

Chronologically tracing US Congress's disaster policy, Platt's *Disasters and Democracies* divides the history of US disaster assistance into three eras: 1) Early Period of Ad Hoc Federal Assistance between 1889 and 1944, 2) Transitional Period of Limited Federal Assistance between 1950 and 1982, and 3) Recent Period of Abundant Federal Assistance. In the original plan, supposedly, the federal disaster assistance program consisted of following principles: 1) the limited scope for emergency assistance and repair of public infrastructure, 2) the supplement to state, local and private resources, and 3) the limited allocation of federal funds to disaster relief.

As opposed to its initial principles, however, the program is used for very broad purposes and viewed more as 'entitlement' for those who suffered from disasters with expanding federal costs for the disaster relief program. According to Platt, such circumstance raises the problem of "moral hazard", creating disincentives for local and state governments to spend scarce resources on disaster preparation, mitigation, response and recovery. In conclusion, Platt raises a question that the federal disaster program inadvertently sets the stage for even greater disasters because the government unintentionally encourages people to take more risky behaviors by tacitly ensuring compensations for natural disaster losses.

Regarding the debate on the use of taxpayer's money for natural disaster relief, I have two points to make. For instance, Irvine questions why victims of natural disasters have a "moral claim" on federal tax money whereas victims of other personal losses have no such claim. Although I admit that victims of natural disasters have no claim on federal tax, such perspective seems difficult to sustain itself in two ways. Primarily, I am not sure whether it is valid to put victims of natural disaster and personal losses on the same table. Obviously, there is no justification to use tax to cover a stock market loss regardless of its magnitude and impacts on the society because they could have avoided these losses by making a different decision by themselves. In such a case, governmental support, particularly with tax, creates serious moral hazard. It is difficult, however, for some people to avoid natural disasters by taking another option such as moving out of disaster-prone zones. Often, due to financial constraints they want but have no choice to protect themselves.

Furthermore, in my knowledge, one of essential efficacies of taxation is redistributing wealth equally throughout a nation in order to reduce a gap between the rich and the poor. Considering the frequent occurrence of disasters, it seems not feasible for private insurance companies to provide insurance unless they charge extremely high premium on their products. Regarding the issue of natural disaster relief, market mechanism seems not to function. If the solution is left for market mechanism, it creates a situation that only rich people can afford protection while the poor must continuously and desperately suffer. Needless to say, certain rules and regulations should be set up to discourage risky behaviors by households and to accuse negligence of local and state governments. To me, however, a government intervention using tax seems justifiable and sounds rather immoral if stopped because of budgetary reasons.