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„The Dynamics of Disaster Relief in Fragile States; A Case  
Study Analysis of the Beirut Port Blast “

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*To the 218 lives lost on the 4th of August 2020,  
amongst which included the first responders  
who gave their lives in trying to prevent the unpreventable*

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## Abstract

**Purpose** - Disasters retain the ability to cause long-lasting damages to the urban and economic infrastructure of the areas in their path. Such disasters can impede state growth and require an influx of resources and aid in order to fulfill economic recovery standards, with an amplified force in fragile and weak states. In this regard, adequate disaster relief and response practices are needed to provide affected communities with the aid they require. How aid agencies, donors and local governments choose to implement and facilitate disaster risk management depends on a variety of dynamics which is well-documented within the literature surrounding disaster relief. The purpose of this paper is to identify the various dynamics and causal mechanisms that influence disaster relief effectiveness within fragile and weak states.

**Design/Methodology** - A literature survey is used to group the arguments of authors and determine the most influential dynamics and concepts within disaster relief literature. These dynamics are utilized as variables in a heuristic case study analysis of the Beirut Port Explosion. The paper will be studying the various considerations in the case through the lens of constructivism, with particular focus on the practices of policy makers, donors and local actors.

**Findings** - The analysis revealed that the applied practices of actors, through the implementation of good practices upon the receipt of aid and facilitating these practices as the relief efforts continue, remain the most effective towards general disaster aid effectiveness. From the case study, the importance of maintaining cohesive, consistent and organized practices on the international and local level is also supported by both a strong program of disaster resilience and mitigation and a strong media coverage. The thesis demonstrates the influence of the collaborative effort with the presence of particular practices, such as monitoring and reporting donor contributions and volunteer efforts and managing an equal distribution of aid, will show a greater level of success in fragile states.

**Originality/value** - The literature surrounding disaster relief practices is extensive, yet often too focused on the policies and not enough on the policy makers. The practices of actors in cases and their level of cohesiveness can make or break causal mechanisms of the dynamics involved. Shifting the focus to the practices of these actors gives further insight on how aid effectiveness can further a country's recovery post-disaster.

**Keywords** - Disasters, Disaster Relief, Disaster Risk Management, Practices, Beirut Port Explosion

## Zusammenfassung

**Zielstellung** – Katastrophen sind in der Lage, die städtische und wirtschaftliche Infrastruktur der betroffenen Gebiete nachhaltig zu schädigen. Derartige Katastrophen können das Wachstum eines Landes behindern und erfordern die nötige Hilfe und Ressourcen, um einen wirtschaftlichen Wiederaufbau zu gewährleisten. , *welcher in schwachen Staaten besonders* .Diesbezüglich sind angemessene Verfahren zur Katastrophenhilfe und -bewältigung erforderlich, damit die betroffenen Gemeinschaften die erforderliche Hilfe erhalten. Inwiefern Hilfsorganisationen, Geber und lokale Regierungen Katastrophenrisikomanagement implementieren und fördern, hängt von einer Vielzahl an Faktoren ab, welche in der relevanten Literatur gut dokumentiert sind. Ziel dieser Studie ist, die verschiedenen Dynamiken und zusammenhängenden Mechanismen zu identifizieren, welche die Wirksamkeit der Katastrophenhilfe in schwachen Staaten beeinflussen.

**Methodik** – Mittels Literaturrecherche wurden Thesen und Argumente zusammengefasst und die einflussreichsten Dynamiken und Konzepte ermittelt. Diese Dynamiken werden als Variablen in einer heuristischen Fallstudienanalyse der Beirut Hafen Explosion verwendet. Die Studie wird die verschiedenen Überlegungen in diesem Fall durch die Linse des Konstruktivismus untersuchen, mit besonderem Augenmerk auf die Praktiken der politischen Entscheidungsträger, Geber und lokalen Akteure.

**Ergebnisse** – Die Analyse ergab, dass die Aufrechterhaltung kohärenter, konsistenter und organisierter Praktiken auf internationaler und lokaler Ebene während der weiteren Hilfsmaßnahmen nach wie vor am wirksamsten ist. Zusätzlich ist ein starkes Programm für Katastrophen Resilienz und -minderung sowie eine starke Medienberichterstattung eine gute Unterstützung. Die These zeigt, dass der Einfluss der Zusammenarbeit mit dem Vorhandensein bestimmter Praktiken, wie z. B. die Überwachung und Berichterstattung von Geberbeiträgen und Freiwilligeneinsätzen und die Verwaltung einer gleichmäßigen Verteilung der Hilfe, in fragilen Staaten einen größeren Erfolg verspricht.

**Originalität/Wert** - Die Literatur über die Praktiken der Katastrophenhilfe ist umfangreich, konzentriert sich jedoch oft zu sehr auf die Politik und nicht genug auf die politischen Entscheidungsträger. Die Praktiken der Akteure in den Fällen und ihr Grad an Kohäsion können die Kausalmechanismen der beteiligten Dynamiken ausmachen oder brechen. Wenn man den Schwerpunkt auf die Praktiken dieser Akteure verlagert, erhält man weitere Erkenntnisse darüber, wie die Wirksamkeit der Hilfe die Erholung eines Landes nach einer Katastrophe fördern kann.

**Stichworte** - Katastrophen, Katastrophenhilfe, Katastrophenrisikomanagement, Praktiken, Hafen Explosion in Beirut

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## Pledge of Honesty

*In my honor as a student of the Diplomatische Akademie Wien, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it.*

Nourhan Dib



# List of Abbreviations

3RF: Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework  
ACDR: Asian Disaster Reduction Center  
ADRC: Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction  
CDP: Center for Disaster Philanthropy  
COVID-19: Coronavirus Disease  
DAC: Development Assistance Committee  
DRM: Disaster Risk Management  
EMS: Emergency Medical Services  
EU: European Union  
FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Agency  
GDP: Gross Domestic Product  
GNI: Gross National Income  
IO: International Organizations  
LRC: Lebanese Red Cross  
MDG: Millennium Development Goals  
NGO: Non-Government Organization  
OCHA: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs  
ODA: Official Development Assistance  
OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development  
PFA: Psychological First Aid  
PoC: Protection of Civilians  
SME: Small and medium-sized enterprises  
UNIFIL: United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

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# Introduction

Disasters, whether humanitarian or natural, pose a destructive and debilitating impact to whatever is in their path. Such disasters maintain the ability to handicap states, impact their economic growth severely and cause irreversible damage to their infrastructural foundation, all while incurring heavy material costs, population displacement and heavy casualties. Spontaneous disasters have even impeded state growth in many developed countries, such as the debilitating effects of events like Hurricane Katrina in the US and the Tohoku Earthquake in Japan, in which evidence of their destruction and effect can still be noticed in the Tokyo and New Jersey economies and societies today. In this regard, one can only imagine the immense danger such disasters might pose to fragile and weak states which are not economically or developmentally equipped to handle spontaneous spots of immense destruction and damage. As such, disaster relief responses and efforts provided to such states by the global collective, of which many international relief and aid agencies and charities are increasingly available and allegedly on standby in the event of a deadly disaster. However, such agreements and notions may seem ideal only in theory and on paper, as disaster relief efforts, especially in terms of foreign aid, seem to be governed by various considerations and concepts that may not always play in favor of the affected state. These prospects are also significant when taking into consideration why many international aid agencies are met with various failures and unfinished projects and programmes, considering that the donors and decision makers which contribute to their maintenance and activities may have been influenced by a number of notions.

As such, the thesis is governed by the main curiosity as to what makes **up effective international disaster relief in fragile and weak states?** In which, the independent variable consists of various dynamics and considerations of donor provisions and recipient acceptance to disaster relief which will be further discussed in the paper. This entails concepts such as donor state motivations and intent, recipient state capacity and their subsequent relationship which will influence the general effect and state of the disaster response in question. The dependent variable is the resulting efficacy of international disaster relief, as defined by recovery time of the affected state - recovery time being once the state achieves economic stability as outlined by the Minimum Economic Recovery Standards.<sup>1</sup> Such standards can also be seen as a return to pre-disaster GDP and the return to normalcy in terms of medical and other livelihood standards. This research question will also be using disaster resilience and related external effects as a key

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<sup>1</sup> *Minimum Economic Recovery Standards* (Rugby, Warwickshire, UK: Practical Action Publishing Ltd, 2017).

moderator in governing the interactions between the independent and dependent variables. Disaster resilience is defined as the preparedness or ability for entities, such as individuals, communities or states, to absorb and recover from spontaneous disasters or shocks, and positively adapt to them in the long-term. This paper uses this concept to explain the echoing relationship of donor-recipient dynamics on the general effect of disaster relief. This means that said dynamics' impact on efficacy will be further viewed from the lens of the level of resilience and disaster awareness available on the ground.

Disaster relief plays a vital role in the reconstruction of an economy during times of crisis. How it's distributed and used is a key factor in determining the recovery after a collapse in local conditions - social or political. Crises associated with natural and/or manmade hazards and disasters are a common occurrence that may disrupt the livelihood of a great number of individuals. They can change the status of states and determine the fate of institutions; in some cases beyond the point of long-term recovery without significant intervention or mediation. Understanding how to better manage and control these variables during times of crisis plays a critical role in the optimization of state economic recovery times when supported by foreign disaster response measures, furthermore supporting local government spending decisions, and preventing or reducing the harm of secondary effects of the disaster which commonly follow, including but not limited to: disease, war, famine, poverty and population displacement.

The literature and content on disaster relief, being an extremely relevant and severely critical element to manage in the primary and secondary response to a crisis, is abundantly available with highlights from national governments and their local approach towards disaster response. Moreover, international disaster relief, based on humanitarian assistance and provision of monetary or resource support from a state-to-state basis, sees a high degree of studies and analyses. However, the literature surrounding disaster relief, whether it is a local or international response, often yields results where the approach is distinct and unique to the subject case. International disaster relief literature more popularly focuses on a quantitative approach in drawing conclusions regarding disaster response measures with an oversimplification or avoidance of the normative/theoretical considerations that might govern motivations to provide or accept relief. Essentially, much focus is given towards the policy and not the policymakers. Moreover, disaster relief literature, and studies on its efficacy, includes more papers on the local rather than the international prospects of crisis response. This paper aims to take a novel approach and perspective to this end, aiming to inform and tackle challenging theoretical considerations overarching disaster relief literature.

Organizations or governing bodies can better make use of such normative measures, as a preliminary means to assess the potential paths to economic recovery available at the time, by paying respect to general constraints present as a prerequisite to classifying an event as a disaster. Resources can be coordinated better between different entities, leading to a more targeted approach to recovery. As such, the research question's significance will be based on both a normative (intent and dynamics) and a realistic (on-ground resilience) function in formulating a more holistic and accurate approach as to why disaster relief may be successful, sub-optimal or achieve negligible results in certain cases. Additionally, in a time of worsening environmental conditions, the world is not only seeing more spontaneous natural disasters and consequences in areas with no prior history to them, but also debilitating long term events - such as long drought cycles with resulting prolonged famine. The research question, in this regard, will contribute to studies of the international movement towards disaster response and humanitarian assistance provision especially in cases of least available expectation or preparation for disaster.

Regarding the various significant elements of the research question, this paper aims to determine how their relationship and ties engage the understanding of disaster relief effects. As such, it will be assessing the various aspects governing these factors and elements. The thesis will be primarily focused on determining the donor-recipient dynamics which dominate international disaster relief discourse. In this regard, whether Donor states' motivations and intents upon deciding to provide humanitarian relief is based on altruistic or instrumental measures, how recipient state capacity affects its acceptance of the international relief and its subsequent equal distribution to the affected areas and how disaster resilience, as a measure and determinant in disaster relief, ties this causal effect together. Specifically, I will look into the resulting behavior and philanthropic nature of donors and decision makers in their commitment towards the international climate of disaster response, as well as the presence of an efficient state apparatus which will equally distribute the aid to the people. The paper does this by relying on various key concepts, such as the rational interest of states, altruism, knowledge and practice.

The baseline theoretical framework this paper abides by in managing these concepts will be based on a neo-constructivist understanding of the various dynamics emerging from disaster response practices by international donors and agencies. Primarily, David McCourt's note on Practice Theory and Relationalism <sup>2</sup> will be a basis for the understanding of disaster relief

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<sup>2</sup> David M. McCourt, "Practice Theory and Relationalism as the New Constructivism," *International Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (2016): pp. 475-485, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqw036>.

dynamics to explain concepts of evolving intent and practices amongst decision makers and highlight the reason behind donor and recipient state behavior. Additionally, the use of knowledge as a key concept identified by F. A. Hayek <sup>3</sup> is a significant element which will help tie the normative and realist aspects of the research question through the indication that an ineffective disaster relief response is the result of a lack of knowledge utilization and inability to efficiently provide or distribute the support provided. For clarification, the baseline theoretical formulations mentioned are mainly conceptual foundations to aid in understanding disaster response dynamics. Disaster responses as a continuous process of evolving methods and considerations is the main takeaway when determining the variables for analysis. However, the main arguments in the thesis will be a result of disaster relief literature which will be utilized as units for analysis. As such, the paper will be depending on a methodology of detailed case study analysis to further prove the various hypotheses and research question's strength in an applied scenario. In order to derive conclusions as to the effectiveness of international disaster relief, the methodology will acquire the case of Lebanon, specifically that of the 2020 Beirut Blast, for various reasons. Furthermore, it is important to clarify that the thesis will be focusing on international disaster relief and will utilize some measures of local disaster efforts as per the determined units of analysis to highlight the relationship of parties in providing or receiving aid.

As such, the paper will be divided into four main parts. Firstly, it will perform a literature review on disaster responses, disaster relief donor commitment and "actorness", disaster relief recipient considerations, disaster resilience, the impact of media on disaster response and the practices of international disaster response decision makers. After that, it will provide an overview of the theoretical framework which will rely on particular arguments extracted from the literature review in order to assess the dimensions of the relevant hypotheses to be administered in the case study. Thirdly, the thesis will define the methodology used with detail given on the Beirut case, along with justification and explanation on the reason behind the case selection. The empirical research follows after, detailing the Beirut Blast and the various corresponding events in Lebanon which will be analyzed for the considered variables before the findings are discussed. Finally, the thesis will wrap up with a concluding section that will overview its contents with some additional comments on prospects towards the future of international disaster relief in weak states and considerations that could enhance it.

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<sup>3</sup> Russell S. Sobel and Peter T. Leeson, "The Use of Knowledge in Natural Disaster Relief Management," *The Political Economy of Hurricane Katrina and Community Rebound*, n.d., <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781849806541.00010>.

# Literature Review

## Donor Behavior and Motivations

### **“Actorness” of Donors in Disaster Relief**

**Brattberg (2013)**<sup>4</sup> provides a solid evaluation pertaining to the role of western entities and their approach to foreign policy actorness. This paper elucidates the relationship between actorness and effectiveness under specific controls, and seeks to deep dive into a rare comparison between the EU and US policy frameworks on the subject matter, taking into consideration the 2010 Haiti earthquake and previous research of effectiveness in this context. One can conclude that both the EU and US see themselves as a key role in disaster relief, and that there is no definitive relationship that can be drawn. However, there are many suggestive findings and strong anecdotal pieces within the paper that support the relationship between actorness and effectiveness. Interestingly, coherence-related actorness was adopted between both parties in question which related to a moderate impact on local field support; notably intra-organization confusion, and leadership contestation. In capability-related actorness, observations showed positive collaborative elements - accessibility to deploy targeted resources on site (mode of transport) being a key point to underpin the relationship between success and capability-based actorness. The paper goes on to evaluate consistency-related indicators of actorness to be inconsistent with the proposed relationship between actorness and effectiveness the paper attempts to discuss. This critical result exposes the key constraints under which one can draw strong definitive conclusions from, that can be carried forward as conjecture for the purposes of this paper.

Additionally, the concept of donor and aid consistency is essentially expected to be in decreasing priority in times of global crisis, in which large multi- and bilateral donors are seen to back out from donor pledges in large organizations such as the OECD. This is especially relevant when deliberating the various impacts of COVID-19 on the behavior of donors and the ability to act during humanitarian and natural emergencies. In this regard, **Carson, Schäfer et al. (2021)**<sup>5</sup> have particularly assessed the cyclical activity of official bilateral developmental assistance in the past with the prospect of times of crisis in mind. Their main prospect hinges on the

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<sup>4</sup> Erik Brattberg and Mark Rhinard, “Actorness and Effectiveness in International Disaster Relief: The European Union and United States in Comparative Perspective,” *International Relations* 27, no. 3 (2013): pp. 356-374, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117813497298>.

<sup>5</sup> Liam Carson et al., “Prospects for Aid at Times of Crisis,” *ODI Working Paper*, no. 606 (March 2021), pg.8.



predictions that aid is meant to fall sharply after a time of crisis, whether they are financial crashes or global pandemics. Instead, aid disbursements from donors witnessed a small rise and many aid agencies maintained their pledges and allocated budgets as seen after the 2008/2009 financial crash.<sup>6</sup> This working paper provided fruitful quantitative analysis on the relation between donor commitment/motivation and the circumstances of their environment, especially in terms of a state's ODA:GNI ratio in a particular year in determining its priority to pledge.<sup>7</sup> In terms of this research, understanding why states remain determined to pledge is incumbent to the impact and influence of the aid it provides. This study provides a basic understanding towards this framework, not in pinpointing that providing solidarity and poverty alleviation being a main motivation for developmental assistance, but also keeping in mind that faster global recovery is within a donor's self-interest.

Furthermore, **Nogami (2014)**<sup>8</sup> also provides a different take on donor behavior and attitudes towards disaster related topics and activities by assessing the psycho-social differences donors and non-donors may express when met with disaster relief related questions and topics. This paper does not only explain a great deal on donor "actorness" and perception, but also shines light on various other concepts in this thesis, such as the impact of adequate media coverage and the influence of disaster preparedness. In this regard, Nogami contributes to the literature by stating that disaster awareness, via the info provided by the media on the various considerations and flaws of the disaster happening on the ground, is a key player in influencing actors in donation efforts.<sup>9</sup> His research design does this by using a number of Japanese donors, and their questionnaire results, as a control group as opposed to non-donors and assessing the various attitudes both groups (n=150) expressed towards monetary and charity donations and their activities/impact.<sup>10</sup> The results and Nogami's subsequent analysis will be referenced highly within the conceptual understanding of this thesis, to which media coverage and disaster awareness play a big part in donor mentality and perception, motivating altruistic sentiments and widening a donor's understanding as to how his commitment might help. **Culpability** is also possibly an induced concept and sentiment amongst non-donors or non-committed donors, once disaster awareness is present within this framework. In this regard, when strong media coverage is present, donor agency and charity foundation transparency must be established and

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<sup>6</sup> Liam Carson et al., "Prospects for Aid at Times of Crisis," pg. 34.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, pg. 34.

<sup>8</sup> Tatsuya Nogami, "What Makes Disaster Donors Different from Non-Donors," *Disaster Prevention and Management* 23, no. 4 (2014): pp. 484-492, <https://doi.org/10.1108/dpm-04-2014-0080>.

<sup>9</sup> Tatsuya Nogami, "What Makes Disaster Donors Different from Non-Donors," pg. 489.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, pg. 486.

communicated with donors and non-donors alike. Nogami's arguments and findings do not formulate a notion towards self-interest and rational motivation amongst donors in which disaster awareness and transparency remain an imperative in this case by allowing a donor state to socially develop a realization that disaster might incur any losses towards its interests and self-motivations.

Other literature that harmonizes with the conceptual nature of donor "actorness" and behavior is discussed by **Fisher (2007)**<sup>11</sup> in his article particularly assessing the nature of international disaster relief regulation within the notion of international law and norms. He talks about the problems arising from the unregulated nature of disaster relief in the world while being optimistic about certain actions that are being taken or will be taken in the future to address this issue.<sup>12</sup> By explaining the complicated nature in estimating disaster relief, especially with the rise of disasters worldwide, Fisher then addresses problems that occur due to the lack of proper policies regarding disaster relief be it technical or legal.<sup>13</sup> This is contrary to many countries' beliefs that tend to believe disaster relief to be readily available. Some soft laws and the non-binding nature of many important international instruments regarding disaster relief make it prone to being abused and frowned upon by donor and recipient states. Furthermore, the article concludes by stating events that show the regulatory direction that many nations are heading towards, indicating that although problems within disaster relief regulation do exist, states do not present any commitment towards strengthening international norms and implementation towards disaster response.<sup>14</sup> Although Fisher focuses on the growing problems within the regulatory portion of disaster relief, donor behavior and commitment remain echoing concepts. This is primarily seen in Fisher's comment on the tendency for state decision-makers and actors to remain flexible and unregulated in their donor pledges to which various concepts, such as the political nature of state interest, might play a role.

## **Disaster Relief and the Use of Military Power**

**Capiea (2015)**<sup>15</sup> writes extensively on the coercive and non-coercive uses of military power for disaster relief in East Asia, whose military bodies have become increasingly reliant on

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<sup>11</sup> David Fisher, "International Disaster Relief: A Growing Regulatory Dilemma," *Proceedings of the ASIL Annual Meeting* 101 (2007): pp. 114-118, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0272503700025350>.

<sup>12</sup> David Fisher, "International Disaster Relief: A Growing Regulatory Dilemma," pg. 114.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, pg. 115.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, pg. 117.

<sup>15</sup> David Capiea, "The United States and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) in East Asia: Connecting Coercive and Non-Coercive Uses of Military Power," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 3 (November 2015): pp. 309-331, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2014.1002914>.

US foreign aid for operations. In this paper there is a strong body to suggest the use of aid as a means to coerce particular behaviors which benefit the donor, given the hard reliance East Asian militaries have in times of crisis. The net contribution by the United States, while yielding an overall positive result, is by nature transactional for the purpose of indirect political influence over the region to compete with Chinese influence. While instrumental by nature, one sees this as a long-term investment in replacing what otherwise might be allocated to domestic defense budgets. While the motivation is to be deemed a preservation act and additionally viewed to control foreign military factions, the investment itself is a positive outcome socially. Balancing the positive social aspects and complex political implications of such an act, we can see that soft and hard power initiatives yield a strategic return on investment in the short term for both the donor and receiver, but may pose detrimental impact in the long term for the receiver.

Although this paper focuses on US strategy within East Asia, this discussion is not a new addition to existing war strategy or literature, but does however provide a good current example and showcase for modern forms of coercive tactics. The strength of this paper comes from the ability to broadly generalize and better characterize superpower disaster relief policies when foreign politics plays a role.

### **Sympathy and Altruism as Donor Motivation**

**Russell and Mentzel (1989)**<sup>16</sup> explore the social motivations behind allocation of foreign aid making use of participants to play the role of the common taxpayer (n = 261 overall participants, n = 157 female participants). Participants scored 20 natural disasters on the test's unique sympathy measures; culpability being found to underlie sympathy ratings. The paper forces us to confront social motivations, which may play a part in politicizing foreign aid - that is to say more female participants opted to give more financial aid and scored higher on the sympathy measures than their male counterparts, which may play a role in foreign aid policies of a governing party near election dates. Although a statistically relevant result in the modern day, when considering voting preference, political alignment and the heavy role it may play in prospective donor behavior. Saying this, it is a perfect example of how donor commitment can vary given the degree of altruistic intent by a voting population; particularly the case when the disaster is closer to the donor geographically. Although an interesting result and

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<sup>16</sup> Gordon W. Russell and Robert K. Mentzel, "Sympathy and Altruism in Response to Disasters," *The Journal of Social Psychology* 130, no. 3 (1990): pp. 309-316, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1990.9924586>.

can be broadly taken as a true relationship, it can only be applied to western bodies with similar cultural and political values and does not account for the economic prosperity of the state.

Adding to the concepts of Sympathy and Altruism within the framework of disaster relief and providing aid, multiple actors provide data into this field, straying away from the common understanding of state donors and international donor agencies. However, the concepts attached to various other non-state actors may still impact aid policy decision-makers and influence their deliberations. In this regard, Disaster Philanthropy is a related field within this literature to which extrapolates insightful and actionable findings that help donors maximize their efficiency in providing aid during disasters. The literature on disaster philanthropy is mainly governed by concepts of urban and local preparedness as well as notions of altruism and humanitarianism as its motivating forces and focuses on allocating funding towards particular areas to provide optimal efficiency and effectiveness. This work is mainly done by the Center for Disaster Philanthropy through extracting data from various aid and charity agencies, such as the OECD's Development Assistance Committee and FEMA within the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and analyzing it to pinpoint how and in what ways philanthropic funding tackles various disaster types in their relief and response efforts.<sup>17</sup>

The CDP has published their data and findings in yearly reports on Disaster Philanthropy and have divided their analysis into Disaster Types, Disaster Assistance Strategies and the relevant funding calculated to each. These reports will be key to this thesis as a primary source of information and material towards the funding available in the years 2020 and 2021 and as analytical understanding towards the concept of philanthropy in disaster relief and what mainly governs its decision-making process. In this regard, the findings of past years include emphasis towards funding gaps in disaster response efforts and an observation towards the major funding allocations in which the least percent went to disaster resilience measures and the most went to response and relief efforts via public charities and foundations.<sup>18</sup> Essentially, the recommendations given by the CDP could be helpful to understanding what aid organizations and donors might focus on in the coming years, with disaster resilience being a frontrunner in

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<sup>17</sup> Adia Colar and Yna Moore, "New State of Disaster Philanthropy Report Shows That Funding Today Can Help Funders Better Respond to Future Crises," *Candid* (Center for Disaster Philanthropy), November 10, 2021, <https://candid.org/about/press-room/releases?fcref=dir>.

<sup>18</sup> Zaynab Almigabbar, Ruja Entchova, and Adia Colar, "Measuring the State of Disaster Philanthropy 2021: Data to Drive Decisions," *Candid and the Center for Disaster Philanthropy*, 2021, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10/gm29bv>, pg. 9.

priority.<sup>19</sup> However, as other literature has portrayed, despite the actions and quantitative estimations of many aid organizations and their relevant think tanks, donor self-interest will play its own role in allocating aid. Additionally, the context of a global pandemic and rising global security concerns may have shifted the global attitude towards disaster relief, causing many states to allocate disaster relief funds based on their own concerns and considerations.

## **Disaster Relief Practices**

### **Common Donor Practices**

Upon focusing the thesis' conceptual framework on Practice theory as part of constructivist thinking, particular attention is given towards the daily workings of actors in international relations. In terms of aid and relief, the activities and practices of donors and decision makers in international aid agencies are not only taken into consideration but their actions are based more on habit, practicalities and preliminary dispositions of daily "actions" rather than interest or cultural norms. When regarding global policy making of economic development and aid, abundant literature exists detailing not only common practices of donors but also their preferential courses of action in decisions towards providing aid. Since a big portion of the literature surrounding donor practices focuses on foreign and development aid, studies and papers on disaster relief practices are not as abundant. Nevertheless, donor practices, especially those recognized by the OECD and other agencies, are considered prerogatives in the field of aid facilitation. Even in the event of a spontaneous disaster, such practices, although common, when considered good are seen as a point of reference in all states.

Consequently, these practices put policy makers in the center of the analysis to which effective aid delivery and facilitation depends on. The OECD assembles these practices in the DAC Reference Document **Harmonizing Donor Practices for Effective Aid Delivery (2003)**<sup>20</sup> in which various papers described and listed good practices between donors and partner governments, between donor agencies and within individual donor entities. This paper will be using the practices mentioned in these papers as a basis to effective donor actions and their general alignment towards providing aid and communicating with governments/agencies. The papers detail various existing institutional frameworks amongst parties in cooperation amongst which donors demonstrate the best practices to result in effective aid. These institutional

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<sup>19</sup> Zaynab Almiggabbar, Ruja Entchova, and Adia Colar, "Measuring the State of Disaster Philanthropy 2021: Data to Drive Decisions," pg.19.

<sup>20</sup> OECD, "Harmonising Donor Practices for Effective Aid Delivery," *DAC Guidelines and Reference Series*, 2003, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264199835-en>.

components include the good practices propagated within preparation of projects and programmes, reporting and monitoring of donations, performance and financial management and delegation of cooperation.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, the papers responded to a Needs Assessment Survey which targeted over 11 OECD partner states and surveyed 400 officials, experts and donors.<sup>22</sup> The survey results demonstrated the integrity and value of the DAC task force, shining light on the flaws of some donor practices and burdens on partner countries. These critiques shift the focus of policies towards encouraging donors to adopt improved practices and maintain effective policy making within the provision of development aid.<sup>23</sup> It is clear that the burdens ranked by the respondents of the interviews indicate core problems within donor actions that have obstructed efficient aid measures.

Aid effectiveness literature is mainly associated with the prospect that it stabilizes or promotes economic development. With many scholars such as **Burnside and Dollar (1999)**<sup>24</sup> studying the impact of aid on the economy of receiving states, the positive aid-growth relationship has grown to be accepted as a standard amongst many academics, international organizations and donors. **Kenny (2008)**<sup>25</sup> is no exception to this in his article on aid allocation and effectiveness. Kenny suggests that development aid's conventional justification might not be the best explanation towards fostering growth and development, and states that a discussion towards reforming aid practices and distribution is more significant.<sup>26</sup> In this regard, Kenny formulates various recommendations towards enhancing the effectiveness of aid so that it yields more resourceful returns. Particularly, focus on the practices towards aid implementation, such as detailed project impact monitoring and paying close attention to the process between project outcomes and the overall results.<sup>27</sup> Kenny claims that aid agencies are moving in the right direction with sustainable ideals such as the Millennium Development Goals, but their work must rest on pillars of increasing foreign governmental spending, strengthening institutions, efficiently and creatively designing better projects in the case of weak institutional environments and under-funding global goods nationally.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> OECD, "Harmonising Donor Practices for Effective Aid Delivery,".

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, pg.100.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, pg. 102.

<sup>24</sup> David Dollar and Craig Burnside, "Aid, Policies, and Growth," *Policy Research Working Papers*, 1999, <https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-1777>.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Kenny, "What Is Effective Aid? How Would Donors Allocate It?," *The European Journal of Development Research* 20, no. 2 (June 2008): pp. 330-346. <https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-4005>.

<sup>26</sup> Charles Kenny, "What Is Effective Aid? How Would Donors Allocate It?," pp. 330-346,

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, pg.340.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, pg.340.

Essentially, his recommendations correspond to the good donor practices listed by the DAC papers in terms of improving facilitative measures and practices in the implementation and distribution process of aid. However, he pays particular attention to the prospect of “aid dependency” as counteractive to the effectiveness of aid, but remains convinced of the impact of increased outflows as an indicator to effective aid.<sup>29</sup> Although Kenny’s optimism towards the MDG may seem far-fetched in contemporary development politics, his statements towards the impact of reformed practices remain true, in essence. This is especially true in the commitment of aid allocation to donors as they seek out more capable and efficient non-governmental institutions or international agencies with more practical deliverables and less focus on the role of national governments.<sup>30</sup> This paper increases the value of focusing on practices as a unit of analysis, especially when adding the importance of realistic estimations of aid provision and assessing the “urgency” of aid provision in various cases.

Further literature on aid effectiveness and donor commitment shed light on the problem of excessive foreign aid fragmentation amongst donors to various and numerous recipient states. Such problems have consequently resulted in the practices of OECD development aid donors and have been regarded as detrimental to aid effectiveness, in which resources are maximized yet the result is fragmented and less optimal. In this regard, **Brown and Swiss (2013)**<sup>31</sup> examine an emerging norm in DAC donor practices, that being the practice of recipient country concentration. The paper assesses the impact this norm has on aid effectiveness in concentrated countries through examining the records of 23 donor country concentrations to which only 8 of them essentially increased their average percentage of development aid to the top 15 concentrated recipients.<sup>32</sup> After analysis, it was clear that only one donor efficiently and effectively reduced its number of recipients, whether via aid flows or bilateral assistance.<sup>33</sup>

This paper contributes significantly towards understanding the commitment, mindset and resulting practice of donor countries. By considering donor countries’ approach towards such norms, their commitments vary with their national priorities, domestic and geopolitical interests and other factors they may prioritize over OECD development and aid-effectiveness principles.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, pg.340.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, pg.336.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Brown and Liam Swiss, “The Hollow Ring of Donor Commitment: Country Concentration and the Decoupling of Aid-Effectiveness Norms from Donor Practice,” *Development Policy Review* 31, no. 6 (2013): pp. 737-755, <https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12033>.

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Brown and Liam Swiss, “The Hollow Ring of Donor Commitment: Country Concentration and the Decoupling of Aid-Effectiveness Norms from Donor Practice,” pp. 749.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. pp.749.

<sup>34</sup> Intent and interest play a part in this regard, but it is the considerable focus towards developing or “not” developing a certain practice or norm based on the initial intent. Overall, the paper recommends that problems like fragmentation should not be the primary concern of donors and more focus needs to be given towards effective means and practices towards improving development aid’s quality. <sup>35</sup>

## Practices in Disaster Relief

Multiple disaster events could occur concurrently in the same geolocation and if the disaster response system is unprepared, that could lead to detrimental and far-reaching consequences on both a humanitarian and economic level. According to **Potutan and Arakida (2021)** <sup>36</sup>, recent concurrent crises experience having a disaster while dealing with the encroaching global pandemic in which having a single-hazard approach has been proven ineffective in resolving the calamity. The purpose of this research is to highlight some of Asia's evolving disaster response methods during the COVID-19 outbreak (Philippines, India, Japan, and the Republic of Korea). Its goal is to demonstrate how these practices evolve, what their consequences are, and whether they can be used to strengthen the disaster response system for simultaneous crises, highlighting the opportunity to transition from a single-hazard to a multi-hazard strategy. In order to accomplish the objectives of this paper, the authors utilized the presentations and reports shared by the Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) member countries during the Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction (ACDR) in October 2020 to achieve the goals.<sup>37</sup>

The thesis will take inspiration from the three disaster response practices established by these reports during the COVID-19 pandemic: (i) digitizing certain disaster response components, such as early warning, surveillance, and impact assessment; (ii) a mass evacuation to ensure social separation, as well as additional procedures such as testing, tracing, and isolating sick people; (iii) Individuals who have been affected by a disaster and are already experiencing anxiety as a result of the epidemic can receive remote psychological first aid.<sup>38</sup> Throughout this article this paper extracts several conclusions. Firstly, it is evident that the DRM agency does not lead response activities independently during concurrent events; instead there are two distinct

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. pp.754.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. pp.754.

<sup>36</sup> Gerald Potutan and Masaru Arakida, “Evolving Disaster Response Practices during COVID-19 Pandemic,” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 6 (2021): p. 3137, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18063137>.

<sup>37</sup> Gerald Potutan and Masaru Arakida, “Evolving Disaster Response Practices during COVID-19 Pandemic,”.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 9.



response systems for each crisis (COVID and the disaster). In this light, the emerging catastrophe practices detailed in this study demonstrate the importance of a multisector approach in dealing with concurrent crises. Secondly, disaster response practices are emerging because the single-hazard method is unprepared for concurrent crises. As a result, it must adapt by implementing additional safeguards (such as social isolation and movement restrictions) to reduce disease spread during a pandemic. The increasing practices of digitization, scattered evacuation, and remote PFA validate the need for DRM systems to migrate from a single-hazard approach to a multi hazard approach in order to successfully respond to concurrent crises.<sup>39</sup> Lastly, the lessons learned from these changing behaviors can be used to strengthen DRM regulations and programs in which local governments can use evolving techniques to encourage communities in taking an active role responding to concurrent crises.<sup>40</sup>

This thesis will explore present and emerging techniques in relief chain coordination as explained by **Balcik et al. (2009)**<sup>41</sup> throughout this article. Before and throughout the initial response phase of disaster, the focus is on typical coordination mechanisms observed among the participants in the worldwide relief chain. There are many different parties involved in humanitarian aid situations, each with their own missions, interests, abilities, and logistics skills. While commercial supply chain management coordination strategies have been well researched, humanitarian relief chain coordination are yet to be fully analyzed. Relief workers operate in an environment that is not always conducive to cooperation; in fact, no single person or organization is in charge of a relief effort. However, there are many challenges that adhere to the humanitarian relief environment that impact planning and coordination such as supply acquisition or procurement, pre-positioning and warehousing, and transportation.<sup>42</sup> The number of relief strategies has recently increased, which has resulted in better utilization of each type of actor's competencies and knowledge throughout the relief chain. Increased collaboration among relief organizations also aids in the establishment of various coordinating mechanisms along the relief chain.<sup>43</sup> While these current and emerging techniques show promise in terms of improving disaster relief coordination, establishing an integrated global relief chain remains a challenge. Improving disaster relief operations necessitates addressing these issues in practice as well as research. Current coordinating systems have the potential to be expanded and improved in order

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> Burcu Balcik et al., "Coordination in Humanitarian Relief Chains: Practices, Challenges and Opportunities ," *Int. J. Production Economics* 126 (October 21, 2009): pp. 22-34.

<sup>42</sup> Burcu Balcik et al., "Coordination in Humanitarian Relief Chains: Practices, Challenges and Opportunities ," p. 26.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

to maximize their benefits. More research is required to develop new and novel approaches to designing partnerships and contracts that aid the relief mission while distributing risks and benefits evenly to all players, as seen in commercial supply chain management but not in the relief chain. Overall, this thesis concludes from the aforementioned articles how evident it is for practices to evolve and adapt into relief practices and relief chains to accommodate whatever crisis may occur in urban society. It is also vital to keep these practices updated, strategic and at hand and to always “Be Prepared” as mentioned by the Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, in the 2021 UN “Our Common Agenda”<sup>44</sup> report.

## **Recipient Behavior and Capacity**

### **Recipient State “Willingness” to Accept Disaster Relief**

**Thomsen (2015)**<sup>45</sup>, argues that it is not a choice but an obligation for the state to accept foreign aid, owing to the duty the state has to the welfare of its population. The resource gained by the recipient and the potential negative implications, outweigh the short-term gain in saving lives, promoting living standards and accelerating economic recovery - using the 2008 Myanmar crisis as a basis for this argument. Here we see the unraveling of donor and recipient transactions through the lens of foreign convention and its failures to protect the short- and long-term interests of people, and how political factions and their interests supersede the interests of the civilian welfare. The perspective of aid refusal is seen to be one whereby the receiver perceives the donor’s aid as politically instrumental, and by refusing aid the state can mitigate the potential risks this may bring later. Although preservation of human life is valid, it is only applicable as a short-term rationalist approach to receiving foreign aid without consideration to the long-term implication which could potentially be more disastrous. The paper furthermore does not take into account the destabilizing factor both refusing or accepting aid has politically, and provides an unbalanced approach which largely assumes the black-box political strategy of the donor in this exchange.

In **Harvey (2009)**’s<sup>46</sup> Humanitarian Policy Group’s 37<sup>th</sup> Brief, great focus is attributed to the responsibilities of states to protect and support their affected citizens. Harvey’s arguments are especially brought up from the focus of research on humanitarian responses given towards

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<sup>44</sup> United Nations, “Our Common Agenda - Report of the Secretary-General,” 2021, <https://doi.org/10.18356/9789210010122>.

<sup>45</sup> Thomsen, Matias. “The Obligation Not to Arbitrarily Refuse International Disaster Relief: A Question of Sovereignty.” *Melbourne Journal of International Law* 16 (2015): 1–38.

<sup>46</sup> Paul Harvey, “Towards Good Humanitarian Government,” *HPG Policy Brief*, no. 37 (September 2009).

foreign aid agencies, humanitarian organizations and donors. Instead, special consideration is given to the role and various considerations of the affected state, especially in the initiation and organization of the humanitarian and relief response.<sup>47</sup> In this regard, the 2008 Cyclone Nargis case in Myanmar is also given attention in terms of state consent towards aid. Sudan's expulsion of donors and agencies in 2009 is also mentioned, emphasizing the extent to which aid discourse depends on donor ability and not recipient capacity and consent.<sup>48</sup> While Harvey calls for a re-appraisal towards the roles and responsibilities of donor and recipient states when it comes to humanitarian and disaster response, clarity towards recipient states' acceptance and distribution of aid, especially within its socio-political structure and international relations with donor states must be clarified.

Consequently, Harvey makes a significant reference to literature on failed or fragile states in terms of their weakness and inability to provide humanitarian assistance to their residents, yet an ability to assess this fragility and quantitatively determine it before giving aid by various agencies remains an obstacle.<sup>49</sup> As such, this brief pinpoints important holes within international humanitarian relief research. It is true that the responsibility of the recipient state must be given weight when calculating; however, when various circumstances contribute to the inability for a state to assume responsibility, other formulations must be considered by foreign aid agencies. Engaging and developmentally motivating the affected state, as well as efficiently calculating the risks and consequences of providing aid, by international aid agencies and organizations must be considered some of their objectives.

### **Capacity to Distribute Aid Efficiently**

**Daly, Maddi, McCaughey et al. (2020)**<sup>50</sup>, examined the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia demonstrating that the foreign aid accelerated the stabilization of welfare standards with respect to household finance and restoration of social securities and contributed to raising the short-term quality of life for those stricken by adverse conditions pre-disaster, but this was short-lived as a side effect of foreign intervention. The paper concludes that it is unrealistic to expect long term sustainable benefit to livelihood development initiatives within the limited intervention time when also considering the inherent inefficiencies in institutional approaches to

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<sup>47</sup> Paul Harvey, "Towards Good Humanitarian Government," pg. 2.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, pg. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, pg. 2-3.

<sup>50</sup> Patrick Daly et al., "Rethinking Relief, Reconstruction and Development: Evaluating the Effectiveness and Sustainability of Post-Disaster Livelihood Aid," *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 49 (2020): p. 101650, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2020.101650>.

large scale reconstruction. The paper self-admittedly does not provide a rich enough overview to develop or entertain discussions pertaining to conceptualization or implementation of livelihood supports after a crisis. The big strength comes with tailoring the approach to aid and setting short term goals which may lead to long term benefit.

More studies on the capacity to manage disasters more efficiently, **Safarpour, Fooladlou et al. (2017)**<sup>51</sup>, identified the problems with the management of disaster relief in the 2017 Kermanshah earthquake. They categorize the problems (barriers) into managerial and structural. Managerial problems are defined as problems arising from the legislative and governmental management of a society whereas the structural problems are those rooted in the type and traditions of a community.<sup>52</sup> The article does not go into much detail as to the significance of each problem discovered; however, it does provide a general focus reference to avoid basic managerial errors in disaster relief. As such, the significance of the article is in generalizing the discovered problems so as to avoid future management issues whilst delivering foreign aid. Furthermore, some problems and some proposed solutions are rather basic and simplistic. For instance, this article states that a company needs to implement a decent policy yet does not give its own assessment of what such a policy would be like.<sup>53</sup> In addition, it states as one of its problems being the inconsideration of vulnerable groups without elaborating on its reason. Therefore, this article is best read as a basic guideline for avoiding humanitarian aid management issues.

## **Disaster Resilience**

### **Disaster Resilience as a Determinant of Recovery**

**Venton et al. (2012)**<sup>54</sup>, stress that the number of disasters is increasing globally, in some areas exponentially, observing a sharp increase in the number of lives impacted/lost and expenditure on relief globally - with the record for the previous year always being broken. In alignment with my research topic, this paper calls for the optimization of relief processes which govern distribution and measured action to negate the harm of disaster on the social and economic level locally - which in turn impacts globally. The focus here is that more international

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<sup>51</sup> Hamid Safarpour et al., "Challenges and Barriers of Humanitarian Aid Management in 2017 Kermanshah Earthquake: A Qualitative Study," 2020, <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.2.11139/v3>.

<sup>52</sup> Hamid Safarpour et al., "Challenges and Barriers of Humanitarian Aid Management in 2017 Kermanshah Earthquake: A Qualitative Study," pg. 7

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, pg. 8.

<sup>54</sup> Courtenay Cabot Venton et al., "The Economics of Early Response and Disaster Resilience: Lessons from Kenya and Ethiopia," Economics of Resilience Final Report, June 2012, [https://doi.org/10.1163/2210-7975\\_hrd-9834-0042](https://doi.org/10.1163/2210-7975_hrd-9834-0042).

budgets should be allocated towards ‘preparedness’ initiatives, mobilization and legislative processes within the international community. Building more resilient social and economic fixtures to reduce harm - thereby the cost of a disaster - is proven to reduce the overall impact and the burden to the international community. Although generally true, this largely disregards the political aspects of players within the global space and proposes ambitious solutions given the transactional nature of global relationships. While cost saving is an excellent incentivizing factor for countries to participate, for some countries it poses a disadvantage, exposes vulnerabilities or shows negligible return as a long-term proposition.

Further literature on disaster resilience shines light on the effects and recovery patterns of urban preparedness to destructive disasters. This is especially relevant when regarding the activities and contributions of communities during disasters such as the Tohoku Earthquake in Japan and Hurricane Katrina in the US. A study which highlights community-driven resilience to disasters and its subsequent recovery patterns was done by **Yabe, Tsubouchi et al. (2020)**<sup>55</sup> in which mobile trajectories and phone datasets in grand scales from five different disasters in Japan, Puerto Rico and the US were utilized to pinpoint various recovery patterns. Despite the noted flaws in research designs, such as the inaccuracy of mobile phone data in presenting various other attributes besides population movement, the results pointed towards a common negative exponential function.<sup>56</sup> Ultimately, the majority of affected individuals swiftly made a return to the residential areas, leaving a small number recorded to have stayed away for a longer period of time.<sup>57</sup> This study does not only indicate the importance and effectiveness of resilience, especially community-driven and on the ground, as a response to disasters, but it also encourages and informs further policies to develop and enhance community and urban first-hand responses to disasters and crises. However, in addition to the established inaccuracies, this study was focused on mid to high levels of development and, thus, maintained a primordial level of disaster resilience. This may not be the case in fragile and failed states which not only can not provide such measures, but might not consent or have the capacity to assume such responsibility from the start.

In relation to disaster relief and its effect on a country’s economy, **Becerra, Cavello, Noy et al. (2012)**<sup>58</sup> determine that there is no significant effect on a disaster-stricken economy

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<sup>55</sup> Takahiro Yabe et al., “Understanding Post-Disaster Population Recovery Patterns,” *Journal of The Royal Society Interface* 17, no. 163 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsif.2019.0532>.

<sup>56</sup> Takahiro Yabe et al., “Understanding Post-Disaster Population Recovery Patterns,” pg. 7.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, pg.7.

<sup>58</sup> Oscar Becerra, Eduardo Cavallo, and Ilan Noy, “Foreign Aid in the Aftermath of Large Natural Disasters,” *Review of Development Economics* 18, no. 3 (October 2014): pp. 445-460, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rode.12095>.

resulting from a surge in disaster relief. Furthermore, they talk about the main factors in determining aid surges. Rates of disaster relief received increases with respect to the intensity of a disaster and are inversely proportional with increases in incomes and foreign exchange reserves. In contrast, this article determines that political affinities and geo-strategies of donor countries have no effect on aid inflows.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, this research can be extended by quantifying the effect of disaster relief allocation in mitigating the damages of a disaster or the optimal composition of aid in a recipient country's development. The study could be used in reducing early estimate errors and combat the resultant bias that leads to an overestimation of disaster relief expenditure. The latter would be useful in assembling disaster relief packages, thus realizing the combinations that could mostly benefit the developmental aspect of disaster mitigation. As such, these extensions would provide some tangible benefits via creating more resilient communities.

Additionally, **May (1982)**<sup>60</sup> provides early insight on the problems of estimating disaster relief when the needs and considerations on the ground are unknown and not transparent. By using the case study of Mount St. Helens volcanic eruption's inadequate disaster response as an example of early estimation errors, in tandem with technical, bureaucratic and political biases, he proposes that relief assistance should not be tied to early estimates of relief needs but to the individual applicant's relief considerations on the ground.<sup>61</sup> Hence Mount St. Helens' case shows that under highly uncertain data, direct appropriation would cause major errors in estimations and incur losses to both recipient and donor parties. Even though this case is true to some extent, the solution proposed by the author doesn't work in cases where relief needs cannot be 'known'. In similar cases to Mount St. Helens eruption, there could be a major downtime between a disaster happening and the documentation of said relief needs. Considering that this study remains early within the developed literature surrounding disaster relief, it is an important stepping stone in discussions surrounding disaster preparedness and resilience considering that in cases like these, an overestimated expenditure can be viewed as an inevitability. As such, urban and community resilience and preparedness efforts are seen as determinants to strong disaster response estimations by naturally reducing expenditure and guiding a community post-disaster.

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<sup>59</sup> Oscar Becerra, Eduardo Cavallo, and Ilan Noy, "Foreign Aid in the Aftermath of Large Natural Disasters," pg. 450.

<sup>60</sup> Peter J. May, "Formulating Disaster Relief When Needs Are Unknown," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 2, no. 1 (1982): pp. 1-16, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3323649>.

<sup>61</sup> Peter J. May, "Formulating Disaster Relief When Needs Are Unknown," pg. 3.

## **Determining Disaster Resilience**

The literature on natural disaster effects and costs is extensive and encompasses various themes, theories and data towards quantitative measures, calculations and analysis on how to handle their respective destruction and costs. Natural disasters can pose various forms of destruction, from displaced individuals to losses in material done by environmental disruption. Such disruption leads to various problems in the long-term, particularly losses, costs and economic impacts. In **Hallegatte's (2015)**<sup>62</sup> World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, natural disaster costs, with respect to the ability of an economy to recover, reconstruct and return to normalcy, is measured according to the welfare impact of the disaster, or its indirect costs. Hallegatte's paper establishes a great contribution towards studies on macroeconomic resilience to natural disasters, providing units of measurement via the interest rate, reconstruction duration and other indicators to determine the strength of the available resilience. Additionally, her main focus falls under the importance of estimating and considering indirect costs in assessing a particular disaster event's seriousness. In this regard, attention is focused on the long term and expected welfare and well-being impacts that an affected economy will experience, along with the obvious casualties and incurred material losses, widening the general understanding within natural disaster and disaster resilience literature.<sup>63</sup> By understanding the wide circumference of fields in which a disaster affects, specifically in terms of the preparedness for it, assessing efficient and sufficient donation packages, services and utilities becomes more likely.

## **The Role of the Media in Disaster Relief**

### **Media Coverage Determining Level of Aid**

**Olsen, Carstensen et al. (2003)**<sup>64</sup> give insightful information on the prospects and determinants of assistance urgency classification and the various political and social considerations which accompany such observations. Instead of tackling disaster relief and aid in particular, their paper proposed a hypothesis in assessing the perceived importance of a humanitarian crisis as per its subsequent media coverage, donor interest and subsequent aid

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<sup>62</sup> Stephane Hallegatte, "The Indirect Cost of Natural Disasters and an Economic Definition of Macroeconomic Resilience," *Policy Research Working Papers*, July 2, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-7357>.

<sup>63</sup> Stephane Hallegatte, "The Indirect Cost of Natural Disasters and an Economic Definition of Macroeconomic Resilience," pg 10.

<sup>64</sup> Gorm Rye Olsen, Nils Carstensen, and Kristian Høyen, "Humanitarian Crises: What Determines the Level of Emergency Assistance? Media Coverage, Donor Interests and the Aid Business," *Disasters* 27, no. 2 (2003): pp. 109-126, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7717.00223>.

framework.<sup>65</sup> The paper provides enlightening clarification towards the enigma as to why some disasters are received with more attention than others, be it from coverage or aid prospects. It does this via a methodology of comparative analyses of selected cases of humanitarian crises which provide data on the proposed hypothesis and retain the quality of being comparable with one another.<sup>66</sup> Essentially, Olsen et al. concludes that a clear hierarchy is present when regarding what affects the importance of a crisis, to which donor interests play a major part in and is followed with media coverage's occasional effect.<sup>67</sup> This thesis will be relying heavily on the arguments and analyses presented in the mentioned study, especially in regard to the weight of self-interest and intent to donor behavior during crises calling for aid and response. Either way, it is established that in the presence of strong donor practices, media coverage is not always needed to push policy agendas towards providing support.<sup>68</sup>

### **The Impact of Social Media in Modern Disaster Relief**

It is important to recognize that with a developing global village, media and awareness of various global events will develop alongside it. In this regard, and in determining the role of the media in providing disaster coverage and information, it is highly incumbent to integrate social media as a big player in the effect it maintains on informing individuals in all corners of the globe on occurring events. Additionally, social media also has an ability to raise awareness, provide contextual information on particular events and encourage the creation of spaces for individuals to communicate, gather and aggregate under notions they believe in and advocate. For this reason, the literature on social media's impact is new and exponentially increasing in relevance. In terms of disaster relief, social media's effect is highly debated and argued in the ways it impacts public opinion and mobilization, especially in the ways it is manipulated and utilized to paint a particular picture. This thesis will be merging the effect of social media with that of media, both of which however will retain an influential role on the effectiveness of disaster relief in the case studies mentioned.

**Landwehr and Carley (2014)**<sup>69</sup> provide a helpful framework in establishing the role social media plays during disaster relief responses, by assessing the methods in which individuals and groups respond via social media platforms to past disaster events. Considering

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<sup>65</sup> Gorm Rye Olsen, Nils Carstensen, and Kristian Høyen, "Humanitarian Crises: What Determines the Level of Emergency Assistance? Media Coverage, Donor Interests and the Aid Business,"Pg. 110.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, pg. 111.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, pg. 124.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, pg. 125.

<sup>69</sup> Peter M. Landwehr and Kathleen M. Carley, "Social Media in Disaster Relief," *Studies in Big Data*, 2014, pp. 225-257, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-40837-3\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-40837-3_7).



that social media is heavily integrated in the majority of people's lives, its utility during a disaster event could prove highly efficient. In this regard, Landwehr and Carley predict to what extent social media can aid the disaster response process, claiming that with the strong noise produced, many first responders to a disaster may find social media unhelpful, overwhelming or challenging in locating actionable and helpful information on areas in need of aid.<sup>70</sup>

Nevertheless, social media's main purpose, to individuals and organizations alike, is to provide information and context to what is happening on the ground, whether it be from media organizations or affected individuals. Taking this study into consideration, this thesis finds various points of harmonization with the impacts of social media, especially in the way it continues to develop and improve in providing mechanisms to increase awareness on disaster events. Although Landwehr and Carley mainly discuss social media's direct usage in disasters and projections towards the future, this thesis finds a strong relationship between social media's potential and the intricacies of disaster resilience, especially in the way the former serves to mobilize groups and individuals. In this regard, a stronger social media presence and coverage will lead to a quicker, more prepared local response.

More on the prospects of social media, **Gao, Barbier et al. (2011)**<sup>71</sup>, describe more advantages and disadvantages of social media applications during disaster relief coordination. Moreover, they explain the barriers that need to be resolved before crowdsourcing applications become a useful tool. An advantage of crowdsourcing applications is the immediate response time it provides between the victim and the relief organizations. In addition, because crowdsourcing tools can collect information from different social media applications, the situation on the ground can be portrayed swiftly. On the other hand, despite crowdsourcing being very helpful in disaster relief situations, it is marred by technical and usability problems. From the technical aspect, different crowdsourcing applications are not created with collaboration in mind which leads to inaccuracies. Furthermore, integrity and privacy of the data received is questionable since social media apps are highly prone to fraudulent behavior as well as the information being readily available online. As such, reports, even with benign intent, could lead to inaccurate assessments of the situation, hence disaster relief estimation problems, especially viable due to victim stress.

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<sup>70</sup> Peter M. Landwehr and Kathleen M. Carley, "Social Media in Disaster Relief," pg. 28.

<sup>71</sup> Huiji Gao et al., "Harnessing the Crowdsourcing Power of Social Media for Disaster Relief," January 2011, <https://doi.org/10.21236/ada581803>.

Furthermore, **Beigi, Hu et al. (2016)**<sup>72</sup> provide another perspective on the applications and effects of social media engagement on disaster relief. Labeling it particularly as “Sentiment Analysis”, their study focuses on the various computational, linguistic and semiotic expressions found within social media, especially as reactions to a disaster response. By observing how sentiment mining in social media platforms is demonstrated and exploited, the study provides an assessment on how information propagated on social media can be used to improve disaster management and how local crowds will react to it.<sup>73</sup> Beigi, Hu et al.’s study is technical, quantitative and sentiment analysis-dependent in nature, relying heavily on approaches in the application of social media to provide situational awareness, as well as visual stimulation to trigger a response from the public.<sup>74</sup> While such an understanding of the manipulation of social media can be seen to improve disaster management, various other considerations arise in terms of disaster awareness and its exploitation during a disaster event, especially when taking donor self-interest in consideration. This study provides subliminal insight towards possibilities of exploiting social media to fit a donor state’s agenda. Nevertheless, in some case studies, we see social media grow into a force that is independent from state manipulation, calling for mobilization towards media coverage of disasters that international disaster agencies may not be paying close attention to. Additionally, the phenomenon of “forgetting” or “not paying attention to” a disaster, especially after it receives drastic media attention and coverage is an interesting point of discussion, especially if the affected state did not receive sufficient aid.

## Theory

### **Baseline Theoretical Framework**

After determining the various literature available, segmenting it into topics and notions and deliberating the multiple arguments and findings made by the authors, this paper will first be considering a baseline theoretical framework to which it will be applying before basing the resulting hypotheses on the relevant arguments. Approaching the different concepts and arguments proposed that might present ideas to maximize international disaster relief’s effectiveness, especially in fragile states heavily dependent on aid, the paper will conceptualize

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<sup>72</sup> Ghazaleh Beigi et al., “An Overview of Sentiment Analysis in Social Media and Its Applications in Disaster Relief,” *Sentiment Analysis and Ontology Engineering*, 2016, pp. 313-340, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-30319-2\\_13](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-30319-2_13).

<sup>73</sup> Ghazaleh Beigi et al., “An Overview of Sentiment Analysis in Social Media and Its Applications in Disaster Relief,” pg. 18.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, pg. 21.

them generally within a constructivist framework of thinking in international relations. In this regard, the continuous roles and evolving practices and considerations of states and individuals will influence their decisions and behavior towards aid provision. Such conceptualization, as noted into why and to whom donor states behave a certain way towards foreign aid and providing relief in times of crises, is the general framework established by McCourt.<sup>75</sup>

Generally, constructivism will be expanded to involve the conceptual understandings of **Practice theory** and **Relationalism** within the framework of foreign aid literature as established by **McCourt**.<sup>76</sup> However, considering that McCourt's original work is only a general outlook towards the theoretical perspective and not specific to disaster relief, disaster resilience and the influence of the media in its implementation, this thesis will use this framework only as an initial standpoint to the general conceptual outline. This conceptual outline will be expanded and branched into multiple arguments in which each will sustain its own intricacies and considerations. The resulting hypotheses to be used in the methodological design of the paper, will also depend on the extracted arguments and will be considered the general “research questions” posed within the empirical research on the presented case studies.

In addition to this, **Chipangura et. al**<sup>77</sup> provide further context of how social constructivism and objectivism can be implemented within disaster risk and relief scenarios and how it is expressed within the various policy making procedures, responses and practices. Their literature survey provides an epistemological and ontological analysis of how social constructivism and objectivism can be used to explain dimensions within disaster risk management and provides context into policy formulation and facilitation.<sup>78</sup> The thesis will be applying their assessment towards social constructivism in disaster risk to its implication in the causal mechanisms played within a disaster relief response. According to Chipangura et. al, constructivism is, in essence, a subjective social phenomenon which entails the evolution of socially constructed structures.<sup>79</sup> Within the context of disaster responses, constructivism reflects disaster risk management as “fundamentally a social construction” as stated, in which all individual and institutional practices are a product of an emerging social choice, constraints,

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<sup>75</sup> David M. McCourt, “Practice Theory and Relationalism as the New Constructivism,” pp. 475-485.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, pp. 475-485.

<sup>77</sup> Paul Chipangura, Dewald Van Niekerk, and Gerrit Van Der Waltd, “An Exploration of Objectivism and Social Constructivism within the Context of Disaster Risk,” *Disaster Prevention and Management* 25, no. 2 (April 2016): pp. 261-274, <https://doi.org/10.1108/dpm-09-2015-0210>.

<sup>78</sup> Paul Chipangura, Dewald Van Niekerk, and Gerrit Van Der Waltd, “An Exploration of Objectivism and Social Constructivism within the Context of Disaster Risk,” pp. 261-274.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p. 266.

action and inaction.<sup>80</sup> Consequently, this further situates constructivism as an appropriate perspective towards explaining the nuances of disaster relief, especially in the thesis, to which exploring the interactions of the dynamics of disaster risk actions and policies in fragile states depends on how the notions of their practice have been constructed overtime, whether historically or socio-politically and as per a case-by-case basis.

As such, the paper will be adapting these to the understanding of disaster and humanitarian relief provisions in affected states. Essentially, the thesis will use constructivism to explain the various dynamics observed in events calling for disaster relief. As such, tying in the question as to why states feel the need to provide humanitarian assistance to explain psychological concepts like **intent**, as well as formulations of altruism in philanthropic-motivated disaster aid as contributed by **Russel and Mentzel (1989)**<sup>81</sup>. Since disaster relief literature tends to be involved with more on-hand cases and examples of natural or manmade crises with quantitative approaches in dealing with them, the thesis will use a further concept of **knowledge** when assessing disaster relief measures as established by Sobel and Leeson (2007) in order to justify the significance of disaster resilience as a solution to the knowledge problem with the presence of other factors that could further influence it. Another concept that could provide a tertiary or external effect is that brought along with increased media coverage or, more specifically, **increased awareness** which won't be deliberated extensively as a standalone concept. Consequently, all of these concepts will be organized under the observation that the continuous practices of parties, whether it is donors or crisis responders, systematically govern the interacting dynamics and correlations within disaster relief functions.

## **Key Concepts**

### **Donor Intent and Interest**

Determining intent and interest is important when assessing why states are committed to provide aid, thus giving clear insight towards its effectiveness. It is true that intent and interests are concepts inherently associated with a rationalist theoretical perspective, especially when taking in consideration **Hans Morgenthau's** Political Theory of Foreign Aid.<sup>82</sup> Essentially, Morgenthau analyzes six different types of foreign aid and attributes the importance to

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p. 266.

<sup>81</sup> Gordon W. Russell and Robert K. Mentzel, "Sympathy and Altruism in Response to Disasters," *The Journal of Social Psychology* 130, no. 3 (1990): pp. 309-316, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1990.9924586>.

<sup>82</sup> Hans Morgenthau, "A Political Theory of Foreign Aid," *American Political Science Review* 56, no. 2 (1962): pp. 301-309, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1952366>.

identifying their correct situations through choosing the appropriate qualitative and quantitative aid to be administered. He focuses particularly on the role and philosophy of the recipient in their acceptance of aid as to whether or not their ideals form a beneficial link with the donor, whether it is through the latter's political philosophy, system, or objectives. He states that, despite the analytical work of economists in assessing the best models to manipulate foreign aid, the general execution of foreign aid remains entirely a political function which is at the whim of political executives and leaders. Whether it is the leadership of the donor or receiver that plays the bigger part, the political function of foreign aid, which is governed by interests, will be dominating. As such, the framework presented paint aid as merely a tool for hegemonic and great powers to manage their control of receiving states, indicating that disaster relief as well could possess an instrumental nature to its primary form of *modus operandi*.

This thesis depends on these prospects while delving into further arguments of actor motivation and factors on their decision-making process during emergencies. Adapting this to **Practice Theory**, although interest plays a big role in explaining the behavior of states and although Morgenthau presents valid points towards its political nature, the existence of state and donor interests during disaster events is a part of its ongoing process of “construction” and not the only unit of analysis. Nevertheless, **intent** will conceptually be utilized to explain the instrumental or calculating reasoning many donors will possess during humanitarian and disaster responses, which will juxtapose the philanthropic nature of aid. Additionally, a platform towards increasing awareness of disaster relief efforts may either hinder or further donor interests in this regard, depending on the case at hand.

### **Altruism and Philanthropy**

The paper's general consideration of **Altruism** as a concept within disaster relief scenarios is a socio-psychological concept affecting elements of sympathy amongst actors and decision-makers of response funds and units. It enables their mobilization to respond and provide help solely and initially based on self-less intentions. As mentioned previously, it is a conceptual opposition to the calculating, rational nature of intent and interest. Altruism remains an ambiguous concept when introducing it into an International Relations setting, especially with the thesis relying heavily on a forefront constructivist perspective for providing disaster relief, even at the most urgent or severe of scenarios. There is no doubt that disasters and crises in states and communities will spark feelings of shock, sympathy and helplessness in individual entities, whether they are policymakers or taxpayers.

As such, this paper will take the socio-psychological nature of altruism and apply it to the climate of international state behavior during times of crisis, especially in calls for severe humanitarian assistance. Will states and donors offer aid to affected regions based on altruistic measures alone or does the calculating and instrumental consideration also play a role? Can altruism be a determinant of donor commitment and mobilization to provide efficient aid or will it hinder the efficacy of the support provided? The latter point remains highly relevant when disaster relief is given abundantly and the costs stack up on donor states, yet they fail to meet any recovery standard. The argument posed here is that, due to these conditions, altruism alone cannot have a sole effect on state considerations, but might play a significant role in donor mobilizations. However, further concepts must be discussed which can explain disaster relief decision-making more elaborately.

As outlined in the Literature Review, **Russel and Mentzel (1989)**<sup>83</sup> address the concept of Sympathy and Altruism in response to disasters through a quantitative study approach towards Canadian taxpayers and their degree of sympathy in global disasters. The psychological and individual aspects of this literature are difficult to translate to international actors, strengthening the point in which altruism will essentially have an effect on the initial donor and decision-maker considerations, but not on the overall picture. However with the integration of the media's impact and increased disaster awareness, more information, often accompanied with visual representation, will be publicly present and may affect the dynamic of altruism and sympathy increasingly, even if it is not applied entirely on the decision maker's table. As such, the effect of increased media coverage on the power of altruism in affecting individual judgment, mentality and decision to donate and provide aid should not be ignored.

## **Knowledge and Preparedness**

In the context of disaster relief, response efforts and mobilizations, disaster preparedness retains a huge significance as a pre-disaster assessment. It is clear that disaster resilience has increased in popularity and relevance within the literature, highlighting its importance on the decision-making process of officials and crisis responders. The paper's general position towards disaster relief is that it retains its significance when discussing any topic related to disaster relief efficacy. However, relying on the technical and quantitative nature of disaster resilience as the sole indicator towards successful disaster relief remains an overly optimistic notion. Disaster preparedness is elaborated as a common variable in various studies on disaster relief efficacy,

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<sup>83</sup> Gordon W. Russell and Robert K. Mentzel, "Sympathy and Altruism in Response to Disasters".

especially in case studies which allocate how prepared some communities and states are to spontaneous disaster as opposed to others.

Resilience is seen as the learned ability of affected entities to take and recover from severe shocks and disasters and adapt to them in the long term.<sup>84</sup> Risk assessment, policy building and risk preparedness are all adapted concepts as a function of an improved disaster resilience measure. In this regard, how prepared a state might be to a shock, whether natural or man-made, will be determined by its resilience. Additionally, the OECD states that disaster relief, when properly contextualized and addressed, empower prospects and elements of disaster resilience which in turn affect strengths in socio-political stability, risk awareness, economic security, etc.<sup>85</sup> However, how is it possible to link the normative context and the clockwork mechanism of interests, rationality and altruism to the technical and realistic approach of disaster relief?

This paper aims to explain this relationship by using the concept of **Knowledge** in the preparedness and/or assessment of disaster relief response. This concept results from the lack of social coordination within a particular climate, whether it be social coordination or disaster relief response. In this regard, **Sobel and Leeson (2007)**<sup>86</sup> state that much of the knowledge derived from circumstances happening on the ground during a disaster is inconsistent, dispersed and incomplete. As such, problems that might arise from disaster relief response inefficiency or ineffectiveness are a function of the problem of knowledge dispersion, to which more knowledge of the scenario and a level of preparedness that is clarified and solidified will lead to a more defined decision-making process by the state. Furthermore, the sufficient knowledge is essentially derived from a higher degree of disaster resilience to which, by default, provide a clear-cut arena for states with interests and altruistic motivations to practice disaster relief based on their individual considerations.

## **Practice and Relationalism**

The thesis makes the connection that all three previous concepts, once available on the negotiation table, will reinforce one another in order to completely underline the disaster relief from donor states. Additionally, and as previously mentioned, increased awareness has a great positive influence to disaster preparedness, in which not only does it mobilize groups and

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<sup>84</sup> “What does “resilience” mean for donors?”, OECD, [www.oecd.org/dac](http://www.oecd.org/dac).

<sup>85</sup> “What does “resilience” mean for donors?”, OECD.

<sup>86</sup> Russell S. Sobel and Peter T. Leeson, “The Use of Knowledge in Natural Disaster Relief Management,”.

provide instantaneous information of the events on the ground, but also solves the “documentation” problem introduced by **May (1980)** <sup>87</sup> in dealing with future disasters. All of these approaches are considered as part of the continuous practices of parties within disaster response events and can be explained under that general mechanism.

As such, Practice shifts focus towards the social nature of these dynamics, in which their presence and expression is embedded and interwoven into the fundamental practical activities presented.<sup>88</sup> This is additionally supported by Relationalism which emphasizes the interconnectivity of these dynamics and alternates from regarding state and domestic interests as the core entities of importance. The focus on practices as an analytical concept in this regard opens various doors to allow the interpretation of disaster relief dynamics, such as **Field theory** in which various actors engage with one another and with the situation according to the extent their goals, successes and risks are positioned within a particular field.<sup>89</sup> Such formulation provides convenient interpretation to various dynamics, all of which is based on the studied practices of such actors, especially within practice-oriented field theory. In this regard, a great deal of the arguments extrapolated from disaster relief literature can be seen in the lens of constructivism, or as McCourt has labeled Practice theory and Rationalism as “New Constructivism”<sup>90</sup>.

It is clear that disaster relief practices, particularly with the notion of disaster relief as a learned function based on continuous processes of knowledge and adaptability, are inherently constructivist and will see further adaptability and change with newer challenges and experiences. Further literature provides more contextual formulations on the use of practice theory in real life scenarios, particularly in **Pouliot and Thérien’s (2021)** textbook on Global Policymaking.<sup>91</sup> The textbook describes select case studies within global policy making procedures which significantly present the constructivist role of practices and their respective value cleavages, such as the doctrine of Protection of Civilians within armed conflicts or the making of the Human Rights Council.<sup>92</sup> This thesis will depend on the various key practices and the value debates presented in this textbook as fundamental information towards the practices which will be tackled in the research. Looking at the PoC case in particular presents various options that heavily correlate with the dynamics observed in disaster relief practices.

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<sup>87</sup> Peter J. May, “Formulating Disaster Relief When Needs Are Unknown,” p.39.

<sup>88</sup> David M. McCourt, “Practice Theory and Relationalism as the New Constructivism,” pp. 478.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p. 479.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, p. 482.

<sup>91</sup> Vincent Pouliot and Jean-Philippe Therien, *Global Policymaking: The Patchwork of Global Governance*, 2021.

<sup>92</sup> Vincent Pouliot and Jean-Philippe Therien, *Global Policymaking: The Patchwork of Global Governance*.



Consequently, value debates, extrapolated from these trends and pinpointed by the key practices observed in disaster relief events will demonstrate and transcribe the various dynamics which play a part in them.

## Methodology

This section will present the research method which will be adopted for this study. It will detail the research problem, units of analysis, case selection, data collection methods and assigned variables. As such, this methodology chapter will begin with specifying the problem or research objective to be targeted with the subsequent research. This is followed by the appropriate measures towards explaining the research objective via the appropriate case selection and assignment of variables. Consequently, this section will detail the methods of data collection and source allocation<sup>93</sup> which will be conducted in the empirical research which follows. Considering the importance of extrapolating the essence of international disaster relief dynamics within a heavily theory-oriented manner as per the numerous arguments noted in the literature review, this thesis will depend on **George and Bennett's** book, "Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences"<sup>94</sup>, to extrapolate information on conducting the methodological process. In this regard, the research method will generally follow a method of case study analysis as per a particular theoretical juncture and keeping in mind the various conclusions already made by the literature dictating dynamics of international disaster relief.

### **Specification of the Problem**

According to George and Bennett, identifying the core problem and assessing the objective of research remain the most integral steps before conducting the empirical study.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Data Collection: The empirical research will be depending on both primary and secondary sources for data collection. Considering the first-hand research done on the Beirut Blast case study, by international organizations, local organizations, NGOs and independent researchers, this paper will depend on a cocktail of sources ranging from reports, studies, briefs and interviews. The variety of the sources chosen will correlate with the variable being discussed, in which a focus on practices will yield a targeted approach towards interviews and detailed press-releases on conferences and governmental meetings for example. This thesis will shift particular attention to reports and studies highlighting the positions and practices of various actors within the disaster response process, whether it is the behavior of the locals, the activities of NGO officials and volunteers or the actions and pledges of international actors towards the Beirut Blast. Furthermore, a method of documentary searches will be extrapolated from academic journals, books and reports to serve as primary data and facts for the case study. Subsequently, with the nature of the Beirut port explosion being a relatively recent case of disaster relief, involving unique scenarios and new numbers and figures, especially with the ongoing economic and security crisis in Lebanon, the results of the disaster response have not been clearly and directly established, with many sources considering Lebanon as still suffering from the long-term effects of the blast.

<sup>94</sup> Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

<sup>95</sup> Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, p. 62.

After regarding the main arguments that result from a literature review on the interacting factors within disaster relief, testing out the correlation of these dynamics towards disaster relief effectiveness presents as the clearest approach. The thesis has maintained a well-established theoretical framework of constructivism, based on relationalism and actor practices in disaster responses. In this regard, the subsequent methodology utilizes this framework in order to identify the dynamics that impact the recurring practices of actors. The research will incorporate the variables extracted from the argumentation of the literature to detail what factors best impact the effectiveness of disaster relief measures while focusing on the practices that play a part in that disaster response. Consequently, the research objective is to identify long-term disaster relief effectiveness to which the incorporation of new variables and levels of analyses is needed to effectively understand achieving it.

Donor agencies have consistently emphasized the importance of good practices in development aid, but in terms of disaster aid, agencies have not yet posed complete and satisfactory programmes, highlighting the preferable practices. Instead, many of the practices associated with foreign aid facilitation and provision by donors have been applied in disaster response instances. Both fields can overlap in the dynamics which play a part, but the urgency in disaster responses calls for a more elaborate discussion towards the active factors which take place on the level of actors. In this regard, the selected methodology to organize these concepts as per the established theoretical framework will be a heuristic case study analysis. Heuristic case analysis, according to George and Bennett, include the introduction and identification of new variables and hypotheses, enabling causal mechanisms and formulations to explain their interactivity under a chosen theoretical understanding.<sup>96</sup> This case study method is the most accurate in attempting to explain the dynamics which correlate with each other within disaster relief effectiveness. Thus, in order to conduct appropriate case study analysis under this type, variables, or the units of analysis, must be particularly established as reinforcing the research objective and establishing causal mechanisms to explain it. Additionally, case selection must be studied to include all of the argumentations considered, as well as possess enough features to be identified as accurate to the research question, yet seen as an “outlier” in the traditional sense of disasters and disaster relief scenarios, as expected within heuristic case studies.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p. 62.

## **Case Selection**

Taking this into consideration, the case selection for this paper will need to be sufficiently accurate to check all the previous conditions as well as strike out as a unique case as far as disaster events go. George and Bennett identify that cases must be selected in order to maintain the “control and variation” which the research question requires.<sup>97</sup> Additionally, the range of studied cases will be narrowed down mainly to establish the correlations and connections of the variables, mainly for the purpose of making these relations despite the possibility of selection bias. However, in order to avoid the problem of “contingent generalization”, as George and Bennett phrase it, only one case will be chosen and will be analyzed in detail based on the proposed variables and hypotheses. As such, the case that will be chosen must satisfy certain requirements in how it can explain or predict the dependent variable of disaster aid effectiveness, how the practices it presents sufficiently specify and operationalize constructivist rationality and the concepts posed and how much the subsequent variables analyzed can be presented within causal mechanisms after detailing the aspects of the disaster event and its responding aid efforts.

Therefore, the paper will be analyzing the Beirut Port Explosion of August 2020 and its various disaster relief considerations as a detailed case study. The reasons to opt for studying this case to explain the disaster relief effectiveness vary, in which the most significant one is the availability of all the proposed dynamics, correlations and mechanisms that have been mentioned within the course of disaster relief efforts to Lebanon in 2020 and up until the present. Additionally, the Beirut Blast presents a unique case of disaster relief, which includes the presence of a drastically catastrophic event, within infrastructural, urban and economic standards, as opposed to a high level of unpreparedness which begged for foreign help to a certain extent. Every resident in the Mediterranean state has been affected by the blast one way or another and its impact on the country’s socio-political state with mobilizing the public in secular means against corrupt and self-destructive political decisions has been unmatched in the history of the country. Overall, the complexities within the Beirut Blast’s disaster efforts fulfill the various arguments and assumptions extrapolated from the literature review, from the domestic response to the international disaster effort and aid. Essentially, the Beirut Port Explosion remains pending in showcasing its disaster relief success rates; however, two years after the debilitating catastrophe, the country does not seem to have recovered efficiently and

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

still struggles with the long-term effects of the blast. Nevertheless, it poses a clear case in highlighting the effectiveness of disaster relief and the dynamics that play a part in that.

### **Limitations and Scope**

According to **Brutus, Herman et. al**, identifying the limitations of a study is important to make assumptions of its weaknesses and heighten its credibility.<sup>98</sup> Within the context of this thesis, the case study is presented by four limitations. Firstly, the assumptions made by depending on a sole theoretical framework when investigating the various complexities of the Beirut Port Explosion. By focusing only on practices of actors and the evolution of the disaster response mindset, many other factors may be overlooked in contrast. Secondly, in focusing only on one case study, despite the advantages of studying the case in detail and being able to control the variables to it, considering other cases individually or in comparison might also bring forth other insights into the dynamics of disaster relief effectiveness. Thirdly, as a result of focusing on one case, which is relatively recent, the data provided or available cannot conclude the general status towards the success rate of the disaster relief efforts in Lebanon. In this regard, set cases work under set circumstances and variables. Lastly, and this is a limitation amongst many researchers studying Lebanese disaster resilience, when referring to dynamics of “preparedness” to face a disaster, the term is used in a general manner, with no particular specification to the phase or type of readiness it is. (Whether it is mitigation, prevention or response).

### **Variables: Arguments and Hypotheses**

With the option of a heuristic case study analysis for the research method, the thesis will depend on a survey of the literature review to generate the research questions which will be implemented as a set of hypotheses to establish the various correlations different dynamics can play on disaster relief effectiveness in the selected case study. From the specification of the problem, the selection of the case and a lengthy literature analysis, the research objective, or dependent variable, being disaster relief effectiveness in fragile states, will be assigned a specific hypothesis, independent variable and will be deliberated based on the associated data extracted from the Beirut Port Explosion case study. In this regard, the variables, in which each will include a hypothesis and correlation, will be actor intent (behavior/commitment), the impact of altruism/sympathy, disaster resilience, media coverage. The thesis will further include a

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<sup>98</sup> Stéphane Brutus, Herman Aguinis, and Ulrich Wassmer, “Self-Reported Limitations and Future Directions in Scholarly Reports,” *Journal of Management* 39, no. 1 (2012): pp. 48-75, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206312455245>.

commentary on the importance of good and established common practices while assessing these variables within the Beirut Port Explosion disaster response and management.

### **Actor Behavior; Donors and Recipients**

As previously mentioned in the literature review towards donor commitment and recipient behavior, the “intent” expressed by actors within disaster response contributes to a certain extent towards the outlook of the aid given or received. In the literature on donor behavior, Brattberg states that “actorness” was particularly highlighted as showing success rates in capability-based situations with a strong focus on consistency in regards to effectiveness. Carson, Schäfer et al. further emphasized the importance of global recovery being a component within donor self-interest in development assistance scenarios by giving economic justification to the behavior of donors. Additionally, Nogami claims that psycho-social expressions by actors, donors or not, plays an important role in influencing actorness with focus on the culpability factor actors might feel. Lastly, Fisher addresses the conceptual nature of donor “actorness” from the lens of regulatory functions such as international laws and norms and makes various statements on the practices of actors and policy makers in their general attitude to remain flexible in their donor pledges. In this regard, the main behavior of donor actors is seen to be affected, to a certain amount, by their self-interests and rational motivations with particular weight established in their sentiments of culpability. Nevertheless, a general agreement is made towards consistent practices of donor behavior.

As for the literature surrounding recipient actors, both Thomsen and Harvey make several statements about recipient state willingness to accept disaster relief. Thomsen claims that recipient governments have an obligation to accept this relief, despite situations in which states have refused aid due to broad political strategy. Whereas, Harvey refocuses the role of the recipient as a responsibility to protect its citizens and calls for a re-appraisal towards the shared roles and responsibilities between donor and recipient. Both agree on the importance of the role of the recipient state in accepting aid, with additional arguments from Harvey on the necessity to establish better practices and policies amongst international donor agencies towards the outcome of aid. Additionally, Daly et al, and Fooladlou et al. examine the importance of equal distribution of disaster aid amongst affected areas via their respective quantitative studies which detail disaster management problems on the ground. As such, recipient states also retain specific behavior towards disaster relief that is governed by an evolved social construct of disaster management, as well. The main takeaway from recipient literature rests not only on

responsibility and obligation, but also on a need to implement policies that further the recipient's objective to protect its citizens and provide them equal and long-lasting aid.

As such, the general hypothesis resulting from examining actor literature is: **When actors involved in disaster risk management have consistent, cohesive and organized practices, then disaster relief is more effective.**

## **Disaster Resilience**

Seen as the preparedness and mitigation efforts present on the ground, disaster resilience plays a major part in maintaining recovery patterns and increasing the chances of further disaster relief effectiveness. The effect resilience plays on aid effectiveness can be logically understood, when considering the concept of “more preparation equals better outcome”. The literature confirms this aspect; however, with some additional steps. Disaster Resilience literature has positive effects on disaster relief effectiveness when met with efforts to measure action and govern distribution, focus on urban recovery patterns to prepare and implement early cost-effective mitigation patterns that avoid overestimation in aid. As such, resilience can be directly assumed to have a positive effect on disaster relief effectiveness, especially when coupled with strong media coverage and philanthropic support.

In this regard, the hypothesis will be: **With stronger disaster resilience present, then disaster relief is seen to be more effective.** A hypothesis which will be tested for its integrity.

## **Media Coverage**

Similar to disaster resilience, stronger media coverage is seen to provide more disaster awareness and work towards providing more efficient disaster relief. By adding the media coverage variable, the thesis aims to identify this dynamic, not as a sole contributor, but a supportive one to the previously mentioned causal relations. The literature surrounding media coverage in disaster events puts great importance on the level of media coverage available on the ground as well as the size of its scope and range. Olsen Carstensen et al. propose assessing the gravity of humanitarian crises as per their resulting media coverage, attributing significance and impact to the size and depth of the coverage. Additionally, social media plays a substantial role in supporting the cohesive approach of actors towards certain disaster events and consequently provides support on the basis of actorness, altruistic motivation, knowledge and resilience and the establishment of existing practices.

Thus, the hypothesis presented will be: **With more sizable and deeper media coverage, the disaster relief will be more effective as a result of the media's supplementary role in the correlation.**

## Case Study: The Beirut Port Explosion

### **Background and Facts**

The August 4th 2020 Beirut port explosion is classed as one of the harshest manmade disasters in recent years, caused by a gross oversight and mismanagement of explosive material (ammonium nitrate - equivalent to over 1.1 kilotons of TNT) at the port of Beirut.<sup>99</sup> This sparked one of the largest non-nuclear explosions right from the heart of Lebanon's capital city. Evidently, the ammonium nitrate which had been seized from abandoned ships, had been unsafely stored and left improperly supervised for six years in warehouses at the port. Despite the cause of detonation still being contested to this day, it is the geo-location of the explosive material that leaves many in awe. The area surrounding the Beirut Port is one of the most active regions in Lebanon, in which some of the most commercial sites in the Beirut area, such as the areas of Mar Mikhael and Achrafieh, the business and governmental headquarters in the Beirut city center and one of the most heavily populated and poorly infrastructure areas in the city, namely the Karantina area.<sup>100</sup>

Reportedly, the blast was felt as far as parts of Cyprus and neighboring countries in the Middle East, affecting over 300,000 residents in Lebanon, with an estimated 7000 injured and approximately 200 confirmed deaths.<sup>101</sup> The surrounding buildings at the blast site are still being surveyed for structural integrity and long-term safety following the blast - the most recent example being the scheduled demolition of the Grain Silos in April 2022.<sup>102</sup> The myriad of primary, secondary and tertiary effects which followed from the explosion sparked public outcry, triggering international intervention and swift aid response measures to be in place to make up the estimated property damages reaching a total of over \$4 billion USD. This was in addition to

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<sup>99</sup> Chirine Khalil Nassar and Corina-Christiana Nastaca, "The Beirut Port Explosion: Social, Urban and Economic Impact," *Theoretical and Empirical Researches in Urban Management*, 16, no. 3 (August 2021): pp. 42, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27035545>.

<sup>100</sup> Chirine Khalil Nassar and Corina-Christiana Nastaca, "The Beirut Port Explosion: Social, Urban and Economic Impact," p. 45.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, p. 45.

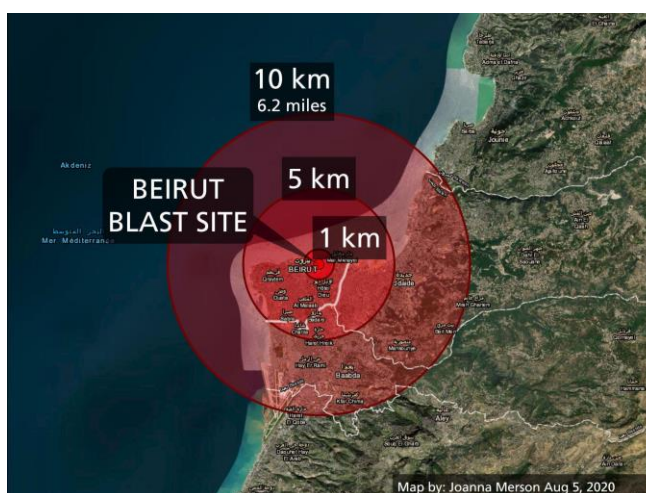
<sup>102</sup> Afp, "Lebanon to Demolish Blast-Hit Beirut Silos," Arab News (Arabnews, April 14, 2022), <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2063231/middle-east>.

the economic state of emergency the government had called during the COVID-19 pandemic prior to the event, which made domestic relief efforts more uncoordinated and inefficient.

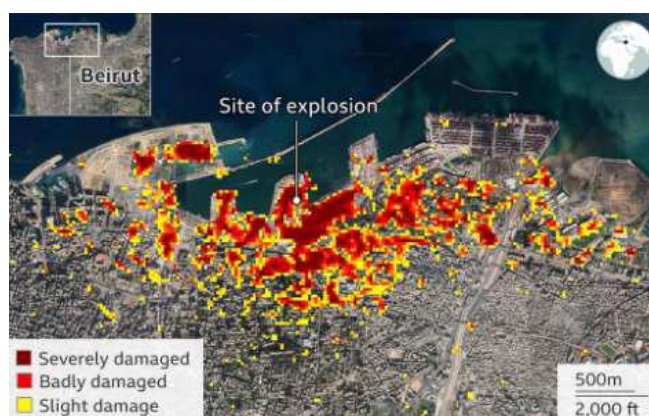
In addition to the Fire Brigade individuals who lost their lives in attempting to take out the fires prior to the explosion site, the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) were among the first responders to the crisis, having had previous experience to deal with primary, secondary impacts of war and natural disasters. In a case study submitted in conjunction with the LRC, the situation and response required was beyond what they had previously dealt with - working in conditions where more than 50% of all medical facilities had been rendered unsuitable due to the primary effects of the blast, leaving only three remaining hospitals in the area to deal with the sharp influx of casualties.<sup>103</sup> The need for immediate disaster relief and evacuation of several unsafe hospitals meant that COVID-19 protocols were not well adhered to, a

secondary effect death count which is not well researched but should be considered in addition to the lives lost from the immediate results of the blast. The long-standing prior socio-economic challenges plaguing Lebanon as a whole played a part in its withdrawal to fund international bodies, like the LRC, resulting in valued first responder efforts to yield less impact on the ground.<sup>104</sup> 30% of the budget for the LRC in previous years was from government funding, which unfortunately was not the case for 2022. The byproduct of the ammonium nitrate explosions was assessed post-event, given chemical toxicity was a real threat to the first

**Fig. 1: Blast damage area, Map shared by Joanna Merson on Twitter [cropped]**



**Fig. 2: Damage Assessment of the Explosion, shared by BBC News**



<sup>103</sup> IFRC, "Case Study: Chemical Explosion Beirut Port, Technological and Biological (CBRN) Hazards," *IFRC Technological & Biological Hazard Preparedness*, 2020.

<sup>104</sup> IFRC, "Case Study: Chemical Explosion Beirut Port, Technological and Biological (CBRN) Hazards,".



responder efforts in place. Fortunately, most of the byproducts were carried downwind and out to sea - although asbestos levels were still a cause for concern and not able to be measured during the crisis itself.

The direct impact of the blast on various societal structures left a massive wound in popular districts and affected multiple sectors of the economy. Not only were schools, houses, governmental buildings, hospitals and businesses destroyed and forced to close, but the subsequent effect on nightlife, shopping districts, cultural and historical artifacts (Sursock Museum) were all gravely affected.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, the political instability prior to the event, coupled with the mismanagement and gross oversight of explosive materials leading to the largest non-nuclear catastrophe in recent years led to an international outcry, making potential donors and supporters withdraw interest from Lebanese affairs more broadly. This made it increasingly harder to amplify or attain existing foreign aid efforts, leading to an overall dysfunctional response and the entire country feeling the effects of the blast to this day. Overall, and although the Lebanese public had been protesting over governmental mismanagement and corruption for almost a year by the explosion event, the disaster cast light on the bureaucratic problems deeply embedded in Lebanese politics in their rampant corruption and negligence of disaster readiness and response, forcing the public to rely on international aid, NGOs and the Lebanese Army Forces.

## **Actors during and after the Disaster Event**

### **Disaster Responses**

#### **I. Initial Response**

The direct disaster response of the explosion began in the moments before the blast upon which the very first responders included the Beirut Fire Department team who were deployed to manage the fire spreading across the port hangars. The team was not aware and not informed of the presence of explosive material inside one of the hangars and were one of the first casualties before a large explosion and blast wave was felt across Beirut within a 200 km radius.<sup>106</sup> The risk of explosion was not known to any of the first responders and no notification or alert was

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<sup>105</sup> Chirine Khalil Nassar and Corina-Christiana Nastaca, "The Beirut Port Explosion: Social, Urban and Economic Impact," p. 46.

<sup>106</sup> Mazen J. El Sayed, "Beirut Ammonium Nitrate Explosion: A Man-Made Disaster in Times of the Covid-19 Pandemic," *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*, 2020, pp. 1-5, <https://doi.org/10.1017/dmp.2020.451>.

shared with the public. This prevented any chances of preliminary rapid evacuation or fortified protection to the populated areas surrounding the port. It is for this reason that the event drastically overwhelmed the emergency medical services, the Beirut hospitals (which suffered immense damages), first responder agencies and other responders to the event.<sup>107</sup> Within the first hours after the explosion, hospitals were flooded with casualties and patients that showed blast trauma, mainly brain injuries and other wounds that resulted from flying glass shards and debris.<sup>108</sup> The role of the EMS was obstructed due to this overwhelming result, leading to many injured arriving through private transportation or by walking to the capable trauma centers.<sup>109</sup>

Additional domestic initial responders included the Lebanese Army which ensured the perimeter of the blast area and especially the explosion crater was secured for search and rescue operations to begin immediately. Some of the first contacts with the affected areas were the Internal Security Forces and the Lebanese Red Cross which were tasked with searching for missing individuals and performing DNA and forensic identification measures of unidentified victims and body parts.<sup>110</sup> Further security responsibilities were assigned to the security forces. Considering that the Lebanese government declared a state of emergency after the blast, its outreach to the international community in asking for aid was instant. The Ministry of Health essentially formed a liaison with the Lebanese Army in order to prioritize medical needs and oversee the flow of donations and resource delivery.<sup>111</sup> Additionally, a call center dedicated for the disaster response activities was established, with a focus on ensuring international assistance travels to the affected area and using the Beirut International Airport as the main recipient site for assisting teams, resources and aid. It is important to consider that the disaster response model established by the Lebanese Army was heavily inspired by principles from the US National Incident Management System<sup>112</sup>, as well as training drills conducted with NGO actors and UNIFIL stationed forces.<sup>113</sup> Subsequently, the first hours, days and weeks following the blast included the collaborative practices of search and rescue operations and a healthcare sector impact assessment and major volunteer cleanup efforts by governmental, non-governmental, individual and international actors.

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<sup>107</sup> Mazen J. El Sayed, "Beirut Ammonium Nitrate Explosion: A Man-Made Disaster in Times of the Covid-19 Pandemic," p. 3.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, p. 6

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p. 6

<sup>112</sup> "National Incident Management System," FEMA.gov, n.d., <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/nims>.

<sup>113</sup> Mazen J. El Sayed, "Beirut Ammonium Nitrate Explosion: A Man-Made Disaster in Times of the Covid-19 Pandemic," p. 6.

## II. Domestic Actors

Some of the key domestic actors that played a part in disaster relief efforts, both initial and subsequent, were mainly governmental branches, such as the Ministry of Health and the Lebanese Army, NGOs and individual initiatives from volunteers, charities or businesses. In fact, in the months following the explosion, the Lebanese NGO scene oversaw an extensive proliferation of organizations and initiatives in response to the explosion.<sup>114</sup> According to interviews done by Sakr in 2022 with over 25 NGO respondents, a diversity of services was presented, all of which were categorized based on the level of damages on the ground. Such activities and services included property rehabilitation, such as fixing house infrastructure, windows and doors, as well as food and basic needs distribution. Other service sectors included the provision of psycho-social support and further medical and psychotherapy support to affected individuals.<sup>115</sup> On the domestic level, it is regarded that NGOs and initiatives provided a detailed level of post-disaster relief, relying on practices which focus on victim-interaction and organized fundraising projects. In this regard, many NGO respondents claimed to have offered various other types of services, such as legal insight to victims, paying student and rent fees as well as aiding small-and-medium enterprises via funds or rebuilding and repairing.<sup>116</sup>

The significant presence of NGOs signified a void in the involvement of the Lebanese government in any disaster relief efforts, however. On top of the speculations and accusations of the public and media that the disaster was a consequence of rampant Lebanese government mismanagement, corruption and bureaucracy, the actions of governmental factions and figures further amplified such frustrations. NGO respondents expressed the need for the state to lead the organization of disaster relief responses in order to regain the trust of the public and faith of prospective donors. For this reason, Sakr's analysis sees a refusal to collaborate with the state and Lebanese Army by some NGOs. (nine out of 25 and 4 out of 25 respectively)<sup>117</sup> In this regard, collaboration between the state and NGOs was not optimal, in which many NGOs attributed this reason being a lack of leadership and organization by the government and a lack of trust to corrupt governmental figures.

Essentially, the considerations of the Lebanese government towards disaster relief efforts began and ended with the practices mentioned above, the search and rescue efforts, health sector impact assessment and receipt of international teams and resources. Years after the blast, many

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<sup>114</sup> Tracy Elias Sakr (2022), pp. 45.

<sup>115</sup> Tracy Elias Sakr (2022), pp. 46.

<sup>116</sup> Tracy Elias Sakr (2022), pp. 47.

<sup>117</sup> Tracy Elias Sakr (2022), pp. 52-53.

still wonder what happened to the donation pledges and organization efforts of IOs and bilateral donors, which had eventually lost momentum. Consequently, the response and the reaction of the Lebanese government towards the blast has been a mixture of failure to lead and provide reassurance to the affected population, particularly in the government's unwillingness and avoidance to remain transparent and accountable for the consequences of the explosion. The Lebanese Transparency Association, with support from Transparency International, has expressed concern towards the government's avoidance towards establishing a wide-ranging and critical investigation into the entities responsible for the blast.<sup>118</sup>

Such irresponsibility is reflected in the government's attitude towards international aid and IO relief plans. According to the Mauritanian official news agency, on August 17, 12 tons of fish heading to Beirut as a measure to assist the victims of the explosions could not be located a number of weeks later.<sup>119</sup> This caused massive online backlash and a whole social media campaign by a Lebanese journalist demanding their whereabouts.<sup>120</sup> Eventually the Lebanese Army released a statement on September 7, claiming that the fish had been received and was being coordinated with "unnamed" NGOs for their distribution.<sup>121</sup> A similar event of this nature occurred after the state visit of the ambassador of Sri Lanka, Shani Calyaneratne, with the Lebanese president, Michel Aoun, on August 24. Consequently, and as a gesture of solidarity, friendship and in consolidation with providing aid for the Lebanese people, the Sri Lankan mission handed a special consignment of over 1675 kilograms of Ceylon tea.<sup>122</sup> However, instead of being distributed to victims of the blast, Lebanese journalists revealed that some of the Ceylon tea found its way to the presidential guard and their families and to the shelves of supermarkets in Beirut, despite presenting an explicit label of "not for sale".<sup>123</sup>

Many suspect that more of the bilateral aid resources received by other states and a number of the financial aid have been embezzled but remain uncovered, considering the shameless consideration of the mentioned aid efforts. Such events have clearly displayed the lack

<sup>118</sup> "Statement on Beirut Explosion Investigation - Press," Transparency International, August 12, 2020, <https://www.transparency.org/en/press/statement-on-beirut-explosion-investigation>.

<sup>119</sup> Karim Merhej and Marie-Christine Ghreichi, "Foreign Aid to Lebanon: Goodwill Marred by Smoke and Mirrors," The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, November 3, 2021, <https://timep.org/commentary/analysis/foreign-aid-to-lebanon-goodwill-marred-by-smoke-and-mirrors/>.

<sup>120</sup> Karim Merhej and Marie-Christine Ghreichi, "Foreign Aid to Lebanon: Goodwill Marred by Smoke and Mirrors,".

<sup>121</sup> "Clarification Regarding a Truckload of Fish That Was Received by the LAF from Mauritania," الموقع الرسمي للجيش اللبناني, September 7, 2020, <https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/clarification-regarding-truckload-fish-was-received-laf-mauritania>.

<sup>122</sup> Sri Lanka in Lebanon, Twitter post, August, 24, 2020, 3:14 PM, <https://twitter.com/slinlebanon/status/1297885050499936258>.

<sup>123</sup> Karim Merhej and Marie-Christine Ghreichi, "Foreign Aid to Lebanon: Goodwill Marred by Smoke and Mirrors,".

of transparency, organization and high levels of embezzlement within governmental actors. The distribution of aid has proved to be a critical problem in the Beirut area, which is home to a variety of groups and ethnicities, most particularly migrant workers and Palestinian and Syrian refugees who stated their inability to receive sufficient aid as opposed to other Lebanese victims.<sup>124</sup> Despite the grave need for help, many victims have complained that the local relief efforts were largely chaotic and uncoordinated, leading to the many people receiving aid from organizations while others were completely overlooked.<sup>125</sup> In this regard, considerations towards international actors presenting sentiments to provide aid are met with a distrustful facilitator, leading to unsuccessful or delayed relief efforts which eventually lose their momentum.

### **III. International Organizations**

Upon the occurrence of the blast, a plethora of IOs and initiatives flocked towards Lebanon in hopes of providing supplementary relief and aid to the affected population. Considering the heavy price tag towards rebuilding the capital, residential homes, governmental buildings and businesses, as well as various other infrastructures, various IOs, specializing in development and aid, initiated multiple programs in the country. Amongst the biggest projects launched was the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) joint venture by the World Bank, United Nations and European Union in December 2020.<sup>126</sup> Essentially, the project oversees a funding framework consisting of over \$25 million in funds towards grants (up to \$25,000) to over 4000 SMEs within the close perimeter of the blast site.<sup>127</sup> However, since its registration and vetting phases, no assistance has been distributed to business owners, leaving many individuals forced to pay for repairs and rebuilding from their own savings (or via NGO help).<sup>128</sup> The Lebanese public has expressed concern towards ever receiving the aid promised due to these complicated bureaucratic considerations. A sentiment towards implementing these programs essentially exists; however, with the unhelpful state of the Lebanese government in facilitating their implementation, mandates and programmes eventually lose their priority on the agenda of such IOs. This calls for a reform to regularly maintain the monitoring and reporting

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<sup>124</sup> Rana Sukarieh Ph.D candidate in sociology, “Disaster Aid Distribution after Beirut Explosion Reflects Lebanese Societal Divides,” *The Conversation*, May 16, 2022, <https://theconversation.com/disaster-aid-distribution-after-beirut-explosion-reflects-lebanese-societal-divides-144627>.

<sup>125</sup> Abby Sewell, “What Happened to the International Aid Promised to Lebanon after the Beirut Port Blast?,” *L’Orient Today* (L’Orient Today, December 17, 2021), <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1285046/what-happened-to-the-international-aid-promised-to-lebanon-after-the-beirut-port-blast.html>.

<sup>126</sup> Abby Sewell, “What Happened to the International Aid Promised to Lebanon after the Beirut Port Blast?,”

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

procedure of such grossly funded programmes or apply bypasses from governmental failures upon drafting the project's mandate.

The instance of the blast oversaw a number of cash donations sent through the government and international organizations as reported by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The reports summed up a total of \$317.7 million in aid donations by international donors as an initial post-blast response, not counting the 3RF.<sup>129</sup> Additionally, over \$167 million was also being donated by the UN through an appeal, within which the European Commission donated the most (\$40 million) to UN agencies for the provision of shelter, health and monetary assistance.<sup>130</sup> Such large numbers being displayed to the public in the aftermath of the blast provided a degree of reassurance to the affected population; however, with the ensuing fuzziness post-blast, many of these funds were not allocated properly. Subsequently, and in addition to the high degree of Lebanese corrupt bureaucracy, the preliminary financial crisis which had plagued the country since 2019 caused sizable portions of the aid's value to be siphoned off in consideration of the fluctuating exchange rates.<sup>131</sup> According to World Bank Regional director, Saroj Kumar Jha, the 3RF was essentially a new initiative, aiming to combine governmental, private, civil society and international elements in its implementation which was innovative in its essence.<sup>132</sup> This sentiment could have led to progress on the level of financial relief response and the IOs in charge had taken in consideration a number of factors in its registration and planning phases, however failing to take into consideration the resulting "limited cooperation" of the Lebanese government.<sup>133</sup> Eventually, the "house of cards" this framework was built on could not continue when a core element was not willing to fully stand.

#### **IV. International Actors**

In addition to IOs, various key international actors, be it independent donors, states or philanthropic individuals/organizations, rallied to support Lebanon less than 24 hours after the

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<sup>129</sup> France 24, "Where Has the Beirut Blast Aid Gone?," France 24 (France 24, February 4, 2021), <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210204-where-has-the-beirut-blast-aid-gone>.

<sup>130</sup> "Lebanon: €20 Million in Humanitarian Aid for the Most Vulnerable People," European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, April 21, 2022, [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/news/lebanon-eu20-million-humanitarian-aid-most-vulnerable-people-2022-04-21\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/news/lebanon-eu20-million-humanitarian-aid-most-vulnerable-people-2022-04-21_en).

<sup>131</sup> Timour Azhari, "Lebanese Banks Swallow at Least \$250 Million in UN Aid," L'Orient Today (L'Orient Today, June 17, 2021), <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1265520/insight-lebanese-banks-swallow-at-least-250m-in-un-aid.html>.

<sup>132</sup> Abby Sewell, "What Happened to the International Aid Promised to Lebanon after the Beirut Port Blast?,"

<sup>133</sup> "Joint communiqué Issued by the Members of the Independent Oversight Board of the 3RF: Latest Releases," Kulluna Irada, July 29, 2021, <https://kulluna-irada.org/release-100>.

Blast. Many actors expressed their support in various ways as this case study has displayed so far, many of which decided to either collaborate with IOs on the ground or provide their own form of assistance. For this reason, many states offered direct assistance in the form of medical resources, relief response teams, aid packages, portable hospitals, food, basic needs and other forms of assistance.<sup>134</sup> The global collective showcased a cohesive and unified approach towards disaster relief efforts, in which over 34 states and the EU mobilized in delivering the aid within the first week of the disaster.<sup>135</sup> Despite the overflowing collaboration, many states prioritized acting independently towards Lebanon, focusing on bilateral donations. However, with the massive in-flows of donations into the state, grave warnings were propagated towards the measures of sending aid to Lebanon, whether it be from states or individuals. Human Rights Watch warned about sending emergency aid directly to the Lebanese government, due to its long-standing infamy in securing its effective distribution.<sup>136</sup> It is for this reason, many donors made the decision to “bypass the state” in providing aid by sending money to local actors and IOs.<sup>137</sup> The main issue remains that governmental bodies still handled the variety of in-flowed donations, especially that of food assistance, medical resources, etc.

Additionally, an international donor conference hosted by French President, Emmanuel Macron, to provide emergency aid to Beirut exceeded its original target of \$350 million.<sup>138</sup> The conference included the pledges of various state donors and considered the aid to be unconditional in its essence. Consequently, Macron insisted that a bigger rescue plan was put in place to support Lebanon on a broader organizational standard once Lebanon’s “then” government is changed and problems of corruption are tackled in the need of economic reforms.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, the French president claimed that the extensive amount in emergency aid is not enough to solve all of Lebanon’s problems with the current culture of corruption and negligence embedded in the Lebanese government, setting off the precedent of this conference upon its conception.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> “Factbox: Countries Rally Round Lebanon after Beirut Blast,” Reuters (Thomson Reuters, August 9, 2020), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-security-blast-reaction-factb-idUSKCN2550CU>.

<sup>135</sup> Reuters Staff, “This Is How Different Countries Are Supporting Lebanon after the Beirut Explosion,” World Economic Forum, August 6, 2020, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/08/lebanon-beirut-explosion-aid-support-international-donations/>.

<sup>136</sup> Aya Majzoub, “Lebanon: Ensure Aid Goes Directly to Those in Need,” Human Rights Watch, October 28, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/16/lebanon-ensure-aid-goes-directly-those-need>.

<sup>137</sup> Anchal Vohra, “The World Is Planning to Rescue the Lebanese, Not Lebanon,” Foreign Policy (Foreign Policy, August 19, 2020), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/08/19/the-world-is-planning-to-rescue-the-lebanese-not-lebanon/>.

<sup>138</sup> EURACTIV, “Lebanon Donor Conference Exceeds Aid Target,” August 5, 2021, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/development-policy/news/lebanon-donor-conference-exceeds-aid-target/>.

<sup>139</sup> EURACTIV, “Lebanon Donor Conference Exceeds Aid Target.”

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

Another important practice observed amongst international actors is the increase in visits to Lebanon amongst many state officials and ambassadors as signs of consolidation and unity with the people of Lebanon. However, such a practice retained the ability to showcase, firstly an incredibly political strategy that may symbiotically play for the individual's agenda, and secondly, another method of recognizing the Lebanese government whose mismanagement and negligence was initially in charge of the disaster. One of the most striking state visits two days after the blast was Macron's.<sup>141</sup> He showcased diligence by being one of the first western leaders to tour the remains and a particular nature of empathy, appreciated by the Lebanese population, when he decided to visit the ruins and meet the protestors on the ground before seeing any Lebanese state official.<sup>142</sup> Although many criticized Macron's actions to be a result of one of his strategies to regain popularity or increase France's presence in Lebanon, the French president's actions sparked attention towards enabling Lebanon with the relief it requires. Regarding the actions of international actors, it is an enigma how many of the planned courses of actions, especially that of the donor's conference, were not laid out properly and had the same effects as the 3RF more or less. Nevertheless, even the donor's conference which was commended greatly, retained its flaws in incoordination and poor foresight. Consequently, according to *L'Orient Today*, when asked about details of the donors and contributors to the various projects from the conference, the French embassy had no information and had to refer the journalist to OCHA specialists which had tracked only a portion of the funds related to UN-organized appeals. Other coordination and tracking problems included the financial emergency aid coming from Kuwait and Qatar which totaled \$91 million after the conference in which its utility and spending could not be specified.

## **Disaster Preparedness**

For better understanding of disaster preparedness in Lebanon this thesis sections this issue into two parts, pre-blast and post-blast. When it comes to the pre-blast timeframe it is optimal to say that the disaster preparedness of Lebanon is better defined as 'disaster unpreparedness', such inadequacy has wreaked havoc costing the country comprehensible damages on both humanitarian and economic levels.

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<sup>141</sup> Deutsche Welle, "Emmanuel Macron Visits Beirut: Can There Be a 'French Solution' for Lebanon?: DW: 08.08.2020," DW.COM, August 8, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/emmanuel-macron-visits-beirut-can-there-be-a-french-solution-for-lebanon/a-54491898>.

<sup>142</sup> Deutsche Welle, "Emmanuel Macron Visits Beirut: Can There Be a 'French Solution' for Lebanon?: DW: 08.08.2020,".



Firstly, this thesis looks upon the state's preparedness to disaster during and before the blast, according to Sakr<sup>143</sup>, many NGO respondents and interviewees indicated that the government was not prepared in the least to handle such a disaster, and that is due to mismanagement of disaster plans and their implementation in addition to corruption embedded negligence that led to the blast in the first place. This unpreparedness can be further explained from the lack of experience of facing such disasters, in which there are no guidelines to work with and no concrete policies that aid throughout the recovery. In addition, it is evident that there is a disunion when it comes to humanitarian disaster response management and the Lebanese Army representing the State, in which it creates somewhat of a gap between the work of NGOs and the state and makes it difficult for the army to receive and work with the help of these organizations. Moreover, Lebanon's municipalities, especially the Beirut Municipality, have zero experience with working on disaster preparedness and very ill-equipped for any catastrophe concurring. The Beirut municipality did not have adequate resources to aid in the blast aftermath, initiatives and volunteers had to bring their own supplies in order to remove the debris and fix the damages causes. Aside from not having sufficient material, the Beirut municipality was requested to present the NGOs and initiatives with maps of the area for better planning of reconstruction and analysis of the extent of destruction, however the municipality failed to do so since the maps presented were outdated and thus were no help leaving the initiatives to work on the go from the ground which in term took more time and effort.

On the other hand, NGOs and initiatives showed more promise when it came to disaster preparedness than that of the state, yet each one's performance depended on when the NGO was established. The NGOs that considered themselves prepared are more likely to be elder ones that have already faced disasters in Lebanon, in which they did not start from scratch and already have the resources and humanitarian assistance to deal with such issues.

Secondly, the subsequent part of this issue is that of post-blast preparedness. In the wake of the Beirut blast on August 4, 2020, the OCHA fabricated an Emergency Response Plan which is a presentation of the coordinated, strategic approach of humanitarian agencies to meeting the immediate needs of those affected by the disaster and is based on information that is currently available in the country.<sup>144</sup> The ERP targets in aiding Lebanon throughout its humanitarian needs which are as followed: (i) The Health Sector where the current crisis in Lebanon, in conjunction

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<sup>143</sup> Tracy Elias Sakr (2022), pp. 63-65.

<sup>144</sup> OCHA, "Lebanon Emergency Response Plan 2021 - 2022 (August 2021) [En/AR] - Lebanon." ReliefWeb, August 5, 2021. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-emergency-response-plan-2021-2022-august-2021-enar>.

with the COVID-19 pandemic, has had an impact on both the health system and patients. A lack of consistent energy, fuel, and water supply jeopardizes the daily operations of hospitals and health facilities, including intensive care units, dialysis units, cold chain requirements, sterilization, and diagnostic procedures.<sup>145</sup> Currency exchange rates and cash flow constraints on US Dollars have limited international purchasing power for key medicines, supplies, and various reagents, while local suppliers – including pharmacies – have similarly depleted stocks;<sup>146</sup>

(ii) Nutrition Sector where poverty contributes to inadequate nutritional intake, insufficient access to medical care, poor hygiene, and a subpar childcare environment, all of which are proximate causes of malnutrition. (iii) Food Security Sector in which food access and availability have become major issues, with most people unable to afford food and merchants struggling to replenish and stay afloat. Competition for basic resources and societal conflicts increase as cheap food supplies become scarce. (iv) Education Sector where in 2020 alone, nearly 1.2 million school-aged children will have their education disrupted, with 400,000 forced to drop out due to poverty and other factors. Aside from the economic crisis, three major crises had already impacted the country's education system: the Syrian refugee crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Port of Beirut explosion. (v) Wash Sector in which the current economic crisis is severely limiting the ability of Lebanese people to obtain safe drinking water in their homes. While public service providers (Water Establishments and municipalities) are disrupting water supply services due to financial constraints and an inability to procure fuel to offset challenges with Electricité Du Liban and Electricité de Zahle (EdL/EdZ) services, households are increasingly relying on water tankers to compensate. (vi) Child Protection and Gender Based Violence where the current economic situation has increased the risk of women and girls being abused, assaulted, or exploited, and the Child Protection Sector's reporting analysis shows an increase in demand for psychosocial support services. (vii) Migrants where, according to reports, the economic crisis in Lebanon was clearly causing them enormous, especially migrant women, men, and children in which more than half of them are unemployed, with a similar proportion unable to meet their basic nutritional requirements. (viii) Logistics where Lebanon is heavily reliant on fuel imports, and the country has been suffering from severe fuel and electricity shortages since August 2021, jeopardizing the provision of essential services such as health care and water and putting hundreds of thousands of families from all socioeconomic groups at risk of a humanitarian disaster.

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<sup>145</sup> OCHA, “Lebanon Emergency Response Plan 2021 - 2022 (August 2021) [En/AR] - Lebanon.”

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

Nevertheless, even though there are concrete plans to increase disaster resilience towards crisis however due to what has already been mentioned, in addition to government corruption and administrative negligence these projects of preparedness are more theoretical and may not be seen in an optimistic light.

### **Media Coverage during and post-Blast**

The media played an important role in disaster management during the Beirut Blast. For example, social media, in particular, was instrumental in the creation of relevant information in its first few hours <sup>147</sup>. In turn, this helped DRM activities be more precise in identifying and dealing with sub-events within a disaster that otherwise wouldn't be possible respond to otherwise. Naturally, it is essential to filter out these large volumes of data that could be very noisy, in order to aid decision making processes during the emergency management phase of a particular disaster. The advances in language processing (NLP) and computer vision AIs have made analysis of such data possible. Through these machine learning programs, it is trivial to filter out disaster relevant images and texts while ignoring irrelevant information. This information is particularly valuable when classical disaster relief programs are too slow to respond during the first hours since it can help confirm a disaster taking place as well as the damage assessment in a very short time (seconds to minutes). For instance, during the Beirut blast the classifier used in the paper was able to identify an image relevant to the disaster less than two minutes after its occurrence whereas the first image posted came up only 14 minutes after. Hence a social media interlinked disaster detection program, in the case of the Beirut Blast, would've shortened the response time to about three minutes at max. Knowing that time is of the essence, especially during the first response, it is safe to assume that integrating social media and disaster relief should be taken seriously since it allows the decision-making process to be more accurate and quicker, saving more lives and pinpointing relief to where its needed most at a faster rate.

On top of that, the traditional independent media plays a positive role in facilitating volunteering efforts and raising awareness and unity, such as that of the Lebanese people in response to the Beirut Blast disaster. The efforts of the media in shedding light on the victims and the decisions that might have led to the disaster empowered the Lebanese people, supported their mental health and gave them hope that the people in power responsible will be held

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<sup>147</sup> Rufolo, Paola, Davide Muraro, and Valerio Lorini. "Social Media Image Analysis in the Immediate Aftermath of the 2020 Beirut Blast." Joint Research Centre, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2760/944555>.

accountable.<sup>148</sup> Hope and unity that the media propagated brought many people back to their senses so that they could focus on helping their communities rather than being chained in despair. Beyond local media, the international media brought individual Lebanese stories to the globe garnering the support of international donors and volunteers. The overwhelming support for Lebanon in its time of need was outstanding. Even the French President Emmanuel Macron took notice of the situation and travelled swiftly to meet the Lebanese people.<sup>149</sup> The French president would then go forward and urge international donors to follow his lead.<sup>150</sup> All this was sparked by the interest the media manufactured through their immense coverage of the situation.

After one year, most media have moved forward to hold politicians and all those responsible for the disaster accountable. This was a response to the lack of accountability from the government itself especially with the attacks on Judge Bitar who was leading the Beirut Blast case.<sup>151</sup> As a result of the media shedding light on the corruption of the government concerning the accountability of some of its high-ranking politicians, international donors started sending aid directly to people via NGOs rather than through the government.<sup>152</sup> Overall, the media in general plays an important supportive role in many aspects of disaster management, from its detection to its allocation. Lebanon might be the perfect specimen of a country where the media, in the partial absence of a working government, played the most important role during one of its greatest tragedies. Social media, at the hands of the people, and independent media have proven to be irreplaceable when it comes to disaster management.

## Discussion on Practices

In terms of the Initial Response, the general approach towards not allowing the public to know of the presence of the explosive's sheds light on the uncoordinated practice and mismanagement of the Lebanese government and highlights the lack of any disaster preparedness or mitigation efforts. Upon the first mitigation efforts are associated with the first responders and their routine actions, considering that Lebanon is not a stranger to spontaneous explosion events and has some experience in responding to such crises. This can also be noted in

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<sup>148</sup> McBride, Kelly. "Lassoing Facts: Coverage of Beirut Explosion Reveals Strengths and Flaws." NPR. NPR, August 13, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/publiceditor/2020/08/13/901766424/lassoing-facts-coverage-of-beirut-explosion-reveals-strengths-and-flaws>.

<sup>149</sup> 24, FRANCE. "Without Reforms, Lebanon Will Continue to Suffer,' Says Macron in Beirut." France 24. France 24, August 6, 2020. <https://www.france24.com/en/20200806-macron-arrives-in-beirut-as-aid-pours-in-after-deadly-blast>.

<sup>150</sup> Wires, News. "International Donor Conference Raises \$370 Million in Aid for Lebanon." France 24. France 24, August 4, 2021. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210804-french-president-macron-pledges-100-million-euros-worth-of-emergency-aid-for-lebanon>.

<sup>151</sup> 08/05/21. "The Media in Lebanon: One Year after the Beirut Blast." International Center for Journalists, August 5, 2021. <https://www.icfj.org/news/media-lebanon-one-year-after-beirut-blast>.

<sup>152</sup> Majzoub, Aya. "Lebanon: Ensure Aid Goes Directly to Those in Need."

the training efforts and models set up by the Army, as they were inspired by other disaster resilience measures to some extent.

As key domestic actors, NGOs played a dynamic and significant role in the disaster relief efforts, retaining a variety of practices. In addition to the organization efforts put in place by these NGO initiatives, their relative success in providing aid to their fullest abilities resulted from their specific mission statements which focused on post-Beirut Port explosion relief efforts. Such organizations were created for the sake of providing specific aid, and prioritized it via the establishment of victim-centric and interactive services on the ground. As such, better collaboration with NGOs might yield a more effective outcome. Moving to the other domestic actors, the Lebanese government practices ended mainly at the initial response to the blast. However, their role to maintain and facilitate the donations and resources received from international actors was messy in application, with questions circulating towards the whereabouts of a good number of such aid. This is evidently a problem of transparency and an internal fallacy of corruption, which affected the influence of practices made by IOs and donors. Adopting practices to particularly subvert such actions by the government might lead to less complications

Being major key players as international actors, IOs retain a cohesive role in the facilitation of collaborative programmes and projects for the distribution of relief aid post-disaster. In this regard, IOs did mobilize and formulate projects and plans to help the affected population, however failed to take into consideration the complexities which Lebanon had been facing since 2019. In addition to a miscalculation in including the Lebanese government as a core player within the projects involved, IOs driving cash donations into the country failed to consider the fluctuating exchange rates. Further taking this into consideration, in fragile and corrupt countries such as Lebanon, further consideration must be given towards these critical elements upon drafting the project mandate. It is important to remain innovative; however, innovation must not come at the cost of efficient implementation. In the future, IOs might benefit more by focusing on supporting NGO work rather than wait for governmental confirmation.

Regarding the role of international actors, their practices ranged from providing bilateral aid and assistance, forming a donor's conference to organize and coordinate aid efforts and the conduct of various state visits. However, similarly to the problems overseen by IOs, the practices were adopted in an uncoordinated and chaotic manner, leading to a great deal of such aid to go unspecified, untracked and unaccounted for. Additionally, the acts of state visits towards the Lebanese government when the latter was in charge of the negligence of disaster relief distribution justifies its disposition. Essentially, a more coordinated system of tracking donor

assistance should have been put in place instead of relying primarily on IOs. Additionally, state visits to civil society and conducting a direct line of support provision through NGOs and other initiatives provides a more coordinated response.

## Conclusion

Due to the long-lasting damages to a country's infrastructure, disaster relief must be provided to facilitate its recovery and ease its suffering. In more severe cases, some states might stay handicapped even after receiving disaster relief as a result of its inadequate management. As such, using literature surrounding disaster relief, the dynamics and causal mechanisms that influence disaster relief effectiveness have been identified and explored in this paper. The effectiveness of such relief was studied in terms of the practices of policy makers, donors and local actors specifically in the case study analysis of the Beirut Port Explosion using a literature survey to group arguments of authors which determine the most influential concept with regards to disaster relief. The analysis revealed that particular practices under collaborative and volunteer efforts will lead to a greater success in providing proper disaster relief especially in the more fragile states. By focusing on the actors involved and their practices allows for a deeper understanding of the role of aid in a country's post disaster recovery.

Strong cohesive practices on the local and international level, backed up by a strong program of disaster resilience, mitigation and media coverage, tend to be most effective in aiding general disaster relief efforts. Disaster resilience prepares the individual of a particular state to be on the ready for any social shocks resulting in their quick adaptability. Mitigation plays the role of aiding recovery of a state post-disaster when its core infrastructure has been severely damaged. Finally, media coverage plays an important role of first, providing the necessary information in a timely manner before during and post first response, as well as allowing the assessment of the damages due to the current event. All the aforementioned programs work in tandem, the failure of one would affect the effectiveness of the other and thus the effectiveness of the disaster relief response as a whole and vice-versa.

## Appendix

<b>Fig. 3 Dynamics in the Beirut Port Explosion Disaster Relief Efforts</b>		
<b>Relief Factor</b>	<b>Corresponding Event</b>	<b>Effect on Efforts</b>
International Actors and Organizations	-The 3RF which formulated an innovative program to bring in relief aid with the collaboration of IOs, the Lebanese government, civil society etc.	-Was not fully implemented and remained in the registration and vetting phase due to lack of clarification and confirmation from the Lebanese government
	-Focus on bilateral assistance, state visits and coordination of a donor's conference	-Ignited attention towards Lebanese resilience efforts, provided extensive aid
Domestic Actors	-Lebanese government instantly requested aid from the international community	-Taking responsibility to provide aid for the people of Lebanon and accepting help from the international community
	-Lebanese government failure to facilitate and distribute aid efficiently	-The disappearance and misallocation of some resources and the growing void of state responsibility which is filled by NGOs
	-NGO proliferation, organization, collaboration and facilitation of various types of services	-Fulfilled the void of duties and services that was left from governmental factions due to lack of trust/lack of organization
	-Lebanese army utilizing its past experience and disaster resilience information from the international community to respond	- Taking advantage of other disaster management information in order to provide an adequate response
Disaster Resilience	-No prior notification of the presence of explosives in the Port	-No evacuation or protection efforts/ overwhelming effect to the public

	-Despite the work of IOs and NGOs in the field, lack of any improvement towards disaster resilience from the government from all sector types.	-Socio-urban and economic debilitation in case of further exposure to another humanitarian disaster
Media Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Application of Social Media Image Analysis and AI</li> <li>- Social media interlinked disaster detection program...</li> <li>-Bringing the story to the international stage and appealing to international donors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Better allocation and knowledge on the ground</li> <li>-More consistent and established facilitation of Information</li> <li>-Influencing foreign state visits and aid, highlighting governmental inaction...</li> </ul>



**Fig. 4 Key Practices of Actors in the Beirut Port Explosion Disaster Relief Efforts**

Practices	Instances	Dynamic Affected
The failure of Lebanese governmental bodies to notify of the presence of explosive material	-No notification or alert to the public or to the first responder units, avoidance of the issue	Disaster Resilience
Lebanese government following a strict disaster response model with the Lebanese army incl. operations, logistics, planning and finance and administration.	-Search and rescue operations, call center establishment, collaborative work with the LRC...	Domestic Actorness
NGO organization and collaborative efforts and provision of various types of services	-Focus on victim interaction in services -Collaborative efforts with international actors, volunteer individuals and other NGOs -Blast specific proliferation of NGOs and targeting disaster relief and aid prospects	Domestic Actorness
Lebanese government inability to organize and facilitate the equal distribution of received aid to the victims	-Disappearance of Mauritanian fish, embezzlement of Sri Lankan Ceylon tea, inability and avoidance towards transparency and accountability of investigative efforts etc.	Domestic Actorness/International Actorness
IOs mandating innovative plans and frameworks to provide relief in, seemingly, the most efficient, inclusive and substantial method	-Relying on governmental clearances and bureaucratic processes to proceed -Not taking into consideration financial crisis, fluctuating exchange rates	International Actorness
Independent actors implementing a cocktail of initiatives and provision of extensive assistance	-Providing bilateral support of all types -State visits to the public and the damage area -Coordinating practices in a conference	International Actorness

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