

SWIFT, EFFECTIVE, AND GENUINE: US FOREIGN DISASTER
RELIEF FOR A GRAND STRATEGY OF RESTRAINT

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A THESIS

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In dictating greater focus on soft power and urging reductions to the American overseas military presence, a new grand strategy of restraint may pose a viable alternative to Washington's foreign policy shortcomings, though garners criticism for a lack of specificity and depth. The purpose of this thesis, then, is to articulate a new central mission of restraint through rapid deployment disaster relief. To assess if relief could be an effective centerpiece of restraint, this thesis analyzes a primary case study of relief in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, followed by two supplementary case studies of Pakistan and Japan, considering both humanitarian and strategic impacts. It then contrasts public diplomacy and relief efforts with hard power strategies of militarized interventions and overseas bases. Selected cases and comparisons indicate that swift, effective, and genuine disaster relief efforts are successful in winning "hearts and minds" and securing US interests abroad with minimal expense. This thesis therefore urges an American commitment to expanded and reinvigorated disaster relief efforts as a new central mission of restraint.

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Table of Contents

I. Rapid Deployment Disaster Relief: Centerpiece of a Strategy of Restraint	6
II. US Grand Strategy Has Been Counterproductive, Ineffective	9
The Debate on US Grand Strategy	9
The Debate on Public Diplomacy – Winning “Hearts and Minds”	11
Militarized Interventions Harm US Credibility and Relations	11
Public Diplomacy Remains Underfunded, Undervalued	13
Disaster Relief Succeeds Where Hard Power Falls Short	15
American Foreign Policy Must Uphold the Primacy of the Genuine	17
III. Best Example of Successful Hearts & Minds Policy: 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami	21
Disaster Unparalleled in Scale and Severity	22
Operation Unified Assistance: Swift, Effective, and Genuine	23
Minimal Costs, Brief Duration	24
Successful in Humanitarian and Economic Spheres	25
Successful in Winning Hearts & Minds, Improving US Reputation	26
Successful in Promoting Regional Conflict Resolution	27
Successful in Eroding Passive Support for Terror & Anti-Americanism	30
Operation Unified Assistance Secured Both Strategic and Moral Interests	32
IV. Further Evidence for Rapid Deployment: Pakistan (2005) and Japan (2011)	33
2005 Kashmir Earthquake	33
Minimal Costs	34
Winning Hearts and Minds in Pakistan	34
2011 Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami	36
Minimal Costs	37
Winning Hearts and Minds in Japan	37
Proven Commonalities Demonstrate Soft-Power Benefits of Rapid Relief	38
V. Overseas Military Bases are Costly and Unwarranted	40
Exorbitant Costs	41
Bases Harm Local Communities: South Korean Anti-Base Activism	41
Bases Highlight American Inconsistencies and Drive Nationalist Resistance	44
VI. The Climate Crisis Demands American Leadership on Global Adaptation Efforts	46

VII. Rapid Deployment Disaster Relief Must be Implemented as Standing Policy	48
Bibliography	52

I. Rapid Deployment Disaster Relief: Centerpiece of a Strategy of Restraint

Every minute of delay cost thousands of lives in the aftermath of the 2023 Turkey-Syria Earthquake, a disaster which would ultimately reach a death toll over 50,000.¹ From a humanitarian perspective, the initial hours of such disasters are the most urgent – 90 percent of earthquake survivors are rescued in the first three days.² But when the 7.8 magnitude quake struck on February 6th, it took the United States until February 8th to field search and rescue teams on the ground in Turkey.³ In this delay, the US missed a crucial opportunity not only to save lives, but also to strengthen the American-Turkish alliance and improve US favorability among Turkish people. Relief efforts have already proven successful in winning “hearts and minds” and improving foreign relations with recipients and allies. In this instance, the US had a vital interest in maintaining and strengthening its relationship with Turkey – for economic and regional security ties,⁴ and for Turkey’s influence on NATO membership negotiations, which continue to stall.⁵ A new strategy of restraint, with disaster relief as its guiding principle and public diplomacy at its core, promises to realize these aims.

Through increased investments in rapid deployment disaster relief, the US could save many lives, strengthen its international partnerships, and forge new ones. This new mission could be a centerpiece of the adoption of a new US grand strategy – in rejection of frameworks which,

¹ “Death Toll Climbs Above 50,000 After Turkey, Syria Earthquakes,” AlJazeera, February 25, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/25/death-toll-climbs-above-50000-after-turkey-syria-earthquakes>.

² “Why the First 72 Hours Are Crucial for Turkey-Syria Quake Rescues,” *France24*, February 8, 2023, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20230208-why-first-72-hours-are-crucial-for-turkey-syria-quake-rescues>.

³ “Responding to the Earthquakes in Turkiye and Syria,” *US Department of State*, February 8, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/dipnote-u-s-department-of-state-official-blog/responding-to-the-earthquakes-in-turkiye-and-syria/>.

⁴ “The United States and Turkiye: A Key NATO Ally and Critical Regional Partner,” *US Department of State*, Office of the Spokesperson, February 19, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-and-turkiye-a-key-nato-ally-and-critical-regional-partner/>.

⁵ “Explainer: Why is Turkey Blocking Sweden and Finland NATO Membership?” *Reuters*, January 27, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/why-is-turkey-blocking-swedish-finnish-nato-membership-2023-01-25/>.

over the last two decades, have led to the prioritization of militarized commitments at the expense of public diplomacy, soft power, and humanitarian aid.

Today, many scholars and some public officials increasingly favor a new grand strategy of restraint – calling for reductions in US military posture, especially military deployments abroad and fixed overseas bases.⁶ Yet as discourse continues, critics of a strategy of restraint often challenge advocates to offer unified and specific policy proposals for implementing their vision. As Emma Ashford writes, “the most common slap at restrainers is that they focus too much on criticism without offering plausible policy alternatives.”⁷ The RAND Corporation’s Miranda Priebe, too, calls for advocates to “expand on their logic and conduct additional analysis.”⁸

The purpose of this thesis, then, is to articulate a practical and effective central mission of restraint through US foreign disaster relief. Relief efforts are commonly cited, though seldom explored, as means of pursuing public diplomacy to win “hearts and minds” abroad, while meeting the demands of increasing climate-related disasters and dodging the shortcomings of an overmilitarized status quo. This thesis first fully explicates a new strategy of restraint, its role in increased public diplomacy, and the proposed importance of rapid disaster relief. To assess if disaster relief could be effective as a central mission of restraint, this study analyzes a primary case study of relief in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, followed by two supplementary case studies of Pakistan and Japan. Rapid assistance efforts are compared to the US’s current policy of overseas bases. Further, the needs of the climate crisis are explored, demonstrating the merits of restraint

⁶ For discussion of contemporary supporters, see: Stephen Walt, “The Top 5 Lessons From Year One of Ukraine’s War,” *Foreign Policy Magazine*, February 9, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/02/09/the-top-five-lessons-from-year-one-of-ukraines-war/>.

⁷ Emma Ashford, “Strategies of Restraint: Remaking America’s Broken Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2021), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-08-24/strategies-restraint>.

⁸ Miranda Priebe, “Interest in a US Grand Strategy of Restraint May Be Growing, So Advocates Need to Provide More Details,” *RAND Corporation*, January 22, 2021, <https://www.rand.org/news/press/2021/01/22.html>.

and relief for contemporary security threats. Finally, some actions are suggested for the implementation of rapid disaster relief as standing US policy.

II. US Grand Strategy Has Been Counterproductive, Ineffective

This section first outlines the debate on grand strategy, identifying competing alternative strategies – including a strategy of restraint – to capture the need to abandon status quo foreign policy and to heed calls for increased public diplomacy. It identifies deficiencies in the US’s approach to winning “hearts and minds” before discussing the benefits and implications of soft power alternatives.

The Debate on US Grand Strategy

As scholar Emma Ashford describes, the modern grand strategy debate is split in three primary camps: liberal internationalists, who emphasize an American “stabilizing” role through the international system; “America First” proponents, who prioritize US military primacy and unilateral action; and restrainers, who favor a “less militarized and activist” foreign policy, instead focusing on “diplomatic and economic engagement.”⁹ In Ashford’s view, the international political landscape necessitates a “course correction” in US grand strategy. She highlights restraint’s role in rolling back US overextension abroad, though notes the internal divisions of restrainers on the extent of such efforts.

Competing alternatives on winning the war of ideas reflect these competing visions of US grand strategy. As security scholar Barry Posen distills, grand strategy is a nation-state’s theory about how to produce security for itself.¹⁰ These are broad frameworks which help define US interests abroad and provide general principles on which to base decisions. Since the end of the Cold War, throughout which the US pursued strategies of containment and deterrence, national

⁹ Ashford, “Strategies of Restraint.”

¹⁰ Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for US Grand Strategy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014), 1.

discourse on grand strategy has intensified and splintered; such debates accompany a deep lack of consensus on the future of US grand strategy.

In *Restraint: A New Foundation for US Grand Strategy*, Posen describes the failings of contemporary US foreign policy – such as unsustainable financial and human costs, the creation of new and unneeded enemies, and free-riding of allies on defense spending – and lays out the core principles and argumentation for restraint. Restraint acts opposed to US strategies of “liberal hegemony” – an activist, hegemonic framework meant to secure American values, which Posen associates with prolonged and unnecessary foreign wars.¹¹ Posen’s strategy of restraint instead involves pulling back US military deployments and commitments abroad in favor of more economic and diplomatic competition. Advocates of restraint contend that the US is fundamentally secure and lacks a need or mandate for sweeping interventions. For the US to be a better and more welcomed ally, therefore, it must recognize its limits and pull back its overbearing military presence, narrowly acting only when needed.¹² Investments in disaster relief represent a core proposal of a grand strategy of restraint, though are seldom explored with any depth. On the relationship between restraint and disaster relief, Posen is brief but evocative. He notes,

“Diplomacy also means lending a helping hand where that can be efficient and effective. Disaster relief is one such opportunity. Although not a magic wand, the US Military’s relief efforts after the Asian tsunami on December 26, 2004, seem to have been somewhat effective in developing more positive views of the United States ...”¹³

As Posen hints, disaster relief offers a legitimate and welcome opportunity for the US to exert its soft power and applicable resources on the world stage.

¹¹ For example, American interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, or Kosovo.

¹² See also: Barry Posen, “Pull Back: The Case for a Less Activist Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2013), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/United-states/2013-01-01/pull-back>.

¹³ Posen, *Restraint*, 86.

The Debate on Public Diplomacy – Winning “Hearts and Minds”

Militarized Interventions Harm US Credibility and Relations

Efforts for winning hearts and minds through militarized commitments have long been characteristic of US foreign policy. George W. Bush sought to undermine global terror and bolster American soft power through the war of ideas, denoting these aims as key foreign policy objectives post 9/11: “we will wage a war of ideas to make clear that all acts of terrorism are illegitimate [...] and to kindle the hopes and aspirations of freedom of those in societies ruled by the sponsors of global terrorism.”¹⁴ These militarized campaigns and interventions entailed enormous financial and human costs.

The extended occupation of Afghanistan and unjustifiable invasion of Iraq were key cornerstones of Bush’s war on terror, themselves sustained at great expense. By 2010, the US had already spent over \$784 billion in direct expenditures on the war in Iraq and \$321 billion on the war in Afghanistan. Experts estimate total casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan of nearly 306,000 and 176,000, respectively.¹⁵ These numbers, however, do little to convey the true costs and staggering implications of the conflict. As professors Stiglitz and Bilmes write, comprehensive evaluations of the Iraq conflict must consider an array of hidden or overlooked expenses: death benefits and life insurance, hidden “operational expenses,” disability and healthcare obligations for veterans, lost economic contributions of families and caretakers, macroeconomic impacts including higher oil prices and reduced domestic investments,

¹⁴ George W. Bush, “National Strategy for Combating Terrorism,” *US White House*, February 2003. <https://www.resdal.org/ultimos-documentos/us-terrorism-strategy05.pdf>, 23.

¹⁵ Joseph E. Stiglitz and Linda J. Bilmes, *The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Costs of the Iraq Conflict* (New York: WW Norton & Company, Inc., 2008).

adjustment for inflation, and interest payments on war borrowing. Due to the categorization of many casualties as “non-combat related,” such as deaths from vehicle accidents, military casualties far exceed reported data as well. On this basis, Stiglitz and Bilmes estimate the true costs of the Iraq War to be roughly \$3 trillion.¹⁶ Similarly, Congress’s Joint Economic Committee anticipated costs totaling \$3.5 trillion.¹⁷

The war on terror’s interventionist – liberal hegemonic – approach has long been criticized by US foreign policy scholars as undefined, misguided, and counterproductive. Thrall and Goepner denounce American overreliance on military means, citing General McChrystal’s words on Afghanistan that the US can’t “kill its way out” of the war on terror.¹⁸ They find, in fact, that US interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen have generally worsened instability, increased radicalization, and heightened resentment towards the US. Analyst Julia Gledhill concurs, noting increased threats of terrorism and “blowback” from US military operations.¹⁹

Failing to win the hearts and minds of foreign publics, these efforts have in fact been largely damaging to US credibility and favorability abroad. Despite efforts to the contrary, Al-Qaeda maintained “a core of popular support,” and attitudes towards the American war on terror remained largely negative by 2009.²⁰ In 2005, the Pew Research Center noted low US

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ “New Joint Economic Committee Report Reveals Total Economic Costs of War Could Exceed \$3.5 Trillion If US Stays Course,” *Joint Economic Committee Democrats*, November 13, 2007, [https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/democrats/2007/11/new-joint-economic-committee-report-reveals-total-economic-costs-of-war-could-exceed-\\$3.5-trillion-if-u.s-stays-the-course-895](https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/democrats/2007/11/new-joint-economic-committee-report-reveals-total-economic-costs-of-war-could-exceed-$3.5-trillion-if-u.s-stays-the-course-895).

¹⁸ A. Trevor Thrall and Erik Goepner, “Step Back: Lessons for US Foreign Policy from the Failed War on Terror.” *CATO Institute*, June 26, 2017, <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/step-back-lessons-us-foreign-policy-failed-war-terror>.

¹⁹ Julia Gledhill, “The Failures of the War on Terror.” *Friends Committee on National Legislation*, August 2022, <https://www.fcnl.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/FailuresOfTheWarOnTerror.14.pdf>, 9-10.

²⁰ Peter Krause and Stephen Van Evera, “Public Diplomacy: Ideas For the War of Ideas,” *Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs*, Harvard Kennedy School, September 2009, <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/public-diplomacy-ideas-war-ideas>.

favorability rates in Arab and Muslim countries, finding that “anti-Americanism is driven by negative perceptions of, and opposition to, U.S. foreign policies, such as the war in Iraq, the war on terror, U.S. support for Israel, and U.S. unilateralism.”²¹ This poor reputation inhibits international diplomacy and erodes trust in future US initiatives and foreign policies. Few, then, would consider these campaigns successful for winning the war of ideas. If the US were to improve its international reputation, erode passive support for terrorism, and build meaningful long-term relationships, it would have to adopt another strategy.²²

Public Diplomacy Remains Underfunded, Undervalued

This project argues that expansions of foreign disaster relief represent needed investments in public diplomacy – meant both to address moral, humanitarian concerns, and to make headway towards broader foreign policy interests. As defined by the US Information Agency (USIA),²³ public diplomacy efforts work towards “understanding, informing, and influencing foreign publics and broadening dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad.”²⁴ Divorced from hard power, i.e. military might, scholars associate such programs with American soft power: persuasion won through credibility, diplomacy, culture, and

²¹ Tom Rosentel and Andrew Kohut, “Arab and Muslim Perceptions of the United States,” *Pew Research Center*, November 10, 2005, <https://www.pewresearch.org/2005/11/10/arab-and-muslim-perceptions-of-the-united-states/>.

²² In the wake of Iraq, US foreign policy experts have since grappled with the questions of public diplomacy and how to best win hearts and minds abroad. Charney and Yakatan’s “A New Beginning” highlights poor perceptions of the US among several focus groups, who frame American interventions abroad as violations of self-determination and inappropriate plays for power. “Obviously,” the authors note, “America’s deeds must match its words.” | Craig Charney and Nicole Yakatan, “A New Beginning: Strategies for a More Fruitful Dialogue with the Muslim World,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, May 2005, https://www.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2005/05/AntiAmerican_CSR.pdf.

²³ Active between 1953 and 1999.

²⁴ Krause and Van Evera, “Ideas for the War of Ideas.”

values.²⁵ Public diplomacy programs are open affairs, aiming to establish mutual dialogues of ideas. They engage not just with foreign governments but with foreign publics.

In “Public Diplomacy: Ideas for the War of Ideas,” political scientists Krause and Van Evera survey American public-diplomacy programs, demonstrate the need for new investments, and explore policy alternatives. Today, public diplomacy efforts function primarily under the US Agency for International Development (USAID), State Department – including the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs – and Department of Defense. These programs have been historically mismanaged and comparatively underfunded. Krause and Van Evera note, for instance, that funding six days of military development in Iraq proved equivalent to US public diplomacy spending for the entirety of 2008.²⁶

USIP advisor Mona Yacoubian affirms the growing urgency for new strides in public diplomacy. Yacoubian notes the lingering appeal of extremist ideologies, prevalence of unconventional threats (climate, non-state actors), and the inability of large-scale military interventions to properly address such issues. To this end, she recommends investments in diplomacy and development. Yacoubian notes that foreign aid accounts for less than 1 percent of the federal budget and ranks comparatively low among other developed countries as a percent of GDP.²⁷

Historic underfunding of American diplomacy has sparked calls from activists, experts, and government officials to surge the State Department alongside or in lieu of the Department of Defense. In 2009, for instance, top officials called for a “civilian surge” to accompany the

²⁵ Soft power remains central to the “war of ideas.” Political scholar Joseph Nye notes, “Both hard and soft power are important in the war on terrorism, but attraction is much cheaper than coercion, and an asset that needs to be nourished.” See: Nye, “Propaganda Isn’t the Way: Soft Power.”

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Mona Yacoubian, “Twenty Years After 9/11, It’s Time to Prioritize Diplomacy and Development,” *United States Institute of Peace*, September 13, 2021, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/09/twenty-years-after-911-its-time-prioritize-diplomacy-and-development>.

military surge in Afghanistan.²⁸ The surge “never materialized,” as former staffer Ilan Goldenberg writes, “because civilian agencies lacked the capacity and resources to do the surging.”²⁹ Many experts and officials continue to recommend additional funding and resources be allocated to the State Department, particularly for public diplomacy.³⁰ For instance, the 2023 Summit for Democracy saw President Biden call for greater emphasis on American diplomacy, despite an under-resourced State Department.³¹ Authority over particular programs, such as security assistance, often remains contested between the Pentagon and State Department.³²

Disaster Relief Succeeds Where Hard Power Falls Short

Despite funding deficiencies, public diplomacy programs such as expanded disaster relief remain crucial means of undermining support for terror, strengthening diplomatic relations, and bolstering American favorability. Disaster relief has long been recognized as a key form of public diplomacy; US Under Secretary of State Hoover Jr. in 1955, for example, noted the potential for disaster relief to promote “goodwill,” “strengthen our prestige,” and have a “marked and lasting beneficial effect on relations.”³³ As former Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy James Glassman articulates, a core tenet of US public diplomacy programs is to “isolate and

²⁸ Proponents included Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who pushed for civilian and diplomatic surges to “[create] economic and social incentives for participating in a peaceful society.” | Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Remarks at the Launch of the Asia Society’s Series of Richard C. Holbrooke Memorial Addresses,” February 18, 2011, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/02/156815.htm>.

²⁹ Ilan Goldenberg, “The State Department is Already Running on Fumes,” *Politico Magazine*, February 28, 2017, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/02/state-department-diplomacy-budget-214841/>.

³⁰ Kristin M. Lord, “The State Department, Not the Pentagon, Should Lead America’s Public Diplomacy Efforts,” *Brookings*, October 29, 2008, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/the-state-department-not-the-pentagon-should-lead-americas-public-diplomacy-efforts/>.

³¹ Stephen Walt, “Biden’s State Department Needs a Reset,” *Foreign Policy Magazine*, April 1, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/04/01/biden-blinken-state-department-democracy-summit/>.

³² Missy Ryan, “State Department and Pentagon Tussle Over Control of Foreign Military Aid,” *The Washington Post*, July 10, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/state-department-and-pentagon-tussle-over-control-of-foreign-military-aid/2016/07/10/ddc98f3e-42b0-11e6-88d0-6adee48be8bc_story.html.

³³ Julia F. Irwin, “Disastrous Grand Strategy: US Humanitarian Assistance and Global Natural Catastrophe,” in *Rethinking American Grand Strategy*, ed. Elizabeth Borgwardt et al. (Oxford University Press, 18 March 2021).

reduce the threat of violent extremism, not with bombs and bullets, of course, but with words, images, and deeds.”³⁴ Investments in public diplomacy offer a potential means of addressing America’s poor international image amid the disastrous war on terror, particularly among the Muslim world.

US aid administered in the immediate aftermath of natural disasters proves particularly useful for “winning hearts and minds.” For improvements in US public diplomacy, Krause and Van Evera recommend further investments in US humanitarian aid programs, including disaster relief. They write that “aid given in times of greatest trauma is especially appreciated and long remembered ... such aid should not be an ad-hoc response, but a standing policy.”³⁵ They also find many countries underestimate the scope of US aid and recommend heightened publicity for aid given. A new strategic focus on disaster relief would therefore represent a departure from militarized interventions and a turn towards public diplomacy, pursuing hearts and minds via genuine US humanitarian action. As evidence, Krause and Van Evera reference the clearest and most striking case for relief and favorability: Operation Unified Assistance.

In two short months in the winter of 2005, US officials found more success winning “hearts and minds” than they did in Iraq and Afghanistan throughout several decades. Primarily undertaken as a humanitarian effort, the US response to the Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami of 2004 in Indonesia largely succeeded in improving US favorability and bolstering American soft power. Under “Operation Unified Assistance” – which lasted only from December 28th, 2004, to February 23rd, 2005 – the US oversaw rapid distribution of food, clothing, fuel, and supplies to impacted communities. Including funds set aside for long-term

³⁴ James K. Glassman, “Briefing on US Public Diplomacy and the War of Ideas,” *US State Department*, October 28, 2008, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/us/2008/111372.htm>.

³⁵ Krause and Van Evera, “Ideas for the War of Ideas.”

reconstruction efforts, relief efforts cost roughly \$908 million; emergency relief meant for immediate use itself cost only \$327 million.³⁶ Despite its comparatively limited budget, the positive impact of the American response on hearts and minds was undeniable. As the Pew Research Center noted,

“Roughly eight-in-ten (79%) said that post-tsunami aid from the U.S. had improved their impression of America, and positive views of the U.S. more than doubled, rising from 15% in 2003 to 38% in the 2005 poll. Meanwhile, the percentage saying the U.S. takes into account the interests of countries like Indonesia jumped from 25% in 2003 to 59% in 2005.”³⁷

For winning hearts and minds, therefore, US foreign disaster relief must be weighed as a viable alternative to the pathologies of militarized interventions, overseas bases, and antagonistic “new Cold War” rhetoric. This research tests US foreign disaster relief as a centerpiece of restraint, expanding on existing literature to deepen and substantiate Posen’s framework. In winning hearts and minds and bolstering American soft power, disaster relief ultimately serves national and strategic interests; in securing humanitarian impacts and climate adaptation, it serves a deeply moral interest. For these reasons, the US ought to heighten investments in disaster relief – and pair back its militarized presence abroad – as an appropriate implementation of restraint.

American Foreign Policy Must Uphold the Primacy of the Genuine

Above all, American foreign policy and public diplomacy efforts must be genuine – credible and legitimate actions which reinforce rather than undermine our words and values. This paradigm finds roots in the writings of diplomat George Kennan, known for establishing the American policy of “containment” during the Cold War. Kennan considered the USSR not primarily as a

³⁶ Sisira Jayasuriya and Peter McCawley, *The Asian Tsunami: Aid and Reconstruction After a Disaster*, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2010, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/159342/adbi-asian-tsunami-aid-reconstruction.pdf>, 49-50.

³⁷ Richard Wike, “Does Humanitarian Aid Improve America’s Image?” *Pew Research Center*, March 6, 2012, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2012/03/06/does-humanitarian-aid-improve-americas-image/>.

military threat, but as a psychological and political one. He warned that direct military interventions in communist countries, especially democratically-minded ones, would impart a “demoralizing influence on our whole foreign policy and corrupt that basic decency of purpose which, despite all our blunders and shortsightedness, still makes us a great figure among the nations of the world.”³⁸ Instead, Kennan advocated for a system of “counterpressure” rooted in the force of example and good form which carry their own weight of validity. It was through this strategy Kennan believed the US might widen its influence and erode support for Soviet ideologies:

“The United States ... must demonstrate by its own self confidence and patience, *but particularly by the integrity and dignity of its example*, that the true glory of Russian national effort can find its expression only in peaceful and friendly association with other peoples and not in attempts to subjugate and dominate those peoples.” [emphasis added]³⁹

It is through Kennan’s framework that the US must operate, building its soft power through the force of example. This force, however, only functions properly when nations’ foreign policies are “seen as legitimate or having moral authority.”⁴⁰ When American foreign policy fails to align with its stated values of democracy, self-determination, or human rights, its credibility and soft power suffer. This was the case with the Iraq War, which proved critically detrimental to the US’s international reputation. This continues to be the case with other disputed policies, such as the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay. As Scholar Joseph Nye notes, these examples build perceptions of inconsistency and hypocrisy. He writes that “without underlying national

³⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 44.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁴⁰ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (March 2008): 95, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25097996>.

credibility, the instruments of public diplomacy cannot translate cultural resources into the soft power of attraction.”⁴¹

Refuting perceptions of inconsistency, therefore, demands the abandonment of imperialistic foreign policy. The US must truly respect the national autonomy and self-determination of others, including its allies and aid recipients. As Dr. John Esposito testified to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in 1985, “the ability of the US to be perceived as a friend by moderate Islamic activists is diminished when those moderates ... see US policies as tinged with neocolonialism.”⁴² For American public diplomacy efforts to be effective, they must also avoid degenerating into propaganda.⁴³ Ultimately, propaganda efforts fail to garner trust or build genuine relationships. Good foreign policy and public diplomacy must go beyond propaganda, and must instead represent meaningful, moral, and legitimate action to foster long-term relationships and lead by example.

Owing to the favorable impacts of foreign aid on public opinion, Professors Goldsmith and Horiuchi find that “one possible means of doing well in the newly forming arena of international competition for favorable perceptions is by actually doing good.”⁴⁴ There can be no clearer example of such a good than genuine humanitarian disaster relief efforts. Foreign disaster relief provides a unique opportunity to uphold the primacy of the genuine. In Kennan’s view, the US has a moral imperative to avert two key threats: great power conflict including nuclear war,

⁴¹ Ibid., 101.

⁴² John Esposito, “Prepared Statement of Dr. John L. Esposito, Department of Religious Studies, College of the Holy Cross,” *Hearings Before Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Relations*, United States House of Representatives, 1985.

⁴³ Nye writes, “public diplomacy that degenerates into propaganda not only fails to convince, but can undercut soft power.” | “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” 108.

⁴⁴ Benjamin Goldsmith, Yusaku Horiuchi, and Terence Wood, “Doing Well By Doing Good: The Impact of Foreign Aid on Foreign Public Opinion,” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 9, no. 1 (March 2014): 29, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2361691.

and the environmental crisis created by industrialization.⁴⁵ At the same time, the US must operate within an “acceptance of one’s limitations.”⁴⁶ Disaster relief does all. Applied appropriately, rapid assistance is at once swift, effective, and genuine. Its brief timeframe distinguishes the practice from sustained development aid – programs which frequently develop imperialistic overtones or struggle with corruption. Its humanitarian focus represents a legitimate and credible impact, rather than an outlet of propaganda. As a means of genuine public diplomacy, US foreign disaster relief offers untapped potential for the realization of both national and moral interests.

⁴⁵ “The one threatens the destruction of civilization through the recklessness and selfishness of its military rivalries, the other through the massive abuse of its natural habitat.” | See: Kennan, “Morality and Foreign Policy.”

⁴⁶ Language identical to contemporary advocates of restraint.

III. Best Example of Successful Hearts & Minds Policy: 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami

The American response to the 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami offers a particularly useful case study of winning “hearts and minds” via soft power alternatives, yielding both moral and strategic outcomes. Even before the ultimate results of US aid were clear, many commentators had already begun to weigh the operation as a true test for the value of soft power.⁴⁷ Now two decades removed, the effectiveness and impacts of the aid are well documented by historians and scholars. This case study first establishes the characteristics of the disaster and the nature of the American response. Then, it evaluates the following factors to determine the success of the operation relative to both national and moral interests: the operation costs, operation duration, humanitarian and economic impacts, diplomatic and favorability impacts, conflict resolution impacts, and antiterrorism impacts.

This project acknowledges both the successes and limitations of nongovernmental organizations in Banda Aceh, over 500 of which provided aid or logistical support following the tsunami. However, the subsequent case study evaluates only the response of the American government, consistent with its focus on US grand strategy and policy alternatives. This case study also narrows its focus to the distribution of rapid assistance – the “relief” rather than “reconstruction” period of the operation. As Professors Jayasuriya and McCawley write, “the rapid delivery of emergency assistance – of food, water, medicine, sanitation and shelter – in the immediate aftermath of a disaster is the single most critical issue in minimizing the human costs

⁴⁷ See: John Bradford, “Waves of Change: Evolution in the US Navy’s Strategic Approach to Disaster Relief Operations Between the 2004 and 2011 Asian Tsunamis,” *Asian Security* (March 8, 2013): 21.

of disaster.”⁴⁸ True in the case of Banda Aceh, rapid assistance delivers immediate, measurable, and impactful results despite short timeframes. Most aid recipients, too, signaled a “strong preference” for speedy distribution.⁴⁹

Disaster Unparalleled in Scale and Severity

On December 26, 2004, in the wake of a 9.0 Richter scale Indian Ocean earthquake, uniquely devastating tsunamis made landfall in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, the Andaman and Nicobar islands, the Maldives, the Seychelles, Somalia, Tanzania, and Kenya.⁵⁰ The disaster – widely considered “the most destructive tsunami ever recorded,”⁵¹ claimed nearly 230,000 lives, displaced over a million people, and caused over \$10 billion in damages to homes and infrastructure.⁵² The Aceh Province in Northern Sumatra, Indonesia was among the worst affected regions, particularly its capital Banda Aceh. 167,540 Indonesians lost their lives, and another 566,898 were displaced – many housed in hospitals and refugee camps throughout the country.⁵³ Over 250,000 homes were partially or completely damaged,⁵⁴ and local economies collapsed as daily income-earning opportunities disappeared overnight. The scale and severity of the crisis overwhelmed existing relief capacities. As Jayasuriya and McCawley note, “even Indonesia, which frequently experiences serious natural disasters, was caught unprepared by the scale of the disaster.”⁵⁵

⁴⁸ Sisira Jayasuriya and Peter McCawley, *The Asian Tsunami: Aid and Reconstruction After a Disaster* (Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2010), 6. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/159342/adbi-asian-tsunami-aid-reconstruction.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 29.

⁵⁰ Bruce A. Elleman, “Waves of Hope: The US Navy’s Response to the Tsunami in Northern Indonesia,” *Naval War College, Center for Naval Warfare Studies*, Newport: Naval War College Press (200): vii, https://permanent.fdlp.gov/websites/www.dtic.mil/2019/a_463367.pdf.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Jayasuriya and McCawley, *The Asian Tsunami*, 2.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Matthew Clarke, Ismet Fanany, and Sue Kenny, *Post Disaster Reconstruction: Lessons from Aceh*, (London and New York: Earthscan, 2010), 3.

⁵⁵ Jayasuriya and McCawley, *The Asian Tsunami*, 2-3.

Operation Unified Assistance: Swift, Effective, and Genuine

Two days later on December 28th, 2004, US Pacific Command formed the Joint Task Force (JTF) 536 for the purpose of executing Operation Unified Assistance, the vessel under which American relief efforts functioned in Banda Aceh and surrounding regions. On January 3rd, 2005, the force was rebranded as the Combined Support Force (CSF), given the inclusion of forces from Australia, Japan, Singapore, Russia, France, and Malaysia, and medical teams from Germany, Britain, and China. Functioning through the US navy, Operation Unified Assistance prioritized the distribution of in-kind aid during the initial response – i.e., food, fuel, clothing, and shelter. By January 5th, 2005, American forces had distributed over 610,000 pounds of water, food, and supplies to the region.⁵⁶ The Operation also went on to experiment with cash-based aid including cash for work programs, cash grants for sheltering displaced families, and social welfare assistance.⁵⁷ In the immediate aftermath, American forces airlifted injured civilians to hospitals; the US also deployed its own hospital ship to the scene – the USNS Mercy – which treated over 9,500 patients in affected areas.⁵⁸

US aid distribution in Indonesia, too, represented genuine action divorced from imperialism or propaganda. Operation Unified Freedom launched as a response to a request for international assistance – not as a preemptive or unwelcome intervention. Upon Indonesian Vice President Kalla’s first survey of damages in Aceh, he reportedly declared to “just get them in.”⁵⁹ It ultimately took the Indonesian Government just over 24 hours to request assistance. Following

⁵⁶ Elleman, “Waves of Hope,” 10.

⁵⁷ President Clinton later signaled out direct cash transfers as “a positive feature of the tsunami effort, helping to empower local communities and families.” For more on cash-based aid, see: Doocy, Robinson, and Johnson, “Cash Grants in Humanitarian Assistance.”

⁵⁸ Elleman, “Waves of Hope,” 79.

⁵⁹ Robin Davies, “Aceh’s Tsunami Remembered, Part 1: ‘Just Get Them In,’” *Devpolicy Blog*, January 13, 2015, <https://devpolicy.org/acehs-tsunami-remembered-part-1-just-get-them-in-20150113/>.

distribution of aid, President Yudhoyono spoke to the nature of the operation during an address in Washington: “what really mattered was that you saw the pain of others and tried to help.”⁶⁰

Minimal Costs, Brief Duration

By December 29th, 2004, President Bush had pledged \$35 million to relief efforts; by December 31st, his pledge was upped to \$350 million. Setting aside funds dedicated to relief efforts in neighboring countries as well as long-term reconstruction efforts, emergency relief for immediate use in Indonesia totaled only \$327 million,⁶¹ with most of such funding ended by late 2005.⁶² By all measures, especially in comparison to militarized interventions, funding for immediate disaster relief in Indonesia was pocket change. Months of rapid, life-saving relief efforts cost less than one day of operations in Iraq.⁶³ They cost less than *half* of one new B-21 Raider jet, of which the Air Force plans to build over 100.⁶⁴ Closer to home, we spend more remodeling One Times Square⁶⁵ or constructing new manufacturing plants in New York⁶⁶ than we did on disaster relief in Indonesia. The monetary burden of Unified Assistance was relatively inconsequential, especially considering budgets of traditional hard power campaigns, such as American interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

⁶⁰ “Indonesia: US Committed to Continuing Tsunami Relief, Bush Says,” *ReliefWeb*, May 26, 2005, <https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/indonesia-us-committed-continuing-tsunami-relief-bush-says>.

⁶¹ Jayasuriya and McCawley, *The Asian Tsunami*, 50.

⁶² Although longer-term reconstruction efforts continued through 2007 and beyond. See: Government Accountability Office, “USAID Signature Tsunami Reconstruction.”

⁶³ \$370 million per day in 2007. | See: John M. Spratt, *The Costs of Military Operations and Reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan: Hearing Before the Committee on the Budget*, US House of Representatives, 2007, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-110hhrg38255/pdf/CHRG-110hhrg38255.pdf>, 7.

⁶⁴ \$750 million apiece. | Doug Cameron, “US Unveils B-21 Raider, the Stealth Bomber Designed to Deter China,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 2, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-unwraps-b-21-bomber-designed-to-deter-china-11669983794>.

⁶⁵ \$500 million. | Patrick Adcroft, “One Times Square to Undergo \$500 million Renovation,” *Spectrum News*, May 6, 2022, <https://www.nyl.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2022/05/06/one-times-square-to-undergo--500-milli-on-renovation>.

⁶⁶ \$550 million. | Liz Young, “\$550 Million Manufacturing, Commercial Development in Brooklyn Secures City Council Approval,” *New York Business Journal*, June 1, 2021, <https://www.bizjournal.com/newyork/news/2021/06/01/acme-smoked-fish-factory-greenpoint-city-council.html>.

In its official capacity, Operation Unified Assistance lasted from December 28th, 2004, to February 23rd, 2005 – a span of less than two months. The operation’s end followed a request of the Indonesian government that all US military personnel be withdrawn by March of 2005, as well as a shift from rapid assistance towards long-term reconstruction. The operation’s brief timetable and aid structure empowered a swift withdrawal divorced from long-standing involvements or imperialist overtones. Unified Assistance secured major foreign policy inroads without the need for permanent overseas military bases, for example. In this way, US aid to Banda Aceh represented a practical implementation of restraint.

Successful in Humanitarian and Economic Spheres

The rapid and widespread distribution of in-kind aid and medical assistance ensured the success of the CSF’s humanitarian mission. CSF effectively coordinated with the Indonesian government to execute rescue and relief activities with speed. Significant US and international humanitarian aid empowered Indonesian President Yudhoyono to end the emergency response phase by March 2005. The response helped build strong foundations for recovery, with 16,000 new homes, 235 kilometers of roads, and 335 new schools built by December 2005.⁶⁷ Aceh’s economic health, though threatened by damages to its agricultural and fishing sectors, greatly benefited from development assistance and foreign aid. As Naik, Stiger, and Laczko of the International Organization for Migration write,

“In terms of overall impact on the economy, the Indonesian government took the view that the disaster would not inhibit Indonesia’s economic growth as reconstruction costs did not come from the government budget and overseas

⁶⁷ Jayasuriya and McCawley, *The Asian Tsunami*, 81.

development was likely to stimulate industry with demands for construction materials and other products.”⁶⁸

Ultimately, the success of Unified Assistance’s humanitarian efforts represented appropriate usage of American resources and commendable cooperation with the international community as a departure from American unilateralism. It reflected a deeply moral purpose, and it pursued this purpose with respect to national autonomy and self-determination. These qualities in themselves helped secure US strategic objectives, in addition to humanitarian interests, as described in the following sections.

Successful in Winning Hearts & Minds, Improving US Reputation

Gains in US favorability among Indonesia’s public in the months following Operation Unified Assistance, largely attributable to the distribution of rapid relief, indicated a newfound success in “winning hearts and minds” through public diplomacy. The war in Iraq and war on terror had tarnished America’s image abroad, particularly in majority Muslim countries. US favorability in Indonesia, for instance, dropped from 61 to 15 percent within a year of its intervention in Iraq.⁶⁹ Yet, disaster relief efforts in Banda Aceh yielded considerable progress in this area. 2005 Pew Research Center surveys found Indonesia’s view had been measurably altered by Unified Assistance:

“Roughly eight-in-ten (79%) said that post-tsunami aid from the U.S. had improved their impression of America, and positive views of the U.S. more than doubled, rising from 15% in 2003 to 38% in the 2005 poll. Meanwhile, the percentage saying the U.S. takes into account the interests of countries like Indonesia jumped from 25% in 2003 to 59% in 2005.”⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Asmita Naik, Elca Stiger, and Frank Laczko, “Migration, Development and Natural Disasters: Insights From the Indian Ocean Tsunami,” *International Organization for Migration*, IOM Migration Research Series, 2007, <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mrs30.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Elleman, “Waves of Hope,” 105.

⁷⁰ Richard Wike, “Does Humanitarian Aid Improve America’s Image?” *Pew Research Center*, March 6, 2012, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2012/03/06/does-humanitarian-aid-improve-americas-image/>.

Another poll found 65 percent of Indonesians had become more favorable towards the US given the tsunami assistance, and many had become more favorable towards US counterterrorism efforts (see antiterrorism subsection).⁷¹ As security scholar Sidney Jones assessed in 2005, “it is fair to say that in Aceh, there is nothing but overwhelming gratitude.”⁷² Similarly, President Yudhoyono noted that “there has been an incredibly deep emotional connection between America and Indonesia since the tsunami.”⁷³

These improvements in Indonesian perceptions of the US manifested, too, in key political and diplomatic gains. Scholar Ann Murphy finds that the tsunami provided a unique opportunity for “genuine rapprochement” and the development of a strategic partnership between both nations built on shared democratic values, which the US believed would help promote stability in Asia.⁷⁴ This renewed relationship would go on to be the basis for future collaborative endeavors, such as the 2010 US-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership, which advanced shared environmental, economic, and security goals.

Successful in Promoting Regional Conflict Resolution

The Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka or GAM) was an Acehnese separatist group active between 1976 and 2005. Their primary driving force was not religion, but independence for a region which had considered itself “ethically, politically, and historically distinct” for

⁷¹ “A Major Change of Public Opinion in the Muslim World,” *Terror Free Tomorrow*, 2005, <https://www.terrorfreetomorrow.org/upimagestft/Full%20Report.pdf>.

⁷² Sidney Jones, “Q&A: Indonesia After the Tsunami,” *The New York Times*, January 7, 2005, https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/cfr/international/slot3_010705.html.

⁷³ Rizal Sukma, “Indonesia and the Tsunami: Responses and Foreign Policy Implications,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 60, no. 2 (June 2006): 225, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10357710600696142>.

⁷⁴ See: Ann Marie Murphy, “US Rapprochement with Indonesia: From Problem State to Partner,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 32, no. 3 (December 2010): 374-75, <https://www.jstor-org.libproxy.uoregon.edu/stable/pdf/25798864.pdf>.

decades.⁷⁵ Washington did not consider the GAM a terrorist organization under its definitions of such.⁷⁶ Regardless, armed conflict between the GAM and Indonesian Government escalated throughout the 80s and 90s, with the Indonesian Government maintaining a military occupation of the region, both in official and unofficial capacities. With peace talks – including a humanitarian pause in 2000 and Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in 2003 – yielding little progress, public attitudes increasingly favored a military solution.⁷⁷

International response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, including Unified Assistance, provided a unique window of opportunity to revive peace negotiations and ultimately end armed conflict between both forces. Shortly after the disaster, GAM and the Indonesian government entered into an informal ceasefire to prioritize relief efforts. Then, in February 2005, peace talks commenced which culminated in the Helsinki Peace Accord and provided a number of concessions. These included an end of hostilities, an Indonesian pledge to withdraw all military by the end of 2005, disarmament and demobilization of GAM troops, the establishment of Aceh-based political parties, amnesty to political prisoners, and the creation of new courts, reconciliation commissions, and monitoring missions.⁷⁸ In December of 2006, Acehnese people directly elected their own governor and local parliament for the first time.⁷⁹ The elections and accords signaled an end to a conflict which had spanned over three decades.

The tsunami first encouraged survivors to set aside their differences, while sustained foreign aid and relief helped manufacture the circumstances for meaningful conflict resolution.

⁷⁵ Sidney Jones, “Indonesia After the Tsunami.”

⁷⁶ Anthony L. Smith, “Indonesia and the United States 2004-2005: New President, New Needs, Same Old Relations,” *Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies*, February 2005, <https://apcss.org/Publications/SAS/APandtheUS/SmithIndonesia2.pdf>, 4.

⁷⁷ Rizal Sukma, “Indonesia and the Tsunami,” 218.

⁷⁸ Jayasuriya and McCawley, *The Asian Tsunami*, 91-92.

⁷⁹ Beardsley and McQuinn find that “the elections were an important forum for reconciliation and affirmation of public support for the peace process.” In the end, prominent ex-GAM member Irwandi Yusuf won the election for Governor. See: Beardsley and McQuinn, “Rebel Groups as Predatory Organizations,” 636.

Continued military operations became untenable given the presence of American and international forces in Aceh. At its core, armed conflict threatened to disrupt valuable relief and reconstruction efforts – as Beardsley and McQuinn summarize common discourse, “the Tsunami’s devastation hindered war making for GAM, and the international aid flowing into the country provided a positive incentive for cooperation.”⁸⁰ They go on to contend that the resumption of peace talks became fundamentally linked to the financial resources of disaster relief. Other authors speculate that the disaster and response provided a “face-saving opportunity” for existing private talks to go public.⁸¹

The end of hostilities between the GAM and Indonesian government indicates the effectiveness of rapid assistance in promoting conflict resolution and securing key US strategic objectives, such as regional security and stability. Conflict resolutions in disaster-affected countries, such as Indonesia, have yielded sweeping and complementary benefits:

“Resolution of the Aceh conflict slackened demand for trafficked weapons, reduced opportunities for corruption, and freed security forces to refocus on previously second-order priorities such as transnational crime. Therefore, the Aceh peace process was not only a positive experience in Indonesia, but it had positive impacts on regional security.”⁸²

Piracy rates in the Strait of Malacca adjacent to Aceh, too, declined from “record highs to almost zero” following the international response to the 2004 tsunami.⁸³ In this way, disaster relief – as a humanitarian endeavor and implementation of restraint – undoubtedly advanced the national interests of the United States at large.

⁸⁰ Kyle Beardsley and Brian McQuinn, “Rebel Groups as Predatory Organizations: The Political Effects of the 2004 Tsunami in Indonesia and Sri Lanka,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 4 (2009): 625.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0022002709336460?journalCode=jcrb>.

⁸¹ K.E. Schulze, “From the Battlefield to the Negotiating Table: GAM and the Indonesian Government 1999-2005,” *Asian Security* 3, no. 2, (June 6 2007): 94, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/147_99850701338547.

⁸² Bradford, “Waves of Change,” 21.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

Successful in Eroding Passive Support for Terror & Anti-Americanism

Indonesia's public remained critical of the American "war on terror" prior to the tsunami—particularly US policy in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Israel – with many viewing the US as anti-Islamic. Though very small minorities, radical Islamic terrorist groups would go on to expand their presence in Indonesia throughout the early 2000s. Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), an extremist group with ties to Al Qaeda, proved particularly active. JI and associated groups executed the Bali bombings in 2002, attacks on the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Jakarta in 2003, and bombings of the Australian embassy in 2004. Such attacks suggested a commitment to violence against Western interests and people.⁸⁴ As a whole, terrorist attacks in Southeast Asia and Oceania grew from 95 instances between 1968 and 1985 to over 2000 instances between 1985 and 2004.⁸⁵

US officials were transparent in their hopes that disaster relief would help combat anti-Americanism and shift attitudes towards terror – the war of ideas at work. Secretary of State Colin Powell suggested that US relief efforts were proof that "America is not an anti-Islam, anti-Muslim nation."⁸⁶ Similarly, Senator Sam Brownback observed that the tsunami was "a foreign policy moment."⁸⁷ Through the humanitarian impacts of disaster relief, the US largely realized these ambitions, succeeding in eroding support for terror where traditional hard power strategies had failed. In conjunction with gains in US favorability, polling revealed a considerable decline in support for Osama Bin Laden following the distribution of US disaster relief, falling from 58

⁸⁴ Smith, "Indonesia and the United States," 4.

⁸⁵ Josh Kurlantzick, "Where the War on Terror is Succeeding," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, May 1, 2007, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2007/05/01/where-war-on-terror-is-succeeding-pub-19146>.

⁸⁶ Matthew Clarke, Ismet Fanany, and Sue Kenny, *Post Disaster Reconstruction: Lessons From Aceh*, (London and New York: Earthscan, 2010), <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/lib/uoregon/reader.action?docID=554791&ppg=6#>, 39.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

percent to 23 percent by February 2005.⁸⁸ Furthermore, opposition to US counterterrorism efforts declined from 72 percent in 2003 to only 36 percent.⁸⁹

Terrorist groups must “move among the people as a fish swims in the sea” to survive and thrive, finding passive support from the surrounding population.⁹⁰ While active support such as donations or memberships proves impactful, terrorist groups can create sanctuaries within host states with passive tolerance alone.⁹¹ As International security professor Audrey Kurth Cronin notes, common means of passive support include ignoring obvious signs of activity, declining to cooperate with the police, or expressing support for the group’s objectives.⁹² Effective counterterrorism strategy therefore involves separating the group from its support in the population (the sea). Passive support can be diminished by “demonstrating that the terrorist organization is not on the ‘right side.’”⁹³ When constituents find refuge in better alternatives or become uninterested in the group’s ideology or objectives, there are fewer incentives to maintain passive support of terrorism. By disputing Al-Qaeda’s messaging around the “far enemy” of the United States and western world, for example, the US can pursue changes in public opinion and understanding. Here is why it is crucial to adhere to the primacy of the genuine – through genuine humanitarian relief, the US provided a legitimate force of example to foreign populations and aid recipients, not propaganda. Militarized interventions conversely affirm anti-American attitudes and do little to build trust or credibility.

⁸⁸ “A Major Change of Public Opinion,” *Terror Free Tomorrow*.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Paul Zagorski and Stephen Harmon, “The War on Terror: Separating the (Star) Fish from the Sea,” *Freedom From Fear*, no. 5 (November 2009): 4, https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/journals/251907_09/2009/5/3/read.

⁹¹ Christopher Paul, “As a Fish Swims in the Sea: Relationships Between Factors Contributing to Support for Terrorist or Insurgent Groups,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33, no. 6 (May 2010): 491, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10576101003752630>.

⁹² Audrey Kurth Cronin, “How Al-Qaeda Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups,” *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 27, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4137538>.

⁹³ Zagorski and Harmon, “The War on Terror,” 6.

With an erosion of popular support, shift towards more pro-American attitudes, and renewed cooperation on counterterrorism efforts, Indonesian extremist groups struggled to retain members and influence. By 2007, Carnegie Scholar Josh Kurlantzick writes, regional trends indicated a lasting shift in support for radical terrorism:

“Across the region, jihadist groups like Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyah are struggling to survive, Islamist parties seem to be weakening, and the region’s newest leaders openly wage war on terror. Moreover, the United States has played a leading role in these successes, and it has done so without creating much in the way of an anti-American reaction.”⁹⁴

Through public diplomacy alone, USAID and Operation Unified Assistance changed the balance of power in Southeast Asia, realizing Bush’s aspirations of defeating terrorism. It did so, not with the staggering human costs of militarized interventions, but through a restrained, humanitarian mission which effectively swayed public opinion and attitudes.

Operation Unified Assistance Secured Both Strategic and Moral Interests

The US response to the 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami succeeded in winning hearts and minds. It proved to be a highly moral and humanitarian operation – saving thousands of lives, building the foundations for economic recovery, and respecting Indonesian autonomy. But it was also a successful political and strategic operation – improving US favorability and foreign relations, strengthening regional stability, and eroding support for radical terrorism. Unified Assistance was cost-effective and appropriately limited, particularly compared to American hard power strategies of the 2000s. For these reasons, the Indonesian case study demonstrates the proven potential of public diplomacy, disaster relief, and soft power. It serves as an appropriate and necessary model for the future of hearts and minds policy, and effectively complements a grand strategy of restraint.

⁹⁴ Kurlantzick, “Where the War on Terror is Succeeding.”

IV. Further Evidence for Rapid Deployment: Pakistan (2005) and Japan (2011)

The American response to the 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami, although a key model for successful public diplomacy, is far from an isolated incident. Rather, Operation Unified Assistance is but one example among many relief efforts found to yield comparable benefits. The following section briefly highlights two additional examples of disaster relief efforts which meaningfully improved US favorability: responses to the 2005 Kashmir Earthquake in Pakistan and to the 2011 Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami in Japan. As in the case of Indonesia, these case studies are not campaigns within conflict zones, nor are they long-term development aid projects – they are rapid humanitarian operations launched to respond to international aid requests.

2005 Kashmir Earthquake

On October 8th, 2005, a 7.6 magnitude earthquake struck Pakistan along the Himalayan Frontal Thrust Fault, leaving 74,000 Pakistanis dead, 70,000 injured, and over 2.8 million homeless.⁹⁵ What followed was a “race against winter” – a sweeping international effort to provide survivors with shelter and supplies needed for the harsh Himalayan weather. American rapid relief operations lasted from October 2005 to March 2006, when immediate humanitarian needs had been met and aid moved under the purview of the Pakistan Government’s Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority. During this time, American responders delivered over 9 million kilograms of aid, gave medical treatment to 30,000 patients, and cleared 35,300

⁹⁵ Tahir Andrabi and Jishnu Das, “In Aid We Trust: Hearts and Minds and the Pakistan Earthquake of 2005,” *Policy Research Working Paper Series 5440*, The World Bank, <https://ideas.repec.org/p/wbk/wbrw ps/5440.html>, 3.

metric tons of debris.⁹⁶ US Chinook helicopters arrived within 48 hours of the disaster to deliver food and supplies, leading newspapers to comment on the successes of “Chinook Diplomacy” in both humanitarian and foreign relations spheres.⁹⁷ Aid recipients recognized these US efforts as genuine; 2008 focus group research in Pakistan found “near unanimous sentiment by local respondents that these organizations responded for humanitarian reasons rather than to promote hidden political, cultural or religious agendas.”⁹⁸ Again, aid delivered quickly and judiciously in times of greatest need found positive reception.

Minimal Costs

Under President George W. Bush, the US committed an initial contribution of \$50 million for earthquake relief and reconstruction efforts.⁹⁹ By November 3rd, 2005, USAID had committed \$41 million to Pakistan in humanitarian assistance including shelter, relief supplies, and logistics.¹⁰⁰ These rapid efforts comprised part of the US pledge of \$300 million for relief and reconstruction assistance.¹⁰¹ Ultimately, costs of rapid relief in Pakistan were comparable or lesser than the costs of Operation Unified Assistance in Indonesia.

Winning Hearts and Minds in Pakistan

Public opinion polls in Pakistan revealed meaningful improvements in US favorability following relief efforts. From a rate of 23 percent in 2005, US approval doubled to 46 percent one month

⁹⁶ Ibid., 19-20.

⁹⁷ “Can US Aid Change Minds in Pakistan?” *The Guardian*, October 20, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2010/oct/20/us-aid-humanitarian-pakistan-winning-hearts-minds>.

⁹⁸ Andrabi and Das, “In Aid We Trust,” 4.

⁹⁹ “Statement on US Assistance for Earthquake in Pakistan,” *White House*, Office of the Press Secretary, October 9, 2005, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2005/10/20051009-1.html>.

¹⁰⁰ “Earthquake Relief Update,” *USAID*, November 3, 2005, https://web.archive.org/web/20051107221742/http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia_near_east/south_asia_quake/.

¹⁰¹ Lisa Curtis, *Pakistan Earthquake: International Response and Impact on US Foreign Policies and Programs*, *Staff Trip Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations*, US Senate, December 2005, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CPRT-109SPRT25130/html/CPRT-109SPRT25130.htm>.

following the earthquake in November 2006.¹⁰² Other reports found that 85 percent of Pakistanis had heard about American aid efforts, and measured a 4 percent improvement in US favorability.¹⁰³ Terror Free Tomorrow polls later conducted in May 2006 found 75 percent of Pakistanis continued to have a more favorable opinion of the United States, and that support for Bin Laden and suicide attacks had fallen drastically.¹⁰⁴

Widely cited research by Andrabi and Das find that distribution of American aid led to improved and sustained trust among local populations. Andrabi and Das suggest it was the “boots on the ground” operation, rather than media campaigns or financial aid to governments, which led to improvements in trust.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, trust and positive attitudes towards foreigners increased closer to the fault line, among populations most directly affected by relief efforts. For every ten kilometers closer to the fault line, trust in all foreigners increased by six percent and trust in European or American foreigners increased by five percent.¹⁰⁶ Disaster relief, therefore, was most successful in changing the minds of direct aid recipients.

There is evidence that US favorability in Pakistan ebbed in years following the initial boost of disaster relief.¹⁰⁷ However, these changes can be attributed to unpopular and interventionist foreign policy decisions of the 2000s, including US drone strikes and the war in Afghanistan. The Pew Research Center cites these examples as reason for declining favorability, speculating that “opposition to key elements of U.S. foreign policy may run too deep” for the

¹⁰² Andrew Wilder, US Aid to Pakistan: Planning and Accountability, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, US House of Representatives, December 9, 2009, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-111_hhrg65128/html/CHRG-111_hhrg65128.htm.

¹⁰³ Wike, “Does Humanitarian Aid Improve America’s Image?”

¹⁰⁴ “Humanitarian Assistance Key to Favorable Public Opinion in World’s Three Most Populous Muslim Countries,” Terror Free Tomorrow, 2006, <http://www.terrorfreetomorrow.org/upimagestft/Indonesia%20Bangladesh%20TFT%20Final%20Poll%20Report.pdf>.

¹⁰⁵ Andrabi and Das, “In Aid We Trust,” 31.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 25.

¹⁰⁷ Wike, “Does Humanitarian Aid Improve America’s Image?”

impacts of disaster relief in Pakistan to persist for the long-term.¹⁰⁸ The solution, then, is not to abandon disaster relief; given its proven potential to change public opinion, humanitarian aid poses little detriment. The solution is to align other US foreign policy decisions with the principles of rapid disaster relief – to pursue actions which are not unilateral nor imperialistic but instead cooperative, genuine, and benign. For this reason, the case of the 2005 Kashmir Earthquake ultimately demonstrates both the untapped potential of disaster relief and the means by which US interests can be undermined by unpopular foreign policy.

2011 Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami

On March 11th, 2011, a 9.0 magnitude earthquake struck the northeast coast of Japan along with subsequent tsunamis which reached as far as six miles inland.¹⁰⁹ The devastation then triggered a nuclear meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant comparable in severity to Chernobyl. The earthquake and tsunami alone left nearly 20,000 people dead or missing, and over 5,000 injured,¹¹⁰ with some reports estimating as many as 28,000 casualties.¹¹¹ Altogether, events represented an unprecedented “triple disaster” which necessitated international support.

Japanese leaders requested assistance from Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, and the United States with speed. The US responded with Operation Tomodachi (*Tomodachi Sakusen*, or “Operation Friends”), which deployed over 20,000 American troops to the region. Operation Tomodachi successfully delivered over 189 tons of food and 7,729 tons of fresh water, cleared debris, performed search-and-rescue operations in collaboration with Japan’s Coast Guard, and

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Rockie K. Wilson, “Operation Tomodachi: A Model for American Disaster Response Efforts and the Collective Use of Military Forces Abroad,” *John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University*, January 2012, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA567991.pdf>.

¹¹⁰ Dana M. Herbert, James A. Prosser, and Rachele A. Wharton, “A Cost Analysis of the Department of the Navy Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response to the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami,” *Naval Postgraduate School*, June 2012, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/36700922.pdf>.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

worked to address the nuclear crisis.¹¹² The operation lasted from March 12th until May 4th, 2011.

Minimal Costs

A comprehensive cost analysis of the operation by Herbet, Prosser, and Wharton estimated total reported expenses of \$80,472,000.¹¹³ Japanese outlet Shukan Post similarly reported costs of \$80 million in April 2011.¹¹⁴ By these estimates, Operation Tomodachi accrued fewer expenses than relief in Indonesia or Pakistan.

Winning Hearts and Minds in Japan

Both American and Japanese officials regarded Operation Tomodachi as a resounding success, noting its impact on relations between both countries. As Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan told US servicemen in 2011, “I am sure that Operation Tomodachi is an operation that will strengthen our relation between Japan and the United States. And that this is also a feeling that will be shared by myself and all the other Japanese people.”¹¹⁵ These sentiments were substantiated by public opinion polling following the tsunami. According to the Pew Research Center, favorable views of the US in Japan jumped from 66 percent in 2010 to 85 percent after aid distribution.¹¹⁶ Among the Japanese Cabinet Office, 82 percent expressed “friendly feeling”

¹¹² Chris Ames and Yuiko Koguchi-Ames, “Friends in Need: ‘Operation Tomodachi’ and the Politics of US Military Disaster Relief in Japan,” in *Natural Disaster and Nuclear Crisis in Japan: Response and Recovery After Japan’s 3/11*, ed. Jeff Kingston (Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), 208.

¹¹³ Herbert, Prosser, and Wharton, “Cost Analysis.”

¹¹⁴ “Is US Military Relief Effort Operation Tomodachi Really About Friendship?” *Japan Today*, April 23, 2011, <https://japantoday.com/category/features/kuchikomi/is-u-s-military-relief-effort-operation-tomodachi-really-about-friendship>.

¹¹⁵ April de Armas, “Japan Prime Minister Visits Camp Sendai,” *Defense Visual Information Distribution Service*, October 4, 2011, <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/68560/japan-prime-minister-visits-camp-sendai>.

¹¹⁶ Wike, “Does Humanitarian Aid Improve America’s Image?”

towards the US. In the broader international competition for credibility and reputation, Operation Tomodachi benefited the US as well:

“Nearly six-in-ten Japanese (57%) said the U.S. provided a “great deal” of assistance following the disaster, while another 32% said the U.S. gave a “fair amount” of assistance. In contrast, fewer than one-in-five believed the European Union, United Nations, or China had provided a great deal of aid. [...] In 2010, just 31% of Japanese respondents said the U.S. takes into account the interests of countries like Japan; a year later, 51% held this view.”¹¹⁷

The operation therefore paved the way for strong diplomatic relations and cooperation between allies. US Ambassador to Japan John V. Roos expressed confidence that relief had “a very positive impact on support for the alliance and the relationship,” and that “if there is one thing that came out of [relief], it’s the deepening of our bonds.”¹¹⁸ For expenses totaling only \$80 million, US disaster relief in Japan provided crucial humanitarian assistance during a time of great need. In doing so, Operation Tomodachi improved US credibility abroad and helped to reinforce diplomatic and political ties with a key ally.

Proven Commonalities Demonstrate Soft-Power Benefits of Rapid Relief

Despite their differing geopolitical circumstances, case studies of Indonesia, Pakistan, and Japan demonstrate strong commonalities in their relationships to US foreign disaster relief. Each demonstrates an immediate and favorable reception to American humanitarian aid, often leading to improved relations, sustained public support, and improvements in US credibility. Public diplomacy, as a tool of American soft power, provides a cost-effective, restrained, and moral means of winning hearts and minds.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Krista Mahr, “Diplomacy and Disaster: US Ambassador to Japan Looks Back on 3/11,” *TIME*, March 15, 2012, <https://world.time.com/2012/03/15/diplomacy-and-disaster-u-s-ambassador-to-japan-looks-back-on-311/>.

Indonesia, Pakistan, and Japan represent a proven and promising track record of success; together they provide the initial blueprints for the realization of Posen's framework.

V. Overseas Military Bases are Costly and Unwarranted

Implementation of restraint demands the abandonment of counterproductive status quo policies maintained in the name of liberal hegemony; chief among them are overseas US military bases. On the basis of maintaining hegemony, securing national interests, and balancing the rising influence of China, officials continue to maintain and even expand the US overseas military presence year after year.¹¹⁹ Building from its extensive Cold War network, the US now maintains over 750 bases in 80 countries and about 173,000 deployed troops.¹²⁰ Under a strategy of restraint, Posen writes, the US would “reduce significantly its overseas base structure and reorganize much of what it keeps.”¹²¹ A reduction in bases would help to eliminate wasteful expenses and to solve problems of overcommitment and “cheap riding.”¹²² By securing command of the commons, and retaining a handful of particularly crucial bases in Guam and Diego Garcia, base reduction promises to pose little impact on the security of either the US or host nations.¹²³

As it stands, overseas bases represent unneeded and outdated policy inconsistent with US interests. One of the areas in which bases demonstrate these inconsistencies is their impact on anti-Americanism. Where disaster relief efforts win hearts and minds, bases are conversely linked to imperialism, anti-Americanism, and local resistance: “populations are irked by foreign military presence, even if that presence was not achieved through violence ... when the United States appears meddlesome, local nationalists are quick to respond, and the response has an anti-

¹¹⁹ For example, see: Sui-Lee Wee, “US to Boost Military Role in the Philippines in Push to Counter China,” *The New York Times*, February 1, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/01/world/asia/p hilippines-united-states-military-bases.html>.

¹²⁰ Mohammed Hussein and Mohammed Haddad, “Infographic: US Military Presence Throughout the World,” *Aljazeera*, September 10, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/10/infographic-us-military-presence-around-the-world-interactive>.

¹²¹ Posen, *Restraint*, 159.

¹²² Wherein US allies, reaping the benefits of US defense spending, underspend on defense despite ample capacity.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 160.

American flavor.”¹²⁴ With respect to this particular interest area, the following section contrasts overseas bases with disaster relief efforts to assess their differences in winning international credibility and appropriately projecting American power.

Exorbitant Costs

Maintaining the US’s network of overseas bases comes at an exorbitant cost. American University’s David Vine estimates that maintaining all overseas troops and bases in 2014 cost between \$160 and \$200 billion, including troops in warzones.¹²⁵ Cumulative costs have only increased since. Annual recurring fixed costs for a single base – excluding personnel, transport, equipment, and operational expenses – can reach \$200 million.¹²⁶ Studies suggest that cutting overseas bases in Europe and Asia by one-third alone could save between \$7 and \$12 billion annually.¹²⁷

Bases Harm Local Communities: South Korean Anti-Base Activism

While attitudes on bases vary among host nations, South Korea’s anti-base activism has been particularly visible. The US has maintained a military presence in the country since the 1950s, though Posen notes that South Korea is “well able to look after itself” given US backup from afar. Anti-American and anti-base activism have dramatically heightened since South Korea’s democratization; as political scholar Jinwung Kim writes, anti-Americanism has “become a national issue and is taken seriously by Seoul and Washington.”¹²⁸ Movements against US base

¹²⁴ Ibid., 53.

¹²⁵ David Vine, “Where in the World Is the US Military?” *Politico Magazine*, July/August 2015, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/06/us-military-bases-around-the-world-119321/>.

¹²⁶ John Glaser, “Withdrawing From Overseas Bases: Why a Forward-Deployed Military Posture is Unnecessary, Outdated, and Dangerous,” *CATO Institute*, July 18, 2017, <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/withdrawing-overseas-bases-why-forward-deployed-military-posture-unnecessary>.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Jinwung Kim, “Ambivalent Allies: Recent South Korean Perceptions of the United States Forces Korea (USFK),” *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 30, no. 4, (Winter 2004), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30172590>, 281.

expansions gained traction and support throughout the 2000s. One such group, the Paengseong Town Committee against the Expansion of US Military Bases, formed in 2003 to protest proposed expansions of Camp Humphreys and Osan Air Base, which would have converted nearly 10 percent of Pyeongtaek into US bases.¹²⁹ Pyeongtaek residents, 70 percent of which opposed the plan,¹³⁰ resisted via mass protests, sit-ins, and marches before being forcibly removed from their homes by police in May 2006. Such vocal opposition to American policy continues. In 2019, for instance, police arrested 19 South Korean university students amid protests of the American military presence. The protesters' messages included "Stop interfering with our domestic affairs!" and "We don't need US troops!"¹³¹ Such activism reflects sweeping detrimental impacts of the American presence.

Two such impacts are heightened criminal incidents and legal disputes. The 1966 Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the US and South Korea has long been a source of contention, given provisions which failed to acknowledge Korean jurisdiction over many crimes perpetrated by US servicemen. In one particularly egregious incident in 2002, for instance, American soldiers killed two underaged Korean girls with an armored vehicle, and had their charges subsequently dismissed by an all-American jury.¹³² Such crimes sour public perception of US bases and invite greater scrutiny of claims to American partnership.

US bases in South Korea also brought with them exploitative camptown prostitution. By 1958, the country's population of sex workers topped 300,000, with more than half in dedicated

¹²⁹ Seungsook Moon, "Protesting the Expansion of US Military Bases in Pyeongtaek: A Local Movement in South Korea," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 111, no. 4 (Fall 2012), <https://read-dukeupress-edu.libproxy.yuoregon.edu/south-atlantic-quarterly/article/111/4/865/3624/Protesting-the-Expansion-of-US-Military-Bases-in>, 869.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Kim Bellware, "Seoul Students Scale Wall Outside US Ambassador's Residence to Protest American Troop Presence in South Korea," *The Washington Post*, October 19, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/10/19/seoul-students-scale-wall-us-embassy-protest-american-troop-presence-south-korea/>.

¹³² Kim, "Ambivalent Allies," 275.

camptowns.¹³³ As political scientist Katherine Moon explains, these camptowns were “virtually colonized space where Korean sovereignty was suspended and replaced by the US military authorities.”¹³⁴ Despite revisions to the SOFA since 1966, American GI violence, crimes, and sexual assaults have persisted with frequency.¹³⁵

Finally, US military presence has proven to pose detrimental impacts for South Korea’s communities and environment. Military infrastructure imparts spatial and planning constraints on communities, while base expansions lead to forcible removals and disruptions – as discussed in the case of Pyeongtaek in 2006. American military bases are also linked to an array of detrimental environmental effects, including the “contamination of water, soil, and air by hazardous wastes and spills; [and] deafening noise and debilitating vibration from repeated military exercises.”¹³⁶ Environmental scandals have sparked widespread protests throughout the deployment.¹³⁷

To be sure, overseas bases do provide notable benefits to host countries, particularly in an economic sense. Advocates point to gains in trade, investment, and economic growth which accompany fixed US military bases. Michael Allen’s 2019 survey affirms such trends, noting tendencies for publics to see more positive national-level economic effects than local ones.¹³⁸ In terms of economic benefit, Allen also finds that newer deployments are perceived to have more

¹³³ David Vine, “My Body Was Not Mine, But the US Military’s: Inside the Disturbing Sex Industry Thriving Around America’s Bases,” *Politico*, November 3, 2015, <https://www.politico.eu/article/my-body-was-not-mine-but-the-u-s-militarys/>.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ See: John Glionna, “Alleged Rapes by US Soldiers Ratchet Up Anger in South Korea,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 20, 2011, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/blogs/world-now/story/2011-10-20/allege-d-rapes-by-u-s-soldiers-ratchet-up-anger-in-south-korea>.

¹³⁶ Moon, “Protesting the Expansion,” 865.

¹³⁷ In July 2000, for instance, soldiers inappropriately disposed of 228 liters of formaldehyde – a toxin which flowed into the Hans River and raised concerns from environmental groups. | Kawato, *Protests Against US Military Base Policy*, 110.

¹³⁸ Michael Allen et al., “Understanding How Populations Perceive US Troop Deployments,” *Minerva Research Initiative*, March 27, 2019, https://minerva.defense.gov/Owl-In-the-Olive-Tree/Owl_View/Article/1797784/understanding-how-populations-perceive-us-troop-deployments/.

economic benefit than longer-standing presences, which often garner neutral or negative perceptions. In South Korea, Heo and Yun note positive economic impacts in four areas: “(a) facilitating trade, (b) enhancement in aggregate demand through consumption, (c) construction in military bases and operation and maintenance expenses, and (d) purchasing Korean products for USFK.”¹³⁹ US security contributions themselves also yield economic benefits for host nations via reduced defense spending obligations.

Bases Highlight American Inconsistencies and Drive Nationalist Resistance

The key difference between overseas bases and restrained disaster relief, and the root of many aforementioned impacts, lies with the primacy of the genuine. Disaster relief, in its limited and swift approach, demonstrates a foundational respect for sovereignty that overseas bases do not. It demonstrates a commitment to American values and decency that overseas bases do not. The US has supported dictators to secure basing access, for example, in Nicaragua, Zaire, Korea, Greece, Spain, the Philippines, and Uzbekistan. According to Professor of International Studies Kent Clader, “the tendency to back dictators—and to refrain from demanding their removal—appears to be greater where bases are involved, America’s democratic ideals ... notwithstanding.”¹⁴⁰

It follows, too, that sentiments indicating public dissatisfaction with bases are frequently expressed along nationalist lines, as a rejection of imperialist-toned American foreign policy. Lee and Phillips draw comparisons between the US military situation in Korea and in the Philippines before the US withdrawal in 1992, finding that imperialist domination historically produces nationalist resistance to sustained military presences. They note that overseas bases are often

¹³⁹ Uk Heo and Seongyi Yun, “US Military Deployment and Its Effects on South Korea’s Politics and Economy,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 56, no. 4 (2020), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0021909620957690>, 14.

¹⁴⁰ Glaser, “Withdrawing from Overseas Bases.”

perceived as limiting, paternalistic, and overbearing by host countries, while the CIA itself concluded in 1987 that “sovereignty is probably the single most important issue dividing opponents and supporters of the bases.”¹⁴¹ Much of South Korea’s anti-base activism orients itself through a nationalist lens.¹⁴² By any standard, these movements affirm Posen’s contention that bases drive nationalist resistance and anti-Americanism. With little impact on security, pairing back overseas bases would lend itself to greater US credibility and favorability – working with soft power alternatives like disaster relief to provide a strong and moral example of American conduct.

¹⁴¹ Jung Hoon Lee and Joe Phillips, “*Deja Vu* in South Korea? Lessons From the 1992 Philippines Withdrawal,” *The Washington Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (Winter 2020), <https://www-tandfonline-com.lproxy.uoregon.edu/doi/pdf/10.1080/0163660X.2019.1694292?needAccess=true>, 114.

¹⁴² Wan J. Sho asserts that “from a nationalist viewpoint in South Korea, anti-U.S. base sentiment reflects self-confidence and self-assertiveness” won through its economic growth and democratization. | Wan J. Sho, “Explaining Anti-US Military Base Sentiment in South Korea,” Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2017, https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/55537/17Jun_Sho_Wan.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y, 11.

VI. The Climate Crisis Demands American Leadership on Global Adaptation

Efforts

The climate crisis lends a unique and undeniable relevance to contemporary humanitarian aid and disaster relief efforts – both in their frequency and implications on the international stage. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) findings continue to record worsening climate trajectories and global impacts. Given that atmospheric carbon dioxide levels have already jumped nearly 40% since the Industrial Revolution,¹⁴³ such impacts are urgent and unavoidable security threats – not distant possibilities.¹⁴⁴ The IPCC has observed increasingly worrying changes in atmospheric warming, ocean warming, and sea level rise. These impacts are linked to an increased frequency and intensity of “extreme events,” including floods, droughts, hurricanes, and other storms.¹⁴⁵ Such events, projected to increase, have already yielded widespread humanitarian and economic harm. Total economic losses due to extreme events, for example, increased by a factor of ten from the 1950s to 1990s.¹⁴⁶ Biden’s Interim National Security Strategy recognizes climate change as a pressing threat to the US and its partners abroad – amid other adaptation and mitigation measures, the administration therefore pledges to “stand prepared to provide humanitarian and development assistance” to nations affected by natural disasters.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ John Houghton, *Global Warming: The Complete Briefing*, 5th edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 27.

¹⁴⁴ As David Wallace Wells writes, “a terrifying future shouldn’t distract us from a horrific present: the Greenland ice sheet melting seven times faster than just a few decades ago, European heat waves testing temperature records three times in a single summer, and Houston hit by five “500-year storms” in the last five years.” | David Wallace Wells, “The Crisis Here and Now.” In *Winning the Green New Deal: Why We Must, How We Can*, ed. Varshini Prakash and Guido Girgenti (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020), 4.

¹⁴⁵ Houghton, *Global Warming*, 212.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 205.

¹⁴⁷ Joseph R. Biden, “Interim National Security Strategic Guidance: Renewing America’s Advantages,” *US White House*, March 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>, 12.

Surging disaster relief in this moment would represent a needed assumption of American responsibility, a moral application of resources, and an opportunity for international acknowledgment and respect. Due to its historic emissions, the United States is uniquely culpable in manufacturing the climate crisis. From 1850 to 2011, the US accounted for 27% of all global CO² emissions – more than any other country, and more than all members of the EU combined, according to data from the World Resources Institute.¹⁴⁸ Many international leaders, therefore, put the onus on historic emitters like the US to spearhead mitigation and adaptation efforts. As former UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon expressed, it is “only fair and reasonable that the developed world should bear most of the responsibility” in fighting climate change.¹⁴⁹ Through expanded disaster relief efforts, the US may begin to heed such calls via impactful and legitimate means. Sweeping federal efforts are needed to reign in emissions and improve sustainability across all sectors of the American economy; nevertheless, need for rapid assistance will only increase over the next decade. Disaster relief, as genuine action and proper acknowledgement of culpability, offers an additional framing by which the US may win hearts and minds. And, by addressing an increasingly frequent international need, it positions itself as a viable centerpiece of restraint.

¹⁴⁸ Mengpin Ge, Johannes Friedrich, and Thomas Damassa, “6 Graphs Explain the World’s Top 10 Emitters.” *World Resources Institute*, November 25, 2014, <https://www.wri.org/insights/6-graphs-explain-worlds-top-10-emitters>.

¹⁴⁹ “Ban Ki-moon: Rich Countries Are to Blame for Global Warming,” *The Guardian*, December 5, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/dec/05/ban-ki-moon-rich-countries>.

VII. Rapid Deployment Disaster Relief Must be Implemented as Standing Policy

Given the successful application of disaster relief in the cases of Indonesia, Pakistan, and Japan, rapid and restrained assistance poses a promising alternative to an overcommitted and overmilitarized status quo. Relief offers the realization of US interests in strategic, diplomatic, and humanitarian spheres alike. Thus, this research again concurs with Krause and Van Evera that “such aid should not be an ad-hoc response, but a standing policy.”¹⁵⁰ The development of this policy will itself require additional coordination, oversight, and collaboration between all stakeholders. However, a practical implementation lies well within reach – the US already maintains the assets and funds necessary to secure an expanded and reinvigorated approach to foreign disaster relief. This concluding section considers the sustained and dedicated use of US military assets for disaster relief efforts, before making final recommendations on the future of US grand strategy.

Research by the Stockholm Peace Institute in collaboration with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs affirms the effectiveness of military assets in natural disaster response. The report surveys case studies of Mozambique, Haiti, Indonesia, and Pakistan; corroborating the findings of this research, the Institute observed “substantial and significant contribution[s]” by Operation Unified Assistance following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, which involved heavy use of military aircraft and naval hospital ships.¹⁵¹ In a broader

¹⁵⁰ Krause and Van Evera, “Ideas for the War of Ideas.”

¹⁵¹ Sharon Wiharta, Hassan Ahmad, Jean-Yves Haine, Josefina Lofgren, and Tim Randall. “The Effectiveness of Foreign Military Assets in Natural Disaster Response.” *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, UN COHA, 2008. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/224421/evidence-nato-disaster-response.pdf, 97.

context, an assessment of factors including timeliness, appropriateness, and efficiency revealed the unique applicability of military assets to the task, particularly in their use for rapid assistance: “military assets’ unique capabilities and ability to deploy quickly have contributed to saving lives in the cases studied.”¹⁵² The authors found that the permanent standby of many assets permits speedy arrival to the scene, and also noted that particular roles – such as aerial reconnaissance or heavy-lift capabilities in search and rescue – are generally unobtainable from civilian sources. Finally, the report assesses selected efforts with respect to the UN Oslo guidelines for the deployment of military assets in disaster relief, with positive results:

“[Foreign military assets] were deployed only at the request of the affected country or with the affected country’s consent ...they were integrated with and supported the existing disaster-relief responses; and they were provided at no direct financial cost to the affected country.”¹⁵³

These conditions ensured the appropriateness of the Mozambique, Haiti, Indonesia, and Pakistan deployments in the eyes of the United Nations and international community.

For the US to fully build on these successes and embrace an expanded approach to disaster relief that is swift, effective, and genuine, it must fully update the guiding vision of its armed forces and grand strategy. Reallocating funds for greater humanitarian use, and assets for rapid humanitarian deployment, would ensure the readiness and effectiveness of any operation. Despite its success, Operation Unified Freedom notably faced pitfalls owing to an absence of standing policy and humanitarian resources. The hospital ship USNS Mercy, crucial to the relief effort, arrived undersupplied and ill-equipped. As Elleman writes, “onboard medical supplies, however, were not specifically intended for a natural disaster ... Mercy’s normal medical

¹⁵² Ibid., 31.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 48.

inventory was intended mainly for combat scenarios; there were no, for example, pediatric or geriatric medicines.”¹⁵⁴ The 2023 Turkey-Syria Earthquake relief efforts, too, demonstrated an inability to respond with the speed and readiness the disaster demanded. These deficiencies indicate a rushed and slap-dash approach to relief efforts which must be remedied if such missions are to reach their maximum potential. There is also room for improvement in improving the visibility of the aid and its origins to raise international awareness – provided all efforts adhere to the primacy of the genuine. Ultimately, a transition of funding and military assets towards rapid deployment disaster relief would best improve response capabilities and secure American interests, via public diplomacy, at minimal expense.

It’s clear the US needs a new approach to grand strategy – one rooted in proper limitations, genuine action, and the merits of soft power. Rapid disaster relief is one means by which the US can embrace this vision with relative ease and speed. For the realization of national and moral interests, disaster relief has been swift, effective, and genuine. Operation Unified Assistance affirms the benefits of relief, at minimal cost, for humanitarian and economic spheres, diplomacy and US favorability, conflict resolution, and antiterrorism, while efforts in Pakistan and Japan corroborate these findings; in each case, rapid assistance proved successful in winning hearts and minds. The shortcomings of militarized interventions and overseas bases reinforce the rationality of relief, particularly from a monetary perspective – public diplomacy and humanitarian aid expenses are staggeringly cheap relative to traditional hard power strategies. Investment in these areas would signal a needed return to Kennan – paving the way for the US to live up to its oft-neglected values, leading by the power of its example – and would further demonstrate a commitment towards addressing increasingly frequent harms of the climate crisis.

¹⁵⁴ Elleman, “Waves of Hope,” 45.

For all these reasons, this research finds rapid deployment disaster relief to be an effective, viable central mission of a new grand strategy of restraint. By realizing the untapped potential of disaster relief and implementing rapid deployment as a centerpiece of restraint, the US may yet correct its foreign policy approach – to make allies, rather than enemies, and to save lives, rather than take them.

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