Introduction

Few phenomena in world politics are as central yet as under-explored as are trauma and emotions. Trauma is a defining human experience embedded in global political relations. Wars are fought and the ensuing emotional, traumatic memories help to constitute and divide societies and nations for centuries. Other forms of violence, such as terrorism, cause insufferable pain and trauma for victims, families and communities. Yet, political violence is not the only cause of trauma in the global arena. Trauma can also stem from more incremental physical suffering, such as poverty, famine and disease, that causes long-term psychological damage. Such damage occurs at the individual level, but when trauma is widespread the damage is more far-reaching: it stretches into the social landscape through which communities live out their lives and shape their politics.

No matter what the cause, whether instigated by political violence or natural catastrophe, experiences of widespread or publicly visible trauma influence not only how individuals and communities interact and define themselves, but also how ensuing political outlooks and policies are formed. No clearer is this illustrated than through the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001. The ensuing trauma deeply affected how people – and governments – perceive of issues of security and national identity. Moreover, the attacks mobilized a substantial coalition of states around the shared goal of eliminating fundamentalist terrorism. But trauma can also be politically constitutive – and enabling – in other more humanitarian ways. Witnessing natural catastrophe, even if from the far-off safety of one's home, can help to configure communities dedicated to alleviating others' suffering. Consider the transnational solidarity that emerged in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti or the December 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia. No doubt the unprecedented and very substantial international aid community emerged at least in part as a

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consequence of the highly visible and intensely emotional nature of the massive suffering depicted.

The central focus – and objective – of this book lies in examining how traumatic events can constitute forms of community in world politics. Some excellent studies have begun to conceptualize the role trauma plays in politics and international relations.[1] However, very few systematically examine the processes through which seemingly individual and inimitable experiences of suffering can attain wider collective political influence. Added to this is that this body of literature is characterized by a certain tension. Many inquiries, particularly those emerging from studies of the Holocaust, consider trauma to be isolating.[2] With a few notable exceptions, these studies tend to emphasize 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.

Even though trauma may be experienced individually, as a rupture of the social fabric upon which individuals rely, traumatic events can also help to form the social attachments needed to constitute community. Significant here is an understanding of trauma that goes beyond that of a lone or direct victim suffering post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Trauma is in this conception understood as in part a construct, produced through social discourses that widely prevail and resonate after catastrophe.[3] A growing number of scholars draw from this understanding and now speak of the phenomenon of "cultural trauma."[4] They refer to events or historic periods so extreme that they

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[1] Prominent contributions include Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); K. M. Fierke, *Critical Approaches to International Security* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), pp. 123–143; James Brassett and Nick Vaughan-Williams (eds.), "Governing Traumatic Events," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 37.3 (2012), 183–281.

[2] For example, Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). Insightful works that examine the history and theory of trauma and trauma studies include Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*, trans. Rachel Gomme (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[3] Brassett and Vaughan-Williams, "Governing Traumatic Events," 183–187, at 183–184; Fierke, *Critical Approaches to International Security*, p. 123.

[4] Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Trauma: A Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), pp. 6–30; Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Gieson, Neil J. Smelser

shatter identities and debase 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. Atrocity and its memory can in this way become, as sociologist Piotr Stompka argues, at least partially constitutive of the "main values, roles and central expectations" that bind community.[5]

Trauma thus involves a fundamental paradox, and this paradox has a dual nature: trauma isolates individuals, yet it can also seep out, affecting those who surround and bear witness and, in doing so, shape political communities.

One of the distinguishing features of my inquiry is that it explicitly addresses the disjuncture between the two very different conceptualizations of trauma. I focus on understanding how seemingly individual traumatic encounters can acquire larger societal and political importance. I do so by underlining the key role that processes of representation play in making traumatic events collectively meaningful, including to those who do not experience trauma directly, but only bear witness, from a distance. By giving voice to or visually depicting what are unique and somewhat incommunicable experiences of shock and pain, representational practices craft understandings of trauma that have social meaning and significance. In particular circumstances, such practices and the shared meanings that are produced resonate with shared, culturally ascribed notions of mutual bereavement, loss and solidarity. A community bound by shared understandings and a common purpose of working through trauma may ensue.

The primary contribution – and argument – of the book emerges from the observation that emotions are a crucial, though largely underappreciated element of the process through which traumatic events construct political communities.[6] To be sure, I argue that in particular circumstances traumatic events and histories proliferate collective forms of meaning and feeling that distinguish a community as

and Piotr Stompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Piotr Stompka, "Cultural Trauma: The Other Face of Social Change," *European Journal of Social Theory*, 3.4 (2000), 449–466.

[5] Stompka, "Cultural Trauma," 457.

[6] One excellent exception is the classic text, Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (London: Pandora, 1992); see esp. pp. 175–195.

an "affective community." With this concept, I mean that the respective community is welded together, at least temporarily, by shared emotional understandings of tragedy. What a community makes of traumatic occurrences – that is, the social and political significance of trauma – is thus linked to, and contingent upon, the emotional resonance of the events at issue. This may seem a commonsensical proposition. Horrific and unexpected events shatter expectations and defy established meanings in part because their impact is of an inherently emotional nature. The emotions felt in response to trauma long haunt victims and witnesses through memory as well. Representations as well as wider discourses of trauma are also intimately emotional: they tend to draw attention to the harrowing nature of traumatic events: they signify shock, vulnerability and confusion. However, while the emotional dimensions of pivotal traumatic events are obvious, the political roles they play are yet to be systematically examined in relation to how communities endure and recover.

My inquiry shows that much can be learned from taking emotions seriously. Yet, to do so it is important that scholars cease to consider emotions in opposition to reason and rationality. I instead underline the pervasive nature of emotions and suggest that emotions play a particularly important political role during times of crisis and trauma. For far too long social science research has sidelined emotions. They were largely seen as feelings that are either purely personal or too ephemeral to be systematically examined for their political relevance. This is why I offer a systematic and comprehensive engagement. In doing so, I draw on a rapidly growing body of literature that examines the role of emotions in world politics.[7] I see emotions as inseparable

[7] In the past decade research on emotions in world politics has undergone a radical transformation. Several articles, journal special issues and forum sections, as well as a growing number of edited collections and monographs turn to emotions for political insights. They do so from a range of theoretical perspectives and emotional purviews. Among the most referenced include Janice Bially Mattern, "A Practice Theory of Emotion for International Relations," in Emanuel Adler (ed.), *International Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Roland Bleiker and Emma Hutchison (eds.), "Forum Section on 'Emotions and World Politics'," *International Theory*, 6.3 (2014); Neta Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotions and Emotional Relationships," *International Security*, 24.4 (2000), 116–136; Khaled Fattah and K. M. Fierke, "A Clash of Emotions: The Politics of Humiliation and Political Violence in the Middle East," *European Journal of International Relations*, 15.1 (2009), 63–97; K. M. Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice: Agency, Body and Emotion in International Relations*

components of our personal and social life – and therefore as a pervasive part of political life. Emotions matter in a range of circumstances. They can shape, in often unseen and inaudible ways, the motives and behaviors of states and they underpin phenomena such as terrorism, international security and cooperation. Emotions also influence normative issues, such as humanitarian intervention, international justice and reconciliation. In short, emotions are intrinsic to all social and political action. They lie at the core of how communities, including nation-states, are organized and function – hence making possible the particular "affective communities" that I uncover and examine. But a widely perceived traumatic event is a time when private emotions are arguably the most publicly pronounced.[8] This is why studying the politics of emotions in the context of an acute catastrophe is particularly revealing.

I engage the issues at stake in both a conceptual and empirical manner. After establishing a framework to appreciate the links between trauma, emotions and political community, I present three empirical case studies. The first two involve situations of "immediate" or sporadic catastrophe that precipitated both widespread trauma and powerful forms of community: the October 2002 Bali bombing and the December 2004 Southeast Asian tsunami. I examine media representations of these two very different but equally pivotal traumatic events. At issue with the Bali bombing was the transnational constitution of

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Renée Jeffery, *Reason and Emotion in International Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Jonathan Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs," *International Organization*, 64.1 (2010), 1–31; Jonathan Mercer, "Approaching Emotion in International Politics," paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, San Diego, California, April 25, 1996; Dominique Moïsi, *The Geopolitics of Emotions: How Cultures of Fear, Humiliation, and Hope are Reshaping Our World* (New York: Doubleday, 2009); Dominique Moïsi, "The Clash of Emotions," *Foreign Affairs*, 86.1 (2007), 8–12; Roger Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Andrew A. G. Ross, *Mixed Emotions: Beyond Fear and Hatred in International Conflict* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014); Andrew A. G. Ross, "Coming in from the Cold: Emotions and Constructivism," *European Journal of International Relations*, 12.2 (2006), 197–222; Brent E. Sasley, "Theorizing States' Emotions," *International Studies Review*, 13.3 (2011), 453–476.
[8] Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics," 130; Ross, "Coming in from the Cold," 211–214; Maja Zehfuss, *Wounds of Memory: The Politics of War in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 240–242.

an insular and parochial sense of Australian nationalism and cor-
responding form of political community. The tsunami catastrophe,
in contrast, demonstrated how representations of a traumatic event
can produce the shared meanings and sense of common purpose
required to mobilize political community beyond the nation-state.

I then move on to a third empirical engagement. Here, I exam-
ine two more long-term cases: China and South Africa. Scrutinizing
China's history of colonial trauma and ensuing humiliation and, in
turn, South Africa's struggle over the traumas of apartheid, I show
how representations can help to cultivate the social space conducive
to acknowledging and working through the painful emotions that
often cohere communities in destructive and politically antagonistic
ways. Thus together with constituting emotional communal link-
ages, I show that traumatic events and histories can also provide an
opportunity to transform the nature of such linkages.

The rest of this introduction now maps out my journey in more
detail. I first offer a preliminary understanding of trauma's dual,
paradoxical nature, tracing its significance within the broader study
and practice of world politics. I then highlight why emotions play
such a crucial – and so far underappreciated – role in the respective
political processes. Here I engage with some of the recent burgeon-
ing literature on emotions and world politics. My purpose, how-
ever, is not to offer a comprehensive survey of the respective field of
study. Rather, my main aim is to advance debate by offering detailed
empirical case studies and by bringing into conversation contribu-
tions from a range of different disciplines, including psychology,
anthropology, sociology, political geography, feminist theory, phi-
losophy, neuroscience, political science and international relations.

The paradox of trauma: the breaking and remaking of community

Scholars are paying more and more attention to the sociopolitical
dimensions of trauma. Where the term "trauma" was once restricted
to use in the mental health field, it is now also understood to be a
social phenomena, as an open wound that can at once affect both
individuals and a wider collective. This growing and somewhat
"elastic" usage of the concept has resulted in a rapid expansion of work

on trauma.[9] Trauma studies now extend across diverse and somewhat disparate bodies of literature. Uniting them is a challenge, as there are many competing claims concerning trauma's precise nature and impact. But, at the same time, some commonalities can be identified. One such commonality is that trauma tends to be conceptualized as a solitary, isolating experience.[10] Trauma is thought to be an encounter with something so terrifying that it plunges those who experience it into a world of uncertainty and fear. The comfort of normal habits and expectations falls away with trauma. Commonly held assumptions and meanings that have, over the course of our lives, come to define us are stripped away. No longer can we envisage life as a smooth trajectory from here to there. Therefore those who survive traumatic experiences may well have preserved their physical lives, but the meaning ascribed to being becomes altered, often in revelatory and irreconcilable ways.

The unexpected and confronting nature of trauma is also said to belie one's ability to comprehend it. Or so psychoanalytical studies of trauma suggest. Scholars note that feelings of disbelief and terror ensue, disorientating victims and witnesses to such an extent that they are unable to reconcile their experiences with practices and memories they are accustomed to. Cathy Caruth suggests that an event is known as traumatic if it "cannot be placed within the schemes of prior knowledge."[11] Maurice Blanchot goes further still, suggesting that trauma is what "escapes the very possibility of experience."[12] Some scholars have even contended that in contrast to pain – which is said to be an everyday occurrence that is "lived" through – trauma is understood to "inhibit living."[13] As such, traumatic experiences are not processed or

[9] Murray Schwartz, "Locating Trauma: A Commentary on Ruth Leys's *Trauma: A Genealogy,*" *American Imago*, 59.3 (2002), 367–384, at 367.
[10] To highlight the isolating features of trauma is, however, not to say that a traumatic experience is purely individual. Every individual is always already shaped by affective dynamics that surround and situate her or him. In this sense, as isolating as trauma feels, an individual's reaction to trauma is always already social and collective.
[11] Cathy Caruth, "Recapturing the Past: Introduction," in Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 153.
[12] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 7.
[13] Liz Philipose, "The Politics of Pain and the End of Empire," *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 9.1 (2007), 60–81, at 62.

"known" in the same ways as are other experiences. Trauma shatters the confidence and sense of security that individuals need in order to walk effortlessly through each day. A human vulnerability is revealed, and those who suffer it are left isolated and puzzled, unable to answer important questions or even express the emotions they feel.

As a result, traumatic encounters prompt individuals to feel cut off from the life and world that surround them. Trauma isolates individuals. This may be distinguished by the corresponding feeling of being detached from – or "betrayed" by[14] – the very community that helps to situate and define one's identity. Bonds between one's self and a wider community are broken; the social context in which one ordinarily locates one's self feels ruptured, in a way that at the time may seem beyond repair. The damage to one's sense of security and community may therefore be severe.

Literatures largely agree that the isolation and emotional disorientation of trauma are compounded by the challenge of how to communicate its impact. Scholarly as well as survivor accounts suggest that following traumatic experiences, individuals find it immensely difficult, if not impossible, to communicate the meaning of their experiences.[15] Shocked, pained, and in disbelief, words seem suddenly incapable of representing the physical and emotional sensations experienced. One can say that it felt horrible, that the shock and pain were completely numbing, but the prevailing reaction of people to trauma is that the sense of loss and grief is so great that it cannot be adequately expressed through language. Some commentators even go as far as to suggest that, without words, traumatic experiences take on a shadowy, strangely "unreal" quality, one that traumatized individuals forever fail to comprehend.[16] Unable to adequately express trauma, one's social and linguistic world becomes "frozen pictures of the past,"[17] as traumatic memories continue to structure being and what motivates interactions with others.

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[14] Jenny Edkins, "Forget Trauma? Responses to September 11," *International Relations*, 16.2 (2002), 243–256, at 245.

[15] See, for instance, Dori Laub, "Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle," in Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 63.

[16] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, pp. 99–108.

[17] K. M. Fierke, "Whereof We Can Speak, Thereof We Must Not Be Silent: Trauma, Political Solipsism and War," *Review of International Studies*, 30.4 (2004), 471–491, at 482.

However – and paradoxically – trauma can also help to constitute community. This process may be an organic one, emanating from survivors and witnesses searching for acceptance and to re-establish the social connections that have been shattered. It can also be a process that is deeply political, either in its effects or in its motivation.

Publicly witnessed traumatic events are an occasion when a type of "collective trauma" is most likely. Such events tend to precipitate a range of processes that involve the repeated re-mediatization of the accompanying disbelief, shock and horror. In Western literatures, September 11 has become the most commonly referred to occurrence. Ann Kaplan captures the prevailing sentiment well when she relays that after the attacks "[e]veryone was in shock: people did not laugh out loud in the streets or in the Square; voiced were muted. People's expressions were sombre. I felt a connection to strangers that I had never felt before."[18] Sara Ahmed argues that in such circumstances a collective sense of shock and of being injured can inspire communal "attachments."[19] Central in this regard is a social environment that recognizes, accepts and responds to the sight of another's pain. According to Ahmed, in such environments "the wound is a sign of identity"; extreme experiences become part of the intimate bonds and feelings that give people a sense that they are tied – or that they belong – together.[20]

Abetting this process are the stages of recovery that victims and witnesses pass through. When confronted with intense feelings of dislocation, individuals tend to seek the consolation and understanding of others. Traumatized individuals, as Judith Lewis Herman contends, must seek to socially reintegrate and have the truth of their experiences acknowledged.[21] Other literatures suggest that however "inexpressible" trauma may ultimately be, the need to speak of it surmounts the difficulties associated with doing so. This process may play out in a number of ways. Often victims and witnesses attempt to express – or give "voice" to – their experiences. They look to a community that will acknowledge, understand and respect the immensity of what they have

[18] E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in the Media and in Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), p. 9.

[19] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp. 12, 16, 28.

[20] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 32.

[21] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, pp. 175–181.

endured. By sharing trauma through trying to communicate and represent it, personal feelings of vulnerability and helplessness interweave with social context. Individual trauma is in this way enacted – or "performed"[22] – in a manner that is at once both social and political, for, as the work of Jenny Edkins and K. M. Fierke explains, traumatized individuals are reliant upon socioculturally obtained patterns of language in order to share and make sense of their experiences.[23] Feelings of discomfort – of shock, incomprehension and pain – are sewn into the social fabric in a way that connects us to some and simultaneously distinguishes us from others who are considered unable to identify with our experiences.

The practice of making trauma communally meaningful is often also overtly political. Scholars have underlined that traumatic events can become pivotal in perpetuating the type of inside/outside communal dichotomies that have long constituted international relations.[24] Key here is that traumatic events can become sites that either affirm or deny particular political and communal boundaries. The ensuing negotiations are in many ways a struggle over meaning: a search to make sense of the events that have transpired. It is not surprising that divisive political battles emerge, for when words seek to replace the meaningless of trauma a whole range of interests and power plays are

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[22] Throughout this book I borrow from Judith Butler's notion of performativity, which suggests that how we speak and physically carry out (i.e. "perform") particular actions constitutes reality (and identities) by appealing to or transgressing established power relations. Adapting this to trauma is to imply that how individuals speak of and enact traumatic experiences and memories through behaviors is inevitably bound by accepted social codes and discourses for doing so. Many of Butler's works could be cited here. One helpful essay is, for instance, Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal*, 40.4 (1988), 519–531, esp. 527–528. A recent collection that interrogates performativity in world politics is Jenny Edkins and Adrian Kear (eds.), *International Politics and Performance: Critical Aesthetics and Creative Practice* (Milton Park and New York: Routledge, 2013). Cynthia Weber has also drawn from Butler's notion of performativity to theorize the linkages between subjectivity and the sovereign state. See Cynthia Weber, "Performative States," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 27.1 (1998), 77–95.

[23] Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, p. 7; Fierke, "Whereof We Can Speak, Thereof We Must Not Be Silent," 473–482.

[24] R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).