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Magdalena, A. Denham, Ph.D.
Sam Houston State University

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pp. 198-200

Recommended Citation

Denham,, Magdalena, A. Ph.D.. "Come Hell or High Fever: Readying the World's Megacities for Disaster. By Russell, W. Glenn. Canberra, Australia: Australian University Press, 2023.." *Journal of Strategic Security* 16, no. 3 (2023) : 198-200.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.16.3.2190>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol16/iss3/13>

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***Come Hell or High Fever: Readyng the World's Megacities for Disaster.* By Russell, W. Glenn. Canberra, Australia: Australian University Press, 2023. ISBN 978-1-760-46553-7. Abbreviations, Bibliography, Index. Pp. ix-461. \$39.95**

Review by Dr. Magdalena A. Denham, Sam Houston State University

Dr. Russell W. Glenn draws on his 25 years of strategic military, disaster studies, urban warfare field and think tank research experience to offer systems' perspective on the challenges and opportunities of disasters in world's megacities. This excellently researched book frames the discourse on megacities in the *all-hazards* perspective, namely exploring disasters along the natural, technological, and man-made (to include war conflict) continuum. It maintains perfect balance in straddling topics and cases across emergency management, national defense, civil defense/civil protection and as such is unique as an offering to Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) scholarship.

A vast array of authoritative voices collected by the author from interviews with military strategists, commanders, soldiers, emergency management professionals, elected officials, or individuals affected by disasters, to name a few, imbue the publication with depth and credibility. The originality of the work stems from the author's selection of the world's megacities—geographically widespread, densely populated, diverse, and of global resonance—as the primary unit of analysis. The selection itself offers a rich global canvass for the inclusiveness of cases across various continents, economies, and governance systems and allows for extensive comparative analyses beyond U.S. or Western contexts. This sets it apart from books like Kelly McKinney's *Moment of Truth: The Nature of Catastrophes and How to Prepare for Them*, which at a much smaller scale explores some of the similar range of topics in localized New York City urban environment and from a uniquely U.S., emergency management perspective.

Glenn's main purpose and the overarching theme of the book is the portrayal of world megacities as perfect examples of complex systems in which risks from hazards and threats and their ensuing consequences are

also the most complex. Notably, world megacities house the deepest pockets of social vulnerabilities to be exploited by disasters, such as the favelas of Rio de Janeiro or the slums of Lagos, Dhaka, New York, or ungoverned sections of Karachi while offering opportunities for the talent pool, learning, creativity, innovation, and collaboration in addressing calamities—Glenn refers to this as the megacity *yin of challenge and the yang of opportunity*.

Megacities are also inherently connected to other external systems which in turn amplify potential global impacts and second and third-order effects of disasters they would face. While not explicitly stated in the book, its design mirrors a journey through the emergency management cycle from prevention, planning, and preparedness to response, to recovery, and to some extent, mitigation. For each of those phases in subsequent chapters, Glenn navigates across a range of critical focusing events to draw lessons for megacities' disaster readiness.

However, unlike HSEM publications, including systematic case studies and lessons learned to inform practice (e.g., *Critical Issues in Homeland Security: A Casebook* by James Ramsay and Linda Kiltz), the author did not take a linear approach. Instead, his lens reflects the systems' thinking for which the book advocates. This puts topics generally amply discussed in literature, such as urban planning for medical capacity, into a masterful web of multi-faceted comparative analyses.

Reflection on Sheri Fink's *Five Days at Memorial* depicting catastrophic events in one of New Orleans hospitals during hurricane Katrina weaves into the post-mortem of medical capacity in Mumbai during 2008 Complex Coordinated Terror Attacks (CCTA), then shifts to an assessment of Paris 2015 medical surge capacities, while intersecting with reflections on Lagos hospital expertise in critical case identification during the Ebola crisis. This high level of synthesis permeates the entire book extracting rich clusters from illustrative cases across impeccably researched historical disaster events with differing anatomies to drive home— at times universal and at times nuanced - points on preparedness, capacity building, collaboration, disaster technologies, risk, and crisis communications, intelligence gathering and sharing, command, and control, centralization vs decentralization, or leveraging of lessons learned in post disaster contexts.

In tandem with systems' perspective, the author focuses on Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) and resiliency. While he contends megacities will be increasingly more exposed and vulnerable to disasters, most likely unprecedented in scope, he underscores the ability of megacities to self-repair and to sustain themselves as some of the largest world cities have done successfully in the past. For instance, one of the compelling arguments omnipresent in *Come Hell or High Fever* is the perennial emergence and spontaneity displayed by individuals, communities, and grassroot movements in the aftermath of a critical event. As *first first* responders time and again constitute powerful human capital in response and recovery from catastrophes, government planning, and preparedness processes need to account for emergence phenomena, sustain them, and support them. Likewise, adaptability and inclusivity should become the *sine qua non* hallmarks of the *rehearsal*—the author's operational term for a wide range of activities related to megacity planning and preparedness processes.

Dr. Russell W. Glenn identified the audiences for his book as city administrators; police, fire, and medical personnel; commercial interests; soldiers; members of local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) as well as individuals who might act as *first first* responders. Inarguably, the expanse of the book might make it a challenging read as a *go-to blueprint* on urban preparedness for many in the suggested readership. However, despite the publication's interlinked, scaffolded structure, chapters can standalone, allowing the reader to enter the text at random without the loss of thread. Moreover, the rich repertoire of quotes as springboards for reflection in each of the book sub-parts makes it an excellent iterative read for anyone interested in pondering the challenges of current and future crisis leadership. Finally, because of its research depth, topic integration, and saturation, as well as sophisticated comparative focus, *Come Hell or High Water: Readyng the World's Megacities for Disaster* is a publication that would be of extreme value as an accompanying text incorporated into graduate curriculum for students in any of the protective disciplines.