

Inter-state vs Intra-state Disaster Diplomacy

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Tsunami-destroyed prison in Aceh (JC Gaillard).

Background

Disaster diplomacy asks how and why disaster-related activities do and do not induce international cooperation amongst enemy countries. Past work, covering pre-disaster activities such as mitigation and prevention and post-disaster activities such as response and reconstruction, has focused on inter-state case studies. The pattern seen is that (a) disaster-related activities can sometimes have a short-term catalyzing impact on diplomacy but do not create new cooperation amongst conflicting parties and (b) over the long-term, non-disaster factors such as a leadership change or an historical grievance have a more significant impact on diplomacy than disaster-related activities. This poster highlights recent case studies from intra-state examples of disaster diplomacy.



2004 floods in the Philippines (JC Gaillard).

Intra-State Case Studies of Disaster Diplomacy

This analysis focuses on three typologies of disaster diplomacy case studies which have been explored for inter-state case studies:

- Proximity or proximity of the political entities. For intra-state case studies, they are all near each other.
- Aid relationship of the political entities; for example, donor-recipient, assisting each other, or mainly external aid.
- Groups involved in the disaster diplomacy, e.g. governments, organizations (e.g. the media, NGOs, or the U.N.), or the public.

Indonesia

- Following the 26 December 2004 earthquake and tsunami, a peace deal was reached to end the long-running civil war in Aceh.
- Secret negotiations had actually started two days before the disaster.
- Aid relationship: Most aid was for Aceh from international sources.
- Groups: Diplomacy was mainly between Jakarta and the Acehness fighters but with international mediators.
- Outcome: The disaster influenced, but did not create, the peace; however after several months, other factors dominated the process.

Maldives

- The 26 December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami suggested possible government-opposition reconciliation, especially after the President dropped treason charges against the opposition.
- Aid relationship: Most aid was from international sources.
- Groups: Most push for political reform was from domestic groups.
- Outcome: The political rivalries soon dominated the relief and reconstruction effort. Little political reform has resulted.

Philippines

- A 1990 earthquake, a 1991 volcanic eruption, and several typhoons, floods, and landslides from 2004 to 2006 have not reduced the various internal armed conflicts against the Filipino government.
- Some events led to brief ceasefires—plus an excuse for opposing sides to blame each other, such as for logging exacerbating floods.
- Aid relationship: Aid was usually controlled by the government.
- Groups: Any peace efforts were led by the government or fighters.
- Outcome: Some short-term impacts, but nothing which lasted.

Sri Lanka

- The 26 December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami devastated the south and east coasts, including many Tamil-controlled areas.
- Some Tamil-controlled areas are a de facto state.
- Aid relationship: Most aid came from international sources. Disputes over aid helped to inflame the conflict.
- Groups: Peace attempts were mainly internally driven, but involving international mediators.
- Outcome: The conflict soon re-started, erasing disaster diplomacy.

Sudan

- The 1998 famine galvanized external aid providers to consider a solution to the internal conflicts.
- Aid relationship: Most aid came from international sources.
- Groups: Peace was pushed mainly by other countries' governments with varying degrees of cooperation from fighters.
- Outcome: Some internal conflicts were solved with the disaster as a minor factor amongst many. Other internal conflicts exploded.



Tsunami-affected slum in Sri Lanka (J. Kennedy).

Conclusions

For the inter-state case studies (similarly to the intra-state case studies already in the literature):

- Disaster-related activities can, but do not necessarily, have a short-term impact on diplomacy.
 - In the long-term, non-disaster factors tend to dominate reconciliation.
 - No pattern is discernible for the disaster diplomacy typologies of aid relationship and groups involved.
 - The intra-state sample is biased with respect to proximity because all parties must be in the same country.
- Minimal difference is found between inter-state and intra-state case studies, suggesting that (unsurprisingly), for disaster-related activities and international politics, non-state actors can be as important as state actors.



Tsunami-isolated Aceh village (L. Babister).