

Earthquakes, Geopolitics, and Civil Society: Republic of Türkiye and The People's Republic of China Compared

WILLIAM MITCHELL - ZHIFENG ZHONG - JONATHAN MIZUTA

(WM) *J.M. Dawson Institute, Baylor University, Waco, TX, US*
bill_mitchell@baylor.edu; zhifeng_zhong@baylor.edu; jon_mizuta@baylor.edu

Abstract

Much of the natural disaster literature is discipline concentrated. More research on comparative and interdisciplinary perspectives is needed to further our knowledge of cultural changes following earthquake disasters. Based on social/cultural movement studies emphasizing political opportunity and mobilization, this paper is a comparative study of reaction and response to the 1999 Izmit (Marmara), Türkiye and the 2008 Sichuan, China earthquake disasters. The patterns of disaster impact are compared and assessed. Although both earthquakes disturbed public order and devastated part of social welfare, the two events opened space for international societal involvement and growth of internal NGOs. The impacts of the two earthquakes were uneven and shaped by perceptions of foreign involvement and national competence. The Sichuan earthquake had a very limited impact on geopolitics and civil society compared to the Izmit earthquake.

Keywords: Izmit earthquake, Sichuan earthquake, Geopolitics, Impact patterns, Civil Society

Introduction

Although the Republic of Türkiye and the People's Republic of China are geographically different in many ways, they each have significant national and international geopolitical concerns, very real threats of devastating earthquakes, and an evolving civil society with increasing civic associations representing civil liberties and human rights. Both countries have also long experienced some of the most devastating earthquake disasters. In what ways do these disasters impact geopolitics and the development of civil society?¹ Although there is vast discipline literature on the three subjects of earthquakes, geopolitics, and civil society, much of the work focuses on a single national event. The need continues for more interdisciplinary and transnational comparative work. We believe the discipline of geography is well-suited for such an undertaking. This paper addresses a small part of this need by examining the 17 August 1999 Izmit, Türkiye and the 12 August 2008, Sichuan, China earthquake disasters in order to answer the questions: During a traumatic national event of massive fatalities and injuries, with vast property and industrial losses which disturb public order and impair social welfare, does the event open space and opportunities for NGO involvement, national, and international cooperation? If so, how did these events contribute to the development of civil society and a shift in geopolitics?

This paper is based on primary and secondary sources of the two case studies, extensive field work in Türkiye and China, and a comparison of the Izmit and Sichuan data. We have interviewed victims, local and national officials, and in Türkiye also participated in the

¹ For our purposes we consider geopolitics as the relationships between geographical features and international politics, rather than the traditional school of thought that developed in the service of state power during WWI and WWII. See Gallher, C., Dalhman, C.T., Gilmartin, M., Mountz, A., & Shirlow, P. (2009). *Key Concepts in Political Geography*. Los Angeles, Sage.

emergency phase of search and rescue, longer term recovery, and reconstruction. We will consider the public, private, and civil society sectors, with focus on national, regional, and local government actions, the media, competence of the state, attitudes toward external aid, and uncertainty of earthquakes impacting international relations.

Obviously, we recognize that the human and physical geographies of China and Türkiye are in some ways bipolar comparisons. Further, with just two cases we do not infer this tentative and qualitative interpretation beyond the boundaries of Türkiye and China. We hope that future research will include additional cases and eventually enough combined and synthesized data to contribute to global earthquake mitigation action. After all, earthquake induced casualties and damages are inevitably spatial, and determined mostly by underlying geographies of human choices and decisions made in advance of the physical action.²

The Izmit Earthquake of 17 August 1999

On 17 August 1999 at 0302 local a magnitude (M_w) 7.4 earthquake struck in the Marmara Region, in Northwest Türkiye. The epicenter was in Kocaeli, near Izmit, along the North Anatolian fault near the south eastern edge of the Marmara Sea. The effected region was home for about 20 million residents (around one third of Türkiye's total population) and encompassed nearly half of the country's industry, which was devastated.³ After about 45 seconds of ground movement, over 17,000 men, women and children were killed, about 44,000 were injured, thousands were missing, approximately 200,000 became homeless, and the local economy (which encompasses nearly half of the entire country's industry) was devastated (Fig. 1).⁴

Based on the number of casualties and damages, this is one of the most devastating earthquakes of the twentieth century,⁵ but far less severe than the 2008 Sichuan earthquake (sometimes referred to as the Wenchuan Earthquake) disaster with about 90,000 deaths and 400,000 injuries.⁶

This earthquake contributed to both fatalities and injuries in the nine provinces of Bolu, Bursa, Eskisehir, Istanbul, Kocaeli, Golcuk, Sakarya, Yalova and Zonguldak located either contiguous or relatively close to the Sea of Marmara.⁷ In addition to being located in Türkiye's geographical core area in the northeast part of the country surrounding the Sea of Marmara which links to the Black Sea through the Bosphorus, and to the Mediterranean Sea through the

² Janelle, D.G., Warf, B., & Hansen, K. (2004). *World Minds: Geographical Perspectives on 100 Problems*. Dordrecht, Netherlands, Kluwer Academic Publishers.

³ Stein, R. (2012). *Seismicity Study in Turkey*. United States Geological Survey, <http://international.usgs.gov/projects/prjturkeyseis.htm>, (Accessed April 15, 2013).

⁴ As with all disasters, statistics for casualties vary and were initially widely reported with unofficial reports of far more fatalities. For fairly current statistical data see Gurenko, E.N., Lester, R ; Mahul, O., Gonulal, S.O. (2006). *Earthquake Insurance in Turkey: History of the Turkish Catastrophe Insurance Pool*. The World Bank, Washington, D.C. Although this paper addresses only one earthquake event in Türkiye (1999) and China (2008), it benefits from experiences with 8 earthquakes over a 33 year period from 1970-2004. For more on the 1970 Gediz, 1975 Lice, 1983 Erzurum-Kars, 1992 Erzincan, 1995 Dinar, 1999 Izmit (Kocaeli), 1999 Duzce, and the 2003 Bingol, Türkiye earthquakes, see Mitchell, W.A. (2004). *The Republic of Turkey and Earthquake Disaster Management: Moving from Fatalism and Vulnerability Toward Active Mitigation in the New Century*. New York, Global Humanities Press.

⁵ United Nations Resident Coordinator. (2000). *Recent Natural Disasters in Turkey: An Overview of the National Technological Capacity and Its Utilization*. <http://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/recent-natural-disasters-turkey-overview-national-technological-capacity-and-its> (Accessed April 15, 2013).

⁶ United States Geological Survey, <http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/eqinthenews/2008/us2008ryan/#summary>, (Accessed April 15, 2013).

⁷ For additional geographical data, see Efe, R. (2000). *Golcuk and Duzce Earthquakes, 1999*. Istanbul. Fatih University.

Dardanelles Straits and Aegean Sea, it was unique in several ways. Fatalities were greater than any earthquake in Turkey since the 1939 Erzincan disaster. It was the second major earthquake---since the San Francisco (1906) event---that has occurred within a large urban environment built on a major fault system. This earthquake contributed to destruction over a vast surface area of around 50,000 km² and ground rupturing for around 200 km (over 100 km on the surface and an estimated 100 km plus under the Sea of Marmara).



Fig. 1: Modified Mercalli Intensities of the Izmit, Turkey Earthquake

Source: Earthquake Research Department of Directorate for Disaster Affairs, Ministry of Public Works and Settlement (Courtesy of the United States Geological Survey 2000).

The Izmit earthquake was located in Türkiye's industrial and heavily populated heartland and unlike any time in the past, this event generated an outpouring of criticism by the elite and middle class against the government and military's slow response to the disaster. Unlike the Lice or Gediz victims of past disasters, were not mostly rural villagers, but were the educated urban elite, including many of Türkiye's intellectuals, wealthy businessmen, teachers, and other professionals. Even more public anger was directed toward construction builders and land developers. Many Turks stated they were no longer satisfied with accepting 'fatalism' as an excuse, that improper and cheap construction killed people, not God.⁸ One should also know that the percentage of population growth in this region was one of the highest in the world, and increased by about 22 % during the 1990s. This rapid urban population growth occurred in Marmara Sea districts that are predominantly hosting Türkiye's recent rapid industrial transformation. This growth rate results in the disaster region urban housing dweller increased at a rate double that of the national average.⁹

State-Society Relations and Disaster Mitigation in Türkiye

Civil society in democratic societies consist of citizens in civic associations, organizations, and institutions that are outside of and autonomous from the state.¹⁰ Within democracies, human

⁸ Tang, A.K., Ed. (2000). Izmit (Kocaeli) Turkey Earthquake of August 17,1999 including Duzce Earthquake of November 12, 1999. Technical Council on Lifeline Earthquake Engineering Monograph No. 17. Reston, VA, American Society of Civil Engineers; and Mitchell (2004), 167.

⁹ D'Ayala, D. & Free, M. Eds. (2003). The Kocaeli, Turkey Earthquake of 17 August 1999. A Field Report by EEFIT. Earthquake Engineering Field Investigation Team. London, Institution of Structural Engineers.

¹⁰ Karaman, M. L. & Aras, B. (2000). The Crisis of Civil Society in Turkey. Journal of Economic and Social Research, Volume 2 (2), 39-58.

rights and other civil liberties are enhanced when civil society functions properly. Türkiye does have bounteous elements of civil society, but their impact on political life has been relatively minimal.¹¹ This trend improved in the 21st century, thanks in part to the Izmit earthquake that "...mobilized CSOs [civil society organizations] and increased society's interest and trust in civil society as citizens participated in search and rescue activities through volunteering and donations."¹² These earthquakes revealed that a modernization and development process completely dependent on the state could not adequately design solutions or address social problems.

Today civil society in Türkiye is experiencing a rapid transformation and is emerging as important for the Turkish democratic process. The Third Sector Foundation of Turkey has made contributions to reforming the legislation, generating knowledge on the sector's future, and promoting cooperation between the public, private, and third sectors.¹³ Most likely Turkish citizens will no longer remain satisfied with restrictions on free speech and the laws on Turkish sensitivities will evolve with more free speech and human rights, partly because of civil society actions resulting from the earthquake and also those actions resulting from meeting EU demands for membership.

Media Response and Impact

National and international visual, sound and print media response was instrumental in documenting and filming examples of victims' responses, actions and attitudes toward and throughout the emergency management. For several days, the government search and rescue was slow to respond, and this was viewed live and uncensored by live cameras from several television stations directly from the sites. All Türkiye viewed the enormous strain on the survivors as they waited for government and military emergency assistance.¹⁴

The populace and media mobilized strong opposition and criticism of government leaders, housing developers, contractors, and even the military. The minister of health, along with the director of the Turkish Red Crescent, was strongly criticized for lack of timely and appropriate action, as well as insensitive politically motivated remarks.

Greek - Türkiye Rapprochement

International relations between Greece and Türkiye and between Türkiye and European Union were significantly enhanced by quick and cordial responses from both Greece and Türkiye as a result of the disaster:¹⁵

Another factor that has helped improve the political climate is the changing attitude of the Turkish and Greek press, both of which have for years sought to win readers and viewers by

¹¹ Third Sector Foundation of Turkey. (2006). Civil Society in Turkey: An Era of Transition CIVICUS Civil Society Index Country Report for Turkey. Istanbul, TUSEV, 38

¹² Quoted in Icduygu, A., Meydanoglu, Z., & Sert, D.S. (2011). Civil Society in Turkey: At a Turning Point. CIVICUS Civil Society Index Project Country Report for Turkey II. Istanbul, TUSEV, 53.

¹³ See Icduygu, A., Meydanoglu, Z., & Sert, D.S. (2011). Civil Society in Turkey: At a Turning Point. CIVICUS Civil Society index Project Country Report for Turkey II. Istanbul, TUSEV.

¹⁴ Alpaslan Ozerdem writes, "The whole population will want to know why it took so long for the authorities to respond to their emergency needs for water, shelter, and food. More importantly, they will ask why the first vital 6-12 hours for rescuing those still alive in the ruins were wasted, as the Turkish Civil Defence turned out to an organization without any effective physical or personnel capacities." Ozerdem, A. (1999). Tiles, Taps, and Earthquake-Proofing: Lessons for Disaster Management in Turkey. *Environment and Urbanization*, Volume 11 (2), 178; Mitchell (2004), 154.

¹⁵ Kadritzke, N. (2000). Forgetting a Remembered History: Greece's Earthquake Diplomacy. *Le Monde Diplomatique*, <http://mondediplo.com/2000/06/06greece>, (Accessed on April 3, 2013).

fanning the flames of chauvinistic nationalism. Since the quake in Turkey last month, they have made an abrupt about-face, and are now vocal cheerleaders for peace.”¹⁶

Greece quickly offered to help in search and rescue and made numerous gestures to enhance neighborly relations. Türkiye reciprocated during the later Athens earthquake of 1999.¹⁷ Business and civic leaders of both countries began taking initiatives to enhance interaction, while the public encouraged political leaders at all levels to continue this exchange. Although there are many challenges ahead, rapprochement and earthquake diplomacy seem to be a positive geopolitical consequence of the disaster.¹⁸

Criticism from the Public

There were immediate and extensive outpourings of criticism concerning the slow emergency management response for the victims. The response was unusually slow and inefficient for the first several days. It is important to remember that although the government was not adequately prepared to respond to this magnitude of disaster, and it was overwhelming in scope, no democratic government, with the loss of power, telecommunications, blocked roads, and massive casualties including many caregivers and first responders could have avoided heavy criticism from the public. Clearly, more so than for any other earthquake disaster in Türkiye, this disaster experience saw the victims, the public, and the media atypically outspoken and critical of the government and military response for search and rescue.¹⁹

The public insisted that those responsible for the unnecessarily heavy loss of life and injuries and loss of family homes and livelihood be held accountable. Public pressure resulted in parliamentary debates over whether thousands of pre-fabricated temporary shelters should be constructed, or whether the reconstruction should begin on more permanent homes, substituting temporary shelters for existing rentals, hotels, or leasing empty buildings.

Public outcry also led to requests for constitutional changes to allow for more freedom of speech, and control over quality of construction by requiring public tenders, not awards to personal choices of national and local officials.²⁰

The Sichuan Earthquake of 12 May 2008

On 12 May 2008, an earthquake measuring 7.9 on the Richter scale struck western China. The epicenter was located near Wenchuan, in the mountainous western part of Sichuan Province. The earthquake struck along the Mount Longmen which separates the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and

¹⁶ Kinzer, S. (1999). Earthquakes Help Warm Greek-Turkish Relations. *The New York Times*, September 13, 1999. Media appears to be attempting to appeal to its consumers by promoting the ideas which the consumers see as important. Prior to the quake, some print media gained consumers by promoting “chauvinistic nationalism,” whereas after the quake, they promoted cooperation and peace with Greece. This leads one to believe that it is the people, not simply the media, which was ready to see a change in Greece and Turkey relations.

¹⁷ Kadritzke (2000) argues that Turkish-Greek relations were on the mend prior to the 1999 earthquake.

¹⁸ Carkoglu, A. & Kirisci, K. (2004). The View from Turkey: Perceptions of Greeks and Greek-Turkish Rapprochement by the Turkish Public. *Turkish Studies*, Volume 5 (1). According to a report to Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, “In November 2001, Türkiye and Greece established a joint standby disaster response unit comprising personnel drawn from governmental and non-governmental organizations of both countries” as a response to earthquakes in both countries in 1999. See Turkey/Greece - Emergency response to disasters: Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/320). ReliefWeb, August 16, 2002, <http://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/turkeygreece-emergency-response-disasters-report-secretary-general-a57320>, (Accessed April 19, 2013).

¹⁹ The Turkish Armed Forces were the most respected government institution in 1999. Consequently, it was a sea change in attitude to see such criticism. Mitchell (2004), 155.

²⁰ Mitchell (2004), 153.

the Sichuan Basin (see Fig. 1). Although the earthquake was mainly located in Sichuan Province, 417 counties in ten provinces were also affected. Beside Sichuan, this earthquake had enormous impact on provinces such Chongqing, Gansu, Shaanxi. Two more things about the location of this earthquake are worthy to be mentioned: it was close to Tibet which it is a political sensitive province, and near the Three Gorges Area (Sanxia) where the biggest dam is located.

As of September 11, 2009 the Xinhua News Agency revealed that 70,000 died, 18,000 were missing and 400,000 were injured.²¹ 7,789,100 houses collapsed, and 24,590,000 were damaged (State Council, 24 June 24). Basic Infrastructures, public service facilities, including schools and hospitals, and industrial facilities all suffered direct damage. According to the State Council, the direct damage was estimated at 845.1 billion RMB (State Council, 4 September, 2008). This was the most destructive earthquake since the Tangshan Earthquake in 1976 (Fig. 2).

Due to its enormous destruction and the distinct features of its location, the central government put disaster relief on the top agenda. Immediately after the earthquake took place, the then-premier Wen Jiabao fled to Sichuan to direct the disaster relief. Many players were mobilized for earthquake mitigation. Around 13,600 soldiers from the Liberation Army were deployed to the disaster area on the same day. Several Ministries of the State Council also commanded their subordinated agencies to get involved in search and rescue. The central

government also engaged the local governments, communist members and state-owned enterprises to this Anti-earthquake and Rescue (Kangzhen Jiuzai) campaign. Eighteen Provinces were responsible for financial support for the post-earthquake reconstruction in their partner counties. Thousands of NGOs and volunteers also came to the earthquake areas. Led by the Earthquake Relief Coordinating Offices, the governmental agencies and non-state actors cooperated with each other to provide disaster relief. Among these players, the state played a leading role in this disaster mitigation. The guiding principle for mitigation in China is government-dominated, social engaged and all citizens involved.

State-Society Relations and the Disaster Mitigation in China

The pattern of disaster mitigation in the Sichuan Earthquake was mainly shaped by the state-society relations in China. In order to understand the dynamics in disaster relief, we need to

understand the structure of state-society relations. Different from pluralism in the United States and the corporatism in Germany, the state-society relations in China are authoritarian in nature. The party-state and its apparatus are the essential players in the public domain. Even in the economic domain, the market is dominated by the state-owned enterprise. Although civil society is emerging in China, its impact is very limited.

Worrying about the subversive effect of the civil society on the party-state, the Chinese government generally places heavy restriction on the development of NGOs. In order to register with the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA), they need to meet certain requirements with regard to assets, staff, office, a charter and approval from the department in charge (yewu zhuguan danwei). Further, the MCA will not grant permission if a similar NGO has already registered in the same line of work. The MCA recognizes three kinds of NGOs in China: social organizations (SO, shetuan), non-enterprise units (minfei) and foundations. The majority of the SOs and foundations are government-backed organization which was called GONGOS by the academy. Concerning the sources of these NGOs, we can distinguish three kinds of NGOs in China: the international NGOs (INGO), GONGOS and the grass-root NGOs. These grass-root NGOs are formed voluntarily, self-support and self-governing.

²¹ Xinhua News Agency. (2008). The Latest Report of Sichuan Earthquake. Xinhua News Agency, September 11, 2008, http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2008-09/11/content_9923910.htm, (Accessed on April 15, 2013).

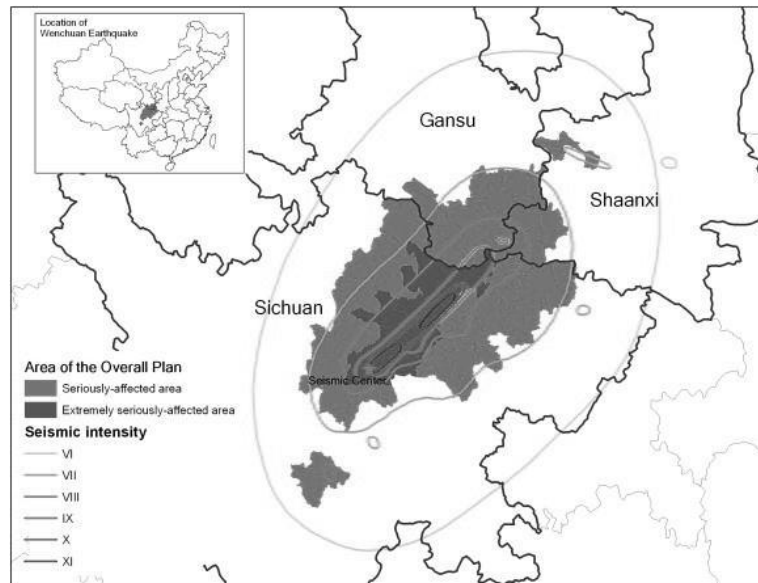


Fig. 2: Modified Mercalli Intensities of the Sichuan, China Earthquake

Source: Adapted from Dunford, M. & Li, L. (2011). Earthquake Reconstruction in Wenchuan: Assessing the State Overall Plan and Addressing the 'Forgotten Phase.' *Applied Geography* 31 (3): 999.

Under China's regulatory system on civil society, there are more than 400,000 SOs registered with the MCA, and a large number (rang from a few hundred thousand to 1.5 million) of un-registered NGOs.²² Most of the NGOs are either lack of autonomy or resource. Therefore, many scholars cast doubt on the existence of civil society in China for the following two reasons: China does not have an autonomous private domain which was protected by law; lack of civil society organizations which are independent from the state.²³ The party-state mainly relied on its political apparatus such as armed force (*wujing*), local government and party systems for earthquake relief. The party-state is more open to internal NGOs than the INGOs. Some report reveals that a foreigner was pulled over by a soldier because of his foreign face.²⁴ Only six rescue teams from six countries were allowed to enter the earthquake areas. The government provided much more space for grass-root NGOs as long as they cooperated with the state. Timing also made a difference. At the early stage, the state provided some space for the involvement of the

²² Because there is no systematic survey, the numbers of un-registered NGOs were estimated by different scholars. Please see Wang, M. (2007). The Development and Present Situation of NGOs in China. *Social Sciences in China*, Volume 28 (2), 99-100, and Watson, A. (2008). Civil Society in a Transitional State: The Rise of Associations in China. In *Associations and the Chinese State: Contested Spaces*, ed. Jonathan Unger, pp. 36-38. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe; Deng, G. (2010). The Hidden Rules Governing China's Unregistered NGOs. *The China Review*, Vol. 10 (1), 188.

²³ Most NGOs in China usually get funding from the state or supervised by the state, therefore scholars called them GONGOs, government-organized non-governmental organizations. For a more detailed discussion, see Shieh, S. & Deng, G. (2011). An Emerging Civil Society: The Impact of the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake on Grass-Roots Associations in China. *The Chicago Journal*, No. 65 (January 2011), 181-194.

²⁴ Ford, P. (2008). Quake Aid: Neither landslides nor Chinese Troops Stop This Volunteer. *Christian Science Monitor*, June 6, 2008, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0606/p01s05-woap.html>, (Accessed on April 14, 2013).

NGOs. Gradually when the state took control of the disaster relief, more restrictions were placed on the NGOs.

Concerning the monetary contribution, the portion from the INGOs and the grass-root NGOs is very small, covering less than 3% (see Table 1). Over 56.5% of the contributions and resources were from the Party and the government. The Communist Party had collected 973 million RMB from its members, and 803 million were sent to Sichuan for earthquake mitigation.²⁵ Donations collected by the GONGOs are second to the party-state, accounting for 40.7%.

Table 1. Contribution of Disaster Relief

	Amount (Million RMB)	Percentage (%)
Communist Party & Government	37, 933	56.51141
GONGOs	27, 317	40.69602
INGOs	874.5	1.302803
Grass-root NGOs	1000	1.489769
Total	67, 124.5	100

Source: Compiled by the authors from The Research Center of Citizen and Social Development in Sun-yet Sen University and The Research Center of Civil Society in Chinese University of Hong Kong, *The Emergence and Challenge of the Social Sector: Evaluation and Suggestion on the Social Organizations' Involvement in Disaster Relief and Post-Earthquake Reconstruction*, May 2009.

To meet the need for a large contribution of personnel, the party-state also greatly surpassed other players in the civil society. According to Wang, 150,000 soldiers, 75,000 candidate soldiers and 91, 3000 doctors and nurses were deployed by the state for disaster relief.²⁶ The party-state mobilized all sectors in China through its governmental branches, party-members, GONGOs and national enterprises. Scholars call this the Total Mobilization Regime (Juguo Tizhi). In the disaster relief of the Sichuan Earthquake, this regime demonstrated its competence in extracting resource, deploying personnel and providing quick response.

In sum, the Army and governmental branched played a leading role in disaster mitigation, while the grass-root NGOs and the INGOs played a modest but noticeable role in disaster relief. Their contribution was more important in the post-disaster reconstruction than the disaster relief.

Media Response in China

Compared to Turkiye, the media played a very modest role in stimulating the development of civil society in China. The tone of the Sichuan Earthquake report was praise rather than critique. At the beginning, most of the international media and the internal media all praised the government's performance in disaster relief. For example, Simon Elegant from *Time* report that "the government's response has been pretty amazing."²⁷ *The Morning Post*

²⁵ Xinhua News Agency. (2011). Amazing Love: How Special Membership Fees from the Communist Party Were Used in Wenchuan. Xinhua News Agency, June, 6, 2011, http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2011-06/29/content_1896052.htm, (Accessed on April 15, 2013).

²⁶ Wang, X. (2011). From Tragedy to Glory: Implication from the Disaster Relief of Wenchuan Earthquake. Sichuan, Sichuan Wenyi Press, 12.

²⁷ Elegant, S. (2008). Sichuan Earthquake: Response Time. *Time Magazine*, May 12, 2008, http://world.time.com/2008/05/12/sichuan_earthquake_response_ti/, (Accessed on April 22, 2013).

(Zaobao) in Singapore commented that “the disaster relief reveals the supremacy of the Chinese regime.”²⁸ Edward Cody from *Washington Post* commented that “The party’s initial response, marshaling a vast relief operation within hours, generated a groundswell of support.”²⁹

Although the main tone of Sichuan Earthquake report was very positive, there was also some minor criticism. The disproportional death of the students resulted from poorly-built teaching buildings did arouse some severe critique from home and abroad. Corruption scandal associated with these “Tofu Projects” also stimulated civil protest from the angry parents. However these noises were quickly silenced by the state. The state also provided some compensation to comfort these parents.

The Beijing Olympic in August, 2008 greatly diverted people’s attention from the Sichuan Earthquake to the Olympic Games. The excellent performance of the Chinese athletes and the commendable management by the China government in hosting the Beijing Olympics greatly enhanced its public image, nationally and internationally.

As for the impact of earthquake on geopolitics, it was also very modest. Due to the sensitive issue of Tibet, the Chinese government did not involve India and other neighboring countries which are close to the earthquake areas in disaster relief for fearing of instability in Tibet. Therefore, bilateral relation between China and its neighboring countries did not change much. Emphasizing the state’s sovereignty, China did not allow the international players (except six rescue teams) to enter its heartland. The main channel for international involvement is donation.

Analysis

New projects supported by the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and the global reinsure—*SwissRe* are underway by Turkish officials and professionals including American team leader Ross Stein of the US Geological Survey. The objective is to help mitigate the earthquake risk in the region around Istanbul. Data from the stress transfer movement along the North Anatolian fault will also provide insight into the San Andreas Fault activity. The stress that was released from the Izmit earthquake was partly transferred elsewhere along the faults, particularly increasing stress on along a fault just southeast of Istanbul.³⁰

Based on the Turkish disaster, it seems that the citizens of the unitary moderate Muslim democracy will no longer tolerate the explanation or excuse of fatalism as the cause of future earthquake disasters. Evidence, widely viewed across Türkiye, clearly demonstrated that shoddy construction, building on unstable land or on known faults, simple greed by unscrupulous developers, and lack of enforcement of construction and zoning codes kill people.³¹ In China, the party-state is powerful and competent in disaster mitigation. Through a Total Mobilization Regime, enormous money and personnel were deployed to the earthquake areas. Although corruption and shoddy construction were also sources for the disproportional death of students, the state quickly used both a “fist and carrot” to silence the protestors. Compared to Türkiye,

²⁸ Zhou Z. (2008). China’s Premier Is Not An Easy Job. *Zaobao*, May 18, 2008.

²⁹ Cody, E. (2008). Crises Cloud China’s Olympic Mood as Quake Tests Party’s Mettle. *Washington Post*, May 17, 2008.

³⁰ Stein, R. (2012). Project: Seismicity Study in Turkey. USGS International Programs. US Department of the Interior. Washington. USGS. <http://international.usgs.gov/projects/prjturkeyseis.htm>, (Accessed on March 12, 2013).

³¹ Consistent with decades of observations, Palash Ghosh writes, “A report in National Geographic indicated that ‘although many of the structures were believed to be earthquake resistant, shoddy construction and inappropriate materials turned them into death traps.’” Ghosh, P. (2011). Turkey Earthquake 2011: Worst Natural Disaster Since 1999 Quake. *International Business Times*, October 24, 2011, <http://www.ibtimes.com/turkey-earthquake-2011-worst-natural-disaster-1999-quake-360372#>, (Accessed on April 19, 2013). Also see Mitchell (2004), 153 and Ozerdem, 178-179.

people in China are generally more satisfied with the government's performance in disaster relief. Although Xu Yongguang called 2008 as the First Year of China's Civil Society,³² the impact of the Sichuan Earthquake on the development of civil society in China is very limited.

The government of Turkiye along with most of its citizens is aware of many existing response issues. In China, citizens and governmental officials realized that fast development without serious quality control would be very harmful. How to stop the poorly constructed housing projects becomes a public concern. The government officials also understood that the state alone was not enough and engaging the civil society in manageable way would be very important in crisis management. To empower the civil society and establish partnership between the state sector and the third sector will also call for political change. The Turkiye and China case studies validate a very large and significant problem that only can be solved by political action to reprioritize and reallocate national funds for earthquake hazard mitigation. Certainly public funds are limited, and other socio-political problems and challenges may seem overwhelming, but this is the opportunity to make political decisions to appropriate, allocate, and invest funds that will save lives, prevent injuries, and minimize damage to the built environment.³³

Turkiye and China are not alone in mitigation criticism. "Earthquakes cause devastating damage and injuries around the world, yet frequently, many at risk neglect to prepare for this eventuality. This applies to many governments as well. Indigent people may not be able to afford the costs; however, governments, including many in the developing countries, can invest to some degree in mitigation action."³⁴ We have too long seen the consequences of fatalistic attitudes leading to self-fulfilling prophecy of helplessness and accepting that earthquakes are uncontrollable natural events and therefore are uncontrollable. This attitude is changing in Turkiye and China.

Conclusion

We have compared the patterns of the disasters' impact on the development of civil society and the shift of geopolitics in Turkiye and China by examining the factors accounting for the variances. The authors argue that although both earthquakes disturbed public order and devastated social welfare, the earthquakes also opened space for NGO involvement, and international cooperation, thus contributing to some degree the development of civil society and a minimal shift of geopolitics. The impacts of earthquakes were uneven, more in Turkiye and less in China. These uneven impacts were shaped by some socio-political factors such as type of polity, perception of foreign involvement and national competence.

In democratic Turkiye, the state did not perceive the involvement of international agencies and grass root organizations as a threat to the regime, therefore, there was more space for their activities. In return, this contributed to a positive change of Turkish-Greek relations as well as the advancement of civil society in Turkiye. Furthermore, people no longer accepted fatalism and became more critical towards the government's disaster relief. The attitudinal change from fatalism to activism also stimulated the development of civil society.

In authoritarian China, worrying about the impact on Tibet and the regime, the party-state restrained the political window opened by the earthquake. It opened little space for international involvement. The Sichuan Earthquake had very limited impact on the shift of geopolitics. Although it was much friendlier towards internal grass-root NGOs, it mainly relied on its party-state apparatus. Through its Total Mobilization Regime, the party-state provided very successful

³² Xu, Y. (2008). The First Year of Civil Society. NPO Commentary, No. 4.

³³ Guha-Sapir, D. & Carballo, M. (2000). Medical Relief in Earthquakes. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, Volume 93 (February 2000), 59-61. See also Mitchell (2004), 51.

³⁴ Mitchell (2004), 17.

disaster mitigation. In return, people became more satisfied with the state. Even though some noise and criticism came out during the disaster relief, they were quickly silenced by the “fist and carrot” response. Therefore, the earthquake only had modest impact on the development of civil society in China.

Beside different perception towards foreign involvement and different state-society relations, national competence also explains the variance between Türkiye and China. Here national competence not only includes competence to produce goods which the GDP and GNP reveal, but also includes competence to extract and deploy resources, the competence to legitimize the state’s action, as well as power to maintain order when facing challenges. Lack of competence in providing quick response and difficulty in handling criticism put the state on trial in Türkiye. The party-state in China is more powerful in providing disaster mitigation and maintaining order in crisis although it was not as democratic as the state in Türkiye. In some situations such as natural disasters, people have to make a difficult choice between human rights and order, as well as democracy and efficiency.

Often the Turkish and Chinese victims and policy makers remained passive. The citizenry waited until an event occurred, then repeated a similar response to the previous earthquake disaster. In both Türkiye and China, the citizens expected the state to take care of the problem. In Türkiye, the earthquake mitigation aroused much more criticism. Repercussions from, and response to, lack of mitigation for these last two catastrophic events, along with memories of past disasters, served as a catalyst to alter greatly the public mood of complacency, acceptance, and fatalism observed in Türkiye’s past. The Turks no longer accept the status quo. There was an unusually loud public and private call for constructive action. The populace and media mobilized strong opposition and criticism of government leaders, housing developers, contractors, and even the military. The minister of health, along with the director of the Turkish Red Crescent, was strongly criticized for lack of timely and appropriate action, as well as insensitive politically motivated remarks. Gradually, passive fatalism is evolving into activism.³⁵

The pressure for change in term of free speech and human right in China is minimal compared to Türkiye. In China, people are more satisfied with the government’s performance in disaster relief. Although some grieved parents and human right activists did bring out some protest against the local officials, its impact was very limited in scope. However the involvement of grass-root NGOs in earthquake mitigation did change the state’s attitude towards civil society. The officials become more positive towards the NGOs, and considered them good partners for building a harmonious society. In fact, after the Sichuan Earthquake, the MCA significantly lowered the requirement for the registration of NGOs. Under the new regulatory framework, many NGOs can get official registration without a supervising authority related to the government.

“Even through earthquakes will continue in Türkiye and China, their tragic impacts can be studied and eventually reduced through proper risk assessment and mitigation. Türkiye’s experience should help both developed and developing countries to realize that disaster management is essential, and that an educated citizenry that has changed from fatalism to an attitude of positive action, is not only possible, but absolutely essential. In China, it reveals that an authoritarian state is more likely to remain immune from public criticism while state competence will also contribute to its autonomy in crisis management. Furthermore, it also indicated that an authoritarian state operated under a Total Mobilizing Regime can be very efficient in disaster relief.

Although mitigation efforts are being addressed with varying degrees of technology, education, and government assistance in many countries, Professor Emeritus Haresh Shah,

³⁵ Mitchell (2004), 39,154, 9.

Stanford University, a pioneer in the fields of risk analysis for over three decades and recognized globally for his excellent work on hazard mitigation, observed that...there is very little hope that a major urban centre [sic] in India or China or Turkey will perform well in a future earthquake.”³⁶ Yet our research demonstrates a little optimism for Türkiye and China.

As suggested by the United Nations’ *Living with Risk: A Global Review of Disaster Deduction Initiatives*, primary components for moving from the status quo toward progress are the achievement of risk and vulnerability awareness; education, research and training; public commitment and comprehensive institutional support; implementation of corrective and preventative measures; and warning and preparedness systems.³⁷ We suggest that more research and work is needed in the public, private, and third sectors of both Türkiye and China for more focus on bottom up solutions.

References

- Carkoglu, A. & Kirisci, K. (2004). The View from Turkey: Perceptions of Greeks and Greek-Turkish Rapprochement by the Turkish Public. *Turkish Studies*, Volume 5 (1).
- Cody, E. (2008). Crises Cloud China’s Olympic Mood as Quake Tests Party’s Mettle. *Washington Post*, May 17, 2008.
- D’Ayala, D. & Free, M. Eds. (2003). The Kocaeli, Turkey Earthquake of 17 August 1999. A Field Report by EEFIT. Earthquake Engineering Field Investigation Team. London, Institution of Structural Engineers.
- Degui, L. (2011). Earthquake Diplomacy: A Potential Turning Point in Regional Relations. *China US Focus*, April, 1, 2011, <http://www.chinausfocus.com/peace-security/earthquake-diplomacy-a-potential-turning-point-in-regional-relations/>, (Accessed on April 3, 2013).
- Deng, G. (2010). The Hidden Rules Governing China’s Unregistered NGOs. *The China Review*, Volume 10 (1).
- Dorronsoro, G. (2002). The EU and Turkey: Between Geopolitics and Social Engineering. *Occasional Paper Series*, No. 34.
- Elegant, S. (2008). Sichuan Earthquake: Response Time. *Time Magazine*, May 12, 2008, http://world.time.com/2008/05/12/sichuan_earthquake_response_ti/, (Accessed on April 22, 2013).
- Efe, R. (2000). *Golcuk and Duzce Earthquakes, 1999*. Istanbul, Fatih University.
- Ford, P. (2008). Quake Aid: Neither landslides nor Chinese Troops Stop This Volunteer. *Christian Science Monitor*, June 6, 2008, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0606/p01s05-woap.html>, (Accessed on April 14, 2013).
- Gallher, C., Dalhman, C.T., Gilmartin, M., Mountz, A., & Shirlow, P. (2009). *Key Concepts in Political Geography*. Los Angeles, Sage.
- Ghosh, P. (2011). Turkey Earthquake 2011: Worst Natural Disaster Since 1999 Quake. *International Business Times*, October 24, 2011, <http://www.ibtimes.com/turkey-earthquake-2011-worst-natural-disaster-1999-quake-360372#>, (Accessed April 19, 2013).
- Guha-Sapir, D. & Carballo, M. (2000). Medical Relief in Earthquakes. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, Volume 93 (February 2000).
- Gurenko, E.N., Lester, R., Mahul, O., Gonulal, S.O. (2006). *Earthquake Insurance in Turkey: History of the Turkish Catastrophe Insurance Pool*. The World Bank, Washington.

³⁶ Shah, H.C. (2006). The Last Mile: Earthquake Risk Mitigation Assistance in Developing Countries. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (2006:364), 2189.

³⁷ Mitchell (2004), 33.

- Hou, L. Earthquake Geopolitics in China: The Case Study of the 12th May 2008 Wenchuan http://www.espre.cn/111/manage/ziliao/CASE%20STUDY%20OF%20THE%20WENCHUAN%20EARTHQUAKE%20_HOU_.pdf, (Accessed on April 3, 2013).
- Icduygu, A., Meydanoglu, Z., and Sert, D.S. (2011). Civil Society in Turkey: At a Turning Point. CIVICUS Civil Society Index Project Country Report for Turkey II. Istanbul, TUSEV.
- Implementation Status and Results—Turkey: Seismic Risk Mitigation Project (P078359). (2012). The World Bank, Report No: ISR419
- Janelle, D.G., Warf, B., & Hansen, K. (2004). *World Minds: Geographical Perspectives on 100 Problems*. Dordrecht, Netherlands, Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Kadritzke, N. (2000). Forgetting a Remembered History: Greece's Earthquake Diplomacy. *Le Monde Diplomatique*, <http://mondediplo.com/2000/06/06greece> (Accessed April 3, 13).
- Karaman, M. L. & Aras, B. (2000). The Crisis of Civil Society in Turkey. *Journal of Economics and Social Research*, Volume 2 (2), 39-58.
- Kinzer, S. (1999). Earthquakes Help Warm Greek-Turkish Relations. *The New York Times*, September 13, 1999.
- Mitchell, W.A. (2007). Civil Defense and a Dynamic World: How Do We Save More Lives? Proceedings of International Conference on National and International Coordination, Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance in Natural Disaster and State of Emergency, April 16-18, 2007. Girne. Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.
- Mitchell, W.A. (2004). *The Republic of Turkey and Earthquake Disaster Management*. New York, Global Humanities Press.
- Ozerdem, A. (1999). Tiles, Taps, and Earthquake-Proofing: Lessons for Disaster Management in Turkey. *Environment and Urbanization*, Volume 11 (2), 178.
- Press Freedom in Turkey: A Dangerous Place to be a Journalist. *The Economist*, <http://www.economist.com/node/18333123>, March 10, 2011.
- Roney, Britton. (2007). Earthquakes and Civil Society: A Comparative Study of the Response of China's Nongovernment Organizations to the Wenchuan Earthquake. *China Information*, *China Information*, Volume 25 (1), 83-104.
- Shah, H.C. (2006). "The Last Mile: Earthquake Risk Mitigation Assistance in Developing Countries." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (2006).
- Shieh, S. and Deng, G. (2011). An Emerging Civil Society: The Impact of the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake on Grass-Roots Associations in China. *Chicago Journal*, No. 65 (2011), 181-194.
- Singapore Morning Post, May 27, 2008.
- Stein, R. (2012). Seismicity Study in Turkey. United States Geological Survey, <http://international.usgs.gov/projects/prjturkeyseis.htm>, (Accessed April 15, 2013).
- Tang, A.K., ed. (2000). Izmit (Kocaeli) Turkey Earthquake of August 17, 1999 including Duzce Earthquake of November 12, 1999. Technical Council on Lifeline Earthquake Engineering, Monograph No. 17. Reston, VA, American Society of Civil Engineers.
- Third Sector Foundation of Turkey. (2006). Civil Society in Turkey: An Era of Transition CIVICUS Civil Society Index Country Report for Turkey. Istanbul, TUSEV.
- Turkey/Greece - Emergency Response to Disasters: Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/320). ReliefWeb, August 16, 2002, <http://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/turkeygreece-emergency-response-disasters-report-secretary-general-a57320>, (Accessed April 19, 2013).
- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2004). *Living with Risk: A Global Review of Disaster Reduction Initiatives*. New York, United Nations.
- United Nations Resident Coordinator. (2000). Recent Natural Disasters in Turkey: An Overview of the National Technological Capacity and Its Utilization. <http://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/recent-natural-disasters-turkey-overview-national-technological-capacity-and-its> (Accessed April 15, 2013).

- United States Geological Survey, <http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/eqinthenews/2008/us2008ryan/#summary>, (Accessed April 15, 2013).
- Wang, M. (2007). The Development and Present Situation of NGOs in China. *Social Sciences in China*, Volume 28 (2), 99-100.
- Wang X. (2011). *From Tragedy to Glory: Implication from the Disaster Relief of Wenchuan Earthquake*. Sichuan, Sichuan Wenyi Press, 12.
- Watson, A. (2008). Civil Society in a Transitional State: The Rise of Associations in China. In *Associations and the Chinese State: Contested Spaces*, ed. Jonathan Unger, pp. 36-38. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe.
- Xinhua News Agency. (2011). Amazing Love: How Special Membership Fees from the Communist Party were Used in Wenchuan. Xinhua News Agency, June 29, 2011, http://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2011-06/29/content_1896052.htm, (Accessed April 15, 2013).
- Xinhua News Agency. (2008). The Latest Report of Sichuan Earthquake. Xinhua News Agency, September 11, 2008, http://news.xinhuanet.com/news/09/11/content_9923910.htm center/2008-, (Accessed April 15, 2013).
- Xu, Y. (2008). The First Year of Civil Society. NPO Commentary, No. 4.
- Zhou Z. (2008). China's Premier Is Not An Easy Job. *Zaobao*, May 18, 2008.