

A Study on Assistance and Diplomacy of India in Disaster Management

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ABSTRACT

Disaster management can notably affect diplomatic proceedings that have started but may or may not itself induce new diplomatic relation. Non-Disaster issues plays a bearing role that include a leadership change, distrust, belief that a historical conflict or complaint should take precedence over present day humanitarian needs or the existence of priorities other than conflict reduction and diplomatic dividends. The paper focuses on how India disaster diplomacy functions by taking into account of comparative analysis of two natural disasters; Tsunami Earthquake 2004 and Kashmir Earthquake 2005. It will mainly examine India's role played in providing aid and assistance in these situations. It asserts that how disaster diplomacy plays an important role to eliminate political, physical and psychological barrier or creates detente in conflict situation, behaviour and attitude. The diplomacy could be theorized by comparing realist and idealist perspective in these two cases. India using Disaster Diplomacy as a soft power either tries to hegemonies itself in South Asia or perceives humanitarian approach towards its neighboring countries. It can use as a tool to pursue its interest via its neighboring countries. It is also to identify that how India role in disaster diplomacy do or do not contribute significantly to improve bilateral relations.

Key Words: Disaster, Diplomacy, Tsunami, Earthquake, Humanitarian Approach and Bilateral Relations.

INTRODUCTION

Disaster can described as something fatal, destructive and troublesome events that occur when hazards interacts with human vulnerability. Hazard is an agent or threat such as earthquakes, industrial explosions or floods etc. Vulnerability on the other hand refers to proneness of the people to disaster based on factors such as their geographic locations exposed to property and level of income. These are two main components of disaster and without vulnerability or hazard there is no disaster. The impacts of disaster are multidimensional affecting it in all aspects like domestic, social, economic and environmental, etc. Disaster is gaining importance in world politics as it is not so because disaster leads to death of millions of people in short span of time and cripple the economy of affected nation but because it open the new scope of cooperation between or among states. Disaster can become a mode of cooperation or negotiations leading to diplomacy. The concept of disaster diplomacy is based on identifying the common interest of nation at a level of scientific understanding of shared risks.

The impact of natural hazards upon human communities can be most effectively reduced through informed decisions regarding the location and construction of built environment, informed actions taken by the public exposed to risk and timely communication and exchange of information among the organization and jurisdiction that have designated responsibilities for protection of life and property. Negotiations involves at state level or at the level of non-governmental and international organizations or at community level.

At the second level nongovernment organization or international agencies plays a key element in disaster management. It is most effective alternative means of achieving an efficient communication link between disaster management agencies and affected country. At the third level it is the community as an institution itself is emerging as the most powerful in entire mechanism of disaster administration

Indian Diplomacy in Tsunami: 2004

Tsunamis are the earthquake generated sea waves. Seismic disturbances, volcanic activities, submarine faulting and earthquakes are the main reasons for occurrence of Tsunami. Tsunami is a seismic sea wave induced by the vertical displacement of plate along the subduction zone. It happens when plate adjustment leads to the earthquake of higher magnitude. It is an important coastal hazard turning to be disaster more and more because of the growing tendency of people to live in the coastal area more prone to the tsunami. Tsunami is more common in the Pacific Ocean. Japan, Philippines, eastern coastal area of north and South America has history of it. In fact the seismic wave derived its names from this area i.e., from Japan. The eastern part of Indian Ocean is also more vulnerable for tsunami due to occurrence of subduction zone where heavy plate gives way to lighter one to move.

On the morning of Sunday 26 December 2004 a severe earthquake in the Indian Ocean off the coast of northern Sumatra caused Tsunami that impacted on at least nine countries in the region. This developed into one of the largest tsunami ever experienced in the world. The extent of the destruction caused by the Tsunami which struck Sri Lanka on the day of 2004 was unimaginable. The Tsunami waves came menacingly from the ocean, into the land and took back with them the lives of young and old, rich and poor, of different ethnicities and destroyed homes caused colossal damage to infrastructure and left hundreds of thousands of people destitute.

As the days rolled by the magnitude of the disaster became more and more evident Between 31,000 and 37,000 people were killed by drowning or debris impact and nearly 100,000 were destroyed along with tens of thousands of vehicles and much infrastructure. About 27,000 fatalities were fishermen and two-thirds of the nation's fishing boats were wrecked, destroying many jobs. Farming was affected by the incursion of large amounts of salt water and marine sediment to fields and wells. People were missing. Roads and bridges in the affected areas were destroyed completely or damaged extensively.

The Tsunami in the Indian Ocean severely affected India and other adjoining countries. India announced that it will not seek international help as India's decision needs to be seen in the perspective that the developing world has been often been portrayed in the west as one needing constant support and as unable to look after its own people. India made extensive efforts to provide immediate and substantial humanitarian support to all other countries affected by the tsunami as well as provided comprehensive support to its own people. The government of India provided an immediate assistance of corers to Sri Lanka.

The President of Sri Lanka moved swiftly to appoint three national task forces to lead and coordinate the response of the line agencies. The Task Force for Rescue and Relief (TAFRER) to attend to the immediate relief requirements, the Task Force for Logistics and Law and Order (TAFLOL) to provide equipment necessary and maintain law and order during the time of restoring normalcy, and the Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation (TAFREN), to attend to the long term requirements. The donor community and the government reacted quickly to the tsunami disaster and deployed many teams to assess the various dimensions of damage, the need for restoration and recovery, and opportunities to improve the circumstances of affected people.

Operation Rainbow was launched for Sri Lanka. India deployed 14 ships, nearly 1,000 military personnel and several dozen helicopters and airplanes to its devastated island neighbor, where more than 30,000 people died in the waves that followed the undersea earthquake off the Indonesian island of Sumatra. Indian officials describe the relief mission as the largest outside their borders since independence from Britain in 1947. Indian Air Force and naval helicopters ferried provisions like packed food, medicines and drinking water to remote areas and undertook rescue operations in Sri Lanka. In the view of many analysts, India's generous response to the tsunami not just on its own damaged coastline but beyond has underscored the country's emergence in recent years as an increasingly potent diplomatic and economic power.

In Sri Lanka, an Indian navy medical team arrived in Colombo within hours of the tsunami, and four ships docked at several ports around the country by the end of the following day. Nearby two Indian military doctors worked at a temporary clinic set up on the veranda of a colonial-era hotel. The army-engineering unit had already completed a number of projects in the area, including restoring electricity to several government buildings that were inundated by the ocean surges.

Many leaders of countries across the world endeavored to make visits personally, to Sri Lanka as an expression of solidarity and to ascertain for themselves the extent of damage. Needless to say all the dignitaries were shocked at the devastation caused by the Tsunami; they expressed their solidarity with the government and people of Sri Lanka, and offered their wholehearted assistance towards the nation's effort in rehabilitation and reconstruction. These visits did give a boost to the morale of the nation shattered by the traumatic experience it had just gone through and gave hope to a renewed life with the support of the helping hands extended.

Indian diplomacy clearly bore fruit and the UN role of directing and coordinating relief and reconstruction efforts was recognized. In turn India was invited by the ASEAN for the Jakarta donors meet and India emerged as a compassionate regional power through its spontaneous and generous effort at providing international relief without being a recipient country itself. India was successful in generating enormous goodwill for itself in Sri Lanka by sending helps days before any other assistance reached the island country. It particularly generated goodwill in Sri Lanka where the earlier intervention in 1987 by its peacekeeping force had failed to maintain peace in the island. India registered its presence tsunami-affected region as a compassionate power capable of helping its neighbors even when its own shores are troubled t it was a conscious decision to build goodwill with neighbors like Sri Lanka with whom New Delhi which has been strained at times.

Kashmir Earthquake: 2005

Tremors or shaking of the Earth's crust is called an Earthquake. Earthquakes are the results of internal forces of the Earth and they are associated with activities like faulting, folding and volcanic eruptions. The impact of Earthquake is sudden with little or no warning, making it just impossible to predict them. One of the major hazards from a severe earthquake is a secondary effect: collapse of the ground under the force of gravity because shaking reduces the strength of the earth material on which heavy structures rest. A massive earthquake with an intensity of 7.7 on the Richter scale with its epicenter just inside Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) struck in the morning of 8 October 2005. As a result about 79,000 people died in POK, Pakistan's North West Frontier Province and the state of Punjab. About 1400 died in Indian J&K. POK also suffered very heavy infrastructure damage, particularly to its roads, which prevented and delayed evacuation of casualties and provision of aid. This left an estimated 3.3 million homeless in Pakistan, while even more were indirectly affected. The massive destruction caused by the earthquake in India and Pakistan has thrown up challenges of rescue, relief and rehabilitation in the affected areas is going to be a long process. The losses in India have been effectively engaged in overcoming the effects of the tragedy. The conditions in PoK however have become unmanageable for the Pakistanis state and have led to a desperate situation (Kumar 2005).

After three centuries wars since 1947 between India and Pakistan it has taken a devastating act of nature to bring the two antagonists a step or two closer together. On October 8, 2005 a powerful earthquake, centered in the Hindukush Mountains of Pakistan, sent tremors through South Asia, killing an estimated 90,000 people, mainly in the Pakistani-administered portion of Kashmir. As the earthquake wreaked havoc on both sides of a contested border bitter rivals struggled to find ways to cooperate to relieve some of the suffering. At that time these two countries response to each other calamity set the stage for a spectacular rapprochement between former enemies termed as Earthquake diplomacy. Through earthquake diplomacy a humanitarian disaster can have a positive impact, providing the framework for new thinking in foreign policy and a breakthrough in long standing bilateral stalemate (Kumar 2005).

India offered immediate help and Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh called up the Pakistani President to convey this. The Indian Prime Minister spoke to Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf to condole the devastation caused by the earthquake. He offered any rescue or relief measures "deemed appropriate" by the Pakistani leadership. After earthquake India and Pakistan collaborated to facilitate the aid operations by lessening Line of Control restrictions. On Oct 19, 2005, telephone links were restored across the LoC to permit families to contact each other. Over nine days in November five locations along the LoC were opened to permit relief supplies to cross. On 19 November civilians were permitted to cross one of these checkpoints to seek missing family members. The Indian armed forces too offered to undertake rescue missions (Kumar 2005).

However, mutual suspicions delayed the opening of border routes and Pakistan agreed to this only ten days later on 18 October. India subsequently sent 25 tons of relief material to Pakistan including food, blankets and medicine across the land routes. The Indian offered to open three relief and medical centers along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Uri, Tangdhar and the Punch sectors for the victims on the Pakistani side. India too dispatched the second consignment of relief material to Pakistan, this time by train through the Wagah border as Pakistan refused to allow another cargo flight. This consignment included 5,000 blankets, tents plastic sheets and tons of medicine. Train sent a third consignment of medicine and relief material again later. India also pledged million aids to Pakistan. To help helicopter deliver relief to remote village, India allowed Pakistan to operate in a no-fly zone along the heavily militarized Kashmir border. And Pakistan president Musharraf says he is ready to allow Indian Kashmir travel freely to the Pakistani side to help in reconstruction effort - an offer India welcomed. Indian Air Force planes have ferried medicines, blankets and tents to Pakistan.

It has however rejected taking the offer of helicopters from India, badly needed for rescue and relief operations in Pakistan. Pakistan welcomed it but without the Indian pilots, because of certain "sensitiveness". India did not pursue the matter further. In keeping with spirit of cooperation, President Musharraf agreed to allow the movement of people across the LoC, just as the Indian government re-activated the dormant telecommunication links between two sides of the LoC (Kumar 2005).

Indian Diplomacy post Kashmir Earthquake

But more than one half year elapsed the diplomacy could not be taken off despite being one of the strong confidence building measure. It is due to suspicion which still runs deep between two countries: Pakistan does not want to appear to be at the mercy of Indian aid and Indian worries that weakened border controls might cause unrest in its side of Kashmir. It is due to;

Half Hearted Response: The process of cooperation was so slow that it took more than a week to agree on terms regarding aid provision and ten days to open the India-Pakistan border in Kashmir to help casualty identification and reconstruction as well as restoration of telephone line. Only five crossing points were opened and that took forty days and on, that is after forty-one days the first civilian cross the life of control legally (BBC coverage).

Lack of sensitivity: Apart from strategic significance the issue of Kashmir has been matter of pride for both sides. In this perspective some of the post-disaster development affected the diplomacy. India offered helicopter just after the disaster for rescue operation in a dire need, but Pakistan refused to accept it with Indian pilots. Indian side also remained adamant to not to let Indian helicopter to be operated by Pakistani army. Politics overwhelmed urgency.

Strengthening Terrorist Infrastructure: Jihadist elements and terrorist groups were the ardent gainers of the post disaster political scenario. They not only responded quickly to the disaster but also cooperated with the Pakistani as well as foreign military with efficiency. This helped them to gather popular support from the masses Indian preoccupation with the complete demolition of terrorist infrastructure before any serious talk on Kashmir issue and refusal of including any non-state actor in the process not only blocked the disaster diplomacy but also affected the Composite Dialogue.

The diplomacy between India and Pakistan failed not because of deep history of mutual distrust and parallel act of terrorism, but due to its inability to respond positively in the non-disaster issue. Pakistan's open option for western forces that counter weighted the India's response and emerging scenario after quake that empower terrorist organization have also well contributed. Pakistan succeeded in playing its diplomatic card in engaging the UN, and the US while nurturing Islamic organization who helped to vent-out the deep anger echoing after disaster. However at ground level, to the strategically sensitive area of Kashmir, the problem remain intact with inefficient reconstruction, dominance of extremist, resurgence of terrorist organizations and its infrastructure.

CONCLUSION

The present study mainly discusses how disaster induces cooperation among countries that have traditionally been not in good relation. It implies that local or regional disaster could positively affect bilateral relation amongst states which normally not prone to such cooperation. The occurrence of threat of disaster creates opportunities to facilitate cooperation among states in conflict through fostering linkages which otherwise might not have existed. In this paper two natural disasters studies have been examined where Tamil influences the dominated area of Sri Lanka or the Kashmir territory, which has been historically, disputed between two neighbors India and Pakistan The comparative analysis of the two cases signifies that disaster could some extent lead to diplomacy through negotiations and bargaining power and it could enhance the bilateral relations. It seems to be fruitful in Sri Lanka case whereas in Kashmir case disaster diplomacy proved to be failure. In the case of Kashmir India humanitarian approach is marked as a helpful cooperative and generous. India followed its idealist perception and stepped towards a helping towards Pakistan in the time of crisis. The long historical conflicts do not stand as a barrier in support and help. India thought this crisis would initiate a new phase of diplomatic relations between the two countries but it proved wrong. The long conflict and mutual distrust could not be overshadowed by a disaster related activity.

In case of India's response to Sri Lanka it no doubtful hearted contributed even if it too suffered from the crisis. Sri Lanka that was fully destructed by the disaster was in great need for aid and support, which was provided not only by India but also by other international powers. India catalyzed disaster as an opportunity to improve its relation with Sri Lanka which was strained due to intervention in 1987 peacekeeping process. It clearly bore fruit as a new phase of diplomatic activities started between the two countries. India in the case of Sri Lankan crisis made extensive efforts to provide immediate and substantial humanitarian support to all other countries affected by the Tsunami as well as provided comprehensive support to its own people. It rejected any foreign assistance from international power. India's position was a statement of its emergence as a self-confident nation and a desire to be removed from this perception of a poor aid recipient country.

Natural disasters do not solve political problems; visionary and courageous political leaders do. It can set the stage for grand public gestures, delegitimizing hostile rhetoric, building confidence, and promoting new thinking, but it is the leaders who need to boldly seize the initiative and transcend decades- long stagnation in response to the pressing needs of their societies. Natural calamities may lead to cooperation but not always. There was cooperation in first case study while in the second case cooperation initiated on the basis of humanitarianism but could not take off due to historical and political disputes. Natural disaster create the window of cooperation but the existence, continuation and nature of cooperation are decided by the bargaining position of two parties they hold in changing of post-disaster scenario. This bargaining position directs the way of negotiation between them and thus failure or success of the diplomacy. Disaster Diplomacy has emerged as a new social science with possibilities for the future. Not only should the mechanisms of providing relief and aid be strengthened in Asia and the world, with stockpiles reserves, trained personnel and procedures worked out and practiced in advance, but the aspect of disaster diplomacy should also receive greater attention. It is perhaps the time that regional organizations as well as United Nations devote some attention to this issue.

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