The Politics of the American Tsunami Aid to Indonesia

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Introducation

The 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake on December 26, 2004 generated a tsunami that was among the deadliest disasters in modern history. The earthquake originated off the western coast of northern Sumatra, Indonesia. It devastated the shores of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, South India, Thailand and other countries with waves of up to 50 feet high. Indonesia was the first and worst hit of countries in the region. The earthquake and tsunami swamped the northern and western coastal areas of Sumatra, and

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the smaller outlying islands off Sumatra. Nearly all the casualties and damage took place within the province of Aceh. The west coast of Aceh was just about 100 km (60 miles) from the epicentre and it took very heavy damage as far South as Tapatkun. The national disaster coordinating agency confirmed the death toll in Indonesia to be 128,715.[1] In the dys of weeks that followed, an average of 1,200 bodies were recovered daily from the debris and buried. The missing tally stood at 37,063. More than 412,000 people have been displaced.[2] UN Secretary General Kofi Annan described the devastation in the Indonesian province of Aceh as the worst he had ever seen.[3]

In the wake of the disaster, Australia, India, Japan and the United States had formed a coalition to co-ordinate aid efforts to streamline immediate assistance; however, at the Jakarta Summit on January 6, 2005, the coalition transferred responsibilities to the United Nations. A total of $6 billion has been pledged so far by developed nations to rebuild in the ten affected countries. Much of the money went to Muslim-dominated Indonesia, a vast and mostly impoverished resource-rich archipelago whose northern Aceh province suffered more than two-thirds of those killed in the tsunami catastrophe. In the words of Kofi Annan, this is an "unprecedented global catastrophe" that requires an "unprecedented global response."[4] The outpouring of aid to

Indonesia reflects the collective anguish of a world horrified by the strongest earthquake in 40 years and the ensuing tsunami that killed thousands of people. Overwhelmingly, the motivation behind the aid is humanitarian, but it also has diplomatic and economic overtones and there are other agendas that both the donor and recipient countries have that need to be studied. What other than humanitarian considerations motivated the donors, particularly the United States, to contribute to the Tsunami aid fund for Indonesia? How did the Indonesian government respond to the donor's demand and with what result?

Aid and Politics

Humanitarian aid cannot be viewed in isolation from the wider foreign (and domestic) policy interests and agendas of donor governments. Aid is not delivered into a political vacuum, nor does it come out of a political vacuum. Scholars and practitioners have attempted to map out some of the underlying interests and agendas that have influenced the delivery of humanitarian aid to disaster-affected countries. According to Brabant and Killick, the donor community is agreed on its key policy objectives: peace through a negotiated settlement, respect for human rights, maintaining the integrity of aid and the security of aid staff, counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism, and refugee return and

reintegration.[5] New conditionalities are attached to aid; either it can be withheld to promote behavioural change or it can be applied to support peace and reconciliation. As M. Duffield has noted, the international community have "attempted to use humanitarian assistance to implement a particular political agenda, not simply alleviate suffering."[6]

Aid is viewed increasingly as a means of promoting and safeguarding the donors' own interests to secure influence, trade or strategic resources.[7] Aid during the cold war years was allotted on the basis of where a country stood in the great Cold War confrontation. In the post 9/11 era, aid is being co-opted to serve in the global "War on Terror." The US, the EU and a number of individual governments regularly use the rhetoric of "opposing terrorism" as a basis on which to allocate aid. There have also been worrying developments at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), where the rules governing how member states give aid are being changed to include terrorism prevention and a range of military activities. Equally, "humanitarian" language has been increasingly recruited to justify military operations particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq.

During the Cold War years, Afghanistan was initially a "survival" issue for the West, but after the withdrawal of the

Soviets from the country in 1989, "the narrative of Afghanistan in the West has changed, from heroic freedom fighters to brutal, sexist bandits, despite the fact that the cast of characters remains largely unchanged."[8] This change in Western foreign policy resulted in the mutation of the Afghan conflict from a Cold War confrontation into one, which now combines elements of a regional proxy conflict and a civil war. While the war has resulted in the death of over one and a half million Afghans and a similar number maimed for life, the response from the West has been largely based on narrow domestic and foreign policy concerns. A similar drama is perhaps unfolding in Indonesia, particularly in Aceh, where both the donor, the United States, and recipient (Indonesia) countries are using Tsunami aid to further their respective political interests.

US Aid to Indonesia

The shock of the tsunami's devastation and the unimaginable loss of human life have led to expressions of what might genuinely be described as "American values." The open-heartedness of the American people has been on display across the United States, with students and youth organizing "bake sales" and other activities to raise money for the victims, and many thousands donating to fund appeals. The US television network and newspapers have

accurately portrayed the scale of the disaster providing non-stop coverage of the catastrophe. Graphic and chilling images of rows of corpses, parents carrying the bodies of their young children and villages reduced to rubble have been shown nightly to US viewing audiences.

Washington's response to the massive destruction wrought by the tsunami, however, was slow and piecemeal. President Bush, who was vacationing at his ranch in Texas, waited 72 hours to publicly address the emergency. The initial US pledge of $15 million was widely derided in the international media and the emergency relief director for the United Nations, Jan Egeland, complained that the West was "stingy" with its relief donations.[9] Stung by this criticism, the Bush administration increased its financial pledge tenfold overnight—while loudly asserting that the United States actually led the global pack in foreign aid.[10] "The US is not stingy," Powell declared. "We are the greatest contributor to international relief efforts in the world."[11]

Media criticism of the White House reached its peak in a front-page article published by the Washington Post on December 29, 2004, a few hours before Bush made his appearance in Crawford. The Post commented: "Skeptics said the initial aid sums-as well as Bush's decision at first to remain cloistered on his Texas ranch for the Christmas holiday rather than speak in person

about the tragedy-showed scant appreciation for the magnitude of suffering and for the rescue and rebuilding work facing such nations as Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and Indonesia." Noting the "international outpouring of support after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon," the Post reported that "even some administration officials familiar with relief efforts said they were surprised that Bush had not appeared personally to comment on the tsunami tragedy."[12] Eight days after the tsunami, President Bush announced that "the devastation in the region defies comprehension." He announced that two former Presidents, Bush and Clinton, would lead a private aid effort, and that the US aid would be increased tenfold to $350m. As the U.S. military delivered tens of thousands of pounds of food and supplies, Bush sent his brother Florida Governor, Jeb Bush, with Secretary of State Collin Powell to the region for a whirlwind tour of the tsunami-devastated countries in South and Southeast Asia. Ship-based helicopters as well as Air Force cargo planes and Navy surveillance aircraft joined the humanitarian relief effort. U.S. aid to survivors of the catastrophic Indian Ocean tsunami, including the American military operation, is the largest in the region since the Vietnam War.[13] The United States had pledged to give 4.7 trillion rupiah ($518 million) in public and private funds for humanitarian and recovery assistance to the tsunami victims

and sent people and aircraft to deliver aid to those who could not be reached any other way.

The US also assumed a leadership role, announcing the formation of a "core group" of countries including Japan, India and Australia, to manage and coordinate aid. Even though such a move immediately revived suspicions of unilateral behavior, no other country was capable of playing such a role. It is understandable that Washington should approach Tokyo, its wealthy ally, to play this role. But the US included India, rather than China, to be a member of its "core group." From China's standpoint, it may be interpreted as the US attempt to curtail China's growing influence in the region. Once in Jakarta, Colin Powell announced the dissolution of the "core group" since the UN was "up and running." However, he made it clear that the UN would play "a lead role, but not the only lead role" in coordinating relief.[14]

Motivation for Aid

In supplying the relief materials, Colin Powell told reporters that "We are not doing this because we are seeking political advantage or just because we are trying to make ourselves look better with the Muslims. We are doing this because these are human beings in desperate need, and the United States has always been a generous, compassionate country."[15] Former

President Bush in an interview said that in many Muslim areas "we are not fondly looked upon today. For the most part, this will elevate the standing of the United States. But that's not why we're doing it."[16] However, President Bush, the outgoing US Secretary of State Collin Powell and other influential members of the U.S. administration made several comments revealing that the US government's purpose in giving aid is to improve its diplomatic position in the region. Reconstruction deals with long-term follow-up contracts for maintenance, upgrading, repairs, and so on, and military links, will be sought as paybacks, as they almost always are for aid. During his whirlwind tour of the tsunami-devastated countries, George Bush said American aid efforts after Asia's killer tsunami would improve the US image in the Muslim world. "In responding to the tsunami, many in the Muslim world have seen a great compassion in the American people... I have to tell you, our military is making a significant difference."[17] Colin Powell made it clear that the U.S. relief efforts was part of its "global war on terror." Speaking of US aid, Powell declared: "It dries up those pools of dissatisfaction that might give rise to terrorist activity. That supports not only our national security interest but the national security interests of the countries involved." Noting that the majority of the victims of the tsunami were Muslims, Powell continued: "We'd be doing it regardless of religion, but

I think it does give the Muslim world and the rest of the world an opportunity to see American generosity, American values in action."[18] Thus, American aid is partly an exercise in damage control and partly to enlist Muslim support for US war against terror. If the United States is seriously engaged in the relief effort, it would benefit the United States in a number of ways:

1. It would improve America's image in the world. The idea that America is a crusader state and no friend to ordinary Muslims is assiduously cultivated by Muslim activists in Indonesia and in the Muslim world in general. People in Indonesia and other Muslim countries would see a kinder, gentler America, and this in turn would generate political good will in the international community and more support for other American policies.

2. It would stem the tide of fanaticism and terrorism. Countries mired in poverty and, to quote Colin Powell, "... if they don't see hope, if they're riddled by disease, if no one is helping them, then radicalism takes over, they lose faith in democracy and they start turning in other directions."[19] Living in poverty, the people in these countries lose hope and vent their anger and frustration through fanaticism. Sudan, Afghanistan, Somalia and many other unstable countries demonstrate the wider effects of poverty. By helping to reduce poverty in such places, the United States would defuse powder kegs and make the world a safer

place.

3. The Bush administration has been trying to re-establish the link between the Indonesian and the US army so that Indonesia could mobilize its troops against terrorism. The tsunami tragedy has provided the United States an opportunity to increase security ties with Indonesia

4. It would be in accord with President Bush's second term mission to see "the expansion of freedom in all the world" and "to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture."[20] The tsunami will stretch Indonesia's newly democratic system and provide fertile ground for terrorist recruiting and networking. These fears drove America's response to the disaster, as much as good-natured generosity. U.S. policy makers would like to ensure that Indonesia's fragile civil society does not break down in the aftermath of the tsunami.

5. It would also be in America's economic interest to ease poverty. Stronger economies around the world create more affluent trading partners and customers for American goods.

The above motivations for aid are based upon the U.S. calculation of the future world system characterized by terrorist threats, the emergence of Chinese and Indian contending powers, and a competitive multipolar world.[21] These motivations are also

due to the importance attached to Indonesia by the United States as a vehicle to help the U.S. maintain its hegemony in the world. Indonesia is the pivotal state in Southeast Asia. As the world's fifteenth largest and fourth most populous nation, it exercises strong influence in Southeast Asia and plays a constructive international role. It has natural resources in abundance and a strategic location astride major sea lines of communication-half of the world's merchant fleet capacity passes through the Straits of Malacca, Sunda and Lombok. Including the oil and mineral sectors, Indonesia is home to an estimated $25 billion in U.S. investments, with more than 300 major U.S. firms represented in the country.

Additionally, Indonesia has by far the world's largest Muslim population, and historically Indonesia's Muslims have been noted for their moderation. It has the two largest Muslim social and educational organizations in the world-the Nahdatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah-each of which is moderate and has more than 30 million members. Indonesia is one of the very few Muslim-majority nations in which Islam is not the state religion. Indonesian Islamic scholars have had a moderating impact on the debate within the Muslim world on the relationship between religion and the state. This influence will be enhanced if Indonesia succeeds in its efforts to develop a viable and nonsectarian

democratic system. Finally, a stable and responsible Indonesia is critical to regional stability. It is the anchor of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and a key player in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the only organization in the Asia-Pacific region that brings the United States together with Japan, China, the ASEAN nations, and others to discuss security issues. The cohesion and effectiveness of ASEAN have eroded significantly due to Indonesia's preoccupation with domestic crises. Instability in Southeast Asia has already provided openings for Islamic radicalism. In short, an unstable, hostile or unpredictable Indonesia would adversely affect U.S. interests and objectives. It would tilt the international balance toward radical Islam, complicate transit through strategic sea and air routes, hamper efforts to combat piracy and drug trafficking, and weaken a potentially constructive regional counterpoint to China.

U.S. Image Boosting in the Muslim World

The spread of anti-American feeling in the Muslim world is a serious problem for the United States. It is generally recognized that the growth of hostility to America in any part of the world including the Muslim world increases recruitment and support for extremism and terror. Anti-Americanism also threatens to damage the commercial and investment climate for U.S. business

in countries that are essential energy sources and potentially significant markets. Since the Sept. 11 attacks dramatically revealed the depth of anti-Americanism in the Muslim world, the United States has been debating ways to improve its standing.

Anti-Americanism in Indonesia reared its head strongly with the advent of the Bush presidency. The primary drivers of this new anti-Americanism are impressions that the United States seeks to weaken Islam, and mistrust based on U.S. activities regarding developments in Indonesia itself. For example, suspicions have always lingered about CIA involvement in regional rebellions in Indonesia in the 1950s, and the massive violence surrounding Soeharto's 1965 counter-coup, which rendered Soekarno powerless. It is not wholly surprising, therefore, that there is disbelief in Indonesia over evidence released by the CIA about al Qaeda links in Indonesia. After the Bali blast, rumors of CIA involvement to tarnish Islam were rife and openly reported in daily newspapers. The devastating Bali terrorist attack on Indonesian soil has so far failed to completely convince the Indonesian public of the dangers that jihadi groups pose. Added to this is the widespread perception that U.S. foreign policy is co-religionist to the extent that America will conduct humanitarian intervention to save Christian populations, but not Muslims as evidenced by the cases of East Timor and Palestine. Thus, many see the global

war against terrorism as a part of a wider anti-Islamic strategy. Given these attitudes, Indonesian public opinion makes it difficult for the Indonesian government to unequivocally support U.S. foreign policy in the war against global terrorism, and impossible to support U.S. military action in Iraq.

Indonesians and Muslims in general are not happy with the counterterrorism policy of the Bush administration.[22] The US policy refers to a "war on terrorism" as being synonymous with a "war on evil" which is almost by definition unlimited and interminable. It heightened perceptions of American imperialism in a region already distrustful of US foreign policy. The 2002 National Security Strategy emphasizes strengthening US primacy, intervening assertively to protect its security and interests, and adopting a more explicit ideological basis for foreign policy which has exacerbated current problems confronting the US in Southeast Asia by elevating existing anti-Western sentiment.[23] This regional anger originates from virulent negative perceptions of America, and the belief that the US is waging a war against Islam.[24] The manner in which Washington has prosecuted the current campaign fosters the indelible impression, justified or otherwise, of an imperialist America that cares for little else other than "exterminating its enemies from Kabul to Baghdad."[25] The antagonistic attitude of Washington towards the Islamist ideology

has reinforced the negative stereotypes promoted by the radical groups, giving further justification for instigating terrorist attacks against Western interests.[26]

The 2002 Global Attitudes Survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press showed that despite an initial outpouring of public sympathy for America following the September 1, 2001 terrorist attacks, discontent with the United States has grown around the world in subsequent years. It reported that: "True dislike, if not hatred, of America is concentrated in the Muslim nations of the Middle East and in Central Asia, today's areas of greatest conflict."[27] A growing percentage of Muslims see serious threats to Islam emanating from the U.S. led war on terrorism. and fear that the U.S. might become a military threat to their countries. An overwhelming of Indonesians (74%) voiced at least some concern that the U.S. could someday pose a threat to Indonesia. The 2003 Pew survey found that people in most predominantly Muslim countries remain overwhelmingly opposed to the U.S., and in several cases, these negative feelings have increased dramatically. In Indonesia, fewer than one in five Indonesians (15%) have positive views of the U.S., as against 83% with unfavourable opinions.[28]

Nevertheless, the Tsunami has created an opportunity for the US to expand public affairs program and additional information

programs to reach journalists, the media, and private opinion leaders. Since September 11, 2001, many publications on U.S. public diplomacy have appeared from Independent Task Forces and leading research bodies that recommended institutional reform and financial support of public diplomacy.[29] The U.S. State Department launched a series of television advertisements in Indonesia in which American Muslims talked about their lives in the United States and, in particular, their freedom to practice their religion. George Bush believes that American aid efforts after Asia's killer tsunami would improve the US image in the Muslim world. In his own words: "In responding to the tsunami, many in the Muslim world have seen a great compassion in the American people... I have to tell you, our military is making a significant difference."[30] American speakers visiting Tsunami-affected areas in Indonesia discuss various aspects of American society, with an emphasis on democracy, diversity, history, values and generosity. The need for better public diplomacy was recognized recently at the highest levels of the U.S. government. President George W. Bush emphasized the need to work in a "public diplomacy" effort to explain US motives and intentions. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has pledged that "public diplomacy will be a top priority"; and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's Defense Science Board issued a report urging stronger public diplomacy.[31]

The appointment of former presidential counselor Karen Hughes as undersecretary of state for public diplomacy also appears to be a sign of the administration's seriousness on this subject.

The observers of the government and politics of Indonesia agree that U.S. tsunami relief has improved attitudes toward America in Indonesia. The New York Times reported that "in normal times, Indonesia's worst nightmare was having American marines arrive on the Banda Aceh tarmac ... Yet here we are in the middle of this operation and we have marines here. It's a sign of progress."[32] The poll of 1,200 adults in Indonesia, conducted by Indonesian pollster Lembaga Survei Indonesia, found that 65 percent of Indonesians view the United States more favorably after the superpower provided military logistic support and millions of dollars in private and government aid for relief.[33] However, the hopes, more or less openly expressed by various leading figures in Washington, that the participation of the US military in relief efforts in South Asia will somehow erase the searing images of torture that emerged from Abu Ghraib or of the mass destruction in Fallujah, is difficult to materialize. Although most Indonesians view Western tsunami aid with appreciation, they did not forget American policies in Iraq or Israel. Among many ordinary Muslims, the enhanced post-tsunami image for the US, regardless of the relations between the governments, will not be

permanent. There are many Muslims who look at the persecution of Muslims in Palestine and Iraq by Western powers and have spoken out strongly against the Western presence in Sumatra. Many Indonesians suspect that the West, led by the United States, wishes to weaken the Muslim world.

Thus, the presence of the U.S. troops in Aceh was not welcomed by all in Jakarta. The chairman of the People's Consultative Assembly wanted the troops to leave in one month, and Jusuf Kalla, the vice-president, would give them only three months.[34] Strong suspicion of American power lingered. In May 2005, when the alleged desecration of Islam's holy book, the Qur'an, at Guantanamo Bay prison was made public, Indonesians wasted no time in spatting on the American flag, throwing tomatoes at the picture of President George W. Bush and in burning the U.S. Constitution in protest. Muslims in Indonesia marched towards the US Embassy in Jakarta demanding an apology from the United States, as well as punishment for those who treated the book with disrespect at the U.S. lockup.35 The help of a friendly marine is an excellent example of the positive side of American diplomacy and military capabilities, but the limitations of aid-derived public relations should be recognized. While relief operations do build genuine good will, they should not be expected to reverse the fundamental politics of many Muslims. Unless American policies

involving Iraq or Palestine are changed, the long-term trend of rising Islamic conservatism in Indonesia and other countries is unlikely to change.

Civil Society and Democracy

Another motivation for aid is to strengthen the forces of democracy in Indonesia. This is because, as President Bush explained,

> The only force powerful enough to stop the rise of tyranny and terror, and replace hatred with hope, is the force of human freedom...[and] America will stand with the allies of freedom to support democratic movements in the Middle East and beyond, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.[36]

Before the fall of Suharto, Indonesia's experience with democratic systems and practices was limited to a few years in the 1950s, so that most Indonesians living today have had no direct experience with democracy. Since 1999, the country has had a free and fair national election and three peaceful presidential successions in 1999, 2001 and 2004. Its media are among the most free in Southeast Asia. Civil society is flourishing. There are now more than 5,000 non-governmental organizations in Indonesia; the political party system is developing with more than 240 parties

competing in the open space. Watchdog organizations have been established to combat corruption and abuse of power.

In 2004, for the first time, the president and vice president of Indonesia were directly elected. Indonesia's first directly-elected president, Susilo Bambang Yudhyono, has inspired particularly strong hopes since taking office, due to his charisma, appointments, and moves against corruption. His much talked about intelligence and ability to connect, including publicizing his mobile phone number to receive complains about government services, were noted.[37] All newly-appointed state officials have been asked to declare their assets. The December tsunami, rather than crushing optimism, actually encouraged it, because of the national unity engendered by the relief effort. Indonesians not only appreciate their new democracy and freedoms, but they also seem to take these reforms for granted.[38]

In the process of reform, the leaders of major Muslim organizations have played a constructive role in defining relations between religion and the state. The Indonesian economy, despite its vulnerabilities, has stabilized in important respects. The country is now at a critical juncture in its democratic transition and economic recovery. This is therefore an opportune time for the United States to assist Indonesia in promoting democracy. The United States has provided substantial support

for the development of civil society since the end of Suharto's authoritarian rule, and encouraging progress has been made as evidenced by successful 2004 elections. Events in the coming five years will determine the fate of Indonesia's democracy and the nature of the new leadership generation expected to emerge before the following elections in 2009.

It is, therefore, considered an opportune moment for the U.S. to expand its assistance in areas where Indonesia wants and can effectively use American help to consolidate the gains already made and to strengthen the base for democracy and continued economic growth. If the democratic transition is unsuccessful, Indonesia's political situation will become less predictable, with increased risk of exaggerated nationalism and/or Muslim radicalism. Less likely, although impossible to discount, is a return to authoritarian rule. Such negative scenarios are by no means inevitable, and it is therefore considered important for the United States to identify policies and programs that will help strengthen the nation's prospects for success. Given the size and importance of Indonesia, the success of that nation's democracy would not only provide a better life for its people but also reduce vulnerabilities to radicalism. For these multiple reasons, the U.S. and Indonesian leaders apparently have entered into an unwritten pledge, in the wake of Tsunami, to work together on

joint programs to promote in Indonesia an effective democracy, sustainable development, and the rule of law. Many observers of Indonesian political scene are cautiously hopeful that the country is headed in the right direction. This is mainly due to new leadership and the new president's anticorruption stance in Indonesia. The United States has helped Indonesia's transition to democracy. It gave over $150 million since 1999 to Indonesian groups working to educate voters, monitor elections, train political officeholders, and improve the courts and local government.

US-Indonesia Military Relations

The Tsunami disaster also provided the opportunity to Bush administration to strengthen ties with Indonesia. In particular, the US wants to establish a stronger defense relationship with the Indonesian Government in order to contain further threats against the Indonesian Government through the uprising of separatist groups in various parts of the country. Such a relationship is also meant to combat the growing influence of radical Islamic groups such as Laskar Jihad and the Islamic Defenders Front responsible for burning churches, fomenting clashes between Muslims and Christians, and organizing anti-American demonstrations. The military link will also provide a means of forging a strong bulwark against China in the region.[39]

For many years, the U.S. was Indonesia's largest weapons source, equipping the country with everything from F-16 fighter planes to M-16 combat rifles. In December 1975, Indonesia invaded neighboring East Timor, which had just declared independence from Portuguese colonisers. Over the next five years, more than 200,000 people (one-third of the population) had died.[40] Declassified U.S. documents point to the United States giving Indonesian leader General Suharto the green light for invasion. In the months that followed, Washington signaled its approval by doubling military aid and preventing the United Nations from taking effective action against Suharto.[41] From 1975 through East Timor's referendum for independence in 1999, the United States continued its military support, transferring over one billion dollars worth of weaponry to Jakarta.[42]

Washington was forced to significantly weaken military ties with Jakarta - a situation the Bush administration is eager to reverse. In 1991, military ties were suspended following the Santa Cruz Massacre where Indonesian security officers fired into a peaceful crowd of protestors, killing 271 people. The relationship was partially restored in 1995. Then, in response to military and paramilitary violence after East Timor's U.N.-organised vote for independence in 1999, Congress strengthened the ban requiring Indonesia to meet certain criteria before military ties can be

resumed.

The Bush administration showed an interest in restoration of those links prior to September 11, and the war on terrorism has added impetus, from Washington's standpoint, for attempts to forge ties, where possible, with the Indonesian military and police. The tragedy in Indonesia has provided the administration with an opportunity to re-establish military links. In Jakarta on Jan. 16, 2005, Wolfowitz claimed that weak ties with the Indonesian military, the TNI, exacerbate Indonesia's problems, and that the way to promote the TNI's efforts to make itself more professional and accountable is to increase U.S. military sales and training.[43]

Indonesia's second democratic elections in October 2004 gave the Bush administration the opportunity to argue the case for military ties. The president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyonoa, is a retired general who had attended the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College. Wolfowitz said this is a positive sign because Yudhoyonoa understands the role of the military in a democracy. Yudhoyono has signaled to the international community that Indonesia will continue to seek international assistance and remain connected to global trade, investment, aid and loans where needed. President Yudhoyono has made the security relationship with the U.S. a top priority in his foreign policy, and the post-tsunami environment gave him the opportunity he needed to

open the discussion from a strong position. He told reporters, "If we had a stronger military, we could have done a lot more," to bring aid to tsunami victims, and called for fivefold increase in defense spending to build a "strong and modern military."[44] In the wake of the disaster, the Bush administration worked around a Congressionally-imposed embargo on military sales to provide spare parts for Indonesia's U.S. manufactured C-130 cargo planes. When then Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz was in Jakarta in January 2005, he praised the "extraordinary strides" Indonesia had taken on "the path toward building a strong and functioning democracy" saying military relations between the two countries were a "resource that we need to rebuild."[45]

The Bush administration was further encouraged by Yudhyono's avowed intentions to use the disaster to spark a peace process with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM)-a guerrilla organization dedicated to independence for Aceh. GAM has been fighting for the independence of Aceh for nearly three decades. Aceh is the northernmost province of Indonesia, situated on the Island of Sumatra. It is one of the most rebellious provinces in Indonesia. Since the independence of Indonesia in 1949, a large number of Acehnese have manifested their intention to exercise the right of self-determination. While the Indonesian Government is willing to grant maximum autonomy to Aceh, the region rich in

natural resources, especially oil and gas, they expect it to remain part of the republic. The war between the Indonesian military and the GAM has raged for more than two decades. TNI chief Gen. Endriartono Sutarto stated in early December that his men had killed 3,216 Acehnese since martial law was imposed upon the province in May 2003.[46]

The United States' interest in resolving the conflict in Aceh is two-fold. First, since the September 11th attacks, the United States has focused its attention on resolving regional conflicts around the globe as part of the war against terrorism. The United States believes that there is a clear link between separatist movements and terrorism, as it is widely known that separatist conflicts have become breeding grounds for terrorist cells. In the post-September scenario, the overall instability in Indonesia has become of particular concern to the United States. The United States needs support from moderate Indonesian Muslims to maintain stability in the Middle East and restrain opponents in the Muslim community. The bombing incidents in Bali and Jakarta also brought to the forefront the key role Indonesia could play in the war on terrorism. In the aftermath of the attacks, the United States criticized the Indonesian Government for its lenient anti-terrorist measures and put pressure on Indonesian government to quell international terrorists as well as domestic separatists.

The second concern of the United States revolves around the presence of ExxonMobile in Aceh. The United States has a strong interest in protecting ExxonMobile, which is the largest investor in Aceh, and Indonesia's natural gas reserves also makes its stability a strategic importance. In March 2001, ExxonMobil was forced to shut down the operation of its major plant, under threats from intensified civil conflicts in Northern Aceh. In response, the Indonesian Government dispatched national security forces to the ExxonMobil plant. The main goal of the United States is to restore stability in the entire archipelago of Indonesia, while hopefully maintaining the territorial integrity of Indonesia. The U.S. has not shown support for the independence of Aceh, as they did with East Timor, because of the implications it imposes upon the other active conflicts in Indonesia.

President Yudhoyono has spoken about finding a political solution to the conflict in Aceh, and while he was a member of the Megawati Cabinet seemed to be almost a lone voice advocating the continuation of peace talks in that province. Ending the all-out military offensive in Aceh and going back to the negotiating table has been urged on Indonesia by the Bush administration since an earlier agreement negotiated in 2002, with the involvement of former general Anthony Zinni as US representative, was brutally broken by the military in May 2003. The United States assisted

in a last-ditch effort to preserve the ceasefire by meetings of the parties directly involved in Tokyo in May 2003, but these efforts were abortive, and on May 20, 2003, the government of Indonesia declared martial law in Aceh.

The tsunami disaster re-focused international attention on the Aceh conflict and the government was strongly encouraged to return to the negotiating table with the rebels to ensure that billions of dollars in foreign aid pledges could be optimally used. After the tsunami devastated Aceh, the rebels proclaimed a unilateral truce saying they wanted to help rescue efforts. Mediated by President Martti Ahtisaari who heads the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), Indonesian Government officials and representatives and GAM's leaders living in exile in Sweden met face-to-face for the first time in January 2005. The two sides discussed international aid and reconstruction in the aftermath of the disaster. A second round of talks was held in late February followed by the third in April and the fourth in May 2005. In the final round, the two sides discussed the issues of self-government, amnesty and reintegration to society, human rights and justice, the economy, and security arrangements. Both parties also agreed to the involvement of the EU Council Secretariat and European Commission in monitoring any peace arrangements.[47] The peace agreement was finally signed on August 15, 2005 in which GAM

dropped its demand for independence in exchange for a form of local government in Aceh. The Aceh peace agreement would probably have taken much longer to hammer out were it not for the tsunami.

The revival of peace talks and the sealing of a peace agreement has convinced many in Washington that Yudhoyono is serious about revamping Indonesia's security approach. The embargo on commercial sales of non-lethal defense articles has been lifted and contact between the two militaries is on the rise.[48] Aid to Indonesia is on the upswing. For fiscal year 2006, President Bush has requested $800,000 in IMET, up from the $459,000 that Congress froze in 2004. Jakarta also expects to receive $70 million in Economic Support Funds and the $6 million in Anti-Terrorism Activities funds to train and equip the police SWAT-like counter-terrorism force.[49] With initial funds of $12 million, the US has trained and equipped this elite unit with sophisticated arms and high-tech communications equipment.[50] The Congressional Budget justification for 2006 notes that "Indonesia's contribution to the Global War on terrorism is also a vital U.S. interest."[51] One of Condoleezza Rice's first acts as Secretary of State in the Second Bush administration was to certify Indonesia for IMET military training programs over the objections of members of Congress and non-governmental organizations.

Conclusion

Indonesia, the largest Muslim country and the cornerstone of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), has always been important in U.S. calculations of security in the Asia-Pacific region. Of new significance in Washington's strategic calculations is the need to cooperate with Indonesia in the Global War on Terrorism. However, there is evidence that Indonesians, including key members of the political elite, still remain to be convinced that international terrorism is a threat. Providing aid to tsunami-ravaged Indonesia offered the United States an opportunity to repair some of its damaged reputation in the Muslim world in the aftermath of the Iraq war. The world's largest Muslim country, which has lately seen radical groups make some inroads, has been viewed as an important entry point for the US as it struggles to convince the Muslim world of its long-term intentions. Using the tsunami aid, the US is trying to create an alliance for a war against terror that could be seen as credible by over a billion Muslims worldwide. This required not merely assisting the disaster victims but also the government in its bid to sustain democracy and to fight against domestic trouble spots by establishing military to military relationships that was seriously weakened years prior to Bush presidency. The Tsunami aid, though not devoid of a humane face, was used by the US to promote its own agenda of boosting

its image in the Muslim World, to save democracy in Indonesia and to restore the weakened linkage with the Indonesian army to make it effective against war on terror. The people in the Bush administration including the President denied repeatedly the use of the massive tsunami tragedy as a powerful political and diplomatic opportunity. That the tragedy did provide this opportunity and they did try to benefit from it through aid efforts is evident in the utterances and behaviour of those in the US State department as well as the White House. Aid in most cases has been tied to political agendas and has never been delivered purely on the basis of humanitarian need. ❐

Notes:

1. New Straist Times (Malaysian daily), Tuesday April 19, 2005.
2. The Star (Malaysian daily), Saturday February 12, 2005.
3. New Straits Times, Saturday January 8, 2005.
4. Ibid.
5. Van Brabant K, Killick T, The Limits & Scope for the Use of Development Assistance Incentives & Disincentives for Influencing Conflict Situations: Case Study: Afghanistan (Paris: OECD, 1999).
6. M. Duffield, Post-modern Conflict, Aid Policy and Humanitarian Conditionality (UK: University of Birmingham, 2000), 40.
7. A large literature has focused on the aid policies of the U.S., which has long had both a sizable bilateral program and substantial influence over multilateral aid agencies See, Catherine Gwin, "U.S. Relations with the World Bank, 1945-1992," in Devesh Kapur, John P. Lewis, and Richard Webb, eds., The World Bank: Its First Half Century, Vol. 2 (Washington: The Brookings Institute, 1997), 243-74; Robert K. Fleck and Christopher Kilby, "Foreign Aid and Domestic Politics: Voting in Congress and the Allocation of USAID Contracts across Congressional Districts," Southern Economic Journal, 67 (2001):598-617. The influence of multiple interests (humanitarian, strategic, and commercial) in U.S. aid allocation is well documented R. D.McKinlay, and R. Little, "A Foreign Policy Model of U.S. Bilateral Aid Allocation," World Politics, 30, no. 1 (1977): 58-86; R. D. McKinlay, and R. Little, "The US Aid Relationship: a Test of the Recipient Need and the Donor Interest Models," Political Studies, 27, no. 2, (1979): 236-50. See also Alfred Maizels and Machiko Nissanke, "Motivations for Aid to Developing Countries," World Development, 12, no. 9 (1984): 879-900; Alberto Alesina and Beatrice Weder, "Do Corrupt Governments Receive Less Foreign Aid?," American Economic Review, 92, no. 4 (2002): 1126-37. On Democratic administrations providing more aid, see Robert C. Eggleston, "Determinants of the Levels and Distribution of PL 480 Food Aid: 1955-79," World Development, 15, no. 6 (1987): 797-808.
8. J Macrae & N Leader, "Shifting sands: The search for 'coherence' between political and humanitarian responses to complex emergencies," HPG Report 8 (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2000), 44.
9. He quickly apologized and said that he did not mean to single out the United States, but the transcript of his comments clearly identifies the U.S. as the primary target.
10. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the U.S. is last in aid as a percent of GNI at 0.15 percent. See Statistical Annex of the 2004 Development Co-operation Report, Table 1, OECD, at http: //www.oecd.org/dataoecd/52/9/1893143.xls. However, in actual dollar contributions, the U.S. is the world's largest donor. The OECD Report show U.S. development assistance (based on bilateral assistance, humanitarian assistance, and contributions to multilateral institutions like the International

Development Association of the World Bank) in 2003 at $16.2 billion with Japan as a distant second with $8.9 billion. The data also reveal that the U.S. gave nearly $2.5 billion in emergency and distress relief in 2003 (Ibid., Table 13). All other countries combined gave $3.4 billion. Moreover, the U.S. contributed nearly 70 percent of all food assistance.

11. The New York Times, January 5, 2005.
12. Washington Post, December 29, 2004.
13. A major part of the relief effort was a collection of 12 ships from the Navy's Military Sealift Command, including six laden with equipment and supplies to support 15,000 Marines for 30 days, and also carrying food, fuel, medical supplies, construction equipment and other materials. Among the Navy warships was the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln. From the coast of Indonesia's Sumatra island, its helicopters delivered food, water and other supplies to survivors.
14. The Washington Times, January 7, 2005.
15. The Star, Thursday January 6, 2005.
16. Ibid., Friday January 7, 2005.
17. New Straits Times, Saturday January 15, 2005
18. The New York Times, January 5, 2005.
19. The Washington Times, January 3, 2005; also Ibid., Friday, January 7, 2005.
20. The Washington Post, Friday January 21, 2005.
21. The study by the US Government's National Intelligence Council forecast impressive, but unevenly spread economic growth until 2020 and massive political and cultural changes in the world. The report predicts increasing terrorist threats, a global movement fuelled by a radical religious ideology challenging western values, robust economic growth led by India and China over the next 15 years transforming the geo-political landscape, and the U.S. eroding its relative power position yet remain the most important single country across all the dimensions of power. See Mapping the Global Future, National Intelligence Council, December 2004, at http://www.cia.gov/nic/NIC_globaltrend2020.html#.
22. The counterterrorism policy of the US is that "...the war against terrorists of global reach is a global enterprise of uncertain duration." George W. Bush in United States National Security Council, The National Security Strategy of the United States of America Washington DC., 2002, 1; Also, See Seng Tan and Ramakrishna Kumar, "Interstate and Intrastate Dynamics in Southeast Asia's War on Terror," SAIS Review 24, no.1 (2004): 99.
23. See Seng Tan and Ramakrishna Kumar, "Interstate and Intrastate Dynamics in Southeast Asia's War on Terror," SAIS Review, 24, no. 1 (2004): 99. Chris Brown, "The Fall of the Towers and International Order," International Relations, 16, no. 2 (2002): 265.
24. Mary Kaldor, "American Power: From Compellance to Cosmopolitanism?' International Affairs, 79, no. 1 (2003): 11.
25. Tan & Ramakrishna, "Interstate and Intrastate Dynamics in Southeast Asia's

War on Terror," 99.
26. Ibid.
27. Pew Global Attitudes Project, What the World Thinks in 2002 (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2002). This report is based on 44 national surveys with more than 38,000 people.
28. Pew Global Attitudes Project, Views of a Changing World (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, June 2003); Pew Global Attitudes Project, A Year after Iraq War, Mistrust of America in Europe Ever Higher, Muslim Anger Persists (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, March 2004). People's unfavorable views of the United States for the most part are based on their feelings about President Bush, not the United States generally. See also Shibley Telhami, A View from the Arab World: A Survey in Five Countries (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, March 2003), and Zogby International, Impressions of America 2004 (Washington, DC: Arab American Institute,
2004).
29. Finding America's Voice: A Strategy for Reinvigorating U.S. Public Diplomacy, Report of an Independent Task Force Sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, September 2003); Public Diplomacy: A Strategy for Reform, Report of an Independent Task Force Sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, July 2002); Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication, (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, September 2004); Hady Amr, The Need to Communicate: How to Improve U.S. Public Diplomacy with the Arab World (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, January 2004); Rebuilding Public Diplomacy through a Reformed Structure and Additional Resources (Washington, DC: U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, 2002); Changing Minds, Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim World ("The Djerejian Report"), Report of the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, Submitted to the Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives (October 1, 2003); How to Reinvigorate U.S. Public Diplomacy (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, April 2003); Reclaiming America's Voice Overseas (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, May 2003); Strengthening U.S.-Muslim Communications (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of the Presidency, July 2003); and U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Expands Efforts but Faces Significant Challenges, Report of the U.S. Government Accounting Office (GAO) to the Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives (Washington, DC: GAO, September 2003).
30. New Straits Times, Saturday. January 15, 2005.
31. Washington Post, January 16, 2005; New York Times, January 18, 2005.
32. The New York Times, January 4, 2005.

33. http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1358435/posts Monday 28, March, 2005.
34. The New York Times, Monday January 17, 2005.
35. New Straits Times, Friday, May 27, 2005.
36. George W. Bush, "State of the Union, 2005," White House Press Office, February 2, 2005.
37. New Straits Times, Tuesday, June 14, 2005.
38. Indonesia: A Report on Public Opinion and the 2004 Elections (Jakarta: Asia Foundation, 2003).
39. See The Council on Foreign Relations report, The United States and Southeast Asia: A Policy Agenda for the New Administration).
40. Jeremy Scahill, "The Saddam in Rumsfeld's Closet," Z Magazine, August 2, 2002.
41. Neil Mackay and Felicity Arbuthnot, "How Did Iraq Get Its Weapons? We Sold Them," Sunday Herald (Scotland), September 8, 2002.
42. Tom Drury, "How Iraq Built its Weapons Programs: With A Little Help From Its Friends," St. Petersburg Times, March 16, 2003.
43. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz has a long history of pushing for closer ties between the United States and the Indonesian military. He visited tsunami-stricken Indonesia under a humanitarian guise. But the mission's real significance was his effort to strengthen U.S. ties with Indonesia's military (TNI), a role that he has long played. Wolfowitz served as assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs from 1982 to 1986, and as ambassador to Indonesia during the Reagan administration's final three years. He was the primary architect of U.S. policy toward the resource-rich country in the 1980s.
44. Tiarma Siboro, "SBY Seeks to Boost Defense Spending," The Jakarta Post/ Jakarta, January 28, 2005.
45. "News Transcript from the United States Department of Defense," DoD News Briefing with Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Republic of Indonesia Minister of Defense Juwono Sudarsono, January 16, 2005.
46. Jakarta Post, December 3, 2004.
47. Jakarta Post, June 1, 2005.
48. "Non-Member Countries to Observe FPDA's Anti-Terrorism Exercises," New Straits Times, June 9, 2004.
49. Congressional Budget Justification for FY05 Foreign Operations, Request by Region: East Asia and the Pacific, State Department, Bureau of Resource Management, February 2004.
50. Robert Go, "Jakarta Swat Team Ready for Action," New Straits Times, Thursday, December 18, 2003.
51. Congressional Budget Justification for FY06 Foreign Operations, Request by Region: East Asia and the Pacific, State Department, Bureau of Resource Management, February 2005.