms of the regime of international law to seek out responsible *agents* complicit in creating or sustaining a famine. Specifically, It combines the precedent of the right to food with the reasoning behind laws for the criminalisation of mass extermination under the Geneva conventions and the convention on genocide to the occurrence of mass death during a famine.

There has been little enthusiasm for prosecuting famine as a crime against humanity to date, with no such charges having yet been brought to international courts, and it remains unclear

under which body of international law such crimes could be prosecuted (Marcus, 2003). Nevertheless, the possibility of prosecuting the intentional starvation of civilian populations appears to be pursuable under current laws against genocide, even though certain significant caveats exempting the extermination of political, economic or social groups remain problematic (Marcus, 2003). Furthermore, the prosecution of a second-degree famine crime (reckless negligence by a government in continuing to pursue faminogenic policies) remains legally dubious under the current international legal regime (Marcus, 2003).

The view to understanding famine as a crime extends the work of the critical interpretation from seeing famine as a system-produced calamity, to holding individuals to account for it. As a paradigm, it understands the causes of famine as arising out of criminal action – something not contemplated in the critical, Sen, or Malthusian understandings. It thus firmly moves conceptions of famine towards interrogating the acts of agents, rather than the outcome of structures. In applying a justice understanding, it also suggests the possibility of prosecution and a holding to account of perpetrators – a response which would make less obvious sense under the critical paradigm (which, in the main, takes a structural view of famine causes), and none at all under the Sen or Malthusian conceptions.

Turning to questions of perpetrators, rather than depoliticised natural causes, as Malthus did, has the further effect of changing the language by which famines are understood. As Edkins explains, "If mass starvation is a crime, the appropriate language should be used. Crimes don't happen, they are committed. Crime is not 'ended', but criminals deterred, detained and prosecuted." (2002, p. 15). The implications of this view for structuring famine interventions differently are profound, and run in a different direction to the traditional logic of feeding and reinstating the political-economic norms.

3.7 Interaction between the four paradigms

It is important to realise that these four paradigms are not proposed as an exhaustive enumeration of the possible representations of the causes of famine, merely as a summary of the perspectives most usefully investigated in the current literature. Furthermore, these four paradigms are linked to each other in a variety of complex ways, and should not be treated as entirely conceptually distinct.

A drought, though understood here as a 'Malthusian' cause, will in turn have effects on the availability and price of food in the markets, part of the 'Sen' conception of famine. The

impact of drought on the markets may also be taken advantage of by particular classes in society who are positioned to do so, to the hunger of those negatively affected – a 'critical' understanding. Finally, the actions of certain individuals judged to have prolonged the market effects of the drought unnecessarily, for example, could be plausibly interpreted as faminogenic and subjected to prosecution.

The four paradigms should therefore be seen less as objective, technical diagnoses of distinct types of causes of famine, but rather as discursive *emphases*, or interpretations, of a complex and interlinked set of factors whose ultimate manifestation is the mass suffering of a famine. What each paradigm does, however, is frame the facts of the famine in a manner that makes certain diagnoses and proposed interventions more 'obvious'. Mass feeding programmes make sense in a Malthusian situation of under-production of food, where a call for prosecution or market subsidies might appear strange. Alternatively, where individual criminal policy action has created or prolonged a drought unnecessarily, a call for prosecution of those responsible might seem entirely reasonable.

The four paradigms should therefore be understood as interrelated, possible understandings of the underlying 'objective' causes of famine. Each makes possible particular kinds of understanding and suggests different interventions as appropriate. As discussed in the previous chapter, which paradigm is deployed - or made most salient - in a discussion about a famine will come to influence the kinds of understanding that distant readers will have of the event.

CHAPTER 4: OUTLINE AND METHODOLOGY

This research project was concerned with investigating the role of the media in facilitating the responses of reading publics to instances of famine. The two key questions investigated are premised on the understanding that the media acts simultaneously as both a catalyst for action and a powerful definer of what action is possible.

4.1 QUANTITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS - MEDIA AS CATALYST

Firstly, this study investigated how rapid and sustained the media coverage of a selected set of famines has historically been. This question was originally intended to be pursued via a quantitative content analysis of all articles published by online news sites *www.cnn.com*, *www.bbc.co.uk* and *english.aljazeera.net* covering the Somalia famine of 2011-12 (Campbell, 2011), the Malawi famine of 2002 (Devereux, 2009), and the Sudanese famine of 2004 (Alex de Waal, 2008). The coverage of the Sudanese and Malawian cases across all three networks was discovered during the content analysis to be so small as to be statistically irrelevant and so was discarded after a discussion, in chapter 5, of why this may have been the case. The resolution of the content analysis for the Somalia coverage was then increased proportionately, to provide a far more strongly sampled data set. Discussed in more detail below, this quantitative content analysis was directed at examining when these media outlets began to publish stories identifying the famines as such, as well as examining changes in reporting frequency as the famine and its coverage proceeded over time.

The intended outcome of this examination was to determine the degree to which a 'media frenzy' understanding such as Howe's (2010) was applicable to the famine reporting being analysed. Questions of whether reporting occurred in time to make meaningful relief possible, and whether the media organisations under analysis were able to maintain coverage as the disaster worsened were also discussed based on the results of the content analysis.

Secondly, in order to probe the question of what made these famines newsworthy, the coverage was interrogated for evidence that it satisfied the particular subset of generally accepted news values discussed in chapter 2. Specifically, *negativity*, *photographability* and *accessibility* were chosen for scrutiny, based on previous work highlighting the importance of these news values in disaster reporting (Campbell, 2011; Olsen *et al*., 2003). After investigating the degree to which these three news values were present in the sample

articles, it was possible to assess the extent to which they may have been significant in establishing the media's interest in the famines being studied.

4.2 Qualitative Content Analysis - Media as definer

In examining the second key area of focus - the manner in which understandings of famine may be shaped by the media - a qualitative content analysis was performed on the same sample of articles to survey for the presence of the specific famine frames discussed in chapter 3, namely:

- The Malthusian frame (Winch, 1987)
- The Economic frame as described by Sen (1981)
- Critical conceptions of famine as per Franks (2006)
- Legal framing of famine De Waal (2008)

Bearing in mind that the effect of content frames describing distant realities is likely to be stronger than would traditionally be the case (chapter 2), surveying the prevalence of each of these possible framings in famine reporting suggested insights into the manner in which the famines under consideration may have been constructed in the media texts that described them. Assessing the relative frequency of these frames also opened new lines of enquiry as to whether particular ones remained hegemonic, or whether they were challenged through the presence of alternatives. Whether different frames predominate in the reporting of different news organisations – particularly in the case of 'alternative' media channels such as Al Jazeera – also served to prompt questions about the different ideological environments in which each media organisation operated.

4.3 The Content Analysis Approach

The preferred method of this study, content analysis has a long history of serving both quantitative and qualitative research traditions as a means of interrogating content for the presence of key concepts, with the purpose of "providing new knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action" (Krippendorff, 1980). It was a research method ideally suited to systematically interrogating media reports for common

characteristics, and for examining the relative frequency of particular concepts or data throughout a sample.

In both the case of the quantitative content analysis of *media as catalyst* and the qualitative content analysis of *media as definer*, the sample under investigation was the entire set of articles that related to the specified famines that were available from the CNN, Al Jazeera English and BBC websites, and a copy of the full coding sheet that was used is provided in Appendix A.

The sample was constituted by searching these sites' news archives for all news articles containing the keyword 'famine' and the country name, and manually selecting from the results those that related to the specific famine being analysed. Articles which were little more than two or three line summaries of an issue (such as portions of broader news roundup pieces) or which were simply extended subtitles to an online video were excluded from analysis as being too short to meaningfully convey any information (in the former case) and essentially being in a format (e.g. video) specifically excluded from interpretation in the latter.

The fact that the sample consisted of the entire set of articles published online by those outlets made it tautologically representative of the coverage of these famines. It was assumed that it would have been impossible to write about a famine in a particular country without actually naming the event a 'famine', or referencing the country in question. Without labouring the point too much, not using the word 'famine' in an article would be to have failed to describe it as such, and this would have rendered the article outside of the set of possible 'famine-explaining' reports.

A related question that was asked was the degree to which the articles present on the websites of these organisations were representative of the alternative media formats (such as print, radio or television) that these organisations may also have published. That is, to ask whether qualitative and quantitative characteristics present in the structure of the online articles might also have been present in reporting published on alternative channels. For practical reasons, this study was necessarily limited to an examination of online articles, as a fine-grained analysis of radio, television and other possible media would have simply taken far too long. Given such constraints, it seemed wiser to pursue a detailed investigation of one type of publication (online articles) than to broaden the research to other media formats at

the cost of smaller sample sets across different (and possibly interpretively incompatible) media, such as radio or television reporting.

It is certainly possible that BBC radio broadcasts, for example, possessed similar characteristics to articles on the BBC website, given the increasing tendency of freelancers and correspondents to file stories across multiple types of media. Nevertheless, without a specific analysis of radio, television and other stories related to the famines in question, this remains an open area of investigation that this study did not specifically address.

Content analysis, whether its object of measurement is the quantitative characteristics of texts or the qualitative interpretations of the researcher, can be classified in its approach as being either inductive, deductive, or mixed in how it establishes categories and concepts used in the classification of material (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). An inductive approach to content analysis seeks to move from the specific data being analysed towards more general categories, through being flexible to establish new categories on-the-fly during analysis. A deductive approach, by contrast, takes pre-defined categories, often determined by clear theoretical ideas prior to embarking on content analysis, and tests them in as-yet unknown data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In the case of quantitatively analysing the rapidity and duration of news performance, the content analysis has necessarily been deductive, since the categories through which the articles will be analysed were theorised beforehand (i.e. author, publication date, word count and news organisation).

In conducting the content analysis directed at searching for the satisfaction of particular news values however, the process was mixed between the two approaches. Started deductively, with a range of possible categories to which an article may conform in the course of satisfying a particular news value, the analysis remained open to inductively adding new categories as became necessary during the process.

By way of an example, the coding sheet contained an element asking which humanitarian organisations appeared as sources in the article, as a means of surveying for the news value of *accessibility* in the text. During actual coding, however, new organisations and sources not previously considered were added to the list on their first appearance, and the inductive approach allowed for the flexible establishment of such new sub-categories to capture this evolution.

Finally, in surveying articles for specific frames during the qualitative content analysis (in terms of the four broadly pre-existing frames that were to be searched for) the process was substantially inductive in determining what types of elements within the text might reflect each frame. By way of example, though the category of 'Malthusian framing of famine' was one overall possibility, the strategies by which an article may have sought to argue that the causes of a famine are environmental or population-based could not possibly be usefully enumerated beforehand, and depended a great deal on particular textual circumstance. The inductive approach allowed for various 'Malthusian' strategies of description (reference to 'drought', or 'crop failure due to climate change', for example) to be recognised without having to declare them *a priori*. These initially-unknown categories were inductively recognised during the content analysis. This provided a practical method of determining how many articles contained a broadly Malthusian understanding of the situation, while being sensitive to the different strategies by which such an understanding was reflected in the text.

4.2 Rationale for Chosen Media Outlets

As mentioned earlier, this study was limited to studying the online articles of three specific news sites, namely CNN (www.cnn.com), BBC News (news.bbc.co.uk) and Al Jazeera English (www.aljazeera.com). CNN and BBC News were chosen as representative of mainstream news sites for the US and Europe, as each is the most-visited news website in its respective area (Alexa, 2012). Al Jazeera English was included as it offered the case of an alternative, yet large news organisation which often takes a more critical view of developing-world stories than organisations such as the BBC, CNN and others (Seib, 2005). Al Jazeera's recent prominence in reporting the Arab spring as an alternative media voice to the West (Iskandar, 2007), for example, illustrates this point. In particular, it was of interest to consider whether the organisation adopted similar framings to CNN and BBC.

4.3 Rationale for Chosen Famines

There were too many famines in the last decade for an analysis of the reporting of all of them to be even remotely practical, forcing this study to limit itself to only the news coverage of specifically selected famines. This study chose to examine three in particular, spread apart in time over the last decade, in the hope of comparing data related to media response and coverage volume over time. There were a number of famines whose coverage data would

have sufficed if a reasonable distribution over the last decade had been the only criterion, but the question of examining news articles for particular frames, however, further narrowed down the selection.

When analysing media reports of specific famines for the prevalence of particular frames, it was important to bear in mind that these frames were not simply the result of decisions by the 'media complex' of journalists and their editors, but were in part made possible by the nature of the specific famine being discussed. A famine in Sudan, for example, may have lent itself better to an explanation framed as the crime of a neglectful government – indeed, there is strong evidence that this was the case in the starvation of the town of Kailak in Darfur in 2004 (de Waal, 2008). In such a situation, we should have expected to find some coverage framing the cause of suffering in terms of a crime/justice frame, in addition to (or perhaps instead of) Malthusian or economic explanations.

What was important to bear in mind was that particular famines might have lent themselves more readily to certain frames than to others. For the researcher, then, it was important to determine whether a particular framing was being disproportionately deployed in news articles *regardless* of the explanations that the circumstances might have inherently lent themselves to. While no famine can ever be reduced to single, simple causes, it's not evidence of an ideological bias in the media complex when a famine described in terms of criminal action really *did* have significant roots the actions of a government that behaved in a criminal fashion.

For the purpose of this study, famines were selected in order to offer the *possibility* of various frames. The famines initially selected were those from Sudan in 2004, Malawi in 2002, and Somalia in 2011-12. A more detailed explanation of the possible frames each was thought to offer is outlined below:

4.3.1 The Darfur famine of 2004

In late 2003, a famine began in the Darfur region of Sudan that would come to displace over 1.6 million people (Minear, 2005) and prompt an international humanitarian response throughout mid- to late 2004 (Minear, 2005). This famine – particularly where it affected the Darfur region of the country – offered a number of possible frames beyond simple Malthusian comparisons of agricultural output and population growth. The literature examining the

humanitarian response to this famine has highlighted the involvement of the Sudanese government in exacerbating the crisis, if not in fact having creating it, through its support for proxy violence in the region and, through it, the destruction and stripping of assets critical to "fragile rural survival" (Middleton & O'keefe, 2006, p. 549). Others have accused the government more directly of committing crimes against humanity, if not outright genocide, for blockading aid to certain areas as part of its military and political strategy in the region (de Waal, 2008).

Sudan therefore offered the possibility of understanding the famine as being more than a simple Malthusian event. That the government and other groups in the country were engaged in the manipulation of aid to achieve political, economic and military objectives (Middleton & O'keefe, 2006) made it possible for news coverage of the famine to explain elements of its unfolding in these terms.

4.3.2 The Malawi Famine of 2002

Occurring in 2001/2, the Malawi famine was small in comparison to the others selected for study, affecting only 46,000 – 85,000 people (Devereux, 2007), of which only 1,000 – 3,000 are estimated to have died (Devereux, 2009). Also, unlike the other cases, Malawi was a country free from widespread, sustained violence, and the state could not plausibly stand accused of criminal, possibly even genocidal, levels of neglect. As such, explanations of the Malawi famine were unlikely to be based on the questions of state criminality as might have been possible in Sudan, nor of the wholesale, violent breakdown of the state as may have been possible in the case of Somalia.

Research on the 2002 famine (Devereux, 2009) has highlighted a number of possible contributing factors, including a poor harvest (a Malthusian explanation), issues in regional and domestic grain markets (Sen/Economic explanation), and the role of the IMF and state officials in crippling the country's strategic grain reserve. The Malawi famine therefore offered a legitimate opportunity for explanation due to rainfall/population (Devereux, 2009), as well as the possibility for reporting to focus on failings of the IMF, government and market in critical terms.

4.3.3 The Somalia famine of 2011-12

The largest and most recent of the famines considered was the famine in Somalia that ran from mid 2011 to early 2012, and which was estimated to have affected as many as ten million people (UN OCHA, 2011). Somalia was a special case, owing to the country having been a failed state for almost two decades at the time of the onset of the famine (Building & Menkhaus, 2007). The status of the country as a failed state made interpreting the famine as a result of criminality (in the sense of crimes against humanity committed by an elite) unusual, except where levelled at the militia Al Shabaab as a *de facto* government in some areas, or the weak Transitional Federal Government based in Mogadishu as a responsible power with a limited geographical reach. It also exposed questions as to the role of on-going violence and the statelessness of Somalia in causing and exacerbating the famine, as well as the conduct of those such as Al Shabaab with the power to exacerbate or mitigate the effect of the famine for different groups (a critical/structural explanation). The fact that 2011 harvests were less than 20 percent of the historic average (FAO, USAID, & NET, 2011) due to lower than average rainfall also offered the possibility of explaining the famine in Malthusian terms.

The overall selection of famines from which to sample coverage was motivated by trying to provide a practical range of cases in which different framings were possible based on what is known in hindsight about both the country and the specific course of the famine in question. The famines selected were open to a wide range of possible interpretations. All offered the possibility of a simplistic, Malthusian perspective, as well as a varied range of more complex paradigms through which to understand them. It would have been possible, therefore, for news reporting on each famine to have simply repeated Malthusian tropes, or to have progressed beyond this analysis into more complex understandings. The degree to which new reporting did so was the key question that the qualitative content analysis sought to answer.

4.5 Analysing the media as an accelerant (Quantitative CA)

The quantitative content analysis of the media response to the three selected famines was a matter of coding each article in the set according to the criteria in the left column ('Quantitative Content Analysis') in appendix A. At this juncture, it is worth discussing the rationale behind the specific criteria chosen for the coding sheet.

Given that this portion of the study was a quantitative content analysis on an unchanging sample of articles, the test-retest reliability (Roberts, 2006) of the procedure was self-evident. Codes such as the presence and number of photographs (items 2.1 and 2.2 in the coding sheet) and the presence of a death toll (item 3.1) in an article could not appear differently for a particular article from one test to another. In the case of other criteria, such as surveying whether victims have been quoted (item 4.4) or whether humanitarian activity is depicted (item 2.4), while it may be philosophically possible that the coder may have changed their views of what constitutes a victim during a subsequent retest, or that a different coder repeating this analysis may have identified 'humanitarian activity' differently, such categories – particularly in the case of a severe disaster such as famine – were unlikely to have a wide latitude for interpretation.

4.5.1 Response Time

The criteria outlined in this section of the coding sheet were intended to answer questions about the timeliness of the media response in reporting famine and the volume of this response. The criteria to be examined in coding each article were:

- Date of publication
- News organisation
- Author
- Article length

The *date of publication* was to be coded for in order to establish a chronology of all coverage, and the relative frequency with which articles were written over the duration of the famine. Coding for the *news organisation* allowed for a distinction to be made between the publishing frequencies of each of the three news websites under consideration. The *author* criterion was added as a means of probing the diversity of voices covering the famine for each organisation, and to examine to what degree coverage was produced by an on-staff correspondent, rather than obtained from newswire services such as AP, or the United Nations' IRIN press service. The final criterion, *article length*, sought to examine whether there was any change in the space devoted to accounts of the famine over time. While it is true that publishing on the web does not have the same technical constraints on length that traditional newspaper publication has, longer articles would offer the possibility of more detailed explorations by the journalist responsible than the perfunctory who/what/where of

shorter pieces. As such, an increase in article length could have indicated an increased commitment to analysis by particular correspondents, and an increased commitment by editors to allow such longer accounts.

As reflected on earlier, this portion of the content analysis was pursued deductively. That is to say that no new categories or sub-categories were added to the coding sheet during the content analysis. The validity of this process was taken as self-evident, given that it was simply an empirical measure of particular, quantitative features of the texts being considered.

4.5.2 News Values

The quantitative content analysis phase advanced from here to code the articles in the sample for the prevalence of three particular news values, namely:

- Photographability
- Negativity
- Accessibility

Given that this list did not describe the possible strategies for incorporating these news values into an article, the content analysis proceeded inductively from this point. As new strategies for expressing these news values were observed in the text, appropriate criteria were added to the coding sheet, and all remaining articles were coded according to the expanded criteria.

Photographability

In the case of *photographability*, appendix A contained five possible codes oriented around interrogating whether an article had value through its ability to reflect images of the famine. In the first instance, the coding sheet enquired whether the article contained a photograph (item 2.1) and the number of photographs present, as a means of determining the relative importance of photographic to non-photographic content in the story. A photo-essay, for example, would have attached a high importance to the visualization of the famine in comparison to a text-only story with no emphasis on the visual whatsoever. Where photographs were present, the remainder of this section of the coding sheet concerned itself with examining the degree to which they served to re-present common tropes of suffering

victims (item 2.2) or humanitarian activities of varying types (items 2.3 and 2.4).

In assessing the validity of the codes chosen here (2.1 to 2.4), we had to assess the degree to which these criteria served to correctly measure the news value of photographability, described by Harcup & O'Neill as whether "a story provided a good picture opportunity" (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001, p274). Furthermore, in attempting to confront questions of the iconography of famine raised by Campbell (2011), we were also concerned with assessing the degree to which the photographs might have reproduced humanitarian clichés of the past. So, without claiming that the codes that this study chose constituted the complete set of all codes for measuring photographability, we asked whether the chosen codes were related to this news value and could serve to identify it.

Given that there was no technical requirement that a photograph *must* accompany a story, the presence of photographs at all and their frequency in an article (criterion 2.1) suggested that their presence was due to their ability to enhance the value of the article to the reader – that is to say, it added a *value* to the *news*. Related to this, where a photograph was included in an article (thereby satisfying photographability as a news value), the coding items progressed to examining the frequency with which victims and humanitarian assistance were preferred images. Items 2.2 and 2.3 asked this question of the images directly, while item 2.4 sought to provide a more fine-grained analysis as to the type of humanitarian activity that was represented. Without labouring the point, images of victims and humanitarian activity were tautologically evidence that in such instances such images were preferred (to other images, or no images at all).

Negativity

In the case of the news value of *negativity*, the coding sheet suggested some obvious markers that could have been present in the text. The presence of an actual, estimated, or hypothesized death toll or affected population (item 3.1) was an obvious example of establishing significant negativity. Alternatively, did the article include descriptions of the suffering of victims and if so, in what terms (item 3.2)?

Once again, without claiming that the codes above were exhaustive, it is worth pausing to consider whether these were valid means of assessing the focus of an article on negativity. Death tolls and descriptions of suffering appear to be self-evidently negative, and their

inclusion provided reasonable grounds for concluding that the article was – at that point in the text – highlighting negative aspects of the famine. The code for assessing other negative realities of the famine (item 3.2) required slightly more consideration, however. Whether particular activities outside of the specific, described suffering of the victims were negative depended in part on the context in which such activities were described.

By way of an example, ongoing violence in the background to assisting victims of a famine may appear – in isolation – as an instance of reporting a negative element of the famine situation. However, whether violence was described as Al Shabaab's destabilization of the country or the efforts of UN-aligned peacekeepers to restore order (by force) would have an effect on whether the negative fact (there is violence) is to be coded as negative or not. The former example of Al Shabaab's destabilization of the country would be codeable as negative where it is linked, in the context of the article, with further suffering. A UN military intervention, described as restoring order and access to much-needed food aid, could not be validly coded as an instance of negativity where it is presented as bringing about positive changes to the situation. The importance of context when coding information is well known (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), and given that this issue was borne in mind during coding, classifying negative realities in the famine as contributing to the news value of 'negativity' was relatively uncontroversial.

Accessibility

Finally, in terms of the news value of *accessibility*, the coding sheet offered a number of coding categories directed at seeking evidence that the presence of humanitarian organisations in the disaster area had aided the journalist's reporting of the story. As reflected on in chapter 2, international institutions such as NGOs and the UN may make accessing particular crises easier for journalists, and thereby facilitate more extensive coverage of them than might otherwise be the case. This assistance could take either the form of direct logistical help – such as the use of UN or NGO vehicles – or 'informational' help, through supplying journalists with research data, quotable sources and other material that can assist a correspondent to file an apparently well-researched story under severe time and resource constraints.

In the case of logistical assistance being rendered to a journalist, there may be few – if any – indicators of this in the published text. Few journalists would acknowledge the logistical

assistance of humanitarian agencies in compiling their stories, or even recognize such assistance as potentially influencing what they cover, despite logistical assistance to the media generally being a key part of NGOs media management strategies (Cottle & Nolan, 2007b). If logistical support may be invisible in the text of a news report, informational assistance is not. The journalistic principle of attributing sources in all but the most exceptional circumstances ensures that where NGOs are providing analysis, insight and history, such assistance will frequently find its way into the text of an article in the form of an attributed quote or viewpoint. It is these sources that we surveyed for in the content analysis in order to detect the role of these organisations in assisting journalists with information.

It is important to point out that a lack of attribution to NGO or other sources in an article does not constitute any meaningful evidence that there was no relationship between the journalist and particular organisations. It is certainly possible, for example, that journalists may have received copious amounts of background from the agency with which they are embedded, but have nevertheless chosen to use only attributed quotes from alternative sources. In contrast, an overwhelming presence of one NGO or other organisation as a source in the reports of a journalist *is* valid evidence of a preference for the views of that particular organisation in a situation where different sources of information would have been available but were not used. It is these indications of a particular 'source preference' that the coding sheet is attempting to discern.

The coding sheet offered a number of coding categories to seek evidence that the story was being told using the informational resources of a range of possible elite actors in the crisis. These included international humanitarian organisations (items 4.1), the United Nations (item 4.1) and government sources (item 4.3). Famine victims (4.4) were also included in the coding sheet, though not as a contrary category of elite source, since access to most famine victims may well have been brokered in some way by NGOs or other actors. Instead, their inclusion was intended to measure the extent to which affected individuals were afforded the opportunity to explain and contextualize their situation relative to the elite organisations present to assist them in resolving it (and potentially mediating access to them).

4.6 Analysing the media as a primary definer (Qualitative CA)

A qualitative content analysis phase constituted the second substantial area of enquiry in this study, and was intended to interrogate the sample texts about the ways in which the famines

being studied were explained (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Unlike the quantitative analysis, this content analysis was substantially more interpretive, since the question of whether a famine was being framed as being caused by one (or many) factors was a substantially more subjective task than counting the instances of images within the text, for example.

In this content analysis, the study coded each article as offering explanations of the famine being described that were rooted in none, one, or some of the possible paradigms discussed in chapter 3:

1. A Malthusian explanation
2. An economic explanation
3. A critical explanation
4. A crime/justice explanation

It would have been impossible to enumerate all possible strategies through which a journalist might have explained the causes of a particular famine, not least because the available facts are likely to change between famines, or a journalist may unearth novel and unexpected explanations for a situation. Because of this, the content analysis followed a mixed deductive/inductive approach in which the overall categories for which the text was being interrogated were theorized beforehand, but in which recognizing explanations of a famine in terms of each of the four categories remained flexible to recognizing new strategies as they presented themselves in practice.

Appendix A provides the coding sheet used for this qualitative content analysis, in which each of the four explanatory paradigms was outlined, along with the codes used to survey for whether a famine was described in terms of a particular paradigm. In the case of Malthusian explanations, the coder was directed to pay specific attention to the presence of explanations focusing on population or environmental factors, whilst the criminal/justice frame asked that the coder examine the text for description of the famine as a crime.

Given that this portion of the study was qualitative, particular justification is required in respect of questions of reliability and validity in the research. Unlike in the quantitative content analysis described earlier in this chapter, we were measuring the coder's subjective understanding of the explanations being given by the news articles that were studied, rather than the text's manifest characteristics (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Put differently, knowing *what*

kind of explanation was being given in the text, in this case, is different to knowing *how many* times a particular event or feature occurred.

Roberts (2006) argues that qualitative content analysis as a method is particularly amenable to establishing reliability over time, as codes can be reapplied to previously-coded data to check for stability. In addition, coding results may be shared with an independent researcher in order to confirm whether the results remain reliable between coders. Both of these strategies were adopted in the course of this analysis. Earlier text samples were reconsidered later in the coding process, to verify that coding had not shifted during the course of being applied to texts, and elements in the sample were re-coded by an independent party in order to ensure that the test could offer a degree of consistency between coders. In reality, a single researcher was responsible for coding all of the articles, with the second coder acting as a form of audit on a selection of those coding decisions.

In seeking to establish the validity of this qualitative content analysis, that is to say how well our coding apparatus was able to measure the subjective phenomena being considered (Roberts, 2006), this study opted to effectively establish validity through triangulation in the coding schema. In attempting to identify the presence of particular explanatory frames in the texts being considered, the study provided a number of possible codes in addition to the possibility of new, inductively established ones. This approach was in recognition of the fact that attempting to identify a Malthusian framing, for example, through one code alone, was to leave the study liable to missing other possibilities not explicitly contemplated in the coding sheet at the beginning. Through allowing new codes to be added to the coding schema as they were recognized in the material, and then subjecting earlier texts to a re-analysis in terms of the expanded codes, we could be sure that we were attempting to identify the four paradigms under consideration through as varied a range of codes as possible.

Finally, validity was further safeguarded through the discussion of selected sample data and its coding with colleagues, as a form of peer review (Roberts, 2006) intended to check whether the codes used and their application were accepted as reasonable. Finally, where codes were added to the sheet during the progression of the content analysis, the rationale behind their inclusion was recorded in order to establish an audit trail (Roberts, 2006) that could allow others to evaluate the validity of these inclusions for themselves.

4.6.1 Explanation of qualitative CA codes used

Given the emphasis just placed on justifying the addition of new codes to the coding schema as the analysis progressed, it would be remiss of this study not to provide justifications for the initial set of codes with which the analysis began.

Malthusian codes

In surveying sample articles for evidence that Malthusian explanations were being given for the famine in question, the coding sheet ultimately contained four possibilities. Item 1.1 asked whether the famine was being explained as a result of population growth, while item 1.2 asked whether it was explained in terms of natural causes, whether linked to climate change or not. Given that the core of the Malthusian understanding of famine is the idea of a competition between population and nature's capacity to provide, these codes were intended to survey for a focus on either side of this balance.

Codes 1.3 and 1.4 approached the question of how the problem of famine was being framed from the reverse direction. They served to examine how the problem was being understood through categorizing the solutions being offered to it. Both emergency feeding (1.3) and agricultural interventions (1.4) are solutions to a problem conceived narrowly in terms of food production/consumption, and were thus markers of the Malthusian conception.

Economic codes

Central to the economic understanding of famine given by Sen (1981) is the notion that starvation is the result of a lack of access to food via the market system. This would occur when the cost of food is such that an individual can no longer afford to secure enough to survive using the assets they have available for exchange. This may occur either because the cost of food has risen unacceptably (item 2.1) or because incomes have declined (item 2.2). Equally, solutions proposed to a problem conceived of in these terms may be classified as either interventions to reduce the market price of food (2.3) or increasing the incomes of those who need it (2.3).

Critical codes

The critical approach (Edkins, 2004; Keen, 1995) reconceptualises famine as being part of the long social and political history that preceded it, and that it is not a dysfunctional breakdown of the overall system, but a continuation of it. Items 3.2 and 3.3 code for this non-disruptive, historical understanding. Furthermore, the critical understanding argues that famines are not simply populated by victims, but also by beneficiaries – individuals and groups for whom famine circumstances may create economic and political opportunities. Items 3.1 and 3.4 focused on identifying whether such beneficiaries were identified, and whether the famine was understood as the outcome of a social and political competition between groups, in which one may have exploited another.

Justice/Crime codes

The crime/justice paradigm (de Waal, 1997) takes the exploitation identified in the critical approach a step further, to argue that such exploitation should in fact be recognized and condemned as a crime – either in terms of international law (4.1) or, possibly, the laws of the country in question (4.2). De Waal (2008) recognizes that current international legal norms may be insufficient to properly recognize a crime of 'inflicting famine', but that this should be impetus for creating such a crime, rather than continuing to fail to condemn it. Reflecting this position of 'ought to be a crime', item 4.3 provided a code for recognizing claims that a famine was a criminal act without a reasonable reference to a particular law.

4.7 Supplementary interview material

During the course of this research, an opportunity arose to discuss some of the findings with Martin Plaut, the recently retired editor of BBC's Africa desk. As a member of the BBC news team during the famine period, his insights were invaluable in helping to explain how the organisational mechanics of the BBC may have produced the results observed in the content analyses. Though interviews were not a formal part of the research methodology, this was a useful complement to the data obtained and so was pursued when the opportunity arose. Selected extracts from the discussion are included in chapter 5 where relevant.

4.8 Conclusion

This study was rooted in content analysis as a method of investigating the media's presumed role as a *catalyst* for famine response, and as a *definer* of the kinds of responses that are possible. Towards the first, it executed a quantitative content analysis of the speed and

duration of the media coverage of selected famines, as well as an analysis of the degree to which the three news values of *photographability*, *negativity* and *accessibility* may have influenced news reports. Towards the second, a qualitative content analysis sought to examine the prevalence in news reports of four understandings as to what causes famine; the Malthusian, economic, critical and justice frames. Issues of reliability and validity in the research were variously addressed according to the specific requirements of the research paradigms being invoked in each of the content analyses undertaken.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

The most recent of the famines studied – that of Somalia in 2011-12 – had a large population of articles across the three news networks. Surprising, however, was the fact that only 18 distinct articles could be found altogether for both the Sudanese famine in Darfur in 2004 and the Malawi famine of 2002. As a consequence, only the Somali famine offered a population and corresponding sample size large enough for meaningful study. While it is disappointing for a portion of a research project to return, in effect, a non-result, such a lack of coverage is in itself an interesting finding, as well as making possible an enhanced, fine-grained analysis of the Somalia famine coverage.

Consequently, this research project concentrated on expanding the size of the Somalia sample so that the findings derived from it would be as statistically relevant as possible. In the end, 180 articles out of the 300-article sample were analysed. This is a large enough sample size that findings arising from it have a confidence level of 95% (±5%) and are therefore highly likely to be representative of the characteristics of the overall population[14].

While the results of the Somali famine coverage are strong, and will be analysed in detail in the following sections, it is worth briefly speculating on possible explanations for the paucity of coverage on the other famines, and ask why they may not have been as widely reported as the Somali instance. The website for Al Jazeera English was only founded in March 2003, which would excuse it from covering the Malawi famine of the preceding year and possibly – since it may have been operating with limited resources and scope initially – from more intense coverage of the Darfur hunger crisis not too long afterwards. CNN and BBC News, however, already had fairly sophisticated websites by then, and so their lack of coverage would likely be due to different factors than resource constraints alone.

[14] The sample was randomly chosen using a computer-generated random sequence, making it appropriate for a CI estimation. The minimum sample size for a 95% (±5%) confidence interval would be approximately 169 records. The actual sample coded (180 records) was chosen for convenience, and because extra coding time was available.

Competing News Cycles and Ambiguity

The Malawi famine of 2002 occurred when poor harvests in 2000 and 2001 led to a crisis in early 2002 (Devereux, 2009; Rubin, 2008). Archival snapshots of the BBC and CNN websites[15] in April, when mortality was just past its peak, show the lead stories to have been fears of conflict escalation between India and Pakistan, Libya's offer to compensate victims of the Lockerbie bombing (BBC, May 30 2002) and escalating fears of a possible terrorist attack in the US (CNN, May 25 2002). There were also not especially high numbers of fatalities in the Malawi instance, only 1,000 – 3,000 (Devereux, 2009)[16], as compared to the warnings of death tolls as high as 750,000 that were carried in some news articles[17] reporting on Somalia (at the time of writing, reliable, researched estimates have yet to be published). Because of this, the Malawi famine may have simply not registered as news, at a time when it lacked the mammoth scale of the Somalia famine, and the world's media were more preoccupied with other, more newsworthy foreign news stories.

Mass starvation in Darfur in 2004 similarly failed to register on the international news agenda. An illustrative case is the fate of the town of Kailak on Darfur's Jebel Mara massif, which was forcibly starved by Sudanese militiamen and soldiers between February and April 2004 (de Waal, 2008). A search of BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera for 'Kailak' returns no results whatsoever – from a media standpoint, the event appears to have been utterly ignored. Archival copies of the homepages of BBC and CNN from early April 2004 suggest that those networks were highly focused on the increasing bloodiness of the US war on Iraq, compared to which the annihilation of a village in Darfur would have held little interest to their domestic audiences. Furthermore, against a backdrop of historic coverage of Darfur as an on-going 'conflict', it may have been difficult to isolate an unambiguous famine narrative from broader political violence –particularly when the famine was in many instances actively inflicted on certain groups and so, in a way, simply a strategy employed in the conflict, rather than a free-standing crisis with its own media identity. Were the famine to be constructed as such in reports, its use as a weapon of war would likely have also needed to be recognized – an understanding unfamiliar in contemporary coverage of famine within a warzone, if the

[15] Taken from the wayback machine archive at http://web.archive.org

[16] Though possibly even as few as 300 – 500 deaths (Rubin, 2008 p. 50)

[17] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14785304

research results from the Somalia case are at all representative of general approaches to famine coverage. Galtung & Ruge (1965) observed that foreign news should match up with audiences pre-existing ideas of what is possible, in order to be newsworthy. It is possible that the story of famine being used as a weapon of war by parties in the Darfur conflict was sufficiently novel as to make such an account less favoured over general coverage of Darfur as a 'conflict'.

This is, of course, largely speculation – this research project having been intended to analyse how famine is described and explained when it is given that name, rather than determining *why* events are and are not recognized as such (and not, say, as part of a war). It would require a different research design than this one to interrogate such a question, and though it is disappointing that these two famines were not meaningfully covered by any of the agencies being studied, this did allow additional content analysis time for a far more thorough sampling of the coverage of the famine in Somalia.

There are a number of key points arising from the content analyses performed on the sample coverage of the Somalia famine that shall be discussed here. Firstly, the overall pattern of an explosion of initial interest, followed by a long tail of decreasing coverage as described in Howe's (2010) media frenzy model appears to hold in the case of Somalia coverage.

Secondly, coverage overwhelmingly represented the Somalia famine in Malthusian terms, with virtually no explicit articulation of the critical or justice paradigms of the event. It was largely characterized as an issue of crop failure requiring medical and feeding interventions, not one of differential suffering, an opportunity for particular classes of individuals, or an occurrence for which groups such as Al Shabaab should bear any legal responsibility for either causing or prolonging.

Third, there is a conspicuous difference between the number of times that those suffering the effects of the famine are photographed and the number of times that they are quoted. The data appears to clearly support the notion that victims are central to visualizing the famine and lending it credibility, but are not required to testify about, or to explain it. The privilege of narrating the famine, its causes, and measures taken to ameliorate it falls overwhelmingly to humanitarian and government elites. Famine victims are quite literally there to be seen and not heard.

Fourth, comparing the understandings of the Somalia famine articulated by a permanent Africa correspondent (in this case, the BBC's Andrew Harding) with the average position of coverage by their organisation (the BBC) reveals that the dedicated correspondent may have a more critical understanding of the issue overall than is the general case in the organisation. This in turn suggests that media bias towards simplified humanitarian narratives may have roots in the experience of journalists deployed to cover these crises and an overall preference for easy-to-obtain news about home government reactions to the issue, rather than more expensive and difficult-to-research in-depth, first-hand accounts.

Fifth, and fairly uncontroversially, the overwhelming presence of elite voices, negativity and photographic material in the coverage of the Somalia famine affirms the importance of visual material, mass catastrophe and the presence of elite voices in making the famine into news. The inevitable inclusion of accounts of suffering and numbers of dying, combined with extensive photographic coverage and the dominance of the elite voice as important news values serve together to reinforce the likelihood that those suffering through a famine are reduced to humanitarian statistics – simply imaged and then spoken for by specialists. Of particular concern is whether the apparent news value of *accessibility* (via elite organisations) may in fact stand in opposition to any attempt to include the voices of those most directly involved in experiencing the effects of a famine.

It is these observations that will now be explored in further depth.

5.1 Timing and Duration of Media Coverage

The first issue being examined in the coverage of the Somalia famine concerned whether there was evidence of significant media reporting having occurred prior to the famine reaching a crisis stage and whether this coverage was broadly maintained over time, or was distributed over a short, intense period of coverage followed by a longer deterioration in publication volume - as Howe's (2010) model of a media frenzy might predict.

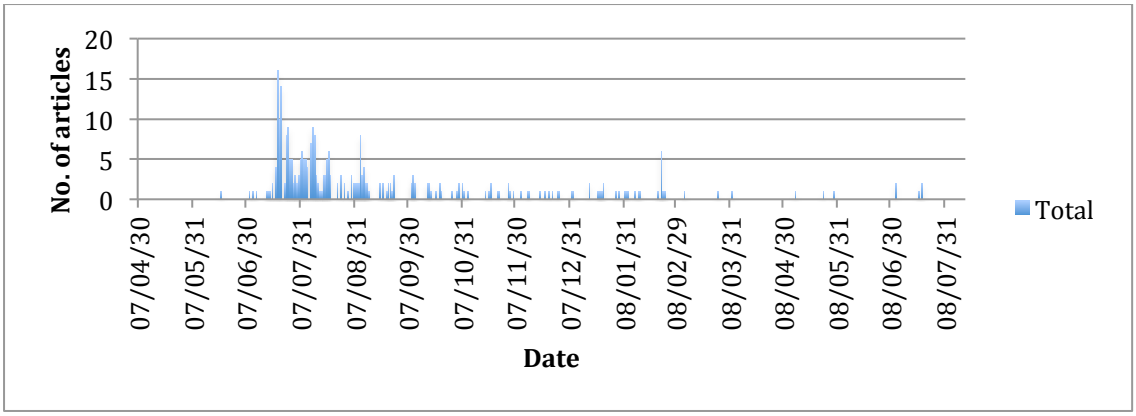

FIGURE 2: TOTAL NEWS COVERAGE OF FAMINE IN SOMALIA

Plotting the level of famine coverage over time (Figure 2), two observations are immediately clear – that the famine coverage conforms well to Howe's media frenzy distribution, and that interest in the famine both started and peaked in a very short period.

In describing the media frenzy model, Howe explains that:

> initial pictures of emaciated or dying people may be aired or printed by a single news outlet. These images generate public interest, sparking intense media competition to provide stories and additional pictures of the famine. The new images generate more widespread interest, intensifying the reinforcing loop. This cycle, however, eventually establishes a balancing loop… With time, the public is inundated with coverage and prefers to see other topics presented; (Howe, 2010, p.44)

We can clearly observe that media interest in the famine persisted at an intense-to-moderate level for approximately two months between July and September 2011, despite the famine itself lasting at least another five months to February 2012[18]. Famine coverage also did not begin until mid-July, when the UN declared a famine in Somalia, despite ample data from organisations including FEWS[19] that a famine was likely and that a large scale intervention would probably be required to prevent it.

[18] The UN declared an end to famine conditions in Somalia on 3 February 2012. http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/122091/icode/

[19] http://www.fews.net/Pages/country.aspx?gb=so&l=en

It is clear from the coverage over 2011-12 that media attention paid to the famine has little correlation whatsoever to the actual circumstances and duration of the event itself, but would appear to fit well with the reinforcing loop described by Howe, in which new stories and pictures are sought to satisfy a kindled public interest in the famine. Furthermore, media interest in the event is closely correlated with elite pronouncements to the effect that a famine was now declared to be in effect, rather than to the presence of data indicating this fact that was available weeks – if not months – earlier.

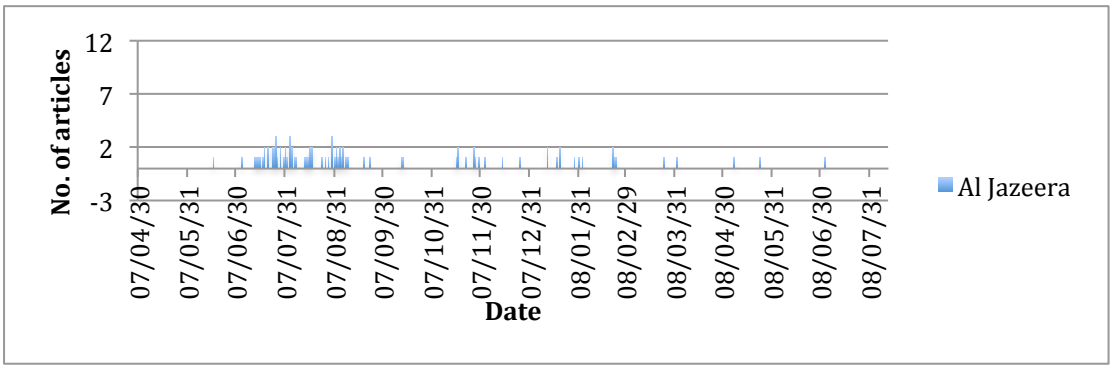

FIGURE 3: NEWS REPORTING ON THE SOMALIA FAMINE BY AL JAZEERA ENGLISH

Moving from analysing the overall volume of coverage across all three organisations' websites to individual cases (in figures 3, 4 and 5), we can see that the overall pattern is consistent between all three organisations. That is to say that each only began responding in mid-July, after which coverage was at its most prolific for a period not longer than two months before gradually petering out.

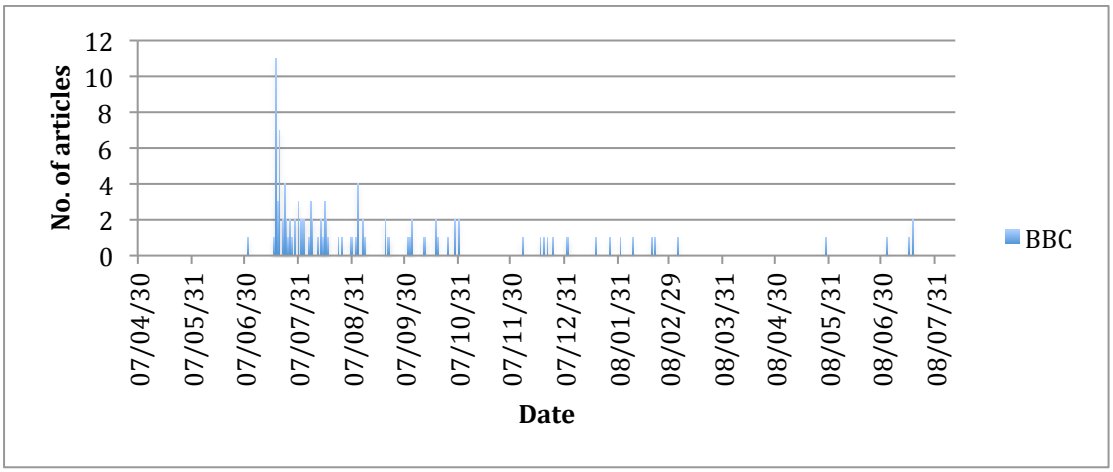

FIGURE 4: NEWS REPORTING ON THE SOMALIA FAMINE BY BBC NEWS

There are, of course, differences in the scale of the responses by the different media organisations, which most likely indicates the different levels of resources that each was able to dedicate to covering the famine. The BBC, for example, was able to generate a number of high-quality pieces using their Africa correspondent Andrew Harding, while Al Jazeera tended to rely more on wire service copy and opinion pieces by academics and other figures who could presumably be more easily and cost-effectively accessed than those directly involved in the relief operations on the ground in Somalia and Northern Kenya. That said, while the overall volumes of coverage may vary from organisation to organisation, the general form of the response as a sudden start persisting over a two-month window and ending in a long decay is consistent across all three organisations. This coverage pattern offers at least two interesting questions for future research, as well as lessons for those organisations - such as humanitarian NGOs - who are dependent on this media coverage to publicise their causes.

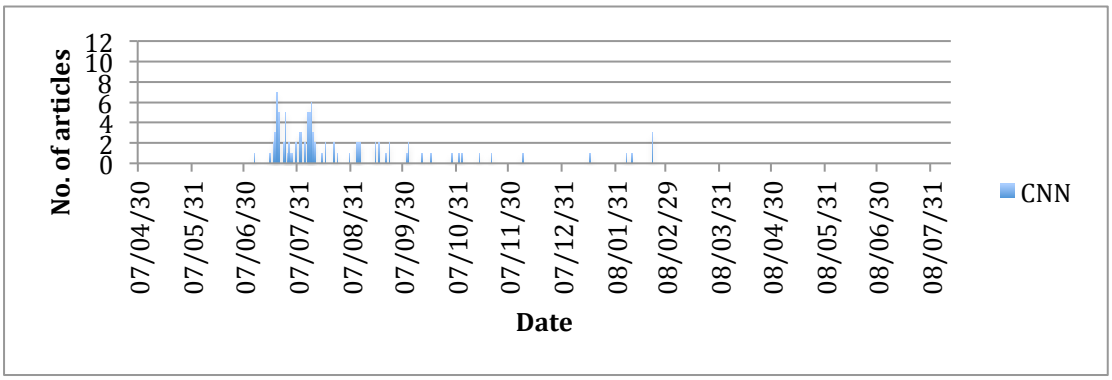

FIGURE 5: NEWS OVERAGE OF THE SOMALIA FAMINE BY CNN

5.1.1 Ordering events and the CNN effect

The first question that would be of future research interest would be to attempt to investigate what factors triggered the initial storm of coverage. It is clear that it was not the availability of warning information about the famine that triggered a media response, as this was available beforehand and yet apparently provoked no media response. It was the action of an elite –the UN, in this case – that kick-started the wave of media attention by declaring as real what the evidence already showed. It would be interesting to evaluate the degree to which elite validation of slow-moving crises such as famine can act as the news event around which to build a media frenzy (as per Howe's model). That is to say, where a disaster such as a famine is occurring over a long continuum and it is unclear at which point it is actually

happening[20], the voice of a suitably positioned elite may be the trigger around which the media can report that a consensus has now occurred, and call for public interest in the issue.

Reaching back into history, the lionized coverage that the BBC produced in response to the Ethiopian famine of 1984 also occurred late into the famine, and was spurred on by the knowledge that the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) had decided to launch a consolidated appeal for the famine (Franks, 2006a) – essentially forcing it to become a media event where it might not have been before. This would support the notion that it is the actions of elite organisations that have the power to ignite a media frenzy around certain disasters, more than knowledge of the disasters themselves. Clearly this cannot be true in all instances – the tsunami that swept Indonesia in 2004 would have made headlines regardless of official pronouncements, for example. But in the case of a slow-onset disaster such as famine, it would make for an interesting historical investigation.

In trying to explain the delayed, sudden coverage afforded to the Somalia famine by the BBC, the comments of former BBC editor Martin Plaut are instructive:

> I remember the Somali [news service] saying, you know, it's looking bad. But the problem was, of course, in Somalia you tell me a time when it isn't looking bad. The country is extremely fragile. Geography… there's almost always an area where there's extremely low rainfall, and of course it has all of the conflict that you're aware of. So the idea that someone was having a hard time in Somalia was nothing new, and we didn't take it very seriously. For a while. And nor did they, quite frankly…and then they sort of started muttering to us, saying 'look, this is really serious', and then I started writing, online would start doing pieces and I would start writing pieces that would go out on English radio, and then you would bring the two together. And then we started to see in the NGO press – you know the Oxfams and so forth and so on – putting out appeals. And then it grew. And that was how it sort of came about (16 Jan. 2012)

It is apparent that there was an awareness of increased hardship in the region, yet it did not become a news theme until the UN press release of mid-June 2011 and a DEC emergency appeal for funds shortly after. What is interesting is the idea that the drought and hardship were known, but were not *news* until the *context* changed to suggest that things were

[20] In the sense that it famine is recognised as such, with all of the political and discursive effects that this implies.

different this time. From the quantitative record of publishing over time, this occurred on the day of the UN press release. More subjectively, Plaut attributes this to the changed 'muttering' of the Somali news desk, which had begun to suggest the seriousness of the situation. Nevertheless, he acknowledges the effect of broader public events – such as the DEC's emergency appeal – in catalysing a much larger media response:

> It starts off in the Somali service, as I mentioned. They tell us when they begin to get these stories. They will have then been reporting it already to their people. Say a week later, we kind of wake up to the fact that this is a really big story when they beat us on the head and say we've got to do it. So it started in the Somali service, then went into the African English [language] area. Then it would go on to the world service. So everyone will be slightly later. And we are probably reporting it on… the world service radio and beginning to do a few little pieces online a few weeks before all of a sudden then when it really got going, you get things like the DEC, the Disasters Emergency Committee, they would launch an appeal. Then, you know, you'd get the mainstream BBC people becoming involved and then they'd deploy people like Mike Wooldridge out to Ethiopia… then the BBC really gets going. (16 January, 2013)

This question of 'what caused what' is important in trying to resolve the question discussed in chapter 2, of whether sympathetic media reporting can motivate governments to create policy responses to situations. The ordering over time of media coverage and the subsequent response by the US and UK governments and the African Union are consistent with the model proposed by Robinson (2000) in which sympathetic media coverage can provoke a government policy response where the government in question had not yet resolved its position.

That said, however, the issue is complicated by the observation that the UN declaration appears to have initially provoked the media coverage. It occurred one day prior to the beginning of the mass-reporting period, and was the subject of many of the initial articles. The question must then be asked whether the UN declaration of a famine did not perhaps both obligate the media to report it, and particular elite governments (such as the US and UK) to respond? If it happened in this case that a third event (the UN pronouncement) was correlated with the start of mass coverage and government response, and may well have caused both, might some similar UN or NATO actions not have similarly provoked coverage in Robinson's (2000) case study of intervention in Bosnia? It suggests, at a minimum, that the 'CNN effect' model typically characterised by the media influencing governments may in fact be a symptom of an underlying model of a diplomatic event (the UN declaration in this case) making both media overage and government response obligatory. It would be wise, having

observed this in the Somalia case, to revisit the classic examples illustrating the 'CNN effect' and check for such precursor diplomatic causes.

5.1.2 Media frenzy and the historical case

A second question arising from the media response data would be to evaluate the average, minimum and maximum length of the media frenzy that characterizes early coverage of such disasters. This was a question that this research had hoped to contribute towards answering through an analysis of coverage patterns in the Sudan and Malawi instances. Though it was unfortunate that scant media attention appears to have been paid to recognizing the famines that occurred in those two instances, this may, cautiously, be a research finding in disguise. The lack of coverage of the famines in these two scenarios may, in fact, an indication that the window of media coverage on a famine can in some cases be *zero*. Further analysis of media response patterns to other famines would serve to broaden the range of estimates on the durability of a famine-related media frenzy in future.

In the case of the Somalia famine coverage, Plaut confirms much of Howe's (2010) concept of a media frenzy burning out as the possible angles on the story are exhausted:

> Essentially, you know… I don't know if you remember the Vietnam war. I remember it being on the airwaves, you know, being on the television screens. And every day the report was the same. For years. More bombing of North Vietnam. I mean hey ho. You get bored with it. Whatever it is. So after a while, there's a peak… So there's this kind of slow start, and then it takes off. And then it gradually, I mean, frankly, the British media are only going to be interested for a week. After that they aren't interested. So then it gradually tails off. (16 January, 2013)

Plaut's account differs to Howes', however, in the respect that he asserts that (in the case of the BBC at least) competition between organisations has little to do with the volume of coverage they will give an issue. Asked whether what is being covered by other news organisations has an important role in the BBC's own news agenda, Plaut responded:

> Not much. Not because we're arrogant… and of course if someone comes up with a real scoop, you know, we know about it. But just because, you know, just keeping on top of our own information sources… takes us all the time we have. (16 January, 2013)

Given the previous account of how the explosion of coverage is tied, in part, to broader events including the DEC appeal and the declarative actions of the UN, it may be worth revising Howe's model to accommodate the possibility of media organisations increasing their coverage in response to the actions of elites towards an issue, rather than the attitudes of their competitors.

From the point of view of a humanitarian organisation or other group seeking to solicit public and government support for relief and other interventions in a famine, this response data and the questions it provokes are significant. In the first instance, it suggests that evidence of a coming famine – however comprehensive – may be necessary but insufficient grounds for triggering an intense media response. A further trigger in the form of an elite consensus or other public event may be required in order to provoke a media response.

Secondly, it will be important to recognize that this media response may be short-lived – two months in the Somalia example under study – and that it is likely to come shortly after the coverage of the famine begins in earnest, not necessarily when the famine itself reaches the point of requiring emergency intervention. This implies that there will be a short window of public attention during which NGOs will have a greater opportunity to have the issue picked up and responded to by the media and the public, and that this window may be delayed such that assistance in the form of food aid from governments may potentially wreck markets once it arrives at least three months later.

5.2 Representations of the Somalia Famine

As one of its core concerns, this research sought to explore the degree to which the four possible framings of famine outlined in chapter 3 were present in the coverage of the Somalia famine. The first of these was the Malthusian understanding of famine as deriving from tensions between the limits of the natural environment and the pressure that human populations subject it to, such that poor rainfall or explosive population growth can result in the occurrence of famine as a natural correction to unsustainable human populations. Second was the conception - deriving from the work of Sen (1981) – of famine as an essentially economic event which occurs when individuals are no longer able to trade for a basket of goods from the available market(s) to sustain themselves and their dependents. This view has less to do with overall food production than with considering the vicissitudes of food *access*

as conditions change to reduce individuals' incomes or raise the prices of needed goods beyond reach.

The third conception was characterized by the arguments of Edkins (2004), De Waal (1997) and others that famines should be understood critically as working to serve particular political and economic interests. They are not aberrant breakdowns of an otherwise functioning social order, but should be seen instead as the necessary continuation of a historic political and economic order that happens to cause starvation and destitution for certain classes of people. The fourth and final conception of famine considered is that it may in fact be a crime that is perpetrated by specific individuals or groups in society – that famine is in fact *inflicted* on particular groups by parties that should be held accountable for a famine crime (Alex de Waal, 2008; Marcus, 2003).

During the coding process, various clusters of famine understandings were coded for, with each cluster surveying for evidence of one of the particular famine framings being evaluated.

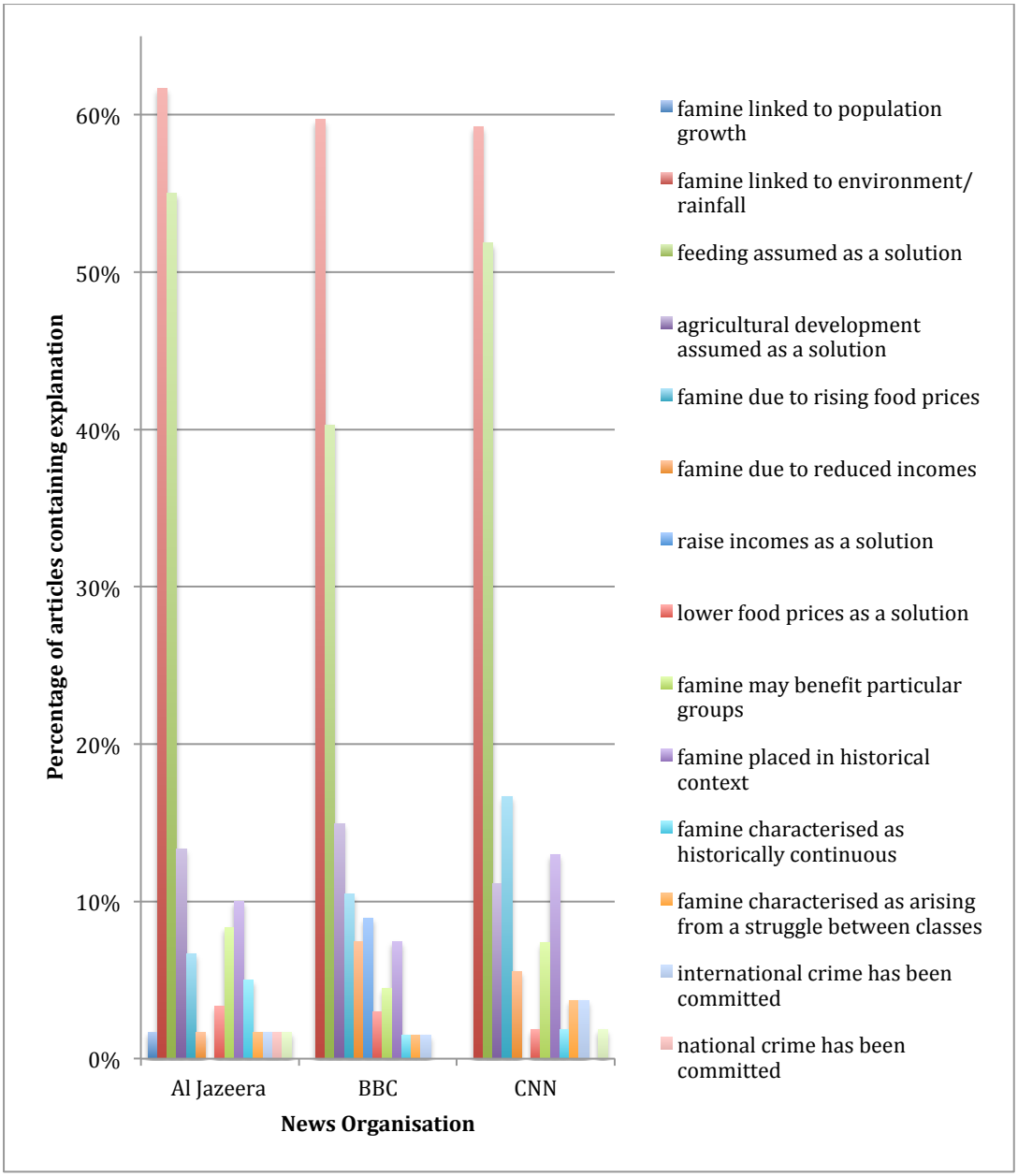

FIGURE 6: TYPES OF EXPLANATION REFLECTED IN COVERAGE

Figure 6 illustrates the percentages of the total coverage in each organisation that contained these various explanations of the Somalia famine (relative to that organisation's total coded coverage of the famine). From left to right, the first quintuple of understandings survey for elements of the Malthusian understanding, the second quintuple for elements of Sen's economic conception, the third for a critical conception, and the final three items seek evidence of a crime-oriented characterization of the famine.

A preference for Malthusian logic

What should be immediately clear from Figure 6 is the overwhelming characterization of the famine as having environmental causes, with emergency feeding as the primary solution. There is, in addition, a limited characterization of the famine in economic or critical terms, and almost no explicit characterisation of any party having committed a crime in causing or prolonging the famine – this despite articles describing how the militia group Al Shabaab actively worked to prevent starving and destitute communities reaching aid, and obstructing the flows of assistance from humanitarian organisations, including the World Food Program. Al Jazeera linked the famine to drought and/or rainfall in 62% of all sampled articles, while the BBC and CNN followed closely, with 60% and 59% of all sampled content linking the famine to rainfall and drought.

Though the Malthusian paradigm clearly predominates in how the famine's causes are described and specific solutions (feeding, in particular) endorsed, it is also interesting to note which elements of this understanding are conspicuously de-emphasised. Nature acting as a check on population growth – in the classic Malthusian model – is only half of the overall tension that results in famine. The other factor, of growth of the human population beyond the carrying capacity of the environment, is notably absent from all but one article in the entire sample. This is almost certainly due to it being socially unacceptable to characterize the famine as being in any way caused by Somalis exceeding the carrying capacity of their environment[21].

Also notable was that whilst emergency feeding was frequently mentioned in articles as an assumed solution to the crisis, only 10 – 15% of articles made reference to the development of Somali agriculture as being part of an appropriate long-term response to the problem. This overwhelming focus on feeding is understandable in the context of there being an immediate crisis in food availability, but does also indicate an attitude of 'short-termism' in the kind of response to the famine that is being articulated. In particular, while emergency feeding is most certainly an important component of the famine relief response, it need not be reflected in media reports characterising 'what needs to be done' to the exclusion of a

[21] Though it should be noted, as an aside, that many reader comments on particular articles had no hesitation in making this link in fairly offensive terms. Furthermore, Plaut – in interview – commented similarly, to the effect that whether Somalia can in fact sustain its human and animal population is an obvious question that is too incorrect to be asked.

discussion around medium- and long-term interventions. That is to say that the focus on short-term solutions and the relative de-emphasis of longer term needs is a *choice* on the part of the journalists, editors and news organisations more broadly. This is particularly important when considering that agricultural assistance to Somalia, and other medium-term requirements[22], are important to ensuring that famine does not return. This is information that would be important to communicate to domestic audiences from whom the assistance for such programs may come.

In terms of the economic understandings of famine, there is evidence across the various news organisations that rising food prices and a decline in the purchasing power of many Somalis had a role in famine. CNN did particularly well in highlighting the issue of rising food prices compared to the other networks (in 17% of articles, with Al Jazeera incorporating this understanding the least (7% of sampled articles). Furthermore, while the various organisations paid a certain level of attention to mentioning economic causes of the famine in rising prices and declining incomes of many Somalis[23], less attention is given to market-based responses to the famine, such as attempting to reduce the price of food, or increase the purchasing power of those affected. The exception to this is the frequency with which the BBC mentioned raising incomes[24] as one potential solution to the issue – though this was generally via a discussion about ensuring a longer-term recovery through agricultural development, rather than as an abnormal intervention in market systems such as subsidized food vouchers, for example. It would be an interesting question – beyond the scope of this research – to examine whether a lack of focus on market-distorting interventions (such as food and agricultural input subsidies) may reflect a prevailing neoliberal idea that markets themselves should not be the subject of development interventions, only the lives of individual victims.

There was generally little coverage of the famine in critical terms. While the history of Somalia was frequently cited in articles, this was often little more than a piece of boilerplate

---

[22] Such as stability, the rule of law, basic infrastructure, etc.

[23] As mentioned earlier, CNN made a link to rising prices in 17% of sampled coverage, while Al Jazeera did so in 7% of cases, and the BBC did so in 10%. Reduced incomes were mentioned in 7% of sampled articles by the BBC, 6% of those by CNN and only 2% of those by Al Jazeera.

[24] 9% of sampled coverage, compared to 0% in the sampled coverage of CNN and Al Jazeera.

text on the collapse of Siad Barre's state in 1992, the lawlessness that followed, and the difficulty and danger of the country for aid groups attempting relief operations. This is why the coding results reflect a relatively high incidence of the famine being 'placed in a historical context'[25], yet much lower scores for more explicitly critical understandings of the famine as a political/historical event affecting various classes differently[26]. Again, provide quantitative percentages

Finally, there is little discussion of the famine being the criminal responsibility of any particular party, either directly or negligently. This is an interesting finding, given that there certainly appears to have been a *prima facie* case for such allegations against Al Shabaab for their reported actions in denying food assistance to civilian populations and restricting their attempts to reach aid stations. Insofar as laying siege to and starving civilian populations can be considered to be a crime (Marcus, 2003), Al Shabaab would be worthy of at least being *accused* of having committed such. Equally, alleged large-scale plundering of food aid intended for its citizens by the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia could well constitute gross negligence in the face of a clear threat of starvation for which they bear a responsibility to respond adequately. Nevertheless, such behaviour was characterized as being a possible international crime in only four instances, and as a crime in the abstract in two. Asked about the lack of holding Al Shabaab to account in the BBC coverage, Plaut gave the following explanation:

> …you are absolutely right. There was less on that. And there are a number of reasons for that. The first is frequently we were told, off the record, in background, what was actually going on with Al Shabaab. But if we put it out, it would be clear where the information was from, since there was only one aid agency there, and their people could be killed or they'd have to leave the area. Now, would you like responsibility for, you know, another ten thousand people starving just because you put out an explanation saying that Al Shabaab were a bunch of bastards? (16 January 2013)

---

[25] Famine was placed in a historical context in 13% of sampled CNN content, 10% of sampled Al Jazeera content, and 7% of BBC content.

[26] Famine descriptions were coded as drawing attention to the fact that it may benefit particular groups in 8% of sampled Al Jazeera content, 7% of sampled CNN content and 4% of sampled BBC content. Framing struggles during famine as occurring between groups or classes of people occurred in only 4% of sampled CNN content, 2% of sampled Al Jazeera content and 1% of BBC content.

This explanation is important, because it points out that the BBC was not unaware of the possibility of representing Al Shabaab's actions as criminal, but that it chose not to do so out of concern for the effect that doing so would have on victims (or the aid agency workers, according to Plaut) in the region. It is not the case that journalists could not see the actions, to some extent, as abhorrent and criminal. They were simply unable to ethically draw attention to them as such. This is an important constraint to consider, since it prevents increased advocacy of the famine-as-justice paradigm in a way that cannot simply be overcome by a change of journalistic paradigm. If famine reporting in instances such as this is to name specific groups as being responsible for faminogenic behaviour while (or shortly after) they are committing it, then there is a high potential cost to be paid.

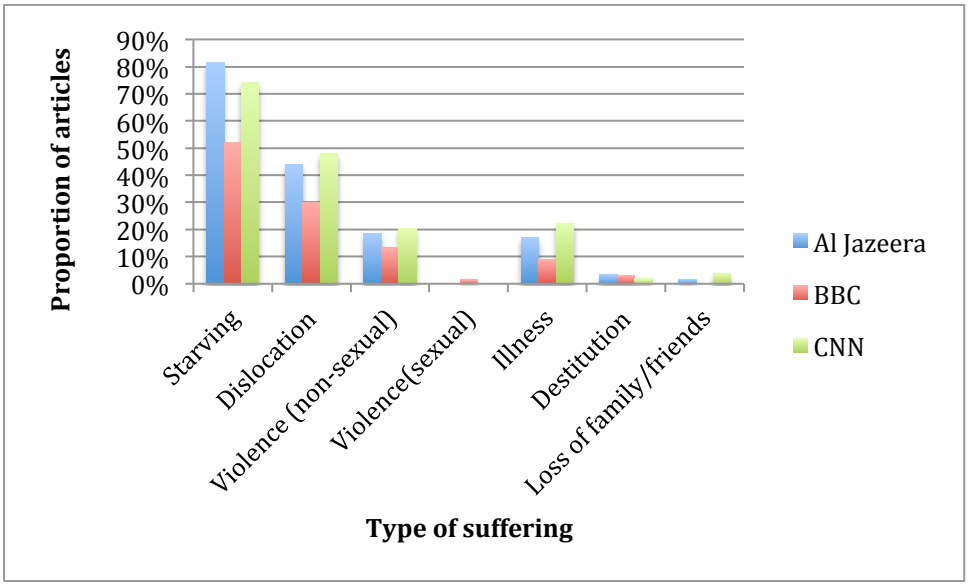

FIGURE 7: CHARACTERIZATION OF SUFFERING

Representation of suffering

The suffering of those affected by the famine in Somalia is characterized primarily as starvation, and displacement – generally in terms of relocation from homes to various aid camps. The on-going threat of (non-sexual) violence and illness emerge clearly as secondary considerations, while scant attention is given to processes such as the destitution and impoverishment of families who have often had to bankrupt themselves in order to obtain sufficient funds to eat or journey to aid stations.

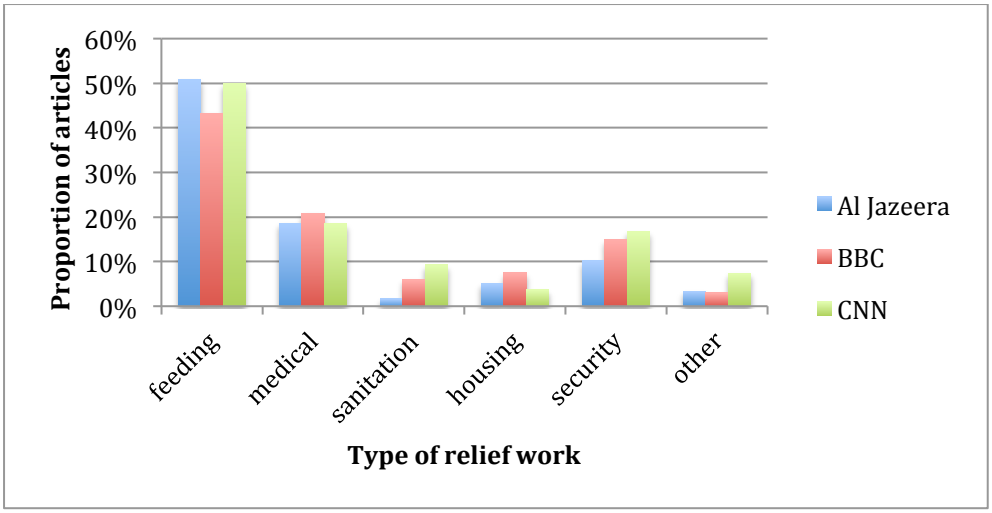

FIGURE 8: TYPES OF RELIEF WORK MENTIONED IN COVERAGE

It is worth noting that significantly less attention is given to the risk of illnesses as a cause of death, given that easily-spread diseases such as cholera and measles may often make huge contributions to overall famine death tolls when introduced to refugee camps. Indeed, a key element of saving lives during a famine is the work done by groups such as MSF to arrest the spread of such epidemics, yet this aspect of famine alleviation receives much less attention compared to emphases on hunger. This observation appears to validate the earlier observation that the famine is understood in overwhelmingly Malthusian food/environment terms. When this is the dominant explanation of the issue, stories of starvation and the migration of individuals to available feeding stations more easily make sense and reinforce this paradigm than stories of measles and cholera management. Figure 8 reinforces that this trend is present not only in terms of the kinds of victim suffering described in the articles, but also in terms of the kinds of aid/relief work that is mentioned. Feeding operations and challenges to the effective delivery of food predominate over medical interventions.

What is further conspicuous in the accounts of suffering is the near-complete absence of accounts of how one of a famine's most devastating effects is to destitute households who may sacrifice valuable long-term economic assets such as cattle or farming implements in exchange for short-term access to food[27]. Unlike starvation and disease, processes of destitution serve to create long-term problems for households who find themselves unable to

[27] Either directly, or by selling assets for cash to fund sending family members to refugee camps and feeding stations.

fully recover from a famine and resume previous levels of production. Such processes are both serious and essential to address if food (and economic) insecurity is to be ameliorated in the medium to long-term. That accounts of this process are virtually absent from coverage of the famine again highlights what appears to be a short-term preference by these organisations for explaining what emergency measures should be implemented to prevent this specific famine, to the exclusion of any discussion on what is required to prevent it reoccurring. It is worth pointing out, once again, that the two understandings are not mutually exclusive. An article could conceivably address mass starvation whilst also reflecting on the inevitable problems that destitution will create for future food security – yet this is not done.

Al Jazeera as a critical alternative media?

It is worth pointing out at this juncture that there appears to be no significant evidence whatsoever that the understandings communicated in the coverage of the Somalia famine by Al Jazeera were in any way significantly more critical than those provided by the 'mainstream' CNN and BBC. Al Jazeera neither promoted additional frames significantly more, nor de-emphasised traditional understandings of famine as being overwhelmingly caused by environmental issues and requiring emergency feeding as a response.

It is worth noting that 45%[28] of sampled articles on Al Jazeera English are credited as either 'Al Jazeera and Agencies', or simply as 'agency' copy, which may go some way to explaining why the coverage is not particularly unique in its framing. Where an organisation like Al Jazeera is significantly dependent on wire service copy for its coverage, it will be difficult to highlight different issues to what is present in such material already. And where such material is being used similarly by competing organisations, a high degree of coherence in framing is to be expected. In a sense, just as news organisations may limit the possibilities for their audiences to understand remote events, wire services may in turn limit the variety of on-the-ground perspectives that news organisations themselves can publish when they do not have their own staff covering a story. The effects of wire service copy in limiting the range of perspectives between supposedly diverse news organisations (as a liberal pluralist model of

[28] 27 of 59 articles. CNN has wire credits for 31% of sampled copy, while the BBC's author attribution was generally too ambiguous to determine attribution.

public media would imagine) would likely be an interesting area of future research – though beyond the scope of this project.

5.3 SEEN, BUT NOT HEARD. VICTIMS, VOICES AND REPRESENTATION

Probably the most interesting finding in this research was that there appears to be an overwhelming preference for images of famine victims (though generally departing from previous histories of gratuitous famine iconography) combined with a universal silencing of victims' voices. There is also compelling evidence for preference being given to government, UN and NGO/humanitarian sources over the voices of victims, effectively soliciting the viewpoints of everyone involved in the famine except for those affected by it.

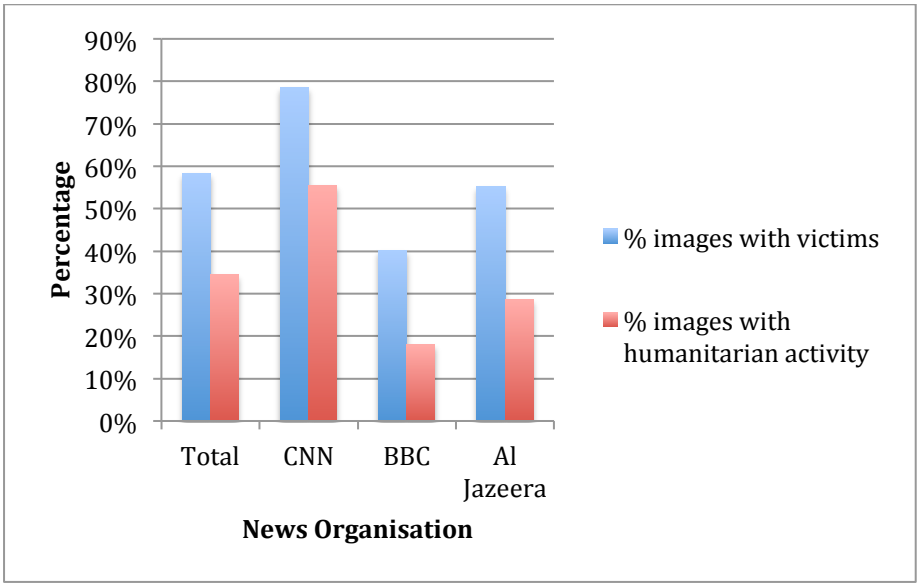

FIGURE 9: PROPORTION OF IMAGES IN ARTICLES SHOWING HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITY AND PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THE FAMINE (VICTIMS)

As Figure 9 illustrates, representations of victims of famine are reasonably prevalent across the coverage sampled, though CNN showed a much greater preference for images of victims (79% of all images) than was the case for BBC (40%) or Al Jazeera (55%). This is due in large part to CNN including a generic photo gallery of a dozen primarily victim and humanitarian images[29] in multiple articles on the famine, thereby distorting the sample as this gallery was

[29] An example of the gallery can be found at http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/08/01/somalia.famine.fighting/index.html

counted as part of each article on which it appeared, thereby weighting the overall counts of victim and humanitarian imagery towards the proportions contained in the photo gallery.

It should still be noted, however, that the photo gallery was not included on all, or even most of the articles sampled. It featured in only 8 of the 54 articles sampled, but added 12 images to the overall tally on each occasion, thereby dominating the count. Removing instances of this photo gallery from the survey reduces the overall percentage of images containing recognizable victims to around 44% - in line with the proportions on Al Jazeera and the BBC. Even with this adjustment, however, all of the organisations under study would have around 40-50% of images containing depictions of famine-affected individuals. Though clearly significant proportions, it is interesting to observe that these percentages are lower than might be expected were the media truly guilty of depicting the suffering of those affected in a gratuitous manner. If it was indeed the case that masses of images of the starving and helpless once characterized famine coverage, the evidence from this study suggests that this may be the case much less now.

What should also be pointed out is that 'images of victims' in this context refers to any photograph of individuals who would reasonably appear to form part of the group of people affected negatively by the famine – i.e. refugee populations, those engaged in migration to camps, pastoralists, people receiving medical attention, etc. While instances of classic 'starving skeleton' images would count towards this total, instances of relatively better-nourished individuals who were clearly refugees, for example, would be counted too. Indeed, though no specific coding was done to differentiate between the archetypal 'starving skeleton' image and images of people who are not clearly suffering an immediate medical emergency, gratuitous famine imagery of the kind popularized in the past generally constituted a minority of the images sampled. Which is not to say that those depicted as victims did not frequently appear in need, but that medically shocking images echoing previous famine tropes are generally absent[30]. Insofar as the media was once guilty of grossly exploiting the dignity of those suffering in famines, the imagery from the Somalia famine appears to be a shift away from such traditions.

[30] A good example of this is in fact the photo essay on CNN mentioned earlier (http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/08/01/somalia.famine.fighting/index.html)

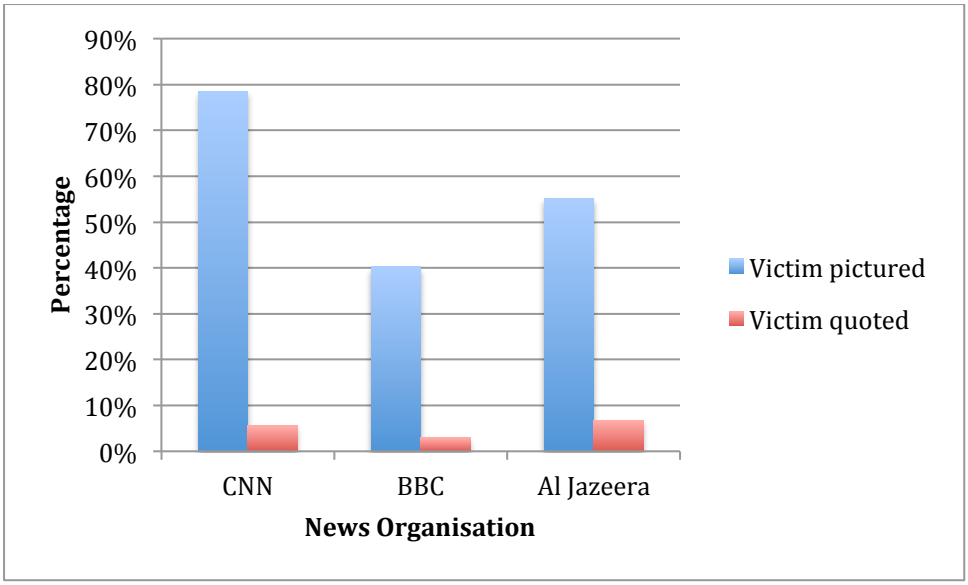

FIGURE 10: DEPICTIONS OF VICTIMS VS THEIR USE AS SOURCES

Voice and Representation

What is most intriguing about the manner in which victims have been treated is the unambiguous preference across all of the organisations studied for using their images, but silencing their voices (Figure 10). Though victims constitute the primary, or at least significant incidental subjects of a great deal of the imagery used by news organisations in their coverage, they are almost never quoted directly about their needs, challenges or thoughts on the famine and responses to it.

Asked about this phenomenon during the interview, Plaut's response is revealing in explaining the mechanics of how this may occur:

> Don't be fooled/ just because we've got a photograph of somebody doesn't mean that we've been there. I mean, I've written lots of pieces, from London, using photographs provided by Reuters or AFP, who are on the ground. I've spoken to MSF, Oxfam. I've spoken to my colleagues at the Somali service, who've told me that this is true, this is what they're hearing, and so forth and so on. But the actual photograph... I might have done the report from London, bringing together these sources, speaking to these people. But I'm not on the ground. I mean most of the information that we get is in that kind of, slightly second hand way. But as long as we are sure that it's true. (16 January 2013)

For the images of victims to have been taken, it seems plausible to assume that a photographer was physically present in front of the individuals pictured, and that this person – if they did not speak a local language – most likely had a fixer/translator with them during at least some of their stay (as is frequently standard practice). It would seem reasonable, therefore, that the journalist would have at least been *capable* of obtaining information, points of view and other quotations from those directly affected by the famine in more than 3 – 6% of the articles surveyed. Yet somewhere along the chain of publication from that photographer/journalist to the person compiling the story as it appears online, those photographed were either not asked for their point of view, or it was solicited but not included. Plaut's account of seeking quotes from local voices during the Somalia famine suggests both that such content was valued, but generally either absent, difficult to have translated, untrustworthy or potentially damaging to the source:

> It can be quite dangerous, because then the BBC is quoting this person in a particular location as saying something. The people in that location can see it and think, "hang on. What. You said this?" So they can get into trouble. So you've got to be careful about that. (16 January, 2013)

And, in response to a question asking whether wire services routinely provided local quotes:

> Sometimes they do and sometimes they don't. I mean it's not as if we're boycotting them. After all, if a journalist there has put in a quote – can you be sure that he's got it right? (16 January, 2013)

Taken together, the data from the content analysis points to a profound silencing of victim's voices relative to their images, while Plaut's experience of the newsgathering processes during the famine suggest that this effect has a number of causes (absence from wire copy, reliability, translation and safety), present both at the time of quote gathering (absence from wire copy and reliability) and later, in the process of compiling and writing the story (translation and safety of sources). It is an effect that is not centred simply on the failings of an in-the-field journalist, but which can be caused or exacerbated by legitimate concerns for the safety of a source and the practical difficulty of getting accurate translations under time constraints.

This understanding, of course, prompts the question that if the accounts of those affected by the famine are not being given space, whose accounts are?

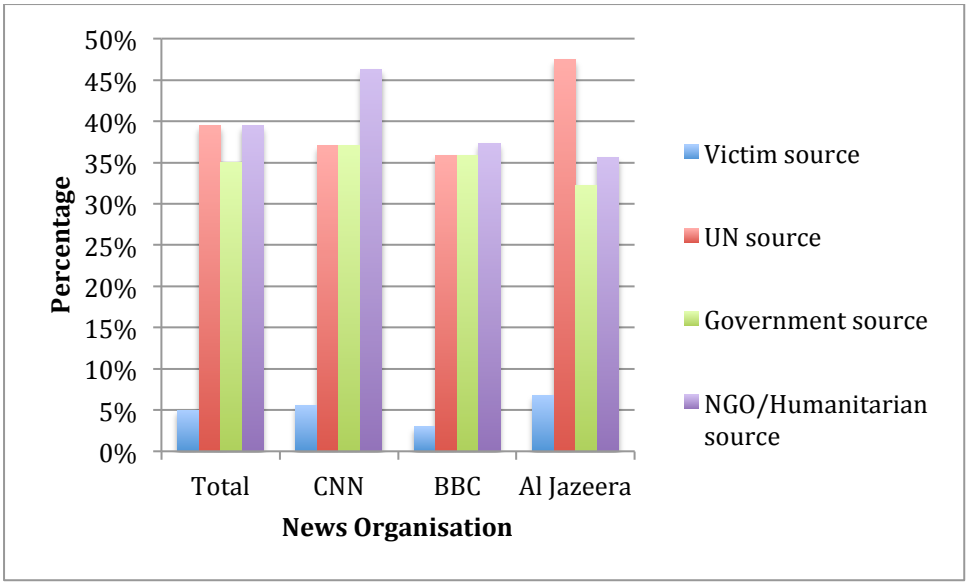

FIGURE 11: SOURCE PREFERENCES IN COVERAGE OF THE FAMINE

Figure 11 answers this question quite clearly. The dominant sources in the coverage sampled are a mixture of the United Nations, sources from governments (including the African Union, in this study) and organisations involved in relief work. Victims trail far behind these sources.

In the case of copy assembled by the BBC in London, it is worth revisiting Plaut's account of the article-writing process:

> I've written lots of pieces, from London, using photographs provided by Reuters or AFP, who are on the ground. I've spoken to MSF, Oxfam. I've spoken to my colleagues at the Somali service, who've told me that this is true, this is what they're hearing, and so forth and so on. (16 January, 2013)

The humanitarian organisations are, in effect, used as a kind of apparatus for the verification of facts reported from wire services and the Somali desk. This is quite possibly the point at which their voices enter the account of the famine. This is a nuanced observation, since discussions of *accessibility* as a news value in chapter 2 had assumed that humanitarian agencies would gain a voice in the reporting through the facilitation of travel to affected areas and structuring of the journalist's activities there. In the case of the BBC, though, Plaut explains that there is a very specific code of conduct towards resisting such undue influence:

> The BBC has very strict guidelines… let's say Oxfam wants this story covered and says 'we will pay for your flights'. We would not accept that. The BBC would not accept that. But, we might say to Oxfam 'look, we will pay. We will pay our hotels. We'll go. But if you're going to be there and you can facilitate us, you can maybe put us in contact with

> your people and perhaps provide a Landrover and we will pay some of the petrol…', yeah, that we would do. So we would work with these people… (16 January, 2013)

If elite voices were to only be included in news stories as the outcomes of such shared travel and first-hand, in-the-field encounters, this would not account for the overwhelming presence of senior elite voices – ministers, the secretary general or directors and coordinators of humanitarian NGOs. The elite-voice dividend appears to pay out not by giving field representatives of elites a greater voice in news articles, but by ensuring that the organisations' offices back in London and New York are consulted during the course of verifying facts and soliciting opinion on the facts discovered by the news organisations' local bureaus and wire services. They are included because they are perceived to be knowledgeable about the famine, not (directly) because they were present with the journalist when they were gathering news. Though, to a great extent, whether they will be contacted by a BBC journalist writing a story at a desk in London will, obviously, depend on whether they are present in the affected area in general.

As has been argued in chapter 2, the photographability of a famine is an essential news value, since without images of individuals clearly affected by starvation, it is difficult to credibly assert that a famine is taking place. Under this assumption, it becomes absolutely imperative to collect images of victims, impoverishment and suffering in order to assert the reality that a famine is happening. Once a famine has been credibly illustrated to in fact exist, however, it must then be *explained*. Why did it occur? What should be done to alleviate it? How can readers help?

In answering these questions, victims may be perceived as having little to contribute out of their local knowledge as compared to the strategic perspectives of larger, more powerful actors in the crises – the governments and UN who are able to raise the giant sums of money required to assist, and the NGOs who lay claim to technical knowledge of how best to intervene. As a result, victims are valuable as tools for illustrating the *fact* of a famine, but are ironically considered irrelevant to *understanding* it. Frequently and dramatically pictured as individuals, they are then reduced to an anonymous population that requires assistance from those who are intellectually and technically able to understand the problem of their famine. Though it is once more beyond the scope of this research project, a full account of the ways in which this imaging-then-silencing process works to affirm the importance of particular

biopolitical discourses of humanitarian assistance would likely prove fascinating[31]. Is this silencing a conscious decision on the part of journalists or editors? Or does it manifest through some alternative process in how journalists frequently broker access to these landscapes via elite organisations?

5.4 The effect of a dedicated correspondent on famine framing

It is clear from an examination of coverage frames above that the Malthusian frame dominates other possible understandings of the famine's causes and required solutions, but it remains to be asked by what process particular frames come to be more frequent than others in the news coverage. While the answer is certain to be a complex mix of factors, one which we may tentatively explore from the data available is the degree to which a knowledgeable local correspondent may be able to explain the famine from a wider range of perspectives than would be possible through a reliance on freelancers and wire copy alone.

If it were indeed the case that having a dedicated correspondent made for richer and more critical understandings of famine, then we would expect to see the body of coverage generated by such an individual deviating away from the Malthus-centric frames of their organisation overall, and towards a noticeably more critical series of understandings. The sampled coverage in the case of Al Jazeera and CNN generally consists of copy either credited to wire services, or written by journalists with too few bylines individually to have a reasonable sample of work on the Somalia famine to be analysed. In the case of the BBC, however, their Africa correspondent Andrew Harding had written eleven pieces in total on the famine during the period under consideration (16% of the total BBC sample). This provides a limited opportunity to see whether his coverage, taken in isolation, provides a more varied and critical account of the famine than that given by the organisation's coverage on average.

[31] Edkins(2000a) has previously explored the idea that humanitarian interventions are designed - in many cases – to reduce those being assisted to a position of 'bare life' in the biopolitical sense. This imaging-then-silencing practice would support this assertion. The suffering of the victims is imaged in order to give authority to those humanitarian organisations who will subsequently anonymise them.

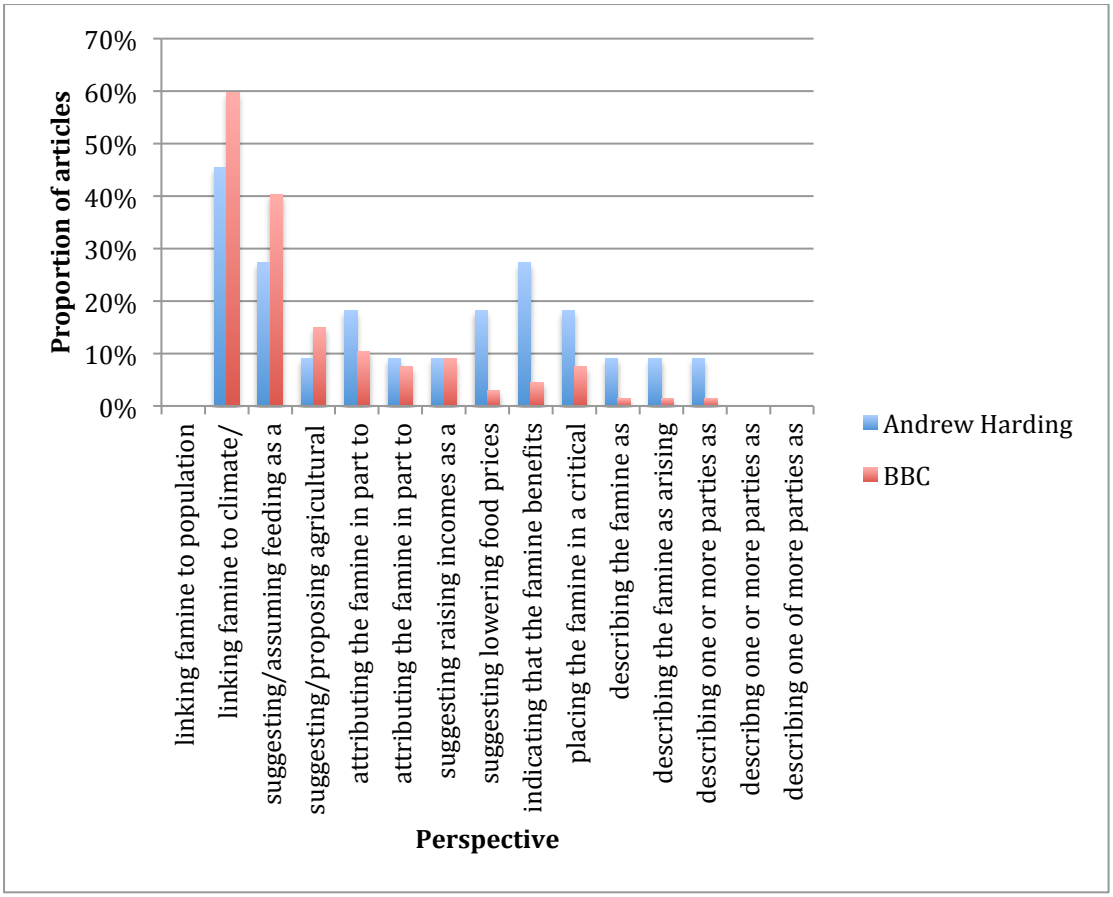

FIGURE 12: FAMINE UNDERSTANDINGS GIVEN BY THE BBC AND ITS AFRICA CORREPONDENT ANDREW HARDING

Interestingly enough, this comparison indeed reveals a noticeable difference between the understandings of the famine given by the dedicated correspondent over the general coverage mix of wire service and other material on the BBC. Though Harding also emphasizes the Malthusian perspective, he does so significantly less than is the case in the BBC coverage more broadly. He also represents critical ideas about the famine far more than the organisation-wide coverage does.

The sizes of the article samples considered in this evaluation are unfortunately small enough that this may simply be an anomaly, and there are insufficient bodies of work from other correspondents on the other networks being sampled to provide a second or third attempt at verifying this pattern. Nevertheless, it holds to reason that a dedicated correspondent more familiar with the issue would be able to provide more informed and critical coverage. It would be worthy of further investigation to determine the value of correspondents (over wire services and stringers, for example) in providing a wider range of more critical interpretations of issues such as famine.

5.5 THE NEWS VALUES OF FAMINE

Next, we turn to analysing how far the news values of *negativity*, *photographability* and *accessibility* of the famine may be valid in explaining the types of articles written. In the case of each, where the news value has influenced the content of the article, we would expect to find, *inter alia*, examples of the writer reflecting on the scale of the disaster, using photographic images, and crediting some of the organisational sources that assisted in brokering their access to famine-related information.

5.5.1 NEGATIVITY

In the case of the *negativity* news value, the content analysis surveyed for the most obvious example of reflecting on the suffering present in a famine – an estimate of the likely death toll. Such information, even if conjectural, would be a centrepiece of any article intent on asserting the terrible effects of the famine.

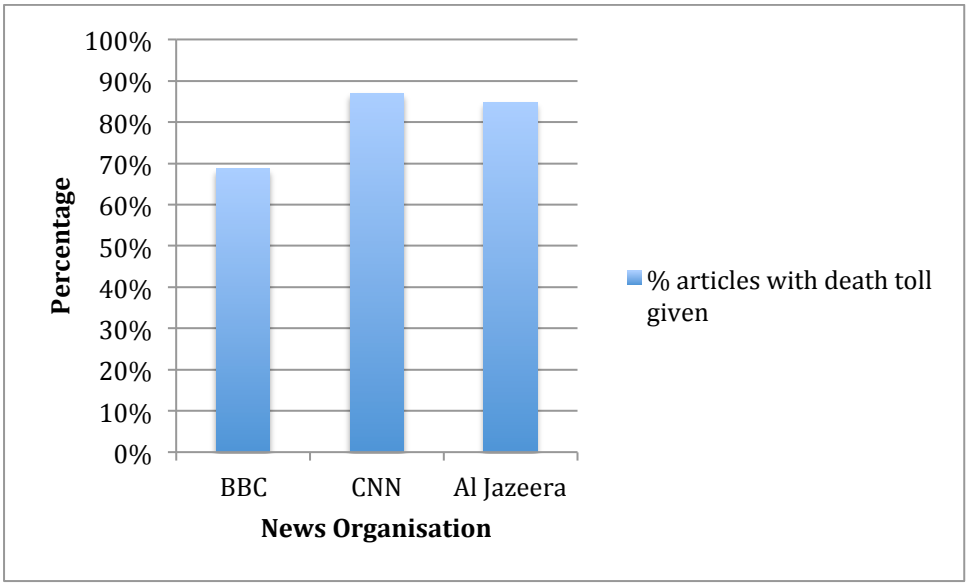

FIGURE 13: PERCENTAGE OF ARTICLES WHERE A DEATH TOLL FIGURE IS GIVEN

As Figure 13 unsurprisingly confirms, almost 70% of all articles dealing with the famine make reference to a death toll, whether informed by official figures of some kind, or simply vaguely conjectured (e.g. "the worst drought in 60 years has thrown some 13 million people across the Horn of Africa into crisis"[32])

[32] http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/faultlines/2011/11/201111271473753430.html

5.5.2 *PHOTOGRAPHABILITY*

As reflected in Figure 9, images of the famine-affected and humanitarian operations compose relatively large proportions of the photographs included in stories relating to the famine. But what of the overall percentages of articles which have a picture at all? I.e. How important does including an image with an article appear to be?

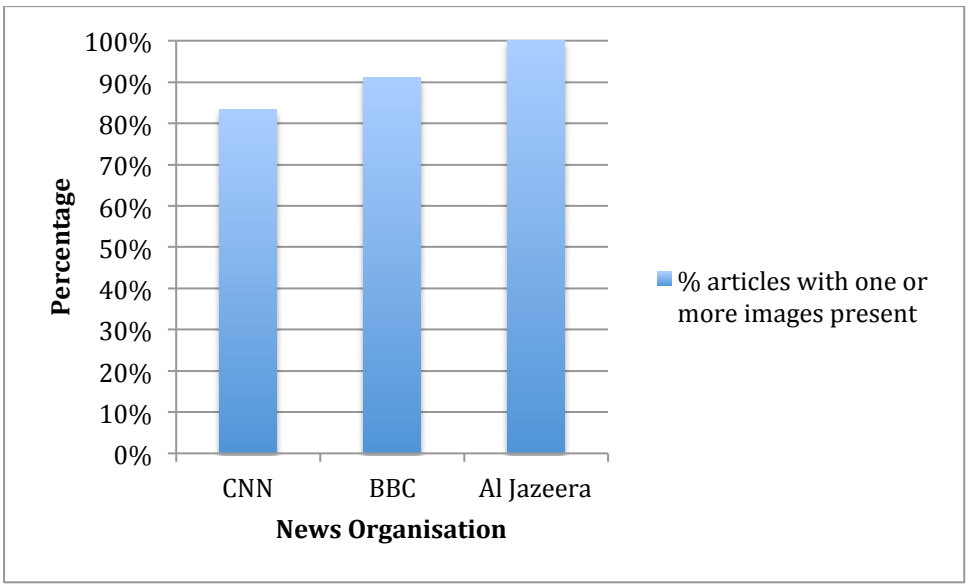

FIGURE 14: PERCENTAGE OF ARTICLES WHERE ONE OR MORE IMAGES ARE PRESENT

As Figure 14 illustrates, fully 80 to 100% of articles across the three networks included at least one image accompanying a famine-related story[33]. The presence of photographs in famine coverage therefore appears to be as important as reflecting on the negativity of the event in the text.

5.5.3 *ACCESSIBILITY*

The final news value under consideration is that of the accessibility of the famine to the media – measured in terms of the frequency of specialist sources appearing in reports on the famine, and used to explain the causes and scope of the disaster and relief efforts. As reflected on in chapter 2, *accessibility* is a much broader concept than simply the use of humanitarian and other elite sources by journalists covering the famine, but other forms of non-source assistance (such as logistical help in reaching aid stations and other areas) do not

[33] It should be pointed out, for the purposes of coding, that embedded video in an article was coded as an image with an initial, clickable screen that displayed subject matter relating to the famine (e.g. a feeding station, victims, humanitarian activity, etc) then it was coded as an 'image'.

necessarily leave measurable traces in the reporting. Using NGOs as sources, thanks to journalistic tradition, frequently results in them being credited as such.

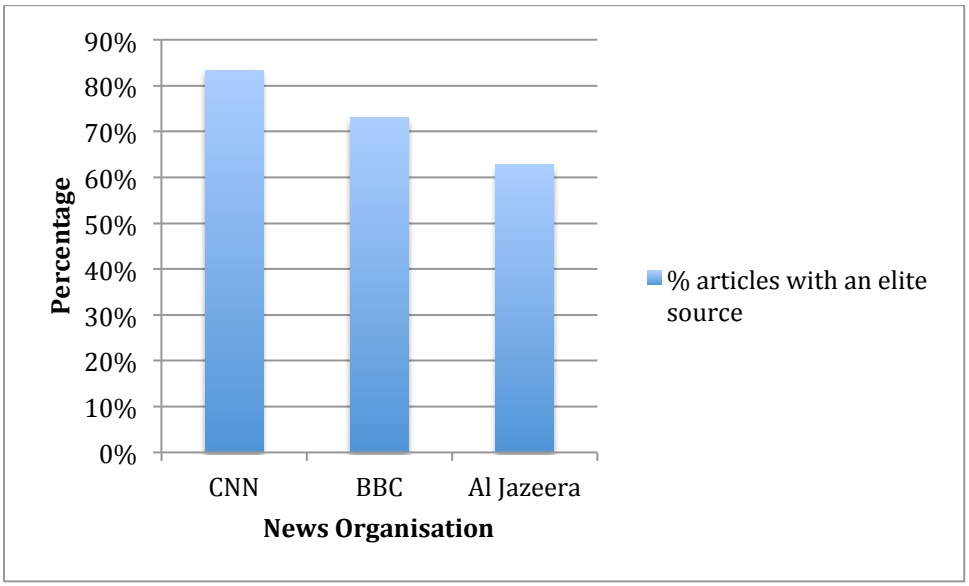

FIGURE 15: PERCENTAGE OF ARTICLES IN WHICH AN ELITE (GOVERNMENT, UN, OR HUMANITARIAN NGO) SOURCE IS INCLUDED

Once again, we can see the importance of such sources to the famine coverage (Figure 15). Fully 63 – 83% of all articles quoted one or more of UN, government or humanitarian NGO sources in the text. Figures 16 – 18 illustrate this breakdown in finer detail, with UN and government sources having by far the largest presence as sources speaking about the famine. Victims, as reflected on earlier, are a minority of sources.

5.5.4 Understanding the news value data

It is clear that the coverage of the Somalia famine favoured highlighting negativity, the use of photographic images, and the use of elite sources in governments, the UN and humanitarian NGOs. It is important, however, to understand these phenomena as being evidence of the preferred manner of explaining the Somalia famine and as *contributing*, though not *definitive* factors in promoting an interest in the event by the media.

Plaut, in his earlier account of how the story of the Somalia famine came to be news, comments that "in Somalia you tell me a time when it isn't looking bad" – pointing to the obvious truth that the news value of negativity could well have been fulfilled prior to the famine. The history of the country is such that it is not hard to find stories of death, destitution or violence. So too would it have been with photographic images. The massive Somali refugee camp at Dadaab in Kenya is the largest in the world, and given the slow-onset

nature of famine would have afforded photographs of the famine's growing effects far earlier than when the issue became a story. Similarly, the presence of humanitarian NGOs in Dadaab and Mogadishu dates back over a decade, making them more than able to assist in providing access to the region's stories or give expert commentary. Indeed, as Plaut explains, they are overzealous in providing such information, if anything:

> They are always sending me stuff and phoning me up and saying 'this is a big story'. And ninety percent of the time, we don't even read the emails. You don't have time. I mean, literally, when I was sitting there I would get a hundred emails a day… Unless they were really interesting, you would hit the delete button as fast as you possibly can. (16 January, 2013)

The point of these observations is that the news values of negativity, accessibility and photographability all predate the start of the famine coverage. While their overwhelming inclusion in the content of the famine-related articles indicates their importance to explaining the famine to readers, they were not the deciding factor in transforming the event from 'not a story', to 'a story'. They appear to be necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for making the famine news. Hawkins (2001) has observed this effect on a grand scale in the case of the on-going violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for which access, photographs and negativity are present to significant degrees, yet which consistently fails to become a major news focus in the manner of the famine in Somalia.

It is clear, therefore, that while these news values were important in structuring the kind of story that was told about the famine, they were not the deciding factor. To determine what served to create the news story where it didn't before, we must turn to Figure 2 once more and, in the face of the sudden explosion of coverage, ask what news value was gained on mid-July 2011 that provoked such heavy coverage where practically none had existed before? Here, as discussed at the beginning of this section, we find ourselves confronted with the UN declaration of famine in Somalia. Whatever news values were present (and, the evidence suggests, necessary for coverage) in the story, it was not until the UN press conference named the famine as such that it became an official media 'event'.

What happened here comports inelegantly with existing news values. The UN announcement was not unexpected (the famine was generally known about in advance), and the negativity, photographability and accessibility of the issue did not somehow shift suddenly. Of the original news values posited by Galtung & Ruge (1965), only that of the implications for elite nations seems to have plausibly changed significantly in the wake of the UN announcement of famine. Given the history of UK and US involvement in famine relief in the horn of Africa, the

UN announcement may have in effect triggered a historically present sense obligation on the part of elite nations. That is to say that naming the famine as such created discursive conditions under which those governments now needed to respond to it in some fashion. If this (somewhat cynical) reasoning is indeed correct, then the media attention that such famines receive appears not to be brought about by the level of suffering, nor the ease with which it can be accessed, imaged and described, but by the occurrence of an event that requires a response from local elites (home governments, in this case). Though all the rest are necessary, none but the elite trigger is capable of producing a mass news event. In this regard, the history of the Eastern DRC conflict as photographable, describable, accessible and terrible – yet largely not an issue requiring a response from the UK and US governments – is instructive.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

As is perhaps the nature of any research project with such a range of data points, there will always be further questions that could be asked, or deeper discussions of interesting phenomena for which there is insufficient space. That said, this project has attempted to at least identify and address - to the extent possible - some of the most interesting quantitative and qualitative findings emerging from a content analysis of the 2011-12 famine in Somalia.

It is clear from the analysis of photography and sources in the famine coverage that while those most affected by such an event may be extensively pictured, their voices are, almost without exception, replaced by those of government and humanitarian elites who endeavour to explain the situation on their behalf. Equally, it is evident from the data that particular explanatory paradigms dominate media explanations of what causes a famine, and that the Malthusian ideas of drought and food scarcity occupy a disproportionate weight compared to more critical paradigms, or those which might seek to classify famine as a potentially criminal act.

In this regard, it has been the object of this study to understand *how* the famine was pictured, rather than seeking to fully explore *why* such reporting came about. To describe the kind of famine causes being described in the belief that such accounts can serve to frame – and thereby limit – home audiences understandings of such remote realities as refugee camps, feeding stations and contemporary Mogadishu might be. Yet despite this initial focus on analysing the quality of the content produced, the fortunate accident of being able to interview a former BBC editor from the Africa desk provided a valuable insight into the processes that give rise to such frames.

Failing to report adequately on issues of criminality by groups such as Al Shabaab appear, in the light of Plaut's first-hand account, to have very little to do with ideological ignorance on the part of reporters and the news organisation as a whole, and far more to do with the very serious potential consequences of such reporting that editors need to grapple with. Equally, a lack of first-hand testimony is a feature with its roots as much in the structure of newsgathering (such as a need for reliable, English-translated content, for example) as in the failure of individual photojournalists to solicit such information when in the field. There is evidence to suggest that a competent, experienced correspondent is able to explain and report on a famine with above-average sophistication, but there are equally limits to how far an under-resourced specialist can contribute to deepening news accounts articles are in many

cases assembled away from the actual story, using wire service images and the narratives of government and NGO elites more readily accessible to news offices places like London and New York.

In addition to questions of the framed content of the Somalia coverage, this research also sought to interrogate the importance of the news values of accessibility, negativity and photographability in making the Somalia famine news. While their overwhelming inclusion as elements of the famine coverage strongly supports the idea that these are key elements to making a famine newsworthy, they also appear to be insufficient alone to trigger media coverage. For this, the occurrence of an elite declaration was needed, possibly because it served to transform the event into one to which home governments suddenly had a responsibility towards (or at minimum were required to give a rhetorical and policy response to).

From the reporting timeline, the link between the UN declaration and the massive surge in media coverage is incontrovertible. Prior to the UN declaration of a famine, little reporting occurred. The next day – and for two months afterwards – it was a massive media event. The application of a quantitative content analysis has served in this case as a remarkably precise instrument for isolating a correlation between media coverage and an elite public event that almost certainly served to enable it. Yet the limits of the technique are exposed in trying to understand quite *how* a UN declaration of famine served to change the perceived facts of the situation such that it became a significant media event. There was no immediate rise in death toll right after the announcement, nor did the situation immediately worsen.

This research has tentatively put forward the explanation that the non-elite news values (including accessibility, photographability and negativity) are necessary, yet not sufficient to provoke a widespread media response to a famine as happened in Somalia. What it suggests is required is a change in the elite-relevance of the event. That is to say that something had to shift in order to make it relevant to local elites – in this case the UN declaration of famine created the discursive conditions under which the US and UK governments were forced to respond. The potentially significant – and newsworthy - link between these governments and the famine was the missing news value that the UN declaration served to create, and out of which media coverage came to explode.

This does, of course, pose questions for future research. As chapter 2 explored, there is a nascent academic consensus that the media may have a role in prompting a government response (of some kind) through its sympathetic reporting of an issue. Yet in this case, the

prompt for governments may not have been media related, but might have come via the actions of another elite (the United Nations), after which the media began heavy coverage and governments and NGO organisations began responding more visibly to the issue. Were it not for the quantitative analysis of coverage over time detecting the correlation between the UN announcement and the media coverage, it would have been tempting to argue that a sudden rise in media coverage prompted a government policy response, rather than observing that the actions of the UN may, in this case, have in fact prompted both. It may be instructive, therefore, to revisit previous incidents where media coverage has 'obviously' exerted an influence on government policy, such as US intervention in Bosnia (Robinson, 2000), to see whether a similar change in elite obligations (such as that arising from a UN declaration) may have preceded both coverage and government response.

Returning to the discussion of the various media frames present in the famine coverage, it would also be of interest in future research to delve further into subjective accounts from practicing journalists, editors and their sources to more completely analyse the matrix of influences that make possible the current preference for a Malthus-oriented explanation of famine. The interview with Martin Plaut was instructive in this regard, as he pointed out that the lack of alternative frames, such as characterizing the actions of Al Shabaab as criminal, was not borne out of the ignorance of the news organisations, but out of a very real fear of the consequences of publishing such reports when relief was on-going, and dependent on the assistance of Al Shabaab. The paucity of more sophisticated framings of the causes of famine may therefore in fact arise from structural factors relating to interactions with (and responsibility to) sources and the perceived impact of particular frames on the task of assisting the affected, and no doubt others. This would be a valuable area of research if the causes of such coverage bias are to be holistically addressed.

It was the grounding assumption of this dissertation that stories matter. That they enable responses to distant suffering, while simultaneously constraining the kinds of responses that can be conceived of. In the case of the Somalia famine of 2011-12, this study has explored both the issues of when coverage happened, and the kind of coverage that occurred. In both cases, there are most clearly factors at work structuring the coverage through which developed world publics came to learn about and understand what was happening in Somalia.

Insofar as critical, complex understandings of such emergencies, delivered as quickly as possible to those who are in a position to assist, remains a worthy goal, this research offers a contribution to its pursuit.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alamgir, M. (1981). An approach towards a theory of famine. *Famine: Its causes, effects and management* (pp. 19–40). London: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers Ltd.

Alexa. (2012). Alexa news site rankings. *Alexa*. Retrieved from http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/cnn.com

Amin, S. (2009). A Misguided Critique of Aid. *Africa Today*, *59*(1), 115–117. Retrieved from http://0-www.jstor.org.wam.seals.ac.za/stable/10.2979/AFT.2009.56.1.115?&Search=yes&searchText=moyo&searchText=dambisa&list=hide&searchUri=/action/doBasicSearch?Query=dambisa+moyo&gw=jtx&acc=on&prq=dead+aid&Search=Search&hp=25&wc=on&prevSearch=&item=1&ttl=12&returnArticleService=showFullText

Ammon, R. J. (2001). *Global television and the shaping of world politics: CNN, telediplomacy, and foreign policy* (p. 200). Jefferson: McFarland & Company Incorporated Publishers.

Autesserre, S. (2012). Dangerous Tales: Dominant Narratives on the Congo and Their Unintended Consequences. *African Affairs*, 1–21. doi:10.1093/afraf/adr080

Barnett, J. (2001). Security and Climate Change. *October*. Canterbury, New Zealand.

Baro, M., & Deubel, T. F. (2006). Persistent Hunger: Perspectives on Vulnerability, Famine, and Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *35*(1), 521–538. doi:10.1146/annurev.anthro.35.081705.123224

Bloch-Elkon, Y., Lehman-Wilzig, S., & Gan, R. (2005). Media , Public Opinion and Foreign Policy in International Crises : An Exploratory Model. *Public Opinion*, 27–31.

Boaz, C. (2005). War and Foreign Policy Framing in International Media. *Peace Review*, *17*(4), 349–356. doi:10.1080/10402650500374603

Brown, P., & Minty, J. (2012). Media Coverage and Charitable Giving after the 2004 Tsunami Media Coverage and Charitable Giving after the 2004 Tsunami. *Southern Economic Journal*, *75*(1), 9–25.

Building, S., & Menkhaus, K. (2007). Governance without Government in the Politics of Coping. *International Security*, *31*(3), 74–106.

Buttel, F. H., Hawkins, A. P., & Power, A. G. (1990). From limits to growth to global change Constraints and contradictions in the evolution of science and ideology. *Global Environmental Change*, 57–66.

Campbell, D. (2011). Thinking Images v.20: Famine iconography as a sign of failure. *Blog*. Retrieved November 28, 2011, from http://www.david-campbell.org/2011/07/16/thinking-images-v-20-famine-iconography-failure/

Carlos, J., Gutiérrez, S., & García, R. R. (2011). African Journalism Studies Assessing the humanitarian framing of the Spanish press coverage of the Darfur crisis. *Ecquid Novi*, *32*(1), 66–81.

Carr, C. (1993). The Consequences of Somalia. *World Policy Journal*, *10*(3), 1.

Clark, D. J. (2009). *Representing the Majority World: famine , photojournalism and the Changing Visual Economy*. *World*. Durham.

Cohen, M. J., & Pinstrup-Andersen. (1999). Food Security and Conflict. *Social Research*, *66*(1), 375–416.

Cottle, S., & Nolan, D. (2007a). Global Humanitarianism and the Changing Aid-Media Field. *Journalism Studies*, *8*(6), 862–878. doi:10.1080/14616700701556104

Cottle, S., & Nolan, D. (2007b). Global Humanitarianism and the Changing Aid-Media Field. *Journalism Studies*, *8*(6), 862–878. doi:10.1080/14616700701556104

Crocker, C. A. (1995). The Lessons of Somalia: Not Everything Went Wrong. *Foreign Affairs*, *74*(3), 2–8.

De Waal, Alex. (2008). On famine crimes and tragedies. *The Lancet*, *372*(9649), 1538–1539. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(08)61641-4

De Waal, Alexander. (1989). *Famine that kills: Dafur, Sudan, 1984 - 1985* (p. 258). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

De Waal, Alexander. (1997). *Famine Crimes: politics & the disaster relief industry in Africa* (p. 238).

Devereux, S. (1993). *Theories of Famine*. *Disasters* (Vol. 67, p. 228). Harvester Wheatsheaf. doi:10.2307/1161457

Devereux, S. (2001). Sen's Entitlement Approach: Critiques and Counter-critiques. *Oxford Development Studies*, *29*(3), 245–263. doi:10.1080/13600810120088859

Devereux, S. (2007). Malawi's first famine, 2001 - 2002. In S. Devereux (Ed.), *The New Famines: Why famines persist in an era of globalization* (1st ed., p. 367). New York.

Devereux, S. (2009). The Malawi Famine of 2002. *Ids Bulletin*, *33*(4), 70–78.

Douma, N. (2005). *White Noise: The issues surrounding the coverage of African Conflicts on Dutch Television*. University of Cardiff. Retrieved from http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/jomec/resources/NynkeDouma_MAIJ2004_2005.pdf

Edkins, J. (2000a). *Whose Hunger? Concepts of Famine, Practices of Aid* (1st ed., p. 236). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Edkins, J. (2000b). Sovereign Power , Zones of Indistinction , and the Camp. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, *25*(1), 3–23.

Edkins, J. (2002). Mass Starvations and the Limitations of Famine Theorising. *Ids Bulletin*, *33*(4), 12–18.

Edkins, J. (2004). “Famines” or “mass starvations”: victims, beneficiaries and perpetrators. *Humanitarian Practice Network*, *44*(27), 6–8. Retrieved from http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-27/famines-or-mass-starvations-victims-beneficiaries-and-perpetrators

Edozie, R. K. (2010). Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How There is a Better Way for Africa New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux/Penguin International; 188 pages, in hardcover/paper-back; price: $24.00. ISBN 9780374139568. *African and Asian Studies*, *9*(1), 191–193. doi:10.1163/156921010X491317

Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of advanced nursing*, *62*(1), 107–15. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, *43*(4), 51–58. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x

FAO. (2005). *IPC reference table - technical guidelines* (p. 24). Retrieved from http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/i0275e/i0275e02.pdf

FAO, USAID, & NET, F. (2011). *Famine in Southern Somalia: Evidence for a declaration*. *Most* (pp. 1–28).

FEWS. (2011). *SOMALIA Food Security Alert Extreme food insecurity likely due to drought and lack of humanitarian response*. *Development* (p. 2010). Retrieved from http://www.fews.net/docs/Publications/SO_alert_2011_03_032111.pdf

Floyd, R. (2008). The Environmental Security Debate and Its Significance for Climate Change. *The International Spectator*.

Franks, S. (2006a). How Famine Captured the Headlines. *Media History*, *12*(3), 291–312. doi:10.1080/13688800601014025

Franks, S. (2006b). Reports and Surveys The CARMA Report : Western Media Coverage of Humanitarian Disasters. *Political Quarterly*, *77*(2), 281–284.

Galtung, J., & Ruge, M. H. (1965). The Structure of Foreign News. *Journal of Peace Research*, *2*(1), 64–91. Retrieved from http://0-www.jstor.org.wam.seals.ac.za/stable/info/423011?&Search=yes&searchUri=/action/doAdvancedSearch?q0=galtung+and+ruge&f0=all&c1=AND&q1=&f1=all&acc=on&wc=on&Search=Search&sd=&ed=&la=&jo=

Gilboa, E. (2005a). The CNN Effect: The Search for a Communication Theory of International Relations. *Political Communication*, *22*(1), 27–44. doi:10.1080/10584600590908429

Gilboa, E. (2005b). Global Television News and Foreign Policy: Debating the CNN Effect. *International Studies Perspectives*, *6*(3), 325–341. doi:10.1111/j.1528-3577.2005.00211.x

Gill, P. (2011). Food Crisis In The Horn Of Africa: International Response Driven By Image Of Africa. *African Arguments*. Retrieved from http://africanarguments.org/2011/07/08/food-crisis-in-the-horn-of-africa-international-responses-by-peter-gill/

Glazer, A., & Konrad, K. A. (1996). A Signaling Explanation for Charity. *American Economic Review*, *86*(4), 1019 – 1028.

Gächter, S., Orzen, H., & Renner, E. (2009). Are experimental economists prone to framing effects? A natural field experiment. *Journal of economic behavior & organization*, *70*(3), 443. Retrieved from http://0-www.sciencedirect.com.wam.seals.ac.za/science/article/pii/S0167268109000171

Hall, S. (1973). “The determinations of news photographs”. In S. Cohen & J. Young (Eds.), *The Manufacture of News: Deviance, Social Problems and the Mass Media* (p. 506). London: Constable.

Hall, S. (1992). Encoding/decoding. *Culture, Media, Language: Working papers in cultural studies* (pp. 128–138).

Harcup, T., & O’Neill, D. (2001). What Is News? Galtung and Ruge revisited. *Journalism Studies*, *2*(2), 261–280. doi:10.1080/14616700120042114

Hawkins, V. (2001). The Other Side of the CNN Factor: the media and conflict. *Journalism Studies*, *3*(2), 225–240. doi:10.1080/14616700220129991

Hawkins, V. (2011). Media selectivity and the other side of the CNN effect: the consequences of not paying attention to conflict. *Media, War & Conflict*, *4*(1), 55–68. doi:10.1177/1750635210396126

Hilary, J. (2010). Africa: Dead Aid and the return of neoliberalism. *Race & Class*, *52*(2), 79–84. doi:10.1177/0306396810377010

Howe, P. (2010). Archetypes of famine and response. *Disasters: the journal of disaster studies, policy and management*, *34*(1), 30–55. doi:10.1111/j.0361

Iskandar, A. (2007). Lines in the Sand : Problematizing Arab Media in the Post-Taxonomic Era. *Arab Media & Society*.

Jakobsen, P. V. (2000). Focus on the CNN Effect Misses the Point : The Real Media Impact on Conflict Management is Invisible and Indirect. *Journal of Peace Research*, *37*(2), 131–143.

Jamieson, D. (2005). Duties to the Distant: Aid, Assistance, and Intervention in the Developing World. *The Journal of Ethics*, *9*(1-2), 151–170. doi:10.1007/s10892-004-3324-9

Keen, D. (1995). The Benefits of Famine: A political economy of famine relief. *The Ecologist*, *25*(6), 214–220.

Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*. newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Leathers, H. D., & Foster, P. (2005). *The World Food Problem: Tackling the Causes of Undernutrition in the Third World* (3rd ed., p. 446). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

Loewenberg, S. (2005). Why did helping Niger take so long ? Niger ' s famine finally caught donors ' attention when images of emaciated children were broadcast. *Lancet*, *336*(9491), 1067–1069.

Marcus, D. (2003). Famine crimes in international law. *American Journal of International Law*, *97*(2), 245–281.

Maxwell, D. (2007). Global factors shaping the future of food aid: the implications for WFP. *Disasters*, *31 Suppl 1*(July 2006), S25–39. doi:10.1111/j.1467-7717.2007.00347.x

McQuail, D. (1994). *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction* (2nd ed., p. 632). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Medicins Sans Frontieres. (2010). *MSF Financial report 2010* (p. 72).

Middleton, N., & O'keefe, P. (2006). Politics, history & problems of humanitarian assistance in Sudan. *Review of African Political Economy*, *33*(109), 543–559. doi:10.1080/0305624060101067

Minear, L. (2005). *Lessons learned : the Darfur experience* (pp. 73–122).

Minear, L., Scott, C., & Weiss, T. G. (1996). *The news media, civil war and humanitarian action* (p. 125). London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

Moeller, S. D. (1999). *Compassion Fatigue: How the media sell disease, famine, war and death* (1st ed., p. 390). London: Routledge.

Moyo, D. (2010). *Dead Aid: Why aid is not working and how there is a better way for Africa* (1st ed., p. 208). London: Penguin.

Mubarak, J. a. (1997). The "hidden hand" behind the resilience of the stateless economy of Somalia. *World Development*, *25*(12), 2027–2041. doi:10.1016/S0305-750X(97)00104-6

Olsen, G. R., Carstensen, N., & Hoyen, K. (2003). Humanitarian Crises: What Determines the Level of Emergency assistance? Media Coverage, Donor Interests and the Aid Business. *Disasters*, *27*(2), 109 – 126. Retrieved from http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-7717.00223/pdf

Olssen, L. (1993). On the Causes of Famine-Droug Desertification and Market Failure in the Sudan. *Ambio*, *22*(6), 395–403.

Omamo, S. W., Gentilini, U., Sandström, S., & Ouattarra, A. (2010). *Revolution : From Food Aid to Food Assistance*. (S. W. Omamo, U. Gentilini, & S. Sandström, Eds.)*Food Policy* (p. 445). World Food Programme.

Plotnik, A. (1964). Malthus, Marx and Mao. *Challenge*, *12*(9), 9–12.

Pogge, T. W. (2003). " Assisting " the Global Poor. *Africa*, 1–21.

Price, D. (1998). Of Population and False Hopes : Malthus and His Legacy. *Population (English Edition)*, *19*(3), 205–219.

Price, V., Tewksbury, D., & Powers, E. (1997). Switching Trains of Thought: The Impact of News Frames on Readers' Cognitive Responses. *Communication Research*, *24*(5), 481–506. doi:10.1177/009365097024005002

Prudham, S. (2009). Pimping climate change: Richard Branson, global warming, and the performance of green capitalism. *Environment and Planning A*, *41*(7), 1594–1613. doi:10.1068/a4071

Rangasami, A. (1985). ' Failure of Exchange Entitlements ' Theory of Famine. *Economic And Political Weekly*, *20*(41), 1747–1752.

Rege, M. (2004). Social Norms and Private Provision of Public Goods. *Journal of Public Economic Theory*, *6*(January 2004), 65–77. Retrieved from http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9779.2004.00157.x/abstract

Rinehart, A. (2002). Famine Relief: Just a Simple Matter of Supplying Food? *Nutrition Noteworthy*, *5*(1). Retrieved from http://escholarship.org/uc/item/81x2g9z2

Roberts, P. (2006). Reliability and Validity in Research. *Nursing Standard*, *20*(44), 41–45.

Robinson, P. (2000). The Policy-Media Interaction Model : Measuring Media Power During Humanitarian Crisis, *37*(5), 613–633.

Robinson, P. (2005). The CNN Effect Revisited. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *22*(4), 344–349. doi:10.1080/07393180500288519

Ross, S. (2007). The World Food Programme: a case of benign US policy?1. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, *61*(2), 267–281. doi:10.1080/10357710701358394

Rothberg, R. I., & Weiss, T. G. (1996). *Rothberg, Robert I Weiss, Thomas G* (p. 207). Washington: Brookings Institution Press.

Rubin, O. (2008). The Malawi 2002 Famine – Destitution , Democracy and Donors, *17*(1), 47–65.

Scheufele, D. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of Communication*, *49*(1), 103–122. doi:10.1093/joc/49.1.103

Seib, P. (2005). Hegemonic No More : Western Media , the Rise of Al-Jazeera , and the Influence of Diverse Voices. *International Studies*, *7*(4), 601–615.

Sen, A. (1981). *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*. *Development* (Vol. 94, p. 257). Oxford University Press. Retrieved from http://www.amazon.com/dp/0198284632

Singer, P. (1972). Famine, Affluence and Morality. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, *1*(1), 229–243.

Sniderman, P. M., Brody, R. A., & Tetlock, P. (1991). *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology* (p. 306). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from http://books.google.co.za/books?id=7mJw5IHI0lYC&dq=reasoning+and+choice+snidermman&source=gbs_navlinks_s

Stoianova, V. (2012). *PRIVATE An emerging trend in humanitarian donorship*. *IRIN*.

Thurow, R., & Kilman, S. (2009). *ENOUGH: Why the world's poorest starve in an age of plenty* (p. 292). Perseus Books.

UN OCHA. (2011). *Eastern Africa: Drought – Humanitarian Snapshot*. *Main* (p. 2011). Retrieved from http://www.google.co.za/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=ocha+one+of+the+driest+years+since+1950

/51&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCoQFjAB&url=http://ochaonline.un.org/OchaLinkClick.aspx?link=ocha&docId=1238614&ei=5Wg6T4aONo-zhAfPzaXyCQ&usg=AFQjCNFedaHhgqu32_GPL6Iu0J4Pk9KVYw

Urdal, H. (2005). People vs. Malthus: Population Pressure, Environmental Degradation, and Armed Conflict Revisited. *Journal of Peace Research*, *42*(4), 417–434. doi:10.1177/0022343305054089

Vestergaard, A. (2008). Humanitarian branding and the media: The case of Amnesty International. *Journal of Language and Politics*, *7*(3), 471–493. doi:10.1075/jlp.7.3.07ves

Watts, M. (1991). Entitlements or Empowerment ? Famine and Starvation in Africa. *Review of African Political Economy*, *1*(51), 9–26.

Watts, M. J. (2000). Development at the millennium : Malthus , Marx and the politics of alternatives. *Geographische Zeitschrift*, *2*(88), 67–93.

Winch, D. (1987). *Malthus* (1st ed., p. 113). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

World Food Programme. (2012). *Contributions to WFP : Annual Contributions and Five-Year Aggregate Ranking From 2008 to 2012* (Vol. 2012, pp. 2–5). Retrieved from http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/research/wfp232961.pdf

APPENDIX A: CODING SHEET

CODING FORM

QUANTITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

1. RESPONSE TIME

1.1 Author:

_____ ☐

1.2 Article text: (copy paste) :

_____

_____

1.3 News Organisation: Al Jazeera/BBC/CNN

1.4 Word count: _____

---

2. PHOTOGRAPHABILITY

2.1 Number of photographs

☐ ____photos

2.2 Photos depicting victims

☐ ____photos

2.3 Photos depicting humanitarian activity

☐ ____photos

2.4 Type of humanitarian activity depicted

☐ Security/ ☐ Medical/Feeding ☐ /Housing ☐ /

Sanitation/Unclear/ ☐ Other

QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

1. MALTHUSIAN PERSPECTIVE

1.1 Is population growth mentioned as a cause of the famine?

◯ Yes ◯ /No

1.2 Are weather/rainfall/climate mentioned as a cause of the famine?

◯ Yes ◯ /No

1.3 Is emergency feeding suggested/assumed as a solution?

◯ Yes ◯ /No

1.4 Is agricultural development suggested/assumed as a solution?

◯ Yes ◯ /No

---

2. SEN/ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

2.1 Are rising prices of food mentioned as a cause of the famine?

◯ Yes ◯ /No

2.2 Is a drop in income mentioned as a cause of the famine?

◯ Yes ◯ /No

2.3 Is lowering food prices suggested/assumed as a solution?

◯ Yes ◯ /No

3. Negativity

3.1 Death/displacement toll is given

Yes/No

3.2 Suffering is described as:

- Starvation
- Illness
- Personal loss (of family, friends, etc.)
- Dislocation
- Violence (non-sexual)
- Violence (sexual)
- Destitution/Poverty
- Other

4. Humanitarian Elite

4.1 Which non-UN agencies are quoted?

- CARE
- DEC - Disasters Emergency Committee
- Gift of the Givers
- International Rescue Committee
- MSF - Medicines Sans Fronteires
- Red Cross
- Samaritan's Purse
- Save The Children
- ShelterBox
- SOS Children's Villages
- USAID
- WFP - World Food Programme
- Unnamed aid agency source
- Other agency

4.2 Are UN sources quoted?

2.4 Is raising incomes suggested/assumed as a solution?

Yes /No

3. Critical perspective

3.1 Are beneficiaries of the famine identified?

Yes /No

3.2 Is the famine placed in a critical historical/political context?

Yes /No

3.3 Is the famine described as historically continuous (i.e. not a sudden malfunction)?

Yes /No

3.4 Is the famine described as a resource struggle between groups?

Yes /No

4. Criminal Justice Perspective

4.1 Is reference made to a crime in terms of international law having been committed?

Yes /No

4.2 Is reference made to a crime in terms of local law having been committed?

Yes /No

4.3 Is reference made to a crime, in the abstract, having been committed?

Yes /No

○ Yes ○/No **4.3 Are government sources quoted?** ○ Yes ○/No **4.4 Are victims quoted?** ○ Yes ○/No **4.5 Type of humanitarian activity described in the text** ☐ Security ☐ Medical ☐ Feeding ☐ Housing ☐ Sanitation ☐ Unclear ☐ Other	