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Emma Hutchison

Abstract

This essay examines how traumatic events can influence the constitution of community in international relations. Trauma is often perceived as isolating individuals and fragmenting communities. This essay argues, in contrast, that practices of representation can make traumatic events meaningful in ways that give them a collective and often international dimension. Central to this process is the role played by emotions. Often neglected in scholarly analysis of international relations, emotions play a crucial political role during times of crisis and can become pivotal sites for the renewal of political stability and social control. The essay illustrates the ensuing dynamics by examining media portrayals of the Bali bombing of 12 October 2002. Focusing on photographs and the stories that accompany them, the essay shows how representations of trauma can provide a sense of collective feeling that is capable of underpinning political community. It concludes by suggesting that international relations scholars can learn much about the politics of community and security by examining prominent representations of trauma and the emotional discourses they mobilise.

Keywords: *Bali bombing, community, emotion/s, media, representation, textual and visual analysis, trauma*

Introduction

The bombing of the Sari bar in Kuta, Bali resulted in the death of 202 people, 88 of whom were Australian. This is why Australia has generally been seen as the nation in which the impact of the bombing was most sharply felt. Indeed, in the days that followed the 12 October bombing it was suggested that Australia, as a nation, must now 'prepare itself for the worst'.[1] As the extent of the atrocity unfolded it almost seemed – if one were to use the media as a gauge – that so too did any differences that can keep a society apart. Discourses of commemoration and national mourning took over the space the violence opened, ascribing meaning to the potential meaninglessness of victims' pain. Front-page articles documented, through both words and pictures, the distress of survivors – emotions crumbling the composure of their faces, the plight of those left still fighting for their lives, and more generally the blinding destruction that the bombs had wreaked. The pain of victims was swiftly referred to as that of a nation.[2] And an ensuing sense of trauma – the shock and the gravity of loss – was invoked as damaging Australia's 'collective soul'.[3]

Portrayals of the Bali bombing are among many examples that demonstrate the collectivising potential of representing trauma.[4] They show how singular events of

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trauma can be represented in ways that shift them from the realm of the individual to that of a collective.

The central objective of this essay is to examine the relationship between trauma and the constitution of political community. I argue that – and I demonstrate how – representations of trauma can generate widely shared meanings, which in turn underpin political identity and community. The paper therefore opposes common conceptualisations of trauma as a solitary and deeply internal experience. Instead, I show that popular representations can mediate and attribute trauma with emotional meanings that are instrumental to the construction or consolidation of wider political communities. To do so I use the Bali bombing as an empirical backdrop against which I examine a range of key conceptual issues. Focusing on the role of emotions in particular, I scrutinise how traumatic events can be represented in ways that make them meaningful to a wider community: to those who do not experience trauma directly but only bear witness, from a distance. Representations of trauma often draw attention to the harrowing nature of traumatic events: they signify shock, vulnerability and confusion. Witnesses strive to make sense of what they are seeing, being affected by emotional responses and drawing upon prevailing discourses and symbols to makes sense of what they see and feel. In this way, traumatic, catastrophic events can acquire shared meaning and become perceived as a collective experience.

In developing this argument I seek to contribute to three distinct debates in the study of trauma and international relations. The first way is by engaging critically with contemporary trauma theory. A significant part of this literature has emerged from Holocaust-based understandings of trauma. With a few notable exceptions, these studies tend to emphasise the solitude and deep sense of anxiety that accompany traumatic encounters. They stress that the difficulties involved with representing trauma obviate the possibility of understanding it in a social and thus collective manner. This essay both draws upon and questions the limits of this approach, ultimately suggesting that while trauma theory may hold true for conceptualising trauma's impact at the level of the individual it stops short in helping to appreciate how particular traumatic events can resonate and gain wider social and political influence. The second key contribution of this essay lies in conceptualising and empirically illustrating the centrality of emotion for understanding the politics of identity and community in international relations. Doing so is important, in part because emotions play a crucial political role during times of crisis and trauma, and in part because conventional social scientific modes of analysis tend to dismiss emotions as purely private and personal phenomena. Finally, my investigation provides insight that helps to better comprehend the often parallel politics of community and security in international relations. Key here is that popular representations of trauma tend to pave the way for political responses that define security narrowly and create contexts in which antagonistic or belligerent security policies prevail. In this way, I suggest that the type of solidarity constructed after trauma often serves not merely to reinstate a conservative and ultimately exclusionary vision of political community, but moreover it can become a source of perceived cultural (or national) injury that risks fuelling new conflict.

The paper is structured as follows: to begin, I discuss the nature of trauma. I show that even though trauma is experienced in internal, solitary, and indeed often incommunicable ways, traumatic events can play an important role in constituting identity and community. Second, I demonstrate that representations play a central role in this process: they provide individual experiences of trauma with larger, collective significance. The third section examines the emotional dimensions involved. The fourth section then illustrates the issues at stake in one concrete setting: the 12 October 2002 Bali bombing. In conclusion I aim to show what international relations scholars can learn from this specific traumatic event and from the manner in which it was politically represented.

Before I begin a couple of clarifications are necessary. Trauma studies span diverse and largely disparate bodies of interdisciplinary literature. Within these literatures there are many competing claims concerning the precise nature and impact of trauma. This essay does not attempt to engage all of these differences. Instead, I consciously brush over some of the more intricate disciplinary debates and search for commonalities and inroads into the social implications of trauma in order to engage linkages between trauma and politics. I would also like to stress that the case of the Bali bombing serves not as an in-depth case study but as an empirical illustration of the linkages that individually experienced trauma – here, it is that of the direct victims – can manifest in a wider community. The bombing has been taken as a 'trauma' because at the time of the crisis it was perceived as exactly as that: as a catastrophe that shattered Australia's collective consciousness and set apart the fate and shape of the Australian national community.

The paradox of trauma: the breaking and remaking of community

The notion of trauma is one of the most complex yet compelling psychological and political issues today. Indeed, the term 'trauma' is now used to describe a range of phenomena in politics and international relations: from civilian experiences of war and the psychological conditions of returned servicemen and women, to the effect of witnessing distant suffering through the media. Despite this wide usage, consensus regarding trauma – how to distinguish it, determine how it is physically and emotionally experienced, ascertain its psychological impact, and also how to best help victims through recovery – remains slim, even though debates waged in a range of scholarly literatures. One agreement, however, is that events known as 'traumatic' are pivotal, impacting upon victims in a deeply personal and often incommunicable way.

Scholars largely agree that trauma involves the experiencing of something so disturbing that one's understanding of the world and how it works is severely disrupted. Be it a civil war or a terrorist attack, be it experienced as a direct witness or observed from a safe distance, traumatic experiences rupture the linear narratives through which we experience the everyday.[5] Jenny Edkins suggests we think of trauma as 'blurring the very distinctions upon which everyday existence depends'.[6] Commonly held assumptions and meanings that have, over the course of our lives, come to define us

are stripped away with trauma. A human vulnerability is revealed, and those who suffer it are left to question their capacity to be in control.

Events we label 'traumatic' are thus usually defined so because they cannot be experienced or processed in the same way as other events. Trauma is experienced with feelings of disbelief and terror, and is accompanied by the inability to reconcile it with the practices and memories we are accustomed to. As Maurice Blanchot puts it, trauma is 'what escapes the very possibility of experience'.[7] Feminist scholar Liz Philipose suggests that trauma is 'an experience of a world unmade and undone'.[8] Cathy Caruth, likewise, describes trauma as 'the confrontation with an event that, in its unexpectedness and horror, cannot be placed within the schemes of prior knowledge'.[9] Trauma is thus characterised by how it terrorises, by how it 'breaks down understanding ... and places people in utterly different worlds of feeling'.[10]

Events or experiences known as 'traumatic' are therefore in many ways solitary. Trauma isolates those who endure it. But individual experiences of trauma can also seep out, affecting those who surround and bear witness. Studies from psychology, sociology and politics speak of a 'distant survivor syndrome',[11] which suggests that trauma can psychologically and emotionally affect those who have not stood directly in its path. Although obviously less visceral, witnessing extreme violence and suffering can damage a viewer's psyche by engendering fear and anxiety of death.[12]

Significant here is a move toward an understanding of trauma that goes beyond the official codification of a direct victim suffering post-traumatic stress disorder. For example, Jeffrey Alexander, Ron Eyerman and Pietr Stompka speak of 'cultural trauma'.[13] They refer to an event or historic period so extreme that it shatters identity and debases a wider sense of public meaning or cohesion. There is also a push to restore or reconfigure collective identity in the wake of such fragmentation. Violence and an ensuing sense of trauma can then shape the social landscape through which individuals define and redefine the place they occupy in the world. Atrocity and its memory can in this way become, as Stompka argues, at least partially constitutive of the 'main values, rules and central expectations' that bind community.[14]

Thus while the pain of trauma may indeed be internal, it is also thought to help create the social attachments needed to constitute community. Threads of the trauma – the more public meanings it obtains – circle individual and community, and in doing so mutually constitute what trauma means and how its pain and memory become socially defined. Discourses of collective solace are established, and as Kai Erikson contends, a community providing both 'intimacy' and a 'cushion for pain' locates itself midst feelings of trauma's solitude and fragmentation.[15]

Politically orientated studies of trauma go as far as to suggest that it is in this way – through the constitution and reconstitution of community after a traumatic event – that present day political configurations and policy outlooks can be shaped by experiences of, and the discourses that surround, acts of atrocity. Despite disagreement on numerous conceptual issues, Duncan Bell, Jenny Edkins and Karin Fierke are among many scholars who have shown that trauma is a powerful social and political phenomenon, one that influences various aspects of both domestic and international politics.[16] Whether instigated by political violence or natural catastrophe, experiences

of widespread or publicly visible trauma produce discourses that shape not only how individuals are connected to the world, but also how such connections influence the way one responds to the needs of suffering. Edkins' investigation of memory and contemporary statehood shows that such discourses generally commemorate trauma in ways that foster the reification of existing forms of political sovereignty. How individuals, and in turn societies, come to remember past traumas and mourn lives lost to events such as war is intimately connected to discourses that reinstate modes of political power and social control. Remnants of such acts linger, shaping social and political landscapes often for generations to come. Consider the legacy of the Holocaust, two world wars in the space of half a century, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, the Cold War, Vietnam, the terrorist attacks of September 11 and now the 'War on Terror'. Events such as these – no doubt catastrophic and traumatic for millions of people – not only directly influence the conditions through which international relations are formally conducted, but they also generate psychological and emotional states that continue to divide the world and shape how contemporary global political relations play out. And, of course, this is only to mention a few of the most extreme and geo-politically destabilising events in world politics.

A major challenge remains: to uncover precisely how trauma intrudes into public awareness and in turn, into politics. At the social level trauma often unknowingly helps to constitute the present; it manifests in social discourses and wider cultural dispositions that play a critical though subliminal role in configuring politics.

To begin to address this challenge I now turn to the politics that are at play in the narration of trauma. Implicated here are not only the communicative practices utilised in the giving of individual testimony, but also – and perhaps more importantly – the practices employed by the media and in politics.

The problem of representing trauma

Key to how individual trauma becomes a collective phenomenon is representation. Representational practices provide for the expression of trauma, and in so doing shift it from the realm of the individual to that of a collective or community.

At first glance, however, the centrality of representation sits uneasily with the communicative crisis that trauma scholars identify. Elaine Scarry's pioneering research on pain helps to better appreciate this tension. For Scarry, pain is, in an important and seemingly contradictory sense, 'inexpressible'.[17] A certain speechlessness is said to accompany pain, signalling that perhaps both its somatic and emotional nature is not only incomprehensible but also unable to be truly shared through language.

Scarry's reflections on pain mirror the thoughts of many scholars of trauma. They tend to agree that individuals find it intensely difficult – if not impossible – to communicate the feeling and meaning of trauma.[18] Shocked, pained, and in disbelief, words seem inadequate expressions for the strangeness of the world revealed by one's suffering. Holocaust scholar Dori Laub contends that the telling of stories of survival or of witnessing is inevitably constrained by the impossibility of ever adequately representing trauma. Laub declares that:

> No amount of telling seems ever to do justice to inner compulsion. There are never enough words or the right words, there is never enough time or the right time, and never enough listening or the right listening to articulate the story that cannot be fully captured in thought, memory, and speech.[19]

One may therefore speak and write of trauma yet words fail to convey the perceptual intensity of feelings, either physical or emotional ones. Sexual assault survivors Susan Brison and Roberta Culbertson share that the struggle for words is synonymous with the hope that speech can free the parts of them that remain trapped by pain.[20] Yet, as words form, shaping their emotions from the outside in, giving social meaning to what is individual pain, survivors often tell that they then struggle to free what becomes trapped by language: 'the emotional self'[21] that has been shaped and constrained by the linguistic orthodoxies through which it has been expressed.

The problem of representation I present here is of central importance to how one thinks about the collective dynamics of trauma. If trauma is ultimately ineffable how is it that traumatic events can so powerfully construct and maintain forms of community – national, cultural or ethnic, familial or otherwise? How can trauma occupy a space beyond representation, while at the same time soliciting a range of social discourses that inspire individuals to evaluate themselves in relation to others? If trauma induces a crisis of representation how can and does one make sense of it? Is there something other than or beyond language, an 'other of language' as Julia Kristeva suggests, that words can only ever partially represent?[22]

Although trauma may be without a 'voice', it often eventually finds some form of expression, regardless of how inadequate. Various representational practices narrate trauma, somehow telling of its terror and its pain, and in doing so weave it into the fabric of both individual and collective conceptions of being and knowing. Speaking of trauma – either by victims or witnesses – is a search to find the expressions considered to be the most appropriate measures of trauma and its pain. This is how trauma gathers meaning, socially, by being encoded within social symbols and linguistic patterns that are specific in time and place.

Significant here is that representational practices employed by individuals and the media alike can only make sense and find meaning within the community through which they have been constructed. These practices of representation can take on many forms, including speech, text, photographs, film and bodily gestures. Two forms deemed particularly significant are language and images. Words, for instance, are a tool that allows traumatic events to be understood within a wider community – a community, that is, that roughly shares language and the symbolic meanings that connect expressions with particular ideas and emotions.[23] In today's growing media culture visual representations are also particularly significant. Consider a historic example: the iconic image of six American soldiers raising the US flag at the summit of Mount Suribachi in World War II.[24] Against wartime devastation and loss of morale, this image became the lone representation for not only the remainder of the war but also the continuing commemoration of generations of servicemen and women who lost their lives in combat. By symbolising victory, this image gave purpose and

meaning to Americans, remobilising the war effort and allowing grieving mothers to make sense of the carnage of their sons. Images – and other representations – thus delineate boundaries of community, because they separate who can and who cannot understand.

Representing trauma is therefore not solely a task of trying to find expressions that adequately represent one's feelings. Representations translate trauma into something that can be meaningful to many. At issue here is that processes of representation can ultimately displace the reality of trauma's suffering, replacing the shock and sublime horror of trauma with something socially and communally meaningful.

Representing trauma and the power of emotions

Whether one can comprehend, or feel for, or even as some suggest identify with another's trauma has therefore much to do with the way it is presented. Rather than an arbitrary or even impartial system of depicting trauma's 'truth', representations of trauma both communicate and are filtered through the particular cultural, aesthetic and affective sensibilities of those who view or listen to them. Trauma gets its shape, its more public meaning, from the way it is represented and the messages such representations are perceived to convey.

Emotions are central to the process of representing trauma. Indeed, understanding that emotions are bound up in how trauma is represented and portrayed is necessary in order to provide meaningful insight into how individual experiences of trauma can help to inscribe community boundaries. Yet emotions are largely neglected in the scholarly analysis of international relations. Considered 'confused perceptions' – sporadic, unpredictable and individually felt phenomena – the dominant view in social science has been that emotions are best kept private.[25] The task of this section is to illuminate the role emotions play in shaping how individuals and wider communities make sense of representations of trauma. To do so I focus on a few scholars who show how emotions – or 'affect' – can play a crucial role in the politics of witnessing and responding to human suffering and trauma.[26]

Some scholars have begun to examine the various ways that representational strategies can align and re-align individuals in the wake of violence and trauma.[27] Luc Boltanski and Lilie Chouliaraki examine in particular the affective impact of gazing upon distant trauma.[28] They begin with the seemingly simple assumption that affective sensibilities – that is, emotions, feelings and moods – inevitability influence how people see. For 'those more fortunate' – to be witnessing rather than experiencing catastrophe directly – Boltanski suggests that such sensibilities generally elicit emotions such as sympathy or pity.[29] Chouliaraki also writes of the feelings of 'sympathy', 'anger', 'protest' and 'loss' that accompany witnessing. Emotions such as these may seem straightforward, yet as both scholars show they are not as simple as they may first appear. A 'politics of pity' has become almost routine in the relationship between victim and witness, they contend. Rather than an ethic of care, responsibility and action being implicit with such emotions, pity and sympathy

merely help to make 'the spectacle of suffering not only comprehensible but also ethically acceptable'.[30] They highlight that this is particularly so for Western societies accustomed to witnessing 'distant' catastrophe and trauma through the media. Still, Boltanski and Chouliaraki remain optimistic, arguing that emotions associated with a 'regime of pity' may be cultivated in ways that lead to the 'practical action' needed to alleviate distant pain.[31]

Boltanski and Chouliaraki's line of argument is highly contested. Scholars have long critiqued the way the Western world seems to ambivalently play 'spectator' to suffering in the developing world. Ann Kaplan argues that rather than feelings of empathy and pity being ingenuous, invoking not merely a sense of despair or indignation but also responsibility and action, such emotions may instead be 'empty'.[32] Arthur and Joan Kleinman similarly claim that the widespread – yet utterly ineffectual – representation of distant trauma can only be considered with dismay.[33] International relations scholars similarly caution against such 'sentimentality', showing that in reality emotions such as pity tend to generalise (rather than sensitise) onlookers to cultural difference, in turn perpetuating the selectivity towards those needing to be 'saved'.[34] To varying degrees these thoughts are also shared by scholars who write of 'compassion fatigue' or an 'exhaustion of empathy'.[35] In contrast, an important study by Jill Bennett contends that some representations may activate viewers' affect and shape thinking in ways that promote the ability to imagine the pain of another.[36] Such imaginings are thought to inspire some form of emotional and, in turn ethical, response – even if the latter takes the minimal form of a heightened critical awareness of another's pain. David Morris goes further in suggesting that imagining others' pain can 'link us together in a chain of feeling'.[37]

Far more important than these debates and disagreement is the underlying recognition that emotions are important sites of not only personal but also political experience. Mediating trauma through selectively representing it produces discourses that either attach or un-attach one to the world. Such attachments are made possible at least partially through the emotional responses solicited by witnesses – even if, that is, such witnessing is via the television or newspaper, and from the comfort of one's couch. Simply put, representing trauma solicits emotional responses that help to distinguish how one is connected in the world. Feminist scholars have elsewhere intimated as much. They point out that representations of violence, such as photographs or testimonies of trauma, can become 'iconic artefacts' that prompt private grief to become public.[38] By providing an emotional object of identification, such representations allow one to work through feelings within a wider community of mourning. Private emotions are in this way collectively anchored.

Representations of trauma can also help to distinguish whom one fails to feel emotionally connected with. Emotions mobilised in response to experiencing and witnessing trauma may further set apart communities, rather than bring previously divided communities together. Important here is that emotions are part of the perceptive processes individuals use to perceive and situate themselves in the world. They are socio-culturally constituted modes of appraisal that help to bind (or fail to bind) individuals together.[39]

Emerging studies from political theory and international relations help to clarify the role emotions play in both forming and interpreting representations of trauma. William Connolly, for instance, stresses that politics cannot be compartmentalised into a reason-filled, a-emotional sphere. Much can be learnt from recognising that visceral and corporal feelings – 'gut feelings' – ubiquitously filter through the political decision-making process, he contends.[40] Andrew Ross and Paul Saurette forward similar theses, suggesting that scholars need to engage the social potential of what have long been considered 'private emotions'.[41] Ross goes so far as to argue that an appreciation of emotion is a vital step towards more holistic theorising of international politics. Unravelling how individual emotions are interwoven with social structures of knowledge and belief may facilitate a deeper understanding of how identities and collectives can be constructed. Examining what he calls 'affective connections' can, Ross suggests, help to 'illuminate how political identities are reproduced and how people become intensely committed to them'.[42] Important to such a study is an investigation of how such 'affective energies'[43] can be both purposefully cultivated and inscribed into representational and narrative structures that shape social and political realities.

Examining trauma through an emotionally sensitive lens is thus crucial to considering the cultural (and collectivising) dynamics of trauma's various representations. Important here is an understanding of how emotions help to shape the interpretative processes through which trauma gains social meaning, and, in some cases, influences boundaries of identity and community. A wider community is often depicted as feeling the disorientating effects of those who witness – and suffer from – a trauma directly. Trauma thus touches not simply direct victims but also those witnessing it at 'home', in a far off and safe place. Claudia Aradau comments that it is in this way that individuals may be 'emotionally affected and experience solidarity with victims'.[44] A kind of social connection between victim and witness can be summoned. Feelings of sympathy, or even shared shock and fear, may emerge between witness and victim, and processes of reckoning with and mourning trauma can foster solidarity and solidify communal connections.

Collectivising trauma through negotiating emotion: on the representation of the Bali bombing

To render my reflections on trauma and political community more concrete I now turn to a specific example: the Sari bar bombing in Bali. I am not trying to provide a comprehensive account of the event and its political implications. Neither am I making absolutist claims about the kinds of emotions the bombing solicited. Doing so would be impossible in the context of a brief essay. My aim, rather, is to illustrate how representational practices can help to forge emotional, and thus social, linkages between trauma and a wider community that bears witness. I focus in particular on the effect of media representations, paying attention to how editorials and images published in Australia's sole national newspaper, *The Australian*, draw a very particular and

concrete link between individual suffering and the nature and fate of the Australian national community.

Media representations of the bombing were explicitly emotional. Both images and stories brought forth the injury and terror of victims. They also sought to communicate the brutality of the perpetrators. Headlines and the language of stories discussed individual damage as deeply wounding Australia as a nation. Visual aids were no less candid. Purgatory-like realities presented themselves through front-page images, and as the suffering of so many Australians was made visual, captions gave testimony of compatriots wanting to flee for 'home'. As such, representations of the bombing may be linked with concomitant notions of pity, compassion and solidarity. They negotiated emotions, explicitly representing the event in ways that called upon a sense of collective fear, anger, grief and solace. In so doing, individual emotions of witnesses were linked, implicitly, with those of both survivors and the political figures that were said to be working desperately towards an official response. The solidarity of an Australian national community was swiftly summoned. Indeed, using the media as a gauge it certainly seemed that the processes of grief and the emotions of outrage were collective ones. A sense of shared meaning, purpose and identity was articulated in what became an 'us'/'them' type of rhetoric. Outwardly reflective of this were both the publicly respected calls for collective remembrance and commemoration, and the discourses of retributive justice that subsequently emerged.

Underpinning the various representations and subsequent discourses that surrounded the tragedy was, I argue, the interweaving of individual and collective emotion. How the media and other representational outlets captured the crisis not only told a story about what happened, but also made one feel. This was accomplished in a way that sought to align individual emotions with the wider emotionally charged social discourses that ultimately narrated and gave meaning to the catastrophe. Notions of national loss, public commemoration and political security helped to guide apparently individualised emotional responses. They sought, either purposefully or naively, to smooth over feelings of discontinuity – the shock and terror – and unite individuals in a spirit of shared experience and bereavement. This was achieved as much through the journalistic and testimonial accounts of the trauma as it was through the images that appeared adjacent to them.

Textual interpretations of trauma: the role of editorial comments in the media

One editorial in particular illustrates the combined emotional and collectivising potential of patterns of speech. Published in *The Australian*, one week after the bombing, was an (anonymous) editorial titled 'Australians United Share the Sorrow of Bali'.[45] The editorial is an evocative yet also surprisingly prescriptive meditation on the tragedy of the bombing and how the broader Australian public should (and ultimately did) respond. The editorial sums up much of what was said, by survivors, journalists and politicians alike:

> It used to be said that no town in Australia lacked its war memorial to young men who had given their lives for the defence of our freedom. Today, as many homes

> and schools and sports clubs echo to the sobbing of distraught families, friends and lovers of Australians caught in the front line of terror. The front line is everywhere. No longer are we immune. Even though Bali is beyond our shores, it had become almost an extension of our lifestyle. Holidaying at Kuta beach and soaking up the sun, surf and party scene was almost a rite of passage for young Australians.

In a number of ways this passage works to contextualise the trauma for Australians who witnessed it from home. It tells of the social and emotional impact of the bombing. Readers are told that broader social institutions (i.e. 'homes and schools and sports clubs') mourn the catastrophe alongside victims' families and friends. In another less explicit way, the lives of those lost or directly affected by the bombing are paralleled with those who look on; Bali is represented as not only a place symbolic of Australian lifestyle but also one that most Australians have holidayed in. Indeed, according to the author, 'soaking up the sun, surf and party scene' in Bali is a distinctly – almost ritualistic – Australian activity.

Significant to portrayals such as these may be the feelings of sympathy, care and solidarity that scholars consider crucial to the collective reckoning with trauma. By representing the bombing in ways that promote common or shared (or at least comprehensible) meanings, as well as the power of cultural identification, the passage also diminishes distance. The trauma is pushed into, aligned with, and made relevant to, the lives of Australians more generally. Compounding this are hinted-at notions of collective insecurity and fear. It is claimed that the 'front line' at which victims suffered is now 'everywhere', and moreover, that Australians are no longer immune to acts of atrocity. Statements such as this prompt one to question: should readers fear for their lives as well? If the possibility of terror is pervasive – indeed, if it is 'everywhere' – where is secure? Likening the trauma of the bombing to that of state-sanctioned war is still another way the editorial contextualises the catastrophe. Beginning with a comment upon war memorials, and also in using the distinctly war-like term 'front line', the editorial traverses the trauma in a way that reinforces the notion of it being a national (if not nationalistic) one. Patriotic language such as this arguably supports the idea of the nation as hub of social well-being and political community.

Most of the themes examined in this short passage are reiterated throughout the remainder of the editorial. Continuing, the editorial comments that:

> It has not been the general lot of Australian's young people to have to face the scourge of wholesale terrorism, or to be in places where danger remains. By bringing personal accounts, the uttered dying words, and the sentiments of sorrow which might have been suppressed, the journalists and photographers covering this tragedy have empowered us to reach out as a nation. For the outrage was not just against a building but to extract maximum harm to people whose only fault was having a relaxed and happy time.

This passage makes further reference to how the bombing impacts Australia, both as a community of mourning and as an 'empowered' nation. An emphasis is placed

both on a sense of collective outrage and what the author considers the comparative lack of danger enjoyed (until now) by young Australians. Assumptions about the victims are also presented here. Faulting them only with the desire to relax and be happy harks back to a kind of lifestyle that is considered distinctly and traditionally 'Australian'. The most nationalist and explicitly emotive passage in the editorial does, however, come later.

> If it is true that death defines us, many of us have suddenly had to realise our mortality. We will ponder this during tomorrow's national day of mourning. Even though our participation in many wars has already conditioned us, this new type of war brings us face-to-face with a new situation nationally. But as a nation we have every right to respond strongly. Fundamentalist terrorism is a threat to our way of life. The people of Australia need to resist any notion that anything other than a fierce defence of our values is warranted.

Here, one can see most clearly how textual representational practices attempt to shift individual trauma into that of a wider, distinctly national community. Couched within this passage are many different emotions, and also, I suggest, an implicit attempt to share or collectivise them. Although these emotions are embedded within the individual reflections of one author, the passage is written with a kind of collective authority – a collective voice even. Death is represented as something that the bombing has prompted many Australians to now consider. It is additionally claimed that one's own death is something to be reflected upon whilst mourning the trauma of others. This pulls the reader – she/he who witnesses – into the trauma. Invoked here is a sense of both authenticity and identification. It prompts one to imagine, and to perhaps fear, the possibility of their own pain, and the direction that readers are to do so alongside the trauma of the victims seems key to the possibility of an empathetic emotional response. The theme of solidarity is thus evoked through a perceived likeness. And as such the trauma and terror of direct victims is shifted from a private encounter to a public phenomenon evoking feelings and memories that inhabit a wider culture. Emotions of grief and loss are represented as that of a society; private processes of mourning are depicted as a distinctly collective activity, one with which many Australians identify and will indeed take part in. Moreover, one can see the editorial again drawing upon contemporary discourses of terrorism and collective insecurity. Implicit here is not only a sense of collective fear, but also the call for retribution and the defence of wider Australian societal values. What is striking is that although the bombing took place in Bali, Indonesia, the attack is here represented as emblematic of a threat to Australia's collective 'way of life'.

Other responses to the bombing also reflect the attempt to connect the event with a much wider sense of collective (distinctly national) trauma and injury. Corresponding emotional responses, such as fear, were evoked as well. Initially, the bombing was presented as shocking not only for direct victims, but also for the 'throngs of Australians'[46] who either holidayed in Bali or watched dumbstruck at home. Through the weeks that followed private mourning was presented, quickly becoming that of

the Australian public. A national day of mourning was called and Australians were urged to wear a native blossom – wattle – in tribute and remembrance.[47] As memorial services took place Australian survivors openly claimed that the Bali bombing had irreparably changed the shape of their nation.[48] Discourses of terrorism and ensuing themes of collective insecurity, fear and panic also seemed to pervade the media more than ever before.[49] Then Prime Minister John Howard also reminded Australia that the 'barbarity' of the Sari bar bombing 'can touch anybody, anytime and in any country'.[50] Political editor of *The Australian* Dennis Shanahan went so far as to comment that 'no one is safe anywhere, Australia as a nation and Australians as a people can't hide'.[51] Reviews of domestic security and counter-terrorism legislation were immediately ordered and the Defence Department even went so far as to label their white paper 'Fortress Australia'.[52] Fear invoked from the bombing was represented as the product of a potentially wider threat and representations of the bombing evoked a corresponding sense of societal terror. Interestingly, as in the above editorial, coupled with such fear were calls to defend so-called 'Australian' values and way of life.[53]

One can thus see the collectivising potential of representing trauma. By both explicitly detailing the injury and terror, and by implying that Australia is the 'home' to which survivors simply wish to return, the language employed to depict the bombing can be seen as an attempt to guide individual emotions towards the comfort and sanctity of a wider (again national) community, ideationally as well as geographically.[54] Many of the expressions employed can also be distinguished as those of 'membership categorisation'[55] or 'naming'.[56] Terms such as 'our way of life' and the 'barbarity' of the implied enemies draw 'us'/'them' type distinctions, which in this case essentially group victims together within a wider conglomerate of Australian society.

In sum, textual representations of the trauma can be interpreted to have enabled – yet paradoxically also limited – the boundaries of political community.[57] The emotions and meanings invoked by ostensibly ordinary patterns of speech and writing were part of this process, helping to reinforce prevailing forms of political sovereignty – and thus community. Evidenced by the above editorial, mainstream representations of the bombing reinstated power structures traditional to the nation-state, which while seeming to strengthen the Australian national community simultaneously silences alternative discourses through which new configurations of community can be generated.

Visual representations of trauma: the role of images in the media

Images of the bombing and subsequent acts of mourning reinforced the emotional undertones of the trauma's linguistic representation. Initial images portrayed the devastation and carnage that the bombs had wreaked. Consider the front page of *The Australian* on the first day of full media coverage that followed.[58] The newspaper devoted half the page to a photograph of survivors as they staggered from the burning shell of the buildings (Figure 1).

The photograph captures two Australian survivors, injured and helping one another. They are alone: no other victims or rescue workers are in sight. They struggle forward


THE AUSTRALIAN

TERROR HITS HOME

Friends saved each other from Sari hell

Figure 1 *The Australian*, 14 October 2002, p. 1

as if escaping the depths of a truly traumatic situation. Around them the building burns in a tangled mess. What is normally kept inside – the hardware of wires and plumbing – lies exposed. Whether consciously done or not, the image creates a vivid visual metaphor, one that sums up the bewilderment and upside-down world of those directly affected by the bombing.

Images such as this one are instrumental to the expression and collectivising dynamics of the trauma.[59] By graphically presenting the horror and pain of unknown others, the image brings viewers up short. It seems to present things as they really are. Distinct here is the feeling of authenticity, of being there and experiencing the horror too. Forcing one to look at the image may not only prompt one to imagine the victims' trauma, but engage emotions generally associated with witnessing: shock, incomprehension, fear and the guilt of looking on. Yet in the sense that it portrays Australian survivors, this image can be seen to bring the catastrophe and its devastation into focus in a culturally identifiable – as well as emotionally directive and collectivising – way. Viewing the image in conjunction with the headline is in this respect particularly illustrative. Once again, although the bombing occurred on foreign shores, viewers are prompted to make sense of the image and the catastrophe as one perpetrated upon their 'home'. Representing the event in this way pushes the catastrophe into the lives of Australians, making it appear to be a trauma for Australians more generally and not just the individuals who were directly impacted.

Another way to highlight the collectivising role of images of the Bali bombing is to examine how – over the course of one week – the publicly available images created a particular narrative, or story. First presented was the above image in Figure 1, one of arresting intensity and visual power. By representing the unrepresentable the image confronts viewers with confusion and many unknowns. As soon as the following day, however, front-page photographs markedly changed. They were full of the meaning that this initial image lacked. Significant here is the contrast of images – the replacing of shock with images that provided solace or grounds for other forms of emotional understanding. What followed were the smiling faces of the young Australians who were either missing or pronounced dead. These photographs were generally taken from family albums. Young Australians were presented drinking beer with their mates, cradling infant children, and sitting on beaches soaking in sun. Accompanying headlines both questioned how such a tragedy could happen to so many innocent and fun-loving Australians and gave warning of an impending 'season of terror'.[60] Photographs and headlines such as these locate a wider sense of societal or cultural meaning. Emotions associated with witnessing are guided as well. The images 'fill in' many of the unknowns – who was affected by the bombing and how – and in so doing provide points of commonality that help viewers distinguish how and for whom they should feel.

The same could be said of the public photographs of those in private mourning. Consider the image featured on page 1 of *The Australian* on 21 October (Figure 2).


THE AUSTRALIAN

RUGBY WORLD CUP TICKET BOOKLET

Grieving for lost innocents

Broadband

$19

TPG

Figure 2 *The Australian*, 21 October 2002, p. 1.

Again occupying almost half the front page, families were shown – heads bowed and weeping – at a church memorial service. This image, and indeed even the accompanying headline ('Grieving for Lost Innocents') appears as a normal and perhaps even a-political visual depiction of the reality of mourning. However, it is precisely in its commonality and so-called 'obviousness'[61] that the image gains representative power.[62] It presents 'ordinary' families expressing grief in ordinary ways. Certainly many – if not all – who saw this picture would be able to recall similar experiences themselves or (empathetically) imagine how this process might be.

Survivors, families and Australians who themselves bear witness through the media's representations were also featured in visibly emotional stages of grief: families greeting their returned loved ones, the hundreds who rallied together at national commemorative services, and the flowing tears and embraces of children as they looked on in disbelief. Politicians were also shown expressing their condolences, presenting honours to those who died. Foremost, then Prime Minister John Howard was pictured in front of hundreds of people paying tribute to those who lost their lives.[63]

As temporary and fleeting as these images may seem they play an important role in constructing a collective vision of individual trauma. By harnessing the 'rawness' of the event and the ensuing processes of grief the photographs provide a social space conducive to the collective acknowledgement of and reckoning with trauma. They resonate emotionally with viewers and can (in often unrecognised and unintentional ways) act to pull people together with what seems to be their power to authentically represent and create meaning. In showing how ordinary Australians work through the immensity of loss and grief, photographs of the bombing implicitly parallel the experiences of victims and their families with those of Australians who were bearing witness through the television and newspapers back home. Visual representations of the bombing may therefore be linked with feelings of sympathy, empathy, compassion and solidarity, feelings that are often seen as instrumental to the social attachments needed to reinforce a sense of national identity and community.[64]

Conclusion

This essay has demonstrated that traumatic events can be instrumental to the construction or consolidation of wider political identity and community. In arguing this I have offered a contrast to prevailing views, which tend to conceptualise trauma as a solitary, lonely encounter; a dive into unknown depths that reveals fragility and fear. In these studies, trauma is shown to sever victims and witnesses from their ordinary moorings and set them adrift. Trauma breaks narratives rather than recreates them. However, this prevailing approach opens important questions for socially and politically orientated studies of trauma: if traumatic events only ever exist in a gap or absence of understanding, how is it possible to examine, let alone comprehend, trauma's political significance? If trauma can never be wholly understood or reconciled from the outside, by bystanders, how it is that extreme events can powerfully cohere and fragment the landscapes of local and global communities? Suggestive in

these questions is that although the prevalent understanding of trauma helps to conceptualise the impact of trauma on individuals it falls short in helping scholars appreciate the political limits and possibilities that are a consequence of the widely perceived 'communal' or 'national' trauma that this essay outlines.

I have argued that key to the link between trauma and community is the process of representation. Representations can make traumatic events meaningful in ways that construct communal solidarity. I have also stressed that there is a need to recognise the crucial role emotions play in this process. Emotions are central not only to representing trauma but also to how individuals and societies make sense of and work through the legacy of catastrophe. Simply put, representations of trauma foster solidarity and community at least in part by arousing the affective sensibilities of individuals, and by prompting particular shared cultural meanings and concomitant emotions.

I have examined the collectivising and emotional dynamics of trauma by demonstrating how representations of the Bali bombing positioned Australia as a national affective community. Representations of the bombing created a context in which the catastrophe was perceived as traumatic for the entire nation. Textual and visual representations in the media played a particularly important role. They invoked a sense of shared feeling, and promoted meanings that drew on emotions such as fear, outrage and solace. They did so by presenting Australians with images of death and of heroic survival, of families and friends in mourning, and the expedience of political responses. Headlines and associated stories captured the public imagination by suggesting that Australia, as a nation, was a community united by shock and grief. While such mediations may not go so far as to specifically tell individuals what to think and how to feel, making sense of representations inevitably involves a reliance upon the socio-cultural discourses most familiar to us. Representations of the bombing can thus be seen to have alluded to meanings that linked the trauma with stereotypical ideals of Australian identity and the search to protect a vulnerable and insecure national political community.

My inquiry into linkages between trauma and the constitution of political community has at least three broader implications for the study of international relations.

First is the recognition that politics and international relations scholars need to look beyond customary understandings of trauma in order to engage the immediate and more enduring social and political influence of pivotal traumatic events. Doing so is important because past trauma pushes forward into present-day politics. Traumatic events play a powerful role in configuring communities, from the local to the global. Indeed, traumatic legacies can stretch far in the future, inhabiting prevailing societal memories and shaping political relations for generations.

A more sustained engagement with the political influence of trauma therefore consists of shifting the focus away from the individual challenges of experiencing trauma to an investigation of the processes through which traumatic events take on a wider social significance. Foremost here is the need to examine the manner through which popular representations politicise and collectivise pivotal traumatic events.

The second implication of this essay lies in the need to illuminate further the political role of emotions. International relations has a long history of expunging emotions from scholarly analysis. Emotions have largely been considered as feelings or bodily sensations that overtake us, distorting our ability to make moral or rational judgements. A sharp contrast to the steady, (male) hand of reason, emotions are meant to be kept private. As a result of this prevailing view there are very few accounts of the significance of emotions in world politics.

My inquiry shows that much can be learnt from taking emotions seriously in politics and international relations scholarship. To do so it is important that scholars cease to consider emotions in opposition to rationality. One way to examine emotions in world politics is to consider them as forms of appraisal, as a pervasive part of the perceptive tools individuals use to situate themselves and make the social world meaningful. Also important is the recognition that emotions are social phenomena. They are constituted in relation to culturally specific traditions, such as language, habits and memories. Shared forms of emotional expression and meaning are likewise necessary for individuals to make sense of the world in the context of a wider community. Emotions are thus both private and public, individual and collective. Expressed in a more general way: emotions have a history and a future. Particular emotional dispositions can be passed down, helping to form and reform not only social attachments and communities but also concomitant political decisions and behaviours.

Emotions are thus an important part of the larger cultural framework within which international relations takes place. At its broadest, understanding that emotions are a constitutive aspect of social and political life increases our ability to understand the nature of identity and agency and why individuals come together in the ways they do. The ensuing insights would be of significance to a range of scholarly and practical endeavours, from understanding the motives and behaviours of nation-states and other key actors in international relations, inquiries into terrorism, international security and cooperation to engagements with more normative issues, such as humanitarian intervention, international justice and the politics of reconciliation.

Third and finally, by illuminating the political and emotional dynamics of representing trauma this study adds to scholarly understandings of the politics of community and security in international relations. At issue here is that traumatic events – particularly when triggered by politically motivated violence – are often represented in ways that promote antagonistic political affiliations and allegiances. In the push to overcome uncertainty and restore order after trauma, communities become centred around disingenuous inside/outside dichotomies.[65] Energies and resources are spent keeping perceived 'dangers' at bay. Defensive, militaristic security policies are frequently privileged. Hence the emotions and in turn the solidarity that are generated after trauma can reinstate a conservative vision of political community. Established, often stereotypical and exclusionary boundaries of identity and political community – whether these are racial, ethnic or those of a nation-state – may be reinforced. Communities motivated by a search for vengeance can also emerge from perceptions of shared pain. Key to both configurations, nonetheless, is that emotions accompanying trauma can help to cultivate a perception of cultural or societal injury that helps to divide societies and fuel new conflict.

An awareness of the linkages between representations of trauma, emotion and political community is important because it opens up paths through which scholars and politicians can critically evaluate and rethink prevailing responses to widespread trauma. Important here is the need to resist the reflex reaction of overly swift, uncritical responses that seek to diminish trauma's uncertainty by creating a culture fraught with insecurity and a corresponding desire for retribution. What is needed instead are attempts to take stock after trauma. Scholars and politicians need to embrace the political space opened by trauma rather than seek to immediately foreclose it. They need to take time to contemplate (and complicate) the habitual or prevailing ways of interpreting trauma in order to form a more measured political response. Intended here is that harnessing alternative meanings and feelings after trauma may pave a way for the construction of political communities that are motivated more by a willingness to reflect upon and assuage the source of trauma than by the legacy of anxiety and resentment that trauma so often creates. Communities that are less hostile and less prone to generate internal and external conflicts may also result from such critical engagements with pivotal traumatic events and their emotional legacies.

Notes

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