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## *Building a Framework for Japan-US-Vietnam Trilateral Cooperation*

### *Series 4*

*How Japan Can Counter  
China's Coercive Actions*

*Masashi Nishihara  
Nozomu Yoshitomi*

*Humanitarian Assistance and  
Disaster Relief*

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***Building a Framework for  
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***Series 4***

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# How Japan Can Counter China's Coercive Actions

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## 1. China's Coercive Conduct

For many years China observed Deng Xiaoping's lesson of "keeping a low profile" (*taoguang yanghui*). But in 2008 after the Olympics in Beijing and the swift recovery from the Lehman Brothers shock, China turned this modest posture into a more aggressive one.

China is now the world's second largest economic power, and as it becomes more confident of its power and status in regional and international relations, it may expand its coercive conduct to economic, political, and military areas. With its new power and status, President Xi Jinping promises to realize "the Chinese dream" and establish "a strong maritime power," by driving off the U.S. power from the East and South China Seas and exerting hegemonic control over them.

How should Japan counter such coercive action?

## 2. A Typical Case: The Senkaku Islands, September 2010

An example of China's coercive conduct toward Japan was its demand that Japan release the captain of a fishing boat who deliberately rammed a Japanese coast guard vessel near the Senkaku Islands on September 7, 2010, and was detained and put into Japanese custody.

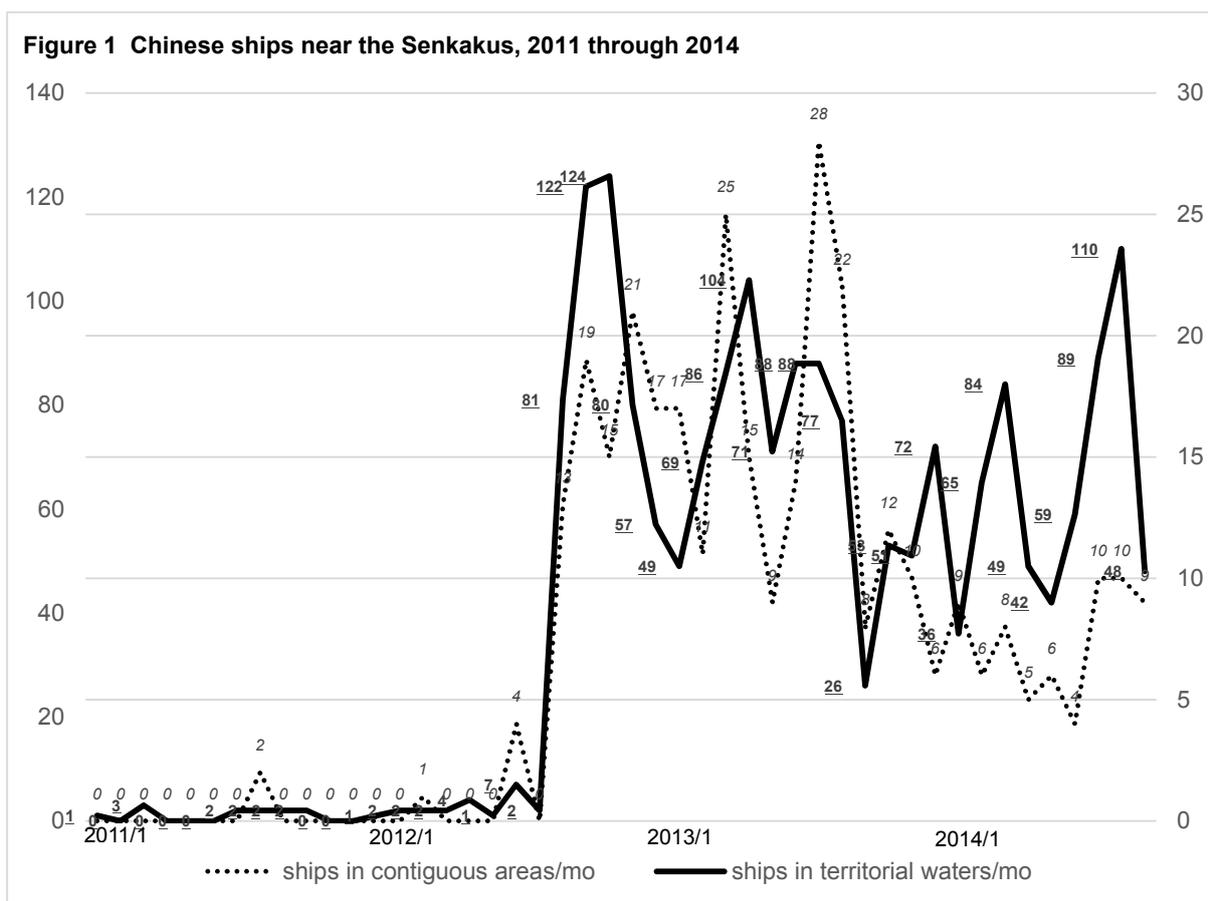
The Chinese government took several measures to gain the captain's release: It suspended its export of rare earths to Japan—which must import more than 90 percent of these minerals. China then ordered around 10,000 tourists to cancel their trips to Japan and arrested four Fujita Company employees for taking photos in a military area, even though they apparently were not aware that it was restricted. Finally, China allowed anti-Japanese demonstrators in several cities, including Beijing, to damage the Japanese embassy and consulate buildings, as well as Japanese-owned factories and stores, and to destroy Japan-made cars driving on the streets.

Bowing to Beijing's vociferous complaints, the Naoto Kan government released the captain on September 24, without indicting him, despite having stated that it would do so. After Tokyo released the captain, who returned to China as a hero, Beijing freed the four Fujita Company employees. Beijing also quietly agreed to repair the damage to the Japanese embassy and consular buildings.

### 3. China's Military and Other Coercive Measures

China's coercive measures in September 2010 basically aimed at causing economic damage to Japan thereby pressing Japan to free the captain. China's other nonmilitary measures include restricting certain Japanese individuals from entering China and using cyberattacks and viruses to disrupt or shut down computer systems.

China may also use other, including military, measures to force Japan to make concessions on the islands. For instance, China now is constantly sending coast guard ships and fishing boats to the area around the Senkakus, often entering their 12-mile territorial waters. [Figure 1] Although Chinese naval vessels occasionally approach the islands, they are careful not to get too close. According to the Japanese Defense Ministry, however, on January 30, 2013, a Chinese navy frigate locked its fire-control radar on both a Japanese destroyer and a helicopter. Then in May 2014 Japan revealed that a Chinese fighter jet had flown dangerously close to a Japanese fighter jet over the East China Sea. Such are China's intimidation tactics.



Source: Japan Coast Guard Homepage, re-designed by the author

#### **4. Japan's Countermeasures**

Japan's countermeasures against China's coercive actions should be devised by the relevant government offices in responding effectively to the next crisis. Some thoughts are:

##### 1) Economic Countermeasures

###### *a. Countersanctions*

China's suddenly suspending its export of rare earths in 2010 brought home to Japan the risk of becoming overly dependent on China for a crucial resource. As a result, Japan has since diversified its sources of these minerals, now importing them from countries such as France, Vietnam, South Korea, and Estonia. Japan also should be aware of other, similar risks in its investment in and trade with China.

In the last few years, China has not taken any notable economic action against Japan, although demonstrations against Japanese firms in China have caused some of them to close down or relocate to Southeast Asia and India. This in turn will only weaken the economic relations between Japan and China.

Sanctions tend to lead to countersanctions, but Japan's threats of countermeasures may actually keep China from going that route. In addition, Japan should consider suspending the export of Japanese items popular with middle-class Chinese citizens, such as disposable diapers, electric rice-cookers, and powdered milk. Likewise, Japan should consider boycotting certain Chinese goods and discouraging Japanese tourists from going to China, damaging the latter's tourism.

###### *b. Stronger Economic Ties with the United States and Partners*

Japan's strengthening its economic ties with the United States and its like-minded partners such as the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN), Australia, and India would help both Japan and its economic partners resist China's coercive economic demands and sanctions. In this regard, an early settlement of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations would be desirable. Japan's support of the ASEAN countries' economies also is essential, as ASEAN's stronger economic foundation will ensure a balanced defense posture as a counterweight to China's coercive military activities.

##### 2) Political/Diplomatic Countermeasures

###### *a. Combating China's Propaganda*

China will continue to raise the issue of "history" and the Senkakus, in order to poison Japanese diplomatic activities. For example, President Xi Jinping imposed the two issues as preconditions for agreeing to meet with Prime Minister Shinzō Abe at the November 2014 Asia-

Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit held in Beijing. The first was Abe's publicly committing not to visit the Yasukuni Shrine, and the second was his publicly acknowledging a dispute with China over the Senkaku Islands. Abe refused to accept either. The bilateral summit became possible only after both sides made minor concessions. These two issues will therefore remain sources of tension between the two countries.

To weaken the resolve of the Japanese government and people in defending the Senkakus, China conducts what is often referred to as the "three warfares" regarding the Senkakus: legal warfare, media warfare, and psychological warfare. Referring to the Cairo Declaration of 1943 and the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951, for instance, China argues that Japan "stole" the islands from China and that it is the one that has changed the regional order established at the end of World War II. Naturally, Japan regards these arguments as groundless, but China will undoubtedly use these three warfares to advance its territorial claims politically.

Beijing also would like to drive a wedge between Tokyo and Washington, by both emphasizing Prime Minister Abe's "militarism" and "revisionism" and warning Washington not to interfere in the dispute over the Senkakus. The key for Japan here is to demonstrate to China the strength of the Japanese-US alliance.

Tokyo also should stress the importance of the rule of law in settling territorial disputes, pointing out that it is China that is threatening to use force. In addition, Japan should publicly remind China that it disregarded this issue between 1890s and 1960s and that it brought it up only in 1971. Finally, Japan should launch its new defense strategy: exercising its right to collective self-defense and Prime Minister Abe's "positive contribution to peace."

#### *b. Expanding Its Political Ties*

Japan should strengthen its political ties with its neighboring partners as well. It already has formed strong political and security ties with Australia, through the two countries' "2 plus 2" ministerial meetings and their Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA). At the Shangri-La Dialogue in June 2014, Prime Minister Abe noted that Japan would offer more help to those Southeast Asian nations that have territorial disputes with China. Already, Japan has supported Vietnam's stand against China over its territorial dispute and the Philippines' decision in January 2013 to bring territorial claims to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLS) in The Hague. China declined the court's invitation to submit its case.

### 3) Military Countermeasures

China has most frequently employed military measures to press its territorial claims on the

Senkakus and to thwart the activities of Japan's Self-Defense Forces (JSDF). On November 23, 2013, China suddenly established an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the East China Sea and announced that any foreign aircraft planning to enter it must register in advance with China. The Chinese ADIZ overlaps with the Japanese ADIZ, each of which covers the Senkakus. This is another indication of China's determination to assert its territorial claims. Both the United States and Japan refused to recognize the ADIZ, flying their planes through it without prior notification and meeting no opposition from China. It has set up a good example of an effective countermeasure.

In May and June 2014, Chinese fighter jets scared its Japanese counterparts by flying recklessly close to them in an overlapping zone of the ADIZs. A similar incident took place in August with a US plane patrolling in the South China Sea when a Chinese fighter jet approached it extremely closely. The US patrol plane, a P8A, is capable of detecting and attacking submarines from the air. Clearly, the Chinese intend to stop Japanese and American military activities emanating from the First Island Chain, which extends from Japan's southwest archipelago through Taiwan to the Philippine islands.

There is growing concern, as well, that Beijing may establish a similar ADIZ over the South China Sea, which would enable China to fortify its sphere of influence and its strategic submarine base in Hainan. The submarines there will be capable of targeting the US mainland.

Its alliance with the United States is essential in defending the Senkakus, maintaining its ADIZ in the East China Sea, and sustaining the security of its sea-lanes in the Western Pacific. The Japanese-US alliance also can bolster Vietnam's and the Philippines' territorial claims against China.

*a. Expanding Its Security Role*

The Abe government has decided to reinterpret article 9 of the Japanese constitution to allow the JSDF to expand its security role, specifically to broaden its security contacts with Vietnam and the Philippines as well as its security agreements with Australia as well as its security contacts with Vietnam and the Philippines. Japan and Australia could conduct joint exercises with either each other or together with the United States, using the latter's base facilities in Guam. Eventually, the JSDF should be able to reinforce US naval forces sailing in the East and South China Seas. The JSDF might also consider working with Vietnamese and Philippine forces.

Japan is gradually developing its own surveillance and intelligence-gathering capability, based on its space satellite. The JSDF plans to include Japanese-US cooperation in this area in the forthcoming revised Guideline for Japan-US Defense Cooperation and, after 2018, to

organize a team specializing in space-based surveillance. Last, Japan should cooperate on cybersecurity with the United States and eventually work as well with Southeast Asian countries like Vietnam and the Philippines.

*b. Providing Arms and Conducting Joint Exercises*

Japan has offered three coast guard vessels to the Philippines and six similar vessels to Vietnam to help build their capacity to patrol in the South China Sea. Although China undoubtedly is unhappy with this arrangement, it is important to keep the balance of power in the South China Sea tipped toward the forces concerned about China's coercive conduct.

Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force will provide training for the crews of the coast guard vessels as well as for broader capacity building. Japan and Vietnam can also practice submarine crew rescue operations together. In the future, it should likewise broaden areas of joint exercises with ASEAN countries, which will send a strong message for China to restrain its coercive activities.

As China becomes more confident in handling political and military matters, it is likely to reinforce its coercive conduct. Countering it, Japan should be firm with its own stands and prepare to implement effective countermeasures.

# Japan's Capacity Building for Vietnam: Cooperating with the United States for Maritime Security in the South China Sea

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## 1. Overview of Japan's Capacity Building Efforts

Japan's National Security Strategy, adopted in December 2013, refers to capacity building for maritime security, rule of law, and international peace cooperation.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Japan's 2013 National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) state that "as capacity building assistance is effective in stabilizing the security environment and strengthening bilateral defense cooperation, Japan will promote it in full coordination with diplomatic policy initiatives, including Official Development Assistance (ODA), and aligning it with joint training and exercises and international peacekeeping activities."<sup>3</sup> Japan's Ministry of Defense (MoD) started its foreign capacity building assistance program in 2012 with the goal of creating a stable regional and global security environment. The MoD believes that it can achieve this goal through human resource development and technical security support. Since 2012, the MoD has already implemented capacity building programs for Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, and Vietnam. These include humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), disposal of land mines and unexploded ordnance, military medicine, peacekeeping operations (PKOs), and maritime security.<sup>4</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) have also conducted their own capacity building assistance activities for maritime security in this region.

## 2. Japan's Assistance with Vietnam's Maritime Security

Now that the Vietnamese Navy has started building a submarine flotilla, with six Kilo-class

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<sup>1</sup> This article does not represent the positions and policies of this institute.

<sup>2</sup> Government of Japan, *National Security Strategy*, December 17, 2013, pp.17–30; available at <http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryoku/131217anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Government of Japan, *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2014 and Beyond*, December 17, 2013, p. 11; available at [http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217\\_e2.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217_e2.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2014*, August 2014, pp. 273–275; available at [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/pdf/2014/DOJ2014\\_3-3-1\\_web\\_1031.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2014/DOJ2014_3-3-1_web_1031.pdf).

submarines, submarine medicine has become critical to the Vietnamese submariners’ health and safety. Accordingly, between 2012 and 2014 the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) sent instructors to Vietnam to conduct seminars on submarine medicine, and in 2013 the Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) also sent instructors to Vietnam to teach aviation safety in South China Sea. In addition, the MoD invited officers from Vietnam’s Ministry of Defense to Japan for study tours on PKOs and general and underwater medicine.<sup>5</sup> For its part, the JCG invited young coast guard officers from Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, for courses on maritime security and extended guided-study tours of the JCG’s activities.<sup>6</sup> In September 2014, the MoFA held a seminar, Capacity Building in Maritime Security and Disaster Relief, for participants from Southeast Asia, again including Vietnam.<sup>7</sup> The MoFA also announced that Japan was providing Vietnam, in connection with ODA, with six used vessels that could be converted into coast guard cutters, in order to enhance Vietnam’s maritime security.<sup>8</sup>

**3. Why Cooperation with the United States?**

The Broad Range of Military Capacity Building Efforts

In figure 1, showing the areas of Japan’s military capacity building programs implemented in Vietnam so far, reveals that they cover only a small portion of the broad range of military capacity building.

Figure 1

	C2	ISR	Operation			Logistics /Admin
			Shape	Deter	Respond	
Sea						✓
Air						✓
Ground			✓			

✓: Areas of Japan’s assistance

Source: author

The decisions regarding the specific capacity building program to be designed and implemented are based on Vietnam’s needs and desires. But given Japan’s current legal constraints and political sensitivity to providing military assistance to foreign countries, the country cannot respond to all requests. Nonetheless, the United States—which is still debating

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 275.

<sup>6</sup> Japan Coast Guard Academy, *The Coast Guard Capacity Improvement Program to Secure Safety and Environmental Conservation in Asian Oceans*; available at [http://ajoc.jcga.or.jp/programs\\_en.html](http://ajoc.jcga.or.jp/programs_en.html).

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Seminar on Capacity Building in Maritime Security and Disaster Relief*; available at [http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e\\_000422.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_000422.html).

<sup>8</sup> “Japan to Hand over 6 Ships to Vietnam to Patrol Territorial Waters,” *TASS*, August 1, 2014.

whether to lift its ban on arms exports to Vietnam—has sufficient potential to respond to Vietnam’s broader range of requests. It is essential, therefore, for Japan to cooperate with the United States by sharing its financial and human resources for Vietnam’s capacity building.

#### Overcoming the War Trauma

Despite the United States’ capacity building programs under way in Vietnam,<sup>9</sup> the trauma of the Vietnam War still hangs over its assistance with bilateral defense, just as it does for many Vietnamese. But because Vietnam’s maritime security needs to be ramped up in a short period of time, one remedy is using Japan as a catalyst. Seeing that Japan has been able to rebuild and, indeed, prosper after World War II and even to form a close alliance with the United States, Vietnam may be encouraged to follow a path similar to Japan’s. Clearly, Japan and the United States must cooperate with each other in creating a favorable environment for Vietnam to fulfill its defense needs while putting its war resentment behind it.

#### **4. Challenges**

Japan’s current whole-government approach is the first challenge to its capacity building programs. The fact that many ministries and state agencies—such as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Justice, and the Environment, as well as the Coast Guard and the Energy Agency—may contribute capacity building activities for maritime security has complicated intra-agency coordination. Therefore, the National Security Council must play a leading role in resolving this problem.

The second challenge is improving the capability of the Japan’s subject matter experts (SMEs) to be sent to Vietnam. That is, many Japanese instructors are not familiar with Vietnam’s political and security situation, language, and culture. To remedy this, some of the ongoing US programs offer good examples. The US National Guard, for instance, offers the State Partnership Program (SPP), a security cooperation program under the US Department of Defense, which is divided into sixty-six individual programs with sixty-six partner states around the world. The typical SPP event is an SME exchange program focusing on areas such as command and control, disaster management, border operations, port security, and military medicine.<sup>10</sup> The Oregon

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<sup>9</sup> US Department of State, *Expanded U.S. Assistance for Maritime Capacity Building*, December 16, 2013; available at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/218735.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> Lawrence Kapp and Nina M. Serafino, *The National Guard State Partnership Program: Background, Issues, and Options for Congress* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 15, 2011), p. 6.

National Guard has taken the lead since 2012 in the SPP's program for Vietnam.<sup>11</sup>

The third challenge to Vietnam's capacity building is coordination among the three countries, which is critical to smooth and flexible planning, implementation, and assessment. Here, sending liaison officers from Japan and the United States to Vietnam is very effective.

The fourth and final challenge is the political sensitivity of some of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to Japan and the United States cooperating on Vietnam's defense capability. ASEAN as a whole has registered its concern about the maritime security issues developing in the South China Sea, but the individual countries' defense policies regarding maritime security are nonetheless caught in a power game between the United States and China.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, some of the ASEAN countries may express strong reservations about the trilateral cooperation initiative, which may eventually weaken ASEAN's integrity. At the same time, this trilateral cooperation may further provoke China, leading it to take even more coercive measures in the South China Sea. To avoid this, Japan, the United States, and Vietnam must ensure transparency in their capacity building activities to alleviate any skepticism from other ASEAN countries.

## 5. Positive Spillover Effects

If trilateral cooperation on Vietnam's capacity building in maritime security succeeds, other countries in the region—such as the Philippines and Indonesia, which are facing similar maritime security challenges—may be followed by a similar form of defense cooperation. For example, Australia and Britain could become donor states for this defense cooperation. Furthermore, success in trilateral cooperation may also create opportunities to promote civil-military cooperation in other areas. For instance, civil-military dialogue on building a trilateral cooperation framework on strategic, operational, and tactical levels may be possible, thereby also strengthening the Japanese-US alliance. Japan then might be further encouraged to contribute to stability in the Asia-Pacific region by taking a leading role in building trilateral cooperation.

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<sup>11</sup> National Guard Bureau, *The National Guard State Partnership Program Annual Report Fiscal Year 2013*, January 2014; available at <http://www.nationalguard.mil/Portals/31/Documents/J-5/InternationalAffairs/StatePartnershipProgram/SPP%20Annual%20Report%20FY13.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Note that "Cambodia and Thailand, which do not have direct interests in this issue, sided with China." See, Suzuki Sanae, *Conflict among ASEAN Members over the South China Sea Issue*, Institute of Developing Economies–Japan External Trade Organization, September 2011; available at [http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Research/Region/Asia/201209\\_suzuki.html](http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Research/Region/Asia/201209_suzuki.html).

# Japan's Experience in the Haiyan Disaster Relief Operation

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On November 8, 2013, Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines, leaving approximately 6,000 people dead, 1,800 missing, and more than 4 million displaced. Japan was one of the eight nations that dispatched its military to help in the relief effort.

Following the Philippine government's request for assistance on November 10, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) sent its civilian Japan Disaster Relief (JDR) medical teams to the island of Leyte, which sustained the most damage, for a period of approximately one month. The medical team consisted of medical doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and coordinators, all of whom were registered volunteers trained by JICA's pre-operational disaster relief programs. The Japanese government also dispatched the Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) as the military component of the JDR team, the largest military group ever sent abroad for disaster relief.

## 1. Civil-Military Cooperation

In the Typhoon Haiyan relief operation, the JSDF offered (1) mobile medical assistance using Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC)s and helicopters; (2) aerial transportation service for the affected people, aid workers, military personnel, and relief goods using C-130Hs, CH-47JAs, UH-1Js, and SH-60Ks; and (3) pest control using spraying units. The JSDF also sent liaison officers (LOs) to the UN cluster meetings on health issues, the military-to-military coordination center, US and British naval vessels, and the JICA office in Manila for information gathering and coordination.

The cooperation during the relief operations between the civilian and military (JSDF) components of the Japan Disaster Relief team included information exchange and sharing by Tokyo, Manila, and Tacloban; transportation of the JDR's civilian staff members between Manila and Tacloban using the JSDF's C-130H transport aircraft; and aerial damage assessment by the JDR's Expert team using the JSDF's SH-60K helicopters.

In addition, the JDR Secretariat in Tokyo also envisioned cooperation between the military (either the JSDF or the US military) and civilians (i.e., civilian JDR workers active in the Philippines). One example was an evacuation plan for the JDR medical teams already operating in Tacloban, using US military assets such as Ospreys or helicopters if their security was severely threatened. Another possibility was to use military facilities for civilian JDR medical staff for temporary shelter (e.g., for showers and laundry). Although the Japanese and US military held negotiations with the JDR, none of these plans materialized. But these examples demonstrate that civil-military cooperation during disaster relief operations could be extended beyond the existing plans, which seem to be limited to information sharing, transportation, and damage assessment.

## **2. Speaking a common language**

In order for both the civilian and the military sides to cooperate, each must be familiar with the other's organizational culture, including its decision-making procedures, managerial structures, and operational capacity. Without this knowledge, it would be impossible to prepare for civil-military cooperation, as cost of coordination is likely to increase.

As many observers have argued, creating a human network made up of civilians, the military, the public sector, nonprofit organizations, private businesses, and individuals is essential. For this, workshops, conferences, table-top exercises (TTX), and field training exercises (FTX) for humanitarian assistance and disaster recovery (HA/DR) have been found useful.

Civil-military cooperation, however, usually is ad hoc and thus cannot be practiced in TTX/FTX scenarios. Nevertheless, such exercises can give both civilians and the military opportunities to create networks among the participating civilian and military officers.

Information sharing between civilians and the military refers to the timely and appropriate translation, interpretation, and analysis of the information and thus is important to decide whether cooperation between the civilian JDR team and the military is necessary. A thorough knowledge of the technical terms used in humanitarian aid and by the military therefore is essential.

## **3. Avoiding Excessive and Misguided Expectations**

Avoiding excessive and misguided expectations of the JSDF's role in disaster relief is another challenge. Even though the Oslo Guideline stipulates that using foreign military assets must be the last resort for HA/DR, in Japan the JSDF has long been the first responder to domestic

disasters. Accordingly, the Japanese people have come to expect it to take an even more active role in disaster relief. Overseas disaster relief operations, however, are conducted in a different environment, in which logistics networks as well as language and cultural barriers may cause operational problems. Because many civilian aid workers are not familiar with the JSDF's foreign operations, they may end up with excessive and misguided expectations of its capabilities. Again, enhancing civilians' knowledge of the military would remedy this problem.

#### **4. The Drawbacks of the "All-Japan Approach"**

The "All-Japan approach" can be defined as cooperation in HA/DR by Japanese actors, including the JDR's civilians and JSDF units, Japanese NGOs, and Japanese private businesses. But political pressure to implement the All-Japan approach, either implicitly or explicitly, may hinder relief activities that could otherwise be carried out more efficiently by non-Japanese actors. Indeed, this approach could even reduce the opportunity for civil-military cooperation. For instance, emergency relief goods might be airlifted more efficiently by other countries' militaries or commercial aircraft. But if a Japanese actor (e.g., the JSDF's air cargo) were intentionally selected in connection with the "All-Japan approach," despite the other, more efficient options, the delivery could be delayed, thereby hurting the affected people. Those working for humanitarian relief thus should always choose the best available resource for relief, without regard to national preferences. Currently, the All-Japan approach still appears to have only a symbolic and political function. It should remain one of the means to efficient relief activities and must not be considered the goal in itself. In this sense, a decision to bypass civil-military cooperation if it is not feasible also is important. Civilians and the military should cooperate on disaster relief activities only if it is the best available option.

# Inter-agency Coordination in Disaster Relief for the 2011 East Japan Earthquake and the 2013 Typhoon Haiyan

Atsushi Yasutomi  
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Japan's experiences with disaster relief after the earthquake in eastern Japan in 2011 and Typhoon "Haiyan" in the Philippines in 2013 have given the country useful lessons for more effective and efficient intra-agency coordination among the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF), state and local authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and volunteer networks.

## 1. Good practice and challenges in civil-military cooperation in the 2011 Earthquake – building networks for cooperation

The JSDF's relief efforts after the 2011 earthquake marked the first time that it had cooperated with NGOs on the ground. The JSDF's information sharing with civilian agencies resulted in the efficient delivery of relief goods, which was a highlight of Japan's civil-military cooperation. Nonetheless, it became evident that more formalized approaches are needed, such as developing a peacetime civil-military cooperation network and providing training and exercises.

One of the best examples of civil-military cooperation during the 2011 earthquake took place in Miyagi Prefecture. The relief efforts began with on-site coordination meetings of the state authorities, relevant local authorities, the JSDF, and volunteer organizations (including NGOs) to plan the distribution of food and other relief goods to evacuees in the region. For example, for the distribution of food, first the local authorities identified the number and locations of the temporary evacuee shelters; then volunteers identified those areas where the food would be distributed and prepared; and finally, using this information, the JSDF clarified the current status of the food distribution and the number of food packages yet to be distributed. In some areas, in order to avoid any duplication, the JSDF prepared hot rice and miso soup, and the volunteers cooked the main dishes.<sup>13</sup> This practice became a model for effective coordination amongst the JSDF and civilian organizations.

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13 Tomoya Kamino, "Disaster Response in the Great East Japan Earthquake: For collaboration among the Japan Self-Defense Forces, Business Enterprises, and civil society organization", *Journal of International Security*, Vol. 41, No. 2, September 2013, p. 40. [Original in Japanese]

Some Japanese believe that the country has become overly dependent on the JSDF for help after major natural disasters.<sup>14</sup> The role of the JSDF in disaster relief and the procedure for dispatching the JSDF are stipulated in Article 83 of the Defense Forces Act, which states that in case of a natural disaster, in order to protect people's lives and assets, the mayor of a city in the affected prefecture may request Defense Minister a dispatch of the JSDF. Upon the request, Defense Minister determines that no other means of sending aid are available, he/she may dispatch the JSDF. For the JSDF to be sent to provide disaster relief in Japan, three conditions must be met: (1) the JSDF's operations must protect people's lives and assets to maintain the public order; (2) the need for protection must be evident; and, (3) no other civilian means must be available to do this.<sup>15</sup>

Given the constraints of the JSDF's assets and the number of personnel engaged in disaster relief activities, the third condition must be minimized. One way would be to develop a plan for coordination stipulating that after a major natural disaster, the JSDF would first concentrate on search and rescue and limit other functions, such as transportation and food distribution. Such an agreement between the JSDF and private businesses may help enhance the JSDF's disaster response capability. To date, the JSDF has concluded a disaster relief cooperation agreement with Softbank, a private telecom company, allowing the exchange of information through Softbank's communication facilities, with the JSDF moving Softbank's mobile communication technicians into the affected areas if necessary.<sup>16</sup> The Agency for Natural Resources and Energy, in the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI), recently

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14 Tomonori Yoshizaki, "A Japanese Perspectives," in National Institute for Defense Studies, International Security Symposium, "The Role of the Military Major Natural Disasters," 2012, Tokyo, p. 76 [original in Japanese]. The JSDF has been dispatched to provide disaster relief in Japan more than 20,000 times since 1951. The populations of those areas of Japan prone to natural calamities now expect the JSDF to be the primary responder to disasters. In fact, in a national opinion survey conducted in 2012, more than 80% of the respondents named disaster relief as the main purpose of the JSDF. Yoshizaki thus refers to the JSDF's role in disaster relief in Japan as "Japan's strategic culture." See also Tomoaki Murakami, "Historical Development of Disaster Relief Operations by [the] JSDF", *Journal of International Security*, Vol. 41, No. 2, September 2013, pp. 15–30 [original in Japanese]. Murakami states that because the JSDF's role in disaster relief is highly visible to much of Japan, the population's opinion of the JSDF has been high. Between July and September 2014 alone, the JSDF was dispatched as many as 65 times for disaster relief in Japan, with 24,509 personnel, 5,083 vehicles, and 258 aircraft deployed. See, *The Asagumo Shimbun*, 13 November 2014. In this respect, Yoshizaki refers to the JSDF's domestic roles in disaster relief in Japan as Japan's strategic culture. See, Yoshizaki (ibid).

15 S. Tamura, K. Takahashi, and K. Shimada, eds., *Legal Systems concerning Disaster Response in Japan* [original in Japanese].

16 Softbank, 「災害時の相互協力に向けて『災害協定』を締結」 [Softbank concludes treaty for mutual cooperation in case of disaster], press release, June 24, 2014; available at [http://www.softbank.jp/corp/group/sbm/news/press/2014/20140624\\_01/](http://www.softbank.jp/corp/group/sbm/news/press/2014/20140624_01/)

conducted transportation trainings with the Ministry of Defense, using the JSDF's vehicle between private oil refineries and private gas stations.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. Challenges in Inter-agency Coordination after Typhoon "Haiyan"

Japan's relief efforts in the Philippines demonstrated that its current approach must institutionalize its coordination of the military and civilian organizations at both the strategic and tactical levels, concentrating on preliminary information exchanges and human resource capabilities.

Just one year has passed since the colossal Typhoon Haiyan caused severe damage to the Philippines in November 2013. The Japanese government offered US\$56 million in financial assistance and sent a medical support team from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The government also sent 1,180 members of the JSDF to Cebu Island and then to Leyte Island, under its Operation Sankay (meaning "friend" in the Visayan language) between November 11 and December 9, 2013, to provide transportation for the service staff, relief goods, pest control, and mobile clinics for medical assistance such as vaccinations.

Because it lacked officers with experience in coordinating with the international humanitarian community, the JSDF's medical team received assistance from the Embassy of Japan in coordinating with civilian actors on the ground, including international organizations and national and local authorities.

### Conceptual mismatch between the strategic and tactical levels on civil-military cooperation

Japan's strategy regarding civil-military cooperation in support and disaster relief activities has been spelled out since 2002, most recently in the Advisory Group Medium-term Report on Future Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs). This report suggests that the JSDF use the Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA) in collaboration with civilian organizations, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), through a whole-of-government approach, or the "All-Japan" policy.<sup>18</sup> Japan's National Security Strategy (NSS), released in 2013, also stipulates that Japanese PKOs should implement effective coordination with ODA projects and with

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17 Ministry of the Economy, Trade, and Industry, 「陸上自衛隊東北方面隊との間で、危機時の石油輸送協力体制を強化します」[METI enhances cooperation between with the Tohoku Arm Group JSDF on transfer of oil in case of disaster], press release, October 14, 2014. 経済産業省、プレスリリース 2014 年 10 月 14 日; available at <http://www.meti.go.jp/press/2014/10/20141014006/20141014006.html>

18 Advisory Group Medium-term Report on Future PKO (PKO no arikata ni kansuru kondankai Chuukan Torimatome), available at [http://www.pko.go.jp/PKO\\_J/info/pdf/20110704.pdf](http://www.pko.go.jp/PKO_J/info/pdf/20110704.pdf)

NGOs.<sup>19</sup> While these strategic documents address Japan's fundamental approach to civil-military cooperation, they contain few, if any, tactical guidelines on practicing the strategies in actual missions, i.e. how the JSDF and potential civilian collaborators should actually cooperate. As a result, the interpretations on civil-military cooperation between the capital city and field level may vary, raising the risk of making cooperation highly case- and person-dependent. Some cases in the Philippines present various witnesses suggesting inconsistencies and confusion over the strategies created in Tokyo and the interpretations of them by the foreign offices and JSDF officers at the tactical level in the Philippines.

The JSDF officer in charge of civil-military cooperation in Operation Sankay noted that the "All-Japan" (whole-of-government) approach was essential to the JSDF's disaster relief operations and international peace support operations.<sup>20</sup> For this reason, there has been constant psychological pressure from Tokyo on the JSDF staff operating in the field seek out and realize any civil-military cooperation projects. But at the same time, this officer acknowledged that the All-Japan approach should not take priority over responding to local emergency relief needs. Indeed, the JSDF had more pressing needs for coordination with local authorities and the UN agencies in Tacloban than seeking opportunities for cooperation with other Japanese agencies.

A diplomat at the Japanese Embassy's Provisional Office in Tacloban revealed that except for protecting Japanese nationals in the disaster areas, it had not received any explicit task orders from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in Tokyo requesting support for the JSDF engaged in Tacloban. He emphasized the serious lack of cohesion between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense concerning public announcements of the JSDF's medical services to be offered in Tacloban. The JSDF periodically gave press releases to the Japanese press, though not to the Philippine media. It is imperative that the JSDF announce in advance its pest control activities (aerosol application) and for the availability of its mobile clinics and to keep track of such activities for future reference. Despite this, the two ministries in Tokyo did not have a unified policy regarding their roles vis-à-vis public announcements. The Provisional Office first sent the announcement to the Embassy in Manila, which is better connected to the local networks, so the announcement could then reach the Philippine and other media. This

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19 Cabinet Office of Japan, National Security Strategy, December 17, 2013; available at [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96\\_abe/documents/2013/\\_icsFiles/afiedfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2013/_icsFiles/afiedfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf)

20 Saya Kiba and Atsushi Yasutomi, "Challenges in Japanese Approaches to Civil-Military Cooperation: Cases in the International Peace Cooperation Missions in South Sudan and the Philippines," *Journal of International Cooperation Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 2014. [Original in Japanese]. The witnesses described in this article are based on the authors' interviews conducted in March 2014.

important policy linkage between the two ministries was not formulated by the authorities in Tokyo but came about on a purely on an ad-hoc and personal initiative basis.

#### Capability for pre-operation information-gathering

The work of the Japanese Embassy's Provisional Office in Tacloban was essential for linking the local authorities and the JSDF in cluster meetings at the On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC, a coordinating body in Tacloban for civilian humanitarian agencies), conducting studies of local medical demands, and providing the JSDF with both information about the community and language support.

The diplomat at the Embassy's Provisional Office mentions two areas needing improvement. The first is that the JSDF was unable to send in an engineering unit with heavy equipment, even though it had been told in advance the need for such equipment. He learned from his post-operation study that the mayors of the local authorities, and members of the state agencies (particularly the Ministry of Social Welfare and Development), and the international agencies all had needed assistance in shelter building and agricultural reconstruction. In addition, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) expected the JSDF to assist in the transportation of relief goods and to provide forklift and other heavy vehicle operators to clear away rubble.

The second area needing improvement is that the JSDF first operated in the north of Cebu Island and only later moved to Leyte Island where the damage was much worse. These tactical challenges could have been avoided if the MoFA had arrived earlier in the damaged areas in order to conduct more detailed studies of local needs and thus to be able to deliver the information to the JSDF more promptly and accurately.

A JSDF officer seconded to the MoFA's Southeast Asia Division agrees that the JSDF/MoD should create a system of constantly strengthening their information-gathering capabilities through peacetime exercises. At present, the Act Concerning the Dispatch of Japan Disaster Relief Team requires permission from the foreign minister to dispatch a JSDF foreign disaster relief team. It is possible, however, to create at least a provisional legal framework to send JSDF/MoD staff to disaster areas to study whether the JSDF's help is truly necessary before actually sending in a team. If their study determined that the JSDF was not needed, then the reconnaissance trip would have been prudent. But it would be better to have more JSDF staff (and defense attachés) capable of evaluating such post-disaster needs stationed at all times in the Japanese embassies in disaster-prone countries so that they could instantly analyze and relay emergency demands.

### Capability of human resources in inter-agency coordination for civil-military cooperation

The JSDF officer quoted earlier stated that ordinary JSDF staff are usually not able to oversee coordination, as it requires expert knowledge of and experience with development assistance and disaster relief. Officers without this expertise are not able to coordinate with UN agents and local and national authorities. For example, they may not be familiar with UN cluster systems and the Oslo Guidelines, and they may not be aware that the military's approach and mind-set are not always compatible with those of the civilian actors. But the JSDF officers' capabilities can be strengthened through peacetime capacity building in these areas. Those who are sent on disaster relief and peacekeeping operations should have at least a basic understanding of Japanese foreign assistance and international cooperation. Moreover, the embassies will not always be able to support the JSDF, so the officers on disaster missions must not depend on the embassy's assistance.

### Legal Constraints on Disaster Relief Abroad: The 1987 JDR Act

The roles of and the conditions under which Japan's Disaster Relief team is to be sent abroad are spelled out in the Act Concerning the Dispatch of the Japan Disaster Relief Team (JDR Act). This law—which first took effect in 1987, with six subsequent amendments—has allowed the Japan Disaster Relief Team (composed of search and rescue, medical, and expert teams from the JICA and other civilian organizations, plus the JSDF) to be dispatched to disaster areas upon the request of the affected country. Article III-2 states that the minister of foreign affairs may consult with the minister of defense regarding the dispatch of the JSDF should it be deemed necessary.

This act has been challenged in several areas, particularly the JSDF's cooperation with the JICA. First, the act regulates what tasks the JSDF can perform during disaster relief operations abroad. According to Article III, the JSDF is permitted to assist in search and rescue; medical activities (including pest control); and the overseas transportation of relief goods, facilities, and personnel. This law currently does not cover the dispatch of engineering units. Due to this constraint, the JSDF was not able to send an engineering unit to conduct rubble removals in Tacloban. In effect, the JSDF's relief activities (vaccinations, pest control, and mobile clinics) were similar to those of the JICA. While Japan's medical functions were multiplied in the disaster areas, the JSDF could not respond to the high expectation for rubble removal, which could be best practiced by the JSDF in the disaster environment. Instead, the JSDF was virtually mirroring JICA's tasks. The second challenge is that the act does not make clear about the division of labor and its sequencing with civilian institutions, primarily between the JSDF and the JICA.

## **Conclusion**

Japan's recent experiences with civil-military cooperation during disaster relief activities have revealed some major problems. Despite the success of the 2011 relief activities, greater peacetime civil-military cooperation network is further needed. Japan's relief activities in the Philippines offer some lessons in the cooperation of the JSDF and private Japanese organizations operating in a foreign country. Japan lacks an institutionalized commitment to inter-agency coordination for disaster relief. Although it has a solid strategy for civil-military cooperation for disaster relief, the interpretation of this strategy is not yet consistent.

The JSDF's experiences with the 2011 earthquake in Japan and the 2013 typhoon in the Philippines demonstrate that concrete measures are still needed to move this strategy to a tactical level. Inter-agency coordination must become institutionalized in order to prevent the mission from stalling and perhaps even harming, rather than assisting, the intended beneficiaries.

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