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# MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„State-led responses by the Islamic Republic of Iran in the  
aftermath of the Bam Earthquake“

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2018 / Vienna, 2018

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /  
degree programme code as it appears on  
the student record sheet:

A 066 589

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /  
degree programme as it appears on  
the student record sheet:

Masterstudium Internationale Entwicklung

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Dr. Lukas Schemper



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## **Abstract**

Unfortunately, these days there are more and more number of natural hazardous all around the globe. Therefore responding to natural catastrophes and acting as effective as possible is very crucial in disaster management, which is very much directly related to the performance of the state of a country.

Iran is a country with high plausibility of witnessing many types of natural disasters one of which had happened in 2003 in Bam. On the other hand, states have a vital role in people's lives in different aspects. That is why the role of the state after the Bam earthquake was the central point of this thesis.

There was a try to bring the view of the people of Bam to the attention, during and after the state of emergency. This was ended to revealing some mismanagement in some areas not only state-related but also involving international organizations, however in some other areas the Iranian state had a constructive role in Bam.

## **Zusammenfassung**

Leider gibt es heutzutage immer mehr Naturgefahren rund um den Globus. Daher ist die Reaktion auf Naturkatastrophen und ein möglichst effektives Handeln im Katastrophenmanagement, welches in direktem Zusammenhang mit der Leistungsfähigkeit eines Landes steht, sehr wichtig.

Der Iran ist ein Land mit hoher Naturkatastrophenwahrscheinlichkeit. Eine von diesen hat sich im Jahr 2003 in Bam ereignet. Andererseits spielen die Staaten in verschiedener Hinsicht eine wichtige Rolle im Leben der Menschen. Deshalb stand die Rolle des Staates nach dem Erdbeben von Bam im Mittelpunkt dieser Masterarbeit.

Es wurde versucht die Aufmerksamkeit auf den Blickpunkt der Menschen von Bam, während und nach dem Ausnahmezustand, zu lenken. Dies endete damit, dass in einigen Bereichen nicht nur staatliche, sondern auch internationale Organisationen einbezogen wurden, doch in anderen Bereichen spielte der iranische Staat in Bam eine konstruktive Rolle.

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## 1- Introduction

*“A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts.”* This is the definition of a disaster, based on United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction<sup>1</sup>. The harmful consequences of a natural catastrophe are in very wide ranges and in different types.

The negative impacts of a disaster, which could be in short and also long run, have high level of attention in international spheres (at least immediately after a disaster happens, then attention might disappear). Countries all around the world are trying to reduce the effects of natural disasters. To do so, the 11<sup>th</sup> goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) refers to this target directly, *“Disaster Risk Reduction”*<sup>2</sup>. However, there are other goals which could be also related to the disasters and their results, like Goal 13 paying attention to climate change and also how it affects people’s lives<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, there is little room for doubt about the importance of research in field of disaster management and its relevance to sustainable development.

On the other hand, the theme of this thesis is a unique one due to special features combining, like the situation of Iranian state which is based on Islam, plus the location of Iran being in one of the regions with a high probability of facing natural disasters while lacking the proper infrastructure to tackle them<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, a 14 years gap between the occurrence of the earthquake of Bam and time of the research creates a perfect time slot for taking a deeper look into what had happened and what could have happened. Because the evaluation is not exactly after the earthquake when most of the things are not in order and might not be a good time for looking at the performance of help givers. On the other hand it is not long after the disaster when people might have forgotten the situation and their experience during and after it. Therefore, this thesis looks at the efficiency of the state of Iran from people’s perspective after the Bam earthquake.

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<sup>1</sup> - UNISDR, 2017

<sup>2</sup> - UN, 2015

<sup>3</sup> - *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> - Hagenlocher et al., 2016

## 2- Elaboration of the Problem

*We cannot wish that human beings were not subject to the forces of nature, including the mortality... we cannot wish for the seas to dry up, that the waves grow still, that the tectonic plates cease to exist, that nature ceases to be beyond our abilities to predict and control... But the terms of that nature include such catastrophe and suffering, which leaves us with sorrow as not a problem to be solved but a fact. And it leaves us with compassion as the work we will never finish”*  
- Rebecca Solnit, *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics*

Earthquake, Iran and state are the most determining variables in the current paper. Therefore, exploring more into them can provide a better understanding of the aim of the report.

### 2-1- Why Earthquake?

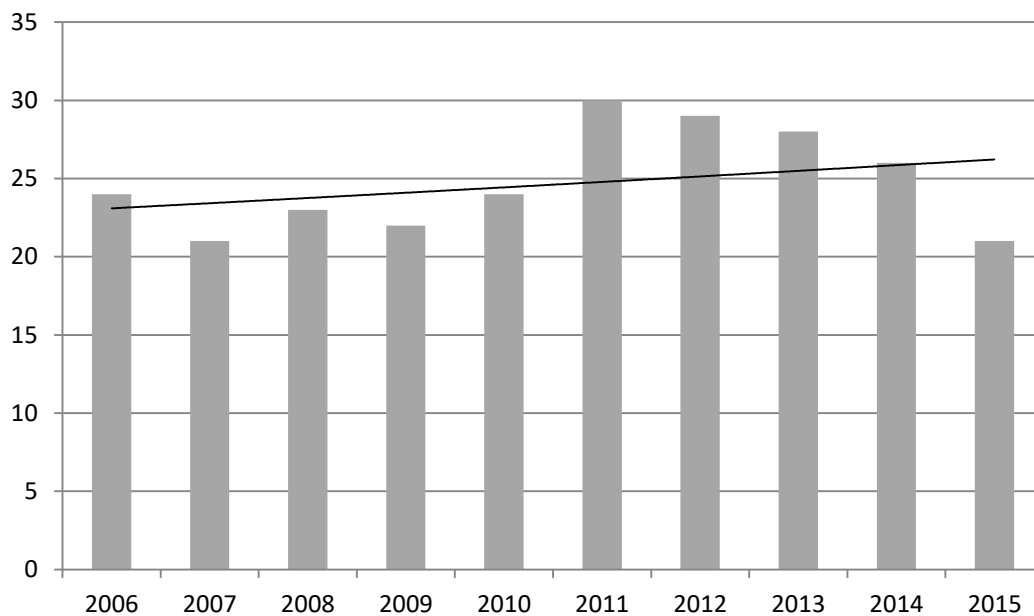
Earthquake is one of the natural disasters which comes in the news every year. In 2015, there had been 21 reported earthquakes which cost 9.526 people's lives across the world<sup>5</sup>. As it is shown in the graph below, based on the latest “World Disasters Report” in 2016 by International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, unfortunately the number of earthquakes has an upward trend during the last years. However the number of casualties and the people who had been affected by the earthquakes do not follow the same trend as the number of reported earthquake. This difference might be due to the place in which the earthquake had happened or in the strength or the time of the disaster or other reasons behind.

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<sup>5</sup> - IFRC, 2016

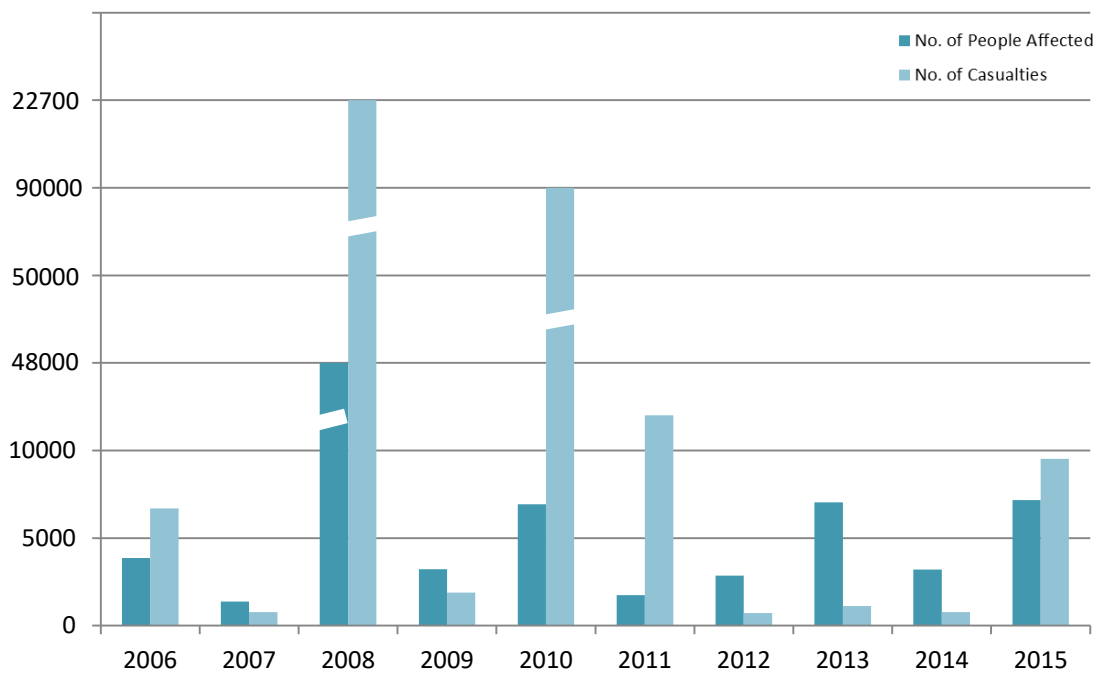


Graph 1- Number of Reported Earthquakes (2006 – 2015)



\*Source: IFRC 2016

Graph 2- Number of Casualties and Affected People from Earthquake (2006 – 2015)



\*Source: IFRC 2016

The consequences of earthquakes are not only restricted to the death tolls but also many other types of undesirable traces which would be seen in private, local, national and even international spheres. There could be obvious physical damages to houses, shops, roads, hospitals, infrastructures and even the nature itself like ruining the trees, blocking rivers and myriad of other examples in this type.

However when it comes to economic effects, it is not always so apparent. Economic consequences can be divided into three main categories. *Direct Damages* which are all the very clear losses to buildings or goods, *Indirect Damages and Flow Losses* that are somehow the potential added-value or money or good which could be generated but did not due to the disaster; and last one are *Secondary Effects* which are calculated mostly not in the same period as catastrophe but rather in the next phase with counting the impacts on the macro level in the economy<sup>6</sup>.

Adding the mental and psychological impacts of an earthquake, all the diseases that it can bring with, and all other plausible consequences, make that phenomenon a very important one. Hence, the more earthquakes and their impacts go under researchers' magnifier and all the possible aspects of them are taken into consideration, the less could be the negative effects of the future earthquakes for the mankind.

## **2-2- Why Iran and why Bam?**

Iran is a country with high plausibility of witnessing many types of natural disasters, including drought or floods<sup>7</sup>. But when it comes to earthquakes, unfortunately it gets even worse. The geographical situation of Iran, where 90% of the country is in earthquake zone<sup>8</sup>, puts this country in a very sensitive situation. As Moinfar et al. in their article "New Iranian Seismic Hazard Zoning Map for New Edition of Seismic Code and Its Comparison with Neighbor Countries" stated:

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<sup>6</sup> - Pelling et al., 2002

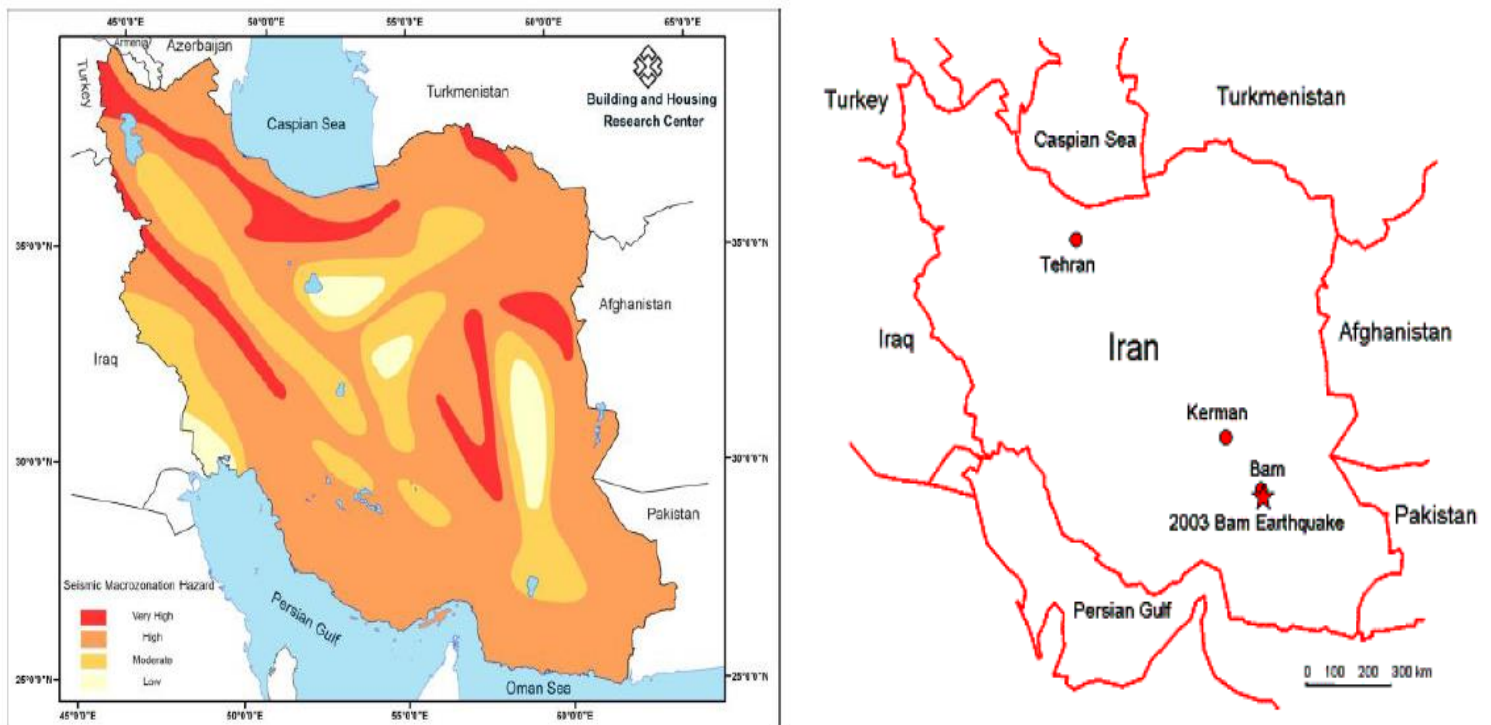
<sup>7</sup> - UNDP in I. R. Iran, n.d.

<sup>8</sup> - Negaresh, 1993

*“Iran has a long history of seismicity and has experienced destructive earthquakes since ancient times. As an average, earthquakes take several thousands of lives and cause extensive damage to properties in Iran almost every year. Most damages and casualties occurred mainly in rural areas in the past, but it has also been observed in urban areas in recent decades. Expansion of urbanization has increased the vulnerability against earthquakes in Iran in recent history.”*<sup>9</sup>

Despite witnessing many earthquakes, in 2003 Iran went through one of its most tragic disasters. Based on the information of Statistical Centre of Iran, there had been a very small city called Bam, in Kerman Province, south part of Iran with 108.641 rural inhabitants<sup>10</sup> before Friday, December 26 of 2003 when in 05:27 AM, an earthquake struck Bam and its surroundings.

Picture 1- Earthquake zone of Iran (left) and the location of Bam (right)



\*Source: Moinfar et al., 2012 and Hisada et al., 2004

<sup>9</sup> - Moinfar et al., 2012

<sup>10</sup> - Statistical Center of Iran, 2003: 4

Although this earthquake is classified as one with comparatively moderate size,  $M_w = 6.6$ ,<sup>11</sup> it was very destructive. There are diverging numbers for the casualties, ranging from 30.000 killed and 50.000 injured<sup>12</sup>, to around 26.000 deaths<sup>13</sup>. 92,1% of Bam and 95,5% of residential buildings of Bam was destroyed; 20 villages were damaged<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, the citadel of Bam, the largest adobe building in the world was almost completely demolished<sup>15</sup>.

Moreover, Bam earthquake was a turning point in international politics. For the first time after the revolution of Iran, United States of America, which had been called always an enemy, had offered help to the state of Iran and they had received a positive answer. This acceptance was followed by a few planes full of material relief landed in Tehran<sup>16</sup>. The relation of Iran and United States of America is so disagreeable that when the Relief Commander of Bam earthquake, Mr. Bijan Daftari, many years later after the incident gave an interview about the situation of that time and how he could manage everything; he still resisted to name the United States of America, instead he said “... *we also received some goods from a country which I don't want to reveal its name...*”<sup>17</sup>. Therefore, it can be really interesting to investigate about the fact that whether the recipients of those aids were aware of that those commodities were sent from the rival country, USA, and if they knew how they reacted to it, accept or reject.

Unfortunately, the seismic activities in Bam and its neighborhood did not stop after 2003. There had been several of earthquakes reported on news, some of the considerable ones in 2010<sup>18</sup>, 2012<sup>19</sup> and the most recent one in March 2017<sup>20</sup>. In these pieces of news it had been always written that there were some casualties and injured people apart from other types of destructions and losses, which can be an additional reason for having a closer look at the Bam earthquake.

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<sup>11</sup> - Bouchon et al., 2006

<sup>12</sup> - Iranian Studies Group at MIT, 2004

<sup>13</sup> - Manafpour, 2008

<sup>14</sup> - Statistical Center of Iran, 2003: 12

<sup>15</sup> - UNESCO, 2004

<sup>16</sup> - China Daily, 2003

<sup>17</sup> - Tasnimnews, 2012

<sup>18</sup> - Iranpress, 2010

<sup>19</sup> - ISNA, 2012

<sup>20</sup> - IRIB NEWS, 2017

## 2-3- Why State?

State and Government are two words that sometimes are used interchangeably; however they are not the same. “A *state is more than a government; that is clear. Governments change, but states endure. A state is the means of rule over a defined or "sovereign" territory*”<sup>21</sup>. Besides, during this period after the earthquake, 4 governments with 3 presidents have been in charge in Islamic Republic of Iran. As a result it was more logical to broaden the topic to the state rather than just the government.

When a disaster occurs, no matter even if it is man-made or natural, state administrations are expected to be present in the place immediately. There are a myriad of books and articles saying directly that managing a catastrophic situation is state’s responsibility<sup>22</sup>. This liability is not just in the very first hours after the disaster, but rather the state should manage the situation in all five phases, being “*mitigation, preparedness, communication, response, and recovery*”<sup>23</sup>. Following are short explanations of the aforementioned phases:

- Mitigation: finding out where are the hazards for people’s health, property, etc. and trying to reduce it with taking different measures.
- Preparedness: broadening the readiness when it comes to action. Simply to say, make plans and train people who would be involved.
- Communication: a new phase in this area which concerns about the communication methods among authorities and people, role of media in catastrophic events, making situations transparent, etc.
- Response: assessing the situation as carefully as possible and evaluate the number of casualties, survivors, rescue people, provide survivors and people in need with food, cloth and every other possible things which could be necessary after a disaster.
- Recovery: carrying out what it needs to be done in order to bring people back to their normal life by settling them down and taking care of infrastructures and businesses that were destroyed or harmed. The recovery phase starts with households, then businesses and thirdly government agencies. However, the area between the period of emergency

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<sup>21</sup> - Global Policy Forum, n.d.

<sup>22</sup> - Haddow et al., 2011 – Petak, 1985 – Col, 2007

<sup>23</sup> - Haddow et al., 2011

and recovery is gray and there is not a strict definition or time to be referred to as a distinction<sup>24</sup>.

According to these tasks, a state should deal with funding of the plans, staffing them, there might be a need for preparing documents, or even establishing a new organization as a coordinator, encourage and support more local people or communities to participate and take liabilities, conduct a research on how the recovery should take place and many more other duties<sup>25</sup>. These are general responsibilities that could be related to all states, but when it comes to a country like Iran with such a high probability of natural hazards, those responsibilities get even more vital.

As aforementioned, earthquake is such an important issue in Iran and for the state that it is the only natural disaster which is written about in the sixth development plan of Iran (article 60). This article is regarding the structure of the buildings and how it needs an especial attention in order to mitigate the danger of earthquake<sup>26</sup>.

In Islamic Republic of Iran, that important responsibility is in the hands of the “National Disaster Management Organization (NDMO)”, which is one of the subsets of Iranian ministry of Interior. It had been formed:

*“... in order to utilize the national, regional and local capacities to confront the natural and unexpected disasters as well as creating an integrated management system for policy making, planning, coordinating research and executive activities in a cohesive manner, concentrated information dissemination and supervision over different phases of disaster management as well as rehabilitation and reconstruction of disaster stricken areas by utilizing the entire required potentials and means pertaining to ministries, governmental and public institutions and companies, banks, governmental insurance companies, Armed and military forces, non-governmental public institutes, Islamic councils, municipalities, public associations, and institutions whose names need to be mentioned for inclusion in the Law and organizations under the auspices of the Supreme Leader and the Armed forces ...”*<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> - Lindell, 2013

<sup>25</sup> - Smith & Sandler, 2012

<sup>26</sup> - Sixth Development Plan of Iran, 2017, 78

<sup>27</sup> - NDMO, n.d.

This organization can be seen as a kind of coordinator among all the ministries and other organizations which would be involved, most important ones are army (which is “under the auspices of the Supreme Leader of Iran”), Ministry of Health and Medical Education, Ministry of Road and Transportation<sup>28</sup>.

One of the issues that should be kept in mind is that the state of Iran is practicing and running based on Islamic rules and regulations. And obviously, Islam like any other religion has its own definition and approach toward natural disasters<sup>29</sup>. This fact might have an impact on how the state had acted during the time when emergency actions were needed or even throughout the other periods.

As a result of all these data and information, which was explained in former sections, the motivation of writing this thesis is more obvious. There are plenty of gray areas around the Bam earthquake that need special attention and additionally a kind of evaluation of all the processes and plans starting from exactly after the catastrophe like rescuing the survivors, taking care of victims, unloading and removal of the debris and distribution of basic needs; till in the longer period or rebuilding phase including reconstruction of the houses and shops, civil engineering, paying special attention to orphans and widows and recreate jobs. The other important point is the comparison between the promises vs. deeds of the state of Iran. For instance whether there was a promise to the people of Bam regarding rebuilding loans and how it was proceeded.

Moreover, the concentration is on the viewpoint of the people of Bam because their perception and satisfaction is the key element that is often neglected. Clearer to say, there will be a focus on finding out about the answer to what were the expectations of people in Bam to the state after the earthquake. Or in other words how people see the deeds of the state after the earthquake in short and long run?

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<sup>28</sup> - *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> - Ghafory-Ashtiany, n.d.

## **2-4- Natural Disaster in Shia's Approach**

In order to understand the situation, and also have a thorough view toward a state which is based on Islamic rules and regulations, it is important to know more about these types of ideas and thoughts. In other words, it could be crucial to have more information about the way that Islam sees a natural disaster and identify whether these concepts have any kind of influence in the performance of the state or not.

### **2-4-1- References for Shia**

The very first clarification in this issue needs to be about the Shia's references. According to Islam, there are three types of references:

- 1- Quran: the Holy Book for Muslims
- 2- Speeches and narrations of Prophet Muhammad and Imams: there are many books which are attributed to holy people for Shias. For instance, Nahj al-Balagha is a book that contains the letters, words and advices of Imam Ali, the first Imam of Shias. Or Bihar al-Anwar is another book presenting some of Shia's traditions and practices given by Imams.
- 3- Jurisprudents or Islamic Experts (in Arabic: Faghih): after the last Imam for Shias, some men started to study Islam, go deeper in it and choose their profession in this field, since obviously not everything was clarified in the first two references above. Therefore, whenever something new happens, these experts ought to find a solution and give their opinion and Shias have to refer to them. As a result, they can be seen also as a kind of references for finding about Islamic approaches.

But clearly the most important reference is Quran; however "natural disaster" is not said exactly in these words in it. Rather different types of natural catastrophes like flood, earthquake, drought etc. are brought up. The way that disasters and their effects are reflected in Quran, is with



different stories and people who had faced one of calamities; therefore their destinies could be an informative lesson for other people.<sup>30</sup>

## **2-4-2- Disasters and their Reasons**

In order to understand the Islamic believes better, at first there are some reasons explaining why natural calamities happen at all. To do so, for every cause there would be some clarification then an example from one of the aforementioned references (in case of Quran, first the name of the SURAH or CHAPTER comes then the number of Verse).

There are different causes which could be categorized as follows:

### 1. Test and Strengthen the Faith:

One of the very first things that comes as a cause for natural disaster is the interpretations that from time to time God wants to test His servants; to show them how strong is their faith. Therefore, he sends some hardships and calamities to them:

*“And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient”.*<sup>31</sup>

### 2. Prosperity and Evolution

The second interpretation could be seen as even a kind of favor to people. The nature of man is such that many of the material and spiritual talents of man do not flourishing except in the face of difficulties and the struggles against problems. Just as the body muscles of an athlete are made only by hard exercises. Or for example, many scientific discoveries and inventions have happened or were influenced by the basic human needs for solving their individual and collective problems. The Quran emphasizes the fact that after any difficulty, there would be ease and convenience.

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<sup>30</sup> - Adiyoso and Kanegae, 2013

<sup>31</sup> - Quran, Al-Baqarah, 155

Imam Ali, the first Imam after Prophet Muhammad had written in one of his letters about this issue. He described the effects of hardship on the flourishing of human intelligence talents, in the form of very beautiful symbols:

*"Know that the woody trees are tighter, but the green trees that are always next to the water, the skin is thinner (and less durable)".<sup>32</sup>*

Or Imam Sadiq, the fourth Imam of Shias has said:

*"Every human being has a degree and rate in God's eye which might not be reached just by his performance, hence God makes him suffer and bear, then God gives him what he really deserves".<sup>33</sup>*

### 3- Awakening and Warning

One of the most important interpretation of a disaster can be awakening people from the obscurity in two ways. If a man enjoys a lot of blessings and fortunes in his life and due to a catastrophe loses them in a short period of time while he cannot stop or even do anything about it, he would recognize the importance of those divine blessings and acknowledge their values. Briefly speaking, exactly like what a Persian Proverb says: *"Misfortunates tell us what fortune is"*.

Besides, another advantage of natural disaster is that it can be seen as a kind of warning for human beings. Through an enormous difficulty people would understand that how limited is their mental and physical ability and whenever God wants to do something, nothing has the ability to do something against it.

Moreover, those difficulties are not sent only for the people who are injured due to natural disaster, but also for the other group of people who are able to witness those calamities, and they should take it as a lesson.

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<sup>32</sup> - Razi, 10<sup>th</sup> Century

<sup>33</sup> - Majlesi, 1698

*“And we will surely let them taste the nearer punishment short of the greater punishment that perhaps they will repent.”<sup>34</sup>*

Or

*“And We sent to no city a prophet [who was denied] except that We seized its people with poverty and hardship that they might humble themselves [to Allah].”<sup>35</sup>*

#### 4- Atone

The other interpretation of natural or any other type of difficulties could be a favor of God for his servants. Because some of Shias believe that, “Difficulties make people more pure and hardships decrease their sins”.

Therefore, the one who suffered more has fewer sins left to be responsible of for the Last Day. As Prophet Muhammad has said:

*“When sins of a believer raise and there are not enough good deeds to make a balance between them, God caught him distress to atone him for his sins”.<sup>36</sup>*

#### 5 - Discipline the people

The last but not the least seems the very first reason that comes to people’s mind regarding this matter, when a religious perspective is taken into account. This cause says that natural disasters are punishments from God.

One of the causes which is referred to many times in Quran and also other books and citations is that when people commit more and more sins easily and it gets normal among people, or in other words when prevalence of committing sins grows day by day among people within a society:

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<sup>34</sup> - Quran, Al-Sajdah, 21

<sup>35</sup> - Quran, Al-A’raf, 94

<sup>36</sup> - Majlesi, 1698

*“So why were there not among the generations before you those of enduring discrimination forbidding corruption on earth - except a few of those We saved from among them? But those who wronged pursued what luxury they were given therein, and they were criminals. (116) And your Lord would not have destroyed the cities unjustly while their people were reformers. (117)”<sup>37</sup>*

### **2-4-3- Earthquake in Islamic Believes**

This disaster is really unique in eyes of Quran as there is even a Surah called Earthquake (in Arabic: “الزلزله” Az-Zalzalah), 99<sup>th</sup> Surah in Quran. It is a very short Surah that talks about the Last Day and how an earthquake can be seen as a sign for it. That is why there are some beliefs among Muslims that natural disasters can be also an indication from God to show that the Hereafter or Last Day is close:

*“When the earth is shaken with its [final] earthquake (1). And the earth discharges its burdens (2). And man says, "What is [wrong] with it?" (3). That Day, it will report its news (4). Because your Lord has commanded it (5). That Day, the people will depart separated [into categories] to be shown [the result of] their deeds (6). So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it (7), And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it (8).”<sup>38</sup>*

Besides, there are some other examples which indicate that earthquake was a consequence of people's misbehavior. For instance, seventh Surah of Quran, Al-A'raf, talks about a tribe called Thamud. Then God sent them a prophet whose name was Salih in order to guide them. Unfortunately, merely a few of them accepted to follow his advice and right path. Therefore, God punished them with an earthquake.

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<sup>37</sup> - Quran, Hud, 116-117

<sup>38</sup> - Quran, Az-Zalzalah

*“And to the Thamud [We sent] their brother Salih. He said, "O my people, worship Allah ; you have no deity other than Him. There has come to you clear evidence from your Lord. This is the she-camel of Allah [sent] to you as a sign. So leave her to eat within Allah 's land and do not touch her with harm, lest there seize you a painful punishment (73). And remember when He made you successors after the 'Aad and settled you in the land, [and] you take for yourselves palaces from its plains and carve from the mountains, homes. Then remember the favors of Allah and do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption (74). Said the eminent ones who were arrogant among his people to those who were oppressed - to those who believed among them, "Do you [actually] know that Salih is sent from his Lord?" They said, "Indeed we, in that with which he was sent, are believers." (75). Said those who were arrogant, "Indeed we, in that which you have believed, are disbelievers." (76) ... So the earthquake seized them, and they became within their home [corpses] fallen prone (78). ”<sup>39</sup>*

### 3- Brief History of Bam and its Citadel

One of the variables that needs to be taken into consideration regarding Bam and the Earthquake is the importance of Bam in international sphere. And the importance is due to the historical side of the whole of Bam and its citadel.

There is not detailed information or evidence about the beginning of the history of life and settlement in Bam, nevertheless it could be tracked down to Achaemenid<sup>40</sup> around 579-323 BC<sup>41</sup>. Settlement started there and continued because of three important reasons:

- 1- Qanats <sup>42</sup>
- 2- Seasonal Rivers
- 3- Neighbor of Silk Road <sup>43</sup>

The heyday of the city was between 13<sup>th</sup> till 17<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, during Safavid Dynasty. The agricultural status of not only the city but also its surroundings had created a unique advantage for Bam on that time. One of the most considerable characteristics of the city was its palm trees. Moreover, the textile products of the city and its cotton, which was also afterwards extended into silk and silk products, in addition to its mature markets and bazaars, had made Bam a well-known city.<sup>44</sup>

The most significant historical monument of Bam and the largest adobe building in the world is located in the northeast corner of the city, Citadel of Bam (“Arg-e-Bam” in Persian). There have been some records of proofs of human settlement in citadel of Bam for about 5000 years ago. However, the oldest evidence of the architecture of the citadel dates back to at least the Achaemenid period. That is why in 1966, Citadel of Bam was listed in the National Heritage with the reference number of 519.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> - Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization of Iran, n.d.

<sup>41</sup> - Auroville Earth Institute, n.d.

<sup>42</sup> - Qanat is a kind of underground water management system which is mostly used in deserts and places with low possibility of rain which have water shortage.

<sup>43</sup> - Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization of Iran, n.d.

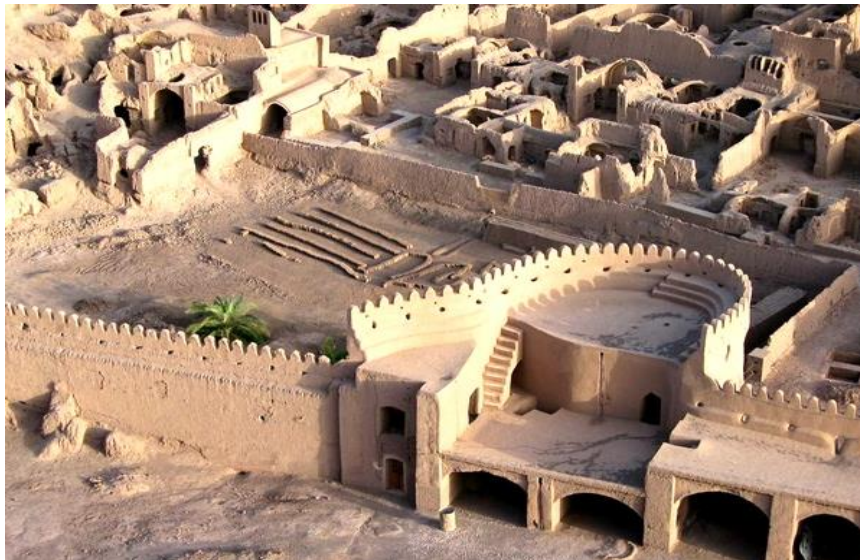
<sup>44</sup> - Auroville Earth Institute, n.d.

<sup>45</sup> - Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization of Iran, n.d.

Picture 2- Citadel of Bam before the Earthquake



\*Sources: Ferasati (n.d)



\*Sources: Molla Hosseini, 2011

The location of the fortress, being on the upper part of a hill made of rock was a reason that ended up on a huge destruction of the citadel due to the earthquake; while the basis and the foundation of the buildings were not strong enough to tolerate the entered force by the earthquake<sup>46</sup>. It ended up in massive debris.

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<sup>46</sup> - Auroville Earth Institute, n.d.



As a result in 2004, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced citadel of Bam in the heritages in danger<sup>47</sup> and sent a group of experts in order to manage a plan for rebuilding the citadel with the cooperation of the local authorities like the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office.<sup>48</sup>

Picture 3- Citadel of Bam after the earthquake



\*Sources: Molla Hosseini, 2011

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<sup>47</sup> - ibid.

<sup>48</sup> - UNESCO, 2007

## 4- Methodology

*“Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted.”*  
- Albert Einstein

As it is already stated, the aim of this research is to identify and interpret the role of the Iranian state right after the earthquake and also its duties and performance in the long run in Bam. The very first step in order to take a closer look into the research will be the reason behind selecting the qualitative research, then how the research was conducted and with which process the data was gathered. Afterwards, there will be the analysis of the obtained information and discussing results out of them.

### 4-1- Qualitative or Quantitative?

Choosing the proper type of data and the methodology to collect it can be a critical step in every research. This selection process starts and accomplishes during the research, and not before its beginning. Because the type of the information and data has a strong correlation with the purpose of the research itself, therefore the most accurate way to opt for the sort of data would be throughout the development of the research.<sup>49</sup> To do so, understanding the difference between qualitative and quantitative research is fundamental.

A brief explanation can be that the qualitative research is an exploratory method of enquiry. It sets out to research underlying causes, emotions and values prior to a hypothesis being developed. The goal of qualitative studies is to discover, explain and interpret why a phenomenon or behavior occurs. However, quantitative research is a systematic, investigative method of research. Quantitative studies gather numerical, statistical data to support or refute their hypotheses which could be previously held and uses standard type of analysis. Therefore quantitative research is more suitable for the type of projects which has a higher number of

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<sup>49</sup> - Holliday, 2007

samples.<sup>50</sup> Both of these types of research have their own strengths and weaknesses that determine the applicability and proper kind in a project.

For the target of this analysis, a qualitative approach has been chosen. Instead of explaining the expectations of people after the earthquake by various variables or an attempt to assess the performance of the state of I.R of Iran, some questions had been provided to bring out people's ideas and beliefs in this regard. Although there might be the risk of ignoring some valuable data or misinterpreting them, but having a broader field with less restrictions makes more sense here. As a result, from this part onwards everything which is in a relation to data and method is under the umbrella of qualitative research.

#### 4-2- Transdisciplinary

*The aim of science is to discover and illuminate truth. And that, I take it, is the aim of literature, whether biography or history... It seems to me, then, that there can be no separate literature of science.*

*- Rachel Carson, Lost Woods: The Discovered Writing of Rachel Carson*

Looking at a topic related to natural disasters and the consequences, disaster management, and even adding the role of state there, many disciplines would be brought up as the related ones. The most important ones would be:

- Geography: one of the very first disciplines in this regard is Geography. Since the geographical situation of Iran is very determining, and that is why as it was mentioned before there are plenty of natural disaster happening there.
- Economics: when it comes to catastrophes, the monetary losses and damages are something very important, because it is not only should be taken into consideration for evaluating the dimensions of disaster but also the amount of money that is needed for recovery.

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<sup>50</sup> - Patton 2002, Silverman 2006

- Politics / Anthropology: in such a situation the relations of people in need with their state, other national or international organizations and even with each other play a very crucial role.
- Sociology: knowing the society, its values, traditions, believes and culture is a very critical factor from each and every aspect, and all the aforementioned phases in this context.
- Medical science: concerns about the health of the survivors of a natural catastrophe during the state of the emergency and even after that is crystal clear. Therefore, there is little room for doubts about the importance of the roll of medical science and related ones like psychology.
- History: as it was mentioned before, Iran has been always endangered with natural hazards. Therefore, paying attention to the events in the past, how it had been dealt with, what was the weak or strong point is the last thing that could be disagreed with in disaster management sphere.

Therefore, many different aspects should be taken simultaneously into consideration in this issue. That is why it can be claimed that, based on different types of looking at a special theme, a transdisciplinary approach would be needed here for analyzing situation of a calamity<sup>51</sup>.

There are a myriad of definitions for transdisciplinary approach, all of them were discussed by Jahn et al. in their article “Transdisciplinarity: Between mainstreaming and marginalization”. After assessing possible explanations and exploring the differences and similarities among them, Jahn et al. come to this definition:

*“Transdisciplinarity is a reflexive research approach that addresses societal problems by means of interdisciplinary collaboration as well as the collaboration between researchers and extra scientific actors; its aim is to enable mutual learning processes between science and society; integration is the main cognitive challenge of the research process. Within the limits of our analysis we hold that this definition reflects a broad consensus among scholars of transdisciplinarity.”*<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> - Mittelstraß, 2005

<sup>52</sup> - Jahn et al., 2012

Moreover, they point out a very important factor in this regard which is about the relation of the society and researchers during a research. More detailed to say, when a research starts, based on either a problem or a research question, there would be a connection between researchers and the society. Both sides could provide information, while those data are considered equally important. In this approach, actually the researchers and their science have the same value as the society actors and their knowledge; they are complementary<sup>53</sup>.

This concrete description of transdisciplinarity make it much easier to understand that how broad is the topics in disaster management and without a transdisciplinarity approach it would be not possible to monitor all the necessary perspectives. Therefore a transdisciplinarity research approach is used here.

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<sup>53</sup> - ibid.

### 4-3- Type of Data and Method

As mentioned before, the proper sort of data for a research reveals itself during the project. Type of data does not refer to films, interviews, questionnaire, etc., as these are actually the way that the data is gathered. But it rather means whether for example the research entails an in-depth description of an event or an institution, or a visual record can bring out the possible answers to the research question (for more detail see Holliday, 2007, Pp 67-69).<sup>54</sup>

Among all types of qualitative data, people's ideas, experiences or thoughts, what Holliday calls *What People Say* is a kind of the information which in comparison to the other sorts of data, are being used most frequently;<sup>55</sup> and it is also the case in this thesis. Yet something should not be ignored about interviews. Although verbal interviews are seen as a valid and an applicable way of collecting data, they should not be overrated; since they cannot be conducted in a purely neutral way or without any kind of distraction or disruption to interviewee. In other words, the presence of the researcher, the way that she / he talks, behaves, her / his word selection and all in all her /his attitude influences the atmosphere and unquestionably the interviewee. The impact of the interviewer could be so high that she / he effects on what interviewee might say.<sup>56</sup>

That is why there could be some critiques regarding the accuracy of the provided materials throughout interviews, during the study and also in the time of assessing achieved results. Not only just in this case but also in any type of data gathering these issues should be taken into consideration.

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<sup>54</sup> - Holliday, 2007

<sup>55</sup> - Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> - Ibid.

#### 4-4- Qualitative Research, Valid Enough?

“*The most important test of any qualitative study is its quality*”<sup>57</sup>, therefore it is very crucial to think about while doing in each and every phase of a research. In order to verify a study, it's *Reliability* and *Validity* needs to be confirmed.

##### 4-4-1- Reliability

In case of qualitative research, it should be said that *Reliability* is not simple to gain. There are some researchers that believe that reliability is not relevant for qualitative studies but rather for quantitative ones<sup>58</sup>. Or there are some other groups that offer other words or terms instead of reliability like “*Dependability*” which is suggested by Lincoln and Guba<sup>59</sup>; they believe that this word can be used in qualitative research and it reflects the same meaning parallel to reliability in quantitative studies. But there are other believes too; a myriad of researchers find reliability something that is applicable to both quantitative and qualitative research.<sup>60</sup>

Regarding this characteristics it can be said that when a set of data is reliable then it has the potential to be collected or produced again and again by different researchers come to the identical outcome.<sup>61</sup> Simply to say, the process ought to be repeatable regardless of associated variables as the first time, for instance the researcher himself / herself, the time that it was conducted and so on.

##### 4-4-2- Validity

Like reliability, validity in qualitative research is also not referred to unanimously among researchers. Golafshani has done an exemplary systematic study of articles and sources in this regard<sup>62</sup>. She came to this point that a lot of researchers do not agree with this term for qualitative studies. But all in all it can be said that this concept is accepted by scholars in this

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<sup>57</sup> - Golafshani, 2003

<sup>58</sup> - Stenbacka, 2001

<sup>59</sup> - Lincoln and Guba, 1985

<sup>60</sup> - Golafshani, 2003

<sup>61</sup> - Silverman, 2006

<sup>62</sup> - Golafshani, 2003

ground<sup>63</sup>. Validity in a research talks about the plausibility of its accuracy and precision<sup>64</sup>; which is more difficult in qualitative studies rather than quantitative.

It also needs to be considered that validity and reliability is related to each other so much that it is also claimed that one of the results of validity in a research, is reliability.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, they both should be in researchers mind at the same time.

To do so, it was decided that in this thesis, the whole process of the interview, the circumstances before, during and after the interviews, and all the related information about everything should be taken into consideration. This description which is very crucial in this study is brought in following sections.

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<sup>63</sup> - ibid.

<sup>64</sup> - Silverman, 2006

<sup>65</sup> - Patton, 2002



## 4-5- Selecting the Method

As it was mentioned before, qualitative type of research had been chosen for doing this thesis. In the area of qualitative studies, there are a myriad of methods which could be chosen, ranging from wide range of questionnaires and different types of interviews (like *ethnographic interviews*, *Eliciting the interviewee's own story or couple interviews*)<sup>66</sup>, to observation and working on a focus group amongst other things. Here, in this dissertation among all the possible methods, interview seems the most suitable one. Because as Silverman says<sup>67</sup> when it comes to qualitative studies which are mostly about exploring a phenomenon in comparison to other type of research which try to confirm an issue, do not entail a very structured and rigid frame. Moreover, when a study is dealing with rather a small sample and group of people, the applicable method can be more flexible and open. Therefore as all of these characteristics match exactly with the features of this thesis, semi-structured narrative interviews have been chosen.

Biographical or narrative interviews are also called “*Oral History*” which can indicate the importance of this type of data gathering. Talking about their experiences throughout their lives, the interviewees could reflect a reality that might represent a definite period of the time of a society, an incident or a generation and etc.<sup>68</sup>. In this case it will be somehow just a reflection of an unfortunate event and its long run effect.

The interviews had been conducted in semi-structured style; since the interviewees might not be aware of the importance of their answers or maybe when they start talking about their past and hard situations, they would continue out-of-topic, hence the interview have the probability to last longer than the plan; or even get so hard for them that they do not want to continue anymore. Therefore, at some points of time it might be necessary to bring back the interview to its path and somehow steer the interview without giving the impression of controlling or forcing. In other words, this partially structured conversation enables the interviewer to bring out the favorable answers to the questions without making the situation too formal. Additionally, semi-structured interviews give the interviewer to change the order of the questions or rephrase them whenever and wherever it is needed, based on the atmosphere of the interview or the interviewees personality. This is on one hand.

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<sup>66</sup> - Edwards and Holland, 2013: 32-39

<sup>67</sup> - Silverman, 2000

<sup>68</sup> - Edwards and Holland, 2013: 3

On the other hand this type of interview gives the opportunity to the interviewee to feel more relax and free in order to talk about her / his experiences about the topic and share her / his ideas and thoughts which might be very helpful and informative for the research. Moreover, during this kind of free style talks new themes and topics can come to existence which might have been ignored or might even change a lot of things during the study.

Harrell and Bradley define the semi structured interview and its goal simple and short:

*“In semi-structured interviewing, a guide is used, with questions and topics that must be covered. The interviewer has some discretion about the order in which questions are asked, but the questions are standardized, and probes may be provided to ensure that the researcher covers the correct material. This kind of interview collects detailed information in a style that is somewhat conversational. Semi structured interviews are often used when the researcher wants to delve deeply into a topic and to understand thoroughly the answers provided.”*<sup>69</sup>

The merely issue that should not be forgotten is that semi-structured interviews with all of its advantages is also not perfect and has its own restrictions. The most critical point here is that interviews ought not to be seen as an experiment in a purely neutral situation, but rather any kind of variables like the time of the interviews, its place and many other things influence it. Hence, the outcome of the interview and its provided information may not reflect all the concrete trueness of the interviewee's ideas or believes.<sup>70</sup> Such expectations from an interview are not realistic.

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<sup>69</sup> - Harrell and Bradley, 2009

<sup>70</sup> - Pole and Lampard, 2002: 127

#### **4-6- Interviews' Blueprint**

In order to gather more information about the topic of this thesis, related theories and different mindsets regarding this theme and in order to be more prepared for the interviews, related articles and literature had been reviewed and studied. The obtained awareness from this procedure had been used to design and write the questions for interviews.

Although the questions for the interviews were exactly the same but due to the fact that the interviews were semi-structured, the order of the questions had not been strictly stuck to. Since sometimes the interviewee based on her / his thoughts had been trying to answer a question, while he / she was actually also referring to another question which had been supposed to be asked afterwards. As a result it could be claimed that the questions and the arrangement of the interviews that had been set beforehand, was actually used as a kind of reminder for being sure that each and every aspect of the theme had been covered and all the issues had been asked and not forgotten.

The other matter that needs to be stated is that because the Bam earthquake had been studied a lot from different aspects, interviewees had been very curious to find out about what they would have been asked and even there some latent aspect of this theme is still left. As a result some of them had inquired about some further information or the questions before the interview. Hence, for some of them the target of the research or just one or two sample questions had been revealed somehow in order to give them a sense of the whole process.

#### 4-7- Judgment Sample

After getting ready for the interviews, gathering all the necessary information and designing the questions, next step which has a significant importance in every research is selecting the interviewees; simply to say picking out the sample.

There had been two options open for this thesis, random sampling or choosing a sample strategy. The first option, random sampling did not seem appropriate for the purposes of this thesis, since a qualitative research had been chosen. Random sampling mostly fits for quantitative studies, where the researcher tries to avoid bias in sampling and reduce the possible inaccuracies. Moreover, the target of such samples is generalizing the result gained from sample group to a broader range and more population.<sup>71</sup> Therefore it was a more logical decision to go for the other way and select the interviewees based on their experiences and information, whom Patton called “*information-rich cases*”.<sup>72</sup>

Hence, a strategy should have been selected. Based on what Marshall had written, there are three types of strategies in this case, Convenience sample, Judgment or purposeful sample and Theoretical sample.<sup>73</sup> Judgment sample is the most used type of sampling among qualitative researchers<sup>74</sup> and it is also selected for this thesis. It had been an attempt to opt for a sample which could cover all the important variables in a group like gender.

Consequently, seven interviewees had been chosen through different ways. Most of them had been among the researcher’s network but with a very distant link. One of them had been introduced by another interviewee. And the last interviewee had been reached out throughout the internet.

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<sup>71</sup> - Patton, 2002: 230, Marshall, 1996

<sup>72</sup> - Patton, 2002: 230

<sup>73</sup> - Marshall, 1996

<sup>74</sup> - *ibid.*

#### 4-8- Reflection of a Native Researcher

*“One of the saddest things in life, is the things one remembers.”*

*- Agatha Christie*

If a student wants to start a research within the scope of social science, one of the very first things that she / he should learn is to be objective in the field research. In other words, if a research does not conduct by someone who is just objective, it would not be accepted in scientific environment. Although forecasting the process, managing the situation and avoiding unpreparedness is beneficial for running a qualitative research, but the most important target of the research is the ability to realize something and comprehend it to the full. Therefore, it is not convincible to ignore one of the key elements of the research which is the researcher her/himself. As Reinharz says, not only the research, but also “*experiential analysis*”, meaning the feelings, interactions and deeds during the fact-finding, is a precious part of the experiment. “*Experimental analysis assumes that what one person experiences is related to or reflects psychosocial arrangements and forces, so that to explicate the former is to illuminate the latter*”<sup>75</sup>.

Mostly the findings of a research in social science are written in a way that apparently, no researcher was guiding that, researcher should be objective or as if the research was just recorded by a camera; however this is not the case. If the personal story of the researcher, her/his status of knowledge, the background that ended up in a specific theme or methodology were not taken into consideration the puzzle of the research is not complete<sup>76</sup>. With ignoring the back scene of the research, the role of researcher, the interactions during the process and how things might have affected the results, the story of “*Self and Other*” comes to existence<sup>77</sup>. Dwyer in “*Moroccan Dialogues*” tried to emphasize on the importance of dialogues, interactions, incidents that could occur during research; since the researcher brings everything to the field, all of the ideas of not only her/himself with but also the point of view of the place that she/he is working for, the society and etc.<sup>78</sup>. Therefore, eliminating the status of the researcher during the process

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<sup>75</sup> - Reinharz, 1979, p 353

<sup>76</sup> - Nash and Wintrob, 1972

<sup>77</sup> - Dwyer, 1982

<sup>78</sup> - ibid.

ruins the whole picture. In order to complete the findings of this practice, following is a reflection of the process of the interview.

As I lived always in Tehran and Bam is in very southern part of Iran, I knew no one there and unfortunately had never been in that region before. By asking all my relatives and friends, I have found someone in Bam. She was the first woman whom I interviewed, then with the assistance of her son I visited the city, Citadel of Bam and could conduct the other interviews. Although I was coming from a different city, people in there accepted me very warmly. I had the opportunity to be a native researcher, not only because the interviewees and I spoke the same language but also we shared the same culture, values like being hospitable and worries for instance about the future of the country. That was an incredible advantage for me, because these similarities empowered me to understand their narratives to the full. However, some disadvantages for native researchers are claimed; most important of which is that they cannot meet the demand of a scientific article because they are emotionally too engaged or might have some bias. But this does not undo all the efforts and it is not troublesome at all<sup>79</sup>.

Something which was unique in my case was that as I mentioned before I had lived always in the capital city of Iran, Tehran, which does not have a lot in common with Bam, because as it was brought earlier Bam is a small city in south of Iran in the middle of desert while Tehran as a mega city is much more modern. Besides, as most of the opportunities and facilities are aggregated in Tehran, people in other cities do not feel equal to the capital inhabitants. Moreover, I am living since the last couple of years in Vienna to continue my education. Therefore, although I was a fellow citizen, I was also considered a little bit as a stranger or outsider.

All in all, I carried out seven interviews with 3 women and 4 men. They all went smoothly and without any problem or interruption, and I had the feeling that they had trusted me to share their sad, determinative, everlasting memories. 5 of them were in Bam and 2 in Tehran. They were very enthusiastic to talk about their experiences and thoughts regarding that unfortunate day with someone who was not there. For instance, the last interview was with a documentarian. He was so enthusiastic to be talked to, that the conversation lasted for 2 hours, at the end of the interview

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<sup>79</sup> - Brannick and Coghlan, 2007

he offered to give me the photos and videos that he even did not published or used in his own documentary. But it was not always like that.

Although I knew that the subject itself is representative and I thought that I was prepared to face sorrowful stories and so do the interviewees but anyhow that earthquake had changed the life of citizens enormously, a turning point happened during the third interview. The interviewee who had lost her mother and some of her relative because of the disaster; started to talk about the day of the earthquake, when suddenly lost her control and burst into tears for some seconds. On that time I was touched so much that I could hardly command my feelings and I did not know what I should do. I just proposed to stop the interview and go for a break or even cancel it, but she refused and said that she wanted to continue. After that I thought that no matter how prepared I am or how much I tried to anticipate everything, there might be different things that change the whole situation, and that is the moment of right action.

Moreover, after doing the interviews and starting to analyze and write, I understood that I am not only writing about my fellow citizens but also I am somehow reflecting myself; because I am doing a research on my people with my own knowledge for readers who might have no idea about us. That is why it makes everything even more difficult and more complicated.

#### 4-9- Translation predicament

For starting the analysis part, the very first step is transcribing the interviews, and translating them if it is necessary. In the case of this method, as it was mentioned before, the interviews had been conducted in Persian, the mother tongue of the interviewees and the researcher and are translated into English by the researcher herself.

As Van Nes et al. stated in their article as clear as possible:

*“...interpretation and understanding meanings are central in qualitative research and text is the ‘vehicle’ with which meaning is ultimately transferred to the reader, language differences generate additional challenges that might hinder the transfer of meaning and might result in loss of meaning and thus loss of the validity of the qualitative study.”*<sup>80</sup>

In other words, translating the materials and data which are the main source of information in a qualitative research is very difficult. Because during this process the researcher should have an eye of the presentation of the data and make sure that translation of them did not bring up any matters like changing the meaning or the message of the interviewee.<sup>81</sup>

Hence, there had been some efforts to tackle the aforementioned plausible problems during the translation. Due to some difficulties it was not possible to ask a professional translator to be present by the researcher during the transcribing and translating time, as Van Nes et al. offered.<sup>82</sup> But in order to minimize the risk of losing the actual meaning of the words and phrases in interviews and hold the validity of the data as high as possible, it was asked from a native English speaker to confirm or edit what was translated, based on her knowledge from Persian language plus all the necessary explanations.

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<sup>80</sup> - Van Nes et al., 2010

<sup>81</sup> - Temple and Young, 2004

<sup>82</sup> - Van Nes et al., 2010



## 5- Analysis

Following all the steps that have been written about, choosing the proper method, selecting the sample, carrying out the interviews, transcribing and translating them, it comes to analyzing the of gained information and data. For doing this, among all the possible techniques for analysis the material of present thesis, content analysis seemed the most adequate one, which is to be discussed as follows.

### 5-1- Content Analysis

One of the ways to get detailed information from a qualitative research is to use content analysis. Within the content analysis, three different approaches could be decided on, conventional, directed, or summative.<sup>83</sup> Coding rules and concerns about the reliability are the most important things that differentiate among these approaches. When in the conventional one the codes and categories are driven out from the text data itself, directed approach defines them based on a theory or research which has the potential to be used as a kind of instruction. And the last type, summative deals with the phrases or words in the text in order to compare them with each other or determining the total number of them and complete the evaluation by explaining and interpreting them.<sup>84</sup> For the purposes of the current research, conventional approach was selected.

According to Philipp Mayring<sup>85</sup>, the *step-by-step model* of doing content analysis is given as follows:

- I. Definition of the material: this step says that the analysis should start with describing the most important variable in the research which is people or interviewees. It needs to be clarified who were the interviews and why they have been interviewed. In other words, how the researcher opt for the sample.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> - Hsieh and Shannon, 2005

<sup>84</sup> - *ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> - Mayring, 2014, 53

<sup>86</sup> - Mayring, 2014, 56

- II. *Analysis of the situation of origin*: Additionally, more information about the interview itself, its conditions even about its place. Even some detailed data about the researcher is also required.<sup>87</sup>
- III. *Formal characteristics of the material*: finally how the process of converting conversations to text data had happened. That needs a myriad of considerations<sup>88</sup> (for more information see Mayring, 2014)

After making all the procedure clear enough and stating all the necessary information about the material, it comes to analyzing the gained data. In order to explain and interpret the material, four ways exist, Summary or Inductive type; explication or context analysis; structuring or deductive and mixed.<sup>89</sup> In the first type, inductive, it offers to reduce the data in order to make the interpretation easier, while context type is mostly engaging further literature in order to explain the data. And the deductive method talks about filtrating the most important features of the data, taking out the crucial parts and interpret them.<sup>90</sup> And last one, as it is guessable from its name, is a mixture of aforesaid methods.

For this thesis, structuring type was chosen, as creating categories and interpreting the data based on the codes which was done in the current research, is a kind of filtering. Most of the codes and categories had been defined before conducting interviews but in order to keep the flexibility and enlarge the possibility of accuracy of the research, categories were revised after the interviews. Moreover, in order to cover all the related topics which had not been foreseen and brought up by interviewees some new ones was created afterwards. Each category has also some sub-categories based on the variables which could be found under the umbrella of the defined code.

This all had been done mostly to shrink the risk of losing important data by creating codes and categories in a qualitative content analysis.

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<sup>87</sup> - Mayring, 2014, 57

<sup>88</sup> - *ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> - Mayring, 2014, 54

<sup>90</sup> - Mayring, 2003, 58

## 5-2- Processing the Codes

As briefly was mentioned in the previous section, some categories have been designed before starting the process of analyzing the written data. Having those groupings in mind, the researcher started to read the transcriptions and mark some parts which were related to those pre-defined categories.

However, during the reading procedure the researcher let herself to be free enough to encounter and grasp the information which might be ignored by that grouping. As a result, some of the categories or sub-categories needed to be revised to cover more related data. Also some additional groups were created.

One of the crucial parts during this process was about the correlation of the categories with the aim of the present study. Because some groups had a direct relation to the research question or to the purpose; however some others were indirectly involved or just could touch a very small part of the research. That is why after having all the codes and categories, there was a final evaluation of the categories and their connection.

Afterwards a color scheme was used in order to organize the data and find more simply the information which were related to each other and were in the same category. This method created a more structured way to start assessing the written material and take out valuable information.

Finally, some of the statements and quotes were used directly and in the interviewee's own words while some of them were rephrased by the researcher. This made interpreting the text and the message by the interviewees much easier.

## **6- Interpretation of Data**

This section deals with the information which has been taken out from the aforementioned interviews. The target of the whole process is to find the most relevant data to the research question, and analyze all that information in order to get closer to the possible answer and aim of the research.

To do so, the very first step is to have a closer look on the interviewees themselves; followed by the discussion resulted from the data analysis. Because of the high importance of the first two categories (the situation during the state of emergency and performance of the state after the state of emergency), it has been tried to use more parts of the interviews and let them explain the situation.

### **6-1- Interviewees' Attribute**

Before getting into the analysis or interpretation of the data, it is very important to know more about the interviewees; because each of them has his / her story and they all brought different perspectives to the research with their participation. Moreover, going more into detail of the characteristics of the interviewees and their situation in the Bam earthquake, makes it more visible that the researcher had tried to gather all the possible type of point of views ranging from someone who lost all of his family member to someone who lost not only none of her beloved ones but also her house did not ruin.

Hence, some detailed information from all of the interviewees has been brought followed by the place and the length of the interview. All in all there were 7 interviews in different places ranging from office to public places.

Interviewee 1- A 42-year-old woman who was in Bam when the earthquake had happened, she did not lose anybody or anything. Since she is an obstetrician, she could easily continue her job after the earthquake. She lives in Bam with all of her family but she prefers to send her sons somewhere that had no sorrowful memories. Her interview was in her home and took around one hour. She was the one who introduced the third interviewee.

Interviewee 2- A man who was in Bam earthquake, lost his mother and he was 48 years old. He had a store which was completely ruined. He rebuilt his store and still lives in Bam. This interview was roughly 90 minutes and in his apartment.

Interviewee 3- A woman who was also in Bam during that time, lost her mother, father and brother. After 3 days, she left the city with her children for next couple of months. She was 45 years old. After coming back, she continued her job as an employee of government in insurance and pharmaceutical sector. The interview with this woman was occurred in her office after the working hours and lasted a little bit more than one hour.

Interviewee 4- A 51-year-old man who lost all of his family in the earthquake, his parents, his wife and his only daughter, while he himself was injured. He had a factory before the earthquake. He started to help other people in Bam after 2-3 days of recovery. Soon after he founded a NGO in Bam which stills helps the survivors and he still lives there. This interview was almost two hours and was held in his office.

Interviewee 5- A man who was badly injured in the earthquake, he was sent to Shiraz for retreatments, came back after a month, he was in his thirties when the earthquake had happened. He lost his mother and some relatives in the earthquake. He had a garden which was totally destroyed by the earthquake. He could partially recover his garden and he lives in Bam. Because he had some guests at home, the interview was held in his brother's house and continued for one hour.

Interviewee 6- A 46-year-old woman who was not there when the earthquake had happened, but all of her family had been there and unfortunately died. She went there 2 days after the earthquake with a lot of difficulties and stayed in Bam for next 3-4 years, and then she left the city. Now, she lives in Tehran. Therefore the one-hour interview was held in Tehran in a small and very quiet park near her home.

Interviewee 7- A man who went to Bam after 3 days, for shooting some videos for NGOs that wanted to help the people in need. And afterwards he stayed there to make a documentary. He was in Bam for 4-5 months, and then he headed back home, Tehran. This was the longest interview for more than two hours and it was held in his home-office. He was the youngest interviewee with 38 years old.

A summary of the interviewees is as follows:

- IV. 3 women and 4 men
- V. Age range between 38-51
- VI. 6 of them were originally from Bam (exception was the last interviewee)
- VII. 5 of them are still living in Bam (except last two interviewees)
- VIII. 5 of them were in Bam when the earthquake had happened (except last two interviewees that came shortly after)
- IX. 5 of them lost some of their beloved ones because of the earthquake (exceptions were the first and last interviewee)
- X. 2 of them had been injured, interviewee 4 and 5.
- XI. 5 of interviews were in Bam and last two in Tehran.
- XII. Interviews were conducted in 4 homes, 2 offices and one in a park.

## 6-2- Analysis of Interviews

After knowing more about the interviewees' characteristics and their situation during and after the earthquake, it is easier to understand their words and sentences and get closer to what they exactly meant to reflect. In other words, the information that they had given can be understood better.

### 6-2-1- The situation during the state of emergency

The first part of the interview and actually the whole story was about the day and the time that the earthquake had happened. The interviewees were supposed to reflect their observations and evaluations about that period, and say whether they see any problem, shortage and any negative or positive point. That is why their thoughts and ideas can be divided into two relative groups, satisfied and unsatisfied.

#### I. Relatively Unsatisfied

As it was stated above, initially the problems shortly after the earthquake from interviewees' point of view is as follows:

*"[...] according to help and rescue we were not ready for it and if there had been readiness and preparation, the death toll and injured people would have been much less,..., The state claimed that they did quite well but it is just a declaration; My answer to this, which is a question, is that when did you arrive and how many were you?... No statistic has been given till now, but regardless of the number of the aid workers they could not rescue ONE CITY.... I personally had been saved by my fellow citizens. This means each person that had been saved accidentally was because of his/her relatives whose house had not damaged. In other words, every person who had survived the earthquake had gone to rescue his/her family,*

*friends or neighbors... The role of forces from state like Red Crescent was not a vital one in rescuing people unfortunately.”*

(Interviewee 4)

After an earthquake, the very first thing that comes to mind is about saving the survivors. Because the number of victims and death toll could remarkably change based on the quality of the rescue teams. As it was stated by the fourth interviewee very clearly and also by all the other interviewees, the state did not react in the proper time and not with the enough force to rescue the people who were still alive and needed help.

It needs to be emphasized that the interviewees who had been in Bam in the day of the earthquake, could survive that day because their house was good enough and it was not severely damaged plus the fact that the other ones who had been injured and could not move, were rescued by their family or neighbors. That means the state and the organizations which were responsible for these tasks (like the Red Crescent) were not ready and also they could not estimate the situation precise enough, therefore they could not be influential there as it was expected.

*“[...]One of the things there was for example Pakistan had set 1000 tent, without permission without any plan, Americans had set a kind of kitchen and gave warm food, Spanish people had taken care of water, an Iranian-American NGO was giving warm milk at night, and Iranian state itself was doing some stuff. So, there were lots of foreigners... Chaos...”*

*“[...]And what was state’s problem? One of them was in Old-Citadel, after the earthquake snakes, spiders and other things came out of that, and you know it was an old building; therefore there might have been some gold in it. Moreover, an*



*ancient time there was a kind of believe that when a child passes away, in order to keep it they put her/him within the walls. After earthquake all the bones came out too. All in all, that entire place needed a lot of attention, so state had closed it and made some borders and put some police officers there.”*

(Interviewee 3)

Having many volunteers or aid providers from all around the world after such a tragedy is a good thing as long as everything goes well. In other words, it is positive until it does not become a problem itself. In conditions like that, arrangements in a proper way play an important role; and this is something that needs to be done by the local officials. If they do not try to manage the smaller groups, it does not end in a good way and would not reduce the present matters and problems.

The other problem which the third interviewee said can be referred to as a unique issue which does not happen often even after natural disasters. The importance of the Citadel of Bam was and still is vital for Bam and its inhabitants, as it was written in chapter 3. Handling the circumstances is not easy when such an inheritance is not only totally destroyed, but also its ruins brought some problems with it. In order to overcome situations like that plenty of knowledge and expertise is needed.

*“[...] You know when someone dies under debris, or loses his foot; you can understand or imagine that. But if someone’s intestine was tear apart and is out of his body and for him it’s better to die, or it’s a kid, you cannot even think about it. There was an especial hospital for such things and nobody could even entre it, it was horrible. People preferred to help the child who had lost his father not to*

*go in that hospital for help. It's really hard to decide for them, state needs to give them services and wait for their death."*

*"[...]It was another problem there; let's say cultural difference was very high. Because we were coming from capital and they were not happy about that. It was even more in case of foreigners. It was even more in case of foreigners. I had this feeling that there was nothing in between to alert about this gap, neither to the volunteers nor to the people in Bam."*

(Interviewee 7)

After a disaster, some people are undefined in respect to their injuries or loss, whom are the first issue of this interviewee. These people do not receive attention even from the scholars in this field; the ones who are so badly hurt that it is not easy to decide whether it is better to give them medical care or allocate the resources to other people who might have more chance to live. As a result, a crisis-stricken state like here, prefers to ignore the problem and stay silent about it until it is gone rather than to find a solution or the best way for dealing with it.

The second issue said by this interviewee, entails a lot of attention from the aid providers in disasters like that especially when they do not know enough about the place and the area, like the city of present study, Bam; although it was known for its cultural inheritance but now very much. And this lack of information and recognition had led to different types of problems.

In such situations, the state was also responsible to make the other groups aware of the circumstances more in detail and give the help providers more useful information in order to reduce the possible difficulties.

*“[...] Another thing was that there was such a competition among NGOs that who can attract more kids, with gummies, funny program or so... there was no alignment among them at all.”*

*“[...] So all in all I think the most important problem was related to children, the state either did not know how to react or was not its main focus to take good care of children. Because in my point of view, buildings, food, cloth etc. would be solved sooner or later but those kids were really affected negatively.”*

(Interviewee 1)

The issues which had been related to children and their conditions, was the theme that was brought into attention by all the interviewees. They had touched different aspects of problems concerning children and teenagers in Bam after the earthquake, as it has been also written in the previous paragraph.

In spite of the efforts made by NGOs with good intentions, the side effects of their activities were not necessarily pleasant. NGOs with different funds, skilled human resources and experience had unbalanced and unproportional contributions. For instance, NGOs with higher budget was taking care of fewer children on a high level which caused jealousy and unhealthy competition among children and also even among NGOs. This is a phenomenon called “*Competitive Humanitarianism*” by Jock Stirrat.<sup>91</sup> Stirrat witnessed the same situation in Sri Lanka after the tsunami in 2004.

Another problem was caused by unprofessional, untrained staff of the NGOs. They had not received any type of training regarding the cultural background and psyche of the children of Bam. More precisely to say, the majority of the children in Bam had not seen any urban woman, but rather they had just faced their mothers, aunts, etc.. That is why seeing a young loose dressed

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<sup>91</sup> - Stirrat, 2006

NGO volunteer could be problematic, while these volunteers themselves had no clue that they were promoting troubles beside help.

The children of Bam, being the next generation of the city with such a tragedy, needed especial attention in order to reduce the negative effect of the earthquake in them and prepare them for their future in Bam or anywhere else. This was the task of the organizations, institutions and NGOs which had been active in children and teenager areas, like the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in Iran.

But the situation had been very complicated and not promising. There were different groups from international and local sphere which wanted to deal with or take especial care of surviving children of Bam. They did not actually help as much as it was planned but also their lack of cooperation had led to more conflicts and disorders. All of these actions and reactions created an unsafe and undesirable atmosphere for children, who have been supposed to rebuild the city in near future.

*“[...]People in such situation are desperate more for mental help, sympathy and consultation rather than need for food or cloth. I mean it is not all about the food or house or such stuff, not only material requirements. But not all the aid givers were aware of that. For instance once I saw one of my neighbors who was a very honorable man, was struggling with himself about receiving some stuff because the donor was standing on a car and throwing them toward people. He needed those things but he could not get along with the way that it was distributed.”*

(Interviewee 5)

Lack of spiritual and psychological support was the other issue that had been spoken about by all the interviewees. The issue that was stated here is about a kind of latent aspect of support, understanding and sympathy. From this point of view, helping people in need after a natural

disaster or even any other type of catastrophe, is not only about giving them basic materials or other stuff. But it also should not be forgotten that the survivors also need to be understood and respected. In other words, although they are in need, but it does not mean that they could tolerate to be treated badly or not well enough.

*“[...]Alongside with all those psychological pressures, a woman’s period had started and that blood can be seen in her cloth. That is really irritating for her... For instance, all types of cloth (especially underwear) should be provided in those packages that donors give to people in need, and also hygienic pads. And there had not been such a thing at that time, they had been added afterwards.”*

*“[...]As I’m pretty accurate in such stuff, I saw that there are some mirrors in a few of those toys, like in a set of make-up stuff; and women had been attracted to those ones. That was really interesting for me. And at that time I understood that women NEED mirror, I mean they do need it really and it should be in aid packages. And that research proved that also.”*

(Interviewee 2)

These examples (about the shortage of sanitary products and mirror) brought by the second interviewee, shows the fact that how much the state and the authorities in Iran did not know women and their needs in such situations. This lack of knowledge and information is not only concerning women but also as it was mentioned earlier it touches the children. Simply to say, the real requirements of people in one society but at the same time in different categories like in various age or gender groups.

## II. Relatively Satisfied

Based on the interviewees' opinions, the performance of the Iranian state during the state of emergency was efficient in some cases such as regaining and keeping the security or the basic needs of the survivors as are written below.

*"[...]Security was definitely not perfect but it got better every day... not only Army but also Sepah (Islamic revolutionary guard corps, IRGC) was also here. Sepah was in charge for entering in Bam and army for entering Baravat."*

(Interviewee 6)

After a disaster in such scales, the order of the city might change easily, as it had happened in Bam. Because most of the people had lost their identification card that is why it had created an occasion for people from the other cities who might have been criminals, thieves and all in all the guilty ones who were seeking for a place to hide or start their lives again. Therefore, Bam was a perfect place for them. This condition makes any city unsafe. And this is only one side of the matter.

The other side was regarding the destruction of the houses, shops, gardens and literally the whole city. But still some of the citizens of Bam had some precious things in their ruined houses, like golds or money. This makes the city even more unsafe because that creates an opportunity for anyone who wants to steal something when the owner is not emotionally and mentally very aware of her / his surroundings.

Due to these two reasons, Bam was not safe and secure at the first days during the state of emergency. But as it was mentioned by the sixth interviewee, the state could overcome the situation after a couple of days and make the city protected from the possible dangers and risks.

*“[...] But keep that in mind that we are talking about the state of emergency which was happening in the middle of desert. So in such a situation if you want to serve these people, it would be in its minimum. And the state did it not so bad...*

(Interviewee 7)

When a calamity happens, there are many variables which can make an incredible difference in the terms of managing the situation like the time of the event or its place; which was mentioned here. As it was written in chapter 2-2, Iran is a broad country. While Tehran, the capital city is mostly near to the center-north of the country, Bam is west-south of Iran, almost located in deserted area.

This means that the geographical situation of the Bam had made it very difficult for help providers, which includes also the Iranian state. For instance, it is good to be mentioned that the nearest real airport during that period was in Kerman city, which is around 200 kilometers away from Bam.

This interviewee had said that this variable needs to be also taken into consideration for assessing the performance of the state. And therefore, in this regard it was not very badly carrying out.

#### 6-2-2- Contact with organizations from state during the state of emergency and afterwards

After getting to know more the general situation of that time in Bam, next step was about getting more into details and see whether the interviewees themselves or any of their family members or friends encountered an organization of the state. Because it was very informative to understand whether the interviewees just had some feelings toward the performance of the state or they really had faced it.

*“[...] Many citizens of Bam could not find their ID cards among the debris so they had to go to the authorities to get one. Every person should have brought 2-3 other people who know him like witnesses.”*

(Interviewee 5)

The first thing that survivors of the Bam earthquake had to do after some days was to go to a type of office of the National Organization for Civil Registration in order to get their identification card, if they had lost them. None of the interviewees mentioned any kind of problem with this organization.

*“[...] Each person needed to go to municipality to have that license in order to rebuild his/her house.”*

(Interviewee 4)

After the state of the emergency, when the city was in a better mood at least for people to think about their houses and shops, they found out that to rebuild their homes they need to go to another organization of the state to get a type of license for the building phase. Although they had different stories about the timing of the bureaucracy they were not unhappy about their performance.



### 6-2-3- State as a whole or separate organizations

Another fact that needed to be taken into consideration was regarding the idea of the interviewees about the state itself. It was interesting to find out whether the interviewees differentiate among all the organizations and institutions that are related to the state or they evaluate it as a monolith.

*“[...] In industry, there had been a really good intervention; it was one of the sections that was really well treated. The ministry of industry started to act very soon and influential... But the reaction in the case of ministry of Trade was not so good. For instance, 4200 shops had certificates for their jobs, until the mid of year 2004 only 700 container had been sent to Bam for people who wanted to start their shops again.”*

*“[...] Banks did a good job, after 4-5 days they came back in some containers trying to help people... They had made some of the people's money available if they needed to. The process was that you needed to find somebody to confirm your identity, and then you could go to the bank and get some money. The responsibility of other local organizations and offices had been given to the offices of other neighbor cities like Kerman. Step by step, they provided some containers and staff got back to their roles; then rebuilding. But it was interesting that some offices could not manage to do it properly maybe due to their managers, for instance Telecommunication office were still in container until some month ago. But the others were good. For instance, in case of welfare organization of Iran, they could build around 40000 m2 building with international help and also local donors as hospitals and so. Ministry of*

*education could attract donors very good and build some schools with their support; we can say that almost all of the schools have been rebuilt.”*

(Interviewee 4)

*“[...] Citadel e Bam is a symbolic heritage that can help the economy of a city. In my opinion, although “Cultural Heritage Organization” is in charge for Citadel e Bam, but still they do not understand exactly how important this can be for us. “Cultural Heritage Organization” could help the people of Bam by increasing the speed of rebuilding Citadel e Bam in order to help the economy. This organization cannot distribute tents in such a situation but rather they could help in another way like that. I did not see enough effort.”*

(Interviewee 2)

*“[...] Ministry of health did a lot of effort there for building hospitals. Or schools started to work very early.”*

(Interviewee 1)

Interestingly, each and every one of the interviewees had been talking about different organizations and institutions separately ranging from banks and schools to a ministry. This can reflect the fact that within a local power, different parts can perform independently and people also see and evaluate it singly.

#### 6-2-4- Complementary organizations

The other aspect in the interviews was to find out whether the interviewees had seen any other institutions ranging from international organizations to local and domestic ones; or even whether there had been a kind of community in civil society. The point was to discover if any of those organizations had been doing a task which was actually a duty of the state or they had a complementary role beside the state.

*“[...] people's mental and psychological problems brought me to work with “Psychological and Social Intervention Team”. This team was supported by UNICEF but its management was by one of the departments of Health Ministry.*

*Regarding other international organizations, I can say for sure that UNDP had an office here, UNICEF that I mentioned and also some international NGOs like Mercy Corps from USA, World vision from France, ACT from Netherland, and some others.”*

(Interviewee 4)

*“[...] I always thought that NGO is for help until I saw some stuff with my own eyes... I understood that those NGOs are there for help but some of them also came there to follow their own interest in other fields like constructing a part of the city.*

*For example Spain which is giving water, and simultaneously they were studying on qanats. Then when the government says something about reviving the qanat in*

*Bam, the first proposal came from Spanish side! Or there was another NGO from USA giving just help to pregnant women for their own studies.”*

(Interviewee 7)

As it was mentioned in interviews, some NGOs from different countries and also some local ones went to Bam to help. But it was seen that some of them were there not only to give assistance to people in need and bring aid to them, rather they had also some other thoughts and plans in their minds. That can be seen also a reason for them to stay so long, even after the state of emergency was finished. However, this fact should not be forgotten that they offered a lot of help and somehow took some burdens from state's shoulder, like what UNICEF was doing for psychological help.

*“[...] Iranians who had been living in USA for a long time could come and they even brought their money; that was very much positive and helpful*

(Interviewee 3)

Financial sources could be seen as one of the very first things that is needed in such circumstances in order to provide the other necessary things. The Iranians who live in the United States of America are seen as elite and rich by the ones residing in Iran. Therefore it is always remembered how the American-Iranians react to the problem inside Iran and whether they helped or not. And this situation was also not an exception. They tried to stand by the side of the people of Bam and sent money to them, even though they might not totally agree with the state's policies.

### 6-2-5- Influence of Religion

As it was discussed in chapter 2-4, Islamic believes is a major part of Iranian culture. Therefore it was interesting to investigate and see whether they could influence the expectations or the assessments of people of Bam; in other words if the believes of people of Bam had changed because of the earthquake. On the other hand, there could have been also some impacts of the state's performance in a positive or negative way.

*"[...] Based on what we can read in Quran and if we do not see those stories not like a philosophic one but rather a real narrative, disaster will occur everywhere. Man should be really idiot if he thinks the opposite. As I told before, this comes from not enough education and so and not everybody has this belief. But unfortunately our society had been harmed a bit due to this matter; e.g. a book had been written by a clergyman and he had distributed that book in schools among students in Bam and it was written in it that "adultery" is the reason of earthquake. But it was nothing important or significant."*

(Interviewee 5)

It was really interesting to hear such thoughts and ideas from the people who had gone through a natural catastrophe and given a high price for it by losing their family and friends. Because based on the Islamic believes and lessons, a natural disaster can be also a sign from God to show that people are doing something very wrong. But it is somehow a kind of comprehension that is not very deep.

Therefore it catches the attention when people experience something very sorrowfully, but still they are logical, aware and wise enough in order to stand against those negative rumors. Simply to say, people in Bam did not let the minority of the society who believes such stories influence

them and give them bad feelings as if they are very much guilty and they are responsible for what happens to Bam.

*“[...] Actually I saw people’s objection to God, even in their things that they wrote on the walls and doors; but after the disaster believe comes back. They had no choice but seek refuge in God. I had a clip from the things that people had been writing in walls of the city, it started very sad and irate, and then it became more and more positive like I’m going to rebuild Bam and so on.”*

(Interviewee 7)

The only time that the religion and spiritual believes came to the interviews were from this point that in the beginning, shortly after the earthquake, some of the survivors in Bam had been very angry and frustrated. That is why they also had taken this anger and disappointment toward God, although this is highly forbidden in Islam. Then, after passing some days, they changed their attitude completely and tried to strengthen their believe and trust in God, instead of the first path that they had been in.

Having all the interviews in addition to the examples above, it can be seen that the Islamic believes not only did not influence the people in Bam but also it did not have an effect on the performance of the state at all.

## 6-2-6- Performance of the state after the state of emergency

After the emergency period is gone, the tasks of the state would be in other forms and people in need would be eager to receive other types of aid in order to go back to their life before the disaster. That is why it was also substantial to get more information about that time and see how the state could handle the situation.

*“[...] In our case the earthquake was in December and aid had been continued until around May, around 4 month. There were some packages which contained foodstuff. This is not correct at all. When you give the people the food directly, this means that they have the least requirement for surviving, therefore the economic circle in the city is stopped; while this circle and trading is one of the very important things that needs to be recovered as soon as possible.*

*This happens while on one side shop owners have nothing to do. On the other side, there might be a person who does not need some of the items in the package while he/she needs some other things more. With giving the packages, the power of selecting had been taken from people.*

*Another problem was that, it was supposed to plan a new detailed design for Bam and preparing and designing that plan had lasted a long time; if I don't make a mistake it was around 8 months when it got ready. Because there were two groups between the state's authorities, one group had the idea that it was not feasible anymore to rebuild Bam, while the other group insisted that it should be done...*

*“[...] The state had given 1 million Toman<sup>92</sup> for fencing the houses gratuitous, for rebuilding 10 million Toman loan and 3.5 or 3 million Toman gratuitous if I remember correctly. But this 13 million Toman was not enough for rebuilding the house, especially in case of the people who got it late, due to some problems of certifications or other stuff. Because they had faced an incredible rise in prices of building materials, iron and so on.”*

(Interviewee 4)

This interviewee had the idea that the distribution of the humanitarian aid packages had to be done by the local stores. However it might be some critiques toward it. For instance this procedure could lead to a kind of semi-favoritism by shop owners which might end in disputes and tensions among the people in Bam. This issue is directly related to the debate in disaster studies regarding the situation of the society after a disaster. Some scholars in this regard argue that in hard situations like after a catastrophe people has more national solidarity, however some others believe that it is exactly the opposite, which means chances of conflicts are much higher in such situations<sup>93</sup>. It seems in the case of Bam people were more toward unity rather than into challenging situations.

The other issue in this piece of information was about how delay in making decisions by the state can unleash problems. All phases of coming to the conclusion whether and how to start rebuilding Bam followed by allocating the adequate amount of fund were so slow that made people of Bam unmotivated, alienated and unsatisfied.

*“[...] in some parts of Bam, for instance we have a street that most of the shop owners are there doing their business. This let say Bazar was closed by “Cultural Heritage Organization”, and they did not let the owner rebuild. Rebuilding of that*

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<sup>92</sup> - Toman is the Iranian currency. Every euro is around 4.000 Toman.

<sup>93</sup> - Dynes and Quarantelli, 1976



*part lasted 8 years. Actually we were not allowed for 8 years to rebuild, and afterwards it took one more year for the owners to rebuild, all in all that lasted 9 years. Some people even died due to depression of not having a job. There were some problems like that especially in case of trading section. There was really a lack of support.”*

(Interviewee 6)

It is vague why “Cultural Heritage Organization” was fully responsible for making this decision regarding rebuilding and reopening the Bazar in Bam. Because it might be an argument that why the ministry of Trade did not interfere in order to facilitate and speed up the process, and bring people back to their business. This long lasted procedure reflects also the inefficient bureaucracy.

*“[...] Then the state did something really good, they specified a ground and told the companies that bring their sample house there to show to people. Then they gave people mortgages for building the house that they selected in that field... . Then the government decided to hold the Mass-Construction conference in Bam to attract construction companies.”*

(Interviewee 2)

*“[...] But the government tried to do something else to attract attention, like holding conferences, concerts, rebuilding Citadel-e-Bam, announced the New-Citadel a free trade zone, and etc. there. To make people come back and live in Bam.”*

(Interviewee 3)

State's attempts, like gathering the experts and companies in construction for the conferences, in drawing the attention of private section to contribute in rebuilding Bam were effective and successful.

*"[...] I think the state could only answer the needs of the people only 10-15 percent not more. And the reason was only the lack of management and also monopolizing the aid. It means that the "Cultural Heritage Organization" thought the only way to help Bam should go through them. Otherwise they don't let it happen."*

(Interviewee 5)

Because of Bam's historical importance "Cultural Heritage Organization" played a crucial role in rebuilding the city. In process of reconstruction, this organization added a lot of inertia to the state in decision making. The approval of the state's plans was given to "Cultural Heritage Organization", while they did not have the potential and capacity for handling and analyzing massive amount of tasks. Therefore, this organization became an obstacle per se.

#### 6-2-7- Evaluation of the whole process

After taking all the aforementioned information in detail as much as possible, it was fascinating to know how the interviewees see the procedure and how they express their feelings and thoughts.

*“I think government did not act very badly; the whole rebuilding period I think will last at least 50 years.”*

(Interviewee 1)

*“It can never be perfect, even in the USA it’s still a problem in disasters.”*

(Interviewee 3)

*“I think everything went ok; just the children of Bam had a tragic destiny.”*

(Interviewee 2)

The two above quotes from interviewees imply that some people have a positive perception about the performance of the state. Even though they were not totally satisfied with the results, but they saw the outcome constructive and acceptable.

Moreover, it needs to be considered that some consequences of such a tragedy are so destructive that regardless of all the efforts, they have inevitable negative effects on people’s lives, especially children.

*“More than their performance, I like to emphasize on their lack of knowledge in this matter. They were not so bad in the cases that they knew how to handle, but they just did not know exactly what to do and when to do”*

(Interviewee 6)

*“I don’t want to be unfair and brutally say no, but I also cannot say yes because I saw and felt that they could do things very much better but they did not.”*

(Interviewee 4)

*“Definitely it could be done better. If I want to answer just with yes or no I would say No. But relatively and considering all the things that had happened in the country, the way that state intervened was really good.*

*The psychological help was not good enough; therefore we needed to start using medicine. And these all sorrows showed themselves with different types of depression, social problems and so on.”*

(Interviewee 5)

The extent of this natural disaster damages in the historical city was so massive that made it a unique experience in Iran. Therefore although the state was doing its best to overcome the destructions but the lack of experience and knowledge, especially psychology, was obvious. And this shortage led to some long-run negative consequences like the depression of people of Bam.

*“I think state did fundamental things there. Especially when you know that Iranians in warm climate are not so fast, they are normally very slow. And if they have an earthquake it will take a longer period for them to rebuild and get back to normal situation, especially with such a huge disaster.”*

(Interviewee 7)

There is a public opinion that people in different region in Iran have various characteristics and attitudes, one of which is that people in southern desert of Iran are mostly laid back. This issue plus experiencing such a catastrophe made everything more complicated regarding the rebuilding the city and getting back to life before the earthquake.

In a nutshell, it should be considered that the outcome of the whole process was not solely the result of the performance of the state but rather a kind of mixture between the state and people's attitude.

## 7- Conclusion

*“There is no country, no community, and no person immune to the impacts of disasters. Disasters, however, can be and have been prepared for, responded to, and recovered from, and have had their consequences mitigated to an increasing degree.”<sup>94</sup>* To continue the decrease in the negative consequences of the natural calamities, the state of a country plays a very crucial role; which was the main focus of this study.

Based on the findings of the present thesis, the impact of the state and its organizations is not undeniable. However in this issue, the Iranian state could not be seen as a monolith because the survivors of the Bam earthquake mostly did not refer to the state as a whole, but rather they prefer to call the ministry or the organization itself in order to talk about it or evaluate its performance during that time. For instance, based on the gathered information the ministry of education was the first one that had tried to take its responsibilities back and encourage the people to restart their lives soon after the earthquake.

The negative points which have been repeated in the collected information were concerning two issues. First, there was a lack of knowledge in understanding the true requirements of people of Bam, with different ages, gender and so on. Second, mismanagement in many areas was obvious, like in the activities of the NGOs and organizations which were there, or taking good care of the survivors houses and jobs.

Although Iran is an Islamic country and therefore Iranians practice the Islamic believes to the most parts (or they have to show that they do), the findings had reflected something very far from this assumptions. According to traditional Islam, when a natural disaster happens, it can be a sign from God to punish his people. But this kind of thoughts did not even cross the mind of people in Bam. Despite some little rumors, they did not see anything regarding this, neither from the people themselves nor from the state.

When the dimensions of a catastrophe are so broad as it was in Bam in 2003, not only the whole power of the state and the locals but also international institutions need to come for help. This was exactly what had happened in Bam. All those organizations had been trying to fill the gap

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<sup>94</sup> - Haddow et al.,2011

between the requirements of the people in Bam and what had been offering by the authorities. Although some of them had not gone there just only to give assistance, but anyhow their presence was appreciated by the locals.

All in all, findings suggest that the Iranian state in this case played a relatively constructive role, both during the state of emergency and also in the long run. However some facts need to be kept in mind:

- The time of the earthquake or any other kind of disaster is very important. In this case it was in a time when mostly people are sleeping. That is why the number of dead and injured individuals was very high.

It is also important to see during which season of the year it happened. Bam witnessed the earthquake in the winter. This had also made the situation more difficult for the state, especially a winter in a desert.

- The place of the catastrophe can be also very much determining. Bam is located in the south west part of Iran, very far from the capital city, Tehran.
- Moreover, the situation of the city or town is also absolutely important. Because for instance in this case, no one knows if Bam had faced exactly the same situation but just without having the Citadel of Bam, what would have happened. Would the survivors of the earthquake or the city itself have received exactly the same amount of attention as they already got or less?

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