
Introduction

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Setting the Scene

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Communication, Culture and Crisis in a Transboundary Context

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Chapter Preview

*As international crises increasingly dominate the news headlines, it is imperative to examine how crises are communicated and perceived from a viewpoint that is often ignored in most crisis literature—the nonwestern perspective. This book, *Culture and Crisis Communication: Transboundary Cases from Nonwestern Perspectives*, attempts to fill that gap by examining the role that culture plays in crisis communication in nonwestern settings. Considering the emergence of new spheres of power in the form of the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) and other emerging economic powers that are not western countries, this book is timely.*

Also, the responses to major crises that have rocked different parts of the world in the last few years—including the disappearance of Malaysia Airline (MH370), the Boko Haram kidnapping of nearly 300 school girls in Nigeria, the mass migration of refugees from the ongoing Syrian war and others, by both western and nonwestern societies—illustrate the importance of examining crisis communication

Culture and Crisis Communication: Transboundary Cases from Nonwestern Perspectives, First Edition.

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from standpoints that are nonwestern. The responses also reinforce the assertion that crises are becoming more transboundary than in the past.

After reading this chapter, you will be able to

- *Understand what crisis is, as well as the definition of crisis that we have adopted in this book*
- *Define more deeply what culture is, and the definition of culture that we have adopted in this book*
- *Review our definition of transboundary, as applied in this book*
- *Comprehend the argument for understanding the role of culture in crisis communication*
- *Assess the importance of looking at cases from a transboundary perspective*
- *See an overview of all the chapters and how the rest of the volume is organized*

Introduction: An Ever-Intertwining World

In a world where there is increasing interdependence of countries, and one in which globalization and technological advancements have made it possible for almost anyone to witness, report on, and/or experience what is happening elsewhere irrespective of location and time, local issues can instantly become internationalized and international issues can become localized in the same way. An issue or crisis that might seem to be a problem for one country or local setting can become a matter of global concern and spawn serious consequences for many who at first glance may have thought themselves far removed from the particular issue or crisis. This situation is exemplified by events that have happened in different parts of the world over the past decade, and how various countries have responded. In some cases, countries have responded in a certain way, only to be forced later to deal with unforeseen consequences, usually borne out of the deeply entrenched differences that are a function of different worldviews or cultural positioning.

The wave of Syrian and other refugees moving to Europe in 2015 was initially welcomed by most countries—Germany alone took in 800,000 in 2015; Sweden accepted 160,000; and Austria, Hungary, and Denmark also took in tens of thousands. While the numbers keep fluctuating based on the numbers that apply for asylum or turned back at original entry countries, the welcome carpet is being withdrawn as news reports indicate a clash of cultures. At a 2015 traditional New Year's Eve event in Cologne for instance, police reported that about 80 German women were sexually assaulted and robbed by men who were allegedly of Arab or North African extraction [1]. Other reports of assault at the city's central train station were also recorded. Swedish media reported an unprecedented onslaught

of pickpockets and vagrants described as North Africans at Stockholm's central train station. While the government response has been to suspend acceptance of additional refugees (Germany), propose a repatriation (Sweden), seize assets to pay for their upkeep (Denmark), and build fences (Hungary), local groups have taken it upon themselves to demonstrate their displeasure with the influx of refugees whose culture they consider as fundamentally different from theirs and has the potential of creating serious social and political problems in future. An example occurred in Sweden's Stockholm central train station where members of a large masked gang distributed flyers calling for the expulsion of foreigners and physically attacked "foreign" looking persons. They reportedly justified the attacks as revenge for a 15-year-old Somali refugee who fatally stabbed a Swedish refugee worker [2].

Media pundits argue that these reports illustrate a glimpse of Europe's future if the refugees are not assimilated into European culture. Even Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany as of this writing, has stepped back from her open door policy. In a reversal of previous statements, she contends that refugees will be expected to return to their countries after the war; but, not all Germans are that patient. The outcome of a March 2016 regional election in Germany shows the anti-immigrant Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) Party gaining influence [3]. At the core of all of these statements, activities, and confusion is culture. So, what is culture?

Culture, Crisis, and Transboundariness

Many definitions of culture abound, but a few will suffice here. *Culture* is the traditional shared behavior of any society, race, or people at a particular time. It includes values, customs, beliefs, and attitudes; it is communicated through generations via language, objects, ritual, institutions, and art. It is also transmitted through learned and shared assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, values, knowledge, norms, clothing, language, and more [4]. As Hofstede [5] aptly puts it, culture is the "collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another." Schein [6] compares culture to an iceberg, arguing that culture exists in layers, with the first invisible layer found just beneath the surface. This first layer is that of values or that which we believe is important and the deepest layer—that of fundamental belief—is the one most difficult to observe, measure, or change.

The refugee crisis in Europe highlights the intersection of culture and crisis on many levels. While research on impact of culture on communications features much of Geert Hofstede's seminal work on theory of cultural dimensions, studies on the impact of culture on crisis is gaining grounds [7]. The Toyota recalls, Volkswagen scandal, BP Deepwater Horizon, Nigeria's Shell Oil crisis, Malaysia Airline crisis, and many others illustrate not just the influence of culture on crisis communication in global environments, but also the transboundary nature of crisis. We use the term *transboundary* here to imply the crossing of inter- and intranational boundaries where there are significant geopolitical, cultural, religious, ideological, and socioeconomic

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differences which are significant enough and easily discernible with set systems based on both formal and informal patterns of observation. In other words, we acknowledge that boundaries can exist both within and outside geopolitical entities or countries.

Threats such as “Terrorist attacks, water shortages, critical infrastructure failures, unexpected flows of illegal immigrants, progressive climate change, and new pandemics” would overwhelm countries and turn into crises that would challenge even the best organized government.

Boin and Rhinard [8] describe *transboundary threat* as that “characterized by the potential to cross geographical and functional boundaries.” They argue that “these characteristics outstrip the capacity of nation-states and national bureaucracies that were designed to deal with more classic threats.” They further contend that threats such as “Terrorist attacks, water shortages, critical infrastructure failures, unexpected flows of illegal immigrants, progressive climate change, and new pandemics” [8] would overwhelm countries and turn into crises that would challenge even the best organized government. Using the European Union (EU) as an example, Boin and Rhinard not only identified the challenges of transboundary crisis management, but also opportunities therein. Their proposal to deal with such crises is for nations to collaborate and cooperate across their political, ideological, and geographic boundaries to respond to the crisis.

This book takes the Boin and Rhinard [8] concept a step further by examining transboundary crisis communication cases from a nonwestern perspective. Much of the international crises emanate from nonwestern countries, yet, there is a dearth of research on the topic.

Second, given the nature of current transboundary crises as mentioned by Boin and Rhinard and illustrated by recent humanitarian crises such as the refugee crisis in Europe, health scares such as the Ebola virus and Zika, corporate crisis such as Volkswagen and others, there is an urgency for case studies of transboundary crisis communication in nonwestern cultures. Whether one wishes to conduct business or research in a nonwestern culture, an understanding of the culture would enable the organization or individual to effectively navigate crises situations in that country.

Crisis, Communication, and Culture

The literature on crisis management and crisis communication suggests that there are many different definitions of what constitutes crisis but for our purposes here, we describe a crisis as a major occurrence that can potentially have a negative effect on the individual, organization, or industry experiencing it, as well as its publics, products, goods, services, and reputation [9]. By its very nature, a crisis unsettles and interrupts normal functioning and creates a sense of unease among some groups,

at the very least [10]. Thus for many communicators, crisis and conflict situations are some of the hardest tests of ability and professional deontology [11] that they will ever face. This is because communication sits at the core in the hierarchy of “crisis issues” [12]. That means that (a) communication or the lack of it can cause crises, and (b) when crisis threatens or occurs, communication is central to averting, containing/resolving it, and/or leading the way to restoration.

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The link between communication and crisis then, is not only obvious, but absolutely important in thinking about crisis and crisis planning. Within this mix is also culture, which can be seen in simple terms as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law customs and many other capabilities and habits acquired by the members of society” [13]. On the basis of that definition, one can argue that what constitutes crisis would necessarily be influenced by culture or cultural predilections, and so would communication about crisis since communication is an inevitable part of culture.

Indeed, available empirical evidence suggests that culture significantly affects the way people communicate [11, 14], and on that basis, various writers/scholars have suggested communication strategies to adopt or follow during conflict/crisis situations. While there are keen differences in these suggested strategies, what is common to all of them is the observation that during the elaboration process, knowing what the recipient/public/audience wants, what its social, professional, cultural, and psychological characteristics are and what its needs are, is germane to successful communication in that situation.

The implication here is that without in-depth knowledge and understanding of the cultural setting where a crisis situation has occurred, the crisis communication strategy stands the risk of not achieving its intended purpose [11]. While culture does not always readily provide us with an explanation of the main reasons why crisis erupt and how they evolve, including cultural dimensions in crisis management thinking is a very positive step. An approach that takes cultures into consideration has great potential for achieving long-term and sustainable outcomes in crisis communication plans [11].

From a transboundary perspective then, culture is even more significant in the sense that it is responsible for the differences in the collective programming of the mind, which ultimately results in significant differences in ways of perceiving, knowing, and being.

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From a transboundary perspective then, culture is even more significant in the sense that it is responsible for the differences in the collective programming of the mind [5], which ultimately results in significant differences in ways of perceiving, knowing, and being. This implies, for example, that “[w]hat is appropriate in one sociocultural/national setting can be seen as wholly offensive in another, and what is rational in one sociocultural/national setting is wholly irrational in another.” How, then, do communicators achieve success with such varying and varied environments?

Paying Attention to Cultural Specificities

It has been suggested that because of cultural differences in the publics’ preferences in terms of direct or interpersonal communication during crisis situations, and also the cultural differences relating to the adequate “translation” of communication strategies, Western-style communication strategies are inadequate for dealing with global and transboundary issues of concern [11]. In view of this, getting to know what different cultural and multicultural groups expect and how they analyze, evaluate, and articulate their views during a crisis will ensure that the activities of different publics are considered when planning the crisis communication process; a process which must in itself be considered to be veritably dynamic.

Thus crisis communication practitioners must necessarily acknowledge that having an adequate understanding of basic features related to international cultures and subcultures is of utmost importance if one wants to communicate effectively in an environment that is becoming increasingly global. They must not only recognize, but also acknowledge the existence of cultural diversity and differences and how these influence not just behavior, but communicative behavior especially in times of crisis—situations where there is a threat to a community’s core and life sustaining values [15]. The communicator must also develop and exhibit intercultural sensitivity toward such differences within and across nations [16] and across boundaries. This must be seen as an important attribute in the arsenal of the successful communicator.

Crisis communication practitioners must not only recognize but also acknowledge the existence of cultural diversity and differences and how these influence behavior—especially communicative behavior—in times of crisis.

Culture matters when two parties (the sender and the recipient(s) of the message) are communicating, but it becomes even more significant in a crisis situation because of heightened stakes, due to the potential for a disruption of “the normal flow of things,” and the human trait that desires to protect its own; what is known – one’s known way

of life that is seen as normal, which is being threatened. This situation, as exemplified by many of the cases presented and discussed in this volume, implies that to be able to effectively handle issues and crisis situations, crisis managers and communicators need to be increasingly more versatile in their understanding of contexts that are often times beyond their immediate spheres of operation and direct influence.

Organization of This Volume

In our call for contributions, we asked authors to write about cases that had significant transboundary implications and which were clearly influenced by cultural specificities. We asked them to consider the following questions:

- How do cultures, in this case, these specific nonwestern cultures, respond to crises?
- What happens when the crisis occurs outside the country, but leads to consequences within the country and also outside the country?
- What are the factors that influence the crisis response by the affected countries?
- What are the lessons that scholars and practitioners can learn about the important role of culture in crisis communication in nonwestern cultures?

The result is a collection of cases that together provide a strong justification for considering crises in a transboundary sense, and also the role that culture plays in the understanding and resolution of crises in nonwestern contexts. The chapters (representing countries where the crises occurred) are drawn from the broad geo-political regions of Africa, Asia/Euro-Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. While not every single chapter has a transboundary angle to it, collectively they go beyond a mere presentation of cases to provide unique perspectives into the various influences – cultural and otherwise, tensions and dilemmas – that affect crisis and crisis communication in the specific settings. Each chapter examines how the specific culture impacts communication and response to crisis, using a case study or two as illustration. The aim is to show how different nonwestern cultures perceive crisis, how they manage all aspects of crisis within and across national, political, and ideological boundaries, and lessons that organizations and others that wish to operate or are operating in those cultures could use in preparing for and managing crisis. This chapter has tried to frame this volume within the adopted conceptual boundaries of culture, crisis, transboundariness, and crisis communication. The remainder of *Chapter 1* is devoted to an overview of the rest of this volume, described in the subsequent paragraphs.

Setting the tone is *Chapter 2*, which examines the political and cultural crisis of violence in Egypt, a situation where protesters express their grievances through violence, which is, in turn, met with state brutality. The chapter looks at several incidents

surrounding the volatile situation in Egypt between 2011 and 2015 and identifies some of the key sociopolitical and cultural issues such as human rights violations, police brutality, and politicization of religion, as well as the breaking of the social contract, that has led to a fragmented social fabric. The consequences, according to the authors, are dire for the practice of democracy, and have resulted in battles that are being waged in inquisition courts. In this confusing and fluid state of affairs, many of the issues relating to an “authentic” Egyptian identity are being questioned, particularly the view that a critical mass of Egyptian civil society can participate in producing a political consensus in which civil and political freedoms may be legitimately sacrificed in the name of national unity and security.

Chapter 3 provides an example of a national crisis with truly transboundary implications: a crisis for one country (Ghana), that unfolded in a different country (Brazil). We see stakeholders across different nations, including a worldwide governing body. Using the Ghana Black Stars’ threatened boycott of their last group match against Portugal at the 2014 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup as an example, this chapter shows how the Ghanaian cultural traits of high power distance, respect for elders, and a general *laissez faire* attitude toward what constitutes crisis influenced the way both the handlers of the national team and government officials responded to this crisis that unfolded in the full view of an enthusiastic footballing world. The Ghanaian government’s rather unconventional approach to resolving the issue in order to avoid what was shaping up to be a crisis of immense proportions, while averting the immediate crisis of an actual boycott, created major embarrassment for Ghana on the international scene. The chapter shows the difficulty in framing the issues and subsequently the narrative/s that are spawned when a crisis is unfolding in full glare of the international media; the story also exemplifies the shared human trait of failing to learn from earlier crises.

Using the case of the detection of an Ebola-infected person as a starting point, *Chapter 4* interrogates how the Nigerian government dealt with the threat and managed to beat the Ebola virus disease (EVD) with few deaths in only 3 months when other West African countries struggled to contain the deadly virus with devastating and fatal results. The Nigerian government’s swift and decisive action in implementing effective strategies and tactics that involved the use of existing health infrastructure and personnel, effective communication, mobilization of technology to trace, track, quarantine, and treat Ebola-infected patients and contacts saved the situation. A concerned but patient public complied with new government directives; religious, traditional, opinion leaders and local and international health organizations cooperated and collaborated with the government in an unprecedented manner to bring what would have been a nightmare, to a quick end. This chapter showcases how quick thinking, planning, and adequate mobilization of people and resources can yield the desired results.

Chapter 5 uses the April 2015 violent xenophobic attacks in South Africa as a basis to raise and discuss some important questions around xenophobia in that country. Observing that the legacy of apartheid has made it easy for South Africans to be suspicious of, and often antagonistic to, people who are different, some key

questions are raised: Do these xenophobic attacks represent a deep-seated suspicion of other people and/or an in-bred intolerance of others? Are there multiple causes that simmer under the surface and—from time to time—explode violently? Do the South African media report on foreigners in ways that perpetuate stereotypes and invariably encourage xenophobia? The authors point out that, on the basis of the country's violent history and also previous incidents, this was one crisis that should have been foreseen. Yet when it happened, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) government seemed to be caught by surprise and its initial reaction was a denial that the attacks were xenophobic, a response which only added fuel to an already incendiary situation. The chapter examines the government's response to the April 2015 attacks in its entirety, while trying to interrogate the culture of xenophobia in South Africa and the validity of claims against foreigners. It concludes by noting that the case reveals the complex nature of South African society and the dynamics of the relationship between South Africans as hosts, and foreigners who live in their midst, particularly those foreigners from north of the River Limpopo.

In *Chapter 6*, the melamine-tainted milk powder crisis in China—one of the most serious transregional crises of the twenty-first century in Greater China—provides the basis for illustrating the role traditional Chinese culture and various institutions, especially political and media systems, play in dealing with crisis situations. Through a comparative analysis of the form and content of crisis communication strategies (CCSs) used to mitigate public anger over the contaminated milk powder, this chapter presents a holistic approach to examining crisis communication practice and its effects in the Chinese context. The chapter also contributes to theory advancement by using a Chinese perspective to enhance the cultural and contextual sensitivity needed for crisis communication practitioners and policy makers in various regions in China.

The subject of *Chapter 7* is the terrorist attacks in Mumbai in November 2008, which provides the basis for interrogating the response of the Indian government, including how crisis communication was carried out in that crucial period. The transboundary nature of the crisis lies in the supposed control or coordination points of the attacks (Pakistan) and the vast number of foreigners who were among the casualties. The terrorists targeted the specific locations to fulfill a three-pronged political agenda, which was anti-India, anti-Israel and anti-Jewish, and also anti-US and anti-NATO. The attacks unfolded live on mainstream television over 3 days, and many ordinary citizens used smartphones and social media to post a constant stream of information to websites, leading to the claim that for the first key hours of the attacks, Flickr® rather than the New York Times® or BBC World® had more detailed and relevant information [17]. The Indian approach to crisis response in general, which is typified by tolerance tempered with caution and the generally easy-going and relaxed pace of life, resulted in a situation where the police forces were in a state of confusion during the first hours of the attack, with no one knowing what was going on or what to make of the pieces of information that were filtering in.

Chapter 8 deals with the way Indonesia responded to the forest fires that led to the transboundary haze crisis of 2013. It discusses the different responses provided

at the different levels of government—the national and the local. While the local government approached the whole crisis lackadaisically, the national government's responses varied according to the respective institutions; while some Indonesian ministry officials adopted a denial and evasion response strategy, others took a more progressive approach that sought to assuage their neighbors' concerns. The authors point out that some of the responses were influenced by the Indonesian cultural characteristics of high power distance, weak concern regarding uncertainty avoidance, high in-group collectivism, and low institutional collectivism, as described by the Hofstede and GLOBE studies.

In *Chapter 9*, the authors use Japan's worst nuclear disaster to showcase how the culture and communication practices of Tokyo Electric Power Company® (TEPCO), which operates the world's largest nuclear power plant, influenced its response to the nuclear disaster such that its transboundary effects continue to reverberate across the globe, more than 5 years later. The chapter examines TEPCO's failure to demonstrate consistently high standards in its crisis management and its failure to be transparent with stakeholders, particularly the everyday public protocol, while holding to the cultural expectations of employee loyalty and of harmony with stakeholders. The chapter proposes a communication plan, which has the potential to restore the company's public image and to reduce the growing public disaffection with it over its perceived mishandling of a major nuclear crisis.

Chapter 10, on Kazakhstan, analyzes the deadly conflict between the oil workers, the KazMunaiGaz oil company, and local government authorities that took place between May and June, 2011, using the national ideology of Eurasianism as a framework for understanding the role that culture played in the response to that conflict. While official reports of the crisis gave very low numbers of civilian casualties (17 dead), social media reports painted a very different picture, reporting that, at least 100 people died as a result of the clash with local police. Social media reporting of the conflict forced the Kazakhstani government to abandon its initial denial of the existence of conflict/crisis in the region and to work toward ending it.

An event that stunned the whole world, and continues to baffle industry experts – the disappearance of a Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 (Flight MH370) on a routine flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, China – is the focus of *Chapter 11*. Precisely 327 days (on Thursday 29 January 2015) after the flight literally vanished without a trace, Malaysia officially declared that the disappearance of the aircraft was an accident and added that it presumed all the flight's passengers and crew were dead. On January 17, 2017, it was announced that the search for Flight MH370 had been suspended, making the incident a major mystery in aviation history, and creating an unresolved crisis for the Malaysian government. The chapter discusses how the Malaysian government responded to the vanishing of Flight MH370 and how communication was carried out with the relatives of people who were on board the flight and their governments, as this was an international flight. The influence of culture on the initial responses and general communication around the crisis, and the role played by social media as the crisis unfolded, are also discussed. Through the lenses of

communication, culture and social media, the chapter examines the various aspects of the Malaysian response within the context of transboundary crisis. This case reveals the complex nature of transboundary crisis and the dynamics of the relationship between communication, crisis and culture in an era of widespread social media use that knows no geographic and/or communicative boundaries.

The crisis preparedness, particularly social media crisis preparedness of Singaporean organizations is the subject matter of *Chapter 12*. The authors argue that despite Singapore's success as a hub of commerce, knowledge, and research and development in a fiercely competitive global environment, and a national culture characterized by diligence, continuous learning, improvement, growth, and always needing to be ahead of the curve, its lack of crisis preparedness, particularly social media crisis preparedness constitutes an Achilles heel. This is particularly so given the heavy social media use among organizations in that country. Using two instances of a breakdown in Singapore's mass rapid transit (SMRT) operator as a case point, the authors conclude that organizations have a lackadaisical approach toward social media use and are totally unprepared for social media crisis. Despite practitioners' claim of understanding the importance of crisis preparedness, few have actually put in place practical and rigorous mechanisms to help manage potential and actual crises. The authors conclude that the lack of preparedness for a crisis engendered and/or given fillip by social media is a function of the corporate culture of Singapore's top organizations; a culture that is characteristically cautious and prudent, seeking to maintain the status quo and has a preference for utilizing "safe" traditional media in order to exert control over communication.

In *Chapter 13*, the Korean Air® "ramp return" crisis provides insights into how Korean culture affects public relations practice and crisis communication within that context. Though Korean Air had a strong public relations department with seasoned crisis communication experts, its crisis management system did not work as effectively as one would expect. This was because, as the authors argue, in South Korea's Chaebol system where the owner of an organization exercises absolute power, any recommendations or plan of action suggested by the internal public relations department is futile unless the owner agrees to it. The chapter shows how, in this instance, Korean Chaebol culture combined with Confucianism to negatively impact Korean Air's crisis management and its response to a crisis which could be seen as largely owner generated.

Focusing on the ongoing war in Syria and the subsequent refugee crisis that it has spawned, *Chapter 14* discusses what has been described as the worst humanitarian disaster since World War II. Noting that the civil war has claimed over 200,000 lives and forced about 12 million Syrians to flee their homes into other parts of Syria as well as to some major European and Middle Eastern countries, the chapter looks at the part that culture has played in both the war and the ensuing refugee crisis, including the resettlement process. The authors ask important questions such as these: What is the rest of the world doing in response to the humanitarian disaster unfolding right before their eyes? What are key Western and Middle Eastern countries doing to help

resolve the refugee situation? How are the media covering the crisis and how does this coverage affect refugees in their efforts to settle in their host countries? Providing answers to these questions help bring to the fore the complex and problematic nature of the civil war in Syria and the refugee crisis that it has inevitably created. In the end, the chapter concludes that the Syrian refugee crisis is not just a Gulf Arab issue but one for the Gulf, as well as Western countries, to work on together. The authors also note that the crisis represents a battle for hearts and minds, and suggest that giving the refugees hope through good refugee policies backed by effective communication can help win that battle.

In *Chapter 15*, the authors use the Borusan crisis of 2011 in Turkey as a basis for discussing the complex relations between business, culture, politics, and religious sensitivities. Borusan withdrew sponsorship for a woman race car driver giving the official reason as budget cuts, but it was alleged that the real reason was because the woman wore a headscarf in a television interview which did not sit well with the company's policy of political and religious neutrality. In this case, the controversial issue regarding the true meaning of a headscarf, in terms of whether it represents religious devotion or political Islam, became an issue and showed how sociopolitical, cultural, and religious differences and inclinations can interact to turn what at first glance might seem to be a simple business decision, into a full-blown crisis, aided by social media. The Borusan crisis is regarded as the first major crisis occurring along the sociocultural fault line that Turkish corporations witnessed, and one that the business world was not prepared for and was unable to deal with in a satisfactory manner. The chapter concludes that the case shows that sociocultural factors have major influences on business success, while highlighting recently amplified sensitivities of the Turkish society.

Chapter 16 examines the Niterói landslide, which occurred in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and how cultural practices accentuated the disaster and also influenced the way in which authorities responded to it. In that situation, two factors came together to turn a natural disaster into a serious tragedy that could have been avoided. The disaster was compounded by a sequence of careless activities strongly influenced by cultural attitudes and state and municipal government (in)action and lack of preparation for effective crisis management. The landslide was partly a result of a terrible series of management misconduct and organizational misdeed. The handling of the Niterói disaster highlights how culture and politics negatively influenced Brazil's response to the crisis and provides important lessons in how effective risk analysis and crisis communication may save lives; and the need to prioritize lives over houses or votes.

Two countries in Latin America – Colombia and Guatemala – are the subject of the discussion in *Chapter 17*. The case, which is also a prime example of a transboundary crisis, involves the United States-based transnational corporation Chiquita Brands International®, which has been involved in crises originating in Colombia and Guatemala, each of which rapidly spread to the United States with different consequences in each respective nation. The chapter describes these crises, how they shifted from the corporation's host countries (Colombia and Guatemala) to Chiquita's home

country (the United States), and the specific controlled public relations and communication strategies and tactics that Chiquita adopted to face those challenging situations. The authors point out that it is essential to understand these crises in the context of global public relations because in a globalizing world, transnational corporations (TNCs) need to understand how cross-national conflict shifts happen. They suggest that corporations need to have the ability to develop a “glocal” strategy that responds to the needs and concerns of different publics in the home and host countries and propose a practical framework for addressing transnational crises, using cross-national conflict shifting theory (CNCS) as a basis.

The final chapter (18) offers a fitting conclusion to the volume by providing practical tips on how to plan for crisis communication across cultural and transboundary contexts. As the summary of the chapters in this section has shown, and as history has consistently taught us, most organizations and institutions will experience a day of crisis in their lifetime. Given that certainty (almost), the authors suggest that it makes sense to put in place plans for that day of eventuality. This is particularly important in an era where a local crisis can quickly cross boundaries – physical, ideological or virtual, and become an international crisis, and crisis seemingly happening far off from a nation’s shores can quickly become a matter of concern for local authorities away from the maiden point of crisis. Thus, planning for the day of crisis, the authors point out, is imperative. The chapters in this volume indicate that there is usually a common theme running through most crises; that is, failure to plan in advance. To deal with that, the last chapter attempts to tie it all together with tips on preparing for that day of inevitability. In crisis situations, things can be chaotic and not as orderly as the crisis handlers would have it, and usually implementing any plan at all, is difficult. Nonetheless, planning is essential and the concluding chapter seeks to provide some guidelines on how to plan for communication on that crisis day, noting that, when a crisis hits, what is said in the early moments can go a long way to not just define how the crisis is perceived but also how the organization recovers from the crisis. The thrust of the chapter is that, despite the focus on culture and transboundary concerns, certain commonalities can be found among crises across all settings, and that, allows for the provision of broad guidelines in planning and preparation.

Conclusion: The Value of Transboundary Crisis Case Studies from Nonwestern Societies

This book, *Culture and Crisis Communication: Transboundary Cases from Nonwestern Perspectives*, aims to fill the gap in an area of crisis communication that is now getting some attention from scholars. Globalization has ushered in new spheres of power in the form of the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) and other emerging economic powers [18, 19]. These countries, with their attendant cultural views, are reshaping business communication. Sriramesh’s pioneering fieldwork on Indian organizations in 1988 set the stage for linking cultural “environment” to the

practice of public relations. Today, while some organizations recognize the important role of culture in their communication to communities in host countries, others are still debating whether adapting their communication to fit cultural mores of a host country is necessary. This debate is heightened when an organization faces a crisis situation. The responses to the burning of the Quran by the US military in Afghanistan, Arla and the Danish cartoon crisis in the Middle East, among others, provide excellent examples. We believe that as more countries and regions assert their influence, organizations and public relations professionals must consider culture in their design of public relations programs and response to crisis situations in nonwestern countries. We believe that culturally significant issues such as religion and the political chasm that exists between developed and developing countries would be highlighted within the project.

Within the emerging literature, there is support for the contribution of this book from those who stress the role of culture in crisis management [20], those who criticize crisis communication scholarship for its “managerial bias” and the tendency to marginalize the perspective of the public [21], and also those who point to the heavy domination of American/Western viewpoints [22, 23]. Since the focus of this book is on case studies from nonwestern contexts, it provides a different perspective to the literature, by addressing some of the aforementioned criticisms while filling a lacuna in the literature.

As individuals and organizations are integral parts of any society, crisis communication cannot be considered in a vacuum; it needs to adopt a holistic approach by considering the broader cultural context in order to better deal with the concerns of stakeholders. For international managers, communicators, and researchers, it is essential to understand the culture of the country or region in which they are operating. Understanding the effect of the differences in context provides a knowledge base and cultural intelligence that can oftentimes be the difference between success and failure.

We believe that this book will appeal not only to students of culture and communication, but also to organizations with business interests in those parts of the world that have been discussed here. It will broaden the scope of research in crisis communication from cultural and nonwestern perspectives. The epistemological value of culture cannot be understated in any attempt to understand how individuals, groups, organizations, and nations around the world recognize and respond to crisis. Ultimately, it is our position that an ontological understanding of crisis and the role culture and communication play in crisis response is an absolute necessity, hence this book.

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