The Chimera of International Community:
News Narratives of Global Cooperation

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References to "international community" have surged in the news. This study investigates how American journalists portray international community in their coverage. We assume that the phrase, while laden with possible meanings, is more than jargon. A growing number of global issues and crises require the kind of transnational cooperation that international community seems to encompass. Our study is guided by recent theoretical evaluations of international community and contributes to scholarly work on the role news narratives play in nurturing global civic sensibilities. We turned to ethnographic content analysis to analyze news constructions of international community from 2000 to 2010. Findings indicate that international community is more than diplomatic verbiage, yet it also lacks the collective identity and solidarity necessary for community. International community emerges as an amorphous fusion of nations, organizations, and elites. Many international communities appear in the news, not just one, and membership is fluid. As a potent symbol in the news, international community is not inconsequential. Our analysis reveals how the news narratives amplify a vision and shared awareness of global connectedness.

Keywords: international community, journalism, globalization, foreign policy, foreign news, global cooperation, global journalism, transnational awareness

Introduction

We are witnessing the beginnings of a new doctrine of international community. By this I mean the explicit recognition that today more than ever before, we are mutually dependent, that national interest is to a significant extent governed by international collaboration and that we need a clear and coherent debate as to the direction this doctrine takes us in each field of international endeavour. Just as within domestic politics, the notion of community—the belief that partnership and co-operation are essential to advance self-interest—is coming into its own; so it needs to find its international echo.

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　~ Prime Minister Tony Blair, 1999

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If news coverage is an indicator, the phrase "international community" is indeed finding its international echo. Since Blair's remarks in 1999, references to international community in news stories have soared (see Table 1). There is no mistaking the allure of the phrase for politicians, diplomats, world leaders, global activists, pundits, and reporters. International community has become a "focus of the aspirations of global governance advocates around the world" (Ellis, 2009, p. 1).

Table 1. Reference to "International Community" in Major News
Publications of North America from 1970 to 2010.

Year	Number of references to "international community"
1970	0
1975	5
1980	205
1985	250
1990	1,816
1995	3,423
2000	5,511
2005	7,259
2010	9,310
Total	**27,779**

The idea of international community is by no means new. Ever since the founding of the League of Nations in 1920, international cooperation has been on policy and public agendas (Alger, 2005). Early momentum for what we now call international community probably began to build from the Congress of Vienna in 1814, a period that Claude (1966) describes as an "era of preparation" for the kind of global values, global networks, and global governance that international community seems to encompass. But it was not until recently that international community found some "agency and autonomy" as part of international organizations (Ellis, 2009).

The ubiquity of the phrase in recent global political discourse prompted *Foreign Policy* magazine to devote a 2003 issue to exploring the question "What is the international community?" Two predominant views, one cynical and one more idealistic, emerge from the academics, journalists, and activists. The more idealistic view depicts international community as a force for global peace and justice, with the

United Nations and its affiliated organizations as major manifestations and with nongovernmental organizations playing an equally important role globally (e.g., Annan, 2002). The cynical view derides international community as a meaningless phrase of little or no consequence. In this view, there are no shared values, goals, and identities on which to base such a community, just cravings for power between competitive nations and multinational corporations (e.g., Chomsky, 2002).

Appadurai (2002) suggests that the international community "is today less a social fact and more a way to remind nation-states of the common humanity of their citizens and of the essential decencies that must guide relations between nations" (p. 43). In his view, international community has no concrete manifestation; instead, it is an abstraction that prompts citizens to "feel obliged to recognize the suffering and needs of all human beings" (2002, p. 43).

If international community is going to nurture that empathy, let alone influence international relations, then it is important to understand how it is constituted by a cultural authority like the news media. It is important to ask how its potentialities and meanings are represented for the general public, policy makers, and academics. Discovering these latent and manifest meanings is the goal of our study.

However diffuse in meaning and practice the phrase may be, international community is in such wide, underresearched use in the news media that we believe it is ripe for analysis. Even a cursory look at this coverage reveals something more than an abstraction. For example, international community is often linked to specific legal and ethical responsibilities around the world. And there is no mistaking that many stakeholders around the world aspire to join or be recognized by the international community.

Understanding how the news media portray international community is important for what it says about journalism performance in an era of fast-paced media and cultural globalization. As Reese (2008) points out, "journalism occupies a crucial and shifting role in the changing institutions and citizenship alignments making up the emerging globalized public sphere" (p. 247), of which the international community is surely a key player, even if imagined.

Along this line, our study adds empirical evidence to recent debates and research on the symbolic power of transnational news media. A key idea that we draw from this work is that news media do not merely communicate global issues and events, they also suffuse these issues and events with meaning, values, interests, and emotions (Cottle, 2009). A relatively new presence in the news, international community joins other emergent global issues and topics that are "critically dependent on processes of social construction (cultural mediation) in the news media" (Cottle, 2009, p. 499). While news media often promote a sense of national unity, they are also positioned to illuminate a global connectedness or cosmopolitan perspective (Berglez, 2008; Chouliaraki, 2008; Cottle, 2009). As Chouliaraki (2008) found, "the cultural representations and aesthetic tropes the media use, to paraphrase Geertz, are not mere reflections of pre-existing sensibilities, they are positive agents in the organization and maintenance of a sensibility " (p. 333). The current study adds knowledge about how journalists may, in their increasing coverage of international community, enact notions of a global consciousness and new global rights and responsibilities that an international community would require.

Theorizing International Community

Systematic theoretical work on international community is scarce. As one of the only scholars to directly tackle a theoretical formulation, Ellis (2009) outlines the basic requirements for international community. Among the most important components is a unified group of states that agrees to abide by a set of norms, rules, identities, and views of moral conduct, which Ellis terms "international interest." At the very least, shared ideas about the way society should be ordered and shared goals must be present (Ellis, 2009).

Cooperation of some sort between governments has always existed with various alliances, treaties, and agreements (Iriye, 2002). And it is perhaps old news that globalization processes have brought countries into closer contact. However, for international community to exist, there must be more than just interdependence (Ellis, 2009). International community must include a substantive, sustained, and purposive group in its own right, one that is about "unity in the pursuit of a joint purpose" (Jackson cited in Ellis 2009, p. 8). Achieving unity across diverse nations and power relations is a formidable challenge.

Not all theorists take such a state- or government-centric view of international community. Jackson (2000) describes a cosmopolitan community of humankind that prioritizes the needs of humankind before any state's needs. This line of thinking about global rights, responsibilities, and needs is echoed in work on global or cosmopolitan citizenship (e.g., Beck, 2006; Pike, 2008). Global citizenship scholars suggest that citizenship is not only a matter of an individual's codified rights and obligations in relation to a nation. Citizen rights and responsibilities, the thinking goes, are today less dependent on membership in a territorial or legal unit. And some problems require global cooperation that governments simply cannot provide. Thus, for these citizenship scholars, "the concept of citizenship describes the ways in which individuals participate in practices and collectivities that form around matters of shared interest, identity or concern, in local, national, global, and hybrid spaces" (Burgess, 2007, p. 60). Much of this work builds on theorizations of an emergent social order that is enmeshed in global information flows (e.g., Appadurai, 1996; Beck, 2006; Giddens, 1990; Robertson, 1992). Such flows lead to an "intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (Giddens, 1990, p. 64). This study adds knowledge about a community that would seem to emerge from that emergent global social order.

While journalists and their publics may already have their antennae tuned to such discourse on global interconnectedness, a basic requirement for international community is that members give precedence to common or shared interests over and above individual and special interests (Ellis, 2009). There can still be disagreement, debate, and dissent, but there must also be some commitment to baseline interests and values of a transnational community. Additionally, at least some form of global governance underlies most conceptualizations of international community. This does not mean that there must be a global government but, rather, that there is a "multi-level collection of governance related activities, rules, and mechanisms, formal and informal, public and private" (Karns & Mingst 2010, p. 4). These could include transnational advocacy networks, nongovernmental organizations, and grassroots social movements. For global governance of any kind to work, Karns and Mingst (2010) argue that it loses

legitimacy if it emerges solely from power centers such as the United States or the European Union. Global governance cannot just be about economic growth and must embrace "wider liberal, social, and political values like those that human security, human development, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development embody" (Karns & Mingst, 2010, p. 549).

Following these conceptualizations, it is plausible that the international community could manifest as an international organization, such as the United Nations and its affiliated agencies. It is even conceivable that there could be multiple international communities that operate through various international organizations. However, they could not claim to be "representative of a universal, solidarist order since the moral-political basis of such a claim would lack legitimacy from nonmembers of the group" (Ellis, 2009, p. 12). Still, the international community, whether manifested as an organization or not, must have autonomy and "policy independence from its constituent units" (Ellis, 2009, p. 14).

Newer networked media today play a role here, because they can nurture new perspectives on location and affiliation (Appadurai, 2002). As ideas, people, and other cultural materials flow farther, faster, and more easily via Web-based networks, the needs and interests of humankind can potentially exert more influence. In this view, traditional definitions of space, territory, identity, and nationality get reimagined, which can then trigger questions about "what it is that binds people together, what it is that constructs a human community" (Iriye, 2002, p. 205).

News media are already representing this kind of transnational awareness, as Beck (2006), Chouliaraki (2008), and Cottle and Lester (2010) have revealed, and they often do so without mentioning "international community." However, we agree with Cottle (2009) that more empirical grounding for claims about journalism's role in the formation of communities, especially a transnational community, is needed. Additional work on this topic is also warranted because coverage of international community, a phrase that would seem to invite new global civic sensibilities, has been on the rise.

A key historical precedent for thinking about this shared global purpose and common identity occurred at the end of the 19th century during that period's rapid economic globalization (Iriye, 2002). Expansion of global networks of goods, capital, and labor led to a rise in international organizations, many of which were nongovernmental. Quietly and often with less attention than they probably deserved, these organizations "enriched the world arena with networks of interdependence" and advanced a key idea: "that there were transnational themes that affected people everywhere and produced universal standards for judging the behavior of nations" (Iriye, 2002, p. 157). Thus, the global interconnectedness that is essential to international community involves not just nations and governments but also international nongovernmental organizations. These bottom-up efforts by citizens to build bridges across nations have helped sustain the idea of international community, especially during wars and other global crises of recent centuries (Iriye, 2002).

It is fair, then, to ask how international community is managed by the news media in the 21st century. What kind of community emerges in news narratives? An exploratory study, our research will provide the baseline for additional work on relationships between international community, public perception, social media, global governance, global citizenship, and social change.

International community is targeted in our study—as opposed to "international society," "global community," or "global society"—because the phrase has become a staple in journalist narratives and in quotations used to represent key sources. It would be difficult to find a leader in the world today who has never held an interview in which international community was not mentioned. In his trenchant theoretical evaluation of international community, Ellis (2009) concludes that we currently lack the common ethos, identity, and interests between nations for a meaningful international community to emerge. Thus, he suggests that scholars make strides to clarify uses of the phrase. This study attempts to do just that within the context of the news media.

Media Effects on Public Responses to International Community

Decades of news media research suggest that an emphasis placed on issues in the news can add salience to those issues and influence what issues people end up thinking about (Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). Additionally, research suggests that when reporters provide a story's context and select what information to emphasize or exclude, they can also influence *how* we think about an issue, not just what issues we think about (Wanta et al., 2004). Identifying any repeated patterns emerging around an emergent concept like international community is important because these patterns tend to simplify such a complex idea, making it easier for people to relate to in their everyday lives (Wanta et al., 2004).

We also agree with Chouliaraki (2008), who suggests that scholars approach news content not just as a *genre of information* but as a *genre of imagination*: "Through their routine choices of image and word, [journalists] help us imagine what we cannot experience: the reality of other people's suffering and where we stand in relation to them" (Chouliaraki, 2008, p. 333). Coverage of global issues and events may encourage the public to enact certain new global civic sensibilities (Chouliaraki, 2008), contributing to notions of a new transnational civic space and new power relations (Ojala, 2011).

Method

To understand news media constructions of international community, we analyzed a decade of coverage. While ours is not a framing study per se, we agree with Entman's (1993, p. 52) often-quoted claim that journalists tend 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." Thus, journalists may spotlight certain meanings of international community and their causes and consequences while belittling others. We turned to ethnographic content analysis (ECA), also known as qualitative document analysis (Altheide, Coyle, De Vriese, & Schneider, 2008), to guide our study of these news portrayals of international community.

ECA borrows from ethnography's emphasis on the reflexive, interactive nature of the investigator, concepts, data collection, and analysis (Altheide et al., 2008). While investigators using ECA do not work in a setting, they follow the ethnographic practice of actively engaging with language, situations, settings

in the text, topics, perspectives, and meanings. ECA calls for "immersion, flexibility, and openness to the relevant communication and symbolic representations" (Altheide et al., 2008, p. 135), which is as important to the ethnographic perspective as being in a setting.

ECA typically collects numerical and narrative data and does not force the latter into predefined categories (Altheide et al., 2008). This reflexive movement between concept development, sampling, data collection, data coding, data analysis, and interpretation is meant to be flexible enough to allow unexpected meanings to emerge, but it is also systematic (Altheide et al., 2008). This process allows us to probe for words, places, topics, organizations, people, goals, values, identities, and other ideas that appear consistently in news narratives and that might convey information about journalist constructions of international community.

We are wary of overemphasizing presumed effects. Only after testing public perceptions or analyzing policy could we establish such a correlation, but that is not our aim here. We intend to illuminate the ways in which international community, a concept that we assume to be of importance to solving global problems and global governance, is constituted and shaped by certain stakeholders.

Following Altheide et al. (2008), we carried out the following steps. First, we familiarized ourselves with the process and content of possible information sources. We zeroed in on *The New York Times* (*NYT*) because of its unrivaled international reporting resources and its stated commitment to coverage of international events. While the *NYT* has long been regarded as an authority for international news (Cohen, 1963), the publication is also considered a leader of the global press (Fahmy & Kim, 2008). News organizations around the world respect the *NYT* for its international coverage and often use *NYT* stories in their own print and online publications. The newspaper is widely acknowledged as an "'agenda-setter' for policy makers, the public, and other news agencies" (Kim, 2000, p. 28). Additionally, the *NYT* is generally "considered to be the 'paper of record' for international news coverage and 'ends up influencing the content' of other mass media" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 299). To underscore the influence of the *NYT* in news coverage, many studies have examined the newspaper's reporting on issues of international scope (e.g., Bantimaroudis & Ban, 2001; Dimitrova & Stromback, 2005; Dornschneider, 2007; Entman, 1991; Yang, 2003). While the current study will analyze what the *NYT* and its sources talk about when they talk about international community, we believe the discourse has much wider reach and influence. We selected the article as the unit of analysis and began to read through articles, using the search term "international community" in the LexisNexis database.

Guided by Ellis' (2009) and Iriye's (2002) theoretical analyses of international community, we approached our broad research question—*how and why is the international community constructed in news narratives, and with what implications?*—by devising categories of interest that would structure our initial data collection. We drafted a protocol that directed us to answer several questions about the purpose, function, identity, interests, and power dynamics of the international community:

- What is the date and headline?

- What is the exact passage with the phrase "international community"?

- To whom is the passage attributed (the reporter, a source)?

- What is the topic of the story?

- What are the goals of the international community?

- Who or what is included in the international community?

- Who or what is guiding the actions of the international community?

- What is the region of focus for the international community?

- What are the values, morals, and/or interests (ethos and identity) of the international community?

We pretested the protocol by collecting preliminary data. We used a random number generator to choose 10 articles each from 2000, 2005, and 2010. This time period was chosen because it includes different U.S. presidential administrations and an array of foreign policy challenges. We each content-analyzed articles using the protocol and then compared our pretest findings.

After this preliminary analysis, we shared our impressions and ran a reliability check. Mostly strong consistencies and few discrepancies were noted, and discrepancies were discussed and clarified. We arrived at our sampling rationale and strategy after this initial data collection and with guidance from the study's theoretical evaluations described above. We decided that a sample drawn from a 10-year period was appropriate in order to note changes and nuances in meaning. Because international community appeared in the *NYT* roughly 200 to 350 times per year from 2000 to 2009, we chose every fifth article from each year. One investigator analyzed articles from 2000 to 2004 and 2010, and the other investigator analyzed articles from 2004 to 2009. We included opinion columns and news briefs, which meant that we only discarded letters to the editor from our searches. This yielded just over 500 articles for our analysis. The 10-year period allowed us to probe for change over time.

At the midpoint during data collection, we examined our data and assessed the need to refine, collapse, and/or add new questions and categories. We saw no need to make major adjustments to the protocol, but we did note similar patterns and found, once again, strong consistencies in our collected data. Next, we performed the data analysis. We read our notes repeatedly and made additional notes. Here, we compared and contrasted extremes and key differences within each category. We each wrote brief summaries of data for each category and for each year, noting surprises and distinct patterns. For example, at this stage we realized that the source type, and especially the official source, for international community was integral, so we heightened our attention to sources and categorized them into "reporter,"

"government or other diplomatic official," "nongovernmental organization representative or other activist," and "other."

We also noted distinct patterns in the kinds of topics and regions linked to the international community. Thus, we quantified regions and topics associated with the international community's efforts, adapting Shoemaker and Cohen's (2005) news topic categories. Altheide et al. (2008) argue, and we agree, that this type of structured, reflexive data collection based on a protocol and ethnographic notes can yield a theoretically informed account of news media messages.

Findings

Who Invokes International Community and in What Contexts?

Journalists rarely set out to report on the international community. Instead, international community is more often summoned by sources who are directly quoted or paraphrased, and these sources are mostly government officials, as Table 2 reveals.

Table 2. International Community Source Type, 2000–2010.

Source Type	References to "international community"	Percentage
Government official	283	55.3%
Reporter	172	33.7%
Nongovernmental organization	22	4.3%
Other	34	6.7%
Total	511	100%

This was our first hint that there might not be a unitary actor on behalf of the international community, because activists, representatives of nongovernmental organizations, and everyday citizens were scarcely quoted using the phrase, nor were they very often implicated. A typical passage flows like this:

> Mr. Baker met with Mr. Bush in the Oval Office on Wednesday, when the president gave him general instructions, a senior administration official said, to "go and get the international community to do something about Iraq's crushing debt." The official said that Mr. Bush was not more specific because "Baker knows how to do this." ("Bush Defends Barring Nations," 2003)

The international community in the news follows global conflicts and crises around the world and emerges primarily from geopolitical hot spots: Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Israel and the occupied territories, and Sudan. The conflicts and humanitarian crises in these regions tend to be militarized and almost always involve global economic powers. The United States typically plays a starring role on the side of international community. This latter observation is perhaps unsurprising, given that the *NYT* targets an American audience and that a sense of national unity often takes precedence in news media framing of globally staged events (Ojala, 2011).

However, the international community is more likely to make an appearance in a story, for example, on efforts to monitor Iran's nuclear weapons manufacturing than it is in a story on species renewal in the Amazon rain forest. The former story has all the ingredients that generate official comment on international community: reactive militarized foreign policy, democracy building, potential war, oil wealth, and global economic stability (see Table 3 for a breakdown of topics). "The international community has begun to lose its patience," a United Nations official says of Iran and its nuclear program" ("Head of Nuclear Agency," 2005). Similarly, President Bush is quoted: "The international community must come together to make it very clear to Iran that we will not tolerate construction of a nuclear weapon. Iran would be dangerous if they have a nuclear weapon" ("Bush Says," 2003).

Table 3: International Community Topic/Purpose, 2000–2010.

	International Community Topic/Purpose	Number of Stories
1	Resolving conflicts such as civil wars, border disputes	103
2	Curbing the development of weapons of mass destruction or the enrichment of nuclear programs	93
3	Provision of food aid to starving people or those affected by natural disasters	23
4	Ensuring credible elections	22
5	Reconstruction of war-torn regions and disaster-affected regions	21
6	Political reforms and good governance	20
7	Fighting against terrorism	19
8	Advocating for human rights issues	18
9	Justice for victims of crimes against humanity	12
10	Improving social lives, especially for refugees	9
11	Improving relations between nations, diplomacy	9
12	Fight against corruption in governments	8
13	Embargo and sanctions against countries	7
14	Adherence to United Nations resolutions	6
15	Curbing drug trafficking	6
16	Fight against AIDS pandemic	5
17	Debt relief	4
18	Responding to natural disasters	4

Notably, several regions that are frequently linked with the international community's actions (see Table 4), such as Iraq and Afghanistan, are also *excluded* from international community. This seemingly obvious observation is important, because discerning who or what exactly is included in the international community is extremely difficult, if not impossible, in news stories. Knowing who is excluded and included is important because a common identity and a shared, sustained purpose are so important to forming international community (Ellis, 2009). We explore membership in the next section.

Table 4: International Community Regions of Focus, 2000–2010.

	Region of Focus	Number of Stories		Region of Focus	Number of Stories		Region of Focus	Number of Stories
1	Iraq	76	26	Russia	4	51	Eritrea	1
2	Afghanistan	46	27	East Timor	4	52	Chechnya	1
3	Iran	43	28	Japan	3	53	Burma	1
4	Israel	42	29	South Korea	3	54	Bhutan	1
5	Sudan	37	30	Argentina	3	55	Mozambique	1
6	North Korea	33	31	Peru	3	56	St. Lucia	1
7	Palestine	27	32	Serbia	3	57	Nepal	1
8	Lebanon	15	33	Georgia	3	58	Ecuador	1
9	China	12	34	Sierra Leone	3	59	Bolivia	1
10	Haiti	12	35	Burundi	3	60	Taiwan	1
11	Kosovo	12	36	Ethiopia	2	61	South Africa	1
12	United States	10	37	Indonesia	2	62	Turkey	1
13	Somalia	9	38	Macedonia	2	63	France	1
14	Rwanda	9	39	Niger	2	64	Azerbaijan	1
15	Pakistan	8	40	Montenegro	2	65	Brazil	1
16	Bosnia	8	41	Chad	2	66	Bangladesh	1
17	Democratic Republic of the Congo	7	42	Uganda	1	67	El Salvador	1
18	Zimbabwe	6	43	Uruguay	1	68	England	1
19	India	6	44	Greece	1	69	Nigeria	1
20	Myanmar	6	45	Kenya	1	70	Cyprus	1
21	Colombia	5	46	Qatar	1	71	Chile	1
22	Yugoslavia	5	47	Cuba	1	72	Denmark	1
23	Honduras	5	48	Armenia	1	73	Madagascar	1
24	Liberia	5	49	Germany	1			
25	Syria	5	50	Belgium	1			

Membership Has Privileges: But Who Is in and Who Is Out?

As mentioned, it is clear from the sampled news coverage that certain nations, such as Iran and North Korea, are not included in the international community. As President Obama was quoted in 2009: "We've got some fixed national security interests in Iran not developing nuclear weapons, in not exporting terrorism, and we have offered a pathway for Iran to rejoining the international community" ("Despite Crisis," 2009).

However, it is not explicit who exactly is included, who decides membership criteria, or whether any specific membership criteria exist. Implicitly, the United Nations and the United States, which often seem to work in tandem as actors guiding the international community, appear to be included, even if the United States is engaged in a war, as it was in Afghanistan during most of the 2000s. Generally, though, membership in international community is represented as amorphous. A passage like this one is typical, appearing in isolation in the context of a story on unrest in Afghanistan: "'We have always requested help from the international community, but have as yet to receive any. We hope that this will take place soon,' said Mr. Rabbani, who is still recognized as Afghanistan's president by the United Nations" ("Alliance Says," 2001).

Occasionally, the international community comprises only the vaguely defined "West," as this excerpt suggests:

> Mustafa Barghouti, a political activist, said this was a test for Western countries, including the United States, that have demanded political reform by the Palestinians. "Does the international community really want democratic reform, or do they just want regime change?" ("Palestinian Line," 2004)

A quote such as this one from a senior United Nations official, mentioning the United Nations and unidentified others, comes as close as any of the references to specifying members:

> "If the thugs who led that violence continue to target the international community, including our agency and our partners, we would have no choice but to suspend our operations," Mr. McNamara said at a regular news briefing in Kosovo's provincial capital, Pristina. ("U.N. Agency Threatens," 2000)

While the above quote identifies agency and partners, the collective identity of the international community remains murky in most of the news coverage. This quote from the Indian foreign minister, whose comment addresses the 2008 terrorist acts in Mumbai, is typical in the way it says little about who is included and excluded: "While we continue to persuade the international community and Pakistan, we are also clear that ultimately it is we who have to deal with this problem" ("India Gives Pakistan Letter," 2008).

Searching the rest of the articles for context or deeper meanings about who or what is included in the international community offered little clarification. Indeed, reporters tend to build references to

international community into the conclusions of their stories, often using it in a direct quote that ends the story.

Thus, the international community often has deep anchorage in United Nations initiatives and U.S. policy, but it is much clearer for who it is not (Iran, North Korea, and other perceived aggressors). Additionally, in almost all references, this tangle of members is implicitly government- and nation-based. Rare are direct references to an international community of nongovernmental organizations, grassroots groups, or social movements. When reporters marshal international community for their stories, they refer to an amorphous, indeterminate, and ever-shifting group of nations and other powerful government organizations. Still, membership apparently has its privileges, conferring possible global status. There were several instances, for example, of the U.S. government offering Iran and other nations a "pathway" to rejoin the community, as if joining the community grants privilege and esteem.

Notably, we found very little evidence in news coverage of a bottom-up international community emerging from grassroots movements or individuals. This dearth of coverage of everyday citizens working to build bridges and cooperate across nations suggests—erroneously—that only officials engage in international community. Nongovernmental organizations play only a minor role in working on the transnational themes associated with international community in the news.

However, as the quotes above suggest, the international community appears to be an important, albeit nebulous, presence on the global stage. In the next section, we explore what the international community seems to be doing around the world as depicted in the news coverage.

Key Activities of the International Community

Throughout the decade under examination, the activities of the international community seem to cohere around protecting the world against terrorism and making the world safe for democracy, key policy foci for the United States. This passage quotes Yevgeny M. Primakov, the former Russian prime minister, on the topic: "'If the terrorists are capable of acting this way, what can we talk about?' The international community, he said, must stick together to do a better job fighting terrorism" ("Bush Aides," 2001).

Similarly, a 2002 article quotes Hamid Karzai on the reconstruction of Afghanistan as a step toward democracy and stability. Even though the article is about a group of countries that pledged $5 billion in aid for Afghanistan, it is not made clear who those countries are or what their aims are: "'The international community has been nice to us,' Karzai says" ("World Donors Praise," 2002) in the only reference to international community in the article.

Throughout the decade, the international community is invoked to justify subduing unruly dictators and destabilizing movements, such as in Iran, North Korea, and militarized Islam. All of these are represented as threats or challenges to the socioeconomic order. Lurking just beneath the surface of these references is a keen interest in maintaining security and a balance of power, particularly a balance that is conducive to U.S. foreign policy and United Nations initiatives.

As it seeks to maintain the socioeconomic order, the international community is sometimes depicted with an institutional and legal framework, possessing norms, protocols, legal duties, and a collective political will. "But as a responsible nation that is trying to integrate into the international community, China has to understand that its conduct should follow international protocols," Chinese legal expert Teng Bao is quoted ("Leading Chinese Advocate," 2008). Coverage of Jesuit killings in El Salvador included this quote from lawyer Gisela de Leon: "It will put pressure on the Salvadoran authorities and remind them that there is an international community out there and they have to respect its norms" ("Jesuit Killings," 2008). Another 2008 article on terrorism in India quotes Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh: "The political will of the international community must be translated into concrete and sustained action on the ground" ("India Presses Pakistan," 2008). In a 2007 opinion essay, the community is described as having the "legal responsibility to prevent genocide and protect human rights" ("Mocking the Powerless," 2007). It even has a "unity of purpose," according to one anonymous senior French official, quoted in a 2007 article on nuclear disarmament in Iran: "We are at a crucial moment in diplomacy and the international community could very well lose its unity of purpose" ("Plan Released," 2007).

Specifics on these norms, protocols, legal responsibilities, and shared purposes are in short supply. These important details, if they exist at all in news narratives, are obscured by the hyperbole of quoted and paraphrased sources. In sum, if a nation with any geopolitical importance lurches in a dangerous direction, then the international community arises and deploys its vague—perhaps imagined— collective will, protocols, norms, and legal frameworks.

It should be emphasized that reactively disarming "the bad guy" is a preoccupation of the international community as depicted in the news. Journalists rarely portray the international community as working on wider, proactive social and political issues, such as health, sustainable development, education, or sports.

Changing Over Time: Rising Tension, Shifting Power Dynamics

We detected few changes in the portrayals of international community during the decade, even in the pre- and post-9/11 coverage, but we did note a steady rise in tension concerning the international community's power dynamics. Coverage of Russia and Vladimir Putin illustrate this tension. Putin is presented as an agitator to the international community and his country as an increasingly uncertain, vexing member. Early in the decade, Putin appears to court the international community, such as in some general comments from the Kremlin about countering terrorism and in Russia's negotiations with the International Monetary Fund. Gradually, however, Putin is portrayed as a troublesome dissenter seated at the international community's table. For example, Putin cautioned Russian citizens that the international community would keep tightening rules governing the use of funds held in offshore accounts. "You will be run off your feet in court trying to unblock these accounts" ("Putin Calls," 2002). In a 2007 article about a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Russia, China, former Soviet republics of Central Asia), Putin is quoted as calling for a "multipolar" world order, a sort of counter-perspective to international community. "Any attempts to solve global and regional problems unilaterally are hopeless" ("At Asian Security Meeting," 2007).

In dealing with the assassination of the former Lebanese prime minister in 2005, Russia is depicted as an influential member of the international community, but also pitted against fellow members Britain, France, Denmark, and the United States. In 2006, Russia, joined by China, riles the international community, because Russia does not support the idea of sanctions against Iran, while France, Germany, Britain, and the United States do. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Putin are depicted as powerful, dueling members of the international community. Bickering over Kosovo in 2007, an international community—vaguely described as the European Union, United States, and Russia—finds itself blocked once again by opposition from Putin. In 2008, Russia's military actions in Georgia seemed to test the country's status as a member of the international community. Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili used an editorial to position Russia as an affront to the international community: "Russia's actions have been condemned in the strongest possible terms by the entire international community, which has reaffirmed its support for Georgia's territorial integrity. The Government of Georgia is grateful for the world's support" ("Saakashvili's Statement," 2008).

Coverage of Putin and Russia is not the only example illuminating the shifting power dynamics and rising tension associated with the international community. Several opinion essays published toward the end of the decade suggest that the international community is becoming more than a warm, feel-good phrase. The arguments suggest that the international community is becoming more complex, powerful, a force to be reckoned with—and held accountable. Noah Feldman, law professor at New York University and fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, wrote an opinion in 2007 that challenges the international community's role in the Iraq war. The community, he argues, needs to "bear responsibility" for investigating and punishing war crimes. He points out that many members of the community—who are unnamed—opposed the legality of the United States invasion of Iraq and were guilty of "sanctimoniously disengaging" in all that has come after ("Not the Case," 2007).

Similarly, a 2009 opinion by former Czech president and author Vaclav Havel invokes international community to hold the United Nations Human Rights Council accountable for its lack of attention to the rights records of potential members. A 2009 opinion by Israeli lawyer and politician Tzipi Livni goes even further, calling on the international community to do the unprecedented: "adopt at the global level what true democracies apply at the national one—a universal code for participation in democratic elections" ("Democracy's Price," 2009). These depictions suggest that, over time, more is expected from the international community and, at the very least, that the community must be held accountable for its actions or inaction.

The Chimera of Community

While we detected no unitary actor with shared interests, no collective identity, no legal framework, and no clear institutional infrastructure, our immersion in a decade of coverage of international community left us with a sense that it has morphed into a potent symbol. As a symbol shared around the world, it contains the aspirations and hopes of leaders and others focused on global issues, and it performs some important functions: it recognizes, it monitors, and it watches over. A Sudanese leader describes how the community is keeping an eye out: "'As rebels, we are losing the sympathy of the international community because of the lack of control and divisions within the

movements,' said Mr. Jamous, a leading figure in the original Darfur rebel movement, the Sudan Liberation Army" ("Peacekeepers as Targets," 2007).

Echoing the above, Kofi Annan opines that "the victor of an unfair vote must be under no illusions: he will neither have the legitimacy to govern, nor receive the support of the international community" ("South African Leader," 2008).

We call this the *chimera of international community*. In Greek mythology, the chimera was a fire-breathing, monstrous creature with a lion's body, a serpent's tail, and the head of a goat. In everyday use, chimera usually refers to an illusion or fabrication of the mind as well as to an unrealizable dream. In our analysis, the international community is in many ways imaginary and includes multiple, incongruous parts. While not exactly monstrous, the international community appears to wield formidable powers. It uses these powers primarily when its tolerance for evil, economic injustice, violence, and human rights atrocities is tested. As the community watches over, it also appears to have the power to punish, sanction, and enforce. An article on Syrian-Lebanese tension reveals it as a potent force:

> As Syrians wait to see what fate the international community will impose on this nation of 18 million people, President Bashar al-Assad has remained out of view, neither addressing the nation nor making any public statements. . . . The challenge will be to balance the demands of three powerful forces: the international community, his family and the Syrian public. ("Facing Threats," 2005)

Just because we view international community as a chimera, though, does not mean that we think it should be interpreted as a foolish or impossible dream. Echoing Appadurai (2002), we view the international community as depicted in the news as lacking a concrete manifestation. Instead, it is more of an abstraction that can remind people of their common humanity. However, we disagree with Appadurai's claim that this makes it somehow less of a "social fact." In our view, the chimera of international community has the power to enact a vision of a transnational community with common interests and unity of purpose.

Why? In all narratives with international community, we detected an assumed, shared awareness of community—an implicit understanding or aspiration that there might be a common humanity that transcends national and cultural boundaries. This shared awareness is present even when official sources employ the phrase as a tactic for political or economic gain. The frequency of references and humanitarian themes reveals aspirations and emotional resonance for a global ethical force that guides and restrains the actions of nations and global citizens.

Conclusion

Developing community among disparate, diverse cultures is a formidable challenge. The key components of international community identified by Ellis (2009) are nowhere in evidence in news coverage: no clear or even formative legal-institutional framework; no clearly articulated, shared functions; no common identity or interests emanating from consensus processes. More importantly, the

international community as depicted in the news is inhabited mostly by the power holders of Europe and the United States. These elites guide the international community in ways that preserve the global socioeconomic status quo.

Where are the bottom-up efforts of everyday citizens to build bridges across national and cultural boundaries, which Iriye (2002) says have bolstered international community for a century or more? Where is the international community when it comes to proactive efforts guided by transnational social values (e.g., social entrepreneurship, poverty reduction, sustainable development, and education)?

Portrayals of the international community do reveal a shared awareness of transnational themes that affect people everywhere and that warrant global attention and scrutiny. Thus, we see tremendous potential for journalists to depict international community as something worthy of emotion and action in our everyday lives.

Recommendations

At the risk of adding another tiresome polemic targeted at resource-depleted newsrooms, we believe news organizations should develop or refine policies for reporting on international community. Based on our findings, we suggest that, rather than giving international community short shrift or ignoring it altogether, the concept should be analyzed by journalists when it emerges in reporting. We are reminded of Berglez's (2008) theorization of a global news style that embraces issues of transnational identity and power and, in doing so, transcends the old foreign-domestic dichotomies. International community is in such wide circulation that it could provide opportunities for journalists to cultivate Berglez's (2008) "global outlook," with new contestations of space, power, and identity. International community should not be appropriated only by power holders who use it to punctuate a press conference or to gain political or economic cachet. With mostly officials and governments in the game, everyday citizens likely see little role for themselves other than on the sidelines.

For example, reporters using the phrase in stories could grapple with the complexities and potentialities of international community by clarifying what sources mean by international community or by truly spotlighting international community in a story—and therefore problematizing it. Journalists continue to make international community salient, so they should also be able to use the phrase as a window into how different people, issues, events, practices, identities, and problems of life are interconnected globally. Even these simple steps would help prevent international community from slipping by as apathy- or fear-inducing jargon.

Stories about international community should remind publics of their common humanity with citizens across national borders and of the essential principles and interests that can, and often do, guide social relations around the world. If adopted, an editorial policy on international community would likely bring a wider range of issues, identities, and potential actions to light for the international community. If portrayals of international community would shift in this direction, we believe it would become less of a chimera and more of a tool kit for citizens to recognize the needs of all human beings—and to take action in their everyday lives.

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