

Hazard, Risk, and Relevant Interests: The Globalization of Public Administrators

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This paper compares the philosophy of the United States with that of the international community concerning risk, security and governance. The hurricane season of 2005 illuminated economic and social challenges related to natural disasters. This paper argues that without revisions in social policies and the consciences that formulate them; the United States remains vulnerable from our notion of risk. We must be secure from terrorism and secure about the competency of public administrators to uphold the civil, political and social rights of diverse populations irrespective of the crisis. Moral dilemmas exist concerning rights that can be addressed by intergovernmental collaboration in the initiation of social policies and services. The United States can benefit from the lessons learned by international communities if it is willing to forego the intoxication of political power, the acceptance of poverty, and the blaming of marginalized populations for economic challenges.

This paper examines the philosophy of the United States concerning risk, security and governance with that of the international community including nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and private voluntary organizations (PVOs). While the hurricane season of 2005 brought a new clarity to natural disasters, this paper argues that without revisions in social policies and the consciences that formulate them; our country remains vulnerable from the way many of us consider the notion of risk. Security recently has been defined solely in respect to terrorism but also includes the competency of public administrators to guard and fulfill the civil, political and social rights of diverse populations irrespective of the crisis. Our national security also relies on the perceptions held by international communities and political regimes (included in this article) about our ethics in addressing the legitimate needs of our citizens (Vaughan 2005).¹ If moral dilemmas exist concerning such rights, they are conflicts among and between political

¹ Media Reaction, edited by Rupert Vaughan, conveys the spectrum of foreign press sentiment. Posts select commentary to provide a representative picture of local editorial opinion. Some commentary is taken directly from the Internet. This report summarizes and interprets foreign editorial opinion and does not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Government. This analysis was based on 51 reports from 25 countries over September 9-13, 2005. Editorial excerpts are listed from the most recent date. More information can be obtained from Media Reaction Branch (202) 203-7888, rmmmail@state.gov and <http://foia.state.gov/masterdocs> as noted in the Vaughan reference.

agendas, intergovernmental collaboration, and humanitarian efforts with strong economic overtones.

9/11, the American hyper power discovered vulnerability and solidarity. After Katrina, Americans can no longer turn a blind eye to social and racial inequalities,...regularly denied and even more overshadowed by a propaganda on security operating on full steam.

Le Soir Press (September 12, 2005, Belgium)

Hazards, Perceived Risk and Risk

Crisis offers an opportunity to learn and develop coherent policies addressing the vulnerabilities of a community and its citizens. The definitions associated with risk, hazards, and perceived risks are important to the formation of policies and the preparation of citizens. For instance, building homes on the coast, on riverbanks, or near deltas is living with hazards but the perceived risk is minimized using a number of trade-offs. Risk associated with particular geological and ecological hazards is measured by the magnitude of potential death, injury, or loss of property (Merritts, DeWet and Menking 1998, 22-23). The potential gain or profit from living with the risk is often part of the calculus for the developer (private or public) but not always for those living with the hazards.

Poverty is a social hazard that carries numerous risks for the poor as well as for policy makers who ignore the accompanying physical, mental, and emotional factors. Like a precipice under which a town has decided to live, the decision to ignore poverty penalizes those who live with poverty, thus reflecting hazards that carry significant risk. The perceived risks associated with geoscientific hazards are often mitigated in favor of economic decisions; likewise with those accompanying poverty. Citizen complacency to their vulnerability from geoscientific and social hazards is ever-present and increases, often without notice. Some may not comprehend the unpredictable magnitude for potential disaster and others are simply unaware. Citizens project into the future that the hazard will not activate into a disaster or demand remediation; otherwise is to live with certain pathology (Reith 2004, 392). One might argue that the pathology is a more sensitive conscience.

While the disaster may appear to occur without warning, the reality is that often the perceived risk posed by the hazard is mitigated by the economic well-being of the community, its citizens, and its potential to rebuild. Risk is a term citizens have learned to ignore and the uncertainties associated with risk are often misunderstood, if even considered. One aspect of public administration is that specialization of tasks has resulted in the necessity of intercollaborative policies. A general example is the litigation that often accompanies environmental issues, zoning, social services, and decisions that elect to ignore aspects of risk based upon who will experience the crisis. Examples include the building of homes on the Florida seacoast, the development of communities on hundred year floodplains, the decision to forego national health care, or the termination of most income maintenance programs.

Politicians and public administrators, while being extensively informed about social and geoscientific hazards, often ignore the risks in favor of maximization of self-interest. The wealthy can build under the precipice because it has a great view, they can pay high taxes, or they may have their taxes cut in favor of decreasing the number of individuals eligible for social services. If the precipice collapses, they have insurance, a

second home, or transportation to family willing to take them in. If accepting risk is profitable, then others join in the behavior. “Prudentialism” expands the concept of responsibility and how to respond to the hazards posing the risk. O’Malley (2000) and Dean (1999) describe “prudentialism” as requiring a duty from citizens to take responsibility for their own welfare. It remains up to them to know what their potential risks are and engage in the “management of these so-called risks as part of everyday life” (Reith 2004, 395). Financial well-being adds to the ability to successfully manage the perceived risk. This governmental philosophy may not easily fit into the aggregate issue of communities who might face natural disasters. The predictability is uncertain and the funds for responding to the disasters rest with local, state, and federal government funded by taxes. Unlike issues of health or social services, geoscientific and environmental hazards cannot be mitigated by an individual. Mitigation requires the inclusion and control of diverse populations that may not be threatened by the hazard but will be required to change their behavior because of those who will. It is about personal responsibility toward providing for those who live in poverty and occupy the margins of society. This requires collaborative thinking in terms of local, regional and global hazards and the social issues that result in uncertainties. How did we get here and do we have the political, administrative, and scientific will to engage in this?

Policy, Poverty and Risk Marginalization

Reinventing Government (1993-2000) was promoted "to make federal government less expensive, more efficient and to change the culture of our national bureaucracy away from complacency and entitlement toward initiative and empowerment" (Devine 1992, 1993, 1995). The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA-HR 3734) heralded a partnership between the states and the federal government in the design of social policy that later would denigrate any system of income maintenance in favor of employment, independence, and limited support for families with vulnerable children (1). The juncture of federal policy with state policy often ignored varied economic needs within a community. One reason may be that professional cadres of lobbyists had more direct access to influential policy makers than the special interest groups that hoped for disparate reforms for redistribution of wealth. The disconnect between policy makers and the impact of their policy on marginalized individuals underscored the penalties associated with downsizing social services. The result of the past decade in addressing poverty and its social complexities reflects the uncoordinated, redundant, ill-informed implementation of “good policy” demanding self-sufficiency of individuals. Those who cannot or do not achieve this independent status are routinely blamed for the failed “good policy.” The lower middle classes and the poor experienced disproportionately severe consequences from the downsizing of government and the welfare reform act. Some moved from full employment to outsourcing and then to contract employment. However, contract employment rarely included pensions, health insurance, paid leave, or job security. The charges of “bloated agencies that failed to compete with the private sector ignored the reality that public service is mandated to serve citizens” and ignored the suspicion that “there will remain powerful elites who will be insulated from the impact of reorganization” (DuPont-Morales 1997, 291). The under-employed, barely sustaining middle-class status felt the consequences of America’s move away from interest in social needs and toward a belief that those moving toward poverty should be held accountable

for their dependence on social services during a time of a shrinking job market.

Thynne (2000) noted the global initiative promoting the “bottom-line” philosophy but admonished administrators to recall that there continued to be social imperatives to provide “essential goods and services” to those in the community who can not achieve independence. He continued, “A key challenge is to ensure that the state, the rule of law, and governance systems actually protect and fulfill the civil, political and social rights of individuals and communities alike” (228). Considine (2002) admonished “bottom line” supporters when he noted that Wilson (1887) and Waldo (1956) defined accountability “as the legal obligation to respect the legitimate interests of others affected by decisions, programs, and interventions” (21). The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) in early 2005 invited states perplexed about poverty and social ills to examine how other states respond to recent budgetary trends, develop innovative policies by reorganizing state agencies, use results-focused planning and budgeting to “take a stand on state-federal issues,” and increase flexibility and control of resources for local governments and communities (2-3). The catch phrase “results-focused” supposedly reflects programs that successfully address social needs. Today the complexities and multidimensional mandates added by “national security” have again constructed a conflict between legitimacy of political rights, security, and legitimately deserved social services.

Crisis Imagination

9/11 and Katrina, two incidents with different causes, brought American prosperity and poverty into full view of the world challenged with sacrificing too much freedom in the name of security since 9/11.

Asahi Press (September 13, 2005, Japan)

Since 9/11 “crisis imagination” has been limited to national security reflecting the identification, apprehension, and prevention of a catastrophic terrorist act against non-combatants. Homeland Security strategizes that the military responds generally to a crisis while local law enforcement engages in control of community needs. The paradox was that those responsible for the services reflective of government’s responsibility to all members of a community discounted the possibility of a disaster where water, shelter, health maintenance, disease and food would demand coherent policy and collaborative public administration beyond previous experiences. While claiming otherwise, an extreme crisis, in the form of a natural disaster with geological factors, just was not within the mindset of public administrators as they continued to limit their imagination to previously addressed disasters. Perhaps the flaw in any governmental construct is the focus on the term of political regimes and reelection rather than anticipating the risks associated with ongoing community challenges such as geotechnical issues, poverty, energy consumption, and poor health care.

The increased divide between the “bottom line”, “focused results”, and “personal responsibility and work opportunity reconciliation” was magnified when the truth about the very poorest was reported by Morin and Rein (2005) of the Washington Post and the Kaiser Family Foundation (2005). The reality of the Houston evacuees missed by the cameras was reported by the evacuee survey, a joint effort by the Washington Post, Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard School of Health. Consider the following:

The reality of the Houston evacuees was that six in 10 evacuees in shelters had annual incomes of less than \$20,000; half had no health insurance as before the storm, 66% used hospitals or clinics as their primary source of care; of those [without health insurance] 54% used Charity Hospital of New Orleans and 8% used the University Hospital of New Orleans.

Of those who had health insurance, 16% were covered under Medicare and 34% under Medicaid and 33% reported experiencing health problems or injuries as a result of the hurricane, of which, while 78% are receiving care for those problems. Four in 10 evacuees were physically disabled or had a chronic illness such as heart disease, diabetes or high blood pressure and 43% said they were supposed to be taking prescription medications, and of those, 29% reported having problems accessing needed medications. One-third of evacuees said they were trapped in New Orleans without needed prescription drugs before being rescued. Of the 61% of evacuees who did not leave prior to the storm, 38% said they were either physically unable to do so or were caring for someone who was physically unable to leave (<http://www.kff.org/Katrina>).

Change Without Notice

“No one expects the Spanish Inquisition.”

Monty Python

Academia may have compounded the ill preparation of local public administrators by failing to incorporate lessons learned from international conflicts and disasters. A disconnect occurred about disasters accompanying conflict, refugee movement, and delivery of humanitarian aid. Superimposed on numerous international disasters are issues of climate, location, relocation, and individual displacement. In the U.S. neither the Pentagon nor the National Guard were prepared for the compilation of poverty, illness unassociated with the disaster, injuries, population diversity, climate and geological characteristics that added to the vulnerability of the communities and their refugees. Furthermore, when a government fails its citizens, be it federal or state, the global perception about government's efficacy changes as well. The political side of government, and ultimately the country, become vulnerable from disgruntled and threatening international movements.

While some administrators limit their crisis imagination to the United States, other administrators study the impact of catastrophes on diverse populations based upon the characteristics of the communities and the disasters. The International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (ICRC) has been addressing and preparing for civil and natural disasters as well as gauging the uncertainty of future catastrophes. Regardless of the catastrophe, the United Nations, the ICRC, and developed countries know it will always be the poor who will be the hardest hit (Sommaruga 1995). The merger between natural disasters and civil catastrophes heightened by poverty adds to the adaptations necessary to sustain communities under harsh climates while assessing the potential to rebuild. Security from violence, shelter from extreme weather, prevention/control of

disease vectors, and access to safe drinking water, clean air, and medical care for injuries, prove difficult challenges without preplanning (Aalst and Helmer 2003, 6). What does this mean for future intercollaborative policies between and among relief agencies and administrators?

There are examples we can analyze which address both security and social needs. For instance, the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) promoted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (2003) began addressing the role of public administrators and local and national governments in providing security and decreasing poverty. Globally, governments promote the remediation of social needs that includes substantial roles for non-governmental agencies and private voluntary organizations. However, in the United States, the responsibility for the amelioration of extreme poverty, persecution, and racism rests with national and local public administrators, not solely NGOs. It is also the role of government and academia to provide mentoring for future public administrators to sustain positive growth in the areas of civil and social rights. In the United States, some local and state governments have moved away from engaging in social welfare issues in favor of transferring them to NGO, PVO, and faith-based organizations. Two issues result from this practice. First, risks posed by these issues may increase as the temporal factor for relief expands (Fitzpatrick 2004, 198). Secondly, nongovernmental organizations have relevant private issues and mandates while the U.S. government is legally forbidden to discriminate. Given a crisis, it is the United States government collaborating with state and local administrators that are charged with providing relief and security. During a crisis, the issue should be the required social services and relief—nothing else. If federal, state and local governments fail to provide timely relief and services, global news agencies transport pictures from the United States to countries where dissident anger, frustration, and moral disengagement feed into acts that challenge our security. Further, as these dissidents see primarily NGOs and PVOs providing the services, they interpret this as evidence of America's preference for profit over humanity.

It will take a long time before the U.S. administration has a clear picture of the reasons for the Katrina chaos. Thus far, it is clear that the Homeland Security Department did not do justice to its tasks and that the authorities in Louisiana were not appropriately prepared for the events. All sides involved are now arguing why this happened.... It will become a classic U.S. debate: domestic against foreign policy; America first, or America in the world.

Die Welt Press (September 12, 2005, Berlin)

International organizations have balanced the poverty and conflict dilemma for a number of years. While many in the United States are not supporters of the United Nations (UN), it has a wealth of expertise concerning poverty and security in times of conflict. The poverty the UN addresses encompasses conflict and/or natural disasters that leave scores of refugees without food, water, or shelter, living in environments with contaminants, toxins, and disease vectors. Further, the UN has addressed the complexities of policy makers and humanitarians challenged by the conflicts within corruption, altruism, and cultural entanglements that accompany any disaster. One approach is the coordinated civilian-military response proposed by the mission of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Without thorough intergovernmental knowledge about NGOs

and PVOs, public administrators will be hampered by flawed suppositions concerning the security needs of communities, how best to deliver services, as well as what the organizations might provide. The issue remains that there must be balance returned to the concern for social needs and security issues. Currently federal policy makers are in direct conflict with some state policy makers over the definition of aid and how it is to be dispersed. Governors and federal officials vary on their support of community-based disaster preparedness (CBDP) versus plans to develop policies to strengthen the resilience of communities after a disaster irrespective of cause.

“All Politics Is Local”

Thomas P. O'Neill, Sr. to Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr., 1936

The National Governors Association will play an important role in the final policy design of disaster preparedness and community resilience. Florida Governor Jeb Bush (2005) wrote in the *Washington Post*:

Just as all politics are local, so are all disasters. The most effective response is one that starts at the local level and grows with the support of surrounding communities, the state and then the federal government. The bottom-up approach yields the best and quickest results -- saving lives, protecting property and getting life back to normal as soon as possible. Furthermore, when local and state governments understand and follow emergency plans appropriately, less taxpayer money is needed from the federal government for relief.

In contrast to this view is Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano's innovative and collaborative regional approach to preparedness concerning potential disasters in California.

California's hospitals and schools could be damaged. Power might be out. In the mid-1990s Arizona officials estimated that somewhere between 10,000 and 100,000 Californians could show up on our doorstep after a major quake. It would depend on how much damage was done and whether, like New Orleans, there were forced evacuations.

And it wouldn't be like today, when the most significant repercussion for Arizona is higher gasoline prices. A big quake in California might cause electrical power problems here. The pipelines that supply our gas could be damaged. Food delivery difficulties could lead to shortages. And this time we'd be the most logical place for the first wave of evacuees to be sent (Montini 2005).

If all politics are local, what is the value in looking at regional community ties that develop and sustain the resiliency needed to recover from disasters? The UN and the ICRC have consistently reported benefits from having family, friends, languages, and traditions as adding to refugee recovery. Kuhlman (1991) writes that the outcome of an adaptation process where immigrants, in this case refugees, can maintain their own identity while becoming part of the host society with acceptance as a valued goal (10). Spatial integration, the process of acclimating to local or regional community and the

changed community, is effective when those receiving humanitarian assistance willingly make attempts to mirror cultural and value adaptations to new circumstances, not reproduce or be forced to return to former locations, social organizations, or characterizations. Some refugee relocations will be permanent. Taylor (1998) calls these conditions “culture of learning” which should recognize that equality and equity issues must reflect access to basic services, local governance and national infrastructure (24). The successful achievement of these multifaceted goals and ongoing processes must not remain peripheral to the implementation of Homeland Security but must balance the diversities of age, class, and traditions.

The United States is scrutinized about its version of a civil society, equity, and social policies. Thus, the key challenge becomes how the international community will judge our response to our own citizens’ needs without a strong public administrative paradigm and intergovernmental collaboration. What are we willing to do for those displaced by the natural disasters of 2005? It is not just an issue of diversity but more an issue of poverty. Many of those who ended up in shelters came with physical and social complexities that had been left unaddressed for years. When some finally got to the shelters they found narrow thinking, labeling, and little respect for community diversity. Some individuals refused to leave their pets and came into conflict with rescue attempts. An important local issue was addressed by the response from The Society for The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and the numerous volunteers who worked to reunite pets with their families. The value of pets to the emotional and physical health of children and families has been demonstrated, thus necessitating the need for veterinarian care for domestic and farm animals during a crisis. Farm animals represent important continued agrarian support to the communities that have come to rely on them for food and for crop harvesting. While this may be seen as minutia to some, it helps the resiliency of rural areas, displaced families, and the welfare of children. The SPCA comprehended the urgency of their service and achieved balance between security and social needs.

Conclusions

The Darfurian States: Yet, the U.S. still has the chance to reconsider its lust for massive war and the destruction of itself and others, bearing in mind that signs of its collapse have begun to appear, since it looked like Darfur following the hurricane.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida Press (September 12, 2005, West Bank)

What might we have gleaned from international immigrants who left everything behind that is applicable to the U.S. disaster victims of 2005? How do people under such tragic conditions surmount the mental and physical challenges to increased dependence on intergovernmental collaboration when increasingly others are demeaned for such dependence? How do displaced persons learn to trust governmental institutions and what is the role of relief agencies? Perhaps as important is what the impact will be of the loss of confidence held by those who viewed how government and public administrators ignored long-term needs of a number of the disaster victims.

Public administrators can learn from the natural disasters of 2005 that diversity is an expansive concept. It is not solely about race but about age, health conditions, spatial integration, economics, and community integrity. Each of these categories merges public health, infrastructure, neighborhood cohesiveness, and spatial integration within a

larger tract that reflects social needs, civility and humanitarian relief. Most importantly is that the needs and the ability to respond to such needs is dependent upon local strengths and local knowledge about similar occurrences globally. Is Reith (2004) correct when she challenges citizens to accept this as an “everyday day part of their lives?” Absent this, how are public and policy administrators going to hold citizens responsible for their own welfare and the rebuilding of their welfare given current and future climatic disasters? The natural disasters of 2005 will cascade with environmental issues, demands for social services, litigation against insurance companies, and measuring the costs of replicating or redesigning a number of communities; either rural or urban. The potential exists for including economic and social restructuring that will address poverty and the policies and circumstances that sustained it. While no one anticipated Monty Python’s quipped “fear and surprise of the Spanish Inquisition” it is hoped that policies after the disasters of 2005 reflect lessons learned.

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