

COMMENTARY

Is ISIS “the” Crisis? Media Studies as Contemporary History – A Provocation

Annabelle Sreberny

SOAS, London, GB

as98@soas.ac.uk

Prompted by recent events in Syria and Iraq and British media representation of stories about them, this polemic asks what is meant by each of the terms in the notion of “the global crisis”: is there a singularity, a “the”? who defines crisis? how global is global?

British media stories concerning ISIS sympathisers raise deep concerns over agency, engagement and compassion and over the invoked norm of a ‘we’ that seems to not include British or other muslims. The displacement of peoples as refugees from ISIS and from other crises plays out with altogether diverse and disproportionate consequences across the world and yet is reported in very sporadic and partial ways in the UK. What are we to make of all this?

The academic fields of media and cultural studies are suffering from intense fracturing and over-specialization. Yet to understand such multi-faceted contemporary issues we need to reassemble the relevant elements of our field and include insights from other disciplinary areas, including gender studies, international relations, technology and social media studies and studies of specific urban communities.

This moment represents a context where counternarratives to both ISIS abroad and to austerity politics at home are urgently needed. The decades of the 1930s, 1950s, 1980s all produced new theoretical approaches and political formations. The current moment is best described as a crisis of complexity and a crisis of politics. We need to produce a new politics of inclusivity, solidarity and resistance that engages with these disturbingly plural and difficult global realities embedded within colonial and sectarian histories.

Keywords: Syria; ISIS; migrants; media studies; interdisciplinarity; agency and representation



Download the audio file here: <https://doi.org/10.16997/wpcc.239.s1>

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

Author Information

Annabelle Sreberny is Emeritus Professor at the Centre for Media Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies formerly holding the post of the first chair in Global Media and Communications at SOAS in 2006. Formerly she was Director of the Centre for Mass Communication Research from 1992–1999 at the University of Leicester. Professor Sreberny’s research has been supported by organizations such as UNESCO, the BBC, the Broadcasting Standards Commission and the ESRC and she was elected President of IAMCR (www.iamcr.org) from July 2008 for four years. Recent publications include the coauthored books *Persian Service: The BBC and British Interests in Iran* (with Massoumeh Torfeh, 2014) *Blogistan: The Internet and Politics in Iran* (2011, with Gohlam Khiabany) and the edited volume *Media and Political Violence* (2007, with Hillel Nosseck and Prasun Sonwalkar).

How to cite this article: Sreberny, A. (2017). Is ISIS “the” Crisis? Media Studies as Contemporary History – A Provocation. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 12(1), 9–10, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16997/wpcc.239>

Submitted: 15 December 2016 **Accepted:** 15 December 2016 **Published:** 30 January 2017

Copyright: © 2017 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

U[*Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by University of Westminster Press

OPEN ACCESS 