

Benazir Bhutto *Reconciliation* (2008) pp. 302-03

"I propose a new program by the developed world similar to the Marshall Plan, specifically using tangible and identifiable means to improve the lives of people in deprived areas of the Muslim nations. I am looking for programs whose success can be measured and evaluated. When ordinary people in a country identify assistance improving their lives and the lives of their children, they bond with the source of that aid. Such a bonding could bring a dramatic turnaround in perception among Muslims—on the so-called Muslim street—about the West. Empirical evidence substantiates this. After the horrific tsunami devastated Indonesia in December 2004, American public and private sector aid poured into the most populous Islamic nation on Earth. A poll taken by Terror Free Tomorrow immediately thereafter showed that favorable views of the United States jumped 65 percent because of American aid to the Indonesian people. Programs help change perceptions.

"A similar phenomenon was found in Pakistan following the 2005 earthquake that killed almost 90,000 of my countrymen and women. The United States alone committed half a billion dollars in relief, and American military transports and American soldiers delivered that assistance to freezing and starving survivors. Polling conducted by Terror Free Tomorrow/ACNielsen Pakistan showed that favorable opinion of the United States doubled in response to the visible, generous assistance. Correspondingly, the same polling indicated a precipitous drop in support for Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda over the same period, explainable by the same phenomenon of direct and visible U.S. support.

"These kind of data have been used by scholars to question whether the level and depth of anti-Western sentiment in the Muslim world is sufficiently broad and deep that it really will take generations to undue, as some say. It appears that support—of the right kind and in the right way—generates a dramatic sea change in attitudes quickly. This strengthens the argument for a different and expanded approach to development assistance by the West to the Muslim world. In the past, Western assistance was funneled largely through governments, mostly authoritarian. But contacts with Westerners on humanitarian missions substantially alter Muslim public attitudes. Direct engagement helps beneficiaries fully understand who the benefactors are. Foreign assistance can alter public attitudes if a "middleman" is not there to cause confusion about the source of the aid."