

Institutional Framework for Disaster Management in China: Natural to Pandemic

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When confronted with disasters, governments and peoples from different countries suffer alike no matter how divergent their cultures, ideologies, and sociopolitical systems. In this way, the government has actively demonstrated the nation's international citizenship and common interests with other countries (Kang 2015; 36). President Hu Jintao, for example, said after Japan was hit by a serious earthquake and tsunami in 2011, "the Chinese people deeply feel the pain that the Japanese people are suffering" (*China Daily* March 19, 2011). Disasters do not have a nationality or is limited within the borders of a country, but has an equal chance of occurring in any state. Humanity cannot escape from this suffering, but can try to avoid it to an extent by adopting the sustainable development goals.

In China, on an average, every year, 10 million hectares of agricultural land is affected by floods, out of which, 5 million hectares are severely affected. Every year nearly 7 typhoons strike China's southeast coastal areas. As per a report, since 1949, earthquakes have claimed nearly 300,000 lives, injured and disabled nearly 1 million people and destroyed more than 10 million houses. On average, in China, 200 million people are affected by disasters every year among whom several thousand people are killed. Moreover, 3 million people need to be resettled, more than 40 million hectares of crops are afflicted by disasters and 3 million houses are destroyed. Since 1990s, China has been afflicted by frequent occurrences of floods, droughts, typhoons, earthquakes, fire, farming and forest pests, landslides and mud-rock flows. Extremely severe floods occur in the Yangtze River, Songhua River, and Neng River. "Generally, thousands of people die of these natural disasters, and about 200 million people are affected every year. In the aspect of property losses, more than 20 million hectares of land are affected and about 300 million rooms collapse every year" (Lixin et al, 2012; 295).

China had fourteen earthquakes of over 7 Richter scale from 1966 to 1976. This made the central government to establish the China Earthquake Administration in 1971 to manage disasters related to it, and China has been the only country that establishes earthquake management institution in government administrative department (Lixin et al, 2012; 297). The China Meteorological Administration established in December 1949, is charged with the responsibility of weather forecasting, climatic predictions, drought & flood monitoring, etc. Prevention and

mitigation of geological disasters used to be responsible by Ministry of Geology before Ministry of Land and Resources was established in March 1998 (Lixin *et al.*, 2012; 298).

Till 2008 fire brigades were under the Ministry of Public Security and State Forestry Administration and the People's Liberation Army. It was charged to see fire disasters in forests and urban areas respectively. In 2008, according to a new enactment, Fire Prevention Law of PRC, fire brigades began taking responsibility for the emergency rescue of large-scale disasters and other job like saving lives. In fact, fire brigades are the dominated force to cope with all kinds of major disasters currently (Xiao 2001; Yang *et al.* 2011).

The Chinese term for natural disaster, '*tianzai*' literally means heavenly ordained due to the immoral practices of the humankind, specifically the ruler. Its traditional interpretation of natural calamities is as a form of divine retribution. As such, the emperor's conduct was of pre-eminent importance. Although the shift in perceptions of natural disasters as 'acts of God' to one precipitated and exacerbated by 'acts of humans' took place in more contemporary times, the notion that states have a moral obligation to assist those in need in disaster situations is by no means a recent construct (Yeophantong, 2016; 243).

Institutional Mechanism

In December 1987, the UN in its 42nd session declared to observe the decade of the 1990 as the *International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction*. In April 1989, the China National Commission for the International Decade on Natural Disaster Reduction was set up under the State Council. In October, 2000, it was renamed as China Commission for International Disaster Reduction, and acted as an inter-agency coordinating body under the State Council. On 2nd April 2005, it was again renamed to China National Committee for Disaster Reduction (NCDR) and started to serve as the top decision-making and coordinating mechanism for disaster management. The government of China also submitted a report to the UN Office of Disaster Risk Reduction in 2005, stating (Kang, 2015; 31):

“It (NCDR) is composed of 30 ministries and departments, including relevant military agencies and social groups. It functions as an inter-agency coordination body, which is responsible for studying and formulating principles, policies and plans for disaster reduction, coordinating major disaster activities, giving guidance to local governments in their disaster reduction work, and promoting international exchanges and cooperation”

In response to the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, and the subsequent Rio Declaration, China formulated a national level plan- *White Paper on China's Population, Environment, and Development in the 21st Century* (1994), referred to as China's Agenda 21.

The draft was passed at the 16th Executive meeting of the State Council in March 1994. It devoted a whole chapter to disaster mitigation (Chapter 17), in which the Chinese government stressed the importance of international and inter-regional cooperation and coordination in improving the country's disaster management and reduction. Its proposed activities includes (Kang, 2015; 32):

- Learning scientific knowledge and drawing useful lessons from abroad for disaster management (17.15) and disaster monitoring, information processing, early warning, forecasting, and communication systems (17.29);
- Promoting association with & exchange of information with international organizations involved in the management of natural disasters (17.15);
- Developing joint early warning services for regional maritime disasters with the West Pacific coastal countries (17.29);
- Calling for aid from the international community after the occurrence of major disasters (17.29);
- Conducting research through bilateral or multilateral international cooperation (17.29).

With having a foundational base on natural disaster mitigation, China formulated the first specialized and comprehensive disaster reduction plan in 1998, named, *The National Natural Disaster Reduction Plan of the People's Republic of China (1998–2010)* in accordance with the Ninth Five-Year National Economic and Social Development Plan and the 2010 Long-term Objective, and greatly supported and assisted by the UN Development Program. The Disaster Reduction Plan emphasized the earlier policy of international assistance and cooperation for disaster mitigation. A National Disaster Reduction Center was also established under the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA) that “serves as a center for disaster information sharing, technical services, and emergency relief decision consultancy,” and one of its major functions is “to propel international exchange and cooperation in disaster reduction” (Kang, 2015; 32). This provided an institutional mechanism to deal with disaster management, and also to collaborate

with international agencies and foreign countries for sharing of experiences on disaster reduction and exchange of technology.

The arrangements till date were, however, not enough to meet the challenges of the outbreak of SARS epidemic in 2003. The government needed a more robust system to meet the new challenges with greater transparency and accountability. The epidemic was brought under control with a systemic change in the governance in the form of more transparency and cooperation with international agencies and foreign countries. After winning the battle, the central government promulgated and modified a series of policies and legislation concerning prevention of and response to natural hazards/emergency situations, leading to the actual formation of the nation's disaster response system (Kang, 2015; 33).

The first to be framed was the *Regulation on the Urgent Handling of Public Health Emergencies* that came into effect in May 2003 and was revised on 8th January 2011. It contained provisions relating to reporting and information release in emergency situations (Chapter 3), establishment of the state's emergency reporting system (article 19) and emergency information release system (article 25). It also contained instructions to the health officials at the central and provincial levels to release correct, accurate information, and nothing should be concealed or exaggerated. In January 2006, the State Council, issued a comprehensive crisis management system named, *Master State Plan for Rapid Response to Public Emergencies*. The master plan categorized the different disasters, like, natural disasters, public health emergencies, man-made disasters, accidents, and also made four levels of severity of disasters that is to be addressed by central government to County government. The whole disaster management was given a total formal shape with standard operating procedure and clear division of responsibilities. The plan also stated that donations and assistance from individuals, enterprises, and organizations (including international organizations) were encouraged for disaster relief (*Master State Plan* article 4.2). Since then, the *Master State Plan* has served as an overarching guide for the nation's various types of emergency response. In tandem with this, by 2011, the State Council had formulated and implemented 18 sub-plans for specific emergencies, relevant government departments had developed 57 sector-specific plans, and governments at provincial and county levels had also released their respective emergency plans (Kang, 2015; 34).

The government of China reiterated the principle of international cooperation, prompt dissemination of information sharing and action on disaster damage in the *National 11th Five-Year Plan on Comprehensive Disaster Reduction (2006–2010)*. This new plan clearly stated

about eight aspects of ability construction and eight key projects would be completed. “The eight aspects of ability are, to cope with disaster, the monitor and forecast, the comprehensive defense capacity, emergency and rescue, the comprehensive response to catastrophe reduction, scientific and technological support for disaster reduction, and education on disaster reduction.

The eight key projects include national integrated disaster risk and disaster reduction capacity survey in key areas, the national four-level disaster emergency command system, national disaster relief material reserves, satellite disaster reduction, community disaster reduction model, Asian regional catastrophe research center, technological innovation and transfer of disaster reduction, and education on disaster reduction” (Lixin, 2012; 299). The *Emergency Response Law of the People’s Republic of China*, the nation’s first overall law on emergency responses, promulgated and implemented in 2007, also emphasized international cooperation and transparency.

The Chinese government in 2009 decided to observe 12th May every year as ‘Disaster Prevention and Reduction Day’, as on this day in 2008, the devastating Wenchuan earthquake occurred. After the devastating Wenchuan earthquake, the *Disaster Management Policy 2009* of China was implemented that included diverse types of disasters like, meteorological disasters, earthquakes, geological disasters, marine disasters, biological disasters, and forest and grassland fires. It states that during the 19 years from 1990 to 2008, on annual average, natural disasters affected about 300 million people, destroyed more than three million buildings, and forced the evacuation of more than nine million people. The direct financial losses caused exceeded 200 billion yuan. Floods in the Yangtze, Songhua and Nenjiang river valleys in 1998, serious droughts in Sichuan Province and Chongqing Municipality in 2006, devastating floods in the Huaihe River valley in 2007, extreme cold weather and sleet in south China in early 2008, and the earthquake that shook Sichuan, Gansu, Shaanxi and other places on 12th May 2008 all caused tremendous losses. The Policy states to strengthen capability in management, monitoring, early warning and fore-casting of natural disasters, prevent and combat natural disasters, emergency rescue and relief work, consolidate flood control in various river valleys, comprehensive response to disastrous calamities, capability in coping with disasters, and scientific and technological support. The Policy concludes with the aim of raising China's overall capacity for and level of natural disaster prevention and reduction, and the Chinese government will continue to put people first and make it a core task to raise the comprehensive disaster reduction capacity of the whole of society.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs promulgated *Disaster Mitigation Model Communities Standard* in 2007 and *National Integrated Disaster Mitigation Model Communities Standards* (modified) in 2010. There are more than 1,100 model communities for disaster mitigation and 5,000 integrated communities will be set up in the period 2010-15 (Lixin et al, 2012; 300). Ministry of Civil Affairs issued the *National Comprehensive Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Twelfth Five-Year Plan* (2011–2015) in 2011. This plan proposed ten aspects of disaster management and seven key projects. These are:

“Ten aspects will be strengthened including national monitoring, warning and assessment, the national risk management, national disaster information, engineering defense ability, disaster prevention and mitigation of the regional and the urban and the rural areas, emergency response and recovery, application of science and technology, the cultural foster of disaster prevention and mitigation, the social support ability, and soft ability on disaster prevention and mitigation. Seven projects include: the comprehensive risk survey project for natural disaster, information platform for comprehensive disaster reduction and risk management, the national disaster emergency command system, the national reserves of relief materials, satellite to environmental disaster mitigation, national simulation system of natural disaster, disaster education and model community of integrated disaster reduction. The implementation of this plan is to enhance the national comprehensive disaster prevention and mitigation ability, effectively restrain the increasing trend in natural disaster risk, minimize the natural disaster losses, improve public literacy on disaster prevention and mitigation, and reduce the effect of natural disaster on the national economic and social development.” (Lixin et al, 2012; 300).

The disaster management framework can be divided into such different phases as prevention, mitigation, preparation, emergency rescue, and recovery and reconstruction (Wang 2010). The government of China has clearly demarcated the responsibilities of disaster management among its different levels of governance units thereby making it ‘unified leadership, graded response and functional division, based on local government, supplemented by central government’ (Wang 2008). China has a four-tier color-coded system for severe weather, with red being the most serious, followed by orange, yellow and blue. As per the colour code the responsibility will be shared among the central government, provincial government, prefecture government, county government and township government, respectively. At present, the permanent disaster management departments include China’s State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters, State Headquarters for Earthquake Resistance and Disaster Relief, State Headquarters for

Forestry Fire Prevention (Lixin et al, 2012; 297). The Chinese government currently utilizes the Chinese Emergency Management System which categorizes the severity of an incident (Bai, 2008). The system includes: Level 1: Extremely Serious Incident, over 30 fatalities, escalate to state council; Level 2: Serious Incident, between 10-30 fatalities, escalate to province level;

Level 3: Major incident, 3-10 fatalities, escalate to city level; and Level 4: Small case, less than 3 fatalities, escalate to local level.

“Unified leadership means the government issues policies, regulations and planning, and makes decision, commands, supervises and coordinates in the course of implementing disaster management measures. Graded response means central government is responsible for management of catastrophe relief, and local government for disaster management in their administrative areas. For example, the central government takes responsibility for major disasters, provincial government for large-scale, municipal government for medium-scale, and county government for minor disasters. Functional division is that relevant departments of the government shall be responsible for relevant work of disaster management in accordance with their respective duties. The practice and expenditure mainly depend on local government and supplemented by central government.” (Lixin et al, 2012; 296).

Disaster Preparedness

The disaster preparedness and management is the responsibility of the Emergency Management Office of State Council and Ministry of Civil Affairs. The State Plan for Rapid Response to Public Emergencies was promulgated in January, 2006. “In addition, later 25 special emergency plans and 80 plans to deal with disasters, compiled by various departments of State Council, were issued by State Council, which constituted the emergency program system in national level. In the plans, all kinds of public emergencies are divided into four levels according to features, severities, controllabilities and influences” (Lixin *et al*, 2012; 300). Emergency Management Office of State Council was established in April 2006 with the charge of being an operation center responsible for the emergency, information collection and comprehensive coordination. In the event of any disaster taking place, it activates all the departments of the State Council to immediately response. The Emergency Response Law promulgated by the government of China in November 2007, was actually a repetition and affirmation of the emergency planning, and it builds the basis for disaster emergency management. The Ministry of Civil Affairs collects all data on disaster events and releases personnel, relief, monetary assistance required for immediate

assistance, evacuation, resettlement, etc. In 1998, it had established ten central material reserve systems for disaster relief, and the same has been established additionally at the local level prone to disasters. Central-level material reserve points for disaster relief have been built in Shenyang, Harbin, Tianjin, Zhengzhou, Hefei, Wuhan, Changsha, Nanning, Chengdu and Xian.

Provincial-level material reserve warehouses for disaster relief have been set up in 26 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities. The reserve points stock living materials such as 370,000 tents with a size of 12 square meters, clothing and quilts have been stored in reserve and a network of disaster-relief material reserve has been preliminarily set up, and is distributed at times of requirements. In 2003 emergency relief materials such as 130,000 tents were transported to disaster-hit Huai River and Wei River areas, which ensured the proper resettlement of disaster victims.

Apart from these, a dedicated professional team of personnel have been set up for rescue and evacuation of the people affected by any sort of disasters. Eight state professional emergency rescue teams, with 100 thousand people, are constructed, such as, Flood Emergency Rescue Team, Earthquake Emergency Rescue Team, Biological or Nuclear Emergency Rescue Team, Air Emergency Transport Service Team, Transportation Emergency Rescue Team, Marine Emergency Rescue Team, Emergency Mobile Communications Support Team, Medical Epidemic Prevention Rescue Team. When disasters occur, China can proceed to rapid rescue, and minimize the losses (Wang 2011).

Recovery and Reconstruction

The Emergency Plan of National Natural Disaster Assistance states that the Ministry of Civil Affairs, at various levels, is responsible for recovery and reconstruction. The basic principle of recovery and reconstruction is that victim's self-reliance complemented by state relief and support (Xuan 2005). The infrastructure is recreated by government grants and the Ministry of Civil Affairs supports the daily needs till the victims are capable of self-reliant. The government gives financial compensation for reconstruction and repair of the damaged houses. The governments, both at the centre and local, rebuild the developmental activities in disaster area through preferential tax, industry donation and formulating the specific recovery regulations. In recovery and reconstruction of natural disaster in China, a very successful way is *one-to-one assistance*, that is, one developed city unaffected by disaster assists one village in disaster area.

The mode has played an important role in a large number of disaster recovery and reconstruction (Lixin *et al*, 2012; 301).

Constraints

The Emergency Management Office of the State Council is the body that functions and coordinates other departments when a disaster has actually occurred, and hence is some sort of

an immediate response. Other aspects of disaster management, such as monitoring, risk assessment, forecasting, relief and recovery are left in the charge of other departments. This makes the process of disaster management a bit cumbersome and difficult, causing delay, may be due to lack of proper coordination among various departments. “Chinese government still continues the ‘single-style’ disaster management mode. Except for standing administrative organizations, such as fire station, seismological bureau, flood control and drought relief headquarters, many departments intend to set up ‘single-style’ disaster management branches in their own organization, which will lead to more investment in infrastructure, complicated disaster management agencies, and consequently, more difficulties in coordination between these agencies” (Lixin *et al*, 2012; 304).

China does not have a single, basic, and comprehensive law, regulation or policy on disaster management till now. There are quite a number of laws regulated by different departments, giving rise to the ‘single-style’ disaster management model. Some of these ‘single-style’ laws are, Flood Control Law, Earthquake Disaster Mitigation Act, Fire Prevention Law, and Meteorology Law. The implementation of reduction actions largely depends on the governmental authority, rather than the law. There exists the politicization in the process of disaster management (Lixin *et al*, 2012; 304). Though the government encourages the participation of non-governmental organisations in disaster management, it has not yet been stated explicitly in legal terms. Volunteerism can be restricted by the government, in certain cases.

“Firstly, various institutional structures in which disaster management experts operate are usually different, they have different orientation and priorities, and use different strategies. Secondly, information barriers between different departments restrict accessing and communicating information effectively and timely. Information is a key ingredient for successful disasters risk management, we need to communicate information clearly and show its usefulness so people can make better informed decisions. Thirdly, disaster management requires an integrated management not only with respect to different stages of disaster cycles, but also for the measures

to manage risks so that they can be integrated within planning and management of cities and regions to attain sustainability.” (Lixin *et al*, 2012; 306)

International Aid and Assistance

The Chinese leaders in the early days were very cautious to accept foreign aid in response to the natural disasters and famines in several provinces. At that time, the government generally rejected external aid despite the difficult domestic situation caused by wars and natural hazards, because it was wary of foreign governments and suspected their intentions in offering help (Kang, 2015; 25). Liu Shaoqi, the Vice-Chairman of the Central People’s Government committee, on the International Worker’s Day speech of 1950 categorically said against the hypocrisy of the US government in providing assistance, and reiterated people’s efforts and government’s initiative in managing the critical situation.

Similar view was expressed by Song Qingling, another PRC Vice-Chairman, ‘reiterating the Chinese government’s competence in managing disasters and famines, as well as its determination to resist any form of foreign “assistance” whose actual purpose was invasion’ (*People’s Daily* 25 May 1950) (Kang, 2015; 25). From 1949 to 1980, China managed the international aid component very cautiously, increasingly pleading for self-reliant, even though it brought hardships to the people. For example, in the late 1950s, when the Chinese people suffered widespread famine, the real situation was barely known outside China due to the regime’s political isolation and its intentional cover-up (Kang, 2015; 25). This policy continued and foreign government’s aid was rejected with sharp criticism that ‘China could solve its own problems and would never beg for food’ (Ashton et al, 1984).

Chinese authorities were reluctant to admit production declines. Despite reports of severe weather – floods and heavy rains in the south and northeast and droughts and pests in central and northwest China – record harvests were proclaimed. Although outside observers discounted reports of record harvests, they also observed continued grain exports and no food imports to suggest the scope of the food crisis (Ashton et al. 1984, p. 630).

The famine of the late 1950s was kept strict confidential and external assistance was never sought for it. In 1976, a devastating 7.8 Richter scale earthquake hit Tangshan in Hebel province, but the Chinese government did not speak on the devastation to the world at large. It killed about 242,000 people and injured 164,000 people. Only the relief and reconstruction was made public.

The government rejected much aid assistance from international community, like US, UK, Japan, UN, International Red Cross, in response to the Tangshan earthquake.

In sum, in several decades following the founding of the People's Republic of China, the government insisted on a closed-door approach to manage disasters. Information of disaster impacts was hidden from its people and outside observers, and news stories were carefully crafted for propaganda purposes.

Furthermore, due to the country's political isolation as well as its hyper-political domestic atmosphere, the government rigidly resisted external assistance despite the serious devastation caused by disasters. At the time, a huge stigma was attached to seeking foreign aid, because it was interpreted as abandoning the nation's glorious tradition of self-reliance and negating the superiority of the socialist system. If the donors were the regime's political adversaries, then accepting their assistance would be denounced as shameful surrender and betrayal (Kang, 2015; 26-7).

In October, 1980, the three Ministries of Foreign Trade & Economic Cooperation, Civil Affairs & Foreign Affairs jointly presented before the State Council a proposal from UNDRO named, *Consultation on Acceptance of Aid from the United Nations Disaster Relief Office*. This was regarding accepting relief and aid in case of disasters faced by the developing countries from the UNDRO. The State Council approved the proposal, thereby initiating the process of flow of international aid. Between 1980 and 1981, this document was regarded as a guideline whenever the government dealt with devastating natural hazards (Kang, 2015; 28).

In early 1981, China sought help from UNDRO on account of the 1980's joint occurrence of severe floods in the Kangtze valley since 1949 and also severe drought in the north in the last 37 years (Kang, 2015). The UNDRO pledged an aid of \$700 together with the help from other participating countries like, US, Canada, Australia, Japan, Kuwait, Venezuela, and European powers. The Chinese officials abandoned the earlier principle of self-reliant and accepted aid under the coordination of the UN. This practice was very short-lived, and during the fall of 1981, China again reiterated the principle of self-reliant and desisted from initiating aid assistance from UN and other international community. However, if the aid assistance in the form of material or monetary is donated *suo motto*, then China accepted it, though with a strict no to aid assistance from religious organizations. Xinhua News agency was given the responsibility of disseminating

news about disasters abroad. The policy of aid acceptance was not rejected, and, “in fact, in September of the same year, China accepted monetary aid (\$25,000) directly from the USA for the first time” (*The Washington Post*, September 10, 1981) (King, 2015; 29). According to Michael Walzer, providing assistance to others constitutes an act of ‘obligatory charity’—an idea that clearly resonates with the prevailing climate of ideas where states and, more broadly, the international community are deemed to have an obligation to help distant others in the spirit of humanitarianism and reciprocity, as opposed to merely being legally compelled to do so (Yeophantong, 2016; 244).

A major forest fire broke out in the north eastern China on 6th May 1987, continued for about a month, “killing 193 people, injuring 226, and leaving 51,000 homeless, and caused more than \$500 million in damage” (Kang, 2015; 29). To meet the challenges of the forest fire, the worst since 1949, the China Red Cross, sought international aid assistance. The China government also formed a working group for aid management. The Food and Agriculture Organisation, World Food Programme of the UN, and the Canadian Embassy, immediately agreed to help. The European Community gave an aid of \$575,000 for fire victims. By the end of July 1987, China received an aid of \$6 million with other relief materials from more than 20 countries and international organizations an aid. “This showed that the government had shifted its attitude toward international disaster assistance and was eager to expand the scope and channels through which foreign aid could flow. International media also noted an increased transparency in the Chinese government’s operation in fighting the fire” (Kang, 2015; 29).

The final opening up for aid assistance to the international community was made in 1991 after a series of severe floods killed around one thousand people and made millions homeless. Chen Hong, Vice-Minister of Civil Affairs, announced at a news conference that “the disaster situation is growing worse. I urgently appeal to UN agencies, governments of all nations and international communities to offer humanitarian relief assistance” (*The Associated Press* July 11, 1991, see also *Japan Economic Newswire* July 11, 1991, Zhan, 2006, Kang, 2015). David Lockwood, Deputy Representative of the United Nations Development Programme’s Beijing office, said the Chinese government’s first appeal for aid was “an important signal in terms of the seriousness and maybe in terms of the government policy toward getting outside help, too” (*The Associated Press* July 11, 1991). During the devastating Wenchuan earthquake of 2008, China received nearly 76 billion yuan-worth of donations and relief materials from both in and outside China.

“The severity of the disasters was not the sole reason for China’s changing tune in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The government’s readiness to receive external help indicated a fundamental policy shift shaped by the broad domestic political environment. As the Maoist revolutionary line gradually gave way to Deng Xiaoping’s pragmatic mentality, China’s foreign policy was adjusted accordingly. Under the official banner of “opening-up to the outside world” and “independence and peace,” as well as the new objective of gaining international recognition and fostering good relationships with the rest of the world (Liu 1997), the leadership no longer felt unsafe or uneasy in interacting with international organizations and foreign governments, particularly when the country was in urgent need.” (Kang, 2015; 30-1)

China since the beginning of 1980 began to focus on disaster management issues with renewed vision, though it was more on sustainable development, in general, and natural disasters, particular. With this objective, China initiated the process of accepting international aid assistance. The earlier system of remaining self-reliant and maintaining a close guard to all natural disasters began to transform into an open system. Disaster mitigation is a major challenge faced by the affected countries and for this large funds and materials are required. Here, the aid assistance and relief materials play a significant role and the donor countries also collaborate in this humanitarian effort through the diplomatic channels enhancing the harmonious relationship among the different countries. China realizes this humanitarian aspect as a means to present as a responsible power. As Chen Jian, Assistant Minister of Commerce, proudly said at a press conference (Kang 2015; 37),

“China always launches its quick-response mechanism of international disaster relief in time and fully implements the donation promises it announces ... China has limited funds, and the donation figures it announces cannot be comparable with those of some other countries, but China’s timely and wholehearted humanitarian aid has won wide praise of disaster-hit governments and people. China will continue to do so (Xinhua News Agency January 19, 2006).”

China was the largest humanitarian donor among the BRIC countries, providing US \$87 million in humanitarian assistance in 2011. In *China’s Actions for Disaster Prevention and Reduction*, (2009) a white paper published by the Information Office of the State Council in 2009, the Chinese government detailed its worldwide disaster aid activities (Kang, 2015; 37-38):

- After the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004, China provided the largest emergency aid in its history, totaling 687.63 million yuan, to the affected countries and related UN agencies. It also promptly dispatched an international rescue team and a medical team to Indonesia.
- On August 29, 2005, hurricane “Katrina” hit the southern part of the USA. The Chinese government provided a relief fund of US\$5 million, together with a batch of emergency aid materials.
- After an earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale rocked Pakistan on October 8, 2005, the Chinese government sent emergency humanitarian aid worth US\$26.73 million. From October 9 to November 29, Chinese airplanes carried disaster relief materials on 26 flights to Pakistan, and Chinese international emergency rescue teams and medical teams were dispatched to the quake hit areas.
- In 2008, after the tropical storm “Nargis” hit Myanmar, the Chinese government sent emergency aid materials worth US\$1 million to Myanmar, followed by relief funds of 30 million yuan and US\$10 million, as well as a medical team.

Global Collaboration

Established in 2005, the *Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction* (AMCDRR) is a biennial conference jointly organized by different Asian countries and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). China hosted the first *Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction* (AMCDRR) in 2005, and has been an active participant in the successive conferences. The Ministry of Civil Affairs, under which the whole disaster management functions, has contributed to the strengthening of declarations of the various AMCDRR, like Beijing Declaration & Action (2005), the Delhi Declaration (2007), the Kuala Lumpur Declaration (2008), the Incheon Declaration and Action Plan (2011), Yogyakarta Declaration (2012), Bangkok Declaration (2014). The Delhi Declaration (2016) was held after the introduction of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. This was followed by the Ulaanbaatar Declaration (2018), where the theme of the AMCDRR 2018 was, ‘Preventing Disaster Risk: Protecting Sustainable Development’ that reflects the essence of the Sendai Framework. The 2020 meet scheduled to be held at Australia, has been postponed to due to Covid19 pandemic.

China organized the *International Conference on Emergency Management* in 2010 that was attended by participants from twenty countries, and also high level officials in the government of China. Luo Pingfei, Vice-Minister of MOCA, said that such meetings strengthened bilateral and

multilateral partnerships with China's counterparts in Asian neighbors and the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM); it issued China's first white paper on *China's Actions for Disaster Prevention and Reduction*, and, for the first time, it led the Chinese rescue team to participate in joint disaster relief exercises abroad (Kang, 2015; 42-43). The UN Disaster Prevention Award 1998 was given to China in recognition to the contribution of the Chinese officials, scientists, and party workers for disaster reduction and relief work and activities.

The entire south-east coast of China is vulnerable to severe typhoons, and many cross the south-east Asian nations before hitting the coast of China. In 2013 Typhoon Hainan (Olanda) devastated Philippines before touching China coast. In October, 2016, Typhoon Haima similarly struck Philippines before touching China. The south-east Asian nations also share disasters like floods and earthquakes. The establishment of the *National Institute of Emergency Management* (NIEM) has allowed China to broaden its disaster management vision and increase the number of publications in English. The NIEM has sought to enhance China's engagement on disaster management with ASEAN. Chinese and Thai experts, in 2013 together went on a training program for disaster management officials and practitioners, and such programmes increased disaster management networking between ASEAN countries and China.

People's War Against Covid19

The strike of the novel Coronavirus, sometimes in the month of November or December 2019, in Wuhan capital city in the province of Hubei, was not a known fact, and it was suspected to be severe pneumonia attack, very much resembling to the SARS syndrome. On 31st December 2019, China informed *World Health Organization* (WHO) about the occurrence of such unusual pneumonia like mysterious disease in Wuhan city. Several of those infected worked at the city's *Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market*, which was shut down on January 1st 2020. As health experts worked to identify the virus amid growing alarm, the number of infections exceeded 40. On January 5th 2020, Chinese officials ruled out the possibility that this was a recurrence of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) virus - an illness that originated in China and killed more than 770 people worldwide in 2002-2003. The new virus strain belonging to the corona virus family was identified as n-COV 2019 on 7th January 2020, and WHO was informed by China. On 11th January 2020, it was declared that the first casualty was a 61 years old man having symptoms of corona virus, died in hospital on 9th January, due to heart failure. A week later, on 17th January, the second death occurred, and patients began to pour in hospitals of

Wuhan with respiratory complaints. The third death was reported on 20th January with more than 200 infected not only in Hubei province, but also in Beijing, Shanghai, & Shenzhen. The cities of Wuhan, Xiantao and Chibi in Hubei province were placed under effective quarantine on January 23rd 2020 as air and rail departures were suspended. More areas were placed under lockdown subsequently, affecting nearly 56 million people.

The WHO on 14th January 2020 tweeted that the outbreak did not yet constitute a ‘public emergency of international concern’ and that the Chinese government had found ‘no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of the novel corona virus’. Meanwhile, on 20th January 2020, a Chinese expert on infectious diseases confirmed human-to-human transmission to state broadcaster CCTV, raising fears of a major outbreak as millions travelled for the Lunar New Year holiday (www.aljazeera.com). On 30th January 2020, the WHO declared the corona virus a global emergency as the death toll in China jumped to 170, with 7,711 cases reported in the country, where the virus had spread to all 31 provinces. By the end of the week, China reported 304 deaths amid 14,380 infections. On 7th February 2020, the Wuhan Central Hospital announced that Dr Li Wenliang, the Chinese doctor who got in trouble with authorities for sounding an early warning about the virus outbreak, has died. On 9th February 2020, the death toll in China exceeded that of the 2002-03 SARS epidemic, with 811 deaths recorded and 37,198 infections. WHO sent an investigative team to China on the same day, and on 11th February, WHO named the virus as COVID 19. On 11th March, WHO declared the COVID 19 as a “pandemic”.

On 10th February, there were 908 deaths with 40,171 infected persons in China. President Xi Jinping appeared in public for the first time since the outbreak began, visiting a hospital in Beijing, and urging confidence in the battle against the virus. On 20th February 2020, China said the death toll had risen to 2,118 while the total number of infected cases reached 74,576. On 8th April 2020, Wuhan began allowing people to leave for the first time since the central Chinese city was sealed off 76 days ago to contain the corona virus that first emerged there late last year.

Medical Response

Jinyintan Hospital in Wuhan was the first hospital to receive Covid 19 patients. Zhong Ming, Director of Critical Care Department of Zhongshan Hospital, Shanghai, was appointed by the National Health Commission at Jinyintan Hospital. He was given the title of “Master of ECMO” (Extra Corporeal Membrane Oxygenation) due to his successive cases, and had also contributed

during the SARS epidemic in 2003 and Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan Province in 2008. The Jinyintan Hospital initially had 3 ICU wards with 16 beds that were too inadequate for the patient inflow. Later, the hospital adapted another two floors into isolation wards for critical patients. The patients who were transferred were at critical stage. Zhong said that COVID-19 is a totally new disease to humans and it was difficult to pull back critical patients from death, as patients who were quite stable became critical on the following day and died.

Huoshenshan and Leishenshan hospitals were the two temporary hospitals built from scratch within a record time of less than two weeks by about 6000 workers, and were closed on 15th April after the last group of patients was discharged. The temporary hospitals were in response to the public health emergency and each had a capacity of 1,500 beds. It fulfilled its mission, according to the hospital's president, Wang Xinghuan, who is also the president of Zhongnan Hospital. Since opening on February 8, the hospital admitted 2,011 patients infected with COVID-19, with serious cases accounting for about 45 percent, Wang said, adding that the hospital's overall mortality rate was about 2.3 percent. President Xi visited the makeshift Huoshenshan Hospital in Wuhan on 10th March and addressed the frontline medical personnel as 'most admirable people in the new era'. All the 16 makeshift hospitals in Wuhan with a total of 13,467 beds treated more than twelve thousand infected persons till that day. Around 41,600 medical personnel from across the country have been dispatched to the central province of Hubei, has repurposed 86 hospitals for COVID-19 treatment and built another 16 offering an additional 60,000 beds and the province's capital Wuhan was on lockdown since 23rd January.

Shear and McNeil Jr. (2020) in *New York Times*, write, 'Beijing ultimately sent 40,000 medical personnel from all over China into Wuhan, built two hospitals, trained 9,000 contact-tracers and began tracking down, testing and isolating not only everyone with the virus but everyone with a fever'.

The *National Health Commission of China* (NHC) reported on 15th April that out of a total of 6,764 asymptomatic infections, 1,297 were later classified as confirmed patients and 588 were imported infections. Zhong Nanshan, China's medical expert, told in video-conference with European medical experts on 16th April that China still faces challenges from imported corona virus cases that pose a threat in border regions and asymptomatic patients, which are now two major focuses, especially as about 50 percent of patients do not show clinical symptoms like cough, fever and fatigue. China needs to implement effective measures of social distancing and

isolation of family members, close relatives and contacts have to be adopted in case of detected positive cases. Countries need to strike a balance between resumption of work and prevention and control work in view of economy and life.

Economy

President Xi expressed concern for the economy in the wake on the corona virus during a meeting of the Politburo's Standing Committee on 3rd February 2020. He reviewed the report of the *National Development and Reform Commission* (NDRC), and urged to refrain from 'more restrictive measures'. The official *Xinhua* News Agency, reporting on the Politburo meeting on

10th February, called the corona virus outbreak 'a major test of China's system and capacity for governance'. It added, without details, that 'party committees and governments of all levels were urged to achieve the targets of economic and social development this year'. The NDRC urged companies to resume work, especially in key industries like food & pharmaceuticals. Pan Gongsheng, Vice Governor of China's central bank, said, 'in the context of the epidemic and the downward pressure on the economy, it is more important to maintain economic growth'. Zhejiang province, an economic powerhouse in eastern China, ordered local authorities not to restrict everyday movement or shutting down shops and businesses. China has unveiled new tax policies as it tries to reduce the burden on industries, and preparing measures, including more fiscal spending and interest rate cuts. On anonymity, a party functionary said that the Party has stressed upon the propaganda of 'economic recovery' for China in media. *People's Daily* in an editorial on 10th February urged public to deal the epidemic with a 'positive mood'.

On 10th March, new guidelines were released on preferential tax policies to cope with the epidemic of COVID-19, including VAT relief for micro and small enterprises, cut or exemption of pension & medical insurances, reduced rent for individual businesses. China ramped up efforts to improve the livelihood of low-income households and unemployed amid economic downward pressure from the COVID-19. By the end of March, China had granted unemployment insurance benefits worth 9.3 billion yuan (\$1.3 billion) to 2.3 million people who lost their jobs from the effects of the COVID-19, while offering 410 million yuan in subsidies to 67,000 unemployed migrant workers, Gui Zhen, an official at the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, said at a press briefing on 10th April 2020. To guarantee the basic necessities of the unemployed, the State Council, the country's cabinet, also prolonged the period the senior unemployed could apply for unemployment insurance benefits, rolled out unemployment

subsidies and doubled temporary price subsidies to them. These measures came amid huge pressure in stabilizing employment for China, whose urban unemployment rate in February reached a two-year high of 6.2 percent.

The *People's Bank of China* (PBC), the central bank, on 10th April 2020 released measures worth 3.3 trillion yuan (\$470 billion) including cutting the reserve requirement ratio and loan arrangement to relieve the impact brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. China's unemployment rate may rise 2 to 3 percentage points from the pre-virus level, which will drag down retail by 6 to 9 percentage points, Ying Xiwen, deputy director of the Macro-economy Research Center at Academy of China Minsheng Bank, told the Global Times on 10th April 2020.

The Politburo meeting of the CPC Central Committee was held on 17th April for the Covid 19 pandemic and the current economic situation. It stressed continuous epidemic response measures in hard-hit Hubei Province including extensive nucleic acid testing, strict vigilance in border cities. Stronger macro policy tools to soften the impact of the pandemic, like issuing special government bonds to support the virus fight, issuance of local government bonds, and instruments such as reserve requirement ratio cuts, interest rate reduction, stressing the need to channel capital into the real economy, especially medium-sized, small and micro enterprises.

The *Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank* (AIIB), in the first week of April 2020, approved for the first time emergency assistance sovereign-backed loan of 2.485 billion Yuan (about US \$ 355 million) to help upgrade China's sustainable public health infrastructure and provide emergency response, equipment and supplies in the Chinese municipalities of Beijing and Chongqing , amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

Containment

Shear and McNeil Jr. (2020) write, ‘...the aggressive way that the Chinese sought to contain the virus, using tactics that were sometimes brutal, including people being dragged from their apartments into hospital isolation when they resisted leaving and welding families into their apartments when they broke quarantine rules.... Brutal as they were, China’s tactics ultimately worked’.

According to the document released on 6th April by the Chinese government, the genome sequence of COVID-19 was submitted to the WHO on 12th January, the NHC unveiled the first

version of guidelines on the diagnosis and treatment for COVID-19 on 15th January, along with prevention and control measures. Since 16th January, Wuhan, Central China's Hubei Province, took proactive measures to screen all patients treated for fever clinics and the Commission sent seven inspection teams to different provincial-level regions to instruct local epidemic prevention and control work. On 19th January, the NHC started to distribute nucleic acid testing re-agents to health departments across the country, and top medical expert Zhong Nanshan confirmed human-to-human transmission on the 20th January.

Wuhan was sealed on 23rd January and it opened-up on 8th April, when 11 million people of the city saw the end of the aggressive control management of the virus. People were relaxed, but were also apprehensive of the looming danger of virus infection again. Hubei Vice Governor Cao Guangjin said, 'we are acutely aware that we must not relax as we have not claimed final victory. We need to remain calm and be just as cautious at the end as at the beginning' (www.aljazeera.com). Dr. David Nabarro, WHO's special envoy on Covid 19, said that identification, containment, and suppression of the virus was the only effective strategy to prevent small out-breaks from ballooning.

Yanzhong Huang writes that China's model of containing the pandemic cannot be replicated by other countries as it is a different political structure resulting in authoritarian 'draconian' containment models. The number of infected persons started to 'drop in mid-February and on March 19, China declared zero new cases for the first time'. China suspended intra-city transport, entertainment places, and banned public gatherings. Huang cites Dr. Bruce Aylward of WHO suggesting other countries to replicate China's approach of containment. However, a 'despotic power' does not have the limitations of the 'checks & balance' of a 'democratic system', and implementing the 'draconian' containment measures 'would require a strong state to penetrate society and enforce its decisions. China can achieve that, thanks to the extensive array of vehicles installed in the Mao era to do just that – village party branches, street sub-district offices and former barefoot doctors (those who received little training but were allowed to practice in the countryside in the Mao era; in the 1980s they were certified to become 'village doctors') who were mobilized to take temperatures, quarantine people and trace infections and their close contacts'. Further, with the use of big data and information technology, such as QR code, tracking of the virus was efficiently possible. Other countries may adopt China's containment measures of shutting down a city, but it would be challenging for them to halt economic production and strictly enforce social distancing measures to the same level as China

did. The Chinese government sealed off cities, apartment complexes and villages, placing security guards on patrol around the clock to monitor people's movements. Huang concludes that China's harsh, restrictive containment measures are not only non-replicable in most places; they probably should not be replicated.

Kelly Dawson writes that the restrictions are not seen as a threat to the freedom of people. At the height of the outbreak, people stayed inside to protect themselves and their families, and because they wanted to play their part – however small – in breaking the chain of transmission. The heavy restrictions and declining infection rates combined to provide a sense that Beijing had regained control, just as the crisis was beginning to accelerate in the US. No one knows whether the reported numbers in China are accurate, but the sense of relief here is genuine.

Nino Cartabellotta, Public Health expert of Italy, said that the containment measures adopted in Hubei by Chinese Communist Party really paid off with positive results, and that all other partial containment measures are not proportional to the speed of the virus.

The Chinese city of Suifenhe in Heilongjiang in north-east China, bordering Russia is under lockdown fuelled by an influx of 40 infected travelers crossing the border from Russia in recent days. Restrictions on the movement of citizens similar to the measures in hard-hit Wuhan have been announced on 9th April. People must stay in their residential compounds and only one person per family may leave once every three days to buy necessities and must return the same day, state-run CCTV reported. The government also announced that a government building will be converted to a 600-bed isolation hospital to treat those infected. As of 9th April, the province announced a total of 127 imported COVID-19 cases with six patients in severe condition, state news agency *Xinhua* reported.

Serbian Ambassador to China, Bacevic in an interview published in *Global Times* on 30th March 2020, said that the ‘Chinese model’ is the most suitable to get one step ahead of the virus spread, and it has included closure of the locations of outbreak, separating the infected, massive testing, isolation of families and those with mild symptoms, treatment and re-isolation. Further, a makeshift hospital at Belgrade Fair Centre with 3,000 beds has been set-up for persons with mild symptoms and 2,000 to 3,000 tests per day to be conducted at the Clinical Center of Serbia.

Criticism

The US President accused China for the global Covid 19 pandemic and dubbed it as the ‘Chinese Virus’ in mid-March 2020. He said in a daily White House briefing, ‘it could have been stopped in China before it started and it wasn’t, and the whole world is suffering because of it’. He also said, ‘If it was a mistake, a mistake is a mistake. But if they were knowingly responsible, yeah, I mean, then sure there should be consequences’. It was the same President Trump who earlier praised China in tweet message on 24th January, ‘China has been working very hard to contain the corona virus. The US greatly appreciates their efforts’. President Trump accused China of ‘lack of transparency’ and the WHO as ‘China centric’. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang, in response said, ‘the virus knows no borders or ethnicity. All people must work together to defeat it’.

The Associated Press (AP) claimed Chinese officials didn't warn the public of a looming outbreak for the six key days in January 2020 when an assessment of the situation of the novel corona virus pneumonia (COVID-19) outbreak was given in a confidential document on 14th January; however, the public was warned only on 20th January. The six days delay could have prevented the infection to a large extent. Zeng Guang, the chief epidemiologist of the China *Centre for Disease Control (CDC)*, said, ‘easy to say but hard to do. It's a process of deepening the understanding on the outbreak, from little to more. From limited human-to-human risks to more outbreaks outside Hubei, it takes time for us to know the facts’.

Ren Zhiqiang, a former head of state-run real estate conglomerate *Huayuan Group* and a party member, criticized a speech delivered on 23rd February by President Xi meant for 170,000 party officials, by saying, ‘not an emperor standing there exhibiting his new clothes but a clown stripped naked who insisted on continuing being emperor’. However, Ren did not mention President Xi’s name anywhere in his critic. He also said it revealed a ‘crisis of governance’ within the party, and that a lack of free press and speech had prevented the outbreak from being tackled sooner, causing the situation to worsen. After this criticism, Ren was being investigated on suspicion of a ‘severe violation of discipline and law’, a joint government-party watchdog said. China has been criticized for the early mishandling of the virus menace and also of suppressions of real data.

Richard Javad Heydarian, an Asia-Pacific political analyst, said Xi's ‘cult of personality’ is at the core of the problem that delayed the transmission of the ‘bad news’ by the fearful local officials

to Beijing. The fact that the Chinese health officials had notified about the ‘unknown’ pneumonia like virus in Wuhan to WHO on 31st December 2019, proves that Beijing was aware of the tense situation. He added that the scientists were ahead of expectations, but in terms of China being open to its own people and putting in necessary measures domestically, we still saw significant delays, if not cover-up. Zhou Xianwang, the Mayor of Wuhan, later told state media that the local government's response was ‘not good enough’, timely action was not taken due to delay at the top bureaucratic level, and offered to resign. Some of the other persons who have been critical of the handling of the Covid 19 by Chinese government were Xu Zhangrun, Ai Fen, Chen Qiushi, who utilized social media to ventilate their standing.

Li Mingjiang, Coordinator of China Programme at *Nanyang Technological University* in Singapore, said local officials ‘made a major miscalculation’ and there was ‘no doubt’ that President Xi would have ordered a quicker response had he been promptly informed of the situation in Wuhan. Since then, Li said that the central government led by President Xi has taken decisive steps to control the outbreak from spreading further, including the building of several large-scale hospitals to accommodate the patients (www.aljazeera.com).

Conclusion

The Wuhan municipal headquarters issued a notification on 17th April 2020 where the infected number was revised up by 325 to 50,333, and the number of fatalities up by 1,290 to 3,869 in Wuhan as of the end of 16th April. The revision in the data was necessitated as many cases were missing on account of not being reported by other family members, institutions. As per Chinese rules and regulations, missing data can be modified later in order to present the accurate data to the public. Earlier the number of infected were 81,953 that now adds up to 82,278 persons, and the deaths from 3,339 to 4,629 persons.

President Xi Jinping in his keynote speech at the *Extraordinary G20 Leaders' Summit*, said, ‘from day one of our fight against the outbreak, we have put people's life and health first’. Decisive, comprehensive and strict measures have been taken by Chinese government to contain the spread of the virus, and people were also united to fight it. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said, ‘our human family is stressed and the social fabric is being torn; people are suffering, sick and scared. The pandemic is a human crisis that calls for solidarity’.

Zhong Ming, Critical Care Expert in *Jinyintan Hospital*, Wuhan, identified three factors for

critical cases, ‘first, doctors should get to know more about the disease, take measures a step ahead of the disease, and not wait until it is too late to take remedial measures. Second, after the medical aid arrived, medical care capacity was improved. Third, categorization and isolation should be clear and patient transfer should be in time’. He further said that the pandemic alerted people that we need a mature system to cope with emergent public health events. The country should be prepared in terms of professional skills, procedures and regulation, making and supply of medical equipment, for critical care management.

China’s Politburo Standing Committee on 3rd February 2020 meeting acknowledged about the ‘shortcomings and difficulties’ in its response to the virus crisis. *Aljazeera* reported that it was a ‘rare admission of fault’. President Xi, who presided over the meeting, called for ‘resolute actions in containing the spread of the epidemic’ and warned against disobeying the committee's command, according to the state-owned *Xinhua* news agency. Members of the committee also determined the outbreak to be ‘a major test of China's system and capacity for governance’ and said ‘we must sum up the experience and draw a lesson from it’, according to *Xinhua*.

Shi Tian in *Global Times* dated 12th April 2020, writes that China's anti-virus fight is indeed a miracle. But for China itself, the outcome appears absolutely normal and deserved in view of the government's strong sense of responsibility for people's lives, the governing system's great ability of mobilization and the Chinese people's firm willingness to support all containment measures. Nowhere could this work as it works in China and so applying any country's models to China makes no sense. China has been working miracles over the past decades thanks to the tremendous efforts of both the government and the people.

On 2nd April 2020, fourteen frontline workers who gave their lives in combating COVID-19 in Hubei, including virus ‘whistleblower’ doctor Li Wenliang were commemorated as ‘martyrs’. This is a fittest honour to all those selfless service providers who laid their life for the service of humankind. China also honored posthumously five female frontline medical workers, Wang Bing, Ruan Huifang, Zhang Kangmei, Liu Fan and Xia Sisi for their relentless service in Wuhan.

President Xi wrote an article in *Qiushi* Journal in mid-April 2020, titled, ‘Solidarity and cooperation are the most powerful weapons for the International Community to defeat Covid 19’. He wrote, ‘international community to strengthen confidence, make a collective response in solidarity, and comprehensively step-up international cooperation to enable humanity to win the

battle against this serious infectious disease'. He further wrote, 'ensuring public health security is a common challenge for mankind, and severe infectious diseases are an enemy of all. In response, countries need to come together and foster greater synergy'.

As per *Xinhua* report on 17th April 2020, the reason for success is China's strong measures that include nationwide mass mobilization, society-wide outbreak control, marshaling national resources to the hard-hit region, and tapping the strength of traditional Chinese medicine. Shear and McNeil Jr. (2020) write, 'Public Health experts have called what China did-stopping a new, highly transmissible disease in its tracks- an unparalleled success'. The CGTN in a tweet on 27th April 2020 said that a Central government team guiding epidemic control work in Hubei Province led by Chinese Vice Premier Sun Chunlan is leaving the Province for Beijing today as the Covid19 situation in Hubei and Wuhan has shifted from emergency mode to regular prevention and control efforts.

China is well prepared to meet any sort of disaster from natural to pandemic, and is also prepared to aid nations in times of crisis. International aid has been given to many states after the Covid19 pandemic, including masks, personal protective equipment (PPE), and also medical and red-cross personnel. Disasters are times of challenges, and these should be converted into opportunities. It gives a scope to show to the world how resilient a nation is, if it overcomes the challenges of a disaster, and returns to normalcy. This has been reflected in the various policies implemented during the times of disasters. Disaster resolution requires stern action and policy-oriented action that can be delivered by a strong state only.

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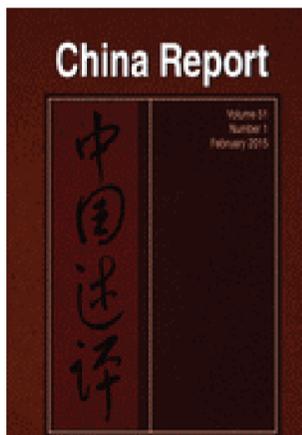


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