

# Emergency Management Tournament: Ideal Model, Essence and Present Situation of the Incentive

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**Abstract.** With the continuous improvement of the structure and institution of the emergency management system, the relevant research has become increasingly rich, but the direct subject of emergency management - "people" has not been paid enough attention to; The current normalized political tournament theory is difficult to explain the behavior and choices of "restrictive and safety-ensured tasks" conducted by local officials under emergency management. This article constructs the "people"-based emergency management tournament theory, and makes up the lack of "people" theory in emergency management and the deficiency of political tournament in emergency management field. Firstly, this article constructs an ideal model of emergency management tournament from the concept, conditions and officials' goals in theory. Secondly, according to the different degrees of accountability and incentive, it builds a two-dimensional matrix of four incentive modes, namely "stagnated stalemate", "radical achievement", "conservative fear" and "balanced innovation", and then systematically refines the essence of emergency management tournament theoretically and practically. Thirdly, focusing on practice, it analyzes the incentive effect and limitations of the current emergency management tournament. The reasons for the incentive limitations are that the implementation conditions of the emergency management tournament in the ideal model are not fully met, and the model of "emphasizing accountability and neglecting incentive" in reality. Finally, this article puts forward the countermeasures and suggestions to further improve the emergency management tournament.

**Keywords:** Emergency management tournament; Incentive model; Epidemic prevention and control; Accountability and incentive.

## 1. Introduction

From a global perspective, human society has entered a risk society with frequent crises, and the coexistence of opportunities and risks is a major paradox in the current stage of social development. At such critical nodes, emergency management becomes the focus in theory and practice. China has continuously improved the structure and institution of the emergency management system in the practice of emergency management: three generations of emergency management systems have been formed in China with structure optimization as the center [1]. The 14th Five-Year Plan for National Emergency Management System issued by The State Council stresses the need to constantly improve the emergency management structure and mechanism. At the same time, the research on the structure and institution of emergency management system has become increasingly rich. Huang and Zhao (2020) found through the method of scientific metrology that in the field of emergency management research in recent ten years, the relevant content of the construction of emergency management institution and structure is a hot topic of academic attention [2]. As the basis of emergency management, the macro system structure and institution are very important, but the direct subject of emergency management -- "people" cannot be ignored. The behavior of local officials is related to the effective operation of the structure and institution of emergency management. It is very important and urgent to construct emergency management theory based on "people".

The theory of political tournament, based on the perspective of "people", effectively explains the behavior logic of local officials, and has had an important impact in the academic community. The initial political tournament theory explained the behavior choice made by officials to pursue economic performance based on the internal motivation of promotion (Zhou, 2007) [3]. Later, the political tournament was also introduced to explain the behavior of local officials in different fields such as

ecological governance (Jin and Shen, 2012) [4], rule of law (Li, 2014) [5], poverty alleviation (Wang and Bai, 2018) [6], and scientific and technological innovation (Huang and Chen, 2021) [7]. The current political tournament theory mainly focuses on multi-task incentive, preference iteration and promotion game under normal governance. These contents are all closely around the subject of "people", which fully reflects the importance of "people" in governance behavior. Therefore, introducing the theory of political tournament into the perspective of emergency management may make up for the theoretical deficiency of "people", an important subject in current emergency management.

However, the limitations given by the traditional normalized political tournaments have certain deviations from the perspective of emergency management. Such established standardized and stereotyped competition background and competition conditions can no longer fully explain the core concerns of emergency management. For example, the traditional tournament focuses on the power flow and emphasizes the large-scale delegation of power from the central government to local governments to promote developmental competition (Zhou, 2009) [8], while the primary purpose of local officials under emergency management is not to gain power, let alone development. For another example, traditional tournament points out that because the central government intervenes in local politics, economy, and culture, the inter-local competitions are initiated under strict design, thus forming a kind of central indicative competition, where the same indicator is pursued by all regions. However, under emergency management, the central government lacks the possibility to provide indicative indicators in advance and can only promote management activities through the established entity structure and institution. Therefore, local officials will bear greater assessment pressure than the traditional tournaments, and local officials will lack the endogenous motivation and risk protection to actively take on responsibilities, resulting in a series of evasion behaviors such as inaction, false reports and concealment. Therefore, the traditional normalized political tournament theory needs to inject new vitality into emergency management.

This paper constructs an ideal model of official behavior logic in emergency management -- Emergency management Tournament. It is hoped that this can bridge the lack of "people" in emergency management research and the deficiency of the political tournament theory in the field of emergency management, so as to explain the game and choice of local officials in emergency management and analyze the current situation and shortcomings of official incentives in emergency management.

## **2. The ideal model of emergency management tournament**

### **2.1 Concept and characteristics of emergency management tournament**

Emergency management tournament is a competitive game and behavior choice of local officials in order to get political promotion or maintain their positions under the realistic background of emergency management. In the competition, the winner can get promoted or keep his or her position and continue to participate in the normalized competition, while the loser will be demoted or lose his or her position and lose the qualification for the regular competition. The significance of putting forward the concept of emergency management tournament lies in the emphasis on the behavior of individual officials in emergency management, while more studies in the past focused on the improvement of the macro structure and institution of emergency management system. Focusing on individual officials, the emergency management tournament highlights the importance of competition among officials in emergency management and provides a micro foundation for opening the black box of local governments in emergency management.

Based on the special background of emergency management, this paper attempts to discuss the differential relationship and specific model of the tournament under normal governance and crisis governance. The emergency management tournament is not a "developmental" local officials' incentive model created by the central government to promote economic growth, but a "safe" local officials' behavior model generated by the shift in public attention caused by unexpected public events.

While traditional tournaments combine centralization of executive power with strong incentives, emergency management tournaments combine binding, safety tasks and high risk. While traditional tournaments do not depend on external changes, emergency management tournaments instantly and dynamically depend on the changes of external environment and public attention.

The defining feature of the emergency management tournament is the need to deal with the uncertainty, complexity and urgency brought by unexpected events. Theoretically, the emergency management tournament has similar logic to the regular tournament, but in practice it is quite different: local officials under the tournament have shorter deadlines and higher requirements for their actions, and the uncontrollable risks and ripple effects brought about by a single decision-making behavior are more serious, so there is a greater need to focus on binding tasks. From the perspective of space, due to the spillover and trans-regional nature of public crisis, it is easier to form cross-regional government emergency competition and cooperation. From the perspective of the subject, due to the uncertainty and unpredictability of the crisis, it is more necessary for multiple parties to cooperate and complement resources to complete the crisis management.

## **2.2 Implementation conditions of emergency management tournament**

"Tournament" was initially used in the production and management of enterprises. Lazear and Rosen (1981) constructed the basic framework of the tournament and pointed out that there were two conditions for its implementation: first, the incentive object had the ability of enterprise management; second, the salary can stimulate the enthusiasm of the motivated [9]. Later, the "tournament" was gradually extended to the political field. Zhou Li'an (2007) introduced tournament into the promotion of local officials as an incentive model, proposed the concept of "political tournament", and further proposed the application conditions of political tournament in theory: the concentration of personnel power; Local government competition indicators can be quantified and measured; The promise of the client is credible; The results of the participants can be separated and compared; The participating officials can control and influence the results of the assessment; Collusion between competing officials is not easy. Zhou Feizhou (2009) pointed out the unique phenomenon of "tournament" in China's Great Leap Forward period, and argued that the tournament system was not a simple issue of promotion standards, but its effective implementation was closely related to the national system. The theory of political tournament has exerted a huge influence and has been introduced by scholars into different areas of government governance such as ecological governance, rule of law, poverty alleviation and technological innovation. In different fields, the conditions for the effective implementation of the tournament are generally similar to those of the economic tournament summarized by Zhou Li'an, but they also have its particularity of specific fields.

Based on the literature review, this paper theoretically proposes the ideal conditions for the implementation of the emergency management tournament as follows:

### **2.2.1. The superior government has centralized personnel appointment and removal power in emergency management.**

The superior government has the power to formulate the standards and rules for promotion, and can appoint and remove local government officials according to their performance in emergency management, with centralized personnel appointment and removal power.

### **2.2.2. Emergency management indicators are quantifiable.**

For example, quantitative indicators such as the daily increase of the COVID-19 epidemic, the time to effectively control the crisis, and the casualties in the crisis all can be directly observed by the principal and agent. In this way, both sides can see the satisfaction of objective indicators in the assessment of emergency management. The superior government makes the evaluation based on the objective situation, so as to avoid the arbitrariness of subjective evaluation.

### **2.2.3. Reliable commitment of the superior government.**

The superior government needs to strictly implement the assessment indicators and fair procedures announced in advance to appoint and remove local officials. If the client is interfered by other factors and deviates from the initial promotion indicators or competition standards, it will reduce the credibility of the tournament for officials. Local officials will not be active and brave to take on responsibilities, and even may evade responsibility in this case.

### **2.2.4. Separable and comparable individual performance.**

The individual performance of local officials in emergency management is relatively separable and comparable. If the "competition results" of individual officials cannot be obtained, it is naturally impossible to judge the performance of their respective officials, and local officials may also have a "free rider" mentality in teamwork management.

### **2.2.5. Relatively controllable emergency assessment performance.**

The effective implementation of emergency management tournament requires local government officials to be able to change the outcome of the competition by taking effective measures. If local officials are helpless in the face of public crisis and are unable to improve the performance of emergency management through their own efforts, such as timely emergency measures, effective allocation of emergency resources and scientific social mobilization, officials will be "powerless". Therefore, the incentive effect of emergency management tournaments will be reduced.

### **2.2.6. Competitiveness in the emergency management of local officials.**

The incentive effect of the emergency management tournaments depends on the competitiveness among local officials. Only the competition for political prospects and personal interests among local officials can stimulate their motivation to improve the performance of emergency management. Without competition, it is easy for local officials to collude -- maintain the same performance and get the same promotion probability, instead of making efforts to improve the performance of emergency management, and ultimately harm the interests of the client, the superior government.

## **2.3 Objectives pursued by officials in the emergency management tournament**

In the political tournament based on economic development, GDP is the most important target pursued by local officials, as GDP development is closely related to official promotion. In the early stage of reform and opening up, economic development has always been the primary goal of the national strategy, and accordingly became the main basis for the assessment and promotion of local government officials [10]. In recent years, the statement "Don't judge heroes by GDP growth" indicates that other indicators related to national development are becoming increasingly important, and the assessment of officials is breaking through the "GDP-only theory". Other factors, such as people's livelihood, fairness, environmental protection, are also included in the assessment of normalized political tournament [11]. However, in the context of a public crisis, the goal pursued by local officials is different from the political tournament under normal management. This is because in the governance of public crisis, safety has become the primary indicator -- even though local officials have ensured rapid economic development, improved people's livelihood, fairness and environmental protection, they may still be demoted or dismissed due to safety issues. The spillover of a public crisis will focus the public's attention in a short period of time, and the public will pay more attention to the government's behavior. Once the government behaves improperly, it may cause negative social emotions and public opinion waves, and local officials will be demoted or dismissed for this reason. So what local government officials are chasing at the emergency management tournament will change. In theory, local officials who want to win the emergency management tournament need to ensure that they complete binding tasks, respond to social concerns in a timely manner, and balance various values in a short time.

### **2.3.1. Ensuring to complete binding tasks**

Local officials face bureaucratic pressure within the organization in emergency management tournaments. Chen and Gu (2022) divided the tasks faced by officials according to the types of tasks, pointing out that local officials are mainly faced with the assessment of four types of tasks in local management: competitive tasks, binding tasks, sports tasks and daily tasks, and further explained the importance of local officials changing these four types of administrative tasks with the change of the attention of the superior government [12]. From this point of view, in the normalized political tournament, compared with other indicators, the superior government mainly focuses on the achievement and development of the local stage, so local governments pay more attention to the completion of competitive tasks, that is, to maximize the pursuit of developmental and incentive indicators, such as economy, people's livelihood, environmental protection, and to achieve better results than their counterparts, so as to get promoted. At this time, the goal pursued by local officials is more incentive and competitive.

The emergency management tournament is different from the political tournament under normal management, in which the attention of superior government is mainly allocated to binding and restrictive tasks. Once local governments fail to fulfill their binding tasks or make mistakes, their previous efforts and achievements will return to zero, and they may be "rejected by a single vote" or even held accountable. In the context of public crisis, the binding task is the primary task, and only on the premise of ensuring the completion of the binding task can the local officials be qualified to continue to complete other incentive tasks. Therefore, the local officials have made clear the minimum standard of their goals -- "no merit, but no fault". Local officials are chasing the goal of ensuring that the binding tasks are met.

### **2.3.2. Responding to social concerns in a timely manner**

In addition to the pressure within the organization, local government officials in the emergency management tournaments are also facing greater social pressures outside the organization. Under the normalized management, the public's attention to the government is decentralized, which is scattered in various functional departments and different fields of the government, such as education, medical care, environmental protection, etc. In public crisis, the public's attention is concentrated. Studies by some scholars have shown that in the public crisis closely related to people, the public has a strong internal endogenous to pay attention to issues related to the crisis [13]. The occurrence of public crisis will make the public's attention quickly focus on the decision-making and behavior of government officials in the two dimensions of time and space. Local governments will always be under the scrutiny and supervision of the public, and the slightest mistake is likely to stimulate the public's negative emotions and behaviors. In addition, local officials cannot only attract local public attention, but also the public attention of neighboring areas. Taking the government's epidemic prevention and control as an example, the epidemic itself is spillover, and the quality of local prevention and control will also affect the neighboring areas: once the prevention and control is improper, the pressure of epidemic prevention and control will be immediately added to the neighboring areas. An out-of-control epidemic in one place has a great negative externality. Neighboring areas not only have the risk of infection, but also need to provide isolation sites, shelter hospitals, in many cases. This can also greatly threaten the normal life of the residents in the neighboring areas, so the public attention in the neighboring areas will also focus on the local government officials. Therefore, in the emergency management tournament, local officials face greater social pressure than normalized management, and need to respond to public demands and reduce negative public emotions and behaviors. Responding to public concerns in a timely manner has become one of the goals pursued by local officials.

### **2.3.3. Balancing different values in a short time**

Local officials also face the pressure of conflict between different values in the emergency management tournament. Under the normalized governance mode of traditional political tournament, although there may be conflicts between values such as efficiency, fairness, environmental protection,

local governments can take a series of auxiliary measures in a long time span to balance other values or emphasize different values at different stages, so as to alleviate the conflicts between different values. However, under the crisis management mode of the emergency management tournament, local governments need to balance various values in a short time. Due to the scarcity of time, local governments need to formulate policies and implement corresponding measures in a short period of time, which is easy to ignore the needs of some groups, resulting in the loss of some values. In addition, in the normalized management, the consideration of different values is often realized through the game between different government departments. For example, the Ministry of Environmental Protection represents the value of environmental protection, the Ministry of State Security represents the value of safety, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs represents the value of people's livelihood. The game between various departments makes all values balanced, and the pressure of value conflict will not be concentrated in a certain department or individual officials. However, in emergency management, due to the urgency of emergencies, all departments do not have enough time to play games and balance all values. Instead, the Emergency Headquarters bears more responsibilities [14]. The pressure of value conflict is also concentrated here, and relevant main officials need to coordinate and balance all values in a very short time.

Therefore, in the emergency management tournament, local officials need to take the interests of various actors into account, envisage possible potential conflicts and consider various values in the limited time. Balancing different values over a short period of time is an important goal for local officials in the emergency management tournament.

### 3. The essence of the emergency management tournament

Tournament mode can be measured from two dimensions of accountability and incentive. The competitive direction and ultimate goal of officials' participation in political tournaments are also, in a sense, a trade-off between accountability and incentive. When the incentive intensity is high, local officials will have the motivation to participate in competitive tasks and pursue outstanding performance, so as to obtain a good ranking among the same level officials for promotion; when accountability intensity is high, local officials will try their best to complete binding tasks to avoid being held accountable or dereliction of duty. Therefore, the essence of the emergency management tournament is how "people" make behavior choices in the game of accountability and incentive when the "structure" and "institution" of the emergency management system already exist and the assumption remains unchanged. Therefore, the relationship between the degree of accountability and incentive is the center of the operation of the political tournament model. When the relative intensity of accountability and incentive is different, the behavior logic of local officials is also very different. The division from the perspective of accountability and incentive is conducive to understanding the various incentive models faced by local government officials, as well as the behavior logic under different incentive models

#### 3.1 "Accountability - Incentive" two-dimensional matrix

A two-dimensional matrix is constructed from the two dimensions of accountability and incentive, and the following four incentive modes are obtained:

1. "Stagnated stalemate" mode -- weak accountability, weak incentive
2. "Radical achievement" mode -- weak accountability, strong incentive
3. "Conservative fear" mode -- strong accountability, weak incentive
4. "Balanced innovation" mode -- strong accountability, strong incentive

<b>Incentive</b>	Strong	<b>"Radical achievement" mode</b> weak accountability & strong incentive	<b>"Balanced innovation" mode</b> strong accountability & strong incentive
	Weak	<b>"Stagnated stalemate" mode</b> weak accountability & weak incentive	<b>"Conservative fear" mode</b> strong accountability & weak incentive
		Weak	Strong
		<b>Accountability</b>	

**Figure 1.** "Accountability - Incentive" two-dimensional matrix.

The accountability in this framework refers to that within a certain period of time or after the occurrence of a crisis event, the superior government evaluates the management and performance of local officials. If the management is not effective or the performance does not meet the standards or has a large negative effect, the superior government will decide whether to make the local officials take responsibility and accept punishment. The incentive refers to those officials who stick to their posts and make effective management or outstanding performance within a certain period of time or after a crisis event. The superior government will evaluate their performance and decide whether he or she will be rewarded or promoted. Constructing a two-dimensional matrix from the degree of accountability and incentive can help understand the incentive modes faced by local government officials in different fields and situations, so as to understand the influences of different mechanisms on officials' behavior.

### 3.2 Four types of incentive modes

#### 3.2.1. "Stagnated stalemate" mode

Under this incentive mode, the intensity of accountability and incentive is very weak, which means that if local officials make mistakes, the probability that their wrong behavior will be noticed by the superior government is small, and it is difficult to be accountable; At the same time, even if local officials perform well and far exceed their peers, they will not be directly promoted. In this case, the behavior of local government is not easy to be noticed by the superior government, and the behavior of local officials has little to do with their career changes. Therefore, under such circumstances, local officials do not have the motivation to take actions and tend to do nothing, so the local development will appear a "stagnant" state. In addition, local officials are likely to take advantage of their political authority to seek economic benefits and become corrupt without restraint [15]. Therefore, this model is not conducive to local governance, and highly relies on the personal qualities of local officials, with instability and uncertainty. The mode of weak accountability and weak incentive mainly existed in wartime or in special periods. At this time, the limited attention of the superior government was mainly focused on the emergency affairs related to the whole country, and it was too busy to pay attention to the behavior of the local government. Another situation is that the country was fragmented, and the superior government was unable to influence the behavior of the subordinate government. However, this incentive model does not exist in China today. The central government has the ability and will pay special attention to the performance of local governments and the governance of local officials.

#### 3.2.2. "Radical achievement" mode

Under this incentive mode, accountability is weak, while incentive is strong. Local government officials are not likely to lose their jobs, and the incentives for promotion are very outstanding. As

long as local officials outperform their peers, there is a great possibility of promotion. Local officials focus on decision-making, thinking about how to win the top position in the competition with officials at the same level. The traditional political tournament based on local economic development is one such incentive mode, with officials competing fiercely for local GDP growth. The political incentive for promotion exceeds the possible economic incentive, thus curbing corrupt practices to some extent. In this mode, due to the lack of corresponding constraints, local officials blindly pursue higher speed, showing a "radical achievement" state. But the speed-oriented risk-taking behaviors of local officials will weaken the stability and balance of local development [16]. For example, in the traditional political tournament, the overemphasis on economic indicators will make other important indicators neglected, while other indicators, such as education, technology and social equity, are equally important and will also play an important role in social stability and government governance. This incentive mode of "strong incentive, weak accountability" mainly exists in the process of government normalized governance since the reform and opening up, and still has an important embodiment in today's government governance.

### **3.2.3."Conservative fear" mode**

This is a model that values accountability over incentives. Local officials are liable to be held accountable and lose their posts, but are less likely to be rewarded and promoted. This model is more restrictive than supportive for local officials. Even though local officials have made clear the direction, they still have no motivation to move forward, and they are always wary of the accountability of their superiors, so they show a state of "conservative fear". But the purpose of the superior government's emphasis on accountability is not to make local officials afraid to act, but to weaken and stop the wrong motives and behaviors of local officials, and to punish officials for their dereliction of duty. However, this model often ignores the actual participation and input of local officials in the emergency management process. Local officials may be affected by some uncontrollable factors beyond their ability. Even if they invest a lot of efforts and resources, they will still be held accountable. As a result, local officials often have too much responsibility and are afraid to take it. This mode was originally intended to avoid official dereliction of duty, but ended up encouraging it. Most of the situations in the emergency management tournament are such incentive mode. This mode, which emphasizes accountability and ignores incentive, is also the fundamental mechanism source of some problems in the process of government emergency management.

### **3.2.4."Balanced innovation" mode**

This is a mode of strong accountability and incentives, with both "carrots" and "sticks". On one hand local officials are liable to be demoted or removed as a result of punishment for improper management or behavior; on the other hand, they are liable to be rewarded and promoted for outstanding performance. In this case, the governance of local governments is highly valued by the superior authorities. Every decision and implementation may determine the fate of officials, which is both an opportunity and a risk. Under this mode, local officials have two choices: one is to take responsibility, and make decisions after careful consideration before taking responsibility. To some extent, the balance between accountability and incentive will stimulate local governments to innovate and explore better emergency management methods; the second is "be content with the status quo". Even if the incentive is increased, a small number of officials will still give up rewards for not making mistakes. But even in the second case, there is no denying that the arrival of the "carrot" has made many officials who were afraid to act under the "conservative fear" mode start to act. To some extent, it has promoted innovation. This is a more balanced mode of accountability and incentive, but it also needs to be adapted to specific situations.

## **3.3 The Essence of emergency management tournament -- The trade-off between accountability and incentive**

Actually, the essence of the tournament is the trade-off and game between accountability and incentive under the uncertain external environment and the unchanged system structure and

institutional assumptions. The fundamental difference between tournaments in different fields is the trade-off between accountability and incentive. In this way, the promotion tournament exerts influence on local officials and influences their behavior logic through two means of incentive and accountability.

The political tournament based on economic development proposed by Zhou Li 'an belongs to the "radical achievement" mode of "weak accountability, strong incentives". Under this mode, local officials compete fiercely on the basis of local GDP growth because of the strong incentive for official promotion. At the same time, due to the weak intensity of accountability, this strong incentive model will also lead to some problems of local government competition in the political tournament, such as the delivery of political achievements, factionalism, local protectionism, etc. [17]. Zhou Li 'an did not put forward the dimension of accountability in his analysis framework, but mainly focused on the analysis of strong incentives for political tournaments. This is partly because accountability has been neglected in traditional political tournaments because of its lack of accountability. But it is also important to understand official behavior from the perspective of accountability, which is different in degree from the economic development based political tournaments in other fields. The two-dimensional matrix of "accountability and incentive" dimension can be constructed to analyze the tournament in different scenarios and be more targeted.

Due to the emphasis on safety indicators and binding tasks, the emergency management tournament requires strong accountability, so theoretically there are two incentive modes: the "conservative fear" mode and the "balanced innovation" mode. The commonality of the two incentive modes lies in the great accountability intensity, while the difference lies in the different incentive intensity. The ideal state of the emergency management tournament is the scientific and reasonable distribution of accountability and incentive, but the actual distribution results are often the "conservative fear" mode of "emphasizing accountability and ignoring incentives", which also has a profound impact on the emergency management behavior of local officials.

#### **4. Incentive effect and limitation of emergency management tournament**

The above article mainly constructs the ideal model of emergency management tournament theoretically. Returning to reality, the emergency management tournament has a certain incentive effect, but there are also great limitations. The incentive effects are mainly to link the political career of officials with their performance in the public crisis, to guides officials to ensure the security and other binding goals in the crisis, which are consistent with the public interest to a certain extent. It is the goal of any incentive system to link the official's personal fate with the standard of social needs, which is of great significance to alleviate the principal-agent dilemma. However, the incentive effect of the emergency management tournament also has certain limitations, mainly because the conditions for its effective implementation are not fully available, and the current incentive model of "strong accountability and weak incentive" may distort the behavior of officials, making them unable to achieve the expected incentive effect.

##### **4.1 Incentive effects of emergency management tournament**

###### **4.1.1 Importance be attached to public needs and attention**

In a public crisis, individuals are more closely connected and the public's attention is also concentrated, which is more likely to trigger negative emotions and lead to mass incidents or public opinion emergencies. And then the behavior of the public will get the attention of the superior government through various channels. Once it leads to other public events or public opinion events, local government officials are likely to be held accountable. Therefore, local officials will pay attention to the needs and attention of the public and respond to public concerns during the emergency management tournament. For example, in epidemic prevention and control, some local governments have set up public opinion collection centers within the headquarters, which actually reflects the concern for public demand and attention.

#### **4.1.2. Improve the overlap between the personal interests of officials and the public interests**

In normalized governance, both government attention and public attention are decentralized, and they are scattered in various fields, so there will be a certain deviation between government attention and public demand. However, in public crises, the needs of the public are often physiology, safety and other fundamental levels. Simultaneously, the emergency management tournament also makes officials pay more attention to the completion of binding tasks, more biased towards security and other issues that the public pays more attention to, and they will invest certain resources to meet the indicators of error free. This has enhanced the coincidence degree of the personal interests of officials and the direct interests of the public, so it has bridged the dilemma of the incentive mechanism of principal-agent to some extent.

#### **4.1.3. Ensure the realization of safety value**

The emergency management tournament guides officials to strive to balance values over a short period of time. However, the real situation is more complicated, and the value conflict in the public crisis is also extremely fierce. It is often difficult for officials to give consideration and respond to all values in a short time. But among the conflicts of various values, local officials will first ensure that the value of safety is realized, because this is the minimum standard for their goal of participating in the emergency management tournament. Only when the value of safety is realized, can they continue to participate in the competition and achieve good results. In the actual epidemic prevention and control, it is not difficult to see local governments' "excessive epidemic prevention" measures, which may damage the values of freedom and democracy. But from another perspective, local officials are just ensuring that security values are realized.

### **4.2 Limitations of emergency management tournament**

#### **4.2.1. Uncontrolled variables reduce the incentive effect**

One of the conditions for the effective implementation of the emergency management tournament is that local officials can control their emergency management performance to a considerable extent. If there is no obvious correlation between the efforts of local officials and their performance, the incentive effect of the tournament will be reduced. However, the emergency itself is unpredictable, and the local government needs to consider many uncontrollable factors, which makes it difficult to accurately infer the direction of the crisis. The decision-making of local officials in emergency management is mostly based on their own experience and intuition, or policy imitation [18], which may result in the limited applicability of past experience and policies due to the differences in specific situations. The efforts of local officials may not yield personally beneficial results. In addition, under the current mode of "strong accountability and weak incentives", the accountability of officials is mostly result-oriented. This large-scale and powerful accountability mode attaches importance to the consequences of the crisis, but largely ignores the efforts made by officials in the crisis management process. Therefore, the complexity and uncertainty of the public crisis itself will weaken the incentive effect of the emergency management tournament.

#### **4.2.2. The pressure of double tournament assessment**

In the management of public crisis, local officials are actually facing the double assessment pressure of emergency management tournament and normal management political tournament. The dual pressures make it harder for local officials to choose and decide. Under the accountability pressure of the emergency management tournament, the best option for local officials should be to prevent a crisis as much as possible. However, different from governance in other fields, public crisis prevention belongs to a state of "visible costs, invisible benefits". That is to say, if local officials do a good job in crisis prevention, it will inevitably require a lot of expenses, and the final result will be a higher safety index. This is the result that should be pursued, but if the crisis was curbed at the embryonic stage, it would be impossible to evaluate the performance of local officials in crisis management in a safer situation later [19], which may limit the promotion of local officials. Once the

risk of crisis is eliminated, local officials will be in a normal political tournament, and the investment in crisis prevention and control will influence the investment in other fields to a large extent, thus affecting the assessment of officials in the political tournament of normal management. So local officials, even in the emergency management tournament, are under pressure to manage the political tournament normally. This can also lead to the failure of the emergency management tournament to play its due incentive role.

#### **4.2.3. The paradox of taking responsibility and evading responsibility**

Returning to the phenomenon that local officials are held accountable for similar evasions of duty mentioned earlier in this article, this phenomenon is not accidental, but has to do with the limitations of current incentives for emergency management tournaments. Under the mode of "strong accountability and weak incentive" of the emergency management tournament, if the COVID-19 epidemic expands, local officials will be liable to be held accountable. Therefore, once the epidemic occurs and expands, local officials will face great risks and be at a disadvantage in the process of being held accountable. After the outbreak of the epidemic, the most important thing for local officials should be to prevent and control the spread of the epidemic, but the current mode focuses on accountability rather than incentive. This means that even if the prevention and control can be done in a timely manner, local officials will not receive great rewards; but once the epidemic is out of control, they are likely to bear huge responsibility. So local officials will not have strong incentives to take on the responsibility, but will think about how to avoid responsibility [20].

The corresponding result of the "emphasis on accountability and neglect of incentives" mode is that officials have too much accountability pressure, while the incentive to be brave enough to take on responsibilities are insufficient. The initial purpose of strong accountability is to stop officials' dereliction of duty, but it will also form a psychological motivation for local officials to avoid responsibility, and ultimately make officials evade responsibility and refuse to undertake crisis management tasks because of the fear of punishment. This is also the current incentive paradox of the emergency management tournament.

### **4.3 Reasons for incentive limitations**

#### **4.3.1. Ideal conditions for implementation are not fully available**

The previous article theoretically constructed an ideal model of the emergency management tournament and proposed six conditions for its effective implementation. But obviously in the current emergency management governance system, these six conditions cannot be fully met, so the incentive effect has not been fully played. Firstly, from the perspective of the credible commitment of the superior government, the appointment and removal of local officials by the superior government will have many uncertainties, and will be easily interfered by other factors. The superior government may hold a large number of officials accountable for the purpose of pacifying social irrational emotions and stabilizing people's hearts [21] [22]. This deviates from the original promotion indicators and competition standards. Secondly, from the perspective of relatively controllable emergency management performance, emergency management is quite different from normal management. Its abruptness, urgency and uncertainty make local officials need to consider many uncontrollable variables in a short time. In many cases, its emergency management performance is not positively related to the efforts of local officials. Therefore, the motivation of local officials to act will be reduced. This paper points out that the conditions for the effective implementation of emergency management tournament are not fully met, which serves as an important reason for the current incentive limitations.

#### **4.3.2. The "strong accountability and weak incentive" mode**

Another reason for the incentive limitation of the emergency management tournament lies in the current mode of "strong accountability and weak incentive". At present, the allocation of accountability and incentives for emergency management makes local governments' responsibilities too heavy and incentives insufficient. Therefore, local officials have insufficient internal motivation

and risk protection to actively assume responsibilities, which leads to the motivation of avoiding responsibilities of local officials. This deviates from the original and fundamental purpose of the emergency management tournament -- to make local officials brave to assume responsibilities through competition. For the wrong behavior of local governments, strong accountability is important, but once the accountability strength breaks the threshold, there will be behaviors to avoid accountability. Therefore, in addition to accountability, matching incentives cannot be ignored, which is more conducive for local governments to make China's "emergency miracle" in the field of emergency management similar to normalized tournaments. When the proportion of incentives and accountability is seriously unbalanced, no matter how much accountability, it may only be faster, less efficient, or even distort the behavior of local officials. Therefore, the current incentive mode of "conservative fear" is another important reason to weaken the incentive effect of the emergency management tournament.

## **5. The perfection and countermeasure of current emergency management tournament**

### **5.1 Being people-oriented and focusing on demand and attention**

Under the emergency management tournament, local officials must respond to each value in a short time, and "people-oriented" should become the core criterion of local officials' balanced value. In many value conflicts, local officials need to pay attention to the core value dynamically and scientifically from the public demand and attention, so as to quickly grasp the main line of value selection under emergencies. For example, in the early stage of emergency management practice for public health emergencies under the COVID-19, local officials need to pay attention to the basic life and health needs of the public rather than economic needs, and first ensure the realization of safety values. In the later stage of the normalization of epidemic control, local officials need to pay more attention to the transformation of public needs and attention at any time, and further grasp the development needs on the basis of safety values.

### **5.2 Clarifying the scope of accountability and promoting scientific and reasonable accountability**

An important reason for the high accountability pressure on local officials at present is the arbitrary and extensive accountability in practice, which will reduce the credibility of superior government commitments and reduce the enthusiasm of local officials to participate in emergency management tournaments. Therefore, it is necessary to define the scope and subject of accountability before the occurrence of public crisis, establish the assessment standards of emergency management tournament in advance, and make more specific provisions for the situations of light, heavy and exemption, so as to ensure the credible commitment, promote scientific and reasonable accountability, and avoid the phenomenon of improper subject, simplification and generalization of accountability. In this way, local officials can actively act under the constraints of fairness and reasonableness.

### **5.3 Improving incentive mechanism and balancing accountability and incentive**

The fact that local officials are held accountable for evading responsibility directly reflects the limitation of the incentive of the emergency management tournament. Under the realistic system of "strong accountability and weak incentives", the input and efforts of local officials in emergency management cannot be taken seriously. In order to encourage local officials to choose to "be motivated by performing their duties", it is necessary to further improve the incentive mechanism, stimulate the endogenous motivation of local officials to perform their duties, and then respond quickly and actively for prevention and control. Under the dual mechanism of restraint and incentive, a "balanced innovation" model is created to stimulate the innovative behavior of local governments.

#### **5.4 Promote the interaction and connection between emergency management and normal governance**

At present, China's emergency management and normal governance are subject to implementation, governance objects, governance environment, governance requirements and other multi-dimensional gaps and splits, making local governments struggling to cope with the basic objectives of normal governance and the special requirements of emergency management. This has greatly affected the efficiency of local governments and the initiative of local officials. If we can introduce the idea of "preventing small things from happening gradually" in emergency management into normal governance, we can more effectively promote the same government team to not only play its due role in normal governance, but also timely adjust relevant policies and resources in the embryonic stage, brewing stage and expansion stage of emergency events, so as to promote the common development of local government's normal governance and crisis governance.

### **6. Conclusion**

With the accelerated development of the global risk society, emerging risks, catastrophes and cross-border crises continue to emerge and multiply, which not only increases the uncertainty of emergencies, but also highlights the importance of emergency management. The macro system structure and system are definitely the foundation of emergency management, but the behavior of "people" in emergency management is also very worthy of attention. Based on the existing research results, this paper introduces the theory of political tournament into the perspective of emergency management, and constructs a theoretical model of emergency management tournament to analyze the behavior of officials in emergency management. This paper theoretically constructs an ideal model of the emergency management tournament from the three dimensions of concept, condition and competition goal. The emergency management tournament is actually a competitive game and behavior choice of local officials in order to obtain political promotion or maintain their position under the realistic background of emergency management. The biggest feature is the need to deal with the uncertainty, risk and urgency brought by emergencies. There are six conditions to be met: centralized personnel appointment and removal power of the superior government in emergency management, quantifiable emergency indicators, and credible commitment of the superior government, separable and comparable personal performance, relatively controllable emergency performance, and competitiveness in emergency. In the emergency management tournament, the goal of the official competition has changed. There are three main points: ensuring the completion of binding tasks, responding to social concerns in a timely manner, and balancing different values in a short time. On this basis, this paper further refines the essence of the emergency management tournament, and summarizes the four incentive modes of "stagnated stalemate", "radical achievement", "conservative fear" and "balanced innovation" in the dimension of the strength of accountability and incentive. The fundamental difference of the tournament in different fields is the different choices between accountability and incentive. Grasping the essence of the tournament is conducive to a deeper understanding of the behavior of local officials.

On this basis, this paper returns to practice and points out that the incentive effect of the emergency management tournament is to link the political career of officials with the performance of officials in public crisis, guide officials to pay attention to public needs and attention, improve the coincidence of personal and public interests of officials, and encourage officials to realize safety value. The emergency management tournament also has its limitations, mainly due to the uncontrollable variables, the conflict of the double tournaments, and the paradox logic of officials taking and avoiding responsibility. The reasons for its limitations lie in the lack of implementation conditions in the ideal model of the emergency management tournament, and the current mode of "emphasizing accountability and neglecting incentives". Based on this, the policy implications of this paper are as follows: Firstly, being people-oriented, importance should be attached to the needs and attention of the public, and being aware of the changes of public needs and attention at any time; The second is

to clarify the scope of accountability, promote scientific and reasonable accountability, avoid the improper subject of accountability, and let local officials act actively under the constraints of fairness and rationality; Thirdly, superior governments should improve the incentive mechanism, balance accountability and incentives, promote local officials to be "motivated by performing their duties", and stimulate their innovative behavior as a responsibility; Lastly, governments at all levels ought to promote the interaction between emergency management and normal governance, optimize and improve the connection mechanism of the two tournaments, and promote the common development of local government normal governance and crisis governance.

It should be noted that this paper provides a comprehensive analysis perspective and research tool for understanding the behavior of officials in emergency management, but there is still room for expansion. This paper classifies the modes of motivating officials from the intensity of incentive and accountability, and discusses them in a scientific and chemical way. But in reality, the incentive model for local officials has the characteristics of other models as well as one model. At the same time, in different periods, with the progress of the event and the implementation of the policy, the incentive model may also be different, so it needs to be analyzed in detail. In addition, this paper mainly builds the ideal model of the emergency management tournament in theory, and constructs four incentive models. The empirical part still needs to be supplemented. The follow-up research needs the joint efforts of the political and academic circles to improve and promote in theory and empirical.

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