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**THE POLITICS OF
DISASTER
MANAGEMENT
IN CHINA**

Institutions, Interest
Groups, and Social
Participation

Gang Chen



The Politics of Disaster Management in China

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To Lixi, Xinglin, Zilin and Tailin

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Introduction

Abstract This part includes a basic introduction of the content of each chapter, proposing the major argument of the book that China's normalization and institutionalization of the bureaucratic system overseeing natural disaster management has had profound political implications in coordinating intractable central–local/civil–military/governmental–societal relations and improving the regime's image and legitimacy. Often portrayed as the preferred means for consolidating the non-democratic regime's legitimacy, the state-led disaster governance needs to effectively respond to pluralistic politics and societal demands by allowing interest groups and social forces to articulate their expectations and priorities through public decision-making. This chapter briefly reviews the problems and progress in China's disaster management, highlighting major factors in its domestic political process that restrain its capacity to manage disasters. Here the author reviews important literatures in the field and includes an analysis of what makes this book distinctive from previous literatures.

China, the world's most populous country with a vast territory and diverse climatic and geological conditions, has been subject to a wide range of natural disasters such as earthquakes, typhoons, floods, droughts, pestilence, and public health crisis since ancient times (Table 1.1). Natural disaster management had become such a life or death issue for each dynasty that neglect of such duties on the part of the ruling class would cause famine, riots, peasant

Table 1.1 Deadliest natural disasters in China's history (EM-DAT 2014; Time 2010)

<i>Event</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Estimated death toll</i>
1931 China floods	July-August 1931	Eastern and Northern China	3,700,000
1928–1930 drought and famine	1928–1930	Northern China	3,000,000
1959 floods	July 1959	Eastern and Northern China	2,000,000
1909 epidemic	1909	Northeast China	1,500,000
1887 Yellow River flood	September–October 1887	Northern China	900,000–2,000,000
1556 Shaanxi earthquake	January 23, 1556	Northwest China	830,000
1920 drought	1920	Northern China	500,000
1938 Yellow River floods	July 1938	Northern China	500,000
1976 Tangshan earthquake	July 27, 1976	Tangshan City	242,000
1920 Haiyuan earthquake	December 16, 1920	Ningxia Province	180,000

rebellion, and, finally, the demise of the imperial regime (Ye 2002; Janku 2007, pp. 267–301; Wittfogel 1957). While the risks posed by disasters cannot be entirely eliminated, preparation, rescue, relief, and reconstruction are essential for minimizing immediate and long-term damage. The most important aspect of local disaster resilience, which comprises the institutions and infrastructure developed to prepare for disasters as well as the measures taken to protect the environment, is the way the country enables change through the design of local solutions to local problems (Ross 2014, p. 1). By opening such dominant political and institutional systems to scrutiny, disasters provide opportunities to observe how actors react and how structures function under stressful conditions (Kreps 1989). In the country's 4000-year-long history and modern development, natural disaster management has been not only about human combat against devastating natural forces, but also about institutional building, political struggle, and economic interest redistribution among different institutional players. A significant payoff for political scientists studying disasters is that they can reveal much of the hidden nature of political processes and structures, particularly those in non-democracies, which are normally covered up with great care (Yi 2015, p. 14).

In modern days, the authoritarian Chinese government's disaster resilience, or its capacities and processes by which various institutional and individual actors develop to prepare for, respond to, and recover from these

catastrophes has been impressive in the global context of increasing disaster vulnerability exacerbated by climate change and urbanization. Despite the country's long history of disaster relief in ancient times and formidable adaptive capacities in modern days, the party-state's non-participatory approach managed in a top-down apparatus has been questioned by the rising political pluralism and civic activism in the era of social media and fragmented policy making. Often portrayed as the preferred means for consolidating the non-democratic regime's legitimacy, the state-led disaster governance nonetheless needs to more effectively respond to pluralistic politics and societal needs by empowering interest groups and social forces to articulate their expectations and priorities through public decision-making.

Against the backdrop of global climate change that has focused more research projects on national disaster governance and decentralized disaster resilience, this book has been designed to help the audience better understand the dynamic relationship among various interest groups and civic forces in modern China's disaster politics, with special emphasis on the process of pluralization, decentralization, and fragmentation. The focus of the book has been narrowed down to naturally induced disaster management, instead of disaster management in a broader sense, which includes all types of disasters such as industrial accidents, pollution incidents, and terrorist attacks. Instead of generalized approaches adopted by most researchers that emphasize norm changes and civic participation, the book focuses on specific institutional reforms and underlining political and socioeconomic implications in this realm, with detailed analysis of China's complicated disaster management bureaucracy and institutional arrangement.

Prolific research has touched upon the emerging civic voices in the social media era (Huberman et al. 2009, pp. 1–9; Ellison et al. 2007, pp. 1143–1168; Java et al. 2007), but not much study has been done to discuss the interaction among different stakeholders concerning disaster management within and outside the state apparatus, which covers a wide range of institutional players like the central government, local governments at various levels, ministries, the military (PLA), government-organized NGOs, companies, the media, and civil organizations. As China's politics and society are getting more pluralistic and fragmented, this book provides vivid case studies and in-depth analysis to reveal the complexity of China's formal and informal politics related to disaster management, in which all these interest groups and social organizations are interacting with one another in a dynamic institutional environment. Through reviewing the problems

and progress in China's disaster governance, the book tries to reveal the institutional factors in China's political process that restrain its capacity for better disaster management.

Although a couple of books with similar topics (Yi 2015; Sakai et al. 2014; Chung 2012; Sun 2004) were published in recent years, the politics of China's disaster management, which has been attracting growing public and scholarly interest in the new context of climate change and social media, is being severely understudied. For example, China's thematic disaster response plans and ad hoc interagency mechanisms in dealing with different kinds of disasters have not received due attention in academic studies. Moreover, China has overhauled its disaster management system since 2011, when the new National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief was enacted to tackle emerging challenges. Most existing studies have failed to capture the latest institutional and norm changes related to this 2011 reform, which reinforced government dominance in relief work and reshaped central-local and state-society relationship in disaster management. Focusing on different institutional imperatives that the authoritarian rulers needed to address in different stages, the book aims to make unique contributions to new institutionalist studies of authoritarianism that help explain the Communist Party of China (CPC)'s "authoritarian resilience" (Nathan 2003, pp. 6–17).

Since disaster relief is delivered in challenging environments, and the immense organizational challenges in suddenly expanding the scope and scale of program delivery are often accompanied by pressure to deliver aid rapidly, the injection of large amounts of resources can exaggerate power imbalances and increase opportunities for corruption (Transparency International 2010, p. x). The substantial losses of donations absorbed by government-linked organizations in post-disaster phases have reflected the government's inability to maintain its credibility, which has been severely challenged in the social media era. Rising civic demand for more participation in the rescue and relief is still suppressed by the authoritarian regime, although ordinary people have been engaging in a broad range of political action and finding a new sense of self, community, and empowerment.

China's disaster management making has been undergoing such dramatic changes as pluralization, decentralization, and fragmentation. When China is gradually opening its disaster relief system to the outside world, the number and type of pressure groups involved are expanding substantially with most ministries at the national level, armed forces, big business entities, media, local governments, NGOs, and even individuals

intertwining their interests with one another. The redistribution of fund and resources among various stakeholders has always been the core issue related to the effectiveness of disaster management. Besides the turf wars at the central level, the involvement of multi-layer local governments further aggrandizes the struggle for funds and resources in China's disaster management. The core of this book discusses to what degree China's system has been effective in delivering funds and resources to needy recipients, and whether new reforms could prevent substantial loss of donations and investment absorbed by government-linked organizations and individuals.

Chapter 2 gives a close look at achievement and weaknesses in ancient China's disaster management. Historians have called such unique disaster and famine-relief governance as famine politics (*huangzheng*), which included policies, practices, institutions, and even theories related to the preparedness, relief, and recovery in the disaster management cycle. This chapter emphasizes complicated guidelines and institutions formalized by ancient dynasties in anticipation of and in response to natural disasters. It assesses various kinds of assistance like grain transfer and distribution, monetary grant, medical aid, control of crop price, loan, tax reduction, and migration that had been recorded in the Chinese history as an important means to relieve the people in disasters. It explains why most ancient Chinese dynasties failed to establish special government departments to manage natural disasters, and to what extent China's modern disaster management has been influenced by its historical heritage.

Chapter 3 discusses China's nascent modernization effort in disaster management in the Republic of China (ROC) era (1912–1949) and People's Republic of China (PRC)'s pre-reform period (1949–1978). After the ROC took power from the monarch of the Qing Dynasty and set up its government in 1912, modernized institutions managing natural disasters were introduced with special departments appointed to take charge of relevant affairs. With a review on how the different ROC governments had tried to establish modern-style bureaucracy to manage natural disasters, this part analyzes to what extent the ROC had been successful in introducing westernized norms and institutions to China's disaster management. The latter part of this chapter deals with the practices and institutions in the PRC's pre-reform period, with a focus on the continuation and variation in the disaster management after the regime change in 1949. This part focuses on the Communist Party's self-reliance principle that couldn't be found in ROC's mentality, trying to reveal the ideological and political motives behind that and the implications upon disaster management practices.

Chapter 4 analyzes institutional changes and evolution of norms regarding disaster management in the PRC's reform era. Since the beginning of the reform and opening up, the PRC has gradually normalized the bureaucratic system in charge of natural disaster management once disrupted by the anarchical Cultural Revolution. This chapter details how China's engagement with the international community has helped the country to re-establish internationally accepted institutions and norms in the field of disaster management. In the preparation for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, the Chinese government founded the National Commission for the International Decade on Natural Disaster Reduction, which comprised more than 30 ministries and commissions and became the predecessor of the Chinese National Committee for Disaster Reduction. This chapter focuses on the division of work among various government departments under this top-level decision-making panel. It assesses the effectiveness of ad hoc interagency mechanisms in addressing specific types of disasters, as well as the evolution of norms and modes of operation in China's disaster management system.

Chapter 5 explains disaster-related bureaucratic politics at the central government level in contemporary China. Although the Ministry of Civil Affairs has been playing a pivotal role in managing natural disasters, it does not have sufficient authority, resources, and tools to prevail over other state-level agencies and stakeholders. Evidently, China's disaster management does not fit in the rational decision-making model where parochial interests often give way to overall national interest. The concept of "fragmented authoritarianism" identified by Kenneth Lieberthal (1992) in China's decision-making provides a useful lens for viewing the processes of formulating and implementing disaster-related policies. An authoritarian centralist state in theory, China has witnessed the emergence of de facto federalism and pluralism in practice in the past three decades. Since then, its disaster management has been undergoing dramatic changes such as pluralization, decentralization, and fragmentation. Fast-growing economic stakes have led to a subsequent increase in the number and type of pressure groups involved in disaster management. This is likely to expand substantially to include more ministries, party departments, and government-sponsored organizations at the national level. This chapter focuses on major actors at the central level that have a strong voice in the disaster management policymaking process, and the political and socioeconomic implications of their interactions.

Chapter 6 studies the interaction between the center and the local authorities in disaster management, as well as the real impact upon the

local disaster resilience. As in other policy realms, China's disaster management process, to a large extent, is still vertically organized. Since local governments in China had no power to raise revenue and most of their expenditures were disbursed by the central government in a strict top-down system prior to 1980, the central government had to be responsible for allocating the relief fund to any place that had encountered natural disasters. In 1994 after China introduced the Tax Sharing System in which local governments were allowed to share tax revenues with the central government, local governments at all levels also started to disburse more expenditures on disaster management. Local governments today shoulder about 30% of China's total fiscal expenditure on disaster management, which is much higher than the ratio in the pre-1994 period. Yet they are still being pressured to pay more for disaster relief so as to ease the fiscal burden upon the central government. This chapter focuses on the dynamic relationship between the central and local governments at various levels and on the influences of decentralization upon the effectiveness of China's disaster management system.

Chapter 7 explains why and how the military forces have been institutionalized as the country's most important rescue team in major disaster relief campaigns, and the impacts upon the effectiveness of disaster management. Both the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the People's Armed Police (PAP)'s roles in disaster management and their differentiated relationships with the central government and Party leadership are discussed here. Since the PLA has its own autonomous administrative and operation process that creates fault lines in civilian oversight of senior generals, central and local government officials often have awkward relationship with the military in the disaster management system where the PLA only obeys orders from the top party leadership instead of administrative leaders. This chapter discusses the change of PLA's role under the new system of National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief, which was enacted in 2011.

Chapter 8 discusses to what extent the party-state's non-participatory disaster management approach has been challenged by the rising civic activism associated with the use of the Internet and social media. As a consequence of more than a decade of civil society development in China, citizens respond to the disaster just as quickly as the government, with the Internet and social media being a relatively uncensored channel of information and communication among civic forces. The chapter reveals social media's important functions in disaster management including information, expression, and civic mobilization, and its role in agenda setting, civic participation, media supervision, and reshaping the party-state's credibility.

Chapter 9 examines how the post-2011 reforms have reinforced the authoritarian regime's non-participatory style in disaster management, and whether the reform has been effective enough to handle entrenched problems and emerging challenges. The Chinese leadership reinstated the holistic disaster management system through formulating the National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief that gave detailed operating guidelines to the division of work among various institutional actors based on the degree of severity of disasters. Apart from this newly placed codex that is applicable to relief actions for all kinds of natural disasters, thematic disaster response systems including ad hoc response plans targeted on specific types of disasters were also regularized to improve administrative efficiency and avoid central–local and administrative–military inconsonance. Nevertheless, more pressing issues linked to rising citizen activism in disaster relief, online supervision, and social media's role in information sharing have been overlooked and excluded in the reinstitution process.

The conclusion discusses different institutional imperatives or fundamental challenges the authoritarian institutional designers needed to address in different stages. It tries to reinforce the viewpoint that China's normalization and institutionalization of the bureaucratic system overseeing natural disaster management have profound political implications in coordinating intractable central–local/civil–military relations and improving the regime's international image and legitimacy, but may have limited effect in coping with emerging challenges linked to rising citizen activism. In the study of institutionalization in authoritarian regimes, non-repressive institutional pillars such as the disaster management system in a non-democratic government are often neglected (Schedler 2009). The book concludes that the reinstitution within the authoritarian regime has improved the hardware aspects of disaster management, but ignored the most salient civil society dynamics driven by cyberspace activism and civic consciousness that may pose lethal challenges to the authoritarian regime itself.

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Natural Disaster Management in Ancient China

Abstract This chapter gives a close look at the achievements and weaknesses in ancient China's disaster management. Historians have called such unique disaster and famine-relief governance famine politics (*huang-zheng*), which included policies, practices, institutions, and even theories related to the preparedness, relief, and recovery in the disaster management cycle. This chapter emphasizes complicated guidelines and institutions formalized by ancient dynasties in anticipation of and in response to natural disasters. It assesses various kinds of assistance like grain transfer and distribution, monetary grant, medical aid, control of crop price, loan, tax reduction and migration that had been recorded in the Chinese history as important means to relieve the people in disasters. It explains why most ancient Chinese dynasties failed to establish special government departments to manage natural disasters, and to what extent China's modern disaster management has been influenced by its historical heritage.

Devastating natural disasters like floods, droughts, earthquakes, and pestilence were frequently recorded in China's ancient history (Ye 2002; Janku 2007, pp. 267–301; Information Office of the State Council of the P.R. China 2009). The management of these calamities had become such a life or death issue for each dynasty that neglect of such duties on the part of the emperor would further lead to man-made disasters like famine, riots, peasant rebellion, and finally, the demise of the imperial regime. In response to devastating disasters that constantly posed an ultimate threat toward their

governance, successive dynasties in ancient Chinese history had developed complicated bureaucratic systems to prevent and handle those calamities.

HISTORICAL HERITAGE MATTERS

Handling natural disasters like floods and droughts has become a part of China's rural life and, in fact, part of China's history. In his book *Oriental Despotism*, Karl Wittfogel (1957), an eminent German-American historian, dubbed China as a kind of "hydraulic civilization," which refers to the culture having an agricultural system that is dependent upon large-scale government-managed waterworks—productive (for irrigation) and protective (for flood control). Such a strong and interventionist role played by ancient Chinese regimes in disaster governance convinced Wittfogel of the fact that civilizations in the Orient were quite different from those of the West. China's oldest dynasty, the Xia dynasty, was founded by Da Yu, a hero who successfully regulated the floods and taught people how to tame China's rivers and lakes. Early historians have dated China's management of constant flooding along the Yellow River back to the twentieth century BC, when Da Yu was asked by Emperor Yao to construct dams and dykes along the Yellow River to control floods (Liang 2005, p. 1). Most ancient dynasties regarded such disaster-relief governance as an unshirkable and vital public responsibility for both the emperor and the officials, who were required to be directly involved in disaster and famine relief work under strict regulations and laws.

In history, successful insurgent forces often gained their populist support through taking advantage of the incumbents' poor disaster governance accompanied by food shortage (famine) and rampant corruption, and after winning civil wars, nascent regimes needed to build their legitimacy on efficient disaster relief work, increase of population and development of agriculture. Walter H. Mallory called ancient China the "land of famine," where between the year 108 BC and 1911 AD, there were 1828 famines or one nearly every year in some of the provinces (Mallory 1926, p. 1). While frequent food shortages in China's ancient history were often associated with protracted droughts, swarms of locusts, widespread floods, or other visitations of nature's wrath, there were not many to which social, political, and economic factors did not contribute. Misappropriation of relief funds, mismanagement of state granaries, and underdevelopment of local credit systems in many cases aggravated the famine situation, and the Chinese social system underlining family values instead of community spirits hampered large-scale cooperation of individuals outside the family that could be essential for the preparedness and relief of cataclysms.

A review of the many factors associated in the causes and cures of famines in ancient China could provide clues for the understanding of how the historical settings have been influencing and constraining China's contemporary disaster management. In other words, a historical and cultural approach to the study of China's disaster governance helps to illustrate "a process of cultural self-sustaining and self-transforming" (Zheng 2010, p. 18) in an oriental country with a 4000-year unbroken history.

FAMINE POLITICS (*HUANGZHENG*) IN ANCIENT CHINA

In the course of recorded history, the Chinese people's fight against these natural calamities has never stopped, with major imperial regimes being able to formalize systematic institutions to manage natural disasters. Probably in no other country—certainly in no other country of China's size or of anything like its population—are the natural features less favorable to the inhabitants than in China (Mallory 1926, p. 36). Chinese history is filled with the details of past disasters and not only recounts at great length the nature of the calamity and its causes but names the officials under whom relief work was administered and describes the methods pursued in bringing succor to the unfortunate victims (Mallory 1926, pp. 1–2).

Historians have called disaster and famine-relief governance in ancient China as famine politics (Deng 1978; Meng 1999), which included policies, practices, institutions, and even theories related to the preparedness, relief, and recovery in the disaster management cycle. Early literature on the *huangzheng* research could be dated back to South Song Dynasty (1127–1279AD), when Dong Wei wrote the influential *Book on Disaster Relief and Lifesaving (Jinhuang huomin shu)*. In the *Book on Disaster Relief and Lifesaving (Jinhuang huomin shu)*, the author said clearly that in the imperial hierarchy from the emperor, prime minister, province governor down to the county magistrate, different posts had different responsibilities to manage natural disasters (Dong, South Song Dynasty, third volume). According to Dong Wei, the emperor needed to practice self-reflection, have a thrifty lifestyle, improve governance, and send ministers to distribute reserves in the granaries, while local officials were required to investigate and report the disaster consequences as well as dispense disaster relief materials and maintain social order.

As early as in the Western Zhou Dynasty (1046–771 BC), some officials in the central government started to be assigned disaster relief responsibilities like distribution of aid materials to the disaster-stricken population (Sun 2004, p. 54). During China's Sui (581–618 AD),

Tang (618–907 AD), Song (960–1279 AD), and Ming (1368–1644 AD) dynasties, the Ministry of *Hu* (*bu bu*), an analogy to today's ministry of finance and civil affairs, was appointed to take charge of the disaster relief work together with other issues like taxation and household registration. Besides the Ministry of *Hu*, officials in other ministries, local governors, and even the emperor were still often involved in famine politics. In the final imperial dynasty of Qing (1644–1911 AD), the central government had established a regular system of sending officials to disaster-hit regions for overseeing or assisting local relief work. Yet despite the intensive attention paid to famine politics, China's imperial dynasties failed to establish an independent department that specialized in disaster management.

Ancient dynasties in China had formalized complicated guidelines and institutions related to detailed procedures and measures in anticipation of and in response to natural disasters. Ancient Chinese regimes managed to institutionalize the buildup of water conservancy projects and the national grain reserve as preventive and mitigation measures against frequent floods, droughts, and other natural disasters. Before Qin united the whole of China in 221 BC, warring states had built small-scale water management bureaucracies to regulate floods and droughts (Yang and Ishidaira 2010, p. 17). About 2000 years ago, during the reign of the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD), a special post of Director of Water Conservancy (*tu shui*) was first created by the government to formalize water management and floods control work. The Han Dynasty also had full-time officers for river management and established river management units at city and county levels. Various kinds of assistance like grain transfer and distribution, monetary grant, medical aid, control of crop price, loan, tax reduction, and migration had been recorded in the Chinese history as important means to relieve the people affected in disasters. As early as in the Western Zhou Dynasty, special posts were set up to manage grain reserves in the granaries in preparation for disasters and famines (Sun 2004, pp. 83–84). Since then, almost all the major dynasties along the ancient history had improved their buildup of grain reserves as an important preparatory measure against disasters and famines. Facilitated by the nationwide establishment of granaries, the ancient regimes very frequently granted grain and other kinds of foods to the disaster-hit population for alleviation purposes. History has recorded numerous cases of government-sponsored porridge distribution to hungry people after severe natural disasters like floods and droughts. In the reign of the early Ming Dynasty, when Emperor Zhu

Yuanzhang realized that a delay of one or two months caused by the complicated bureaucratic process of approving grain grants may cause more deaths, he issued documents authorizing local officials to distribute grain to the disaster-hit population before they got the formal permission from the capital.

Besides grain and food, monetary and medical aid was also frequently provided by China's ancient regimes for disaster alleviation. As early as in the Han Dynasty, it was recorded in history that each family with casualties in the floods or earthquakes could get cash compensation from the government. From the Han Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty, history had recorded occasional distribution of medicine and medical services to disaster-stricken areas. In the recovery stage of disaster management, ancient dynasties sometimes intervened in the market through changing the grain supply and demand to stabilize its price. According to the practice called rice trade (*pingtiao*), the government would sell more to the market from its national grain reserve in the disastrous year and increase its purchase in the bumper year. After the disasters, previous dynasties from time to time exempted or reduced taxes upon the people and loaned seeds or money to them for the quick economic recovery.

Although most ancient Chinese dynasties had not established special government departments to manage natural disasters, the emperors and their bureaucrats paid intensive attention to the preparatory and alleviation measures and therefore had formalized a series of policies, practices, institutions, and even theories in this regard. Besides detailed practices like the establishment of national granaries, improvement of water conservancy projects, grain, monetary and medical aid, and rice trade (*pingtiao*), relevant institutions relating to disaster reporting as well as rewards and punishment of accountable officials had also been set up to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of disaster relief. Nevertheless, due to the science and technology constraint and the lack of modern management institutions and norms that demand systematic integration of the various stages and relevant departments involved in the disaster management cycle, natural disasters in many cases still caused severe casualties and huge economic losses. Ancient governments paid more attention to short-term relief measures after the disasters rather than time-consuming preparatory and preventive actions. Such imbalance contributed to the recurrence of deadly flooding along the major rivers and lakes in China's history.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT DOCTRINES AND POLICIES

Rulers of China's early dynasties, who often connected natural disasters with social stability and food security, the most urgent problem of the ancient Chinese, developed their own systematic doctrines and policies related to disaster relief, with focus on post-disaster food supply, transfer, grain price control and tax rebate. *Famine politics* literally refers to governance related to relief work after all famines instead of natural disasters per se. Since the food problem is an ancient one in China (Mallory 1926, p. 1), it's not surprising that most of the Chinese emperors and officials put most of their disaster-related concerns onto the food problem and thus did not distinguish disasters of different kinds much from famines and starvations. This food-centric mentality of managing natural disasters has profound implications upon the major choices of approaches adopted by the ancient Chinese for mitigation and relief purposes, as well as the real effectiveness of these measures in the fight against natural hazards.

First of all, almost all the Chinese dynasties paid intensive attention to the development of agriculture, establishment of granaries and food reserves, and other contingency policies related to food supply and transfer as most important disaster relief approaches among all the policy choices in the toolbox of famine politics. Karl Wittfogel (1957) has pointed out that in such a "hydraulic civilization," government apparatus always had to play a dominant role in providing large-scale productive and protective agro-related infrastructure, so it is understandable that throughout China's history, the government rather than the community, the family or the individual acted as the main and sometimes the sole player in disaster governance.

In detail, agriculture-first mentality in ancient China's disaster governance was reflected by a motley of long-term precaution measures against famine and starvation, most of which were directly related to food production, storage, and consumption. Ancient Chinese thinkers like Shangyang, Guanzhong, and Chaocuo all suggested emperors and governors to prioritize the agricultural production as the most effective means against famine and disasters (Sun 2004, p. 48). In addition to the increase of grain output, ancient regimes made enormous effort to build large-scale water conservancy projects, which served the dual purposes of floods mitigation and crop irrigation. A typical example for this is the construction of *Dujiangyan* irrigation infrastructure, which was built in 256 BC during the Warring States period by the State of Qin, and is still in use today to irrigate over 5300 square kilometers of land in southwest China's Sichuan

province. The *Dujiangyan* along with the Zhengguo Canal in Shaanxi and the Lingqu Canal in Guangxi are known as “the three great hydraulic engineering projects of the Qin dynasty” (Sina.com news, July 26, 2005).

Another related yet very important precaution measure was the establishment of state food reserve systems featured with numerous granaries of large and small scale that scattered in different parts of China. The *Book of Rites* or *Liji*, a collection of texts compiled by Confucianist scholars to describe the social forms, administration, and ceremonial rites of the Zhou dynasty, said clearly that “it would be insufficient if a nation’s (grain) reserve drops below the level of nine years of national consumption, while it would be urgent if the reserve drops below the level of six years of consumption; when the nation does not have reserve equal to three years’ consumption, it could not be called a nation” (The Book of Rites—Chapter *Wangzhi*, ancient times). China’s national granary system was first established in West Zhou Dynasty (1046–771 BC), when counties were assigned with the task of setting up granaries in preparation for famine and disasters (The Rites of Zhou—Chapter *Diguansitu*, ancient times). One of the major functions for these state-sponsored granaries was to increase grain supply and suppress grain price in the market when the region was hit by disasters and famines and to raise up grain prices in the time of bumper harvest through increasing procurement from farmers. Therefore, the establishment of these state-run granaries was also an important economic tool for the ancient Chinese governments to intervene in the grain market.

An apparent consequence of the overemphasis on the agriculture and food aspect was that other essential components in the disaster management cycle, including medical and personnel preparation, after-disaster rescue work, reconstruction and accumulation of related scientific knowledge, could be easily overlooked. Although ancient China was frequently hit by all sorts of meteorological disasters like typhoon, floods and droughts, inadequate attention was paid to the scientific study of meteorology and forecast of these natural hazards. In such an agricultural civilization where heaven’s (god’s) will was deemed as preconditions for good harvest and favorable living conditions, sorcery, superstition, and praying were often resorted to by emperors who identified themselves as sons of the heaven (*tianzi*). Praying for timely precipitation that would be good for crops was first recorded as early as Shang Dynasty (about 1600–1046 BC), and until Qing Dynasty (1644–1911 AD), it was still an imperial ritual that was institutionalized in government documents and practiced

routinely in the capital city of Beijing (Deng 1978, pp. 271–279). Even in the Republic of China period (1912–1949), superstitious activities like drawing magic characters and reciting incantations (*hua fu nian zhou*) were sometimes reported by local newspapers in the locust or drought disasters (Deng 1978, pp. 284–285).

Ancient Chinese regimes paid more attention to provisional relief measures rather than preemptive actions and institutionalized preparedness efforts that could have mitigated casualties and economic losses more effectively. The two major relief approaches most dynasties frequently relied on were distribution of food, money, and labor (*zhenji*), and transfer of grain (*tiaoshu*) during famine. Nevertheless, the centralized way of managing disasters often delayed such distributions that were urgently needed in disaster-struck areas. In most cases, county-level officials had to report local disaster situation to their prefecture-level superiors, who would make reports to provincial governors. After the emperor in the capital city collected all the disaster-related information from different provincial governors, he would make the final decisions as to how to make the distributions of grains, money, and labor. This level-by-level structure of information reporting, decision-making, and grain/money distribution had significant impact upon the disaster governance quality in a centralized ancient state of huge territory.

With such a phenomenon that the Chinese described as “the mountains are high and the emperor is faraway” (*shangao huangdi yuan*), disaster relief materials and funds often came too late to the needy places, and embezzlement was frequently recorded by historical documents. Su Shi, a famous writer and senior official in the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127 AD), complained that when disasters and famines were reported by the prefectures, the central government often spent a lot on the relief, but the people in starvation could not benefit much from the expenses simply because of the late arrival of these materials and fund (Deng 1978, pp. 304–305). In many cases, local officials would like to exaggerate the disaster situation to get more grains and money from the emperor than what was really needed and embezzlement usually followed. In 1781, 22 local officials in Gansu Provinces, including provincial, prefecture, and county governors, were executed by Emperor Qianlong (Qing Dynasty) for embezzlement of disaster relief funds (Sun 2004, p. 65).

In China’s long history of fighting natural calamities and famines, the state apparatus played a vital role in designing and implementing all sorts of plans for controlling floods, improving irrigation, fighting pestilence,

establishing granaries on nationwide scales, adjusting grain prices, and increasing soil fertility and conservation for the forests, which to some extent mitigated people's sufferings and maintained social order in disaster-stricken places. Nevertheless, when ancient Chinese paid too much attention to the issues of agricultural development and severe food shortage, other essential components in the disaster management cycle, including medical and disaster-related expertise preparation, after-disaster rescue work, reconstruction, and accumulation of related scientific knowledge, were often ignored. Meanwhile, a multi-layer political system with almost all the decision-making powers centralized in the capital city of a unified empire had apparent weaknesses in achieving local amelioration, since slow information flow and half-way embezzlement were intractable problems that often led to inefficiency or havoc in the disaster relief process.

INHERITED CAPABILITIES AND DISABILITIES

In approaching a consideration of the heritage that ancient famine politics has given to contemporary disaster governance in China, it should be borne in mind that while the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) seems to be a novelty as a Leninist political entity in the country's long history, its domination of the state and the centralized party-state structure has been likened to a kind of 'organizational emperorship' (Zheng 2010). In other words, when the CPC is monopolizing and wielding its political power in handling different sorts of governance issues, it actually is facing a similar cultural and institutional environment that monarchs of previous dynasties had encountered. From this perspective of historical continuity, the centralized party-state system today manifests certain governance styles that resemble both the capabilities and disabilities of past dynasties in tackling disasters.

The approaches of both ancient dynasties and modern China toward disaster management were state-dominant and institution-based, with complicated guidelines and formalized norms related to detailed procedures and measures in anticipation of and in response to natural disasters. Ancient China paid intensive attention to agriculture-related issues of grain and food, with grain storage, transfer, and distribution being formalized as core preparatory measures against disasters and famines. Such food-focused solutions in *famine politics* still impact the Chinese government, which has established a nationwide grain reserve system with excessive food storage.

In China's "hydraulic civilization" (Wittfogel 1957), ancient rulers had strong consciousness of connecting their performances in developing agriculture, mitigating disasters, and building water management projects to their regimes' legitimacy and stability. In the very early stages of ancient China's civilization, kings and vassals spent huge human and financial resources in building flood control projects of large and small sizes while warring with neighboring states, with full-time officials and specialized departments being appointed to supervise these river management projects that were vital for the crop yield and disaster reduction. The modern communist government now has a specialized apparatus called the Ministry of Water Resources which is in charge of nationwide hydraulic projects as well as anti-flood and anti-drought tasks. Besides, immediately after the People's Republic of China was founded, the nascent government set up a specific bureau called the Central Flood Control Headquarters to oversee management of disasters caused by floods, which evolved into the vice-premier level State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters (*guojia fangxun kanghan zongzhihuibu*) in the 1990s. Since Mao's time, the PRC government has been mobilizing enormous human and financial resources to build hydroelectric dams and reservoirs as a solution to flooding and energy shortage. The communist regime's obsession with building water management projects can be partially explained by the country's historical heritage of taming rivers and lakes.

The centralized way of handling disasters has made the top-down chains of distributing food, money, and other resources too long to supervise, which often led to pervasive graft activities in both ancient and contemporary China. Neither ancient nor contemporary Chinese rulers were able to tolerate sufficient supervision or participation from societal forces in the various phases of disaster management, which resulted in unchecked corruption and inefficient local solutions in the exclusive political process.

However, it would be unfair and prejudicial to ascribe all the merits and ills manifested by the CPC regime to the thousands of years of dynastic politics. The CPC has tasked itself with modernizing China since its foundation in 1921, and it had to adapt itself to the fast-changing political, economic, and social surroundings through rounds of deep reforms and opening-ups, with cosmopolitan and avant-garde norms being absorbed especially in the past three decades. China today has very close exchanges and cooperation with the international community over disaster management, which has revolutionary impacts upon the Middle Kingdom's ideological tradition that emphasized food production, self-reliance, and seclusion.

Emperors in ancient China failed to regularize special government departments to manage natural disasters, but today's PRC government, based on foreign experiences and practices in the Republic of China (ROC) era, has not only designated the Ministry of Civil Affairs to handle disaster relief affairs, but also established inter-agency mechanisms like the China National Committee for Disaster Reduction, the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters, and the Earthquake Relief Headquarters of the State Council. Ancient emperors tended to pray for the Heaven's forgiveness and moderation of extreme weathers when they were desperate about catastrophic consequences, but modern Chinese government relies on high-tech facilities like remote sensing, satellite positioning, and unmanned planes for forecasting and monitoring disasters.

In contrast to the deficiency of laws in ancient dynasties, the Chinese government today has codified large numbers of legal documents pertaining to the disaster management. These laws provide guidelines and sometimes implementation details for the regulation of distribution and use of relief fund, central–local relationship, civil–military relationship, emergency response procedures and other disaster-related issues. China's history of famine politics has definitely left a vestige in the PRC's disaster management mentality and approaches, but the processes of modernization, marketization, and integration with the international community have proved to be more powerful to overwrite the Chinese civilization's historical heritage in disaster governance.

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From ROC to PRC: Modernization of China's Disaster Management

Abstract This chapter discusses China's nascent modernization effort in the disaster management in the Republic of China (ROC) era (1912–1949) and People's Republic of China (PRC)'s pre-reform period (1949–1978). After the ROC took power from the monarch of the Qing Dynasty and set up its government in 1912, modernized institutions managing natural disasters were introduced with special departments appointed to take charge of relevant affairs. With a review on how the different ROC governments had tried to establish modern-style bureaucracy to manage natural disasters, this part analyzes to what extent the ROC had been successful in introducing Westernized norms and institutions to China's disaster management. The latter part of this chapter deals with the practices and institutions in the PRC's pre-reform period, with a focus on the continuation and variation in the disaster management after the regime-change in 1949. This part focuses on the Communist Party's self-reliance principle that couldn't be found in ROC's mentality, trying to reveal the ideological and political motives behind that and the implications upon disaster management practices.

The watershed that demarcated the start of modern China's disaster management and ancient China's famine governance came in 1912, when the Republic of China (ROC) took power from the monarch of the Qing Dynasty and set up its government based on Westernized principles of democracy and constitutionalism. Modernized institutions managing

natural disasters were introduced with special departments appointed to take charge of relevant affairs. The short-lived ROC period (1912–1949) was crucial for the evolvement of China’s disaster management system as it was a unique interim stage that connected imperial China’s famine governance in the ancient times and contemporary China’s disaster management in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) period. The ROC practices manifested how exactly the modern disaster management institutions and norms, most of which were imported from the Western world after the 1911 revolution that ended the rule of the Manchus, were fit into China’s indigenous political, socioeconomic, and cultural context, fully revealing both the merits and limitations of such localization efforts that continued to play a part in the ensuing disaster management work in the PRC era.

This chapter reviews how the different ROC governments had tried to establish modern-style disaster management bureaucracy, expounding the concrete institutional actions taken by these regimes in regularizing modernized bureaucratic systems related to disaster management. In comparison, the latter part of this chapter deals with the practices and institutions in the PRC’s pre-reform period (1949–1978), with a highlight of the continuation and variation concerning disaster management institutions and norms in Mao Zedong’s time. A special focus has been placed on the Communist Party’s self-reliance principle that couldn’t be found in ROC’s mentality, which was in stark contrast to the disaster management styles affiliated to the earlier ROC period and post-Mao era.

THE ROC PERIOD (1912–1949)

After the ROC took power from the monarch of the Qing Dynasty and set up its government in 1912, modernized institutions managing natural disasters were introduced with special departments appointed to take charge of relevant affairs. In the August of 1912, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*nei wu bu*) was set up inside the ROC Beijing government to take charge of disaster relief work, philanthropy, and public health, with its subordinate department of civil affairs taking over the detailed disaster alleviation work (Sun 2004, p. 55). This was a landmark change in China’s disaster management institutionalization as in thousands of years of ancient history; imperial regimes had not been able to establish any specialized organizations within the government to deal with disaster relief. Such an institutional defect had serious consequences upon ancient disaster politics, which included the emperors’ impromptu and some-

times willful appointment of his intimate ministers as top commissioners in charge of the relief work, and lack of accountability when relief work failed to deliver due accomplishment. When Yuan Shikai became the ROC president in 1912, his Beijing government assigned the task of disaster relief specifically to the Civil Affairs Bureau under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. There were five sections under the Civil Affairs Bureau, which later on restructured itself into the Bureau of People's Governance, among which the Fourth Section had the specific task of managing relief and charity work after disasters.

Besides this full-time organization managing natural disasters, the ROC Beijing government also established an ad hoc national committee on disaster relief after the outbreak of catastrophes to coordinate the responses from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Ministry of Transportation. In September 1920, the central government in Beijing promulgated a charter for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on disaster relief, which was composed of personnel from the above-mentioned four ministries. In May 1921, the Ministry of Internal Affairs publicized a statute to institutionalize a national committee on disaster management, which aimed to find out the causal factors behind natural disasters and work out corresponding preparation and prevention plans (Gong 1996, pp. 500–504). This national committee had six divisions respectively in charge of general affairs, farmland and forestation, water conservancy, grain reserve and distribution, migration and protection of labor forces. As early modern effort to comprehensively manage the Yellow River, known both as “Cradle of Chinese civilization” and “China’s sorrow,” the Chih-li River Commission, and later the Hua Bei River Commission began the first systematic monitoring of the Yellow River flow in 1922 (Yang and Ishidaira 2010, p. 18).

The ROC went through numerous social unrest, wars, and revolutions after its founding, which severely undermined the rulers’ effort to build up and normalize institutions in various governance dimensions, with disaster management system being no exception. China’s political gravity shifted from the north to the south when the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT) established a central government in the capital city of Nanjing in 1927, which later on grabbed most part of China from warlords of various factions. The KMT government in Nanjing basically copied the previous disaster management model set up by the Beijing government with the Bureau of Civil Affairs under the Ministry of Internal Affairs still being the full-time apparatus on this issue. At that time, it was still the fourth sector

under the Bureau of Civil Affairs that took charge of the disaster relief, preparedness, and fund-raising issues, similar to the arrangement done by the Beijing government prior to year 1927.

One of the major political challenges facing the Beijing government, and later on the Nanjing government during the ROC era, was the central leadership's weak control and ineffective governance over many localities that were reined by warlords or communists and enjoyed high degree of autonomy. In comparison to those ancient dynasties that successfully unified the whole China and centralized political power over provincial governors appointed by the emperors themselves, the ROC's incompetent management of local affairs even led to significant setback in its effort to introduce modern disaster relief institutions from Western countries and to better manage natural catastrophes based on foreign experiences and norms.

China's Red Cross Society, the establishment of which could be dated back to the last years of the Qing Dynasty, received its formal international recognition from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1912 (The Red Cross Society of the Republic of China, Taiwan 2015). Under the auspices of the Nanjing government led by Chiang Kai-shek, the national society held close ties with American and British Red Cross in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, having learnt substantial experiences, operational modes and norms related to modern relief and charity work. In 1933, the society was renamed the Red Cross Society of the Republic of China, with the Act of Administrative Rules and Procedures of the Red Cross Society of the Republic of China promulgated by the KMT government (The Red Cross Society of the Republic of China, Taiwan 2015). The daily operation of the society was under the supervision of the KMT government, of which the Ministry of Internal Affairs was overseeing the organization on behalf of the authorities. The society's activities during the Sino-Japanese War time period (1937–1945) were limited to KMT-held areas in southwest China and to some areas under Japanese control. The society received humanitarian supplies through Burma and India from the USA and the UK, sometimes receiving fund and material donations from overseas Chinese.

In response to the Central China Floods in 1931, probably the deadliest natural disaster ever recorded, the ROC Nanjing government established a national committee on floods relief to coordinate the work done by different government departments, and to share some responsibilities with the Bureau of Civil Affairs. In the recovery stage, the Nanjing government promoted the "Huai River Conservancy Commission" to address flood

problems. The Yellow River Water Conservancy Commission was founded in 1933 to ease China's historically problematic inter-provincial tensions upon the management of the indocile river.

However due to the Anti-Japanese war, the Chinese Civil War, and the shortage of funding, the KMT government made little progress in building up effective water conservancy infrastructures along the major rivers. To achieve political and military goals in the early stage of the Anti-Japanese War, the KMT government even opened up the dike in Huayuankou without informing the public beforehand and created the 1938 Yellow River flood in an attempt to halt the rapid advance of the Japanese invaders. As a result of this man-made natural disaster, the course of the Yellow River was diverted southwards for nine years afterward, inundating 54,000 square km of land in central China and took at least half a million lives. Thanks to the re-establishment of the dikes in 1946 and 1947, the Yellow River returned to its pre-1938 course after the end of the Anti-Japanese war.

During the ROC period, China was in the early stages of industrialization and modernization that facilitated the nation to introduce modern-style bureaucracy to manage natural disasters. Yet since the ROC's nation-building process was often disrupted by large-scale wars and severe political confrontation, the distracted bureaucratic system failed to function properly to address major natural disasters. Despite KMT's high-profile plans to improve water conservancy works and fundamentally solve the problem of floods along major rivers like the Yellow River and the Huai River, the regime's warfare priority had from time to time prevented it from being a responsible government in disaster mitigation and post-disaster recovery.

PRC'S PRE-REFORM PERIOD (1949–1978)

Since the Communist Party of China (CPC) defeated the KMT in a civil war and founded the PRC in 1949, the new regime in its early days continued to authorize the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*nei wu bu*) to be responsible for disaster relief work. In February 1950, a central committee on disaster relief (*zhongyang jiu zai wei yuan hui*) was established to coordinate disaster management work among the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Water Resources, the Ministry of Health, and other related ministries and governmental departments, with Vice-Premier Dong Biwu being the head of the committee. Following the central government's instruction, local governments subsequently set up their disaster relief committees

at the prefecture, county, and township level. During the frenetic “Great Leap Forward” movement in 1958, the central committee on disaster relief and many of its local branches were abolished amidst people’s blind faith that natural disasters would no longer pose serious threat in the communistic China. In 1969, two years after the start of the Cultural Revolution, the Ministry of Internal Affairs was abolished with most of its disaster management functions scattered in other ministries and departments, which led to the inefficiency and even chaos in this area.

In the conference marking the establishment of the central committee on disaster relief in 1950, Dong Biwu put thrift, self-dependence, mutual aid, and using labor instead of aid materials as guidelines for new China’s disaster relief work (Sun 2004, p. 130). When the young PRC joined the socialist camp in the early stage of the Cold War, it enunciated that it refused to accept any foreign aid offered by the antagonist Western camp, especially the USA, for the disaster relief in China. Since the new regime was not well equipped to provide necessary monetary and material aid, the PRC government at that time took a lot of effort in asking disaster-hit population to lead thrifty life and resume production as soon as possible.

In August 1950, the Central Government of the PRC reorganized the Red Cross Society of China that had been overseen by the KMT government prior to 1949, helping it to reclaim its legal membership in the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in 1952 (china.org.cn 2015). The Red Cross Society of China later on played an important part in assisting the Chinese government in implementing the Geneva Conventions which established the international standards for the humanitarian treatment of war, supporting post-disaster rescue work and improving the country’s healthcare and medical services. Nevertheless, unlike its predecessor in the ROC era, the Red Cross Society of China in Mao Zedong’s time did not have an active engagement with its international counterparts, especially those Red Cross organizations in Western countries like the USA and Britain. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the Red Cross Society of China, together with its local branches at various levels, ceased its domestic operations and disbanded most of its staff, with only a small fraction of the organization retained to continue limited exchange activities with foreign counterparts.

Influenced by the Cold War mentality, the PRC in its first 30 years took very cautious attitudes toward foreign aid, refusing to accept most of them even in severe disasters like the 1976 Tangshan Earthquake. At the time of the magnitude 7.8 quake that hit Tangshan at the end of the Cultural

Revolution (1966–1976) and took at least 240,000 lives, the insular PRC leadership clung to extreme-leftist ideology refused all offers of international aid, even from such neutral bodies as the United Nations and the Red Cross. Instead, the Chinese government urged its citizens to “Resist the Earthquake and Rescue Ourselves” (Szczepanski 2010). Such self-reliance attitudes toward disaster relief effort reflected young PRC’s over-sensitivity over the sovereignty issue based on memory of China’s tribulations caused by foreign invasion and interventions in the past a hundred years. In less than one year after the PRC was founded, the USA expressed its concern over the ongoing famine in China and its willingness to offer help, but the Communist leadership interpreted such posture as imperialists’ intention to undertake subversive activities. In 1954, China briefed foreign journalists on the reasons behind the self-reliance principle, saying that “since China is a unified country with vast territory, diversified resources and a large population, it is able to use its own domestic resources to handle natural disasters that hit certain regions every year when other parts of China are enjoying a bumper year” (Sun 2004, p. 138). PRC’s disaster management work had been dominated by the purely self-dependence guidelines until 1979 when the Communist Party decided to start reform and open-door policy.

The nascent regime had bitter experiences in managing disasters in the first decade of the CPC ruling when the country witnessed two major floods in the Yangtze River Basin in 1954 and 1956, as well as the beginning of the three-year famine (1959–1961) that was officially blamed on natural disasters. The CPC used “The Three Years of Natural Disasters” (*sannian ziran zaihai*) to describe the famine in which at least 20 million people died of starvation caused by “Great Leap Forward” and other utopian government policies. Since then, the PRC government had drawn lessons from such miserable experiences and made remarkable progress in disaster preparation and mitigation. After the 1954 Yangtze River floods that occurred mostly in central Hubei Province and killed about 33,000 people, the building of hydroelectric dams and reservoirs as a solution to flooding and energy shortage had gradually become commonplace, and millions of peasants during Mao’s time were mobilized to construct small and medium water conservation work (Chen 2010, pp. 5–6). Such efforts over the years had the cumulative effect of alleviating floods through the 1960s and 1970s. In his poem “Swimming” (1956), Mao Zedong envisioned future dam construction on the Yangtze as “to hold back Wushan’s clouds and rain till a smooth lake rises in the narrow gorges; the mountain goddess if she is still there, will marvel at a world so changed.”

Since there were no major earthquakes in the first 17 years of the CPC ruling, the PRC had not paid much attention to earthquake management until the deadly quakes struck Xingtai, Hebei province, in 1966 and took about 8000 lives. China set up the National Earthquake Administration to take charge of earthquake monitoring, research, and emergency responses in 1971. In 1975, China successfully predicted strong quakes in densely populated Haicheng, Liaoning Province, and thus saved more than a 100,000 people. In 1976, despite its failure in predicting the Tangshan Earthquake, China still managed to forecast devastating earthquakes respectively in Sichuan and Yunnan Province.

A COMPARISON OF THE TWO ERAS

China's nascent attempts to modernize the national disaster management system in the ROC period had huge implications upon the institutional building and ideological guidance regarding the PRC's disaster management. Since the CPC and KMT are ideologically heterogeneous, the early stage of the PRC emphasized the principle of self-reliance and mobilization of soldiers and ordinary people which various ROC governments had not promoted. In contrast, the ROC, which itself was founded in the framework of Western-style democracy and constitutionalism, welcomed the foreign aids of all kinds and advices from foreign experts in the process of disaster management. The communist China's self-reliance attitudes toward disaster relief was not only a reflection of the Cold War mentality, but also a historical legacy inherited from the dynastic times when the "Middle Kingdom" enjoyed superior status vis-à-vis its peripheral vassal states and adopted the economic principle of seclusion. As the ROC founders that overthrew the monarchy were inspired by Western ideology of democracy and constitutionalism, they were generally more open than their preceding imperialistic rulers as well as succeeding PRC founders toward Western ideology, technology, institutions, and governance experiences.

Based on foreign experiences and practices, the ROC tried to modernize its disaster management system through establishing specialized government institutions in charge of disaster relief. This institutional arrangement was later on inherited by the PRC founding fathers, who appointed the Ministry of Internal Affairs to be responsible for disaster relief work. The ROC and PRC, despite their ideological divergences, shared institutional similarities through setting up specific departments within the government for handling disaster issues and establishing inter-agency committees for

the coordination of disaster-related work among various ministries. Such institutional setups were big steps forward from what had been missing in thousands of years of ancient China's famine politics. Both the nascent ROC and PRC governments had bitter experiences in managing disasters due to lack of experiences, weak economic capacities, frequent social turmoil and even warfare, and in some cases, man-made policy blunders exacerbated the disastrous situation and led to loss of numerous lives.

Both the 1938 Yellow River flood and the three-year Great Famine from 1950 to 1961 were man-made natural disasters caused by improper military or economic policies with specific political intentions of blocking invaders or conducting utopian experiments. The various ROC governments constantly faced the issue of weak governance over strong local forces led by warlords or the communists, which seriously affected the central governments' disaster management capability and slowed down relevant institutional building. The PRC central government, however, had strong control over local affairs even in the early days of the communist regime, which thus facilitated the central government's intervention in local disaster relief work. Within such a centralized power structure, the nascent Communist government made remarkable achievement in certain anti-disaster fields that the KMT government had never managed to fulfill. One of ROC's disaster mitigation focuses was to tame the major rivers that often inundated vast areas and led to large numbers of deaths and homeless people. Institutions like the Chih-li River Commission, the Hua Bei River Commission, and the Huai River Conservancy Commission were set up by various ROC governments for the mitigation of deluge in major river valleys. However, local political turmoil, weak capacity building, frequent military conflicts, and rampant corruption prevented those institutions from functioning effectively on the management of indocile rivers. During Mao's time, the unified and centralized communist country was able to improve water conservancy works and efficiently solved the problem of flooding along major rivers thanks to a peaceful domestic environment, the CPC's strong mobilization capacity for building large-scale dams and reservoirs, and growing industrial and technological capabilities. Different from the ROC governments whose warfare priority had often overshadowed their focuses on disaster mitigation and post-disaster recovery, Mao's regime was able to be concentrated on disaster preparation and mitigation through mobilizing millions of peasants, workers, and soldiers to engage in related preparation, relief, and recovery projects.

As the ROC central leadership failed to have strong and effective control over local troops under the command of warlords of different factions, military forces had never become a significant player in the disaster relief and mitigation missions. On the contrary, charity organizations, especially those that were established by civic groups under the influence of Western philanthropic thinking, mushroomed in places like Beijing, Shanghai, and Jiangsu Province in the ROC era and played increasingly important roles in the disaster relief work. Frequent disasters had led to the proliferation of locally nurtured charity organizations like Pu Yu Tang, Guo Yu Tang, and Tongrentang prior to the 1911 Revolution, and during the Bei Yang period (1912–1927) of the ROC era when the central governments in Beijing remained weak vis-à-vis local warlords, many of these charity organizations got assistance from the local governments as well as from foreign organizations. During this period, the Shanghai municipal government helped Xin Pu Yu Tang, an influential local charity organization, in an active way but didn't intervene in its management or exert sufficient supervision. The supervision of Xin Pu Yu Tang mainly came from the public at that time and Xin Pu Yu Tang and governmental agencies maintained good cooperation with each other (He 2007, p. 111). After the KMT overthrew the Bei Yang regime in a civil war and set up its own central government in Nanjing under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek in 1927, the ROC government required all the philanthropy organizations to be registered with the government and to be audited by government agencies (Wang 2015, p. 137). In 1929, Chiang's authoritarian government in Nanjing enacted a special law on the supervision and management of charity organizations, which legalized the government's administrative power in approving management reshuffle, budget proposals, financial reports, and charter revision of all the charity organizations (Wang 2015, pp. 137–138). The Nanjing government's heavy-handed interventions led to growing tensions between those social organizations and their government supervisors, with the number of active charity organizations decreasing substantially by 1931. The devastating flooding in 1930 and 1931 softened the KMT government's attitudes toward civic charity groups, which started to receive growing subsidies and other supports from the government since then. After 1931, Xin Pu Yu Tang received about 10,000 yuan per year from the ROC government, and other organizations like the Zhai Bei Charity Group and Hu Nan Pi Han Suo also got one-off or regular financial aid from the government in the mid-1930s (ROC Shanghai Municipal Government Secretariat 1935, p. 212). Meanwhile, Chiang's government had been giving strong supports to the

Chinese Red Cross and other Christian charity organizations that had close ties with the American and British Red Cross societies and other Western organizations.

In contrast, Mao's communist regime greatly restricted the roles played by social organizations in disaster relief in the context of the CPC's total control of the Chinese society. Even the regular work of the Red Cross Society of China was disrupted by the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, with only the Red Cross Society's social function of contacting its foreign counterparts being emphasized for diplomatic purposes. With effective command over the military and local politics, the central leadership often resorted to the deployment of People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops, militia, and other local communist organizations for emergency rescue and recovery missions. When China was trying to modernize its disaster management from the early years of ROC era under the rein of Bei Yang governments to the Cultural Revolution in Mao's time, such an evolution process followed the trajectory of increasing intervention and domination of the state sectors controlled by the central leadership and decreasing activity of civic organizations and their autonomy from the government interventions. Compared to the fragmented and participatory yet sometimes chaotic and inefficient disaster politics in the era of Bei Yang governments, Chiang Kai-shek's Nanjing government tried to rein in the rapid expansion of civic charity organizations through imposing heavy-handed government supervisions and launching state-led disaster relief actions. However, despite occasional tensions between the government and civic organizations, Chiang's government still held a cautiously welcoming attitude toward the civic participation in disaster affairs, especially those with extensive foreign connections and following Western operating norms. The nascent PRC regime accepted the institutional heritage from the ROC by establishing similar disaster-related government agencies and tolerating participation of civic charity organizations. Yet over time, the party-state and its military forces, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), gradually dominated and monopolized the disaster management and fully squeezed out the participatory room once enjoyed by civic groups in the ROC era and early years of the PRC. The state monopoly of disaster affairs on the one hand led to more efficient and planned solutions to chronic disaster issues like frequent flooding in major river valleys and contingency calamities like earthquakes and rainstorms, while on the other hand, restricted the voluntary activity of local people and societal forces, and resulted in opaqueness and bureaucratism in the disaster management process.

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The Reform Era: Institutional Changes and Evolution of Norms

Abstract This chapter analyzes institutional changes and evolution of norms regarding disaster management in the PRC's reform era. Since the beginning of the reform and opening up, the PRC has gradually normalized the bureaucratic system in charge of natural disaster management once disrupted by the anarchical Cultural Revolution. This chapter details how China's engagement with the international community has helped the country to re-establish internationally-accepted institutions and norms in the field of disaster management. In the preparation for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, the Chinese government founded the National Commission for the International Decade on Natural Disaster Reduction, which was comprised of more than 30 ministries and commissions and became the predecessor of the China National Committee for Disaster Reduction. This chapter focuses on the division of work among various government departments under this top-level decision-making panel. It assesses the effectiveness of ad hoc inter-agency mechanisms in addressing specific types of disasters, as well as the evolution of norms and operational mode in China's disaster management system.

Since the beginning of the reform and opening up, the PRC has gradually re-established and normalized the bureaucratic system in charge of natural disaster management once disrupted by the anarchical *Cultural Revolution*. China's engagement with the international community has spurred the country to re-establish internationally accepted institutions

and norms in the field of disaster management. In the preparation for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR), the Chinese government founded the National Commission for the International Decade on Natural Disaster Reduction, which was comprised of more than 30 ministries and commissions and became the predecessor of the China National Committee for Disaster Reduction. With focus on the division of work among various government departments under this top-level decision-making panel, this chapter assesses the effectiveness of re-established regulations, institutions, and ad hoc inter-agency mechanisms in addressing specific types of disasters, as well as the evolution of norms and operational mode in China's disaster management system.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND LEGALIZATION IN THE REFORM ERA

In the reform era, the PRC has gradually normalized the bureaucratic system in charge of natural disaster management once disrupted by the anarchical Cultural Revolution. In 1978, two years after the Cultural Revolution was over, the Ministry of Civil Affairs (*min zheng bu*) was re-established to resume some disaster management functions. During most of the 1980s, the Ministry of Civil Affairs was in charge of disaster relief only in rural areas, while the State Economic Commission (SEC) has the power to coordinate all the disaster management work at the national level. In 1988, when the SEC was abolished in another round of administrative reform, that responsibility was shifted to the State Planning Commission, which later transferred this function to the State Economic and Trade Commission established in 1993. In 1998, according to a circular issued by the State Council General Office, the State Economic and Trade Commission officially handed over the function of organizing and coordinating disaster relief work to the Ministry of Civil Affairs (China's State Council General Office 1998), which since then has institutionalized its pivotal role in managing natural disasters in China.

The Chinese government in the reform era paid intensive attention to the codification of relevant regulations and legal documents pertaining to the disaster management, a process that was disrupted by the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. In 1983, the Ministry of Civil Affairs enacted a circular that set principles for the distribution and use of relief fund to disaster-hit people. Four years later, it enacted another circular to enhance the management of such disaster relief fund, which insisted that

all the allocated fund had to be strictly used for the purpose of disaster relief and that the unused part of the fund should be taken back by the Ministry of Civil Affairs (China's Ministry of Civil Affairs 1987). In 1990, the Ministry of Civil Affairs enacted three circulars on the management of insurance compensation to disaster-hit people in rural areas, supervision of disaster relief fund and disaster information communications respectively. In the first decade of the reform era, the Chinese government had already found serious embezzlement and misuse of relief fund in many localities, which resulted in the Ministry of Civil Affairs' repeated revision of its circulars on the management and supervision of relief fund. However, since the Ministry of Civil Affairs lacks sufficient political authority to oversee the distribution and usage of relief fund in a province that has equivalent administrative ranking as the Ministry has, the local implementation of these circulars had proved to be extremely weak.

During the reform period, in which the PRC has been paying more attention to the institutionalization and legalization of government activities, the country has enacted more than 30 laws and regulations related to disaster management. These include the PRC Flood Control Law, the Law on Earthquake Preparedness and Disaster Reduction, the Emergency Response Law, the Regulation on Forest Fire Control, the Regulation on the Preparedness of Meteorological Disasters, the Regulation on Anti-Drought Effort, the Regulation on the Preparedness of Geological Disasters, and the Regulation on the Participation of Armed Forces in Emergency and Disaster Rescue Actions. The Chinese government has enacted detailed regulations on comprehensive disaster relief work, the reporting and monitoring of disaster situations, the management and use of aid materials and funds as well as on receiving international and domestic donations.

Under the related laws and regulations, the Chinese government has institutionalized an emergency response system comprising the National Master Plan for Responding to Public Emergencies, five national thematic disaster response plans and emergency response plans for 15 central government departments and their detailed implementation plans and operation norms (United Nations Economic and Social Council 2008, p. 9). The serious problems of crisis management revealed in the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) episode in 2003 prompted the Chinese government to rethink its crisis/disaster management regime and initiate a number of important institutional changes. The most notable of these was the establishment in December 2005, of a 'one office, four committees'

crisis management system (Suttmeier 2012, p. 113). It included a newly established National Emergency Management Office in the State Council (*guowuyuan yingji guanli bangongshi*), which is intended to achieve national coordination among the many agencies involved in crisis management, and see to the development of up-to-date contingency plans at both the national and local levels, and four more specialized inter-agency committees—the National Committee for Disaster Reduction, Work Safety, Food Safety, and the Communist Party’s National Committee for Integrated Crisis Management (having responsibility, respectively for natural disasters, industrial accidents, public health and food and drug safety emergencies, and public security incidents) (Suttmeier 2012, p. 113). As part of the crisis management system established after the SARS crisis, the State Council enacted a national Master Plan on emergency responses (*guojia tufa gonggong shijian zongti yingji yu’an*), under which were 25 subordinating thematic plans relating to floods, earthquakes, forest fires, ocean salvage and rescue, industrial accidents, aviation accidents, urban subway accidents, blackouts, nuclear disasters, environmental crisis, public health crisis, food safety incidents, financial emergencies, telecommunication emergencies, animal disease outbreak and emergency incidents abroad, as well as 80 central departmental plans and local emergency plans (Suttmeier 2012, p. 114). This emergency response system made it clear that local governments, especially those at provincial level, should take the lead in most cases since they are usually the commanders of first-batch responders.

In 1989, in response to the United Nations (UN) resolution to designate the 1990s as the IDNDR, the Chinese government founded the National Commission for the International Decade on Natural Disaster Reduction, which was comprised of more than 30 ministries and commissions, including the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Foreign Ministry, the State Planning Commission and relevant military agencies and social groups. It soon became the top-level decision-making panel to command and coordinate disaster relief work scattered throughout different ministries and departments. In 2000, as soon as the IDNDR was over, it was renamed the China Commission for International Disaster Reduction, which turned out to be a regular inter-agency coordination body under the State Council rather than an interim organization in answer to the call from the UN. In January of 2005, it was renamed the China National Committee for Disaster Reduction (NCDR). Headed by a State Councillor, the NCDR is responsible for studying and formulating

principles, policies, and plans for disaster reduction, coordinating major disaster activities, giving guidance to local governments in their disaster reduction work, and promoting international exchanges and cooperation (Asian Disaster Reduction Center 2010). Since then, the Chinese government has formalized the NCDR as the top inter-agency mechanism in charge of disaster management, with the Ministry of Civil Affairs taking on routine jobs of the NCDR and playing a pivotal role in coordinating work done by various ministries and sectors.

According to the division of responsibilities under the current disaster management bureaucracy, the Ministry of Civil Affairs deals with most of the daily administrative work of the NCDR. It also coordinates disaster relief work among various departments, collects and releases the latest disaster situation information, manages and distributes the aid fund and materials from the central government, cooperates with other departments in relocating disaster-hit people, prepares the national level food and rescue material reservation, organizes public donations and undertakes international cooperation in this area (Ministry of Civil Affairs 2010). The Ministry of Finance formulates the yearly budget for national disaster relief, supervises the use of such funds and provides special funds for severe disasters. The State Administration of Taxation formulates and implements the tax waiver policy in disaster-hit regions. The Ministry of Agriculture is in charge of the provision of agricultural materials such as fertilizers and diesel in the disaster-hit regions and helps peasants produce grains in the recovery phase. The Ministry of Water Resources plays a vital role in fighting major floods and droughts and thus undertakes the administrative work of the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters, another inter-agency mechanism to cope with severe floods and droughts. The Ministry of Health is in charge of medical services in disaster-hit regions, while the Ministry of Transport repairs the roads and railways damaged in natural disasters. The China Earthquake Administration forecasts and monitors earthquakes, while the China Meteorological Administration takes charge of weather forecasts and releases warnings on meteorological disasters. Meanwhile, the Chinese government has established ad hoc leading panels on combating floods and droughts and earthquake relief.

Compared to the PRC's early experiences in disaster management, the bureaucratic system in the reform period, facilitated by all these laws, regulations and plans, has clarified the assignment of duties among major departments. It has also standardized the procedures through which the government, the armed forces, businesses, and civil society plan for and

reduce the impact of disasters, react during and immediately following a disaster, and take steps to recover after the disaster.

EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Many researchers have noticed a distinctive change in the bureaucratic structure and norms concerning disaster management after the Tangshan earthquake in 1976, which happened the same year the Mao era ended (Chen 2012, pp. 130–148; Lim 2011, pp. 11–20; Tan et al. 2011; Yi et al. 2012, pp. 295–309). By improving the bureaucratic structure, accepting foreign aid and enhancing financial and technical preparation, the Chinese government has done fairly well in controlling annual disaster death tolls to under 10,000 in most years (Fig. 4.1).

The Party-state's normalization and institutionalization of the bureaucratic system overseeing natural disaster management have profound political implications in coordinating intractable central–local relations (Zheng 2007) and improving the regime's international image and legitimacy. Since local governments in China had no power to raise revenue and most of their expenditures were disbursed by the central government in a

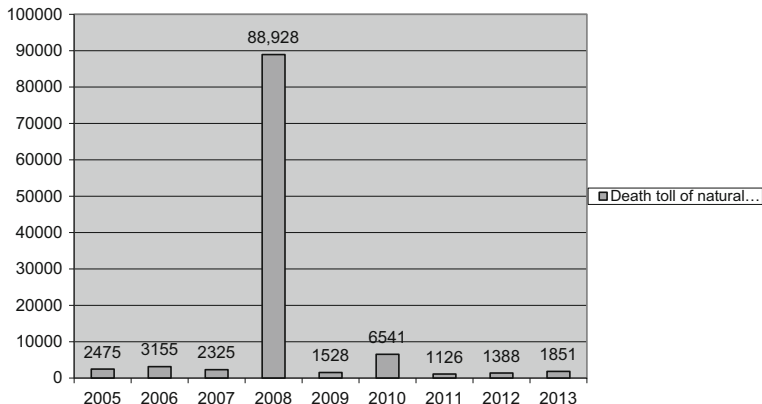


Fig. 4.1 Death toll of natural disasters in China (2005–2013). *Source:* Press Release from China's Ministry of Civil Affairs

strict top-down system prior to 1980, the central government had to be responsible for allocating relief funds to localities where natural disasters had occurred. In the 1980s and early 1990s, local governments gradually assumed control of their own revenue and expenditure under a contractual fiscal system characterized by defining a fixed sum paid to or received from the central government (Lin 2000, pp. 477–490; Loo and Chow 2006, pp. 215–216). Nevertheless, most disaster relief funds still came from the central government. From 1983 to 1994, 85 % of the disaster relief funds used in Anhui Province were allocated by the central government, while only about 15 % came from the provincial and county-level governments (Sun 2004, p. 192). In 1994, China introduced the Tax Sharing System allowing local governments to share tax revenues with the central government (Chung 1995, pp. 2–3; Loo and Chow 2006, p. 216). Thereafter, local governments at all levels also started to disburse more for disaster management. Local governments today shoulder about 30 % of China's total fiscal expenditure on disaster management, which is much higher than in the pre-1994 period. Yet they are still being pressured to pay more for disaster relief to ease the fiscal burden upon the central government.

Shifting from its insular attitudes toward foreign aid for disaster relief during the Cold War, China has been readily receiving international donations through different channels in the reform period. In the early 1980s, the reformist leadership decided to accept foreign aid and opened its disaster relief system to the outside, with the UN as its major institutional channel to engage the world. The year 1989 was a turning point, when China joined the IDNDR initiated by the UN and set up the National Commission for the IDNDR, which later became the top-level decision-making panel on national disaster relief work. As the predecessor of the National Committee for Disaster Reduction, the National Commission for the IDNDR in the 1990s had learnt a lot of modernized norms and practices in the field of disaster management through international exchanges and activities. The Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the government-organized Red Cross Society of China and China Charity Federation are now the major sectors involved in receiving overseas aid and donations. In natural calamities like the 2008 Sichuan earthquake that have claimed huge casualties and economic losses, the Chinese government not only accepted international aid and donations, but also welcomed rescue and medical teams from foreign countries to the disaster-hit regions.

Before the reform period, the PRC government had regarded the death tolls in natural disasters as state secrets and refused to release them to the public. Foreign media were not allowed to cover the disaster relief work on the spot at that time. As a move to greater transparency, in 2005 China announced it would no longer treat the death toll in natural disasters as a state secret. The National Administration of State Secrets declared the declassification of disaster-related death tolls at almost the same time (The New York Times 2005). During the Sichuan earthquake in 2008, the country's worst natural disaster in the reform period, official media provided round-the-clock coverage of the earthquake and the rescue efforts, demonstrating remarkable openness. In sharp contrast to the opaque and seclusive disaster relief work in the Maoist era, China's gradual openness to international aid and media coverage has won international praise from organizations like the UN (The United Nations Economic and Social Council 2008) as well as domestic support and thus consolidated the authoritarian regime's legitimacy that had been severely damaged by the Cultural Revolution and Tiananmen crackdown (June 4 1989).

ESTABLISHED NORMS AND THE EVOLUTION OF OPERATIONAL MODE

As a country vulnerable to many types of natural disasters, China in the past 30 years has made tremendous effort to improve its complicated bureaucratic structure in managing those disasters and to enhance relevant financial and technical preparation. Meanwhile, thanks to the opening-up process and increased international engagement, new norms and guidelines have been gradually introduced to China's natural disaster management and many of them have become well-established principles guiding the country's disaster relief work in the new century. As a result, the Chinese government has managed to control the casualties caused by various kinds of natural disasters at relative low levels (China's Government 2007) and its achievement in this regard has been acknowledged by the international community (*The New York Times* 2008; The United Nations Economic and Social Council 2008).

Prioritizing Prevention and Preparation Measures

As in many other parts of the world, China today has been making disaster mitigation and preparedness a priority task at policy, institutional and oper-

ational levels. By accepting well-established international norms to guide the country's disaster relief work, the Chinese government has managed to keep the casualties caused by natural disasters at relatively low levels. In the disaster management cycle, pre-disaster mitigation and preparedness activities not only reduce the probability that a disaster will occur and the negative effects of unavoidable disasters, but also produce greater efficiency in responding to any emergency. Therefore, compared with the post-disaster phases of response and recovery, the preventive and preparation measures are more cost-effective and thus deserve intensive policy attention.

Among all the preventative measures, building up flood-control facilities and related warning/forecasting systems has drawn the most attention from the Chinese government, especially since the Yangtze River floods in 1998, the heaviest in the reform period, led to a series of collapsed levees and killed more than 4150 people. In the early stage of the reform period, the state followed a blatantly urban-biased development strategy with most resources diverted to glamorous industrial and urban projects instead of water conservancy and forestation projects. As a result, China has to bear with the inestimable environmental costs of soil erosion and deforestation that exacerbated the floods (Fig. 4.2 shows that areas affected by floods had been on the rise from 1978 to 1998). Since 1998, however, substantial funds have been generated from both central

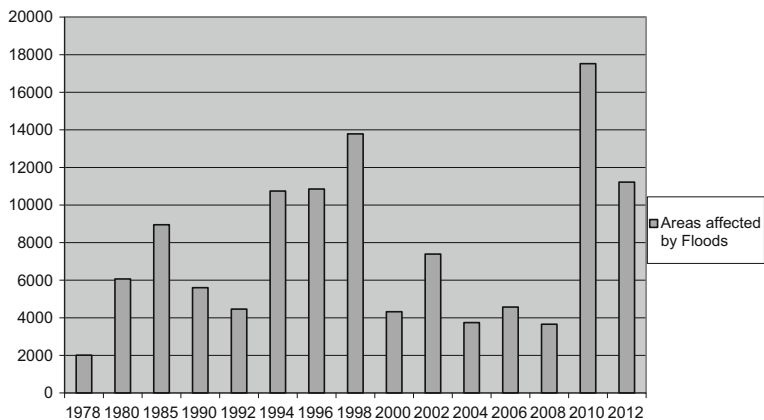


Fig. 4.2 Areas affected by floods in China (1000 hectares) (China Statistical Yearbook in various years)

and local governments for the reinforcement of the levees and for building flood storage and detention basins. China has invested heavily in the world's largest flood-control project, the Three Gorges dam completed in 2006. The government has also set up nationwide early-warning networks to monitor and identify risks and threats of meteorological, oceanic, geological, earthquake, and forest fire disasters. Influenced by the government's enhanced pre-disaster prevention thereafter and favorable climate conditions, from 1998 to 2008, the total area affected by floods in China was greatly reduced. Since 2008, however, the numbers have surged (Fig. 4.2), which could be explained by increased extreme weather in the context of climate change and local nonfeasance in maintaining water conservancy facilities.

With respect to preparedness measures, the Chinese government has not only mapped out national emergency response plans for major types of natural disasters, but also has built up a three-tiered manpower mobilization mechanism that includes professional teams, volunteers and community-based human resources to respond to disasters. In addition, the Chinese government has established special financial budgets for the response to and relief of general disasters and several central and local government departments, including civil affairs, water resources, agriculture and forestry, have established a system for stocking disaster relief materials. This system consists of ten central government stocks and local stocks in areas where disasters happen frequently (The United Nations Economic and Social Council 2008, p. 14).

Clear Assignment of Duties Inside the Bureaucracy

Local governments have been authorized by the National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief to play a substantial role in disaster relief work. The plan articulated the principle of "combination of central and regional system while giving priority to the regional system" (*tiaokuaijiche yikuaiweizhu*), requiring provincial, municipal, county-level, and township governments to take due responsibility of implementing local emergency response plans, moving disaster-hit people to safer places and reporting and assessing disaster situation (China's Government 2006, Article 6). After the Tax Sharing Reform in 1994 that greatly enhanced the fiscal capacity of local governments at various levels, regional governments have been responsible for a larger share of disaster relief expenditures.

Yet in contrast to the sharp increase of their revenues, local governments' payment growth for disaster management is still sluggish.

Horizontally, the central government has set up various inter-agency mechanisms to ensure the clear-cut division of work among involved ministries and departments. For routine jobs on disaster relief, it is the Ministry of Civil Affairs that plays the pivotal role in coordinating the work of different sectors, while in catastrophic disasters like the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake or the 2010 Yangtze River Floods, such ad hoc inter-agency panels as the Earthquake Relief Headquarters or the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters command the disaster relief campaigns. According to relevant legal documents, all the involved departments and sectors have been assigned well-defined jobs in the colossal bureaucratic system on disaster management to avoid administrative chaos, with punishment in place for the breach of duty.

Openness to International Aid and Media

One of the sharp contrasts between the disaster relief work in the Maoist era and reform period is China's gradual openness to international aid and media coverage. Many blamed the Chinese government's rejection to foreign aid for the exacerbation of the destructive consequence of the Tangshan quake in 1976. Meanwhile, before the reform period, the PRC government had regarded the death tolls in natural disasters as state secret and refused to release them to the public. Foreign media were not allowed to cover the disaster relief work on the spot at that time.

In the early 1980s the reformist leadership decided to accept foreign aid and opened its disaster relief system to the outside world, with the UN as its major institutional channel to engage the world. Year 1989 was a turning point when China joined the IDNDR initiated by the UN and set up the National Commission for the IDNDR, which later became the top-level decision-making panel on national disaster relief work. As predecessor of the National Committee for Disaster Reduction, the National Commission for the IDNDR in the 1990s had learnt a lot of modernized norms and practices in the field of disaster management through all kinds of international exchanges and activities. As a move to greater transparency, China in 2005 announced that it would no longer treat the death toll in natural disasters as a state secret, with the National Administration of State Secrets declaring the declassification of disaster-related death tolls almost at the same time (*The New York Times* 2005).

During the Sichuan Earthquake in 2008, the country's worst natural disaster in the reform period, official media provided round-the-clock coverage of the earthquake and the rescue efforts, demonstrating remarkable openness. The Chinese government not only accepted international aid and donations, but also welcomed rescue and medical teams from foreign countries to the earthquake regions.

Deploying Armed Forces Quickly

The PRC has frequently mobilized troops to combat severe disasters like floods, earthquakes, snowstorms and forest fires. Now with 2.3 million soldiers, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been institutionalized as the country's most important rescue team in major disaster relief campaigns. According to the PRC Law on National Defense that was enacted in 1997, military personnel on active duty shall "accomplish the tasks of dealing with emergencies and providing disaster relief" (PRC Law on National Defense, 1997, Article 58). During a rare snow storm that affected much of southern and central China in early 2008, 306,000 PLA soldiers plus 1.07 million militia and army reservists were mobilized in the disaster relief effort. Within hours of the Sichuan Earthquake in 2008, thousands of soldiers and policemen were being deployed, with military helicopters heading for the epicenter to help with rescue efforts. Within three days, tens of thousands of troops forged into the quake regions to pull people from the rubble.

Promoting Advanced Technology and Know-how

China today is much better equipped technologically than before to deal with natural catastrophes, with improved high-tech systems for forecasting and monitoring disasters. Since the effectiveness of disaster management relies greatly on the utilization of related technology and information, the country has taken strenuous effort to improve its knowledge and technology capacity in all fields related to disaster mitigation. Relying on meteorological, oceanic, and land resources satellites as well as ordinary aeroplanes and unmanned planes, China has been using remote sensing and satellite positioning technology for the surveillance tasks. Within two hours of the Sichuan Earthquake, a map indicating basic information about the epicenter and major affected areas had been prepared by the National Disaster Reduction Centre, an information sharing platform

under the Ministry of Civil Affairs. In the following days, 120 maps and reports derived from satellite and aeroplane images were submitted by the Centre and its cooperative partners. Manned and unmanned aeroplanes equipped with remote sensors flew over the areas hit by the quake to collect field information with a view to more effectively deploying rescue and mitigation forces and relocating affected people (The United Nations Economic and Social Council 2008, p. 6).

Compared with PRC's early experiences in disaster management, the bureaucratic system in the reform period, facilitated by all these laws, regulations and plans, gradually had a clarified assignment of duties among major departments and standardized the procedures through which the government, the armed forces, businesses and civil society plan for and reduce the impact of disasters, react during and immediately following a disaster, and take steps to recover after the disaster.

Having drawn lessons from past experiences, the Chinese government has paid intensive attention to the disaster preparedness and prevention phase, with detailed thematic disaster response plans enacted and enormous fund and resources input into precaution measures in the recent two decades. In the pre-reform period, China had no specific emergency response plan to deal with certain type of natural disasters, and neither did China classify the disasters according to their severity, controllability, and affected areas. Now besides the National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief that is applicable to relief actions for all kinds of natural disasters, ad hoc response plans including the National Emergency Response Plan for Flood and Drought Disasters, National Emergency Response Plan for Earthquake Disasters, National Emergency Response Plan for Geological Disasters and National Emergency Response Plan for Very Severe and Most Severe Forest Fire Disasters are also in place to handle specific type of disasters. According to the severity and controllability, the Chinese government has classified natural disasters and other emergency events into four response categories under the National Master Plan for Responding to Public Emergencies: (a) level I for the most severe situation, where the response is organized directly by the central government, together with the affected provincial and local governments; (b) level II for very severe events, where the relevant provincial governments are primarily responsible for organizing responses, with the assistance of the central government; (c) level III for severe events; and (d) level IV for general public emergencies, where events could be dealt with mainly by local governments, with the assistance of relevant central government

departments (The United Nations Economic and Social Council 2008, p. 9). Through the classification of natural disasters based on severity, the central government has found it easier to figure out the sum of fund that should be allocated to different disasters as well as which level of government should play a dominant role in disaster relief work.

Shifted from its insular attitudes toward foreign aid for disaster relief in the Cold War, China has been readily receiving all kinds of international donations through different channels in the reform period. The Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the non-governmental Red Cross Society of China and China Charity Federation are the major sectors involved in receiving overseas aid and donations. After the occurrence of the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, the Chinese government not only accepted international aid and donations, but also welcomed rescue and medical teams from foreign countries like Britain, France, Indonesia, Russia, and Singapore to the earthquake regions.

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Bureaucratic Politics at the Central Level

Abstract This chapter explains disaster-related bureaucratic politics at the central government level in contemporary China. Although the Ministry of Civil Affairs has been playing a pivotal role in managing natural disasters, it does not have sufficient authority, resources, and tools to prevail over other state-level agencies and stakeholders. Evidently, China's disaster management does not fit in the rational decision-making model where parochial interests often give way to overall national interest. An authoritarian centralist state in theory, China has witnessed the emergence of de facto federalism and pluralism in practice in the past three decades. Since then, its disaster management has been undergoing dramatic changes such as pluralization, decentralization, and fragmentation. Fast-growing economic stakes have led to a subsequent increase in the number and type of pressure groups involved in disaster management. This chapter focuses on major actors at the central level that have a strong voice in the disaster policymaking process, and the political and socioeconomic implications of their interactions.

Although the Ministry of Civil Affairs has been playing a pivotal role in managing natural disasters, it does not have sufficient authority, resources, and tools to prevail over other state-level agencies and stakeholders. Evidently, China's disaster management does not fit in the rational decision-making model where parochial interests often give way to overall national interest. The concept of "fragmented authoritarianism" identified by Kenneth

Lieberthal (1992) in China's decision-making provides a useful lens for viewing the processes of formulating and implementing disaster-related policies. An authoritarian centralist state in theory, China has witnessed the emergence of de facto federalism and pluralism in practice, in the past three decades. Since then, its disaster management has been undergoing dramatic changes such as pluralization, decentralization, and fragmentation. Fast-growing economic stakes have led to a subsequent increase in the number and type of pressure groups involved in disaster management. This is likely to expand substantially to include more ministries at the national level, big business entities, media, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) among other entities and individuals. This chapter will focus on major actors at the central level that have a strong voice in the disaster policymaking process, and the political and socioeconomic implications of their interactions.

CENTRAL-LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT

China's governmental structure is highly hierarchical, with political power in almost all the policy realms centralized at the top level. In a five-layer government structure, namely central, provincial, prefecture (or city), county, and township levels, each government unit above the village level has an administrative (or bureaucratic rank), which is an important reflection of power and status (Ma and Ortolano 2000, p. 14). The central government located in the capital city of Beijing is made up of a number of functional units (ministries, commissions, administration, bureaus, and departments), which are in charge of various issues such as foreign affairs, trade, education, public health, civil affairs, finance, land resources, economic projects, personnel, and environmental protection. A ministry or a commission has the same administrative rank (*buji*) as a provincial-level government. These functional units exist at the vertical chain through successively lower territorial levels of government, from ministerial-ranking at the central level down to the section-ranking at the county level. Communication between functional units at the same level has traditionally been very limited (Jahiel 1998, p. 34), with inter-ministry/commission interactions being no exception.

Like its predecessors in the ROC era, the Ministry of Civil Affairs has been playing a pivotal role in managing natural disasters in PRC politics. Despite this, this ministry does not however, have sufficient authority, resources and tools to prevail over other state departments involved in

disaster management work. Evidently, China's disaster management policy formulation does not fit in the rational decision-making model where parochial interests often give way to overall national interest. The concept of "fragmented authoritarianism" identified by Kenneth Lieberthal (1992) in China's decision-making provides a useful lens for viewing the processes of formulating and implementing disaster-related policies. An authoritarian centralist state in theory, China has witnessed the emergence of de facto federalism and plutocracy in practice, in the past three decades. Since then, its disaster management has been undergoing dramatic changes such as pluralization, decentralization, and fragmentation.

China's growing demand for better and modernized disaster management stems from its massive policy process of market reform and opening-up to the global economic system, which has led to a subsequent increase in the number and type of pressure groups involved in disaster management. This is likely to expand substantially to include more ministries at the national level, big business entities, media, local governments, and NGOs among other entities and individuals. In a national emergency response system institutionalized by the central government in the early 2000s, at least 15 central government departments, including the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Central Military Commission, were involved in five national thematic disaster response plans and emergency response plans, almost all of which had their own implementation plans and operation norms as well as specific regulatory departments to deal with related issues (The United Nations Economic and Social Council 2008, p. 9). Many large state-owned enterprises (SOEs) also have substantial stakes in disaster relief businesses. Recently the influence of the media and think tanks over the disaster-related policy process is increasing, while provincial, municipal, and even county-level authorities are becoming more active in vying for favorable policies.

There are several actors in China's central-level bureaucracy that have strong voices in the disaster management process. The China National Committee for Disaster Reduction (NCDR), headed by a State Councilor, is a key entity in this regard. It is a top inter-agency mechanism in charge of disaster management, and composed of 20-plus ministers and commissioners (Table 5.1). The Ministry of Civil Affairs plays a pivotal role in coordinating other NCDR institutional members and takes on routine administrative jobs of the NCDR. The Minister of Civil Affairs has always been acting as a Deputy Director of the NCDR, while a vice minister of

Table 5.1 Components of the China National Committee for Disaster Reduction (NCDR) (China's State Council General Office 2013)

NCDR Director: State Councillor Wang Yong
NCDR Deputy Directors: Minister of Civil Affairs Li Liguo
PLA Deputy Chief of General Staff Zhang Qinsheng
State Council Deputy Secretary-General Ding Xuedong
NCDR Secretary-General (Director of the NCDR Office): Vice Minister of Civil Affairs Jiang Li
NCDR Members: Deputy Chief of the Party's Central Propaganda Department Sun Zhijun
Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Ma Chaoxu
Deputy Director of National Development and Reform Commission Du Ying
Vice Minister of Education Lu Xin
Vice Minister of Science and Technology Wang Weizhong
Chief Engineer at Ministry of Industry and Information Technology Zhu Hongren
Vice Minister of Public Security Liu Jinguo
Vice Minister of Finance Wang Baoan
Vice Minister of Land and Resources Wang Min
Vice Minister of Environmental Protection Li Ganjie
Vice Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development Guo Yunchong
Vice Minister of Transport Feng Zhenglin
Vice Minister of Water Resources Liu Ning
Vice Minister of Agriculture Yu Xinrong
Assistant Minister of Commerce Yu Jianhua
Deputy Director of the National Health and Family Planning Commission Xu Ke
Vice-Chairman of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) Huang Shuhe
Deputy Director of State Administration of Radio, Film and Television Nie Chenxi
Deputy Director of State Administration of Work Safety Wang Dexue
Deputy Director of National Bureau of Statistics Zhang Weimin
Deputy Director of National Bureau of Forestry Zhang Jianlong
Vice President of Chinese Academy of Sciences Ding Zhongli
Deputy Director of the China Earthquake Administration Zhao Heping
Deputy Director of China Meteorological Administration Jiao Meiyao
Assistant Director of China Insurance Regulatory Commission Li Jinfu
Vice President of the National Natural Science Foundation of China Liu Congqiang
Deputy Director of State Oceanic Administration Wang Hong
Deputy Director of National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geoinformation Min Yiren
Deputy Chief of the Armed Police Force Xue Guoqiang
Executive Secretary of China Association for Science and Technology Xu Yanhao
Vice President of the Red Cross Society of China Zhao Baige

Civil Affairs holds the post of secretary-general of NCDR concurrently (China's State Council General Office 2013). Apart from that, there are other key institutional actors inside the NCDR whose voices the top leadership cannot neglect: the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the Party's Central Propaganda Department, the People's Armed Police, the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC), as well as powerful ministries and commissions in the State Council like the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Agriculture, China Meteorological Administration, State Administration of Work Safety, China Earthquake Administration, and State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (China's State Council General Office 2013). All these organizations send their own senior officials as members of the NCDR, while the PLA delegates a deputy Chief of General Staff as a deputy director of NCDR. Such an institutional arrangement indicates that in the NCDR hierarchy, the military, like the Ministry of Civil Affairs, enjoys larger say and overarching power over other institutional peers in the matter of disaster management.

Although governance issues in Chinese politics are usually organized vertically in what are called *xitong* (systems) (Bachman 1998, pp. 34–38), the strength of the *jiuzai xitong* (disaster relief system) has been constantly impaired by horizontal conflicts with formidable institutional players in other systems. The hierarchical components of the *jiuzai xitong* include the NCDR at the top that formulates disaster management strategy and coordinates relevant ministries, departments, and entities, with the Ministry of Civil Affairs playing a central role and taking charge of detailed policy formulation, daily coordination, and secretarial work inside the NCDR and long-term strategic planning for national disaster management. However, representatives from the Ministry of Civil Affairs and NCDR Secretariat have often failed to dominate the decision-making process even inside this system due to strong political and economic influences from other powerful players like the PLA, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Red Cross Society of China. Although basic staff support for the NCDR is mainly provided by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the NCDR institutional members include almost all the cabinet ministries inside the State Council and other relevant stakeholders. Its diversified components have revealed that China's top-level disaster policy making is a complicated process that absorbs viewpoints from various

institutional players as opposed to being an exclusively managed by disaster relief professionals. In recent years, although NGOs and the emerging civil society have become visible players, their roles and functions are still marginal under China's state-centric political systems.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs receives most of its funding from the State Council via the Ministry of Finance, and is supported in its efforts to formulate national disaster relief policy and laws by China's top legislature, National People's Congress and its Standing Committee. The Ministry of Civil Affairs has proved to be a weak unit inside the State Council, compared with other peer-level ministries or commissions endowed with important economic or political power, such as the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce, or the NDRC. China's "development first" strategy makes those economic departments inside the government play a dominant role in the inter-agency decision-making games while those with social and environmental functions play minor roles. In its interaction with more powerful party organizations like the Central Propaganda Department or the PLA, the Ministry of Civil Affairs is even in a more inferior position as these organizations not only have higher rankings in the party-state hierarchy, but also are outside the State Council system and thus immune from any leadership in the administrative apparatus. The exact role of the Ministry of Civil Affairs in China's disaster management mechanism is therefore to coordinate rather than to lead the relief effort jointly made by various institutional players. Whenever there is divergence among these organizations, the Ministry of Civil Affairs cannot place any order or make any decision upon the issue; instead, it needs to report the inter-agency dispute to top authorities in the NCDR or even in the Party's Politburo for final decisions.

Like many other countries, China's response to disaster mitigation is intertwined with its disaster-related policy process, in which even the powerful NCDR leadership lacks the authority, resources, and tools to prevail over other state or party departments. Since the past 30 years, China's disaster relief bureaucracy has undergone periodic restructuring in order to establish a central agency aimed at ending the splintering of relief-related authority among multiple institutions. It has however, been unable to do so despite the growing importance of disaster management in China's domestic and foreign agendas. In early 1980s, the Ministry of Civil Affairs was in charge of disaster relief only in rural areas, while the State Economic Commission (SEC) had the power to coordinate all the disaster management work at the national level. In 1988, when the SEC was abolished in a large-scale administrative reform, such function was

shifted to the State Planning Commission, another economic planning department, which later transferred this function to the State Economic and Trade Commission established in 1993. In 1998, the State Economic and Trade Commission officially handed over the function of organizing and coordinating disaster relief work to the non-economic Ministry of Civil Affairs, which since then has institutionalized its pivotal role in managing natural disasters in China. Such an institutional evolution indicated that in most of the time in 1980s and 1990s, the government perceived the disaster relief work mainly as a part of the country's economic development, with its social functions being overlooked during that period.

China's institutionalization of its top-level disaster management mechanism was to a large extent spurred by its growing engagement with the international community since 1980s. Inspired by the United Nations resolution to designate the 1990s as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR), the Chinese government founded the National Commission for the International Decade on Natural Disaster Reduction in 1989, which soon became the top-level decision-making panel to command and coordinate disaster relief work scattered throughout different ministries and departments. In 2000, as soon as the IDNDR was over, it was renamed the China Commission for International Disaster Reduction, which turned out to be a regular inter-agency coordination body under the State Council rather than an interim organization in answer to the call from the United Nations. In January of 2005, it was renamed the China NCDR. Since then, the Chinese government has formalized the NCDR as the top inter-agency mechanism in charge of disaster management, with the Ministry of Civil Affairs taking on routine jobs of the NCDR and playing a central role in coordinating work done by various ministries and sectors.

All this bureaucratic restructuring, however, did not fundamentally change the scattered responsibility and authority among multiple powerful stakeholders. Turf battles among various party/government/military institutions have sometimes led to miscommunications, fund default, and delay of rescue actions. Disaster management functions in China has been scattered among more than a dozen of ministries and organizations in the party-state system. It's the Ministry of Civil Affairs that collects and releases the latest disaster situation information, manages and distributes the aid fund and materials from the central government, cooperates with other departments in relocating disaster-hit people, prepares the national level food and rescue material reservation, organizes public donations, and undertakes international cooperation in this area (China's Ministry

of Civil Affairs 2010), but some of these functions overlap with the tasks assigned to other central or local organizations. The Ministry's functions of distributing relief fund and materials duplicate the missions of similar kind that also go to the Red Cross Society or the local government. The Ministry of Civil Affairs' international cooperation function also overlaps the similar roles played by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, and the Red Cross Society. The PLA has been institutionalized as the country's most important rescue team in disaster relief campaigns, but the troops in most cases only listen to their military superiors instead of local civilian authorities that often need to coordinate rescue forces from different sources. The Ministry of Finance formulates the yearly budget for national disaster relief, supervises the use of such funds, and provides special funds for severe disasters, but it does not have the authority to allocate or oversee the relief fund and materials used by the military. The Ministry of Agriculture is in charge of the provision of agricultural materials such as fertilizers and diesel in the disaster-hit regions and helps peasants produce grains in the recovery phase, but in terms of irrigation or water conservancy works located in rural areas, the Ministry of Agriculture may have turf wars with the Ministry of Water Resources, which is assigned with tasks of fighting floods and droughts and undertaking the administrative work of the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters, another inter-agency mechanism to cope with severe floods and droughts. In coping with frequently-seen meteorological disasters like floods and droughts in China, the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters, coordinated by the Ministry of Water Resources, may clash with the NCDR mechanism that is coordinated by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and applicable to all sorts of natural disasters. In most campaigns against floods and droughts, it is the Ministry of Water Resources rather than the Ministry of Civil Affairs that plays a central role in coordinating various institutional players. The Ministry of Civil Affairs, therefore, actually has very limited powers in dealing with disaster mitigation issues if the high frequency of floods and droughts in China is taken into account.

INTERACTION AMONG THE PARTY, THE ADMINISTRATION, AND THE MILITARY

China's unique one-party political system predetermines the country's governance quality in many issue areas. Concerning the interrelations among the ruling party, the cabinet (State Council), and the military

(PLA), the Communist Party of China always plays a predominant role in all decision-making processes with its ruling status stipulated by the Constitution and its members penetrating into the ministries and military departments and. It is efficient to enforce central policies in various parts of the vast territory at various levels under such unitary political system, but this also causes intractable governance problems such as lack of supervision, corruption, and constant conflicts between the Party and the government and between the government and the military. In terms of disaster governance, the growing attention paid by the Party at the central level to the mitigation has mobilized the whole governmental and military system to make all-out effort in the area, but even in such a monolithic power structure, the country's disaster politics has been undergoing dramatic changes such as pluralization, decentralization, and fragmentation. The officials from the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the chief actor in the disaster relief bureaucracy, has often found themselves incapable of dominating the NCDR that also includes representatives from other cabinet ministries and powerful party-military departments like the Central Propaganda Department, the PLA, and the People's Armed Police. For coordination with those peer-level ministries or commissions inside the State Council, the Ministry of Civil Affairs can still resort to the leadership of the State Council if there are divergences between them. Nevertheless, this approach will not always work if the Ministry of Civil Affairs finds certain party or military departments uncooperative. Although these organizations also have their representatives sit in the NCDR, they are not part of the State Council (administrative) system and therefore do not necessarily need to obey orders from a State Councilor, vice-premier, or even the Premier of the State Council. The PLA and the People's Armed Police are under the direct command of the Central Military Commission, in which the Premier, vice-premiers, and State Councilors usually has no say due to their civilian status. The Party's Central Propaganda Department, which controls the censorship over all the press release and media reports during and after disasters, is a major party apparatus at the top level that reports its work directly to the Party's Politburo and its Standing Committee. The powerful and secretive Central Propaganda Department communicates with other State Council ministries or commissions via the Information Office of the State Council, a ministerial-level organization that is under the dual leadership of both the Central Propaganda Department and the State Council. As the Central Propaganda Department itself is the top authority of the Propaganda and Education System (*xuanjiao xitong*) and

has a central, guiding role over the whole of Chinese society (Brady 2006, p. 58), the State Council and its ministries usually do not have the mandate to interfere with the work done by central propagandists.

The NCDR's diversified components have revealed that China's top-level disaster governance is a complicated process that absorbs viewpoints from various institutional players as opposed to being a solo exclusively played by disaster mitigation professionals. Adding to this complexity, experts from universities, research organizations and academies, chief executives of SOEs, bank directors, local government officials, and leading media representatives operate on the margins of the traditional centralized party-state and try to influence China's disaster management from top down to the grass root in the multi-layer structure. In a state-centric country like China, the party-state rather than the civil society plays a dominant role in disaster mitigation, thus when the party-state institutions have innate perplexities, the efficiency and effectiveness of disaster management will sometimes be hampered.

MINISTRY OF CIVIL AFFAIRS VERSUS GOVERNMENT-ORGANIZED NGOS

When the Chinese government started to deepen its reform and opening-up in the 1980s, civil activities became frequent and all kinds of NGOs working for public and special interests mushroomed. Although many of these NGOs have also become increasingly visible players in China's disaster relief politics, their roles and functions are still quite restraint under China's current state-centric political systems, and therefore, they are not as strong and influential as their international peers. In response to growing civil demand for deeper participation in disaster mitigation missions, the Chinese government has robustly supported the dominant roles played by government-organized NGOs (GONGOs) in leading people-to-people humanitarian aid and charity activities in the aftermath of disasters. In the state-centered country, GONGOs definitely enjoy much more political and financial advantages and policy convenience compared to other NGOs, but this kind of government background also restrains their role as a third force against the state and market.

According to the regulations on the registration and management of NGOs and non-profit organizations, which were promulgated by the Chinese government in 1998, any NGO to be established in China needed to be registered to the Ministry of Civil Affairs and have a spon-

soring governmental institution (Jin 2001, pp. 5–8). However, such strict government control and restrictions over NGOs do not necessarily apply to powerful GONGOs like the Red Cross Society of China, China Soong Ching Ling Foundation, and China Disabled Persons' Federation, some of which have been playing substantial roles in organizing disaster-related fund-raising and distribution of aid materials. Since these three GONGOs, among others, are exempted from the requirement of being registered to the Ministry of Civil Affairs (China's Ministry of Civil Affairs 2000), they are granted with such special political status that they have the freedom to act independently in disaster relief missions and ignore supervision from the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

The Red Cross Society of China, probably the country's most privileged NGO in which paramount leaders including Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao had been the honorary chairman, has its prerogative role in humanitarian social relief secured by China's Red Cross Law, which was promulgated by the Standing Committee of National People's Congress in 1993 to provide legal basis for the special political status of the Chinese Red Cross and its close ties with the government. In 1999, the Charter of the Red Cross Society of China was amended to include the item that "China's President should concurrently hold the position of the honorary chairman of the Red Cross Society of China," which consolidated the organization's supreme political position that no ministries or other government regulators dared to challenge (*The Epoch Times* 2015, p. 2). Such an item was removed in May 2015 when Chinese President Xi Jinping refused to serve as its honorary chairman and appointed Li Yuanchao, the vice president of China, to hold the honorary position. Xi's decision came after the public image of China's Red Cross had been severely damaged since 2011 by a scandal revealed online that was linked to a woman known as Guo Meimei, who may have traded on a presumed connection through a company called Red Cross Commerce and bragged of her luxurious lifestyle, posting photos of expensive cars and luxury accessories on Sina Weibo, China's most popular Twitter-like microblog service. Meanwhile, it was widely circulated on the social media that following the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, at least 84 million yuan in donations managed by China's Red Cross had been misappropriated (*The Epoch Times* 2015, p. 2).

The Red Cross Society of China, usually headed by a powerful political figure of vice-premier ranking, is de facto a government organization in the name of an NGO with a privileged position higher than many cabinet ministries like the Ministry of Civil Affairs in the party-state system.

Besides, unlike all the other humanitarian aid and charity entities, the Red Cross Society of China is the only organization of such kind that has a position in the elite NCDR, which guarantees its special advantages in getting relevant information and government support for its work like fund-raising and dispatch of medical teams during the period of disasters. After major devastating catastrophes like the Yangtze River Floods in 1998 and Sichuan Earthquake in 2008, it was the Red Cross Society of China that did the majority part of fund-raising in the society. Before 2008, it was not only unrealistic for other civic organizations to compete with the Red Cross Society of China, but also unpractical for other ministries like the Ministry of Civil Affairs or the National Audit Office in the central government to supervise disaster-related activities done by the Red Cross Society of China, whose chairperson has a higher political ranking than most ministers.

Other influential GONGOs like the China Soong Ching Ling Foundation and China Disabled Persons' Federation also have close political ties with the top leadership and special political privileges that facilitate their relief work and charity actions. Many of these GONGOs are not registered to the Ministry of Civil Affairs, which has little say in their daily operations and management. The China Soong Ching Ling Foundation, for example, is also a politically powerful GONGO that plays an active role in raising funds and making donations in catastrophic events. Established in May 1982 in commemoration of Soong Ching Ling, the late Honorary President of the People's Republic of China, the Foundation has established extensive overseas partnership with social organizations in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, and other parts of the world (China Soong Ching Ling Foundation 2008). With Deng Xiaoping, late paramount leader being its first honorary chairman and retired party patriarchs as its chairpersons, the China Soong Ching Ling Foundation has special political privilege equivalent to the Red Cross Society of China that cannot be infringed by other ministry-level regulatory or coordinating departments in the disaster politics. According to its Charter, the Foundation receives donations from governmental, NGOs, army units, enterprises, institutions, and individuals in Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and the Mainland of China, as well as donations from overseas Chinese, foreign organizations, and individuals (China Soong Ching Ling Foundation 2008). China Disabled Persons' Federation is another elite social organization with about 120 thousand full-time employees nationwide (China Disabled Persons' Federation 2008) and special political status in fostering humanitarian aid in society.

Deng Pufang, son of late leader Deng Xiaoping, has long been serving as Honorary Chairperson of China Disabled Persons' Federation, which is commissioned by the Chinese government to supervise the administration of disability-related affairs and represents China on the issue of disabilities in the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The Red Cross Society of China, China Soong Ching Ling Foundation, and China Disabled Persons' Federation, among others, all played very active roles in receiving donations, distributing fund, and dispatching food, water, and rescue staff to disaster-stricken areas during the Sichuan Earthquake in 2008 and some other catastrophes.

As most of these privileged social organizations at the central level are beyond the sphere of influence of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, it decided to establish its own nationwide non-governmental charity organization called China Charity Federation in 1994. With all its members claiming to work on a voluntary basis and a semi-retired Vice Minister of Civil Affairs acting as its chairman, the China Charity Federation has a clarified mission of delivering needed assistance at the scene of natural disasters and increasing public awareness of the great difficulties faced by many members of the society (China Charity Federation 2015). China Charity Federation, while routinely receiving guidance and support from expertise in the Ministry of Civil Affairs, has proven to be more professional in disaster relief actions compared with many other charity organizations like the China Soong Ching Ling Foundation and China Disabled Persons' Federation. It has been subject to the leadership of the Ministry of Civil Affairs and auditing work done by the National Audit Office in major disaster relief missions. Nevertheless, those GONGOs that do not need to be registered to the Ministry of Civil Affairs often behave like independent kingdoms when being involved in humanitarian and charity activities due to high ranking of their leaders and strong connections to China's political elites.

These Beijing-based GONGOs have special networking advantages in disaster mitigation due to their extensive connections with many social organizations in various Chinese localities and also in foreign countries. China Soong Ching Ling Foundation has been vigorously working on the partnership with other social organizations in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao, and those established by overseas Chinese in other countries. China Charity Federation has over 260 affiliates throughout China and has established cooperative relations with about 200 charity organizations throughout 46 countries (China Charity Federation 2015). Compared to other government-organized social organizations, the Red

Cross Society of China has been more active internationally due to its legitimate membership in the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and its frequent exchanges and cooperation with other sister national Red Cross societies. The broad overseas outreach of these government-organized social organizations has been complementary to the domestic-oriented functions of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, which often has to resort to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Commerce for expanding international exchanges. Meanwhile all these social organizations have been competing fiercely with one another on the access to local and overseas donations, with the Red Cross Society of China always having an upper hand and China Charity Federation quickly catching up.

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Central Versus Local

Abstract This chapter studies the interaction between the central government and the localities in disaster management, as well as the real impact upon the local disaster resilience. As in other policy realms, China's disaster management process, to a large extent, is still vertically organized. Since local governments in China had no power to raise revenue and most of their expenditures were disbursed by the central government in a strict top-down system prior to 1980, the central government had to be responsible for allocating the relief fund to any place that had encountered natural disasters. After China in 1994 introduced the Tax Sharing System with which local governments were allowed to share tax revenues with the central government, local governments at all levels also started to disburse more expenditures on disaster management. Local governments today shoulder about 30 % of China's total fiscal expenditure on disaster management, which is much higher than the ratio in the pre-1994 period. Yet they are still being pressured to pay more for disaster relief so as to ease the fiscal burden upon the central government. This chapter focuses on the dynamic relationship between the central and local governments at various levels and on the influences of decentralization upon the effectiveness of China's disaster management system.

People's resilience to natural disasters is fundamentally local, which involves the strengths a local government and community develop to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters (Ross 2014, p. 1). Since disaster is always a local problem, an axiomatic principle is that the remedy in terms

of protection and relief must be applied at the grassroots level of local communities and administrations (Alexander 2006, p. 11). Local capacity-building and solutions to disaster management therefore are essential for the effectiveness of risk management, disaster responses, and recovery efforts, but in today's interconnected and bureaucracy-laden disaster management field, local disaster resilience is often constrained by limited fiscal and human resources, unengaged citizens, and conflicting local government priorities (Ross 2014, p. 2). In the dynamics of China's intriguing central-local relations, local authorities since early 1990s have successfully gained greater political and fiscal autonomy in dealing with local issues that include disaster mitigation jobs. Nevertheless, in a still centralized one-party political system, local apparatus is not prepared to play an independent role in most disaster response and recover actions. As in other policy realms, China's disaster management process, to a large extent, is still vertically organized. In the overall structural environment of China's central-local relations, three categories of disaster-related interactions between the central and local governments of different levels can be identified, namely coercion, bargaining, and reciprocity. Zheng (2007, p. 32) has called such an overall structural environment of China's central-local relations "de facto federalism," in which three sub-structures, that is, formal organizations, procedures, and norms, play determinant roles in shaping central-local interactions. This chapter discusses how these structural and institutional factors regulate the interaction between the center and the localities in disaster management, as well as the real impact upon the local disaster resilience.

HOW DECENTRALIZATION AFFECTS LOCAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Prior to 1980, local governments in PRC had no power to raise revenue and most of their expenditures were disbursed by the central government in a strict top-down system in which the central government had to be responsible for allocating the relief fund to any place that had encountered natural disasters. The central government, instead of local governments from the provincial down to the township level, was playing a predominant role in disaster prevention and relief work in the pre-reform era. In the early stage of reform and openness, inter-governmental decentralization between the central and local governments at various levels started to burgeon, which had a significant impact upon the central-local division

of work and distribution of fund and relief materials in disaster politics. In the 1980s and early 1990s, local governments gradually assumed control of their own revenue and expenditure under a contractual fiscal system characterized by defining a fixed sum paid to or received from the central government (Lin 2000, pp. 477–490; Loo and Chow 2006, pp. 215–216). Nevertheless, most disaster relief funds still came from the central government. From 1983 to 1994, 85 % of the disaster relief funds used in Anhui Province were allocated by the central government, while only about 15 % came from the provincial and county-level governments (Sun 2004, p. 192).

In spite of the growing role played by local governments in the process, the central government in 1980s and early 1990s was still the cardinal actor that commanded local rescue and recovery operations and made all the key decisions concerning dispatch of rescue teams, allocation of relief fund and materials, and implementation of mitigation strategies. The State Council was the chief command responsible for all the detailed response and recovery plans in catastrophes like the devastating Forest Fire in northeast China in 1987 and the Yunnan Earthquake in 1988. Nevertheless, local governments, with no special departments to manage disasters, still played a minor and complementary role on the side-lines of these rescue missions.

The watershed came in September 1989, when the State Council issued a circular that asked provincial governments to establish disaster relief offices inside their general offices, with regular staff in these offices charged with tasks of coordination, supervision, and information exchanges regarding local disaster management (China's State Council 1989). This circular highlighted the principle of “prioritizing localities with national aid as supplements” (*yi defang weizhu, guojia fuzhu weifu*) for the guidance of central–local relations in disaster management, which laid out an important institutional foundation for subsequent decentralization process in the disaster relief area. It for the first time drew a clear line between the relief duties of provincial governments and those of the central government, stipulating that provincial governments rather than the central government should provide the majority of relief fund and materials in major natural catastrophic events (China's State Council 1989). The central government, instead, was only responsible for the supply of some subsidies to the devastating natural disasters, subsidies for anti-flood and anti-drought purposes and special categories of relief materials including fertilizer, diesel oil, gasoline, timber, steel, cement,

plastic, and tires (China's State Council 1989). Such a policy change was a direct response from the Chinese government to the United Nations' resolution to designate the 1990s as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, which demanded a more active role played by localities in disaster reduction work.

The National Work Conference on Disaster Relief in 1993 formally proposed the target of setting up new disaster management system in which relevant relief tasks and fund were borne by various layers of governments (*fenji guanli, fenji chengdan*) (Sun 2004, p. 171). The localization and decentralization of China's disaster management actually were synchronous with the country's macro-level decentralization that redefined the specific functions and powers of the local governments, and thereafter became the source of Chinese-style de facto federalism (Zheng 2007, p. 41), in which provincial, municipal, county, and township governments were endowed with much larger political and fiscal powers in handling local socioeconomic affairs. Such decentralization, which helped China to transform a command economy to a mixed market economy, not only had significant impact upon central-local government relations, but also generated dynamism for changes in state and society relations in later stages. After China introduced the Tax Sharing System (*fenshui zhi*) in 1994 with which local governments were allowed to share tax revenues with the central government, local governments at all levels also started to disburse more expenditures on disaster management. Local governments today shoulder about 30 % of China's total fiscal expenditure on disaster management, which is much higher than the ratio in the pre-1994 period. Yet even today they are still being pressured by Beijing to pay more for disaster relief so as to ease the fiscal burden upon the central government.

REDISTRIBUTION OF FUND AND RESOURCES: A CORE ISSUE

The redistribution of fund and resources among various stakeholders has always been the core issue related to the effectiveness of disaster management. Besides the turf wars at the central level, the involvement of multi-layer local governments further aggrandizes the struggle for fund and resources in China's disaster management. The long-time marginalization of local governments in PRC's disaster management proved to be both a bane and boon for local leaders. On the one hand, local officials who saw disasters occur within their jurisdiction and were part of the closest stakeholders in disaster relief missions could only play a very passive

role in disaster relief and recover, often finding themselves being excluded from the process of decision-making, organization, and coordination. On the other hand, limited power came with limited responsibilities. Local governments at all levels had not been obliged to provide relief fund and materials, with most of the financial and personnel resources dispatched by the central government before the political decentralization took place in late 1980s. Under this central-planning style of disaster management, central leaders usually relied on disaster information and data reported by local cadres level by level (usually down from township level to county level, from county to prefecture/municipality level, from prefecture to provincial level, and finally from provincial to the central level) for their decision-making on the distribution of fund and resources, and in many cases, local cadres tended to exaggerate disaster situation when making reports to their superior-level government for the purpose of getting larger shares of fund and resources (Chart 6.1).

For the competition among various levels of governments for fund and resources allocated by the central government, it is almost a zero-sum game as provincial, prefectural, and county governments contributed very little fund and materials from their own budget toward the disaster relief missions of subordinate levels of government. A provincial government would redistribute the centrally allocated fund among different subordinate municipalities, while the provincial government itself didn't contribute much of its own revenue for disaster relief in its jurisdiction. Similarly, a municipal government would redistribute the received fund among various subordinate counties, and a county government would redistribute the fund among its townships. During this top-down allocation of fund and resources, each level of government seldom passed all the received fund and resources to the subordinate governments, with a considerable share being kept at this level for their officials' own use. As almost all the subordinate governments had the expectation that their superior-level of governments would retain some centrally allocated fund, they were inclined to exaggerate the disaster damages even more when reporting to the above levels of governments in order to offset such retention effect.

When the central government started the decentralization process in the 1980s, the fiscal strengthen of local governments at various layers got consolidated through expansion of local tax revenues. However, the above-mentioned pyramid of fund and resource allocation remained barely changed as all the local governments still relied on the central government for most of the fund and resources needed in disaster management. From

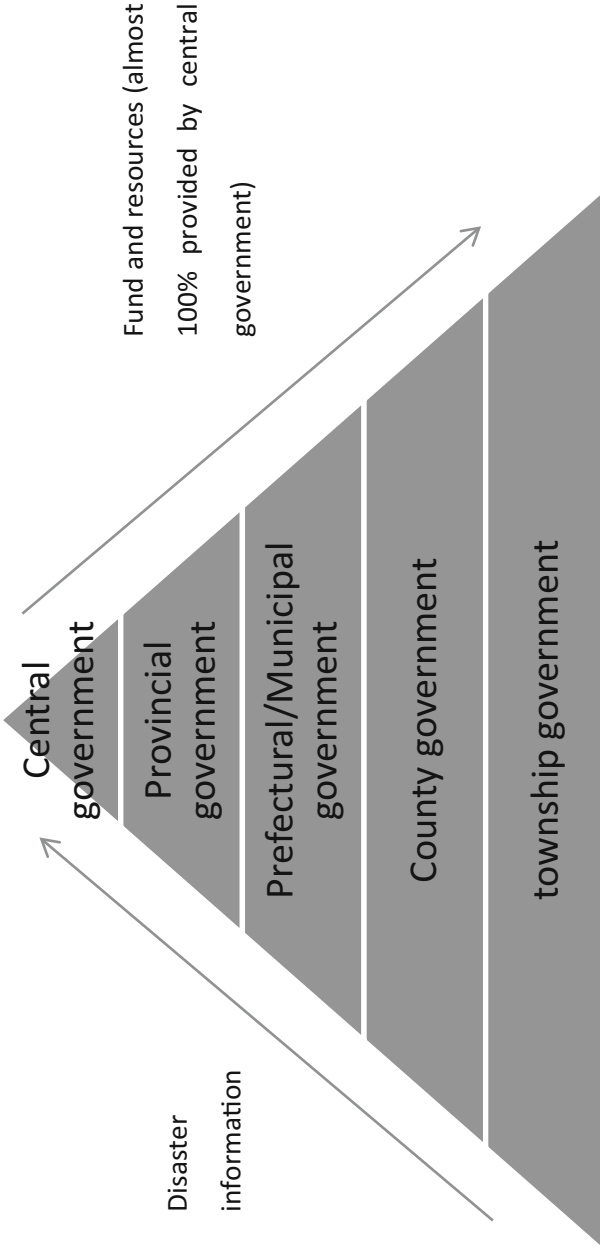


Chart 6.1 Inter-governments information flow and relief fund and resource distribution before decentralization

1983 to 1994, 85 % of the disaster relief funds used in Anhui Province were allocated by the central government, while only about 15 % came from the provincial and county-level governments (Sun 2004, p. 192). Yet the revenue collected by the central government during that period only accounted for about 30 % of the total government revenues, with the lion's share being reaped by local governments.

Over-burdened by the soaring fiscal expenses for disaster relief, the central government decided to change the rules of games through redefining the distribution of authority and responsibilities between central and local governments. On the one hand, all levels of local governments were allowed to play active roles in local preparedness, emergency response, rescue, relief, and recovery, while on the other hand, they were required to contribute much more from their own revenues to disaster management. A local bureau of civil affairs were required to compile annual disaster relief budget for the same level of government, and when catastrophic events occurred, the local bureau of finance needed to allocate special fund and resources for emergency use. In the new pyramid of relief fund and resource distribution (Chart 6.2), municipal, county, and township governments not only received subsidies allocated by the central government, they also got financial and material aid from their above-level governments. In the

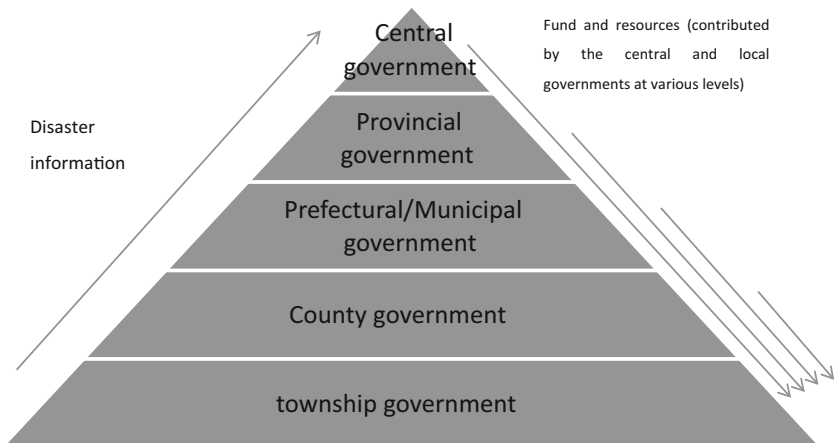


Chart 6.2 Inter-governments information flow and relief fund and resource distribution after decentralization

new system, the fiscal burden of the central government has been greatly alleviated, while the provincial governments are obliged to spend more on local disaster management. Like the provincial government, municipal and county governments are required to contribute part of their local revenues to disaster relief causes.

The decentralization process was supposed to weaken the central government's role in national disaster management, but in practice, when the country is facing devastating natural disasters that need nationwide aid and cross-provincial-border allocation of materials and rescue personnel, the central government has still been playing a pivotal role in organizing rescue and relief operations and allocating fund and strategic resources. In order to reduce the time cost of transporting relief materials over long distances, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of China has set up the central system of material reserve for disaster relief since 1998, with centrally controlled stations of material reserve being built in some big cities (Shi et al. 2007, p. 12). For instance, massive emergency aid materials are being regularly stored in Chengdu and Kunming City for contingency events in the vast territory of southwest China, and other similar reserve points can be found in cities like Harbin, Shenyang, Tianjin, and Zhengzhou, which will function when disasters hit the populous northern China (Zhang and Zhao 2015, p. 337). Although these emergency aid materials including tents, quilts, rice, and mineral water theoretically can be sent out to people in nearby disaster-hit areas within 24 hours, the dispatch of these locally stored materials still needs the approval from the Ministry of Civil Affairs in the central government in most contingency cases. The applications have to go through each level of governments (township, county, municipal, provincial) before they could reach the decision-makers in the Ministry of Civil Affairs (Chart 6.3).

Inter-governmental political and economic decentralization was significant for local disaster resilience, since the provinces, municipalities, counties, and even townships had the authority not only to deal with local disaster mitigation affairs, but also to influence decision-making at the upper levels of governments. Since economic resilience is the ability of local communities to withstand financial disruption and cushion themselves against damage and loss (Rose 2006, pp. 226–245), such a decentralization process implemented by strong centralized leadership (Hasegawa 1992, p. 69) strengthened local economic, institutional, infrastructure, and ecological capacities (Ross 2014, pp. 13–15) in handling disasters. Yet local officials did not necessarily welcome the power and

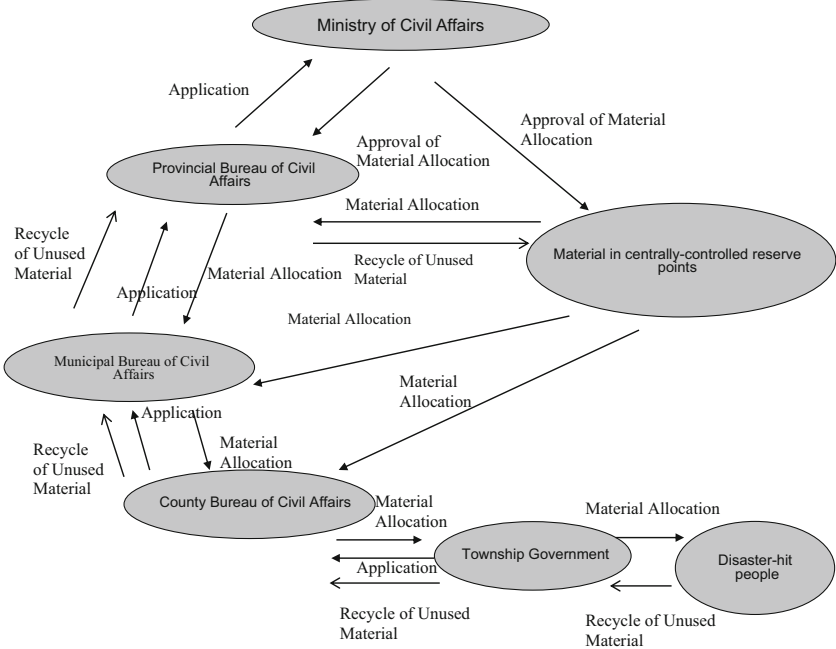


Chart 6.3 Application process for centrally-controlled relief materials in local reserve points (Sun 2004, p. 229)

responsibility sharing in this field, as the decentralization would surely increase local expenses on disaster management, and more importantly, local bureaucrats were more accountable for local disaster management results. In a centralized system of cadre promotion, local officials had to bear more unshirkable responsibilities which may add risks to their political careers. While local governments increased their power bases vis-à-vis the central government in the beginning of the decentralization, they were more interested in gaining authority over local economic affairs than in responsibility to handle social and civic affairs, of which disaster management was a typical case and aggregated local fiscal burdens.

The bargaining between the central and local governments over refined division of relief responsibilities has been going on for a long time, with the central government trying to resort to both coercion and reciprocity to solve the issue. On the one hand, the central government was using the

internationally recognized norm of localizing disaster management as an external pressure to force local governments to be more involved. On the other hand, the Tax Sharing System (*fenshuiizhi*) in 1994 greatly expanded revenue sources for local governments, which were able to spend a portion of their revenue increase on local disaster reduction causes. Nevertheless, even in such an emerging structure of de facto federalism, the power relations between the central and local governments have never been clearly defined in legal documents, with the blurred line of division often being made use of by local governments to shirk responsibilities and gain more fiscal aid.

After rounds of bargaining between central and various provincial governments, the State Council temporarily worked out a fiscal burden sharing scheme concerning relief fund for catastrophic contingencies in January 2011. According to that regulation that redefined central–local fiscal responsibilities in the era of decentralization, the central government was no longer responsible for almost all the subsidies granted to people in catastrophe-hit areas; instead, the central government should pay 50 % and economically vibrant places like Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Guangdong had to share the other half of disaster subsidies (China’s Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Civil Affairs 2011, Article 18). For the provinces of medium-level economic development like Liaoning, Fujian, and Shandong, the central government should pay 60 % while provincial governments had to pay 40 %. Those least-developed provinces, including Hebei, Shanxi, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Hainan, Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia, and Xinjiang, only needed to pay 30 % and the central government should pay as much as 70 % of the fund needed in major natural disasters (China’s Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Civil Affairs 2011, Article 18).

WEAKNESS IN LOCAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENTS

Besides the turf wars at the central level, growing involvement of local governments further aggrandizes the fragmentation and decentralization in China’s disaster politics. Like what has been happening at the central level, provincial, municipal, and county-level disaster-related policy making and implementation have been scattered among various departments and bureaus. This includes local Bureaus of Civil Affairs (subsidiaries of

Ministry of Civil Affairs) as well as peer-level finance, economic planning, water resources, agricultural, meteorological, earthquake, transportation, and environmental protection bureaus. When performing their social management duties, bureaus of civil affairs at various local levels are often in a disadvantageous position vis-à-vis their peers with economic functions. In most cases, it is the local government, not the higher levels of civil affairs apparatus, that provides local disaster relief agencies with their annual budgetary funds, approves institutional promotions and determines increases in personnel and even allocation of resources such as cars, office buildings, and employee housing.

Local leaders, including the party bosses and administrative chiefs, all treat economic growth as top priority and are more willing to put hefty fiscal resources into economic development fields like manufacturing, infrastructure, and property construction instead of social causes including disaster mitigation. Local governments at various levels sometimes do not follow their superiors' instructions when allocating relief and recovery funds. Meanwhile, the central and local governments often have different perceptions of the importance of disaster management. Obsessed with high-speed economic growth, which has become a major indicator to measure the performance of administrative chiefs, local governments at various levels pay much more attention to glamorous industrial and urban projects instead of disaster preparation and relief projects. Due to insufficient funding from local budgets, some remote seismological observatories and disaster reduction facilities cannot be maintained (Jinan Times 2013). The earthquake in 2008 and floods and mudslides in 2010 can be considered timely wake-up calls for the government on the need to pay more attention to the development of local disaster reduction infrastructure that has lagged behind the expansion of urban areas and urban population growth. High-speed economic growth is not only an important index of local officials' performances and linked to their future promotion prospects, but it also increases local fiscal revenues and benefits local officialdom materially as a whole. Disaster management, nevertheless, usually cannot make significant contributions toward local GDP (gross domestic product) growth; on the contrary, in the eyes of many local officials, such social management function as disaster management diverts some local financial and human resources from being invested into economic realms.

In each provincial, municipal, or county government, it is the bureau of finance (local subsidiary of the Ministry of Finance) instead of the bureau of civil affairs that is responsible for compilation of local annual disaster

relief budget and approval of ad hoc fund for contingency uses. When a local government receives relief subsidies from the upper or central-level governments, the bureau of civil affairs at that level also needs to get the approval from the peer-level bureau of finance, a process in which local party or administrative chief can play decisive roles in distributing such fund (China's Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Civil Affairs 2011, Article 11–7). Misappropriation of centrally allocated disaster relief fund has been frequently reported by Chinese domestic media, with some of the fund being embezzled by officials or misused for construction of luxurious office buildings, hotels, or shopping malls. In an audit report released by China's National Auditing Office in 2004, serious financial malpractice was discovered in use of disaster relief fund in flood-ridden Huaihe River Valley and earthquake-stricken areas in southwest China's Yunnan province (Xiang 2005, p. 48). According to another report released by the National Auditing Office in 2008, a sum of 16.7 billion yuan was allocated for disaster relief work in 13 provinces in 2005 and 2006, 1.5 % of which was misappropriated for construction of office buildings or other administrative expenses (RFA News, September 5, 2008).

Many local disaster prevention and relief departments have for years been facing the problem of fund shortage, and some even cannot afford the salaries of their staff members. Even when the government is increasing the budget on disaster management, only a fraction of the allocated fund could be used for real disaster work due to lack of supervision over malpractices in the officialdom. Due to the two devastating Sichuan Earthquakes in 2008 (Wenchuan) and 2013 (Ya'an), budgets for China's Earthquake Administration soared from 2.4 billion yuan (about 390 million US dollars) in 2010 to over 4 billion yuan in 2013, merely 13 % of which was slated for seismic monitoring, prediction, and disaster prevention (Xinhua news, March 7, 2014). A much larger share of the budget was used for cars, banquets and overseas trips at public expenses. Many local earthquake offices, including some of those in quake-hit provinces, have been failing to function properly due to lack of fund and human resources. In less developed regions with limited financial budget, the funds allocated to local disaster management departments each year sometimes are far from sufficient to cover the expenses of normal operation. The difference had to be offset by these local departments themselves through providing some forms of commercial services and retaining a portion of such income while the majority of it is submitted to financial bureaus.

In disaster management, fund allocated by central or upper-level governments now goes directly to the local finance bureau, while the local bureau of civil affairs and other disaster-related departments are not guaranteed to get fair share for their disaster mitigation jobs (Lo and Tang 2007, p. 48). This system requires the local bureau of civil affairs to develop an annual budget, which must be approved by the finance bureaus and then incorporated into the regional budget before submission for parliamentary approval by local people's congress. This system to some extent has played a positive role in curbing corruption and increasing transparency, but for some disaster relief officials, the system also has a negative impact on the bureau of civil affairs because financial power is now concentrated at the finance bureau, and it takes more time and effort for the bureau of civil affairs to request funding. From this perspective, this system has made local disaster management departments more financially dependent upon the local government.

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Military Forces in China's Disaster Management

Abstract This chapter explains why and how the military forces have been institutionalized as the country's most important rescue team in major disaster relief campaigns, and the impacts upon effectiveness of disaster management. Both the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the People's Armed Police (PAP)'s roles in disaster management and their differentiated relationships with the central government and Party leadership are discussed here. Since the PLA has its own autonomous administrative and operation process that creates fault lines in civilian oversight of senior generals, central and local government officials often have awkward relationship with the military in the disaster management system where the PLA only obeys orders from the top party leadership instead of administrative leaders. This chapter detects the change of PLA's role under the new system of National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief, which was enacted in 2011.

Like many other countries, the Chinese leadership often calls upon its armed forces to assist with large-scale rescue and relief operations at times of natural catastrophes. Nevertheless, the role of Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) in domestic disaster response has been particularly prominent in the era of PRC, with the frequency, scale, and types of the domestic disaster relief works that the PLA has conducted being seldom matched by military forces elsewhere (Zhang 2014, p. 69). In many countries, using military troops in response to natural disasters has been restricted due to the development of more professional civilian-based

rescue workforces and deeply harbored concerns about political implications of using the military, whose primary mission is to defend against foreign aggression, in domestic affairs (Anderson 1970). The PLA, however, with a unique history of being “the people’s army” by undertaking various activities to serve society outside its normal military duties (Blasko 2006, pp. 118–120), has been engaged intensively in domestic disaster relief missions. In recent years, when the PLA was shifting its strategic focus to non-traditional security issues (*feichuantong anquan wenti*), its tasks in disaster rescue and relief activities became even more important. The consolidation of such a role in relief operations, on the one hand, beefs up the state resilience against large-scale natural catastrophes via efficient military mechanisms of mobilizing a great many of people for emergency purposes. On the other hand, such problems as lack of training and professionalism and poor civilian-military coordination continue to exist and on some occasions, tend to exacerbate to damage the effectiveness of national disaster resilience.

THE PLA, PAP, AND THE GOVERNMENT IN DISASTER RELIEF

China has frequently mobilized troops to combat severe disasters like floods, earthquakes, snowstorms, and forest fires. Now with 2.3 million soldiers, the PLA has been institutionalized as the country’s most important rescue team in major disaster relief campaigns. According to the PRC Law on National Defence enacted in 1997, military personnel on active duty shall “accomplish the tasks of dealing with emergencies and providing disaster relief” (PRC Law on National Defence 1997, Article 58). In July 2005, China promulgated the *Regulations on the Army’s Participation in Emergency Rescue and Disaster Relief*, which stipulates the principles, tasks, and command system concerning the PLA’s participation in rescue and relief. Since China still lacks professional disaster rescue workforces on which many Western countries rely to tackle emergencies and disasters, the government has to resort to the PLA for large-scale disaster relief missions. During a rare snowstorm that affected much of southern and central China in early 2008, 306,000 PLA soldiers plus 1.07 million militia and army reservists were mobilized in the disaster relief effort (Xinhua News 2008). During the Sichuan earthquake in 2008, tens of thousands of soldiers and armed police were being deployed, with military helicopters heading for the epicenter to help with rescue efforts. Despite the vital

role the PLA has played in relief operations, over-reliance on the military could be potentially detrimental to the development of an effective civilian-based national disaster management system (Zhang 2014, p. 70).

The People's Armed Police (PAP), a minor component of China's armed forces that is under the dual leadership of the State Council and the Central Military Commission (CMC) (China's Ministry of National Defense 2015b), is an emerging force that has been increasingly involved in all kinds of emergency rescue missions that include firefighting, tunnel accidents, and urban disasters. With more than 260,000 PAP servicemen on guard duty every day, the PAP makes full preparations for handling public emergencies by establishing all levels of command centers, improving information systems, allocating resources efficiently, and providing communications, supplies, and transportation to stranded people (China's Ministry of National Defense 2015b). Compared with the PLA that is under the direct leadership of CMC instead of the State Council, the PAP is often preferred by the state apparatus in handling public emergencies due to the State Council's leadership over the PAP.

Since the PLA has its own autonomous administrative and operation process that creates fault lines in civilian oversight of senior generals, central and local government officials often have awkward relationship with the PLA in the disaster management system where the PLA only obeys orders from the CMC instead of administrative leaders. In the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, Premier Wen Jiabao, head of the Earthquake Relief Headquarters of the State Council, had to bark orders to army generals over whom Wen had no power when he learned that rescuers from the People's Liberation Army had yet to reach Wenchuan, a city of 100,000 at the quake's epicenter. General Guo Boxiong, then CMC Vice Chairman who was in charge of rescue affairs, privately set up an anti-earthquake headquarter for the PLA in Sichuan, and refused to listen to Premier Wen's command who had no power over the military (*The Epoch Times*, 15 May 2015, p. 2). Such an open defiance in this high-profile and high-stake rescue operation significantly exacerbated the relationship between civilian leaders and top generals, which partially led to the downfall of the two CMC vice chairmen, Gen. Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou, as well as their family members under corruption charges a few years later.

In China's unique system of "Party commanding the Gun" (*dang zhibui qiang*), the Party's CMC is in full command of PLA affairs, with only the Party's general secretary sitting in as commander-in-chief and surrounded by top generals. At the individual level, when Hu Jintao was the Party's

general secretary (2002–2012) and CMC Chairman (2004–2012), the weak civilian oversight was further compromised by Hu’s practice of reign-without-rule (You 2014, p. 3). Hu basically adopted a hands-off approach due to the lingering influence of Jiang Zemin, his predecessor, who still kept the top military post for about two years after retiring from the paramount party post. Hu’s weak style of leadership over the PLA was a major reason behind the top generals’ defiance against Premier Wen’s instruction of quickly deploying soldiers to the quake-hit Sichuan province in the first few hours of the disaster on May 12, 2008. Xi Jinping, Hu’s successor, managed to consolidate his power in the military through daunting anti-corruption investigations. During his tenure, Xi replaced a large number of PLA generals, many of whom were being implicated in the unprecedented anti-graft campaign in the military. Xi has repeatedly emphasized the importance of the PLA’s absolute loyalty and firm faith in the Party leadership, reiterating the party’s supremacy over the PLA during a military political work conference held on October 30, 2014, at the township of Gutian in Shanghang county, Fujian Province. The meeting had the same venue as the famous Gutian Conference of 1929, which was considered a milestone for both the Party and the PLA as it established the fundamental principle of the “party commanding the army” (Zheng and Chen 2014, p. 12). Xi’s authoritarian approach toward the PLA took effect during the second Sichuan Earthquake in Ya’an in 2013, when the PLA troops were immediately deployed to disaster-stricken areas at the request of the State Council without any delay. Xi’s tough personality may have addressed some accumulated negative effects of weak civilian oversight over the army, but in the long run, the structural difficulties in achieving an appropriate degree of civilian control remain in future disaster relief missions if no substantial institutional reforms are introduced to guarantee such control.

At the local level, although the provincial, municipal, and county government has the right to put forward the request for troop involvement, the local military units still need to report to higher military authorities for approval of action. Even in urgent situations, the local military forces shall still make reports to their superior PLA organs while carrying out relief operations simultaneously. The local government can entrust specific tasks for the military’s participation in emergency rescue and disaster relief, but the superior military apparatus shall be responsible for the command of the relief operations by the local military forces (ASEAN 2015, pp. 11–13). When the military forces are being dispatched to disaster-hit

areas, local governments and relevant ministries have the obligations to provide necessary technical, logistical, information, and financial supports to the troops involved. However, in most urgent cases, the PLA rescue workforces prefer to use such military resources as vehicles, tents, fuels, medicine, food supplies, and even their own telecommunication systems. On many relief occasions, the PLA troops are more or less acting as an independent kingdom in their interaction with local governmental departments and other civilian organizations, failing to be seamlessly integrated into the national disaster management system that demands cooperation and coordination among different institutional participants.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES REFINED

The PLA has a long history of participating in domestic large-scale disaster relief operations, but its roles, responsibilities, and motivations have been reshaped in the reform era when the PLA has been increasingly charged with “Military Operations Other Than War” (MOOTW) (*feizhanzheng junshi xingdong*) (Kamphausen 2013, p. 1; Fravel 2011, pp. 177–200) in the peace time. It is estimated that between 1949 and 2009, the PLA was engaged in emergency disaster relief works on more than 420,000 occasions (Ding 2010, p. 50). In total, more than 20 million PLA men were deployed for the relief works and some 100,000 air flights were organized to evacuate more than 12 million endangered persons and transport several hundred million tons of materials out of the disaster areas (Ding 2010, p. 50). The PLA has been playing particularly important roles in emergency rescue and relief work in devastating disasters like the Tangshan Earthquake in 1976, the Yangtze River, Yellow River, and Huaihe River floods in 1996, Yangtze River floods in 1998, ice and snowstorm in 2008, the Sichuan Earthquake (Wenchuan) in 2008, and the second Sichuan Earthquake (Ya’an) in 2013. Nevertheless, in the Cold War era, involvement in domestic emergency rescue operations was considered a sideline political task that the “People’s Army” was expected to fulfill, while in the reform era, when China has enjoyed peace with its neighbors for more than three decades, the strategic importance of emergency rescue functions have been greatly elevated in PLA’s field of duties. The underlying cause of the change is a growing perception among Chinese leaders that natural disasters are a non-traditional security threat needing to be dealt with by military forces, whose roles and responsibilities have to be redefined by new legal and institutional frameworks, and whose training

regime, force structure, and operational procedures have to be adjusted accordingly (Zhang 2014, pp. 69–70).

Under the Party's leadership via the CMC, the PLA's disaster rescue function in peace time is an indispensable source for the legitimacy of the one-party rule that justifies the communist army system commanded by the Party instead of the State. In another word, in the reform era, the Party has to find a way to help its army to redefine its missions in the post–Cold War period in which massive world-scale wars are increasingly unlikely, with a tilted gravity on the MOOTW. The PLA describes MOOTW as consisting of non-war activities, and defines it by the military activities it includes, such as peacekeeping, domestic disaster relief (earthquake response, epidemic prevention, typhoon response), anti-piracy escort mission, regional military medical support, counter-terrorism, and domestic security for big events such as the 2008 Olympics and 2010 Shanghai World Expo (Kamphausen 2013, p. 1). Disaster relief has been one of the most important among all these MOOTW tasks, which is evident in the PLA's MOOTW military force structure consisting of five specialized forces: “flood and disaster relief forces, post-earthquake emergent rescue forces, emergent rescue force for nuclear, chemical and biological disasters, emergent relief force for transportation facilities and international peacekeeping forces” (Huang and Liu 2009).

Compared with the warfare-focused training programs that didn't include many disaster rescue contents in the Cold War, the PLA nowadays has been “attaching more importance to MOOTW training in counter-terrorism, stability maintenance, emergency response, peacekeeping, emergency rescue and disaster relief” (China's Ministry of National Defense 2015a). The PLA has set up a national MOOTW capacity-building plan, with eight categories of professional state-level emergency response teams (a total of about 50,000 people) established in the seven military regions (Wu et al. 2011). The PLA's growing involvement in disaster responses has been in accordance with the global trend in which armed forces around the world are being increasingly deployed for disaster relief operations, which is driven by the growing intensity and frequency of the deadly natural catastrophes as well as caused by the increasing focus on non-traditional security issues and humanitarian missions by many militaries in the post–Cold War period (Schrader 1993). However, the increasing use of the armed forces in domestic rescue operations may potentially overpower the military in domestic politics (Morrisey 2008), and in China in particular, the PLA has become an extremely powerful interest group in the country's disaster

politics that has caused concerns about the growing militarization of disaster relief work and squeezing of civilian activities.

In response to the Party's shift of strategic gravity from class struggle to economic development, the PLA in the reform era has been participating actively in domestic economic and social affairs principally for the sake of consolidating the armed forces' domestic political status and economic interest in the peace time. Unlike their peers in the Western democratic countries, the armed forces in many Asia-Pacific countries often perform various roles outside their primary responsibility of national defence, and are used by the states in areas ranging from disaster relief to economic development (Arugay 2012). China's PLA, in particular, has not only been a central and most active part of the country's disaster relief capacities, but also been deeply involved in lucrative national and local economic development projects including property development, manufacturing, telecommunications, hotel, and trade. The armed forces, a relatively independent and opaque kingdom that often evades supervision of the judiciary, National Auditing Office, and even the Party's disciplinary departments, has been a hotbed for corruption when it is performing such non-military economic and social functions. Under Xi Jinping's leadership, the fall of CMC Vice-chairman Xu Caihou and his subordinate General Gu Junshan, former deputy commander of the PLA's General Logistics Department, showed that high-ranking PLA officers with extravagant lifestyles could be involved in domestic businesses such as illegal sale or lease of military properties. Unlike the punishment of civil servants and party officials, the details of investigations and sentences related to PLA officers are seldom announced to the public, so there is no evidence available to prove that corruption occurs in the army's disaster relief operations. Yet apparently, regularized rescue and relief missions help the PLA to justify military budget increase on relevant preparation and training programs, equipment procurement and personnel recruitment, and to elevate its political status in domestic politics through having a larger say in high-profile disaster relief operations.

Before the 1990s, the PLA considered disaster relief primarily as political work aimed at generating public support for the military and the party and fulfilling the military's moral obligation to serve society (Wang and Zhang 2007, p. 34; Li and Xian 2009, p. 86), which had not been explicitly codified in any laws or regulations at that time. Since 1990s, a series of laws and regulations like the "Regulations on the Political Work of the PLA" (Wang and Zhang 2007), PRC Law on National Defence (1997,

Article 58), and the Regulation on the Army's Participation in Disaster Rescue (2005) have been promulgated to legalize the PLA's roles and responsibilities in disaster relief and other emergency operations. Based on these legal documents, the PLA is being tasked with such responsibilities as rescuing, transferring, and evacuating trapped personnel, protecting key objects, rescuing important resources, participating in such special rescue as rush repair of roads, bridges, and tunnels, and carrying out medical treatment and rescue (China's State Council and Central Military Commission 2005, Article 3).

The State Council had played a substantial role in formulating the regulations, which gave relevant administrative departments at various levels an upper hand vis-à-vis the armed forces in disaster management. Recognizing the PLA as the rush strength in disaster rescue (China's State Council and Central Military Commission 2005, Article 2), the regulations stipulate that where any disaster rescue as organized by the State Council requires the army's participation, it shall be set forth by the relevant administrative department of the State Council to the Headquarters of the General Staff of the PLA (China's State Council and Central Military Commission 2005, Article 4). This helps the administrative departments to gain initiatives since the request from the government is the legal precondition for the PLA's participation in disaster relief operations. Moreover, the troops shall be guided by local governments and experts and coordinate closely with other emergency rescue and disaster relief forces. Yet, the PLA's participation in emergency rescue actions is not at no cost for the governments at various levels. It is stipulated that when central and local civilian governments request military assistance in disaster relief, the governments at the corresponding level should bear the cost of the relevant operations (Zhang 2014, p. 77).

In the post-Cold War era, the CPC and PLA leadership has been attaching growing importance to non-traditional security (*feichuantong anquan*) threats like climate change, natural disasters, terrorism, piracy, pandemics, cyber-attack, and financial crisis. Thus, in the peace time, the PLA's active participation in disaster and other emergency responses accords with its new role and responsibility that should be assumed under the broadened concept of security. In September 2002, the PLA promulgated a new regulation for military training that called for strengthening training for MOOTW. The three main types of the MOOTW listed in the regulation were disaster relief, maintaining social stability and participation in peacekeeping operations (Xiao 2009, p. 40). In general, the tasks of

disaster relief and emergency rescue have greatly enhanced the PLA's non-traditional functions other than war when the country has been shifting its strategic importance to socioeconomic development. In this way, the PLA can prevent its institutional interest and capacity-building from being weakened in a civilian-centric structure of political economy.

CONTROVERSIES OVER THE EXTENSIVE USE OF PLA

Whether the armed forces should be deeply involved in domestic disaster and other civil emergency responses has been a subject of political controversy primarily due to concerns over the overuse of national defence forces in domestic affairs. As discussed, the PLA has been participating in domestic disaster relief activities far more extensively than its Western counterparts, with its role in these missions being further enhanced in the peace time due to the leadership's growing focus on non-traditional security issues including natural disasters. Although its disaster relief functions have been institutionalized by legal documents and its contribution to disaster relief has been widely recognized by the Chinese society, the excessive use of military forces in large-scale disaster response operations has led to the reflection of the PLA's roles in China's disaster management.

The PLA, despite its increasing attention to disaster-related training and preparatory programs under the rubric of MOOTW, is still not a professional workforce specialized in disaster relief and rescue missions. Therefore, the effectiveness of the PLA's relief work is always a debatable issue, especially when the PLA's professionalism and expertise regarding rescue work are considered. No matter whether in the devastating Tangshan Earthquake in 1976 or the Sichuan Earthquake in 2008, massive PLA troops being deployed to quake-stricken areas did not have proper training for earthquake rescue or specialized equipment. With rudimentary tools like spades and ladders and their bare hands, the numbers of survivors rescued by the soldiers from the rubbles were often disappointingly low. In the Tangshan Earthquake rescue and relief in 1976, tens of thousands of PLA officers and soldiers did not have any large-size equipment or tools but had to use such tools like picks, and they often rescued quake victims from under debris with their bare hands (People's Daily online 2008). Even 32 years later, during the Sichuan Earthquake rescue in 2008, the PLA reportedly rescued alive from the rubble a total of about 3330 people, while it was estimated that professional earthquake rescuers could have saved five times of lives on the same occasion (Li et al. 2009, p. 119).

Moreover, the predominant role the armed forces have been playing in China's disaster rescue operations has squeezed the space of civil society in such activities, and prevents the country from setting up a professional disaster and emergency rescue workforce with more advanced equipment and better training. In some way, the overemphasis of the military's role in modern disaster management reconsolidates the conventional state-centric approach to disaster management, which has failed to respond to growing civic activism associated with the use of the Internet and burgeoning social media. Meanwhile over-reliance upon the PLA's disaster relief functions has exacerbated the intra-regime tensions emerged in the political process of fragmentation and decentralization. Coordination between the military and civilian government departments from central to local levels has remained poor despite the disaster management reform after 2008 that was aimed at improving the civilian-military relationship (Chap. 9). As the overall political system of "the Party commanding the PLA" (*dang zhibui qiang*) remains intact, the State Council and its disaster management components like the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of Water Resources have no direct authority over the PLA's General Staff Department, which is responsible for the military's emergency responses and under the control of the Party's CMC. The PLA's vertical and exclusive structure of command and management often impedes the horizontal coordination and cooperation among military, government, and civic organizations at various local levels.

Despite specific items in the PRC Law on National Defence and Regulations on the Army's Participation in Emergency Rescue and Disaster Relief, some Chinese law experts still questioned the legitimacy of the PLA's predominant role in disaster rescue missions, saying that such role has not been explicitly justified by China's Constitution and other basic laws (Hu and Wang 2008, p. 89). Up to now, there are no specific laws in China with regard to the conditionality of deploying military forces in disaster rescue and relief, or the appropriate ratios of civilian-military workforces that should be dispatched under different circumstances. On many occasions, the responses to small- and medium-scale disasters do not necessarily require the participation of the military forces, whose deployment could be time-consuming and financially costly. Some suggested that there should be clear restrictions on the deployment of active-duty PLA soldiers in disaster responses, since the frequent use of the troops could potentially dilute the PLA's original function of defending the national from foreign aggression (Hu and Wang 2008, p. 89; Dai 2008). The PLA leadership,

however, has never perceived the army's extensive involvement in supporting disaster relief operations as a burden that should be abandoned; on the contrary, it has tried to consolidate the military's proactive role in national responses to all kinds of catastrophic events, which sometimes cause losses equivalent to those in conventional wars. Despite the controversies over the PLA's disaster relief functions, the overuse of the military forces in domestic relief activities will probably continue as the state-centric system of disaster management is not overhauled.

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New Challenges from Popular Politics: NGOs, Commercial Organizations, Social Media, and Civic Society

Abstract This chapter discusses to what extent the party-state's nonparticipatory disaster management approach has been challenged by the rising civic activism associated with the use of Internet and social media. As a consequence of more than a decade of civil society development in China, citizens respond to the disaster just as quickly as the government, with the Internet and social media being a relatively uncensored channel of information and communication among civic forces. The chapter reveals social media's important functions in the disaster management including information, expression, and civic mobilization, and its role in agenda setting, civic participation, media supervision, and reshape of the party-state's credibility.

When the Chinese government started to deepen its reform and opening-up policy in the 1990s, civil activities became frequent and all kinds of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working for public and special interests mushroomed. Given the unchanged nature of China's one-party political system, state actors, especially various government departments and state-run organizations at all levels as well as the armed forces, have still remained the main players in disaster management that control almost all the resources and dominate policy processes. However, the party-state, pushed by the impetus to establish an open, inclusive and accountable image, has been taking a more tolerable approach toward, and sometimes even welcome the growing civic participation in the state-centric disaster management. In recent years, with the development of market economy, privately owned companies, shareholding companies of mixed

ownership, and foreign-funded companies have become emerging forces to be reckoned with in the affairs of disaster management.

Thanks to the opening-up process and increased international engagement, new norms and guidelines have been gradually introduced to China's natural disaster management and many of them have become well-established principles guiding the country's disaster relief work in the new century. Following internationally recognized norms like welcoming individual volunteers and civic organizations as rescue and assistance forces and promoting the role of commercial organizations in risk management, recovery, and reconstruction, the Chinese government has been making efforts to formulate a comprehensive and inclusive system of disaster management that involves such nonconventional categories of stakeholders as NGOs, commercial organizations, and volunteers. The government's tolerant attitude toward nonstate actors in the disaster management had a limit nonetheless, especially when the civil activism, facilitated by the Internet and social media, were questioning state sectors' credibility and accountability and gaining increasing financial, human, and material resources with which they could function. How effectively nonstate organizations and civil society can function in partnership with the government is an important question for disaster management and risk mitigation, since the impact of nature-induced disasters could significantly vary depending on the social conditions (Özerdem and Jacoby 2006, p. 11), and security from catastrophes is becoming a profitable public and private sector consumer goods like water and electricity (Beck 2009, p. 9).

This chapter discusses to what extent the party-state's nonparticipatory disaster management approach has been challenged by the rising civic activism associated with the use of Internet and social media. As a consequence of economic and social development in China, NGOs, commercial organizations, and citizens responded to the disaster just as quickly as the government, with the Internet and social media being a relatively uncensored channel of information and communication among civic forces. The chapter discusses social media's important functions in the disaster management including information, expression, and civic mobilization, and its role in agenda setting, civic participation, media supervision, and reshape of the party-state's credibility.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NGOs IN CHINA'S DISASTER MANAGEMENT

China's NGOs have made significant progress in participating in the country's disaster relief, a top-down process that has been long time monopolized and mobilized by the state. The rescue, relief, and reconstruction

process following the Sichuan Earthquake in 2008 witnessed an unprecedented outpouring of volunteers and NGOs (Yang 2008), which led some media and analysts to tout 2008 as an “NGO Year Zero for China” (Jia 2008) or the “Year of the Volunteers” (Shieh and Deng 2011, p. 181). A survey revealed that most of the Chinese NGOs that had participated in rescue and relief activities after the Sichuan Earthquake in 2008 were environmental NGOs, charity foundations, and development centers (Yi 2015, p. 79). More importantly, many NGOs in the disaster response and relief field recognized the urgency of establishing cooperative platforms and umbrella organizations for the joint actions aimed at addressing the needs of affected populations efficiently. One year after the Sichuan Earthquake, the One Foundation, an independent public fundraising foundation which was started by actor Jet Li in China, launched a NGO Disaster Response Alliance to strengthen cooperation and networking among NGOs, volunteers, media, business, and the public in future disaster responses. Other NGO platforms like the Beijing NGOs Action, Sichuan 5.12 Voluntary Relief Services Center, Xiamen Disaster Relief Acting Group, and Guizhou NGO Disaster Relief Network were also established to enhance communications and cooperation among various grassroots organizations. The One Foundation NGO Alliance now includes 300 domestic Chinese voluntary disaster response and rescue teams with approximately 5000 individual members in total. Since its establishment, the Alliance has become the biggest voluntary alliance active in disaster response in China, responding to local emergency disasters in cross-province/district missions (Hao 2014).

China’s officially registered NGOs are categorized by the Ministry of Civil Affairs into three groups: social organizations (*shetuan*), private non-enterprise units (*minban feiqiye*), and foundations (*jijinhui*). When these NGOs are being scrutinized in terms of their backgrounds and features, seven categories of social groups can be generally identified: government-organized NGOs (GONGOs, see Chap. 5) and foundations, other register NGOs and foundations, nonprofit enterprises that are registered as business entities but operate as nonprofit organizations, unregistered voluntary groups, web-based groups, student associations that are registered with campus Youth Leagues yet function as NGOs, and university research centers (Yang 2005, p. 50). In the state-centered country, GONGOs and government-run foundations definitely enjoy much more financial and political advantages and policy convenience compared to other NGOs, but this kind of government background also restrains their role as an autonomous force against the state and market in the disaster management. GONGOs are still

making up a majority of social organizations and foundations that are registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs (Shieh and Deng 2011, p. 183), but an increasing though smaller percentage are private nonenterprise units that better fit with the strict definition of NGOs.

China's restrictive regulatory system concerning registration, organization, and funding is still preventing most of these NGOs from carrying out substantial disaster relief missions, although in recent years, the Chinese government has to some extent encouraged the development of NGOs for participating in disaster relief. For a long time, any social organization to be established in China needed to have a supervising governmental institution before being registered to the Ministry of Civil Affairs. This presented a major hurdle to registration because an NGO was often considered a political liability not an asset to its sponsoring government institution. The regulations stipulated that in the same administrative area, there should not be more than one organization for any specific area of work (such as environmental protection). In many cases, GONGOs had already filled that fixed quota (Yang 2005, p. 55). Apart from that, a successfully registered NGO was still vexed with such issues as organizing and fund-raising. The Ministry of Civil Affairs prohibited most NGOs from establishing subsidiary organizations in other areas, and from engaging in public fund-raising independently. Since China issued Regulations on Management of Foundations in 2004, the number of foundations has increased fivefold, totaling over 3900 nationwide by 2014. However, before 2013, due to the government regulations, the majority of these Chinese foundations had to channel the domestic donations they received through government agencies or disaster relief GONGOs like the Red Cross Society of China and China Charity Federation. Even Liu Qi, a former Politburo member and Party Secretary of Beijing, complained that such compulsory linkage between the government and social organizations had hampered the normal development of social organizations (*Southern Metropolitan News* 2008).

The government decided to loosen such restriction after the public trust on China's Red Cross, one of the most influential GONGOs, slumped in 2011 due to an online scandal associated with Guo Meimei, who may have traded on a presumed connection through a company called Red Cross Commerce and bragged of her luxurious lifestyle on the microblog service. Pressured by the public that were infuriated by the Guo Meimei incident, the government in that year no longer required NGOs to have a supervising governmental institution before being registered to the Ministry

of Civil Affairs. After the second Sichuan Earthquake in Ya'an county in 2013, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, pressured by NGOs and foundations, repealed the regulation that required these social organizations to hand over the donations to government departments or major GONGOs.

In disaster relief, local governmental departments usually have mixed attitudes toward the NGOs, volunteers and other nonstate actors. On the one hand, local officials benefit a lot from a wide range of community services to the disaster victims from construction of temporary resettlement sites to delivery of food, water, clothing, quilts, and blankets. The government is usually capable of providing emergency relief and rebuilding infrastructure facilities rapidly, but it often fails to engage affected communities and address longer-term recovery issues. Recognizing these constraints, NGOs and foundations have adopted more participatory approaches to local communities, complementing the government's top-down rehabilitation projects. Therefore, local governments often want these civil organizations to continue social services in their jurisdiction in the long run and foster long-term partnerships with these grassroots organizations. On the other hand, many local officials, influenced by old-fashioned mentality of being wary about nonstate actors, still suspect the real motives of NGOs and volunteers and sometimes hold hostility toward these social forces. In the aftermath of the Sichuan Earthquake in 2008, social workers were asked by local officials to stay away from the residents' complaints about policy issues (Yi 2015, p. 84). Some cadres feel offended by the public popularity the NGOs and volunteers have in high-profile disaster relief, worrying that social organizations may take most of the credit from the government and threaten its authority.

The NGOs also have their own weaknesses in capacity building and internal management. Although most Chinese NGOs have become more mature and sophisticated over the years, they still face insufficiency and weakness in their managerial structure and professional capacity, which prohibits them from playing a larger role in disaster management. Many of China's first generation of grassroots NGOs are spontaneous in management and function, and depend too much on their founder-leader. Leaders' personal ambitions and charisma shaped these organizations and mobilized followers. Management was not institutionalized and decision-making remained concentrated among a small group of individuals (Fu 2007, p. 307). These NGOs need to institutionalize their managerial structure and improve internal evaluation systems to promote administrative efficiency. As today's disaster management becomes more and more

sophisticated, the solutions to these problems demand expertise in engineering, logistics, medical knowledge, finance, meteorology, and other areas. Lack of professional knowledge in these areas will prevent these organizations from playing an active and effective role in influencing governmental decision-makings and setting public agendas. Under such new circumstances, NGOs need to take a professional rather than a general perspective to cope with certain disaster issues. The time of relying on a certain charismatic leader has passed and there is an urgent need for Chinese NGOs to standardize their operational and managerial procedures and lift up their professional standards. Without a favorable policy condition in China, however, it is very difficult for NGOs to attract fund as well as talented professionals. The de facto restrictions from the government, therefore, impose an indirect influence upon the capacity building of NGOs in China. Despite the large number of NGOs in the country, they can actually only play very limited roles in supervising the government and setting agendas in disaster management.

COMMERCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

The development of China's market economy since 1980s has enabled state businesses and private sectors to be increasingly engaged in the disaster management, a state-dominant process in which inadequate attention had been paid to disaster risk prevention and management as an economic and business issue in the period of commanding economy. With a much closer interaction between business and government that ensured appropriate risk mitigation, adequate economic tools for implementation of security, rescue, relief and recovery measures, and a liability and insurance regime that takes proper account of the local economic interests, commercial entities in various forms have been asked by the Chinese government to play a larger role in beefing up the country's economic resilience against catastrophic events. Unlike NGOs and voluntary organizations that are primarily driven by humanitarian and social motivations, companies are incentivized to join by commercial interests involved. Over the years, commercial organizations, especially those business juggernauts in insurance, contracted construction, transportation, energy, and agricultural produce, have emerged as nonnegligible interest groups that constantly impose institutional pressures upon disaster policy formulation as well as pre- and post-disaster actions. As compared to state-owned enterprises (SOEs) that have the congenital political privileges in participating in the state-centered disaster management,

private sector entities in China still have a large untapped potential to help provide skilled services and goods for preparedness, emergency responses, and post-disaster recovery and reconstruction.

The State Council often request SOEs, especially those large-scale SOEs controlled by the central government (*yangqi*), to take active parts in disaster relief operations. In such natural catastrophes as the Sichuan Wenchuan Earthquake in 2008 and Yunnan Ludian Earthquake in 2014, the State Council's State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC), through issuing urgent circulars, ordered centrally controlled infrastructure SOEs like China Southern Power Grid Company, China Telecom, China Mobile, and China State Construction Engineering Company to repair damaged power grid, roads and railways, telecommunication facilities, aviation SOEs like Air China and China Southern Airlines to ensure the timely transport of relief materials, medicine SOEs like the Sinopharm Group to provide drugs and medical equipment, energy SOEs like China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation (Sinopec) to supply gasoline and diesel, and food SOEs like the COFCO group and China Grain Reserves Corporation to safeguard food and water provision (SASAC 2008, 2014). All these state-owned business mammoths regarded such emergency missions as mandatory political assignments instead of their regular business operations based on cost-effectiveness principles, although sometimes the government would give compensations to these SOEs to partially cover their economic costs for the relief actions.

Under disaster relief and other emergency circumstances, SOEs have played a significant role in carrying out public policy objectives. The enterprises under state ownership are formally justified by the government's need to overcome market failure in a wide range of areas including public service delivery, emergency responses, externalities, and natural monopolies. Partly because of many SOEs' multiple priorities, the Chinese government has generally not provided sufficient subsidies to compensate for the costs of these missions (OECD 2015, p. 32, 156). During the governmental procurement of relief commodities and services from SOEs and other companies, how to price these commodities and services has always been a high-stake issue that determines the profit margins of commercial organizations in disaster management. When asked about this pricing issue concerning government procurement in the wake of the Sichuan Earthquake in 2008, the Chinese Minister of Commerce Chen Deming said all the procured materials were sold by companies at the

prices equivalent to the production costs and lower than the market prices (Beijing News May 22, 2008). However, the assessment mechanism that the government applies to SOEs is mainly about scale and financial returns, so individual enterprises have a strong inclination to earn profits, which creates incentives for SOEs operating as monopolies or within oligopolistic markets to make full use of their pricing powers (OECD 2015, p. 156). In reality, collusion between state-run relief organizations and commercial enterprises sometimes led to overpricing of government-procured commodities and services or the provision of sub-standard and useless materials. When a strong typhoon hit southern China in July 2014, the Red Cross Society of China distributed about 3500 thick quilts and jackets to the disaster-stricken areas where the temperatures exceeded 30°C in the midsummer. Such a move was questioned by local residents who at the moment badly needed drinking water, food, and blankets instead of thick quilts and jackets (Jinghua Shibao, July 21, 2014). Meanwhile some residents in the Hainan province complained that the bread procured by the local Bureau of Civil Affairs had already gone moldy upon distribution (people.cn, August 3, 2014).

Following China's Government Procurement Law which entered into effect in 2003, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and many other government organizations have been frequently purchasing relief materials like tents, quilts, blankets, coats, sleeping bags, bottled water, and canned food by way of competitive bidding. These calls for tenders based on market principles nonetheless contradicted Minister of Commerce Chen Deming's claim that procured materials should be sold at the price level equivalent to production cost and no profits should be made during the process. Increasingly, companies, including those SOEs that assume substantial public policy functions, have been incentivized to take active parts in providing disaster-related materials and services when the government organizations at various levels are expanding their procurement related to the disaster management phases of preparedness, relief, recovery, and reconstruction.

Apart from joining government-organized tenders, companies have been increasingly engaged in voluntary donations and relief actions that go beyond mercantile groups' regular operation of producing goods and services in the most efficient and economical manner. More and more Chinese companies have shown their interests in the corporate social responsibility (CSR), which concerns the relationship not just with their clients, suppliers, and employees, but with other groups, and with the needs, values, and goals of the society in which it operates (UN 2000,

p. 2; Twigg 2001, p. 5). Like their peers in developed economies, business managers in China have committed themselves to CSR that covers a wide range of public interest areas like environmental protection, disaster relief, and poverty alleviation. As natural hazards pose serious threat toward local sustainable development and cause substantial economic losses, the solutions to the challenges to a large extent lie in the economic resilience that could be provided by corporations in parallel with the state and civil society. Yet the practice of CSR that can generate many benefits for the local community is not the same as altruism, since its ultimate purpose is to help the company (however indirectly) (Twigg 2001, p. 12).

In reality, many Chinese companies' involvement in disaster-related CSR is motivated by a number of self-interest goals ranging from propaganda of brands and improvement of company reputations to networking with government apparatus and potential customers. In many ways, corporations view CSR as a means to secure financial gains, an essential component of their own sustainable development or even sometimes as the key to future organizational success (Bendell 2000, pp. 8–9). In the case of corporate philanthropy in China's disaster relief, for example, voluntary donations as a strategy of public relations (PR) have been frequently used to propagate companies' products and services and to improve their public images as successful and responsible corporations. In the first 24 hours after the occurrence of the Sichuan Earthquake in May 2008, Chinese drug companies and medical equipment producers like Harbin Pharmaceutical Group, Simcere, and Neusoft made super-fast responses through announcing to donate their own medical products worth millions of Chinese yuan (Bioon News, April 8, 2009). However their sincerity was questioned by the public who later found out that some of these companies actually spent more money on the TV commercials that highlighted their proactive roles in disaster relief than the amount of donations. Only about 2 % of large drug companies donated pure cash to earthquake-stricken areas, while the rest of them mainly donated their own medicines and other products (Bioon News, April 8, 2009). There is compelling evidence that globally the development of CSR has been piecemeal and uneven (Twigg 2001, p. 12). In China in particular, due to the nascent development of the concept of CSR, very few companies have adopted comprehensive CSR strategies in the process of disaster management. There is still a substantial gap between corporate rhetoric and their deeds, with reports revealing that some companies intentionally exaggerated their post-disaster donations.

In China's state-centric system of disaster management, insurance companies' role in managing natural hazard risks has long time been overlooked. As compared to many Western countries where the payment amount of commercial insurance can be up to 30 to 40 % of the direct economic loss caused by catastrophic events, Chinese victims usually get most of the economic compensations for relief, recovery, and reconstruction from direct financial aid of the governments at various levels, as well as donations from individuals, companies, and NGOs. The Sichuan Earthquake for instance caused a direct economic loss of over 800 billion yuan in 2008, but the insurance companies only paid back 0.2 % percent of the total losses (China Radio International 2014). Inspired by mature experiences in advanced economies, the Chinese government in recent years has initiated intensive discussions over whether and how China should promote natural disaster insurance services to manage these risks more efficiently. In October 2014, China's Insurance Regulatory Commission confirmed a plan to build a sound nationwide insurance system to compensate the victims of natural disasters (China Radio International 2014). However, despite intensive lobbies by Chinese and foreign-funded insurance companies, scholars, and some government officials, China still lacks relevant legislations and regulations regarding commercial insurance, co-insurance and reinsurance as part of the post-disaster relief mechanism. On the one hand, Chinese people's overreliance upon the government's aid and compensations after disasters has made most of them unenthusiastic about buying commercial insurance against risks of natural hazards. On the other hand, the government's overprotection of domestic insurance companies from foreign competition has prevented them from being competitive and innovative in providing affordable and attractive disaster-related insurance rates.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Members of the public traditionally have relied on emergency officials and news media to provide them with information about emergency and disaster events, but in recent years, with growing access to the Internet, the pervasive adoption of mobile technology, and an explosion of social networking services (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube), exponential amounts of socially generated data are publicly available (Hughes and Palen 2012, p. 1), which challenges the authority of government sectors as the only legitimate source of information (Britton 1989). Increasingly, microblogging and other forms of social media are being considered as

means for emergency communications because of their growing ubiquity, communications rapidity, and cross-platform accessibility (Vieweg et al. 2010, p. 1079).

There has been an increasing tendency to regard disasters as caused more by the social conditions they affect than by the geophysical agents that precipitate them (Alexander 1997, p. 289). The Chinese government which is increasingly challenged by independent and populist voices on the Internet and social media has been tightening control over cyberspace information flow through all means. Authoritative organizations like the Red Cross Society of China and local bureaus of civil affairs have been plagued by scandals and online rumors related to the state-dominant disaster management since the Sichuan Earthquake in 2008. The earthquake killed so many children because planning laws had not been properly implemented for multistorey school buildings (Lovell 2014, p. 23). Despite the effective rescue and reconstruction work in the aftermath of the earthquake, growing civic activism and supervision facilitated by online media as well as intra-regime tensions emerged during the rescue and reconstruction process, which posed substantial challenges to China's disaster management systems.

Civil right activists including Ai Weiwei, Tan Zuoren, and dozens of volunteers participated in the investigation into the poor construction of the schools and posted the evidence they had collected on their online blogs. Their claims conflicted with the official stand that no students were killed by sub-standard school buildings and subsequently both Tan and Ai were arrested. Nevertheless, public concern over corruption continued in the space of Internet and social media during the reconstruction period when more reports were released about the misuse and embezzlement of donation funds and materials. A Sichuan secondary school rebuilt in 2010 with HK\$2 million in quake relief funds was later torn down to make way for a luxury housing development (*The Independent* 2013). In 2012, some microbloggers revealed that the money donated to the many fund-raising boxes placed in 2008 by the Red Cross Society on the streets of Chengdu, capital city of Sichuan, had turned moldy after being left unused for the four years (Beijing News 2013). With the quick spread of social media, government-backed organizations have appeared more vulnerable when trying to fend off accusations supported by pictures and video clips as online evidences.

With the Internet and smart phones becoming more popular among the Chinese especially the youths, outspoken social media figures have emerged as opinion leaders with substantial political, economic, and social

influences. In 2013, more than half of China's netizens (55.6 %) were young adults aged 20 to 39, while those above the age of 50 comprised only 7.2 % (China Internet Network Information Center 2013, p. 16). The number of mobile phone Internet users increased sharply in 2012, surpassing the number of users who use desktops in the middle of the year (China Internet Network Information Center 2013, p. 19). The fast penetration of mobile Internet enables people to be connected online in areas where Internet access and terminal availability are limited. This group of people includes rural population in remote areas, migrant workers, and low-income people.

Some microblog celebrities like Charles Xue and Qin Huohuo once had millions of followers in cyberspace, surpassing the subscription size of many official newspapers and thus vesting them with unfettered power in influencing the political, economic, and social agenda in China. This has become a headache for a government that usually resorts to the traditional media to guide public opinions. Both Xue and Qin who had openly questioned the credibility of government-led disaster relief operations were subsequently arrested by the Chinese authorities under the charges of spreading online rumors about the Red Cross Society of China and other government organizations (Chen 2013, p. 1). To provide legal foundation for such government actions to rein in the social media, a tool increasingly used by the Chinese people to discuss politics despite stringent censorship, China's Supreme Court issued a judicial interpretation in September 2013 that allows prosecutors to charge netizens with defamation if their online posts containing rumors registered more than 5000 Internet visits or reposted more than 500 times (Reuters News 2013). The charge could lead to three years in jail.

Actually it was the party-state's nonparticipatory approach that had been questioned by the rising civic activism associated with the use of the Internet and burgeoning social media. This was unprecedented in the PR C's history as for the first time, the Internet (and later on, the social media) proved to be a crucial channel of information in China's disaster relief work. It served at least three important functions in the wake of catastrophic events: information, expression, and civic mobilization (Yang 2008, p. 5). As a consequence of more than a decade of civil society development in China, citizens responded to natural disasters just as quickly as the government, with the Internet and social media being uncensored channels of information and communication among civic forces. For citizens, the Internet via computers was the most important channel of

information during the Sichuan Earthquake, followed closely by television (Yang 2008, p. 4). At that time, only 5 % of population relied on cell phones as major access to disaster-related information, but nowadays, Internet-linked smart phones have become the most important platform for Chinese people to get instant information about disasters. Internet-mobilized civic actions posed a threat to the overwhelming role played by the state in disaster management. GONGOs like the Red Cross Society of China and China Charity Federation, which had monopolized the receipt of donations in disasters, faced competition from online fund-raising organized by major websites and pure NGOs such as martial arts star Jet Li's One Foundation.

China has been exercising stricter online censorship since 2009 when the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) required all personal computers sold in China to be pre-installed with the software called "Green Dam" to filter out pornography and politically sensitive information from the Internet. The authorities have been involved in spats with international IT giants like Google, HP, and Apple over the censorship issue, which often ended up with compromises from foreign tech companies. In May 2011, the ministry-level State Internet Information Office was established to help coordinate the dozen Chinese government ministries and agencies with a stake in the Internet. Nevertheless, it is still difficult for high-handed government control to catch up with China's booming online "virtual society," now boasting the world's largest number of netizens at over 649 million, of which 557 million are mobile Internet users (China Internet Network Information Center 2015). The fast expansion of Twitter-like social media services including microblog (*weibo*) and *wechat* (*weixin*), together with the popularization of smart phones, has been reshaping the creation and communication of public opinions. Average Internet users, opinion leaders and traditional media all turned to microblog and *wechat* in different ways to obtain news, publish news, express opinions, and stir up public opinions, which resulted in the high growth rate of social media users (China Internet Network Information Center 2013, p. 47). Technically speaking, it has become more difficult for propaganda departments to continue to impose an iron-clad censorship over microblogs and social networking websites, which have been fully integrated into various smart phone applications with such social networking functions as instant messaging, photo/video-sharing, and personal space (blog). Some of the previous censorship measures like the "Green Dam" have proved to be unpopular and ineffective. Although

the propaganda departments have been changing their strategy from circumscribing the popularization of smart phone apps to targeting individuals with high popularity, it is still too early to tell whether the outspoken online community facilitated by the social media will succumb to new rounds of cyberspace crackdown.

Social media does not necessarily represent voices of the civic society on all occasions. It can be manipulated by various interest groups in propaganda campaigns to maneuver online opinions, consolidate their own power and interest, undermine rivals' reputation and credibility, and set political and socioeconomic agendas in favor of their interests. The Chinese government on the one hand has enhanced regulations on rampant activities of Internet and social media public relations (*wangluo tuishou*), a type of organized business operation in which online posters are recruited to use multiple Internet identities in promotional and marketing campaigns, particularly in Internet forums and social networking sites (Wu 2011, pp. 1–2). On the other hand, the state actors, based on lessons learnt from previous setbacks in the early development of social media, has been making efforts to maneuver online opinions in public relations campaigns initiated by their own propaganda teams.

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“Reform 2.0”: Progress and Limits

Abstract This chapter examines how the post-2011 reforms have reinforced the authoritarian regime’s nonparticipatory style in disaster management, and whether the reform has been effective enough to handle entrenched problems and emerging challenges. The Chinese leadership reinstated the holistic disaster management system through formulating the National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief that gave detailed operating guidelines to the division of work among various institutional actors based on the severity degree of disasters. Besides this newly placed codex that is applicable to relief actions for all kinds of natural disasters, thematic disaster response systems including ad hoc response plans targeted on specific type of disasters were also regularized to improve administrative efficiency and avoid central–local and administrative–military inconsonance. Nevertheless, more pressing issues linked to rising citizen activism in disaster relief, online supervision, and social media’s role in information sharing have been overlooked and excluded in the reinstatement process.

The Chinese leadership reinstated the holistic disaster management system through formulating the National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief in 2011, which gave detailed operating guidelines to the division of work among various institutional actors based on the severity degree of disasters. Besides this newly placed codex that is applicable to relief actions for all kinds of natural disasters, thematic disaster

response systems including ad hoc response plans targeted on specific type of disasters were also regularized to improve administrative efficiency and avoid central–local and administrative–military inconsonance. Nevertheless, more pressing issues linked to rising citizen activism in disaster relief, online supervision, and social media’s role in information sharing have been overlooked and excluded in the reinstitution process. This chapter examines to what extent this new round of reforms since 2011 has reinforced the authoritarian regime’s nonparticipatory style in disaster management, and whether the reform has been effective enough to handle entrenched problems and emerging challenges.

RE-INSTITUTIONALIZATION AFTER 2008

Having drawn lessons from relief work in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, the Chinese leadership reinstated the holistic disaster management system by formulating the National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief (China’s State Council 2011), which gave detailed operating guidelines for the division of work among various institutional actors based on the severity of disasters. In addition to this new plan, applicable to relief actions for all kinds of natural disasters, thematic disaster response systems including ad hoc response plans targeting specific types of disasters were also regularized to improve administrative efficiency and avoid central–local and administrative–military inconsonance (Chen 2014, p. 40). Nevertheless, more pressing issues linked to rising citizen activism in disaster relief, online oversight, and social media’s role in information sharing were overlooked in the reinstitution process. To a large extent, the reform since 2008, with limited technical and administrative improvement, has reinforced the authoritarian regime’s nonparticipatory style in disaster management, a trend contrary to the growing civic demand for more participation in public affairs amidst the new Internet and social media culture.

The Sichuan earthquake in 2008 catalyzed the enactment of the National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief in October 2011. Previously, the government’s disaster response plan was only included as part of the National Master Plan for Responding to Public Emergencies, in which most of the guidelines were generalized for all public emergency events, not specifically designed for disaster management. For a long time China had no specific emergency response plan to deal with certain types of natural disasters, nor did China classify the disasters according to their severity, controllability, or affected areas.

In the new framework of the National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief, the Chinese government classified natural disasters into four response categories, based on the severity and controllability of disasters (China’s State Council 2011). Level I is for the most severe situation, where at least 200 people are killed (or over one million people need emergency aid in the disaster). The response is organized directly by the vice-premier-level director of the National Disaster Reduction Commission in the central government, together with the affected provincial and local governments. Level II is for very severe disasters with a death toll between 100 and 200, where the minister of civil affairs (also the deputy director of the National Disaster Reduction Commission) should organize and coordinate disaster relief work. Level III is for severe disasters with a death toll between 50 and 100, where the vice-ministerial-level secretary-general of the National Disaster Reduction Commission should take charge of the coordination work. Level IV is for general disasters with a death toll below 50, where the Office of the National Disaster Reduction Commission should organize and coordinate relief work.

Through the classification of natural disasters based on severity, the central government has found it easier to figure out the amount of funds that should be allocated to different disasters as well as which level of government officials should play a pivotal role in disaster relief work. In addition, the National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief has reinforced the leading role of the government, especially the central government, in disaster relief work. The plan replaced the traditional principle of “combination of central and regional system while giving priority to the regional system” (*tiaokuaijiehe yikuaiweizhu*) with the new norm of “singular leadership at the central level” (*tongyi lingdao*) and “government dominance in relief work” (*zhengfu zhudao*). After the Tax Sharing Reform in 1994, which greatly enhanced the fiscal capacity of local governments at various levels, regional governments have simultaneously increased their power in disaster relief work. At the same time, the reinstatement again consolidated the role of the central government in the fragmented disaster management system. Premier Wen’s plight vis-à-vis the military in the 2008 earthquake should be averted under the new system where the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), as an institutional member of the National Disaster Reduction Commission, has to obey orders from the unitary leadership of the Commission.

Besides the National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief that is applicable to all kinds of natural disasters, ad hoc response plans have been put into place to handle specific types of disasters. These include the National Emergency Response Plan for Flood and Drought Disasters, National Emergency Response Plan for Earthquake Disasters, National Emergency Response Plan for Geological Disasters, and National Emergency Response Plan for Very Severe and Most Severe Forest Fire Disasters. Horizontally, the central government has set up various inter-agency mechanisms to ensure the clear-cut division of work among involved ministries and departments.

For routine jobs on disaster relief, the Ministry of Civil Affairs plays the pivotal role in coordinating the work of different sectors. In catastrophic disasters of specific categories like the 2008 Sichuan earthquake or the 2010 Yangtze River floods, ad hoc inter-agency panels such as the Earthquake Relief Headquarters and the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters command the disaster relief campaigns. According to relevant legal documents, all the involved departments and sectors have been assigned well-defined jobs in the colossal bureaucratic system on disaster management to avoid administrative chaos, with punishment in place for the breach of duty.

The Chinese government set up the Earthquake Relief Headquarters of the State Council (*guowuyuan kangzhenjiuzai zongzhibuibu*) in response to the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. The deadly 8.0-magnitude quake hit southwest Sichuan Province on 12 May. On May 18, 2008, the State Council publicized the details of the Earthquake Relief Headquarters, which was divided into nine inter-agency work groups to coordinate the work among various sectors (China's State Council, 18 May 2008). A ministry or department was appointed to play a pivotal role in each group: the General Staff Department of the Chinese army coordinated the emergency response group, the Ministry of Civil Affairs coordinated the disaster relief group, the China Earthquake Administration coordinated the earthquake monitoring group and the Ministry of Health was the coordinator in the public health and anti-epidemic group.

The Earthquake Relief Headquarters of the State Council was specifically set up to deal with the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, but such ad hoc mechanisms continue to exist long after the occurrence of the quake. This is mainly because the reconstruction and recovery process takes a long time in the province and the central government has realized the importance of maintaining the mechanism to respond to severe earthquakes

that may strike China again in the future. When Yushu, in north-western China’s Qinghai Province, was hit by a devastating magnitude 6.9 earthquake in April 2010, the Earthquake Relief Headquarters of the State Council immediately organized emergency aid and disaster relief work at the national level.

Both the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters and the Earthquake Relief Headquarters are ad hoc inter-agency mechanisms under the State Council, but there is a structural distinction between them. The Earthquake Relief Headquarters is a multi-layer organization comprised of various work groups, each of which is headed by a certain ministry or department, while the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters has no such subgroups and is simply a two-layer organization in which the Ministry of Water Resources plays a pivotal role.

In response to the lack of civilian–military inter-agency coordination, the PLA’s Office of Emergency Responses within the General Staff Department was substantially enlarged in terms of both staff and responsibilities. A joint ministerial meeting system between the PLA and another 20 ministries of the State Council was also set up to coordinate military and civilian emergency rescue work (Zhang 2014, p. 82). Greater efforts have also been made to develop and strengthen the information-sharing system between the PLA and ministries/commissions of the State Council. Since the State Council has commanding authority over the People’s Armed Police (PAP), the PLA-based national emergency response force was asked to incorporate a 31,000-people PAP unit specializing in water control, and protecting electricity supplies and communication networks in July 2009, which can be better maneuvered under the command of the government. All military regions at the provincial level also began to form local emergency rescue units by working together with provincial governments (China’s State Council Information Office 2011).

THE LIMITS TO THE REINSTITUTION

China’s reinstitution of the disaster management system since 2008 proved to be effective in mobilizing the top-down bureaucracy to cope with the second Sichuan earthquake, in Lushan County, Ya’an, in April 2013. The political authority of the newly anointed premier Li Keqiang, as well as his State Council colleagues sitting on the National Disaster Reduction Commission, was undeniably respected by both the military and local governments. Technically speaking, the leadership was more efficient than five

years earlier in coordinating various intra-bureaucracy players to achieve a better division of work, relying more on the institutionalized procedures set by the National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief.

Based on the rough death toll figure (less than 100) provided by the local government, the Ministry of Civil Affairs originally only launched a level III response for rescue and relief work, which fit strictly in the categorization of disasters written into the National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief. The central authority later raised the response level to the highest level (level I) only when the death toll rose to above 200, which also triggered the involvement of higher-ranking officials. The government-dominated relief work was logistically efficient, since helicopters reached the disaster site within hours, while workers dynamited their way through roads blocked by landslides, making the quake zone accessible by road eight hours later, a marked improvement from more than three days taken during the 2008 quake. Infrastructure was restored more expediently, with electricity and communications networks up and running the next day.

On the other hand, the reinforcement of the authoritarian regime's nonparticipatory style in disaster management since 2008 further contradicted the growing civic demand for more participation in public affairs amidst the new social media culture. In the self-reinforced, state-centric disaster management system, the reform failed to address the urgent civic demand for substantial participation and supervision, with the increasingly salient influence of the Internet and social media being overlooked by the institutional designers. Such neglect subsequently had an unanticipated negative impact on the credibility of the government-dominated disaster management system in the second Sichuan earthquake, in 2013.

The first day after the earthquake, the government-organized Red Cross Society of China encountered an unprecedented credibility crisis in the PRC history when it received a mere 140,000 yuan (US\$ 22,700) in donations, compared to 10 million yuan taken in by Jet Li's One Foundation (*The Wall Street Journal*, 30 April 2013). The public image of China's Red Cross had been severely damaged in 2011 by a scandal revealed online where a woman known as Guo Meimei, who may have traded on a presumed connection through a company called Red Cross Commerce, bragged of her luxurious lifestyle, posting photos of expensive cars and luxury accessories on Sina Weibo, China's most popular Twitter-like microblog service. Meanwhile, it was widely circulated on social media, with evidence provided by reporters and whistle-blowers,

that following the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, billions of yuan in donations managed by China’s Red Cross had gone missing.

The substantial loss of donations absorbed by government-linked organizations between the two Sichuan earthquakes reflected the government’s inability to maintain its credibility, which had been severely challenged in the social media era. Rising civic demand for more participation in the rescue and relief was still suppressed by the regime in the 2013 Sichuan earthquake, although ordinary people had been engaging in a broad range of political actions and finding a new sense of self, community, and empowerment in those five years. The reinstitution within the authoritarian regime has improved the hardware aspects of disaster management, but ignored the most salient civil society dynamics driven by cyberspace activism and civic consciousness that may pose lethal challenges to the authoritarian regime itself.

EVALUATION OF RE-INSTITUTIONALIZATION IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

The Party-state’s normalization and re-institutionalization of the bureaucratic system overseeing natural disaster management have profound political implications in coordinating intractable central–local relations (Zheng 2007) and improving the regime’s international image and legitimacy. In the pre-reform era, local governments in China had no power to raise revenue while the central government had to be responsible for allocating relief funds to localities where natural disasters had occurred. After several rounds of reform, local governments today shoulder about 30 % of China’s total fiscal expenditure on disaster management, and are still being pressured to pay more for disaster relief to ease the fiscal burden upon the central government.

Shifting from its insular attitudes toward foreign aid for disaster relief during the Cold War, China has been readily receiving international donations through different channels in the reform period. In the early 1980s, the reformist leadership decided to accept foreign aid and opened its disaster relief system to the outside, with the United Nations (UN) as its major institutional channel to engage the world. The year 1989 was a turning point, when China joined the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) initiated by the UN and set up the National Commission for the IDNDR, which later became the top-level

decision-making panel on national disaster relief work. As the predecessor of the National Committee for Disaster Reduction, the National Commission for the IDNDR in the 1990s had learnt a lot of modernized norms and practices in the field of disaster management through international exchanges and activities. The Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the government-organized Red Cross Society of China and China Charity Federation are now the major sectors involved in receiving overseas aid and donations. In natural calamities like the 2008 Sichuan earthquake that have claimed huge casualties and economic losses, the Chinese government not only accepted international aid and donations, but also welcomed rescue and medical teams from foreign countries to the disaster-hit regions.

For a long time, the PRC government had regarded the death tolls in natural disasters as state secrets and refused to release them to the public. Foreign media were not allowed to cover the disaster relief work on the spot at that time. As a move to greater transparency, in 2005 China announced it would no longer treat the death toll in natural disasters as a state secret. The National Administration of State Secrets declared the declassification of disaster-related death tolls at almost the same time (*The New York Times*, 13 September 2005). During the Sichuan earthquake in 2008, the country's worst natural disaster in the reform period, official media provided round-the-clock coverage of the earthquake and the rescue efforts, demonstrating remarkable openness.

In sharp contrast to the opaque and seclusive disaster relief work in the pre-reform era, China's gradual openness to international aid and media coverage has won international praise from organizations like the UN (United Nations Economic and Social Council 2008) as well as domestic support and thus consolidated the authoritarian regime's legitimacy that had been severely damaged by the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) and Tiananmen crackdown (June 4, 1989).

As in many other parts of the world, China today has been making disaster mitigation and preparedness a priority task at policy, institutional and operational levels. By accepting well-established international norms to guide the country's disaster relief work, the Chinese government has managed to keep the casualties caused by natural disasters at relatively low levels. In the disaster management cycle, pre-disaster mitigation and preparedness activities not only reduce the probability that a disaster will occur and the negative effects of unavoidable disasters, but also produce greater efficiency in responding to any emergency. Therefore, compared

with the post-disaster phases of response and recovery, the preventive and preparation measures are more cost-effective and thus deserve intensive policy attention.

Among all the preventative measures, building up flood control facilities and related warning/forecasting systems has drawn the most attention from the Chinese government, especially since the Yangtze River floods in 1998, the heaviest in the reform period, led to a series of collapsed levees and killed more than 4150 people. In the early stage of the reform period, the state followed a blatantly urban-biased development strategy with most resources diverted to glamorous industrial and urban projects instead of water conservancy and forestation projects. As a result, China has to bear with the inestimable environmental costs of soil erosion and deforestation that exacerbated the floods. Since 1998, however, substantial funds have been generated from both central and local governments for the reinforcement of the levees and for building flood storage and detention basins. China has invested heavily in the world's largest flood control project, the Three Gorges dam completed in 2006. The government has also set up nationwide early-warning networks to monitor and identify risks and threats of meteorological, oceanic, geological, earthquake, and forest fire disasters. Influenced by the government's enhanced pre-disaster prevention thereafter and favorable climate conditions, from 1998 to 2008, the total area affected by floods in China was greatly reduced (China Statistical Yearbook 2009, p. 479). Since 2008, however, the numbers have surged, which could be explained by increased extreme weather in the context of climate change and local nonfeasance in maintaining water conservancy facilities.

With respect to preparedness measures, the Chinese government has not only mapped out national emergency response plans for major types of natural disasters, but also has built up a three-tiered manpower mobilization mechanism that includes professional teams, volunteers, and community-based human resources to respond to disasters. In addition, the Chinese government has established special financial budgets for the response to and relief of general disasters and several central and local government departments, including civil affairs, water resources, agriculture and forestry, have established a system for stocking disaster relief materials. This system consists of ten central government stocks and local stocks in areas where disasters happen frequently (United Nations Economic and Social Council 2008, p. 14).

China today is much better equipped technologically than before to deal with natural catastrophes, with improved high-tech systems for forecasting

and monitoring disasters. Since the effectiveness of disaster management relies greatly on the utilization of related technology and information, the country has made a strenuous effort to improve its knowledge and technological capacity in all fields related to disaster mitigation. Relying on meteorological, oceanic, and land resources, satellites as well as ordinary aeroplanes and unmanned planes, China has been using remote sensing and satellite positioning technology for surveillance tasks. Within two hours of the Sichuan earthquake, a map indicating basic information about the epicenter and major affected areas had been prepared by the National Disaster Reduction Centre, an information-sharing platform under the Ministry of Civil Affairs. In the following days, 120 maps and reports derived from satellite and aeroplane images were submitted by the Centre and its cooperative partners. Manned and unmanned aeroplanes equipped with remote sensors flew over the areas hit by the quake to collect field information with a view to more effectively deploying rescue and mitigation forces and relocating affected people (United Nations Economic and Social Council 2008, p. 6).

Despite the remarkable progress made by the PRC in natural disaster management, problems still exist and through learning lessons from previous experiences, the country can further improve its relief work to reduce potential losses in disasters. Currently the government is still playing an overwhelming role in disaster management, with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) unable to provide sufficient assistance. Although indigenous NGOs, a symbol of the emerging civil society, have become increasingly visible players in China's disaster relief work, their roles and functions are still quite restraint under China's current state-centric political systems, and therefore, they are not as strong and influential as their international peers. The Sichuan Earthquake in 2008 for the first time in history witnessed an unprecedented civic mobilization facilitated by Internet communications (Yang 2008, pp. 4-5). Immediately after the quake, NGOs and citizens around the nation responded to the disaster just as quickly as the government. The day after the earthquake, several environmental and educational NGOs in Beijing initiated a "Green Ribbon" campaign. Their members and volunteers fanned out in the streets in fund-raising and blood drives. On the same day, 57 NGOs issued a joint statement calling for concerted disaster relief efforts among all NGOs, and 51 other civic groups jointly established an office in Chengdu to coordinate NGO relief activities.

Due to the government's strict control and restrictions over NGOs plus their weak capacity building, most NGOs except government-organized

NGOs (GONGOs) like the Red Cross Society of China and China Charity Federation could only play a very limited role in the relief work. With the Sichuan Earthquake being an exception, most NGOs in China failed to take noticeable actions in response to such major disasters as the snowstorm in 2008 or the deadly floods and mudslides in 2010. Past experiences in Western countries show that significant supervision and participation from NGOs and other civil society groups are requisites for better disaster management, so if China wants to address natural disasters more efficiently, it has to improve the institutional environment for the vibrant growth of NGOs.

The central government is now overloaded with excessive responsibilities in the disaster management, having to take care of almost all trivialities related to organizing donations, sending reports to the disaster zones, transport aid materials and disperse of compensation fund. This increases the difficulty in coordinating work among various sectors and in implementing detailed instructions and policies, and thus on many occasions causes inefficiency and even corruption. The one-party political system that lacks sufficient supervision from opposition parties and independent media also exacerbates the embezzlement in utilizing donation fund and materials. Local governments at various levels sometimes do not follow their superior authorities' instructions when allocating relief and recovery fund. Without sufficient supervision from the civil society and NGOs, misappropriation and embezzlement of disaster preparedness/relief fund and materials are still being frequently revealed in local disaster management process. As for post-disaster compensations, insurance companies still play a minor role due to their limited population coverage while the Chinese government is responsible for most of the payment.

Obsessed with the high-speed economic growth that has become a major indicator to measure administrative chiefs' performances, local governments at various levels often pay much more attention to glamorous industrial and urban projects instead of water conservancy and forestation along small and medium-sized rivers. Due to the insufficient funding from the local budgets, some remote seismological observatories and disaster reduction facilities cannot maintain normal functions. The earthquake in 2008 and floods and mudslides in 2010 can be considered timely wake-up calls for the government on the need to pay more attention to the development of local disaster reduction infrastructure that has lagged behind the expansion of urban areas and urban population growth.

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China's Natural Disaster Management: Implications for Non-democratic Governance

Abstract The conclusion part discusses China's monolithic and purely authoritarian model of handling disasters that has been increasingly challenged by strong vested interests within the party-state system and citizenry activism outside the system. To maintain the top-down command-and-control relationship in the disaster politics, the central leadership has to continue its firm grip over economic resources, personnel, and information pertinent to the cycle of disaster management, but such control from the top has been gradually eroded by the sheer number of institutional participants, multi-layer local-government structure, and complex socioeconomic relationship among different actors in the disaster management. The book concludes that the reinstitution within the authoritarian regime has improved the hardware aspects of disaster management, but ignored the most salient civil society dynamics driven by cyberspace activism and civic consciousness that may pose lethal challenges to the authoritarian regime itself.

Based on abundant historical experiences in fighting against natural calamities and internationally accepted learnings and norms from other modern states, China today has developed its own disaster management regime of authoritarian style that can effectively coordinate and mobilize various state forces to control casualties and damages at relatively low levels. Having mitigated the imminent political risks from these catastrophes that have toppled many dynastical regimes in China's history, the communist

government is now facing new types of institutional and societal imperatives in its effort to revamp the country's disaster management governance.

In contrast to the disaster management system adopted by a typical democracy, which accentuates individual freedom and public participation in environment-related actions (Andrew and Cortese 2013; Jänicke 1996), China's regulatory system and policy process have been state-dominant, nonparticipatory, and often centralized and characterized by the absence of public consultation, grassroots activism, civil litigation, and lobbying (Lo 2015, p. 152). In recent years, such a monolithic and purely authoritarian model of handling disasters was increasingly challenged by strong vested interests within the party-state system and citizenry activism outside the system. To maintain the top-down command-and-control relationship in the disaster politics, the central leadership has to continue its firm grip over economic resources, personnel, and information pertinent to the cycle of disaster management, but such control from the top has been gradually eroded by the sheer number of institutional participants, multi-layer local-government structure and complex socioeconomic relationship among different actors in the disaster management.

In the study of institutionalization in authoritarian regimes, nonrepressive institutional pillars like the disaster management system in the non-democratic governance are often neglected. Through the research on China's disaster management politics, the book continues new institutionalist studies of authoritarianism that help to explain the Party's "authoritarian resilience" (Nathan 2003). In contemporary China's disaster politics, a powerful party-state dominates a mono-centric and nonparticipatory policy process with command-and-control regulatory instruments, but this authoritarian system of disaster management has been constantly fine-tuning itself, and sometimes making overhauls to address emerging changes.

In the normalization and re-institutionalization of the country's bureaucratic system overseeing natural disaster management, substantial efforts have been made in different reform stages to tackle thorny central-local/civil-military relations, and to improve the regime's international image. The study of China's disaster politics reveals that the fragmentation and decentralization of the authoritarian power have been particularly prevalent in the reform era, with vested interest groups emerging as strong voices to distort, ignore, or even challenge central leadership's authority in the disaster policy process. To a certain extent, China's disaster governance has become less authoritarian when the party-state itself is getting more fragmented (Lieberthal 1992) and the society is getting more pluralistic. In general, China's central leadership has successfully

re-established and adjusted its disaster management institutions in the reform era to maintain domestic legitimacy and international image, but these re-institutionalization efforts had limited effect in coping with emerging challenges linked to rising citizen activism.

CHINA'S DISASTER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: AN INSTITUTIONAL PILLAR FOR "AUTHORITARIAN RESILIENCE"

In the first three decades of the reform era, the Communist Party of China (CPC) gradually normalized the bureaucratic system in charge of natural disaster management once disrupted by the anarchical Cultural Revolution. The party-state's normalization and institutionalization of the bureaucratic system overseeing natural disaster management have profound political implications in coordinating intractable central–local relations and improving the regime's international image and legitimacy. The system now has a clear-cut division of responsibilities among various departments, recognizes well-established international norms such as openness to foreign aid, and prioritizes pre-disaster mitigation and preparedness as well as equipment of high-tech surveillance and logistical systems. As a result of the re-establishment of the disaster management bureaucracy the government has managed to keep the casualties caused by natural disasters relatively low.

Targeting problems revealed in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, the Chinese leadership reinstated the holistic disaster management system by formulating the National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief that detailed the division of responsibilities among various institutional actors based on the severity of disasters. Nevertheless, more pressing issues linked to rising citizen activism in disaster relief, online oversight, and social media's role in information sharing have been overlooked in the reinstatement process. The resilient party-state system has ostensibly showed leniency toward growing civic participation in disaster management and recovery, giving societal forces more room to maneuver in the new institutions, but whenever civic activities posed a threat to the CPC's core interest in maintaining its legitimacy and image among the public, the nonrepressive disaster management sector appeared to be repressive and intolerant. To a great extent, the reform since 2008, with technical and administrative improvement, has reinforced the authoritarian regime's nonparticipatory style in disaster management, a trend contrary to the growing civic demand for more participation in public affairs amidst the new Internet and social media culture.

As China's one-party political system remains unchanged, state actors, including central and local-government departments and state-run organizations as well as the armed forces, have been the main players in disaster management that control almost all the resources and dominate policy processes. However, the development of market economy and increased international engagement have made such nonconventional categories of stakeholders as NGOs, commercial organizations, and volunteers increasingly involved in the affairs of disaster management. Although the party-state rhetorically welcomes individual volunteers, commercial organizations, and civic organizations as rescue and assistance forces, the government's tolerance toward nonstate actors in the disaster management is limited, especially when the civil activism, facilitated by the Internet and social media, is questioning state sectors' rent-seeking activities and challenge their credibility and accountability. In the process of acquiring more financial, human, and material resources with which they could function, these nonstate organizations and civil society will definitely try to have a bigger impact upon government-led disaster management and risk mitigation, which are becoming profitable public and private sector consumer goods (Özdem and Jacoby 2006, p. 11; Beck 2009, p. 9).

In the complicated competition process among miscellaneous state actors for policy, financial, and personnel resources, these intra-government interest groups usually have mixed attitudes toward the NGOs, volunteers, and other nonstate actors. As compared to socially insulated military troops, local governments benefit a lot from a wide range of community services to the disaster victims from societal groups and volunteers. As local governments are often required to engage disaster-affected communities and address longer-term recovery issues, they are more open to the participation and help from NGOs, commercial organizations that can complement the government's top-down rehabilitation projects. Nevertheless, many local officials, influenced by old-fashioned mentality of being wary about nonstate actors, still trust and prefer state-organized NGOs and suspect the real motives of societal forces.

DETERMINANTS OF CHINA'S DISASTER GOVERNANCE

Through reviewing the problems and progress in the politics of China's disaster management, the book reveals and analyzes the determinants in China's governance and political process that restrain its capacity to manage nature-induced disasters. Different chapters of this book have high-

lighted different variables that have significant impacts upon the country's overall performances in disaster management, with historical famine-relief heritage, ideological divergences over modern practices, institutional and norm changes, central-level bureaucratic politics, central–local dynamic interactions, roles of military forces, social and commercial organizations and central leadership's re-institutionalization effort being scrutinized and discussed. As China's politics and society are getting more pluralistic and fragmented, the dynamic relationship and interactions among miscellaneous interest groups and civic forces in disaster governance tend to complicate the policy process and affect the regime's ability in managing disasters.

Although China's disaster management system now has a clear-cut division of responsibilities among various departments, tensions and competitions among intra-regime interest groups have been exacerbated. In high-profile relief missions like the two Sichuan earthquakes, substantial loss of donations absorbed by government-linked charity organizations led to other government departments' grievances over monopoly of fundraising by these organizations and revealed the central propaganda department's failure in censoring all media reports on mainland China. As in many other policy areas, the country's disaster management realm have been experiencing growing fragmentation and decentralization, which will continue to affect the weighing of different institutional players in determining the final policy output.

The complexity of China's formal and informal politics related to disaster management should not be underestimated, as all these political forces, interest groups, and social organizations are interacting with one another in a new socioeconomic and institutional environment. China's disaster management evidently does not fit in the rational decision-making model where parochial interests often give way to overall national interest. The Ministry of Civil Affairs has been playing a coordinative role in managing natural disasters, but it lacks sufficient authority, resources, and policy tools to prevail over other state-level agencies and stakeholders. In the ecology of "fragmented authoritarianism" (Lieberthal 1992), fast-growing economic stakes have led to a subsequent increase in the number and type of pressure groups involved in disaster management. In political pluralization and fragmentation, more government entities at the national and local levels, commercial organizations, media, and nongovernment organizations among other entities and individuals have been involved in disaster management, all wanting to magnify their voices and interests in the policy process.

An authoritarian centralist state in theory, China has been undergoing de facto economic federalization and political pluralization in the

reform era. The party-state's governance structure is highly hierarchical, with political power in almost all the policy realms centralized at the top level. However, divisions among these vertically existing functional systems from central level down to the township level have been blurred in the process of market reform and opening-up to the global economic system, with central authority being weakened in almost all policy realms by sharp increase in the number and type of pressure groups involved in disaster management. The fragmentation at both the central and local levels has led to growing bargains, competitions, and even divergences among different actors, which affects the quality of disaster management and the authoritarian regime's attempts to safeguard its legitimacy and image through managing disasters.

In China's *jiuzai xitong* (disaster management system), the CPC's Central Propaganda Department and its subordinating State Administration of Radio, Film and Television are institutional members of the China National Committee for Disaster Reduction (NCDR) that take charge of the press release and media control in all disaster relief missions. However, their censorship authority has been constantly impaired by horizontal conflicts with other formidable institutional players including the ministry-level State Internet Information Office, which was established in 2011 to direct, coordinate, and supervise online content management (*China Daily*, 4 May 2011). The emergence of the new media, which refers to online media and social media in China, and the fragmentation of the CPC's traditional mouthpieces, which started to represent different interest groups and political factions within the regime, have greatly challenged the Central Propaganda Department's control over media reports on sensitive issues. Guo Meimei's scandal that had severely tarnished the public image of China's Red Cross in 2011 was a case in point that reflected the fragility of the CPC's propaganda work and the disunity among intra-regime organizations that held different views over the predominant role of China's Red Cross in absorbing donations. Some media reports that revealed Guo's scandal and bashed the opaque operation within the Red Cross were mobilized by government-linked or civic charity organizations that were competing with the Red Cross in fundraising activities. As the State Internet Information Office did not ban most of the online and social media reports on Guo's scandal, conventional media like officially run newspapers, TV and radio channels subsequently zoomed in the event that badly damaged the reputation of government-organized NGOs at the national level.

In the process of the CPC's re-institutionalization to rein in political fragmentation, the dedicated civic–military relationship will continue to be another important determinant for China's disaster governance. General Guo Boxiong's open defiance of then Premier Wen Jiabao's instructions in the high-profile and high-stake Sichuan Earthquake rescue operations in 2008 had to some extent led to Guo's downfall and unprecedented purge of People's Liberation Army (PLA) generals in Xi Jinping's tenure. The National Emergency Response Plan for Natural Disaster Relief enacted in 2011 emphasized “singular leadership at the central level” (*tongyi lingdao*) and “government dominance in relief work” (*zhengfu zhudao*) (China's State Council 2011), while Xi himself repeatedly emphasized the importance of the PLA's absolute loyalty and firm faith in the Party leadership after 2012. Nevertheless, the long-lasting administrative-military inconsonance is not likely to vanish anytime soon, because the PLA still has autonomous administrative and operation systems that create fault lines in civilian oversight of senior generals and the State Council still relies on the CPC Central Military Commission to deploy PLA troops.

China's institutionalization of its disaster management mechanism was spurred by its growing engagement with the international community since 1980s. The country's future disaster management quality to a large extent will continue to rely on the leadership's openness toward internationally accepted norms and learnings, or knowledge as well as foreign aid and cooperation. Despite the remarkable progress made by the PRC in natural disaster management, problems still exist and through learning lessons from previous experiences, the country can further improve its relief work to reduce potential losses in disasters. Currently the government is still playing an overwhelming role in disaster management, with NGOs unable to provide sufficient assistance. Although indigenous NGOs, a symbol of the emerging civil society, have become increasingly visible players in China's disaster relief work, their roles and functions are still quite restraint under China's current state-centric political systems, and therefore, they are not as strong and influential as their international peers. Due to the government's strict control and restrictions over NGOs plus their weak capacity building, most NGOs except government-organized NGOs like the Red Cross Society of China and China Charity Federation could only play very limited roles in the relief work. Past experiences in Western countries show that significant supervision and participation from NGOs and other civil society groups are requisites for better disaster management, so if China wants to address natural disasters more efficiently, it has

to improve the institutional environment for the vibrant growth of NGOs. The resilient party-state has ostensibly showed leniency toward growing civic participation in disaster management and recovery, but if the regime needs to regain the trust from its own citizens and the international community on its disaster management system, it has to substantially weaken the media censorship and monopoly of state organizations in disaster management to give societal forces sufficient room to maneuver.

WHAT CAN THE STUDY OF CHINA'S DISASTER POLITICS TELL US?

When the CPC is monopolizing and wielding its political power in handling challenges from naturally induced disasters, it actually is facing a similar cultural and institutional environment that monarchs of previous dynasties were encountering in the “Middle Kingdom”. From this perspective of historical continuity, the centralized party-state system today manifests certain governance styles that resemble both the capabilities and disabilities of past dynasties in tackling disasters. The approaches of both ancient dynasties and modern China toward disaster management are state-dominant and institution-based, with complicated guidelines and norms formalized related to detailed procedures and measures in anticipation of and in response to natural disasters. Neither ancient nor contemporary Chinese rulers were able to tolerate sufficient supervision or participation from societal forces in the various phases of disaster management, which resulted in rampant corruption and inefficient local solutions in the exclusive political process.

Nevertheless, it would be unfair and prejudicial to ascribe all the merits and ills manifested by the CPC regime to the thousands of years of dynastic politics. The party-state has to adapt itself to the fast-changing political, economic, and social surroundings through rounds of deep reforms and opening-ups, with cosmopolitan and avant-garde norms being absorbed especially in the past three decades. Based on experiences and lessons learnt from the Republic of China (ROC) era and Mao's period, the Chinese regime since 1980s has successfully normalized the once-disrupted bureaucratic system of disaster management, which, facilitated by laws, regulations, and plans, has clarified the assignment of duties among major disaster relief actors and standardized the procedures through which these actors act to mitigate the impact of disasters. Having abandoned insular attitudes toward foreign aid during the Cold War, China has been open

to foreign donations and international cooperation in various forms, and engaged increasingly in disaster reduction activities on the world stage. Meanwhile, certain internationally accepted norms and principles, like prioritizing prevention measures, openness to international aid and media, clear assignment of duties, and use of advanced technology, have been absorbed by China's disaster management systems as well-established principles. Some norms, like sufficient civic participation and supervision, transparency of information disclosure, and prioritization of local disaster resilience as adaptive capacities (Cutter et al. 2010, p. 1; Ross 2014, p. 8), have not been strictly enforced.

Stable authoritarian governments do not regularly face political risks of losing office as democratic governments do in election systems, so undemocratic regimes tend to employ a longer time line in policymaking. This account seems particularly applicable to adverse situations, such as a serious disaster, where the mishandling of events could have a negative impact on the regime's production and development in the long run (Yi 2015, p. 6). Besides, the Chinese government has proved to be extremely concerned about retaining its international and domestic reputation in policy areas like climate change and public health (Zhang 2003, p. 78). This explains why in the non-democratic Chinese political system where people lack formal ways and means to hold the government accountable, it is still possible for officials to actively convey crucial public goods like disaster mitigation. However, in non-democratic regimes where neither free media nor opposing parties can work actively to keep office-holders' performance under public scrutiny, governments are accustomed to keeping their people in the dark (Yi 2015, p. 7). This is particularly true in China's disaster response, where the government's tolerance of civic and foreign participation, supervision from nongovernmental organizations, and investigations done by independent individuals has been unsatisfactorily limited.

As China's authoritarian ruling is encountering increasing political fragmentation, economic pluralism and civic activism, the top leadership has to cope with new types of challenges emerging from disaster governance even if the government manages to control disaster-induced casualties and economic losses to low levels. Such challenges include intra-government inconsonance among various administrative departments, civic-military tensions, conflicts between government-organized NGOs and other NGOs, central-local incoordination, and civic demand for more participation and information transparency. Simply regarding the disaster governance of China as authoritarian overlooks some important features of the

country's contemporary politics (Lo 2015, p. 152). More specifically, the decentralization of policymaking and policy implementation in the reform era has created political space for interest groups and local governments to act as representatives of their own interests, rather than as mere agents of the central government (Chung 2000; Lieberthal 1992).

The redistribution of fund and resources among various stakeholders has always been the core issue related to the effectiveness of disaster management. China's response to disaster mitigation is intertwined with its disaster-related policy process, in which even the powerful NCDR leadership lacks the authority, resources and tools to prevail over other state or party departments. Since the past 30 years, China's disaster relief bureaucracy has undergone periodic restructuring in order to establish a central agency aimed at ending the splintering of relief-related authority among multiple institutions. It has however, been unable to do so despite the growing importance of disaster management in China's domestic and foreign agendas. The Ministry of Civil Affairs that runs the NCDR Secretariat has been too weak to dominate the decision-making process even inside this system due to strong voices from other powerful players like the PLA, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Transport, and the Red Cross Society of China.

Besides the turf wars at the central level, the involvement of multi-layer local governments further aggrandizes the struggle for fund and resources in China's disaster management. In a still centralized one-party political system, local apparatus is often constrained by limited fiscal and human resources, unengaged citizens, and conflicting local government priorities. Local governments at various levels are not prepared to play independent roles in most disaster response and recover actions. It is almost a zero-sum game for various levels of governments to compete for disaster relief fund and resources allocated by the central government, as provincial, prefectural, and county governments contributed very little fund and materials from their own budget toward the disaster relief missions of subordinate levels of government. The decentralization process since 1990s has been supposed to weaken the central government's role in national disaster management, but in practice, when the country is facing devastating natural disasters that need nationwide aid and cross-provincial-border allocation of materials and rescue personnel, the central government still needs to play a major role in organizing rescue and relief operations and allocating fund and strategic resources. Local governments at various levels sometimes do not follow their superiors' instructions when allocating

relief and recovery funds, with misappropriation of centrally allocated disaster relief fund frequently being reported.

Institutionalized as the country's most important rescue team in major disaster relief campaigns, the PLA sometimes has awkward relationship with the administrative apparatus in the disaster management system where the PLA only obeys orders from the Party's Central Military Commission. At the local level, although the provincial, municipal, and county government has the right to put forward the request for troop involvement, the local military units still need to report to higher military authorities for approval of action. The PLA troops are more or less acting as an independent kingdom on many relief missions, failing to be seamlessly integrated into the national disaster management system that demands cooperation and coordination among different institutional participants.

In recent years, the Chinese government, pushed by the impetus to establish an open, inclusive, and accountable image, has been taking a more tolerable approach toward participation from civic groups, commercial organizations, and individual volunteers in the state-centric disaster management. The government has loosened regulatory restriction concerning NGOs' registration, organization, and funding after the public trust on China's Red Cross, one of the most influential GONGOs, slumped in 2011 due to an online scandal associated with Guo Meimei. Despite that, it is still very difficult for NGOs to attract fund as well as talented professionals under current policy environment in which local officials still suspect the real motives of NGOs and volunteers and often hold hostility toward these social forces. As compared to state-owned enterprises that have been justified as the regime's economic foundation and thereby privileged to participate in state-centric disaster management, private sectors still have a large untapped potential to help provide skilled services and goods for preparedness, emergency responses, and post-disaster recovery and reconstruction.

Pressing issues linked to the 2008 Sichuan earthquake forced the Chinese leadership to overhaul its holistic disaster management system. Nevertheless, such a reinstitution process overlooked emerging challenges like rising citizen activism in disaster relief, people's demand for information transparency, and social grievances over official corruption. The party-state has showed leniency toward growing civic participation in disaster management, but whenever civic activities posed a threat to the CPC's core interest in maintaining its legitimacy, the nonrepressive disaster management sector appeared to be repressive and intolerant.

Despite the political process of pluralization, fragmentation, and decentralization, the reform since 2008, with improvement in administrative efficiency and technical efficacy, has reinforced the authoritarian regime's nonparticipatory style in disaster management.

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