

Policy Studies Organization

From the Selected Works of Daniel P Aldrich

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Review of Managing Disasters and Disasters and the American State

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/daniel_aldrich/32/

3601 They wonder if Strauss’s dismissal of the Platonic theory of
 3602 ideas as central to Platonic thought can be sustained. They
 3603 wonder if Aristotle’s science of politics can be understood
 3604 apart from his teleological understanding of nature, as
 3605 Strauss seemed to suggest it could. They wonder if
 3606 Strauss’s understanding of the conflict between philosophy
 3607 and law characteristic of medieval Islamic philosophy
 3608 adversely affected his reading of the ancient Greek and
 3609 Roman philosophers who had no contact with Jewish law.
 3610 And they wonder if Strauss’s claim that Machiavelli was
 3611 a “philosopher” in the Socratic-Platonic tradition can be
 3612 accurate.
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3614 To this list of claims by Strauss that need reexamina-
 3615 tion another should be added, perhaps the most funda-
 3616 mental of them all from Strauss’s point of view: the
 3617 assertion of an ineluctable tension between philosophy
 3618 and the city, and of the related tension between Athens
 3619 and Jerusalem. In fact, much of Strauss’s understanding of
 3620 the history of political philosophy emerges out of these
 3621 fundamental claims.
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3623 No one, of course, doubts that such tensions exist, but
 3624 the question is whether Strauss has characterized them
 3625 accurately. Is the city in fact well served by unquestioning
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3627 **AMERICAN POLITICS**

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 3630 **Managing Disasters through Public–Private Partner-**
 3631 **ships.** By Ami J. Abou-Bakr. Washington, DC: Georgetown University
 3632 Press, 2013. 248p. \$29.95.
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3634 **Disasters and the American State: How Politicians,**
 3635 **Bureaucrats, and the Public Prepare for the**
 3636 **Unexpected.** By Patrick S. Roberts. New York: Cambridge University
 3637 Press, 2013. 232p. \$90.00.
 3638 doi:10.1017/S1537592715002649
 3639

3640 — Daniel P. Aldrich, *Northeastern University*

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 3642 The compounded disaster in Tohoku, Japan, on March
 3643 11, 2011, showed the world how even the most
 3644 advanced, industrialized countries remain vulnerable to
 3645 hazards. Beyond the 18,000 lives taken by the 60+ foot
 3646 tsunami that struck Japan’s northeast coast, some 40,000
 3647 residents from towns around the Fukushima Dai-ichi
 3648 nuclear prefecture remain evacuees four years later due
 3649 to radioactive contamination. An additional 80,000 peo-
 3650 ple across the region are still in temporary housing units
 3651 due to a lack of permanent homes. Scholars have under-
 3652 scored how the economic and human costs from disasters
 3653 will only continue to rise with the anthropogenic climate
 3654 change and increasing urbanization in population-dense,
 3655 low-lying coastal areas such as Bangladesh, Boston,
 3656 Mumbai, New York, Shenzhen, and Tokyo. These two
 3657 new books tackle the topic of disaster management and
 3658 response from very different angles but share a focus on the
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3661 faith? Plato’s ideal city teaches noble lies to its young, but
 3662 its rulers are wise by hypothesis. The rulers of actual cities
 3663 almost never are. To what degree were the city fathers of
 3664 Athens, for example, acting wisely when they punished
 3665 Socrates? How much, on the other hand, were they acting
 3666 out of baser motives, ignorance, or mere superstition?
 3667 How one answers such questions will determine the extent
 3668 to which one considers esotericism essential to the
 3669 philosophical life and to the art of philosophical writing.
 3670 Finally, is the related tension Strauss seeks to restore
 3671 between Athens and Jerusalem really the secret of Western
 3672 civilization? Is the God of revelation as voluntaristic as
 3673 Strauss claims, without any features of the transcendent
 3674 idea of the Good that we find in Plato’s *Republic* or of
 3675 Aristotle’s mind that thinks itself? And does the God of the
 3676 Bible in fact demand *unquestioning* faith (see, e.g., Gen.
 3677 18:16–33, Job 21, 42:7, Matt. 7:7–8)?
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3679 The Zuckerts are inviting readers to learn about,
 3680 consider, and even challenge Strauss’s ideas and his
 3681 interpretations of ancient texts. This formidable task
 3682 requires an adequate understanding of his work; *Leo*
 3683 *Strauss and the Problem of Political Philosophy* is an invalu-
 3684 able aid in getting us there.
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 3688 role of public- and private-sector institutions in managing
 3689 crises. Both works suggest that the United States should
 3690 attempt a more optimal balance among private, public,
 3691 and local actors than can be found in current disaster
 3692 management systems.
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3694 When large-scale disasters such as Hurricane Katrina
 3695 strike, most U.S. residents believe that the federal
 3696 government will provide medical assistance along with
 3697 food, water, and recovery aid. When relevant agencies
 3698 are slow to respond, standing presidents may face
 3699 electoral consequences. But this was not always the
 3700 case. Patrick Roberts’s *Disasters and the American State*
 3701 shows how our expectations for the federal government’s
 3702 role in disaster response and management have shifted
 3703 tremendously over time. Initially, the public expected
 3704 very little from the federal government in terms of its role
 3705 in disaster policy. Presidents and federal agencies, for
 3706 example, were not involved in responding to the 1881
 3707 Great Fire in Michigan that left 5,000 homeless or the
 3708 1889 Johnstown flood that killed more than 2,200 (more
 3709 than Hurricane Katrina). In both cases, the Red Cross
 3710 organized relief efforts. However, over time, the “in-
 3711 cremental development of statutes, administrative action,
 3712 and political interpretation” (p. 8) created new norms
 3713 concerning disaster management. Politics and global
 3714 events—especially the advent of World Wars I and II—
 3715 built new “civil defense” agencies, which, while well
 3716 funded, struggled to define precise goals (p. 61). Civil
 3717 defense structures—many of which were built with the
 3718 fallout from nuclear weapons in mind—later came to
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serve “double duty” against tornadoes and other natural hazards as agency mandates expanded. Even though the actual effectiveness of many civil defense programs was low, once they were in place, path dependence, the stickiness of U.S. political institutions, and increasing federal claims about the country’s capacity to protect citizens meant that dismantling the programs was impossible. Potential victims came to see the federal government, and not themselves, private firms, or local governments, as the responsible party for responding to crises.

Beginning with the creation in 1979 of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which combined hundreds of disaster response programs from multiple agencies into a single body, and with the passing of the Stafford Act in 1988, the government has sought to define its role in disaster response and recovery. The logic of centralization, bureaucratic autonomy, and increasing expectations institutionalized the federal government’s role in disaster in the Stafford Act: It would take on 75% of the cost of disaster response costs, with the local governments assuming the rest of the burden. Critics pointed out that, counterintuitively, the Stafford Act meant that mitigation dollars could only be spent *after* disaster and that FEMA itself could not deliver relief until the president made a disaster or emergency declaration. Furthermore, the actual authority for programs and decisions that decisively shape hazard exposure and risk—such as land use and zoning—sits in the hands of local and state agencies (p. 177). With the arrival of the twenty-first century, the U.S. public firmly believes that the nation-state will save us during catastrophe.

Where Roberts’s book demonstrates the source of our over-reliance on federal agencies like FEMA, *Managing Disasters through Public—Private Partnerships* uses historical case studies to suggest a new, more inclusive framework for approaching disaster mitigation and response. Ami Abou-Bakr’s research rests on the reality that private-sector, not public-sector, organizations control some 85% of critical infrastructure, including power plants, rail systems, hospitals, food production, financial services, telecommunications, and chemical industry facilities. Damage to any of these sectors by terrorism or natural disasters could result in widespread ripple effects across our society. Recently, the FBI has been investigating, for the eleventh time, the vandalism of fiber-optic cables that channel much of the Internet traffic into San Francisco’s Bay Area; in 2013, gunmen caused more than \$15 million in damage by firing automatic weapons at an electrical substation outside San Jose, California. In both cases, private firms controlled the infrastructure under attack. Further, private-sector firms and big-box retailers are often better positioned to respond to crises. During the aftermath of

Hurricane Katrina, for example, Wal-Mart’s highly efficient logistical infrastructure was able to deliver food, water, electrical generators, and other desperately needed supplies to its stores in and near flooded areas well before the federal government did. Wal-Mart sent some 2,500 containers of supplies along with free prescription drugs to the Gulf Coast; one Louisiana parish president publicly stated that “if [the] American government would have responded like Wal-Mart has responded, we wouldn’t be in this crisis” (Steven Horwitz, “Wal-Mart to the Rescue,” *The Independent Review*, 2009). Many private actors have integrated chains of command in combination with flexibility of response, allowing them to be more agile than national or state authorities in managing a crisis.

Integrating private-sector organizations like Wal-Mart into national disaster relief plans and actual responses has proven challenging, however; the current state of public—private partnerships (PPPs) in the field of disaster management is poor. To provide insights and a theoretical approach for building potentially more successful PPPs, Abou-Bakr uses case studies of two PPPs, one “responsive alliance” and one “strategic partnership”—the War Industries Board (WIB) and the Federal Reserve System (known colloquially as the Fed), respectively. She also carried out interviews with a number of relevant actors across the public and private sectors. With rich historical data on the workings of the WIB and the Fed, Abou-Bakr uses a framework of seven factors, including crisis, leadership, structure, information, benefits, and trust, to explain how these government–private sector collaborations responded to strains and shocks.

President Woodrow Wilson’s passing of the 1913 Federal Reserve Act set up the Fed as the “independent but within the government” (p. 103) central bank for North America. Built to provide financial system stability and contain financial market risk, the Fed is an organization composed of 12 regional banks that can pool resources during crises. It is interesting to note that the Fed adapted and has continued for more than a century despite some major failures, such as those on display during its response to the 1929 stock market crash when nearly 5,000 banks failed (p. 113). The WIB, in contrast, worked quite well but lasted only a short period of time—less than a full year. As the United States struggled to mobilize its manufacturing capacity during World War I, President Wilson set up the War Industries Board as an organizational framework for coordinating the wartime needs of the government for ammunition, weapons, and supplies with the private-sector manufacturing firms that focused all efforts on producing them. Wilson passed no legislation to set up the WIB, instead relying on the self-interest of the cooperating firms and the sense of urgency facing a nation at war. These two case studies demonstrate the importance of the nature of the crisis, the structure of

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3841 the organization, and the shared benefits possible from the
 3842 relationship, with organizational structure as the most
 3843 important element (p. 189). Abou-Bakr argues that a
 3844 successful public—private partnership in disaster response
 3845 must have both goals, along with tools that can continue to
 3846 manage the partnership as it evolves (p. 197). She suggests
 3847 that the Fed itself may serve as a relevant and resilient
 3848 model for decision makers looking to take disaster re-
 3849 sponse and infrastructure protection seriously (p. 199).
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 3851 Taken together, these books illuminate the shortcom-
 3852 ings in our current system of disaster management. One
 3853 way forward would draw on these insights to carry out
 3854 two major shifts: First, decentralize both roles of and
 3855 expectations about the federal government. Next, better
 3856 incentivize and include not only the private sector but
 3857 civil society as well. Local firms and entrepreneurs, along
 3858 with geographically bounded social networks, play a crit-
 3859 ical role in the recovery process (see Virgil Henry Storr,
 3860 Stefanie Haeffele-Balch, and Laura E. Grube, *Community*
 3861 *Revival in the Wake of Disaster*, 2015, and Daniel P.
 3862 Aldrich, *Building Resilience*, 2012). Strong, local social
 3863 networks provide resilience to major shocks, helping
 3864 residents and business owners share information, mobilize
 3865 collectively, and engage decision makers in decision
 3866 making. Organizations like New Zealand’s Wellington
 3867 Regional Emergency Management Office have sought to
 3868 actively change people’s expectations about disaster re-
 3869 sponse. WREMO personnel tell audiences that it is very
 3870 unlikely that civil defense personnel will be able to reach
 3871 victims of an earthquake or tsunami in Wellington
 3872 quickly; instead, the community needs to take charge
 3873 and embrace its likely role as the first responder. Devolving
 3874 more flexibility and autonomy along with fiscal power to
 3875 local decision makers could further empower these groups
 3876 and remove false conceptions about the government’s role.
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 3878 Moving to the national level, large private-sector firms
 3879 that feel a sense of shared urgency, have autonomy from
 3880 short—term, politically driven decisions, and are guaranteed
 3881 transparency in interactions that would more likely assist the
 3882 government in disaster planning on a volunteer basis. The
 3883 biggest challenge here is manufacturing and sustaining a real
 3884 sense of shared crisis: Politicians and decision makers typically
 3885 respond only after a major shock, and even then in partisan
 3886 ways. (See Andrew Healy and Neal Malhotra, “Myopic
 3887 Voters and Natural Disaster Policy,” *American Political*
 3888 *Science Review*, 2009, and Michael M. Bechtel and Jens
 3889 Hainmueller, “How Lasting Is Voter Gratitude? An Analysis
 3890 of the Short- and Long-Term Electoral Returns to Beneficial
 3891 Policy,” *American Journal of Political Science*, 2011). A new
 3892 organizational parallel to the Fed might be a way to keep the
 3893 private sector actively engaged in the disaster management
 3894 field over the long term. Given the likelihood of future
 3895 disasters both “natural” and man-made, it is critical that we
 3896 look for more holistic approaches to disaster risk reduction
 3897 and climate change adaptation.
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Latino Politics en Ciencia Política: The Search for Latino Identity and Racial Consciousness. 3901
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By Tony Affigne, Evelyn Hu-DeHart, and Marion Orr, eds. New York: 3903
 New York University Press, 2014. 320p. \$89.00 cloth, \$30.00 paper. 3904
 doi:10.1017/S1537592715002650 3905

— Benjamin Marquez, *University of Wisconsin, Madison* 3906

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 3909 Tony Affigne introduces this collection of essays with
 3910 a remarkable finding: “before 1970, there was no interest
 3911 at all, and *not a single book* was published anywhere in the
 3912 United States in which the political behavior, policy, or
 3913 political leadership of the nation’s Latino population were
 3914 the subject.” (p. 11). Moreover, it was not until 1980 that
 3915 any leading (Anglo) scholars of political behavior pub-
 3916 lished an analysis which included Latinos (p. 15). The
 3917 essays in this volume show how far survey research on
 3918 Latinos has advanced since that time. Seventeen scholars
 3919 contributed papers based on data from the Latino National
 3920 Survey of 2006–2008. The authors address some basic and
 3921 contested questions. Do Latinos constitute a distinct racial
 3922 and ethnic group, and do they possess a sense of shared fate
 3923 with other Latinos? Are they assimilating into American
 3924 society or are they, as some have charged, a large,
 3925 unincorporated group actively resisting integration?
 3926 Depending on their findings, what are the political
 3927 consequences? The book is divided into three sections:
 3928 Latino Identity, Acculturation and Community, and
 3929 Inter-Minority Relations. Each of these essays offer new
 3930 and significant contributions while grappling with some of
 3931 the more vexing theoretical and empirical problems that
 3932 social scientists face when studying this complex racial and
 3933 ethnic group. 3934
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3936 How do Latinos identify in the United States? One set
 3937 of articles reveals new directions in ethnic identity and
 3938 attachments. For example, Jessica Lavariega Monforti’s
 3939 examination of the self-identity of immigrants finds
 3940 a growing tendency to utilize pan-ethnic identities like
 3941 Hispanic and Latino. Individuals vary in their tendency to
 3942 utilize nation-specific identities like Dominican, Mexican
 3943 American or Puerto Rican. At the same time, they do not
 3944 see themselves as unconnected to other Latino subgroups.
 3945 Lavariega Monforti interprets this growing tendency as
 3946 a response to societal hostility, political activism, and
 3947 statutory recognition. Although the meaning and central-
 3948 ity of this category is by no means interchangeable among
 3949 the various Latino subgroups, it is an increasingly impor-
 3950 tant political and social concept. Gershon and Pantoja
 3951 examine the question of individual identity as it applies to
 3952 Latinos’ country of origin. Attachment to home country
 3953 has traditionally been interpreted as a sign that individuals
 3954 have yet to adjust and assimilate into American society—
 3955 a point of contention in today’s divisive political climate.
 3956 These ties include following events in the home country,
 3957 sending remittances, participating in home country organ-
 3958 izations, or frequent visits to the home country. Although
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