Chapter 6
Political Science Perspectives

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Abstract Government institutions play an important role in guiding disaster preparedness, mitigation, and recovery. In turn, political scientists have devoted considerable attention to the study of hazards and disasters, including the impact of disasters on election outcomes, the capacity of disasters to help set the crowded government agenda, the various organizational strategies used by emergency management agencies, as well as scores of other related topics. The following chapter considers three areas of political science research examining the intersection of politics, policy, and disaster. It specifically considers the literatures on policy change, myopic voting and reactive decision making, and organizational behavior. This review also considers the literature on disaster resilience, a topic that overlaps various subfields within the discipline. In addition to assessing the strengths and weaknesses of each area of research, this chapter highlights a number of potentially fruitful areas of future research.

Keywords Political science · Public policy · Resilience · Agenda setting · Myopic voting · Focusing events · Policy change

Scholars, public officials, the general public, and the media have long recognized the link between government and the damage suffered in the aftermath of disaster. From the famed flood mitigation programs of Egyptian Pharaoh Amenemhet III to the mass evacuations of Pompeii to the Biblical tale of Noah's Ark, history is littered with stories illustrating the importance of leadership during disaster (Cimellaro 2016). For centuries, humankind has looked to its leaders in times of crisis. Political leaders are uniquely positioned to leverage our collective social resources to help mitigate and, ideally, prevent the destruction caused by disaster. Disasters are often watershed moment in a politician's career, forcing them to make tough choices in the face of extreme uncertainty, panic, and stress.

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Not surprisingly, then, scholars interested in the political process have devoted considerable attention to the study of disaster, a tradition that can be traced to at least the late eighteenth century when political philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau penned his account of the 1775 Lisbon, Portugal earthquake. Commenting on the disaster, Rousseau writes: "nature did not construct twenty thousand houses of six or seven stories there, and if the inhabitants of this great city had been more equally spread equally spread out and more lightly lodged, the damage would have been much less and perhaps of no account" (Dynes 2000, p. 106). Rousseau's work, which is considered the first social scientific account of the politics of disaster, concluded that better urban planning on the part of elected officials could have prevented the enormous loss of life suffered in the wake of the earthquake.

If Rousseau's study represents one the first social scientific accounts of disaster, then Samuel Prince's study of the 1917 Halifax maritime explosion is the first systematic analysis of the political dynamics of hazard and disaster policymaking. A sociologist by training, Prince meticulously documents the Canadian government's response to the disaster, which saw nearly 2000 people perish after a cargo ship filled with explosives and other incendiary devices exploded in Halifax harbor. Analyzing the various laws and rules enacted by the Canadian government in the months following the event, Prince shows disaster can provide an important catalyst for policy and social change (Scanlon 1988). His work remains influential to this day. Scores of researchers have set out to explain the relationship between disaster and policy, a theme discussed in greater detail below.

Disasters are an important area of inquiry for political scientists. Because the study of disasters has always been an interdisciplinary enterprise, political science research on disasters overlaps with many of the other fields surveyed in this book, including sociology, economics, anthropology, geography, and others. Nor is there a singular theory of disaster politics. Instead, considerable variance exists across various the discipline's various subfields, each of which differs with respect to its unit of analysis and conceptual foci.

There is, however, general consensus that disasters are social constructs. Whether or not a particular hazard (a potential source of harm) becomes a disaster (an event that strains the response capacity of a social system or organization) is dictated not only by the size and scope of the hazard, but also by existing vulnerabilities as well as a particular community's capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from disaster (Comfort 2005; Lindell et al. 2006; Islam and Ryan 2016). Because government institutions play a critical role in determining how resources are distributed before, during, and after disaster, politics often determines if a hazard becomes a disaster or, worse yet, a catastrophe (Gerber 2007). Communities look to their political leaders to help decipher between those hazards that are dismissed as little more than a tragic, but unavoidable, confluence of events and those that are somehow the byproduct of human error (e.g., poor planning, a slow response, inadequate resources) and thus can be avoided in the future (Birkland 1997, 2004, 2006, 2010; Jasanoff 2010; Roberts 2010).

The following chapter considers three areas of political science research examining the intersection of politics, policy, and disaster. First, it considers the ways in which disasters lead to policy change. Policy change is the process through which new policies are created and old ones are amended and altered across time (Cobb and Ross 1997; Parsons 1995). By aggregating death, destruction, and economic loss, disasters play an integral role in drawing policymaker, media, and public attention to certain issues thereby helping them access the crowded government agenda, an important precursor to policy change (Birkland 1997).

Second, it considers the literature on myopic voting and reactive decision making. Legislators are often characterized as being reactive, meaning they only attend to those issues that have an immediate impact on their constituency as opposed to those that threaten future harms. A thriving body of research has consider the social and political determinants of myopic voting, in larger part because they provides useful insights into the ways in which elected officials cater to the desires of their constituents. Disaster policy offers an excellent context for investigating this topic since it allows for an assessment of policy rendered *before* an event (e.g., disaster preparedness policy) as well as policy created *after* and in response to an event (e.g., disaster recovery and relief policy) (Fiorina 1974, 1981; Healy and Malhotra 2009, 2010, 2013; Anderson 2000). Put differently, it creates a rather distinctive natural experiment for contrasting proactive versus reactive policymaking.

Finally, this chapter briefly reviews the research examining the administration and management of disaster situations. Unlike the sections on policy change and myopic voting, which focus on fairly well-specified areas inquiry, this section is not necessarily organized around a single research question—or even set of questions for that matter. Instead, it aims to sample some of the political science research that has set out to address both conceptual and, often times, applied questions regarding the ways in which politics impacts different phases in the disaster management cycle, namely disaster response and recovery.

The chapter closes by briefly highlighting a number of gaps in the political science literature and suggesting future research directions. Note that this chapter is intended to serve as a useful entry point into the literature on politics, policymaking, and disaster. It is by no means exhaustive and focuses primarily on U.S. domestic policy, which is, in large part, a testament to the author's own area expertise. However, scholars studying comparative politics and international relations have also made important contributions to our understanding of disasters, despite the fact that their work is not accounted for in the text ahead.

6.1 Policy Change and Disaster

Few subfields have devoted more sustained attention to the study of disasters than the policy sciences, as evidenced in the Policy Studies Organization's 2010 creation of *Risk, Hazards & Crisis in Public Policy*, a peer-reviewed journal devoted entirely

to disseminating research on the policy and political dynamics of hazards and disasters. Disasters factor prominently into virtually every major theory of policy change. Abrupt shocks are said to draw policymaker, media, and public attention to once ignored issues, providing new opportunities for policy change (Kingdon 2003; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Sabatier 1988; Sabatier and Weible 2007; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999).

Public policy encompasses a broad intellectual universe. Textbook accounts present the policy process as including a series of distinct but overlapping stages, including the identification and definition of social issues (problem definition); the selection of issues for explicit government attention (agenda setting); the development and adoption of policy alternatives (policy formulation and adoption); the execution and administration of laws, rules, and regulations (policy implementation); and the assessment and appraisal of new and existing programs (program evaluation) (Anderson 2010). Moreover, the term "public policy" refers to an eclectic array of decisions or governmental outputs, including statutes and laws, court decisions, agency regulations and rules, and orders issued by executive officials (Parsons 1995). Some scholars suggest agreements between various non-governmental or transnational institutions also constitute policy, particularly when these agreements result in the provision of some sort of public good (Stone 2008).

A great deal of policy research has focused on the distinct but interrelated processes of agenda setting, which describes the process through which issues are selected for consideration by a decision making body, and policy change, which broadly describes the creation of new policies or the revision of existing ones (Anderson 2010). Agenda setting is a precursor to policy change in that policy cannot be reformed unless an issue first accesses the agenda of a decision-making body or policy venue. Just as there are a myriad of different types of policy, so too are there different venues. Examples include specific committees within a legislature, government agencies, and state and local governments. Groups seeking policy change need to be careful to select a venue with jurisdiction over the issue in question and, more importantly, one that is receptive to their calls for change. Venues therefore serve as gatekeepers within the political system (Pralle 2006).

Various theories of agenda setting and policy change recognize the importance of disasters. Consider Kingdon's multiple streams framework (MSF hereafter), which is one of the three most widely cited theories of policy change (Zahariadis 2014). Kingdon's (2003) theory uses a metaphor depicting multiple streams of policymaking activity to conceptualize the agenda setting process. The *politics stream* denotes the various constellations of interest groups and policymakers petitioning for change. The politics stream also includes macro-political forces, like public opinion and the national mood. The *problem stream* describes the various ways in which problems are revealed to policymakers, the general public, and the media. As noted below, disasters are one of a number of mechanisms that help bring issues in the problem stream to the attention of policymakers. Finally, the *policy stream* describes the various policy proposals and ideas circulating a particular policy community. Put differently, it includes the various options and ideas for addressing problems in the problem stream. Policy change occurs when a committed and politically savvy

individual, a so-called policy entrepreneur, draws together or couples elements from the various streams thereby coupling the streams. Coupling in turn opens a policy window or an opportunity for organized interests to push their preferred policy onto the government agenda and, ideally, induce policy change.

According to Kingdon (2003), disasters are an important element of the problem stream. Other elements of the problem stream include indicators, which describe the various statistics and numeric measures used to quantify a problem, as well as feedback, which describes information generated during the implementation of program. Disasters are said to represent focusing events or attention grabbing incidents that rapidly aggregate death and destruction. Kingdon notes that certain events, particularly those that are seen as being emblematic of government failure, have the ability to "bowl over everything standing in the way of prominence on the agenda" (p. 96).

MSF is hardly the only theory of policy change to highlight the importance of disasters. The punctuated equilibrium model argues disasters can disrupt existing policy monopolies—areas of policymaking dominated by a select group of individuals and institutions—by drawing attention to a once ignored issue that challenges the status quo (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). What is more, the advocacy coalition framework (ACF), which argues policy change results from changes in the belief systems of organized interests or advocacy coalitions, argues crisis provides a powerful opportunity for coalitions to learn and, in some cases, alter the ways in which they perceive a particular problem (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999; Nohrstedt 2005, 2008). Alas, from a policy perspective, disasters can, in some cases, provide an impetus for policy change.

However, rarely is policy change a forgone conclusion. Birkland's (1997) seminal work on disasters and agenda setting stresses that disasters represent *potential* focusing events, meaning a number of variables, many of which are seemingly unrelated to the event itself, determine the outcome of a post-event policy debate. Problem definition is particularly important. Problem definition assigns meaning to disaster. It communicates the scale and scope of a disaster, describes the population impacted by the event, identifies one or a handful of causal factors that led to the event, and even presents various solutions that can be used to help prevent a similar event from occurring in the future (Rochefort and Cobb 1994; Stone 2002; McBeth et al. 2007). Disasters, in other words, are socially constructed. Roberts (2013) summarized this process writing:

> Congress, disaster managers, presidents, and the media inadvertently shape what counts as a disaster and how much responsibility the federal government has in addressing it. This process of social construction occurs while various actors pursue their own interest, whether winning reelections, making promises to voters, managing organizations, reporting the news, or preparing for disasters. (p. 176)

Proponents of policy change need to use the problem definition process to, first, demonstrate that government was somehow negligent in its responsibility to protect against a particular hazard and, second, convince others that policy change is needed (Birkland 1997; Nohrstedt 2005).

Problem definition helps mobilize organized interests to support policy change. Proponents of change use these narratives to recruit previously disinterested groups who may not have been impacted by the disaster, but who could come to see the event as pertinent to their work and lives (Schattschneider 1960; Pralle 2006). Widespread mobilization is especially important in disaster domains. Unlike many other areas of policymaking, public risk domains, which encompass an array of man-made (e.g., technological accidents, terrorism) and naturally occurring (e.g., earthquakes, hurricanes, aviation disasters, oil spills) disasters, are said to lack an organized public (Huber 1986; May and Koski 2013). Very few interest groups actively lobby for things like earthquake preparedness programs or flood mitigation policies. Instead, disaster policy tends to be dominated by experts and technocrats whose primary source of influence is information and knowledge, as opposed to money and campaign donations. Disaster policy therefore lacks the salience of other, more contested areas of policymaking, like health care, education, or economic policy (May 1991; May and Birkland 1994; May and Koski 2013). In turn, proponents of widespread change need to capitalize on the fear and anger engendered by disaster and cobble together a coalition capable of upending the status quo and creating substantive policy change. When it comes to post-disaster mobilization, time is obviously of the essence, as this uptick in salience will begin to wane once the media stops covering the event (Birkland 1997).

Meanwhile, opposing groups work to communicate narratives that counter these pro-policy change definitions in hopes that they can block their competitors from accessing the government agenda (Cobb and Ross 1997). Those seeking to prevent policy change often have the distinct advantage of representing status quo, meaning they somehow benefit from existing policy arrangements (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). In turn, they usually have preexisting and longstanding connections to policy venues with jurisdiction over the issue. In fact, groups seeking policy change often need to shift the issue to an entirely new venue, as existing venues are rarely receptive to narratives challenging the status quo (Pralle 2006).

Disasters are heavily politicized but this does not mean the objective features (e.g. number of deaths, economic impact, etc.) of an event are totally irrelevant. In fact, some events are so dramatic that change is almost unavoidable. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks are one of the best examples of this phenomenon. September 11 opened policy windows across a variety of policy domains, including transportation, public health, national security, law enforcement, and others (May et al. 2011; Avery 2004; Birkland 2004). There was ample opportunity to capitalize on this particular event and promote policy change across a variety of different policy areas, including those that, at least at first glance, were only loosely related to the incident itself. However, these types of events are rare and few disasters trigger such widespread mobilization. Indeed, most disasters evoke little more than "thoughts and prayers" from government officials, let alone a comprehensive policy response.

Finally, it is important to note that policy change does not always reduce risk. Policymakers are susceptible to deriving the wrong types of lessons from disaster

and adopting laws that fail to mitigate existing vulnerabilities. What is more, many of the lessons learned after disaster are not entirely novel, but are instead ideas that have been circulating policy communities for years (Birkland 2004). Disaster provides an opportunity for organized interests to attach their pet projects to a pressing problem. Success, it seems, can only occur if and when policymakers are ready to explicitly consider the viability of existing policies and programs, as opposed to exploiting a disaster as an opportunity to score political points (Birkland 2006).

6.2 Myopic Voting and Disaster Preparedness

When it comes to emergency management, legislators are said to be reactive, meaning they tend to overinvest in policies that help communities recover from disaster but devote far fewer resources toward programs that aim to prepare for, mitigate, and, in some instances, prevent disaster. Various studies have demonstrated an enormous gap between disaster relief and preparedness spending (Mileti 1999; Healy and Malhotra 2009; Sainz-Santamaria and Anderson 2013). One of the more recent studies estimates that between 1985 and 2008 the U.S. government spent nearly $82 billion on relief but a mere $7.5 billion on preparedness (Sainz-Santamaria and Anderson 2013).

This spending pattern is perplexing given that preparedness has been shown to save both lives and money. Rose et al. (2007) estimate that every $1 in preparedness spending offsets roughly $4 in relief spending. Healy and Malhotra (2009) indicate that every $1 spent on preparedness results in upwards of $7 in immediate savings but close to $15 in future damage reductions. Aside from saving money, preparedness also saves lives. Preparedness programs, such as revising building codes, prohibiting construction in high-risk areas, and reinforcing vulnerable structures, have been shown to protect citizens by helping to shield them from harm's way (Godschalk et al. 2009).

Disparities in relief versus preparedness spending have been attributed to a number of factors. The emphasis on recovery is partially an outgrowth of the way in which individuals conceptualize risk. Faced with an innumerable number of pressing agenda items, policymakers rarely concern themselves with protecting against low probability, high consequence events, many of which may or may not occur until months if not years in the future (Burby and May 1998; May and Koski 2013). This finding echoes a rich body of psychology literature documenting the propensity of individuals to disregard future benefits in lieu of immediate gratification (Quoidbach et al. 2013). Many individuals are too busy to concern themselves with temporally remote problems that may or may not occur at some yet-to-be-determined point in the future.

The literature on myopic voting provides yet another explanation of this spending paradox: Electoral politics. It builds from the assumption that, although legislators need to account consider a myriad of factors (e.g., party affiliation, personal

values and goals, the priorities of their party) when deciding how to vote, constituency concerns are often weighted above all else (Kousser et al. 2007). Specifically, unless an elected official maintains a healthy relationship with the voters in their district, they risk losing their job.

Voters are said to keep a running tally of incumbent performance. Over the course of an incumbent's term, voters closely monitor the issues that most directly impact their lives and, when it comes time to vote, make a determination as to whether their lives have improved over the last 2–6 years. In this respect, voters are myopic. One of the clearest illustrations of myopic voting is the relationship between election results and economic performance. A poor economy has been shown to raise the specter of voter backlash. Citizens are, for obvious reasons, quite sensitive to their financial well-being and look to punish elected officials for failing to ensure a healthy economy (Lewis-Beck 1990).

Disaster provides an even more interesting context for studying myopic voting. First, unlike the economy, natural hazards and disasters are generally assumed to fall outside the boundaries of policymaker control. While government plays an important role in guiding preparedness and response activities, elected officials can do little to prevent tragedy. This stands in stark contrast to economic health, which many voters believe is directly tied to policy decisions. Second, and as noted above, disaster policymaking sets up a rather convenient natural experiment. It allows scholars to assess voter and legislator behavior both before and after disaster. Taken further, they can assess the electoral benefits of investing in preparedness versus relief programs.

Not surprisingly, then, a great deal of the literature on myopic voting has focused on emergency management policy. Much like a poor economy, hazards and disasters, including droughts, bad weather, and even shark attacks, can be deleterious to an incumbent's reelection prospects (Achen and Bartels 2004, 2012, 2016; Gasper and Reeves 2011). Voters perceive themselves as being worse off in the aftermath of disaster and—rightfully or wrongfully—blame elected officials. This does not mean politicians sit idly and allow themselves to take the brunt of voter criticism. The policy change literature stresses that elected officials and other actors (e.g., interest groups, the media, experts) work diligently to frame and define disasters in ways that advance their political goals (Birkland 1997).

Elected officials risk punishment in the next election if they fail to attend to the concerns of their constituents (Achen and Bartles 2004, 2016; Gasper and Reeves 2011; Arceneux and Stein 2006). But disaster need not be a death knell for the incumbent politician. On the contrary, disaster can represent an opportunity, as voters often reward incumbents who secure ample relief money (Gasper and Reeves 2011). In fact, something as simple as a disaster declaration has been shown to result in a vote share twenty-times greater than the share lost after disaster (Reeves 2011). In this respect, the ability to distribute disaster relief money positions incumbents to benefit from disaster (Chen 2013; Healy and Malhotra 2010).

Because it allows elected officials to distribute resources back to their district, recovery policy is obviously a highly salient policy type (Berke and Beatley 1992; May and Birkland 1994; Burby and May 1998). From a voter perspective, this

salience is magnified by the fact that recovery programs relieve the suffering caused by disaster, be it through repairing homes or rebuilding critical infrastructure. Preparedness, on the other hand, is far less salient, despite the above described benefits of investing in pre-event activities. Relative to relief policy, candidates who support preparedness policy enjoy a much smaller vote share in the next election (Healy and Malhotra 2009). And because it lacks the obvious observability of relief policy, voters are generally disinterested in preparedness.

Electoral politics thus creates a perverse incentive structure wherein elected officials are rewarded for responding to, as opposed to mitigating and preparing for, disaster. Regrettably, the literature on myopic voting provides few insights into how policymakers can overcome voter apathy toward preparedness. Gerber and Neely (2005) found that individuals will, on occasion, support preparedness programs when they are presented with adequate information on a particular risk. What is more, Healy and Malhotra (2009) suggest targeted investments in preparedness at a community or even household level can increase voter interest in preparedness policy, but they concede that this research is underdeveloped. Future work should revisit the viability of these and other strategies.

6.3 Disaster Management, Leadership, and Resilience

Political scientists have also contributed to the larger, interdisciplinary field of disaster management. This work encompasses virtually every step in the disaster management cycle, although this section emphasizes research on the management of public sector agencies during times of crisis (Boin et al. 2006; Wise 2006) as well as research on the various strategies for improving disaster recovery and resilience (Aldrich 2012; Ross 2015; Kapuco et al. 2014).

Government capacity, which is broadly defined as "the ability of government to respond effectively to change, make decisions efficiently and responsibly, and manage conflict" (Bowman and Kearney 2014, p. 3), is an important determinant of how well a community will navigate an unexpected event, including disaster. Other factors, such as the size of the disaster, health of the economy, and even sociodemographics, have also been shown to influence emergency management, although political scientists have, for obvious reasons, tended to emphasize role of government (Aldrich 2012).

The twenty-first century ushered in an important shift in the organization and administration of emergency management agencies. Many industrialized nations, and especially the U.S., have expanded the national government's role in disaster management. Emergency management was once seen as squarely the province of subnational governments, which were assumed to be better equipped to rapidly respond to crisis. While subnational units remain important drivers of emergency management policy, the attacks of September 11, 2001 prompted policymakers in the U.S. (and later throughout Europe) to revisit this arrangement (Gerber 2007; Roberts 2013). In the wake of September 11, the U.S. adopted an "all hazards"

approach to disaster management, which mandated federal agencies protect against an array of naturally occurring and man-made hazards, including terrorism, hurricanes, disease outbreaks, earthquakes, and others (May et al. 2011). This change codified a much larger role for the national government in emergency response. More importantly, it permeated the collective consciousness of the general public. More than ever before, citizens expect national agencies, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), to take the lead during times of crisis (Roberts 2013).

Many European countries have adopted a similar approach to hazard management (Djalali et al. 2014). France, for example, moved away from a disaster-specific system and adopted a complex risk approach, which aims to prepare the country for an array of multifaceted and often cascading hazards (Renda-Tenali and Mancebo 2009). Germany adopted a similar approach in 2004, consolidating all of its emergency management offices under a single agency, the Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance (Connolly 2009).

Of course, agency structure alone does not determine how well a government will respond to disaster. Individual behavior—within emergency management organizations, government, and even at a community level—is equally important. Political scientists have long emphasized the importance of leadership. Boin et al.'s (2006) *The Politics of Crisis Management: Public Leadership Under Pressure* underscores five common difficulties leaders face during times of crisis: (1) *sense making*, which describes the ability of policymakers to identify and interpret signs implying the possibility of an emerging crisis; (2) *decision making and coordinating implementation*, which refers to the overseeing and coordination of crisis response activities; (3) *meaning making*, which describes the shaping of public understanding of crisis; (4) *accounting and ending*, which describes actions taken to achieve closure and allow society to move on; and (5) *learning*, which describes the process through which lessons are drawn from a crisis. Suffice it to say, the modern crisis manager has to juggle a variety of distinctive responsibilities, each of which is complicated by the enormous complexity and uncertainty associated with contemporary crises.

The last two decades have also seen a marked uptick in interest in resilience, which describes "the capacity of a social system (e.g., an organization, city, or society) to proactively adapt to and recover from disturbances that are perceived within the system to fall outside the range of normal and expected disturbances" (Boin et al. 2010, p. 9). Political scientists trace to term to Wildavsky's (1988) seminal book, *Searching for Safety*, which introduces two competing patterns for managing uncertainty. The first pattern, the anticipatory approach, sees policymakers try to anticipate threats before they emerge in order to prepare for and, ideally, prevent them. The second pattern, the resilience approach, works to ensure adaptability and flexibility in the face of extreme events, allowing society to quickly "bounce back" from disaster (p. 77). Wildavsky ultimately argues that while anticipation may seem desirable, it is impossible to predict each and every crisis. As such, resilience represents the most logical approach to dealing with low probability, high consequence events.

It goes without saying that organizations and institutions play an important role in determining how quickly a community will bounce back from disaster. How government chooses to organize its resources is inextricably linked to resilience and sound disaster management (Mileti 1999). But perhaps the most important (and admittedly surprising) contribution of the thriving body of literature on resilience is the fact that it often *deemphasizes* the importance of government. Resilience is thought to transcend the state. Instead it involves factors that seemingly fall outside the immediate purview of government control. (Tierney 2014; Aldrich 2012).

Aldrich (2012), for example, suggests social capital is the single most important determinant of resilience. His analysis of disaster response in Tokyo after the 1923 earthquake, Kobe following the 1995 earthquake, Tamil Nadu after the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, and New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina shows social networks and interpersonal connections (linking social capital) are best suited to distribute precious resources and guide recovery efforts in the wake of disaster. Aldrich's model obviously stands in stark contrast to the typical disaster management process utilized by the U.S. government, which has increasingly relied on top-down measures emanating from the national government (Roberts 2013). Large-scale infrastructure projects and national guard deployments fail to address the important community level factors that often determine local resiliency. Instead, Aldrich (2012) advocates for hyper-localized programs that build social ties among residents. Investments in things like community centers or block parties can go a long way toward cultivating neighborhood partnerships that can be activated during times of crisis. Far more than a buzzword, the concept of resilience thus raises important questions about the efficacy of top-down and hierarchical emergency management programs.

6.4 Future Directions

The three literatures surveyed in this chapter provide an admirably comprehensive depiction of the political dynamics of emergency management. Disaster creates an opportunity for policy change, assuming interest groups and politicians are able to stoke public concern and convince voters that the event is symbolic of government failure. Policy change, even after disaster, is never guaranteed, although elected officials routinely find ways to capitalize on these events and distribute resources back to their district. The same cannot be said about preparedness policy, which is often overlooked by politicians and voters alike. Moreover, government spending is not the only determinant of how quickly a community will bounce-back from disaster. Connections forged at the local level are equally if not more important to ensuring resilience, a finding that no doubt calls into question the recent movement to centralize important emergency management functions within the national government.

Despite these important contributions, there are a number of obvious gaps in the political science literature on hazards and disasters. Most glaringly, all three literatures—and especially the literatures on policy change and myopic voting—say

relatively little about disaster preparedness, save underscoring the fact that elected officials are reluctant to invest in these types of programs. For example, the policy change literature has focused almost exclusively on policymaking after disaster. This relatively narrow conceptualization of disaster policy overlooks those cases, however rare they may be, when policy is created in anticipation of an emergent hazard, such as pandemic influenza or even coastal flooding. Policy scholars have begun to address this shortcoming (DeLeo 2010, 2015, 2018), but the subfield's understanding of preparedness policymaking remains noticeably underdeveloped.

To this end, policy scholars should consider the possibility that focusing events are not the only mechanism through which hazards and disasters reveal themselves to policymakers. Kingdon (2003) notes indicators, which, as noted above, refer to numeric measures and statistics, constitute yet another element of the problem stream. Research has already established that many public health problems, including Ebola and pandemic influenza, reveal themselves gradually and across time through a slow accumulation of indicators, namely disease cases and deaths (Birkland 2006; DeLeo 2018). The gradual accumulation of indicators implies that a much larger disease outbreak is on the horizon, thus allowing policymakers to fashion legislation and allocate resources to prepare for a looming event. This pattern obviously differs from policy sequence evidenced in the aftermath of a focusing event, but is no less important to emergency management and preparedness.

In additional to emerging diseases, a host of other "slow onset" disasters are likely revealed through indicators, including droughts, wildfires, and the various hazards associated with climate change. To what extent does the policymaking pattern evidenced in these cases differ from post-event policymaking? What types of narrative strategies do policymakers use to define problems that have yet to occur? How do policymakers fashion legislation in anticipation of disaster? Again, while research has begun to address some of these and other questions, policy scholars have largely overlooked the political dynamics of pre-event and preparedness policymaking.

The literature on myopic voting is marked by similar deficiencies. While it is well established that voters tend to reward politicians for supporting disaster relief, relatively little research has considered potential strategies for overcoming myopic voting. This shortcoming is partially an outgrowth of the methodologies used in these studies, which focus primarily on measuring election results relative to district-level spending. Healy and Malhotra (2009) suggest a different approach, writing: "Future scholarship could use surveys, as well as lab and field experiments, to determine the extent to which voter decisions can be influenced by government efforts at increasing the salience of issues and policies in areas such as disaster preparedness" (p. 403).

Surveys or even qualitative research designs could provide important insights into the decision nexus of elected officials. Voters are surely not the only factor influencing legislator decision making. For example, to what extent are legislator decisions influenced by expert opinion? To what extent do voter and policymaker

preferences for preparedness vary geographically? For example, are individuals from coastal states, many of which now suffer from chronic flooding, more likely to support preparedness projects? And, what, if anything, can be done to help overcome myopic voting and reactive decision making? Are there any messaging strategies, for example, that organized interests can use to increase policymaker interest in preparedness? Is there an uptick in voter interest in preparedness in the weeks and months following disaster?

Developing a more comprehensive understanding of when and under what conditions government prepares for disaster will help advance extant political science theory by allowing scholars to investigate important concepts (e.g., policy change and voter behavior) in a distinctive temporal context, namely the months or weeks leading up to disaster. Equally important, these findings promise to inform the advocacy strategies of interest groups and experts working in a variety of policy domains. For example, the last decade has seen an uptick in interest in climate change adaptation, particularly in coastal communities. Adaptation will that require politicians grapple with a slew of temporally remote problems, even in the face of voter confusion and, at times, disinterest. Understanding how these types of threats can be better communicated to policymakers will be critical to ensuring our collective security.

The global proliferation of all hazards preparedness also deserves closer examination. Curiously, scholars have said relatively little about the various factors that helped facilitate the international diffusion of this distinctive approach to emergency management, save acknowledging the domestic and global significance of September 11. To what extent are the all hazards regimes in Europe similar to the model used in the U.S.? How are they different? More broadly, does the proliferation of an all hazards approach suggest a convergence of global emergency management systems or does it remain a highly localized process? In short, the spread of all hazards management raise a number of fascinating applied and conceptual questions, particularly in light of recent backlash against globalization and the uptick of nationalist sentiments in many industrialized democracies.

6.5 Conclusion

There exists a thriving body of political science literature dedicated to the study of risk, hazards, disasters, and crises. This chapter specifically examined three distinct sub-streams of research (the literatures on policy change, myopic voting, and disaster management) but, as noted above, this is only a sampling of the political science research on risk, hazards, and disasters. Political scientists have proven instrumental in highlighting both the strengths and, perhaps more importantly, the limitations of government in disaster situations. Electoral concerns, interest group competition, and discursive conflict can derail even the most well-intentioned disaster mitigation programs. By highlighting these pitfalls and, at times, suggesting potential

strategies for overcoming them, political scientists have helped to inform our shared understanding of hazard and disaster management. Disaster have been and always will be political events. As such, it is safe to say political scientists will continue to weigh-in on these debates for many years to come.

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