Journal of Peace Studies

A QUARTERLY PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL

Journal of Peace Studies

C O N T E N T S

Journal of
Peace Studies

SUBSCRIPTION

Politics of Disaster Management:
A Critical Analysis

Niharika Tiwari*

Abstract

This paper argues that catastrophes and politics are inextricably linked: political systems both shape the production and management of disasters, while disasters, in turn, generate new arenas for political contestation. At national and international levels, the causes, impacts, and responses to disasters are frequently mediated, and at times obscured, by political considerations. Although often described as "natural," the term "disaster" retains its political implications. In common parlance, disasters occur when the regular, cyclical natural processes intersect with human systems in ways that harm lives, livelihoods, dignity, and property. In such contexts, the capacity of informed and prepared communities becomes critical in mitigating loss. The study argues that the success or failure of disaster management hinges on the effectiveness of the political system and its capacity to make swift decisions. The COVID-19 pandemic illustrates how disasters can reshape domestic governance and alter international power dynamics among states.

Keywords: Disaster, Politics, Decision-making, Disaster Management

Introduction

A study of major disasters reveals that political leadership is either strengthened or weakened by its approach to managing such crises. While ineffective disaster response has led to the fall of governments, competent and empathetic ones have enabled new political actors to gain legitimacy and form governments. It underscores the commonly held view that politics permeates all spheres of public life, whether it is governance, resource

Dr. Niharika Tiwari is an Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India.

distribution, or the management of natural calamities. Contemporary discourse increasingly challenges the notion of "natural" disasters, arguing instead that disasters are frequently the outcome of unchecked exploitation of nature and resources. Although democratic states are theoretically designed to function for public welfare, in practice, they remain shaped by biases, discrimination, and vested interests, as political actors seek to maximise gains within existing power structures.

Notwithstanding the assumption that disasters are less politically divisive than ethnic or military conflicts, research indicates that politics remains deeply embedded not only in determining the impacts of disasters but also in the distribution of humanitarian aid that follows such crises. It is because political dynamics influence vulnerability, intervention, decision-making, and benefit allocation before, during, and after a catastrophe. This, as such, makes marginalised groups like women, children, persons with disabilities, and people with low incomes often bear the brunt of disasters, particularly when they are excluded from political decision-making or misled by political narratives. It was demonstrated during the COVID-19 global pandemic when women, migrant labourers, the elderly, and economically vulnerable populations were exposed to disproportionate hardships.

Several empirical studies suggest that citizens tend to reward governments for effective disaster responses and likewise punish failures .[1] Despite this dynamic, and ironically so, voters frequently undervalue disaster preparedness, sometimes penalising incumbents for prioritising preventive measures whose benefits are less immediately visible than post-disaster relief. This paradox, therefore, makes disasters valuable empirical sites for examining politics and assessing the commitment of political leadership to public welfare as they expose the "narratives, promises, and capacities" of state institutions and political actors.

Disasters also create opportunities for political contestation by enabling opposition forces and the public to highlight governance failures. Herein, how a government responds in managing such crises plays a vital role; for, if a disaster is handled with a people-centric approach, the government secures public support and bolsters its legitimacy. However, if a government fails to address public concerns, there is a likelihood of this anger manifesting during elections

in a democratic political system becomes credible.

Disaster management also occupies a central position in governance and development discourse, and is closely aligned with the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As such, its objectives, such as "gender equality," "sustainable urban development," "climate action," strong institutions, and inclusive partnerships, have become integral to effective disaster planning. Although disasters are often described as indiscriminate, their impacts are inarguably shaped by prevalent structural inequalities, as the elite-constructed socio-economic and political frameworks determine how disasters are experienced across communities, with marginalised groups suffering most. Research shows that the political actors use manipulative tactics in many instances to scapegoat minorities or vulnerable groups in order to deflect accountability in disaster response preparedness or the post-incident mitigation process. In this context, this article examines the intricate relationship between politics and disaster management, highlighting how their interconnections influence governance, vulnerability, and societal outcomes.

Defining Disaster and Disaster Management

a. *Disaster*

The term "disaster" originates from the Old Italian *disastro* and Middle French *desastre*, both derived from the Greek negative prefix *dus-* meaning "bad" and *aster* meaning "star." Literally translating to "bad star" in Greek and Latin traditions, the term has its roots in ancient divination, where elders used it to describe misfortune attributed to the collapse or adverse alignment of a star. Over time, the concept of disaster has evolved from an interpretation of divine displeasure to one that increasingly recognises human agency and responsibility in the production and management of catastrophic events. According to Ted Steinberg (2000):

"One of the oldest ways of interpreting these events is to see floods, earthquakes, and storms as signs of God's displeasure." Take Minister Thomas Foxcroft's comments, for instance, which he wrote following the rather strong shock that shook New England in 1727 and affected an area of 75,000 square miles. Foxcroft interpreted the incident as proof of God's "divine power." However, he also

saw the earthquake as "a Token of Wrath kindled against a Place for Wickedness of them that dwell therein." What we now refer to as natural calamities carried a great deal of moral significance for the colonists. The god-fearing people shared these morality stories with one another."[2]

This underscores how politics, disaster, and disaster management have been closely interlinked since the very beginning. European imperial powers frequently invoked disasters to justify their actions in their colonies, often portraying them as acts of God's anger and retribution. In doing so, they aimed to obscure the exploitative nature of their policies, conveniently using disasters to deflect any responsibility for their actions.

Likewise, in the current context, the Indian government, in its official policy document, *'Disaster Management in India',* define disaster as:

"An event or series of events that cause losses in addition to the damage or loss of property, infrastructure, essential services, or means of sustenance on a scale that is beyond the normal capacity of the affected community to recover. A" disastrous situation in which the normal pattern of life or eco-system has been disintegrated and extraordinary exigency interventions are needed to save and save lives and/ or the terrain."[3]

In its broadest typology, disasters can be categorised into geological, environmental, and weather-related event. These can be either "natural" and encompass geological events, such as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, environmental hazards, including forest fires and pest infestations, and biological events, like pandemics, including epidemics of cholera, diarrhoea, meningitis, dengue fever, and malaria. In addition, climatic or meteorological disasters include famines, cold waves, heat waves, avalanches, coastal surges and tidal waves, cyclones, hurricanes, storms, tornadoes, tropical storms, and severe dust or sandstorms.

b. *Disaster Management*

Disaster management, in simplest terms, is a systematic process to reduce risks and vulnerabilities associated with predictable and recurrent hazards, such as cyclones and floods. Its key components include prevention, preparedness, mitigation and establishment of early warning systems. An effective disaster management campaign, as per the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

(IFRC), depends on bottom-up, democratic institutional mechanisms that integrate community participation with state capacity to ensure equitable and sustainable outcomes.

Since disaster management has both global and local dimensions, states have sought to develop frameworks and modalities to design efficient and targeted disaster management programmes. Consequently, many governments have adopted decentralisation mechanisms to translate these frameworks into effective grassroots campaigns by delegating responsibilities among multiple stakeholders. In this regard, institutional capacity-building through the strengthening of disaster risk reduction institutions at national and local levels has emerged as a key priority in the disaster management process. As identified by the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005–2015), the process includes improving early warning systems, promoting a culture of safety through education and knowledge sharing, reducing underlying risk factors, and strengthening preparedness for an effective response. There have been efforts at international level to augment this agenda further under three major global frameworks of 2015, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030), the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015–2030), and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015–2030).

Moreover, the failure of previously practised top-down approaches has allowed several alternative approaches, such as Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR) initiatives, to gain prominence over the years. In this context, Bankoff and Hilhorst (2009) argue that social vulnerability and underdevelopment necessitated conceptualising disasters in alternative ways, which became a precursor to the emergence of CBDRR as a credible approach to disaster management.[4] It challenged the earlier hazard-centric approach by emphasising the critical role of local knowledge, participation, and empowerment in preventing and mitigating disasters.

Defining Politics

Politics in its broadest sense refers to the processes through which individuals and groups choose, uphold, and modify the rules and institutions that govern their lives. Aside from its academic understanding, politics in the institutional context gives rise to governments that maintain law and

Figure 1 Disaster Management
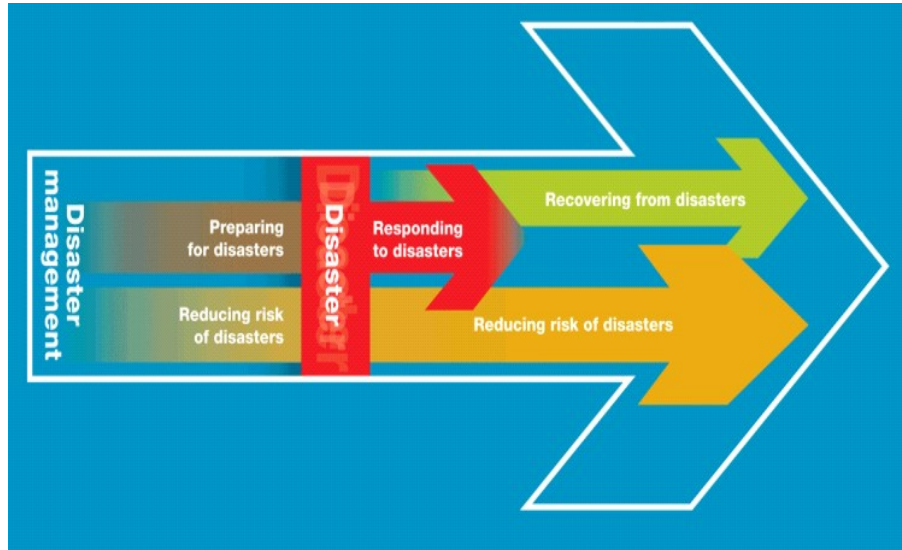
Source: IFRC

order and enable the conditions necessary for collective living. It is inherently characterised by the coexistence of collaboration and conflict. Hannah Arendt's (2018) notion of political capacity as "acting in concert" aptly captures the collective dimension of political action.[5] While political life often involves competing interests and opposing viewpoints, meaningful change requires cooperation to negotiate and institutionalise outcomes. In this context, politics is, therefore, best understood not as the complete resolution of conflict, but as an ongoing process of managing, negotiating, and containing disagreements in conditions of

diversity and scarcity, which are intrinsic features of human societies.

More radical interpretations view politics as pervasive across all social relations. For instance, while feminism asserts that "the personal is political," environmentalism calls to "think globally, act locally," whereas subaltern discourse emphasises how power operates within everyday experiences and social structures. Yet, at its core, politics, with power as a central means of shaping outcomes and influencing behaviour, concerns decision-making and the production, distribution, and use of resources within society. For this study, politics

is examined as a mechanism of resource distribution, conflict-driven change, and the legitimisation of authority, drawing on postmodern insights into the relationship between knowledge and power.

Conceptual Underpinnings of Politics and Disaster Management

Disaster responses assume political connotations almost immediately given that governments have the first obligation to respond to such eventualities. And the way governments anticipate, prepare for, and manage disasters carries significant political and psychological consequences for affected populations as well as in shaping their relationship with the state. Though disaster management can be examined from a technocratic perspective, as Hilhorst (2013) notes,[6] by focusing on improving protocols, logistics, and institutional mechanisms, however, it still retains an inherent political dimension. It is because all decision-making around disaster management, including risk prioritisation, loss assessments, and selecting authoritative policy frameworks, cannot be divorced from underlying power relations and political interests.

Studies about colonial administrations across Asia and Africa demonstrate that disasters and their management have historically served the interests of the political class. The ruling elite used such calamities to consolidate control through selective and strategic responses, which highlights how disaster practices often serve as contested political arenas, shaped by competing interests and power struggles rather than neutral humanitarian imperatives.

Disasters raise fundamental questions about the reorganisation of society in the aftermath of crisis, particularly, who leads and who benefits. Herein, the 1936 classic formulation of "*Who Gets What, When, and How*" by Harold D. Lasswell provides a useful framework for analysing how ruling elites and counter-elites mobilise power during disasters to secure political advantage and resource control.[7] Research shows that political actors in many instances may seek to instrumentalise disasters by framing such incidents through polarising narratives, such as "us versus them," often invoking foreigners, minorities, or external enemies to divert attention from governance failures. Scapegoating is a recurring strategy used to mask inadequate preparedness and institutional weaknesses. At the same time, moral hazard may emerge when governments underinvest in disaster

preparedness due to expectations of post-disaster assistance from domestic or international actors.[8]

Disasters also expose and intensify existing social inequalities, with research consistently demonstrating that poor and socially disadvantaged communities are disproportionately affected by disasters worldwide given their lack the resources, resilience, and institutional support needed to cope with shocks. There is a gender dimension to this inequality as well, with women historically enduring blame and persecution as demonstrated by rampant witch-hunts during ancient and medieval periods. Similar patterns persist in some contemporary contexts, particularly in regions characterised by inadequate education and limited awareness. Consequently, pre-existing structural gender inequalities are reinforced, increasing the vulnerability of women and girls during and after disasters.[9]

In democratic systems, which are often described as "government of the people, by the people, and for the people", failures in disaster response are frequently attributed to political leadership and administrative shortcomings. Political institutions are criticised for misrepresenting ground realities and neglecting disaster preparedness in policy and electoral agendas. Across many developing countries, including India, given that emotive and identity-based issues around caste, religion and pseudo-nationalism have become primary drivers of electoral politics, it has rendered issues like disaster management least attractive electorally. Although scholars argue that stronger institutionalisation, democratic empowerment, and citizen participation can significantly improve disaster management, the political establishment often shows reluctance to invest in preparedness due to its limited short-term electoral returns. This means that administrative mismanagement becomes visible only after disasters strike.

Additionally, as disasters transcend national boundaries, effective transnational coordination becomes imperative to manage such crises. However, the nature of international politics has relegated cooperation on environmental protection and human security to the margins of international affairs, as major powers dominate it for their hard power projection. As Michael P. Powers (2006) observes, post-disaster recovery outcomes largely depend on the priorities and commitment of those in leadership

positions, shaping whether recovery reinforces the status quo or protects vulnerable populations.[10]

Disaster Management from the Perspective of Disasters as a Political Construct

The adjective "natural," frequently attached to the word "disaster," is far from neutral. It reflects the attitudes and perspectives of political establishments toward crises. Historically, rulers have employed mechanisms such as attributing disasters to forces beyond human control, to evade responsibility for their mismanaging of disasters. For example, in the medieval West, the Church, which acted in concert with political authorities, often portrayed calamities as the "wrath of God", which not only legitimised existing power structures but also deflected popular anger away from ruling elites and their policy failures. Similarly, labelling disasters as "natural" has been used to conceal unpreparedness, discriminatory governance, and structural inequalities.

A postmodern lens further highlights this political construction of disasters. Michel Foucault's insight that power and knowledge are mutually constitutive is particularly relevant in this context. Power is exercised through the production and control of knowledge, while knowledge itself reinforces power by shaping how reality is understood[11] When this construct is applied to disaster management, it suggests that by "naturalising" disasters, political authorities encourage the belief that such events are beyond human control or intervention. Such a framing is used to absolve the state of responsibility and obscures the socio-economic conditions that render certain populations more vulnerable than others. It enables the political elite to reframe such issues as unfortunate but inevitable occurrences and subsequently have disaster management be relegated to the margins of urgent public policy frameworks.

Such discursive framings of disasters by the governing elite have tangible consequences. This is because it allows them to mask the structural causes of these vulnerabilities like poverty, unequal development, poor urban planning, and environmental degradation, and consequently shift the attention away from questions of accountability. It, therefore, makes disaster management reactive rather than preventive, something which was clearly demonstrated by handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. As Noam

Chomsky observed, scientists had long warned of the likelihood of a coronavirus-driven pandemic following the 2003 SARS outbreak.[12] However, knowledge alone proved insufficient. In the United States, neoliberal ideology and market-driven priorities discouraged both government intervention and pharmaceutical investment in long-term preparedness. Profit-oriented corporate structures were unwilling to invest in research with long gestation periods, exposing the limits of capitalist logic in addressing collective risks.

Disasters were historically treated as anomalies to the social order that is bound by forces such as the state, shared values, social systems, or institutions. As such, an earthquake in an uninhabited area is merely a geological event. It became a disaster, and by extension, a social phenomenon, only when it intersects with human settlement and creates vulnerability in the social order. This insight underpins sociological approaches that view disasters as fundamentally social phenomena. Scholars such as Turner (1978)[13], Weick (1993)[14], and Vaughan (1996)[15] have argued that disasters are "man-made" in the sense that they arise from organisational failures, policy choices, and patterns of development rather than from nature alone.

While the mismanagement and misappropriation of natural resources, along with lopsided and unsustainable development, frequently transform hazards into disasters, political leadership can also allow minor incidents to escalate into large-scale catastrophes because of their negligence and inefficiency. For instance, when governments fail to invest adequately in public health, education, and social welfare, the consequence is increased levels of devastation when such calamities like epidemics and pandemics strike. Therefore, sound public policies, as Padli et al. (2018) emphasise, which prioritise robust infrastructure and sustainable environmental practices can greatly mitigate the destructive impacts of inherently unpredictable disasters.[16]

The other issue that complicates disaster management is socio-political divisions, as fragmented communities often lack the coordination and consensus required for implementing community-driven, effective initiatives to reduce disaster risks. It is further exacerbated by endemic corruption within state institutions that undermines the implementation of disaster management policies, such as building codes, safety regulations, and enforcement mechanisms. These issues cumulatively increase the

severity of damage with empirical evidence supporting a strong link between human development and disaster resilience. A 2009 study by the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre indicates that countries with higher levels of human development, which is measured by their levels of income, education, and life expectancy, are better equipped to plan for, mitigate, and recover from disasters.[17]

As such, disasters cannot be understood as purely natural or apolitical events as their management is inherently shaped by political choices, power relations, and development trajectories. Therefore, it becomes essential to recognise disasters as political constructs to move toward more just, accountable, and effective disaster management practices.

Disaster Management from the Perspective of Disasters Producing Politics

Disasters possess a strong capacity to generate politics, and their management can both concentrate blame on ruling parties and become a means through which political legitimacy is consolidated or contested. Scholars such as Dynes and Drabek (1994)[18] and Fritz (1961)[19] argue that disasters serve as political laboratories, offering unique opportunities to evaluate the type of regime, institutional effectiveness, and the degree of legitimacy enjoyed by governments during crises.

While the authority and legitimacy of the ruling political elite are called into question and their political survival is threatened if they fail to

Figure 2
Interlinkages between Politics and Disaster
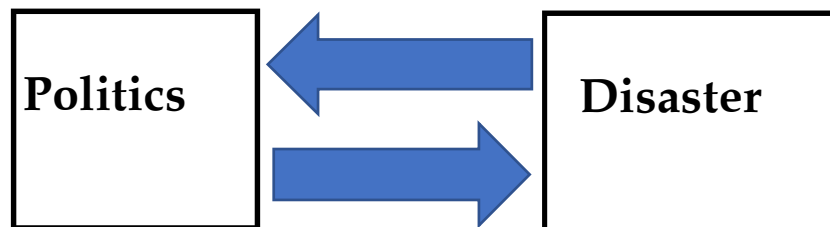
Source: Authors presentation

manage disasters effectively, such failures offer opposition parties opportunities to highlight governance failures and project themselves as credible alternatives. Across the world, there are numerous instances where governments have been voted out of office due to poor disaster response and recovery efforts. Take the case of the 2011 Fukushima Nuclear Disaster, when Prime Minister Naoto Kan's administration was accused of poor crisis communication and inadequate evacuation planning. While Kan was subsequently forced to resign, his Democratic Party lost power in the 2012 elections, where his mishandling of Fukushima became a major electoral issue.

David Twigg, in his *The Politics of Disaster (2012)*, illustrates this dynamic through the case of *Hurricane Andrew* in the United States.[20] Drawing on Olson (2000), he argues that disasters frequently place new issues on political agendas by exposing underlying values and creating situations in which incumbent political representatives are prone to making visible mistakes. Although a major disaster can sour public perceptions of an incumbent by weakening their electoral advantages and emboldening their electoral challengers, these incidents do not necessarily harm those in power in a uniformly manner. But, as Twigg notes, if incumbents demonstrate empathy, decisiveness, and administrative capacity to deliver resources and address complex problems, they can generate "positive effects" and help reinforce their legitimacy.

Therefore, the capacity of a disaster to produce politics depends on the actions and interactions of key stakeholders, including incumbents, opposition parties, voters, and institutions, as well as their ability to shape public perceptions and the broader political environment.

Case Study: Cyclone Phailin (2013) Success and Covid-19 Politicisation in India

Numerous examples demonstrate the nexus between disaster management and politics. Where those in power have demonstrated political will and administrative commitment, effective disaster management has saved lives and reduced large-scale suffering. And this is not restricted to developed countries alone, as developing countries have produced significant success stories. Take for instance the case of Cyclone Phailin (2013) which demonstrated how political intent,

institutional capacity, and governance choices helped it mitigating the disaster outcomes while Covid-19 handling showed how politics remained inherent in such matters.

The 2013 Cyclone Phailin was one of the most intense tropical cyclones to make landfall in India since the 1999 Odisha cyclone. It landed near Gopalpur in Odisha's Ganjam district on 12 October 2013 and caused severe damage worth over $4.2 billion (INR 42 billion) to agriculture (500,00 hectares of standing crop) and infrastructure (including 400,000 houses) across Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. But what distinguished government's response to Phailin from previous such experiences like the 1999 Odisha super cyclone was preemptive measures undertaken by both state and central agencies like the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA). By ensuring early warning systems were in place, the authorities made timely evacuations of over 1 million people to designated government shelters which helped reduce the human fatalities to around 46 compared over 10,000 people in 1999. As such, this handling of the crisis, as argued by Muralidhara and Hadiya (2016), highlighted the importance of proactive planning and community-

centred rehabilitation, something that made India's management of Phailin cyclone as a global benchmark in disaster preparedness and response.

In contrast, the initial handling of the Covid19 pandemic revealed how disaster management is prone to politicisation. Despite severe public health failures, widespread deaths, livelihood disruptions, and mass migration, India also witnessed a systemic silencing of dissent questioning government's policies and scapegoating of *Tablighi Jamat* religious grouping of minority Muslim community for the spreading virus by having a weeklong mass gathering in New Delhi two weeks before government announced a countrywide lockdown. The *Tablighi Jamaat* congregation was recurrently portrayed as the first "super-spreader" event, enabling diversionary narratives that shifted attention away from state failures in pandemic management.[21] This episode underscored how religious polarisation and political messaging can be deployed to obscure governance shortcomings by politicising a public health disaster like Covid19.

Politics can function either as a catalyst or as an obstacle in disaster management. Where political leadership is visionary and adopts a

bottom-up, people-centred approach, the human and material costs of disasters can be substantially reduced. In India, however, the interlinkages between politics and disaster management are particularly pronounced. Public funds are frequently diverted towards politically visible and popular initiatives rather than long-term disaster mitigation. Moreover, institutional mechanisms designed for disaster management are often weakened by political interference, undermining their effectiveness.

Politics and Disaster Management in India

Historical evidence demonstrates that India has repeatedly experienced a wide range of disasters, and its approach to disaster management has evolved gradually over time. However, the discourse, institutional architecture, and implementation of disaster management in India have been profoundly shaped by the country's political context. India has established a tiered system of disaster management bodies to prepare, identify and respond to such crises. Led by the Prime Minister, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) also includes central agencies such as the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) for operations, the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) for capacity building, and their equivalent state-level bodies. As Ajit Menon (2018) observes, disaster management is a comprehensive process encompassing prevention or mitigation, preparedness, emergency response, recovery, rehabilitation, and disaster risk reduction.

"After the devastating 1999 super cyclone in Orissa, the Indian government, along with donor agencies, national and international nongovernmental organisations, corporate sector entities, and other stakeholder groups, took a number of actions that changed the course of disaster management in the nation in the final ten years of the 20th century."[22]

Though effective disaster management requires robust coordination between the central and state governments, yet India's centre–state relations remain highly politicised and polarised. The historical misuse of Article 356 of the Constitution and partisan rivalries highlight the fragility of cooperative federalism. The allocation of disaster-related funds is often influenced by whether the same political party governs at the Centre and in the states, or whether there is a political alignment between

different levels of government. Inter-state relations are similarly politicised, with disputes sometimes overshadowing urgent disaster response needs. Since the central government controls major financial resources and deploys disaster response forces, political alignment, or the lack thereof, plays a decisive role. Given the relatively weaker fiscal position of most states, their capacity to invest meaningfully in disaster mitigation remains limited.[23]

Moreover, deep-rooted social stratification continues to shape Indian politics and governance, including disaster management and policy frameworks which often reflect the biases of policymakers. For instance, even today, many public institutions fail to meet accessibility norms for population sections like persons with disabilities besides other marginalised groups like women. The National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP) has been criticised for insufficiently addressing the specific needs of women, Dalits, and persons with disabilities. Such an intersectionality of caste, gender, disability, etc., makes structural violence caused during disasters and their aftermaths affects more pronounced as such communities usually become first line of victims as well as administrative ignorance. As reported by *The Indian Express (2016),* women and adolescent girls face heightened risks during disasters, including poor maternal healthcare, sexual violence in relief camps, lack of access to sanitation, and increased maternal and neonatal mortality.

"Many people are unable to physically enter buildings, vehicles, relief camps, or locations where aid is distributed. People from lower caste communities, sometimes known as Dalits, are another vulnerable group. They frequently reside in subpar housing on the outskirts of settlements with no protection from natural disasters. Many Dalits may not have the same access to emergency relief as their neighbours from higher castes, including clean water, dry food rations, and shelter, according to a 2013 research."*[24]*

It was witnessed during Covid19 pandemic when economic migrants and their families (women, children, the elderly) endured walking hundreds of miles to their villages, while access to healthcare and basic necessities became a luxury. Despite such governmental failures, electoral politics has since continued to prioritise emotive and divisive issues,

revealing how disaster management in India remains deeply entangled with political priorities and power structures.

Additionally, corruption represents another critical challenge in India's disaster management framework. There has been a nexus between political elites and the administrative machinery in facilitating constructions in ecologically fragile zones, particularly in hilly regions, by means such as granting environmental clearances without due diligence, thereby exacerbating disaster risks. And when such calamities strike, this endemic corruption then impedes the effective distribution of relief by preventing aid from reaching intended beneficiaries.[25]

Conclusion

Politics, both in everyday and formal institutionalised context, shape disaster management processes and, in turn, are reshaped by them. While disasters are undeniably traumatic, they also function as critical moments of reflection that expose the strengths and weaknesses of governance systems as demonstrated by the Covid19 global pandemic. As the pandemic affected almost the entire world, it transformed domestic and international politics by compelling political leaders to reconsider and, in some cases, restructure institutions of local, national, and global governance.

The pandemic also served as a litmus test for states' commitment to human development. For decades, many countries prioritised military expenditure and border security over sustained investment in public health and education. While the state was conceived as an institution to protect its people and democracy was designed to ensure that political authority flows from the bottom up, these ideals have often been undermined by the growing influence of profit-driven capitalist interests. Disasters repeatedly reveal this disconnect. Regardless of the form of government, when politics is divorced from human values and political establishments fail to act in a people-centric manner, disasters continue to inflict disproportionate suffering on vulnerable populations.

Politics, therefore, is unavoidable, but it need not be devoid of democratic and ethical principles. Disaster situations demand a shift from traditional, state-centric notions of security towards a broader understanding of human security. Such a transformation is possible only with an informed and educated

citizenry capable of holding leaders accountable, and with visionary, forward-looking leadership committed to public welfare. Effective disaster management ultimately depends on the ability of political systems to prioritise human life, dignity, and resilience through well-conceived pre- and post-disaster strategies. ∎

References

1. Healy, A. and N. Malhotra. (2009). "Myopic Voters and Natural Disaster Policy," *American Political Science Review*, 103(3), pp. 387–406; Bechtel, M. M. and J. Hainmueller. (2011). "How Lasting is Voter Gratitude? An Analysis of the Short- and Long-Term Electoral Returns to Beneficial Policy," *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(4), p. 851–867.

2. Steinberg, T. (2000). *Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disasters in America*. Oxford University Press: New York, pp. xxi

3. Ministry of Home Affairs (2016, revised 2019) *National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP)*. New Delhi: Government of India, p. 1, Available at: https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/2024-09/DevelopmentInitiativesNewSchemesDMDIVEng_02092024.pdf (Accessed: January 2026).

4. Bankoff, G., Frerks, G. and Hilhorst, D. (2009) *Mapping Vulnerability: Disasters, Development and People*. London: Earthscan.

5. Arendt, H. (2018). *The Human Conditions*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

6. Hilhorst, D. (Ed.). (2013). *Disaster, Conflict, and Society in Crises: The Everyday Politics of Crisis Response*. Routledge: London.

7. Lasswell, H.D. (1936) *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

8. Cohen, C. and E. Werker. 2008. "The Political Economy of 'Natural' Disasters," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 52(6): pp 795–819.

9. Center for Disaster Philanthropy (CDP). *Women and girls in disasters*. Available at: https://disasterphilanthropy.org/resources/women-and-girls-in-disasters/ (accessed: November 2025).

10. Powers, M.P. (2006) 'Post-disaster recovery outcomes: leadership priorities and vulnerable populations', in Shaw, R. (ed.) *Post-Disaster Recovery: Issues and Challenges*. Tokyo: Springer

11. Michel Foucault, (Ed.) Gordon, Colin. (1980). *Power/Knowledge Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77*. Pantheon Books: New York.

12. Chomsky, N. (2020). "The pandemic has only exposed the suicidal tendencies of capitalism". *The Wire.* Available at: https://thewire.in/world/noam-chomsky-interview-covid-19-pandemic-capitalism-neoliberalism-us-hegemony (Accessed: November 2025).

13. Turner, B.A. (1978). *Man-made disasters, [London, England]; New York*. Wykeham Publications (London); Crane, Russak.

14. Weick, K.E. (1993). The Collapse of Sensemaking in Organisations: The Mann Gulch Disaster. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *38*(4), p. 628.

15. Vaughan, D. (1996). *The Challenger Launch Decision. Risky Technology, Culture, and Deviance at NASA*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

16. Padli, J., Habibullah, M.S., & Baharom, A.H. (2018). "The impact of human development on natural disaster fatalities and damage: panel data evidence". *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istrazivanja*, 31(1), p. 1557–1573.

17. Asian Disaster Reduction Centre (ADRC) (2009). *Natural Disaster Data Book 2009 (An Analytical Overview).* Tokyo: Asian Disaster Reduction Centre.

18 .Dynes, R. R. & Drabek, T. E. (1994). The structure of disaster research: Its policy and disciplinary implications. *International journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters, 12*(1), pp. 5–23.

19. Fritz, C. E. (1961). *Disaster. In Contemporary Social Problems: Introduction to the Sociology of Deviant Behaviour and Social Disorganization,* ed. Robert A. Nisbet. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World. pp. 651–694.

20. Twigg, D.K. (2012) *The Politics of Disaster: Tracking the Impact of Hurricane Andrew*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

21. Purushothaman, U., & Moolakkattu, J. S. (2021). The Politics of the COVID-19 Pandemic in India. *Social Sciences*, *10*(10), 381. URL: https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10100381

22. Menon, A. (2018) *Environmentalism and the Left: Contemporary Debates and Future Directions*. Abingdon: Routledge, p. 19.

23. Raghavulu, C. V., & B. P. C. Bose. "Centre-State Relations in Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness." *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 53, no. 3, 1992, pp. 314–31. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41855616. Accessed 20 November 2025.

24. "National disaster management plan neglects women, disabled and lower castes: aid workers", *The Indian Express,* 8 June 2016. Available at: https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/national-disaster-management-plan-neglects-women-disabled-and-lower-castes-aid-workers-2841384/ (Accessed: November 2025).

25. Transparency International (2006). *Working paper #03/2006: Corruption in humanitarian aid*. Transparency International.

Note for readers and subscribers

We are happy to inform you that from January 2009 we have introduced the system of peer review of articles to ensure quality of publications and improve the scholarly value of our journal. We have a renowned group of scholars and academicians associated with our Centre and they are helping us in this process. We are grateful to them for their kind support and cooperation.

We would request our readers and subscribers to take note of these changes and we would, as ever, encourage them to send in research articles for publication to us. The manuscripts of research papers submitted for publication should be neatly typed in double space and the length of the papers should be ideally between 3,000-5000 words including the references. They should contain an abstract and a short introduction of the author. The authors should use Chicago Manual Style for their references. The articles can be sent to us in an electronic format, preferably Ms Word. For detailed guidelines they may send their queries to us in the following address.

Journal of Peace Studies
Research Section

Emails: cpsndjps@gmail.com, jps@icpsnet.org