

## COMPARING THE PERCEIVED PUBLIC PERFORMANCE OF GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS IN RESPONDING TO FOUR MAJOR SEISMIC ACTIVITIES

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### **Abstract**

This paper, through collecting data from major Turkish and international newspapers and by using content analysis, examines the responses of Turkish government to 4 seismic events took place in 1999, 2002 and 2003. The paper discusses if and how the responses of public officials and organizations improved. The data collected from the news coverage of these events following the 30 days after the earthquake is coded according to the four stages of disaster management.

The news reports of the government's response to the earthquakes is analyzed at two levels. First, they were evaluated for the overall tone of the report. Then they were reviewed at the statement level. These statements then were examined at three levels. First, statements were coded according to their tone. Next, the statements were coded by 1) the type of organization listed in the account, and if the organization was a governmental organization, 2) its level in the intergovernmental system and 3) the performance of each organization during and following the earthquake. The coding for the type of organization emerged from a review of the organizational types and the clustering of the organizations named into one of several categories. The final coding effort examined the news accounts in terms of their focus on one of four stages of disaster management: i) mitigation, ii) preparedness, iii) response and iv) recovery. The data shows that governmental actors has relatively improved their performance but were not able to completelt build public trust.

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## Introduction

Disasters are “calamitous natural or human-caused emergency events that suddenly result in extensive negative economic and social consequences for the populations they effect” (Donahue and Joyce, 2001). They “signal the failure of a society to adapt successfully to certain features of its natural and socially constructed environment in a sustainable fashion” (Oliver and Smith, 1996). Major natural disasters such as earthquakes, while they vary in scale, usually threaten the general welfare of the effected people by generating problems and conditions that are difficult to anticipate and address (Comfort, 1995; 1999 Schneider, 1992; 1995; Donahue and Joyce, 2001). Even though individuals, communities, charity organizations, and private companies try to help, their efforts are often woefully inadequate (Schneider, 1995) to ease the enormous and extraordinary burdens on the people who experience them. As Schneider (1995) states “[w]hen a natural disaster occurs, few people stop to ask if the government *should* intervene. Instead, citizens tend automatically to view the situation as a serious *public* problem requiring immediate *governmental* action”. According to Schneider (1995) four specific characteristics of these cataclysmic events make them critical policy issues that require governmental attention. They are: i) objective dimensions (severity, range, and visibility of disasters); ii) political aspects (riveted public attention and window of opportunities for political action); iii) symbolic aspects (strong metaphors like “disaster”); and finally, iv) absence of market solutions. Therefore, Schneider asserts, governments are expected to intervene because, that is seen as governments’ basic responsibility and failure to do so can cause extraordinarily severe societal problems. Second, disaster situations can become highly politicized issues, and finally, “[g]overnment is the only institution with the resources and the authority to help citizens cope with such cataclysmic events” (1995).

Today, emergency management is defined as a primary responsibility of governments ( GDDA, 2002; FEMA, 2002). The entire structure of disaster management emerged as a result of major crises (Clary, 1985; Comfort, 1988; Schneider, 1995). For instance, in the U.S., the evolutionary pattern from the Congress’s first piece of disaster legislation that provided assistance to fire victims in New Hampshire in 1803, to The Disaster Relief Act of 1950, which set the first comprehensive nationwide system of disaster response and relief (Clary, 1985), and finally to the creation of The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 1979 (May, 1985) have progressively increased the role of public service agencies in disaster management.

Modern disaster response has also evolved overtime (Donahue and Joyce, 2001) into an array of activities what we call today Comprehensive Emergency Management (CEM). This approach was developed in 1979 by the National Governors’ association during its study of emergency preparedness (Clary, 1985; Donahue and Joyce, 2001). The CEM approach specifies four phases of modern disaster management (FEMA, 1997; Donahue and Joyce, 2001):

- 1) *Pre-Disaster mitigation*: Activities undertaken in the long term, before disaster strikes, that are designed to prevent emergencies and reduce the damage that results from those that occur, including modifying the causes of hazards, reducing vulnerability to risk, and diffusing potential losses.
- 2) *Pre-Disaster Preparedness*: Activities undertaken in the shorter term, before disaster strikes, that enhance the readiness of organizations and communities to respond to disasters effectively.
- 3) *Disaster response*: Activities undertaken immediately following a disaster to provide emergency assistance to victims and remove further threats.
- 4) *Post-Disaster Recovery*: Short-and long-term activities undertaken after a disaster that are designed to return the people and property in an affected community to at least their pre-disaster condition of well-being.

## Theory and Method

Public agencies have “the legal responsibility for the protection of life and property during a disaster” (Comfort, 1999: 140). Emergency management is a complex policy subsystem which requires, public agencies’ collaboration with private and non-profit agencies because of multigovernmental, multisectoral, and multiphased efforts to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters (Comfort, 1999, 2001; Donahue and Joyce, 2001). Managing these interorganizational/intersectoral collaborations is a major challenge by itself. These challenges increase considerably under the pressures caused by disasters.

Disasters generate problems that are often difficult to anticipate and handle and they impose extraordinary demands on the decision-making and service-delivery systems because: 1) disasters are large-scale, rapid on-set incidents relative to the size and resources of the effected jurisdiction; 2) disasters are uncertain with respect to both their occurrence and their outcome; 3) and finally, disasters occur relatively infrequently (Schneider, 1992; Donahue and Joyce, 2001). Further, the challenge of governmental response to disasters becomes more problematic due to the gap between the emergent norms that guide social interactions and the bureaucratic norms that dominate governmental activities during the disasters (Schneider, 1992: 1995). As a result, “the effectiveness of governmental efforts in this area has been highly variable” (Schneider, 1992).

When systems have been designed to function and have promised for substantial responsibilities during and after major disasters they are subject to higher expectations for effective performance in developing credible public responses to these crisis situations. Failure to perform effectively during major disasters raises serious questions on the trustworthiness and assurance of continuity of such systems (La Porte and Keller, 1996; La Porte and Metlay, 1996; Pearson and Mitroff, 1993).

Despite the increasing popularity of the concept of trust in a wide range of disciplines from sociology to organization and management theory and from public administration to economics, the development of a common conceptual framework has yet to happen. Sources of, mechanisms for examining public trust have lead to the development of different approaches and definitions of what is meant by it (e.g. for a recent review see Adler, 2000). La Porte and Metlay (1996) assert that a serious *analytical shortfall* exist in our understanding of the bases for institutional trustworthiness. One of this paper’s goals is to contribute to this understanding. Following La Porte and Metley (1996) we offer the following: *Trust* is the belief that those with whom you interact will take your interests into account, even in situations where you are not in a position to recognize, evaluate, and/or thwart a potentially negative course of action by “those trusted”. *Confidence*: exists when the party trusted is able to empathize with (know of) your interests, is competent to act on that knowledge, and will go to considerable lengths to keep its word. *Trustworthiness*: is a combination of trust and confidence.

Shockley-Zalabak et al. (2000) state that high levels of organizational trust is associated with *effective crisis management*. Allen and Caillouet (1994) note that in crisis situations, simultaneous accountability pressures emerge from multiple stakeholders which can challenge the public’s perception of the appropriateness of organizational and public leaders’ responses to the crisis situation. Ruef & Scott (1998) citing Suchman (1995) define legitimacy as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions”. Ruef & Scott (1998) also suggest that the legitimacy of an organization is determined to some degree by the perceptions of key stakeholders who assess its *performance* against some standard or model. Therefore *perceptions of failure to perform effectively* during major disasters bring serious questions on not only the trustworthiness but also the assurance of continuity of public institutions (La Porte and Keller, 1996; La Porte and Metlay, 1996; Pearson and Mitroff, 1993). Using the responses of Turkish public institutions to four

earthquakes one of which was one of the largest earthquakes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we examine how governmental performance impacted perceptions of trustworthiness and ultimately legitimacy.

### Comparing the Perceived Performance of the Governmental Responses to 4 Earthquakes

In 1999 two major earthquakes struck Turkey. The first one, on August 17, hit Turkey's most populous and industrial region at 3:02 am local time with a 7.4 moment magnitude on the Richter scale (KOERI and GDDA, 2000). It caused extensive damage in the eight provinces of northwestern Turkey. In the provinces of Kocaeli, Istanbul, Yalova, Sakarya, Bolu, Eskisehir, Bursa, and Zonguldak 17, 480 people were killed, 43,953 were injured, and about 600,000 were left homeless (GDDA, 2000) because of the 45-second tremor. The second, magnitude 7.2 on the Richter scale (KOERI, 2000) earthquake, struck mainly northwestern province of Bolu on November 12, 1999, only 89 days after the first disaster and killed 736 people and injured 4,948 and left thousands homeless (GDDA, 2000)<sup>2</sup>. Both earthquakes took place on the North Anatolian Fault line (NAF), one of the most active fault lines of the world. A third one, with a magnitude 6.4 on the Richter scale struck Cay town in the Afyon Province on February 03, 2002, 3 years later the first two, killing 44 people. The fourth one struck the eastern province of Bingol on May 01, 2003, with a magnitude 6.4 on the Richter scale and killed 176 people.

Government's perceived performance plays an important role in the level of trust that people have for public institutions and media plays an important role in shaping perceptions of that performance (Schneider, 1992). LaPorte and Keller (1996) note that after a seismic event, public institutions are challenged to meet the public's expectations of them. They suggest that when public institutions cope with seismic events effectively, public trust is sustained and perhaps increased. On the other hand, failing to respond in an effective manner can have a negative effect on this trust. From an organizational trust standpoint, therefore, disasters are both threats of losses and opportunities for gains.

Hearit (1995) suggests that in order to maintain and achieve legitimacy, an organization must demonstrate *competence*. One element of competence is the provision of a product or service which meets standards of quality and desirability. Individual incompetence is one of the major reasons that organizations can lose trust (Thomas, 1998). Oliver-Smith (1996) states that when disasters happen they tend to affect most aspects of community life. Thus, when they occur, the responses need to be based on local understanding of the social and physical environments, which corresponds to Hearit's (1995) standards of quality and desirability. Disasters provide an opportunity to examine how perceived governmental performance shape and/or changes public trust.

Crises often produce massive audiences for the mass media (Graber, 1989 cited in Loges, 1994). Media Systems Dependency (MSD) theory argues that under certain circumstances, such as when people perceive that they are threatened by their natural and/or social environment information from the mass media becomes more central to the goals of people, groups, or other social systems (Ball-Rokeach, 1985; Ball-Rokeach et al., 1984 cited in Loges, 1994; Hirschburg et al., 1986; Loges, 1994; 2000). Loges (1994) have demonstrated that dependency relations with mass media are more intense the more one perceives one's social and natural environment to be threatening.

Newspapers often shape the perceived trustworthiness of public institutions. "The media lie at the key intersection between public agencies and their publics" (Loges, 2000). For example, when

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<sup>2</sup> The data for the first two earthquakes were collected, analyzed and presented by Oztas, N. 2002. "Bitter Lessons from Quakes: Fault Lines of Trust and Legitimacy Aftershocks Response and Recovery by Learning?" at the ASPA's 63<sup>rd</sup> National Conference on Featured Panel: Public Trust and Public Service: Influence of Governmental Officials' Responses to National Disasters. Phoenix, Arizona. March 23-26, 2002.

Washington State’s Mount St. Helens volcano exploded in May 1980, the average citizen and official agencies lacked a frame of reference from which to interpret the explosion. As a result, public officials were unable to provide information about what to do and what to expect due to the ambiguities of the disaster Hirschburg et al. (1986)., found that during and following this disaster the media served as the primary information source for people. Similarly, Turner and Paz (1986) showed that the media system as a whole is structurally located to serve as our primary disaster and emergency alert system. They also found that printed words more easily convey new and elaborated information than television and radio. Thus, to analyze the effects of Turkish government’s perceived performance and competence in responding to the 1999 disasters data from 4 major newspapers were used.

**Data**

To analyze and to compare the perceived performance of the governmental responses to the four earthquakes that struck Turkey, news accounts from 3 major international newspapers *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *The Guardian* (London) and a national paper *Radikal* was collected to provide a broad perspective. “Turkey” and “Earthquake” were used as key words in our search of the Lexis-Nexus database to locate the news pieces published in the three international newspapers in the 30 days following immediately after the 4 earthquakes. After the first analysis the news pieces that are not about the four earthquakes that struck Turkey are excluded and the final sample from the international papers consisted of 178 articles. In addition to these three international papers, *Radikal*, one of the biggest national papers of Turkey was used to provide more detailed information on the earthquakes and perceptions of government performance. Because *Radikal* was not available on Lexis-Nexus a day-by-day search on the “Turkiye”(Turkey) section of its online version was conducted. This search uncovered 883 earthquake related news articles published by *Radikal* in the 30 days following the four earthquakes. The combined final sample for the four earthquakes consisted of 1061 news articles of which 883 (83.2%) were from local and 178 (26.8%) were from international sources (Table 1). Quantitative content analysis was employed to analyze the media messages.

**Table 1** News coverage and tone distribution

Tone Distribution	İzmit 1999*						Düzce 1999**						Afyon 2002***						Bingöl 2003****									
	Positive	%	Neutral	%	Negative	%	Total	Positive	%	Neutral	%	Negative	%	Total	Positive	%	Neutral	%	Negative	%	Total	Positive	%	Neutral	%	Negative	%	Total
Radikal	19	3	416	70	153	26	588	22	10	158	75	30	15	210	12	43	6	21	10	36	28	20	35	25	44	12	21	57
The New York Times	0	0	40	61	26	39	66	2	29	4	57	1	14	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	67	2	33	6
The Washington Post	0	0	17	47	19	53	36	3	33	6	67	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	25	2	50	1	25	4
The Guardian	0	0	19	50	19	50	38	1	25	3	75	0	0	4	1	33	2	67	0	0	3	2	50	0	0	2	50	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>71</b>

\* İzmit 08/18/1999-09/16/1999 \*\* Düzce 11/13/1999-12/12/1999 \*\*\* Afyon 02/03/2002-03/03/2002 \*\*\*\* Bingöl 05/01/2003-06/01/2003

The news reports of the government’s response to the four earthquakes was analyzed at two levels. First, they were evaluated for the overall tone of the report. Then they were reviewed at the statement level. Trust, legitimacy, and disaster management literatures were consulted to develop a coding scheme. In the assessment of tone, an article was coded **positive** in tone if it was 60% or more favorable to the government’s efforts. A **negative** tone was assigned to reports that were 60% or more unfavorable to the government’s efforts. A **neutral** assignment was made when the article contained no or very little “judgment” of the government’s efforts – mainly a factual presentation of what had

happened. The articles that were not directly related to four Turkish earthquakes and responses to it were coded as not-relevant and were not included in the analysis.

The second level of analysis examined the statements for every report. A statement was defined as a “sentence or the set of sentences that expresses evaluation of the behavior of public institutions and their leaders” (Allen and Caillouet, 1994). These statements were examined at three levels. *First*, statements were coded according to their tone. *Next*, the statements were coded by 1) the type of organization listed in the account 2) its level in the intergovernmental system and 3) the performance of each organization during and following the earthquake. The coding for the type of organization emerged from a review of the organizational types and the clustering of the organizations named into one of several categories. The *final* coding effort examined the news accounts in terms of their focus on one of four stages of disaster management: i) mitigation, ii) preparedness, iii) response and iv) recovery. Final sample included 3921 statements from 1061 news reports (Table 2).

To test the reliability of the coding assignments, four colleagues, one of whom spoke Turkish, each coded 10 randomly selected statements from the list of coded statements. Each statement was coded by tone and then for the four stages of disaster management. The inter-coder reliability was found to be 86.6% for positive/negative coding and 90% for phases of disaster management coding.

## Results

*Article Level Findings:* The magnitude of the first disaster and the failure of public agencies, particularly the central government has brought harsh criticisms. Of the 728 content analyzed news pieces covering the first earthquake that struck İzmit only 19 (2%) of them had a positive tone and all were published by the local paper *Radikal*. More than approximately 40% of all the coverage in the international papers had a negative tone, demonstrating that public agencies did not have a satisfying performance in responding to the 7.2 scale disaster. When the Düzce earthquake struck only 89 days after the first earthquake the percentage of the positive tone coverage has raised to 12% despite the fact that local paper had a much less positive tone (10%) coverage compared to the international papers (25% and above). After the third earthquake the percentage of the positive tone coverage has dropped down to 13% and negative tone coverage raised to 35%. After the fourth earthquake the coverage was better again.

*Statement Level Findings:* Table 2 highlights the distribution of the positive and negative statements by the phases of disaster management and also of the organizations mentioned during these phases. Overall public institutions (central government, local governments, military, and civil defense army combined) were severely criticized at all stages of the İzmit earthquake. Of the 1,253 negative statements 80.6% (1010) were about the unsatisfactory performance of the public institutions' responses to the disaster. Of these 57.3% (718) were about central government's perceived weak performance .

After the first earthquake, compared to other organizations' performance the central government received the highest number of critical comments at each stage of the disaster except for the mitigation phase. While the responsibility for not adequately preparing for the disaster was shared with the local governments (25.2%) and the Turkish people (7.6%), the central government received the highest number of negative statements (46.6%). At the response (73.5%) and recovery stages (84.6%) the central government also received the majority of the criticism. In the mitigation phase, the percentage of negative statements that criticized the central government (19.3%) was lower than the criticisms directed to local governments (27.4%) and contractors (32.5%). Contractors received the highest number of critical comments; mainly for not following the construction codes and the local governments for not enforcing those codes while the codes themselves received 6 positive but no

negative comments. Following the Izmit earthquake, hundreds of lawsuits were filed against the construction companies and many contractors were prosecuted.

In the mitigation and preparedness phases of the Izmit disaster the central government and the local governments together received the largest number of critical comments. The number of the combined positive statements for these two phases was 8 compared to 451 total negative statements. The overall statement level account of the management of the Izmit earthquake shows that the Turkish society as a whole and particularly the public institutions failed to mitigate and prepare for a major but not unexpected disaster. The finding was not different for the response stage. The central government's performance received 551 negative comments, which corresponds to the 44% of all (1,253) the negative statements. Of the total 119 positive statements at the response stage, 63.9% (76) were about the efforts of foreign rescue teams (24.3%), Turkish people (23.6%), and Turkish voluntary organizations (16%). In many instances the efficiency of both foreign rescue teams and Turkish non-governmental rescue teams served as a point of reference for the public to compare public institutions' performance. At the response phase the only public institution with a relatively higher positive evaluation was the Turkish Military (17%).

The press reports indicate that the central government and other public institutions did not meet public expectations in two areas. The first was not responding in a timely fashion to the earthquake. Many complained about not seeing any governmental rescue teams and/or representatives during the most critical first two days of the disaster. Second, while there was no shortage of food, supplies and foreign aid immediately following the Izmit earthquake, there was a problem in their distribution to places most in need. With aid and volunteers pouring in from all over Turkey and from over 50 countries around the world the coordination of these efforts was also lacking. As a result, the people held their government responsible while government leaders defended themselves by "being overwhelmed". The Prime Minister said no government in the world has enough rescue teams to respond to such a major disaster.

It seems clear that the press felt that governmental efforts in responding to the earthquake were not timely and coordination had failed. A majority of the 551 negative sentences about the central government noted these failures. A lack of organized governmental activities, particularly during the first two days of the disaster was revealed in reports describing decomposing food in the streets and unburied bodies under the wreckage was all reported by Turkish and international news sources (cf. *Radikal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*). At the same time, one of the biggest earthquakes of the century that affected more than 15 million people in a big metropolitan area simply overwhelmed the capacity of government to respond. Thirty-two statements from governmental leaders and scientists and international rescue team leaders noted that the government was simply "overwhelmed" during the response stage. The following two excerpts from *The New York Times* (Aug 23, 1999) summarize the unfolding events and their consequences in terms of public trust:

STATEMENTS	Mitigation				Preparedness				Response				Recovery				TOTAL
	izm it 1999	Dü zce 1999	Afyo n 2002	Bing ö l 2003	izm it 1999	Dü zce 1999	Afyo n 2002	Bing ö l 2003	izm it 1999	Dü zce 1999	Afyo n 2002	Bing ö l 2003	izm it 1999	Dü zce 1999	Afyo n 2002	Bing ö l 2003	
Positive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Negative	104	32,5	6	37,5	17	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Central Government	5	33,3	2	50	0	4	67	2	100	9	64	0	3	50	13	10,9	
Positive	6,2	19,3	1	33,3	5	31,3	17	39	61	46,6	3	75	2	50	3	50	
Negative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	14	0	0	17	21	17,6	
Military	5	1,6	0	0	0	0	0	4	3,1	0	0	0	0	0	0	61	
Positive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Negative	45	14	1	33,3	2	12,5	2	4,5	10	7,6	0	0	0	0	0	23,6	
Turkish People	1	16,7	1	25	0	0	0	0	0	1	8	0	0	0	0	2	
Positive	87	27,4	0	0	3	13,8	6	13	33	23,2	1	25	2	34	50	6,7	
Negative	0	0	1	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	
Local Government	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	
Voluntary Org.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	
Positive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,4	
Negative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12,5	
Foreign recruitment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Positive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
Negative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24,3	
Private Business	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	
Positive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Negative	6	1,8	0	0	0	2	4,5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Red Crescent and Civil Defense Army	0	0	0	0	0	2	33	0	0	2	14	1	50	2	33	1	
Positive	1	0,3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,8	
Negative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	
Positive	10	3,1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Negative	6	4	0	0	6	2	14	2	6	132	63	5	12	93	27	3	
TOTAL	320	4	16	44	131	4	4	4	4	750	23	10	5	52	66	10	
Positive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Negative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	



“Turkish citizens take lead in recovery efforts in earthquake crisis, highlighting government's inability to respond effectively to disasters. As the scale of this week's disaster sinks in, many people interviewed in downtown Istanbul expressed shame and disgust at their Government's handling of the crisis. They echoed the widespread criticism in the Turkish press about the lack of equipment and of trained personnel in a country that has suffered repeated earthquakes over the last hundred years.”

“... in the wake of the overwhelming earthquake disaster on Tuesday, many residents of this giant city [Istanbul] with an estimated population of 12 million are more doubtful than ever that their Government is capable of planning ahead for such a catastrophe. “I don't trust the Government to plan for this,” said Ms. Sesahan, a sculptor. “Take what is happening today as a model. The people are being very helpful and supportive of one another, but the Government can't get real help to the people.”

An interesting finding was that the number of positive statements was higher than the negative statements in only one phase of the Izmit disaster—that of recovery. There, the Central government's performance received 56 positive statements compared to 44 negative statements. Similarly the military received 8 positive evaluations and no negative evaluations at the recovery stage. It appears that the government put extra effort and resources to regain the trust of people that was lost during the first three phases of the disaster. They provided 113,924 tents in 121 “tent cities” with health clinics, schools, shopping centers, childcare centers...etc (GDDA, 2000). The government also provided low interest housing credits, rent aid, and many other services to the victims including food, clothing, and health services as part of the recovery efforts. What was not revealed during the 30 days covered by this analysis was the government's promise to build more than 30,000 pre-fabricated temporary houses for the coming winter. With minor exceptions, the majority of these were completed by November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2000. As a result, the perceived performance of the government increased at the recovery stage compared to the earlier three stages.

The perceived improvement of public institutions' efforts in the final stage, recovery, has certainly had a positive effect on government's seriously questioned legitimacy especially during the early days of the disaster. However, the perceived failure of government was so intense during the first three stages that many governmental officials were protested during their visits to the region and even many months after the disaster. Since the North Anatolian Fault Line (NAF) is of the most seismically active faults in the world, aftershocks despite government's trust rebuilding efforts, reminded people of their insecurity as well their government's unreliability during a disaster. The trauma of the Izmit earthquake was so immense that, during the aftershocks many people did not hesitate to jump from the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> floors of the apartment buildings rather than staying inside. Given the “disaster psychology” of the victims and the public's intense feeling of “distrust” of the only sector “with the resources to deal with a major disaster” (Schneider, 1992), expecting that the government would be able to rebuild the “lost trust” with successes at one stage of the disaster would be very naïve.

When the second earthquake struck Turkey Only 89 days after the first earthquake, government was much better organized, responded faster and tried to earn public trust by performing better. The content analysis of the news reports show that at all stages of the disaster central government has received much more positive evaluations compared to the first earthquake. Especially at the preparedness and response stages the number of positive statements were higher than the total number of the negative evaluations. At the recovery stage, however, there were more negative statements due to the fact that the area effected from the earthquake had harsh winter conditions and the recovery efforts in the first earthquake area were still continuing. There were even a shortage of winter tent supplies in the markets.

In 2002 and 2003 two other earthquakes struck Turkey. These were, compared to first two, in less populated and smaller areas and thus they received less media attention. The content analysis of the

news reports have showed that at the mitigation phase for both the third, Bingöl and fourth, Afyon, earthquakes the central Government, Local Governments, Contractors and Turkish public all have received negative evaluations. The majority of the criticisms were directed to the central government (31.3% and 39% respectively) who funded some of the collapsing public buildings and the contractors (37.5% and 39% respectively) who built them and the local governments (%18.8 and %13 respectively) who did not enforced the building codes properly. Particularly a collapsed boarding public school has received lots of media attention after the Bingöl earthquake. In responding to these two earthquakes central government, military and civil defence army has performed relatively better. The recovery efforts of the governmental organizations has received much better evaluations after the third earthquake but not after the fourth.

Overall despite the fact that central government has tried to improve its performance, the total number statements evaluating its performance were more negative (1350) than positive (725). The ratio of negative statements to positive statements is much worse for local governments (409:53). Red Crescent and Civil Defense Army, despite their low performance in the first earthquake have overall improved their performance and had done a better job (162:244). The Military has also a good record in terms of the overall ratio of negative statements to positive statements (104:140). Foreign rescue teams as well as the local voluntary organizations have done a job that earned the hearts of the public since the first earthquake and were shown as examples of efficiency and effectiveness.

## Discussion

These findings indicate that during the Izmit earthquake the people's perception was that public institutions in general and the central government particularly, failed to live up to their expectations in mitigating, preparing for, and responding to the disaster. However, the central government did a much better job in their recovery efforts. Despite the improved performance at the last phase of the disaster, the failures attributed to the public institutions during the first three phases resulted in a "distrust" of government. Forty-six statements the people or journalists stated that people do not "trust" government anymore or have "lost confidence" in it. To rebuild trust, in the last 8 years starting after the İzmit earthquake, government has devoted more resources, time and energy in preparing for the future disasters. As a result, despite the fluctuations central government's performance in the analyzed last 3 earthquakes, has relatively improved. Empirical research is needed to asses if this has resulted in increased levels of public trust.

In a democratic society, legitimacy is the major foundation of any government. When a large number of people in a society perceive that their government is incompetent and cannot meet its expected role obligations the legitimacy of that government is de facto endangered (Blau and Scott, 1962). One important component of legitimacy is public's trust. High levels of organizational trust is associated with effective crisis management (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2000). Failure to perform effectively during major disasters brings serious questions on the trustworthiness and assurance of continuity of such institutions (La Porte and Keller, 1996; La Porte and Metlay, 1996; Pearson and Mitroff, 1993).

These data suggest that the Turkish government failed to mitigate, prepare for, and respond to the Izmit disaster and that this failure to perform brought forth serious questions about the trustworthiness and legitimacy of the government. The findings about the recovery efforts of the Izmit earthquake and in the following three earthquakes revealed overall a relative improvement in the performance of governmental organizations which appeared to reduce the perceptions of incompetence. Given that high levels of organizational trust is associated with effective crisis management (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2000), it would be reasonable to conclude that government has restored some of the public trust it has lost with its improved performance.

One important observation is that according to the media coverage the public did not compare the performance of the Turkish government to its past performances. Rather, the performance of the international and Turkish non-governmental organizations, especially their efficiency in the search and rescue efforts, served as a reference point for the public to assess their government's performance. This suggests that in a more globalizing world, public expectations are more likely to be set by external and non-governmental referents rather than relative improvements in government's records.

The high percentage of both the negative and positive statements about the public institutions at every stage of the disaster supports Schneider's thesis that "[w]hen a natural disaster occurs, few people stop to ask if the government *should* intervene. Instead, citizens tend automatically to view the situation as a serious *public* problem requiring immediate *governmental* action" (1995). As much as a government is expected to actually get involved at every stage of the disaster, one of the most important roles expected from government is to play a leadership role. Massive disasters such as earthquakes demand involvement by a number of national and international entities. In the Turkish experiences there were no shortage of involvement from the different members of the society. Aid and volunteers poured in from all over Turkey. These findings showed that the non-governmental actors, for instance business organizations, with relatively minor effort, were able to easily receive positive coverage and appreciation in the media and furthered their organizational legitimacy. The expectations from the government, on the other hand, were higher and failure to satisfy them has brought rapid and serious criticisms.

These findings also showed that as much as failure to provide timely help, the failure in the coordination of non-governmental help has received the same attention and negative coverage for the government. The failures of government to collaborate with people not only harmed confidence in it but also discouraged people to collaborate with the public sector and for instance more than 30 NGOs came together to form an alliance and coordinated their own activities after the İzmit earthquake. Similarly, due to observed inefficiencies in governmental coordination and leadership people chose to volunteer for non-governmental rescue teams like AKUT, during the İzmit disaster. The lesson is that, for the government as much as actually doing the job in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from the earthquakes, leading and coordinating the activities of the other members of the society is also particularly important.

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