

Research on the Driving Factors and Pathways of Discontinuous Change in China's Emergency Management Policies: A Clear Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis Based on 20 Cases

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Abstract

The change in China's emergency management policies is largely influenced by emergencies, but not all emergencies drive policy changes. Based on the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, this paper employs the Clear Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (csQCA) method to study 20 cases of emergencies in China, categorized into natural disasters, accident disasters, public health incidents, and social security incidents. Combining the actual context of Chinese policy decision-making, the paper focuses on analyzing the driving elements and configuration pathways that lead to discontinuous changes in emergency management policies. The study finds that the shift in high-level attention is a necessary prerequisite for changes in emergency management policies. There are two configuration pathways for policy change, which can be classified into macro-political push type and focal event-induced type. By using the qualitative comparative analysis method to explore and reflect on the mechanisms of emergency management policy change, we can better grasp the inherent laws of policy change from the perspective of condition combinations, providing theoretical insights for the future optimization and adjustment of emergency management policies.

Keywords: emergency management policy, policy change, clear set qualitative comparative analysis

1. Introduction

In 2014, General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed the concept of a holistic approach to national security, integrating emergency management into the overall consideration of national security and innovating it as a comprehensive public safety governance model. Therefore, from a macro perspective, the emergency management system is generally subordinate to the national public safety system (Zhu Zhengwei & Wu Jia, 2019), and emergency management can essentially be defined as "public safety governance". The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2022 emphasized the need to resolutely safeguard national security and social stability, incorporating public safety and emergency management into the framework of national security. It also pointed out that improving the level of public safety governance requires adhering to the principle of safety first and prevention first, establishing a comprehensive safety and emergency framework, and improving the public safety system. This indicates that promoting the modernization of emergency management and enhancing the national security system and capabilities have become important levers for achieving the modernization of the national governance system and governance capabilities.

Historically, China has been a disaster-prone country, and the ideas and practices of crisis or emergency management have a long history, especially since the founding of the People's Republic of China. Various emergencies (natural disasters, accident disasters, public health incidents, social security incidents) have frequently occurred, causing significant economic losses and casualties, and posing enormous challenges to the

government's emergency management work. Reviewing the history of emergency management in China, it can be said that the development and changes in emergency management and its policies are invariably linked to emergencies, and they exhibit distinct stage characteristics. However, not all emergencies lead to policy changes; rather, they are the result of multiple factors working together. So, besides emergencies, what other necessary conditions are required for changes in emergency management policies? And what pathways exist? This paper attempts to answer these two questions by constructing an analytical framework for the change in China's emergency management policies based on the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, and by focusing on the driving elements and configuration pathways that lead to discontinuous changes in emergency management policies, thereby better grasping the inherent laws of emergency management policy change.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Emergency Management Research

Reviewing relevant literature, it can be seen that research on emergency management in China started relatively late, truly taking off after the SARS incident in 2003. Existing research on emergency management mainly focuses on emergency capabilities, emergency systems, emergency institutions, and emergency mechanisms, with less attention paid to the driving forces and pathways of emergency management policy changes from a macro-dynamic perspective. For example, Zhong Kaibin (2009) believes that China's emergency management system is built around the "one plan, three systems" core, and that the emergency management system should be adjusted according to changes in social development to adapt to the development of society in different periods; Zhang Haibo (2019) emphasizes the whole-process management of emergency management, arguing that the key to innovative development of emergency management in the new era is process reengineering, comprehensively optimizing the operational mechanisms of emergency management from the five stages of preparation, prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery; Yu Jianxing and Chen Shaohui (2022) emphasize the introduction of digital technology to achieve crisis governance through platform embedding, thereby enhancing emergency management capabilities. In fact, after two decades of development, the evolution of emergency management policies in China is a specific reflection of the requirements of socio-economic development for emergency management systems or practices in different periods. From a practical development perspective, China's emergency management policies have experienced both gradual minor adjustments and discontinuous changes caused by focal events or leadership decisions. However, current research on emergency management in China tends to focus on static theoretical analysis, lacking dynamic research on the entire development trajectory of emergency management policies. Therefore, this study will draw on the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory and use the Clear Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis method to explore and analyze the influencing factors and condition combinations of discontinuous changes in emergency management policies.

2.2 Policy Change Research

Public policy change has always been a core area and research hotspot in both domestic and international academia. In the 1960s, Charles Lindblom defined policy change as "the science of muddling through" and proposed the incrementalism model of policy change; in 1984, John Kingdon proposed the Multiple Streams Theory, attributing policy agenda setting to the coupling of three streams: political, policy, and problem streams; subsequently, in 1993, Sabatier and Smith jointly proposed the Advocacy Coalition Framework, arguing that the process of policy change is a gradual evolution driven by the competition among advocacy coalitions and external shocks to the system; the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory was proposed by Baumgartner and Jones based on the process of policy issues appearing and disappearing from the public agenda in U.S. politics. They believe that the policy process is usually driven by a stable incremental logic, thus presenting a long-term stable state. However, during this process, due to internal and external factors, policy crises and changes occur from time to time, leading to policy collapse. This theory takes into account both the discontinuous and equilibrium states of policies, demonstrating strong explanatory power for actual policy analysis. The above theories and models have been extensively tested and revised through research and have been widely applied in the field of policy change research in China. Based on these theories, theoretical explanations have been made for the policy evolution in fields such as transportation, family planning, education, and public health, and adaptive revisions have been made according to the specific policy context in China. For example, Kuang Yanhua (2015) explored the driving factors of fluctuations in fiscal expenditures in the environmental protection field in China based on the Punctuated Equilibrium analysis framework and developed the "decision-maker attention — institutional friction" explanatory framework; Xie Ming (2018) added the "political pressure" factor to the study of China's poverty alleviation policy changes, arguing that the accumulation of political pressure has a destructive effect on the original policy monopoly, continuously enriching the connotation of the original Punctuated Equilibrium Theory.

3. Research Methods and Case Selection

3.1 Research Methods

The Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) method was created by American scholar Charles C. Ragin in 1987. This is a research method that explores the causal relationship between conditions and results from a holistic perspective. Its basic assumption is that there are interdependent relationships among condition variables, and cases are “configurations” of condition variables. By comparing and analyzing cases, the configuration pathways that lead to the occurrence or non-occurrence of results can be derived (Du Yunzhou et al., 2017). The key questions it answers are: What are the antecedent conditions that lead to the occurrence of a certain result? What are the antecedent conditions that do not lead to the occurrence? Can the number of conditions leading to the occurrence of a result be reduced? What are the sufficient conditions that lead to the occurrence of a certain result? What are the necessary conditions? It is essentially a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, aiming to explore the causal relationships among variables.

In terms of classification, the Qualitative Comparative Analysis method is mainly divided into three categories based on the types of variables it handles: Clear Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (csQCA), Fuzzy Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA), and Multi-value Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (mvQCA). The research method used in this paper is Clear Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (csQCA), and the software used is fsQCA3.0. Clear Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis is typically used for the analysis of binary variables, where condition and result variables are assigned values of “0” or “1”. By assigning binary values of 0 or 1 to antecedent conditions, the path relationships between result variables and antecedent conditions are identified. The Qualitative Comparative Analysis method mainly evaluates antecedent conditions and pathways through two indicators: Consistency and Coverage. The Consistency formula (1) is used to test sufficiency and necessity, while the Coverage formula (2) reflects the explanatory power of antecedent conditions or pathways. When Consistency is greater than 0.8, the antecedent condition or pathway can be considered a sufficient condition for the result; when Consistency is greater than 0.9, the antecedent condition or pathway can be considered a necessary condition for the result.

$$\text{Consistency } (Y_i \leq X_i) = \sum [\min(X_i, Y_i)] / \sum (Y_i) \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Coverage } (X_i \leq Y_i) = \sum [\min(X_i, Y_i)] / \sum (X_i) \quad (2)$$

3.2 Case Selection

Influenced by factors such as climate and topography, China is a country prone to frequent disasters, and emergency response to sudden events has a long history in China. However, since the SARS incident, the cross-border nature and impact of sudden events in China have become increasingly evident. Therefore, this study selected twenty typical cases as research samples within the time frame from the SARS incident to the present, as shown in Table 1. To ensure the typicality and representativeness of the selected cases, this study chose cases that had a profound impact, received widespread public attention, and had complete event records available. Among the twenty cases selected for this study, each of the four types of sudden events (i.e., natural disasters, accident disasters, public health, and social security) accounted for five cases, aiming to exclude the potential influence of the type of sudden events on the research results. The specific case information is shown in the following table:

Table 1. Twenty Sudden Event Cases

Event Type	Case Name	Province(s)	Year
Natural Disasters	Southern Snowstorm	Guizhou, Hunan, Anhui, Sichuan, etc.	2008
	5.12 Wenchuan Earthquake	Sichuan	2008
	4.14 Yushu Earthquake	Qinghai	2010
	9.16 Typhoon Mangkhut	Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan, Guizhou	2018
	7.20 Zhengzhou Heavy Rainstorm	Henan	2021
Accident Disasters	8.13 Hunan Tixi Bridge Collapse	Hunan	2007
	4.21 Shijiazhuang Liquefied Gas Leak	Hebei	2011
	8.12 Tianjin Binhai New Area Explosion	Tianjin	2015
	12.20 Shenzhen Guangming New Area Landslide	Guangdong	2016
	6.21 Yinchuan Barbecue Restaurant Explosion	Ningxia	2023

Public Health	SARS Incident	Guangdong	2003
	Melamine Milk Powder Incident	Anhui	2004
	H7N9 Avian Influenza	Shanghai, Anhui, Jiangsu, Zhejiang	2013
	Changchun Changsheng Vaccine Incident	Changchun	2018
	COVID-19	Wuhan	2019
Social Security	6.28 Weng'an Incident	Guizhou	2008
	9.20 Shenzhen Fire Accident	Guangdong	2008
	6.5 Chengdu Bus Burning Incident	Sichuan	2009
	7.5 Urumqi Severe Violent Crime Incident	Xinjiang	2009
	3.1 Kunming Railway Station Violent Terror Attack	Yunnan	2014

4. Theoretical Basis and Variable Setting

4.1 Theoretical Model

In the 1990s, based on the assumption of bounded rationality, Baumgartner and Jones proposed the “Punctuated Equilibrium” theory to explain the nonlinear and significant changes in U.S. public policy after long periods of stability and equilibrium. The logic of the Punctuated Equilibrium theory in explaining U.S. policy changes is as follows: the original members of the policy subsystem, in order to maintain the “policy monopoly” within the subsystem, would exclude “outsiders” by shaping a positive image of the policy or raising barriers to entry into the decision-making arena. At this time, “negative feedback” plays a major role, and the policy maintains monopoly and slow development within the subsystem. When policy issues are discussed within the subsystem, the existing institutional structure keeps the decision-makers’ attention within a limited range and specific alternatives, making decisions exhibit “path dependence” characteristics to maintain policy monopoly. After a period of imbalance, the policy subsystem always returns to its original state. However, the policy subsystem often faces threats from external mobilization, so policy monopoly is not always successful. When new issues or new dimensions of issues arise and cannot be resolved within the subsystem, external pressures, policy entrepreneurs, and new participants will guide the transformation of the policy image and confront the existing policy image, further stimulating public discussion of policy issues to attract the attention of decision-makers in the macro system. Once the new definition and discussion of policy issues enter the macro political system through agenda setting for serial processing, the policy is likely to face punctuated change. This process is the “positive feedback” process.

In summary, policy monopoly and the continuous strengthening of negative feedback within the policy subsystem maintain the incremental change of policies, while the mobilization and impact of the external environment play a positive feedback role, continuously pushing the agenda setting into the macro political system and promoting punctuated policy changes. The state of policy alternates between punctuation and equilibrium in the transformation of the policy decision-making arena, as shown in the following diagram of the change process:

4.2 Variable Setting

The variable setting of this study includes two dimensions: outcome variables and condition variables. The outcome variable, i.e., the case outcome, refers to whether the national emergency management policy has changed, judged by whether laws, regulations, or institutional settings have been updated. The condition variables, i.e., the antecedent conditions, can be set as the impact scope of focal events, the degree of policy monopoly, the transformation of policy image, and the shift of attention based on the core elements of the Punctuated Equilibrium theory. Based on the Punctuated Equilibrium theory and related research on emergency management policy and its changes, this paper has determined the antecedent condition indicators affecting the change of national emergency management policy, as detailed in Table 2.

4.2.1 Focal Events

Focal events refer to social issues that easily attract public or decision-maker attention. Birkland (Birkland T A) summarized three types of focal events that easily attract social attention: first, events that involve a wide range of people and become focal events. For example, major natural disasters become focal events within a certain geographical area. Second, events that pose significant potential danger to society and thus become focal events. For example, major social projects such as nuclear power plant construction often become the focus of public

attention. Third, events that attract the attention of interest groups or political elites and thus become focal events. In this case, the event itself may not have a wide impact, but it reflects a complex social background, prompting public or decision-maker discussion of the social issues behind the event. Attention to the event itself shifts to social issues or a certain policy, forming a focus. The occurrence of focal events often provides an opportunity to solve related social problems or conditions for policy change and adjustment. In other words, when sudden events exceed the local scope and have a national impact, they easily attract the attention of the public and even decision-makers, promoting policy change.

4.2.2 Policy Arena

There are some institutions or groups in society that have the authority to make decisions on related issues, which we call the “policy decision-making arena” (or policy arena), including authoritative political institutions and interest groups. Baumgartner and Jones proposed that the “policy arena” includes the policy subsystem and the macro political system: the sub-political system is the arena for handling specialized policy issues, while the macro political system is a higher-level arena composed of national leaders and political parties with decision-making power over comprehensive policy issues. In reality, the addition of new actors and internal contradictions can cause changes in the policy arena. In the policy process, policy decision-makers are influenced by various factors, i.e., changes in the policy arena, which directly cause policy changes and accelerate the collapse of policy monopoly.

4.2.3 Policy Image

How policies are understood and discussed by the public and the media, including the description and evaluation of policy content. Based on the public’s understanding and acceptance of policies, policy images can be divided into positive and negative policy images. When the public holds a positive attitude towards a policy, it is under the influence of a positive image, which is conducive to policy stability. When the public questions or even opposes a policy, a negative image comes into play, and the public harbors doubts and disapproval of the policy, which can easily lead to policy evolution.

4.2.4 Attention Shift

In reality, due to the specialization of the policy subsystem, its way of handling issues is parallel, and its policy issues are also realized through the policy subsystem. The attention of the macro political system and its leaders is limited and cannot simultaneously identify and handle a large number of policy issues, but can only handle them in order of importance. Its way of handling issues is a serial mode. In this context, how various issues attract the attention of policy makers is crucial. Therefore, when major changes occur in the external political, economic, and other environments, the work of the losers in the policy subsystem is to transfer the issues in the parallel processing field into the serial processing field through the redistribution of attention in the macro political system, making them re-recognize and evaluate certain policy areas and promoting policy development. Therefore, in the policy-making process, the allocation of decision-makers’ attention will directly affect whether policy issues can enter the policy agenda and the order in which they enter, thereby affecting decision-making results and achieving policy change.

Table 2. Outcome Variables and Conditional Variables of Policy Change

Variable Category	Value Name	Discriminant Rule	Value
Outcome Variable	Emergency Management	Laws and regulations or institutional settings have been updated	1
	Policy Change	Neither laws and regulations nor institutional settings have been updated	0
Conditional Variable	Scope of Emergency Impact	The impact of the event involves multiple provinces or even the entire country	1
		The impact of the event does not exceed the local area	0
	Attention Shift	The central government is responsible for emergency response	1
		Local governments are responsible for emergency response	0
	Degree of Policy Monopoly	The government responds to emergencies in an open policy environment	1
		The government responds to emergencies in a closed policy environment	0
Policy Image	The public and media generally hold a positive evaluation of the	1	

Transformation	government's image after the event	
	The public and media generally hold a negative evaluation of the government's image after the event	0
Attention Shift	The central government is responsible for emergency response	1
	Local governments are responsible for emergency response	0

4.3 Construction of the Truth Table

After completing the selection and assignment of outcome and conditional variables, the truth table was constructed using the fsQCA3.0 analysis software and Boolean algebra algorithms. This table shows all possible logical combinations of outcome and conditional variables for the 20 cases in this study, as listed in Table 3. For ease of expression, each variable code is represented by its English initials: FEC for Focus Event Coverage, DPM for Degree of Policy Monopoly, PIT for Policy Image Transformation, AD for Attention Shift, EMPC for Emergency Management Policy Change, and number for the number of cases.

Table 3. Truth Table

FEC	DPM	PIT	AD	EMPC	number
1	1	1	1	1	6
0	1	1	1	0	4
0	0	0	0	0	4
0	0	0	1	0	2
1	0	0	1	1	1
1	0	0	0	0	1
0	1	1	0	0	1
0	1	0	1	0	1

5. Research Results and Analysis

5.1 Analysis of Antecedent Conditions

As shown in Table 4, among the antecedent conditions, only Policy Image Transformation and Attention Shift have consistency greater than 0.8, but only Attention Shift has consistency greater than 0.9. This indicates that both Policy Image Transformation and Attention Shift can constitute sufficient conditions for the outcome variable, while only Attention Shift is a necessary condition. This means that Attention Shift is a necessary prerequisite for the change in the national emergency management system, and only Attention Shift can independently influence the occurrence of the outcome variable. Other factors must work through conditional combinations to drive changes in national emergency management policies.

Table 4. Necessity and Sufficiency of Conditional Variables

Antecedent Condition	Consistency (%)	Coverage (%)
Large Focus Event Coverage	75.00	50.00
Small Focus Event Coverage	25.00	25.00
Open Policy Field	75.00	42.86
Monopolized Policy Field	25.00	33.33
Negative Policy Image	87.50	53.84
Positive Policy Image	12.50	8.33
Attention Shift of Decision-Makers	98.15	58.33
No Attention Shift of Decision-Makers	12.50	8.33

5.2 Path Configuration Analysis

Using the fsQCA3.0 software for Boolean minimization, three solutions are output: the parsimonious solution, the intermediate solution, and the complex solution. The parsimonious solution refers to the configuration with the fewest conditions after simple and difficult counterfactual analysis; the complex solution is based on raw data without considering logical remainders, usually containing more configurations and antecedent conditions; the intermediate solution considers only simple counterfactual analysis, incorporating logical remainders that align with theoretical expectations and empirical evidence. Existing research shows that among these three solutions, the intermediate solution, which is reasonable, well-supported, and moderately complex, is generally the preferred choice. Moreover, in the configuration analysis results, core conditions coexist in both the parsimonious and intermediate solutions. Based on this, this paper uses the intermediate solution as the foundation for discussing the results, determining the number of configuration paths and conditional combinations, and then uses the parsimonious solution to identify the core conditions in the aforementioned paths, resulting in the intermediate solution for the configuration path analysis of the discontinuous change in emergency management policies.

As shown in Table 5, the discontinuous change paths of China's emergency management policies mainly include two types: macro-political-driven and focus-event-induced. The overall coverage of these two configuration paths is 87.5%, meaning that these two path types can explain 87.5% of the phenomena of emergency management policy changes.

Table 5. Configuration Distribution of Discontinuous Change Paths in China's Emergency Management Policies (Intermediate Solution)

Item	Focus-Event-Induced	Macro-Political-Driven
Path	1	2
Focus Event Coverage	●	○
Degree of Policy Monopoly	●	○
Policy Image Transformation	●	●
Attention Shift	▲	▲
Raw Coverage (%)	75	75
Unique Coverage (%)	12.5%	12.5
Overall Consistency	1	
Overall Coverage (%)	87.5	

Note: “●” and “▲” indicate that the condition occurs, “○” indicates that the condition does not occur. Among them, “▲” indicates a core condition, “▲” and “▲” indicate necessary conditions. Raw coverage refers to the proportion of cases explained by the path; unique coverage refers to the proportion of cases explained only by the path; overall coverage refers to the proportion of cases explained by all paths.

(1) Focus-Event-Induced Path

The focus-event-induced discontinuous change path of China's emergency management policies refers to Path 1 (Focus Event Coverage, Degree of Policy Monopoly, Policy Image Transformation, Attention Shift). That is, when a focus event occurs and its impact involves multiple provinces or even the entire country, external factors will significantly shake the internal policy subsystem, quickly attracting the attention of decision-makers. At the same time, a negative policy image becomes prominent, and the negative feedback mechanism comes into play. Citizens, social groups, etc., actively participate in politics, entering the policy field and changing the original power structure, thereby driving the macro-political system to pay high attention to the issue, re-examining and defining it, and responding to promote the discontinuous evolution of policies. Typical events include the 2003 SARS outbreak, the 2008 southern snowstorm and Wenchuan earthquake, and the 2019 COVID-19 pandemic.

2003 SARS Outbreak. The SARS outbreak began in Guangdong in December 2002 but was not taken seriously initially. It was not until April 2003, when the outbreak spread nationwide, affecting more than 20 provinces (autonomous regions, municipalities) in mainland China, that it attracted high attention from government departments, news media, and the public due to its strong transmission, unknown pathogen, and the spread of rumors, accelerating the accumulation of a negative policy image. Subsequently, driven by national leaders and medical experts, China began to explore the establishment of a “one plan, three systems” emergency system, revising the “Law on the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases” in 2004, promulgating the “National Emergency Response Plan for Public Emergencies” in January 2006, and enacting the “Emergency Response

Law of the People's Republic of China" in 2007, marking a key step in China's emergency management system.

2008 Southern Snowstorm and Wenchuan Earthquake. From January 10 to February 2, 2008, most parts of China, especially the southern regions, experienced four consecutive cooling and snow-rain processes, resulting in severe low-temperature snow and ice disasters. Just three months later, before the post-disaster recovery and reconstruction were completed, an 8.0-magnitude earthquake struck Wenchuan County, Sichuan Province, on May 12, becoming the most destructive, widespread, and challenging earthquake since the founding of the People's Republic of China. These two major disasters severely tested China's "one plan, three systems" emergency management policies, exposing issues such as weak practicality and specificity of emergency plans, insufficient emergency coordination capabilities, and weak policy basis for post-disaster reconstruction, exacerbating the negative image of the policies and prompting high attention and deep reflection from the central government. Consequently, in 2008, the State Council promulgated the "Regulations on Post-Wenchuan Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction" to guide post-disaster recovery and reconstruction, established the Emergency Rescue and Coal, Electricity, Oil, and Transportation Command to ensure the smooth progress of rescue work for the severe snow and ice disasters, and issued a series of policy documents covering emergency rescue, life resettlement for affected people, health and epidemic prevention, and post-disaster reconstruction, promoting the improvement of the "one plan, three systems" emergency management policies.

2019 COVID-19 Pandemic. At the end of December 2019, unexplained pneumonia cases with exposure history to the Huanan Seafood Market were successively discovered in some hospitals in Wuhan. However, the Wuhan municipal government did not attach sufficient importance to these cases or handle them appropriately. Under public scrutiny, the Wuhan authorities continued to organize various mass gatherings, including the Spring Festival Greeting Ceremony and the Ten Thousand Families Banquet. However, the increasing number of cases and the continuous strain on medical resources, among other issues of inadequate emergency response, led to heightened public concern. Under the guidance of central leadership and infectious disease experts, various epidemic prevention and control policies were successively introduced, which also prompted the enactment of the Biosafety Law. This marked a discontinuity in the evolution of emergency management policies.

(2) Macro-Political Driven Type

The path of China's emergency management policy changes driven by the central government refers to Path 2 (~scope of focus event impact * ~degree of policy monopoly * policy image transformation * attention shift). This indicates that when no single major emergency occurs or its impact does not exceed the local region, regardless of whether the policy field is in a highly monopolized or closed state, a transformation in the policy image occurs, meaning a negative policy image begins to form. If the attention of the macro-political system (central government) is reallocated, emergency management policies are likely to undergo significant changes. In the context of China's unique political system and decision-making discourse, the macro-political system plays a decisive role in driving changes in the policy field. Decision-makers can exert absolute influence over the policy subsystem through internal learning, thereby driving changes in the policy field and achieving policy discontinuity. Typical events include the establishment of the Central National Security Commission in 2013 and the Ministry of Emergency Management in 2018.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, risks in the new era and under new circumstances have exhibited highly complex and uncertain characteristics. The emergency management system established after the SARS incident, which focuses on multi-hazard comprehensive emergency response, has shown significant inadequacies. Coordination in emergency work often faces issues such as blurred responsibility boundaries and mismatched authority and responsibility, leading to inefficiencies in emergency management. Against this backdrop, in November 2013, the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee decided to establish the Central National Security Commission. On April 15, 2014, Xi Jinping presided over the first meeting of the Central National Security Commission, where the concept of a holistic approach to national security was first proposed. In the same year, China revised the Work Safety Law. Guided by the holistic approach to national security, in 2015, China promulgated the National Security Law of the People's Republic of China, providing legal support for addressing universal issues in national security and urgent legislative gaps in emergency management. This marked the beginning of China's decision-making and deployment of emergency management work from the strategic height of national security. Especially after the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2018, during a new round of institutional reforms, the Ministry of Emergency Management was established, marking another significant transformation in China's emergency management system.

6. Research Conclusions and Policy Implications

6.1 Research Conclusions

The research conclusions of this paper include two dimensions: influencing factors and path distribution. In

terms of influencing factors, based on the analysis of antecedent conditions, attention shift is a necessary condition for emergency management policy changes and can independently influence policy changes. Other factors must be combined to achieve this. In terms of path distribution, based on the configuration analysis results, there are two configuration distributions for emergency management policy changes, which can be divided into macro-political driven type and focus event induced type.

Building on the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, this paper uses the clear-set qualitative comparative analysis method to explore the influencing factors and paths of China's emergency management policy changes, revealing the mechanism of national emergency management system changes under the combined influence of multiple antecedent conditions. At the same time, this study also addresses the shortcomings of overly singular research methods and theoretical analysis in the field of institutional changes, providing a new approach to traditional qualitative research in this field.

6.2 Policy Implications

The research conclusions of this paper provide two implications for optimizing emergency management policies: First, expanding the policy field to promote multi-stakeholder collaboration. China has a highly centralized administrative system, and the macro-policy system holds absolute dominance. However, an open and inclusive policy field can attract more policy stakeholders, making the policy stakeholders more diverse, thereby providing more knowledge and experience for the formulation of emergency management policies. Therefore, future emergency management work should continuously transform government functions, broaden channels for multi-party participation, and actively guide the orderly entry of experts, scholars, companies, public organizations, and individual citizens into the policy field, promoting scientific and democratic decision-making. Second, strengthening reflection and learning from focus events to grasp the direction of policy changes. Throughout the history of China's emergency management policy changes, focus events such as the SARS incident and the COVID-19 pandemic have largely played a "trigger" role. In addition to impacting the scientific and rational aspects of current emergency management policies, focus events also have significant value for policy reflection and learning. Whether a focus event leads to policy discontinuity depends on whether it attracts the attention of decision-makers. Therefore, in dealing with focus events in the future, policy decision-makers should deeply analyze the underlying causes of focus events, identify the shortcomings and defects in existing policies, and strengthen reflection and learning on policies to provide ideas for policy adjustments and changes.

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