

# The New York Times Deploys to Nepal: America's Disaster Diplomacy, Geo-strategic Interests and "Soft Power"

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*"First comes the missionary, then the soldier," was an old maxim borne out by the bitter experience of a century of bloody colonial conquest in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.*

The missionaries are still at it, particularly in lands where souls can be bought most cheaply, but they hardly play the role allotted to them in the 19th century. A more modern version of this same epigram—better suited to the ongoing militarist drive by US imperialism for global domination—might substitute for missionary, "the man from the *Times*."

From the wars of aggression in Iraq and Afghanistan to the proxy war for regime change in Syria and the fascist-spearheaded coup in Ukraine, the *New York Times* has dispatched its correspondents to produce the propaganda—in all of these cases involving fabrications and outright lies—needed by Washington to justify its predatory policies.

In Iraq, America's so-called "newspaper of record" was an invaluable partner of the Bush administration in dragging the American people into a criminal war of aggression that claimed the lives of roughly a million Iraqis, killed nearly 4,500 US troops and left an entire society in a state of devastation.

The *Times* senior correspondent at the time, Judith Miller, used her intimate connections with US military and intelligence sources to promote and embellish upon the administration's lies about Iraqi "weapons of mass destruction," using the newspaper's erstwhile liberal credentials to lend them greater credibility.

Similarly in Syria, the *Times* distorted UN findings to make them fit Washington's propaganda line that the Assad regime had employed chemical weapons against suburbs of Damascus. The author of this piece was one C. J. Chivers, a former US Marine Corps captain, who "embedded" for the *Times* not only with the US military in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also with US-backed Al Qaeda-linked "rebels" in Syria.

Then in Ukraine, where Chivers also played a prominent role, the *Times* systematically covered up the role of neo-Nazi elements in the so-called Maidan coup orchestrated by the US and its allies, and then passed off fabricated photographic "evidence" of Russian forces in eastern Ukraine, which it was subsequently forced to retract.

The latest focus of the *Times* attention is the earthquake-ravaged country of Nepal. It has invested substantial resources in the story, sending several correspondents to the isolated

Himalayan capital of Kathmandu and devoting multiple pages of its print edition to the coverage.

An unwitting reader attributing this interest to the humanitarian sentiments of the *Times* editorial board would be making a political mistake. The newspaper's record shows that it is highly selective as to which human tragedies elicit its feigned sympathy.

In Nepal, as in Iraq, Syria and Ukraine before it, the journalistic pursuits of the *New York Times* dovetail closely with the operations of the State Department, the CIA and the Pentagon.

In an article posted Monday, the *Foreign Policy* web site pointed candidly to what is really behind "humanitarian" interest in Nepal, both on the part of Washington and the *Times*.

Relief efforts by the US and other countries, particularly China and India, the article states, highlight "the role that disaster diplomacy can play in foreign affairs as countries project soft-power influence."

It points out that Washington is an old hand at such operations, having utilized the 2004 tsunami and the 2013 typhoon that ravaged the Philippines to pursue the same aim of furthering US imperialist hegemony in Asia.

This "soft-power" side of Washington's pivot to Asia goes hand-in-hand with the buildup of military forces for a confrontation with China, which in many areas has outstripped the US in terms of investment and trade.

Such is the case with Nepal, where China is by far the country's biggest investor. Chinese corporations are building a \$1.6 billion hydropower project there, as well as the country's first eight-lane highway. Between 2010 and 2013, Nepal's imports from China rose by 67 percent.

In the aftermath of the disaster, Beijing has pledged three times as much aid to Nepal as Washington has thus far offered.

Significantly, the first US aid has come from two US military special operations units that were already deployed for exercises in Nepal when the earthquake struck. The Pentagon is taking the lead for the bulk of the other aid that is to be sent.

In its voluminous coverage of the Nepalese disaster, the *Times* makes no mention of the geo-strategic interests that underlie the US response nor of the role played by the "pivot to Asia" and increasing confrontation with China that shape Washington's policy toward Nepal.

If the newspaper is silent on this score, it is for good reason. As in Iraq, Syria, Ukraine and elsewhere, the *Times* is not merely reporting events in Nepal, but is integrating its journalistic operations seamlessly with the aggressive operations pursued by the Pentagon, the State Department and the CIA, functioning as a de facto organ of state propaganda.

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