

PREPARING FOR FUTURE DISASTERS

Strategic Assistance and the U.S.-Japan Alliance

By Thomas B. Fargo, Noboru Yamaguchi,
Ryo Sahashi, Kei Koga, and Alison Szalwinski



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Preparing for Future Disasters: Strategic Assistance and the U.S.-Japan Alliance

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Front cover image: A U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook helicopter externally loads humanitarian relief supplies at Muzaffarabad, Pakistan, January 4, 2006. The Defense Department is supporting the State Department by providing disaster relief supplies and services following the massive earthquake that struck Pakistan and parts of India and Afghanistan. U.S. Air Force photo by 1st Lt. Chad Leisenring.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Faced with the threat of increasingly frequent and destructive large-scale disasters in Asia, Japan and the U.S.—owing to their unique capabilities and shared interests within the region—need to elevate humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) operations to be a key component of their combined regional security strategy.

MAIN ARGUMENT

The Strategic Assistance concept seeks to apply some of the lessons of recent HA/DR operations to U.S. and Japanese strategies, plans, and postures for future disaster responses in South and Southeast Asia in a whole-of-society, joint U.S.-Japan approach. With factors such as geography, geology, extreme weather, environmental change, climate change, socioeconomic trends, and economic progress contributing to a shifting threat environment within South and Southeast Asia, regional states recognize the need for improvements in multilateral coordination on disaster preparedness and response. While many of these states benefit from U.S. and Japanese involvement in HA/DR activities, they have varying perceptions of and concerns about the U.S. and Japanese role in providing assistance. It remains clear, however, that given military, civilian government, and private-sector capabilities, the U.S.-Japan alliance is an ideal platform to deliver enhanced HA/DR operations in Asia. While keeping in mind challenges such as fiscal constraints, sovereignty concerns, and political dynamics, the Strategic Assistance concept envisions the U.S. and Japan working together to build resilience, strengthen response, and enhance recovery in HA/DR operations.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- *Resilience.* The U.S. and Japan should focus on developing approaches to increase coordination and cooperation on programs that stand to enhance the ability of vulnerable nations to withstand major disaster events.
- *Response.* The U.S. and Japan should enhance combined communications, decision-making, and action-coordination capacity across a range of actors.
- *Recovery.* As stability is re-established and operations focus more on rebuilding essential social functions and capacities, the U.S. and Japan should invest resources in and transition back toward steady-state recovery and development programs.

With Asia emerging as the global geopolitical center of gravity, large-scale disasters in the region will carry profound consequences. Sudden disasters resulting in mass casualties, widespread destruction of property and essential infrastructure, prolonged displacement of large populations, and potential long-term challenges such as famine and disease outbreak will severely test existing national and international institutions. These disasters will pose a significant human security challenge and could present a broader threat to regional stability. Faced with such challenges, Japan and the United States—owing to their unique capabilities and shared interests within the region—should elevate humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) operations to be a key component of their combined regional security strategy. To that end, it is imperative that Tokyo and Washington work together to develop and establish a cooperative, joint approach to regional HA/DR—an initiative that we call Strategic Assistance.

The Strategic Assistance concept seeks to apply some of the lessons of recent HA/DR operations to U.S. and Japanese strategies, plans, and postures for future disaster responses in South and Southeast Asia via a whole-of-society, joint U.S.-Japan approach. With factors such as geography, geology, extreme weather, environmental change, climate change, socioeconomic trends, and economic progress contributing to a shifting threat environment within South and Southeast Asia, states in the region recognize the need for improved multilateral coordination on disaster preparedness and response. While many of these states benefit from U.S. and Japanese involvement in HA/DR activities, they have varying perceptions of—and concerns about—the U.S. and Japanese role in providing assistance. It remains clear, however, that given military, civilian government, and private-sector capabilities, the U.S.-Japan alliance is an ideal platform to deliver enhanced HA/DR operations in Asia. While keeping in mind challenges such as fiscal constraints, sovereignty concerns, and political dynamics, the Strategic Assistance concept envisions the United States and Japan working together to build resilience, strengthen response, and enhance recovery in HA/DR operations.

In building resilience, the United States and Japan should focus on developing approaches to increase their coordination and cooperation on programs that stand to enhance the ability of vulnerable nations to withstand major disaster events. Specifically, they should:

- Develop regular, joint regional HA/DR threat assessments that highlight existing and likely future vulnerabilities to major disasters
- Seek to better coordinate respective efforts to reduce vulnerability through long-term development programs and place greater emphasis on establishing and strengthening disaster-management institutions within potentially affected nations
- Through defense aid programs, focus on organization building; enhancement of command, control, and communications (C3) infrastructure and resilience; and procurement of multipurpose platforms

To strengthen response capabilities during the immediate days, hours, and weeks after a major disaster incident, the United States and Japan should enhance combined communications, decision-making, and action coordination capacity across a range of actors. Specifically, they should:

- Develop a joint concept of operations plan (CONPLAN) series to cover a likely range of disaster events and create a joint doctrine regarding decision-making on initiating combined response operations

- Establish an HA/DR coordination and command center to facilitate the decision-making process regarding combined mobilization of government resources and under which interagency civil-military response management and disaster-response teams can facilitate “hour-zero” operations
- Develop enhanced corps of information/liason officers to facilitate Japan-U.S. coordination and communication with potentially affected nations in the region
- Expand participation in bilateral and multilateral military exercises with rigorous HA/DR components as well as demonstrate bilateral disaster-management capabilities and coordination mechanisms in multilateral joint exercises

During recovery, as stability is re-established and operations focus more on rebuilding essential social functions and capacities, the United States and Japan should invest resources and transition back toward more steady-state recovery and development programs. Specifically, they should:

- Support NGOs and private-sector actors in playing a central role in the recovery process and devolve command to a more decentralized and localized process
- Focus on restoring the function of critical social infrastructure, assisting in the long-term care of displaced persons, and supporting the re-establishment of core social functions
- Consider leaving a small advisory contingent in the affected nation during the recovery phase to assist with defense reconstitution and civil engineering works

The following report first examines the shifting threat environment and intensifying challenges posed by major disasters in the Asia-Pacific region. It then discusses efforts of the international community to strengthen coordination on disaster response before turning to the differing reactions of affected states in South and Southeast Asia to outside humanitarian assistance within the region’s geopolitical context. The next section defines the Strategic Assistance concept and identifies why the United States and Japan are uniquely suited to lead this effort. After identifying some challenges to the Strategic Assistance framework, the final section analyzes its three components—resilience, response, and recovery—and provides recommendations for the United States and Japan for each.

Asia’s Emerging Disaster Nexus

The Asia-Pacific is already home to the majority of the world’s victims of natural disasters (62% of fatalities and 89% of disaster-affected peoples over the past three decades), and this trend is likely to intensify in the future. The rising frequency and destructiveness of major disasters in South and Southeast Asia, in particular, pose serious challenges for the future of regional stability. Poor and underdeveloped national infrastructure, along with rapidly expanding populations increasingly concentrated within low-elevation coastal zones, will serve to heighten vulnerability to major ocean-borne disasters within these key subregions. Under-resourced or ineffectual governance will likely compound vulnerability by preventing or severely diminishing adequate domestic preparation and response capabilities. Indeed, even in the best of times, many local and national governments find themselves under severe strain to meet the demands of their populations for increasingly scarce resources such as water and energy. In disaster scenarios, these deficiencies are apt to be laid bare and severely intensified.

Factors That Heighten Asia's Vulnerability to Natural Disasters

According to the International Disaster Database, during the first decade of the 21st century, 1,227 natural disasters occurred in Asia, killing nearly 500,000 people and costing over \$350 billion.¹ Within this broader region, South and Southeast Asia are particularly vulnerable due to eight basic factors.

First, several geographic factors heighten the vulnerability of South and Southeast Asia to natural disasters. Of the 600 million people in the world who live less than ten meters above sea level, 460 million reside in Asia, including 18% of the region's urban population.² The Mekong and Ganges Deltas, both of which are vital economically and the locus for very large population concentrations, are two of the world's three deltas that are most susceptible to natural disasters. Vulnerable coastal areas are at the forefront of economic development and are increasingly becoming densely populated. More specifically, India, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Japan are among the ten countries with the highest coastal-asset exposure, while India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Indonesia, and Japan constitute seven of the world's ten countries with the highest population exposure to potential ocean-borne disasters.³

Second, the geology of South and Southeast Asia exacerbates their propensity for disaster. The convergence of major tectonic plates—the Indian plate and the Eurasian plate meet in the Himalayan region; the Philippine plate, the Eurasian plate, and the Indo-Australian plate meet on the western coastlines of the Philippines; and the Indo-Australian plate and Eurasian plate meet along the southern island chains of Indonesia—renders the region highly susceptible to major earthquakes. For example, due to its location along the line where the Indian plate intersects with the Eurasian plate, and the memory of a 1934 earthquake that killed over 10,000 people, geologic experts had been warning that the Himalayan region was due for another disastrous earthquake when a magnitude 7.8 quake struck Nepal in April 2015, killing over 8,000 people and injuring over 17,000.⁴ Additionally, the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami that resulted in over 280,000 deaths across the region and the March 11 disaster that devastated Japan were both caused by major earthquakes (respectively, the third and fifth most powerful earthquakes ever recorded) occurring along ocean fault lines.⁵

Third, extreme weather has increasingly affected South and Southeast Asia. Massive tropical cyclones have occurred with growing regularity and intensity. Such storm systems can reshape coastal geology and have lasting effects on social stability. The risks posed by major cyclones are most pronounced along the coastal areas extending from the Bay of Bengal to the Philippine archipelago. In addition to destructive storm systems, long-term climatological trends affecting

¹ "International Disaster Database," Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, <http://www.emdat.be/database>.

² Anthony Oliver-Smith, "Sea Level Rise and the Vulnerability of Coastal Peoples: Responding to the Local Challenges of Global Climate Change in the 21st Century," United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security, 2009, <http://d-nb.info/102969186X/34>.

³ Abhas K. Jha and Zuzana Stanton-Geddes, eds., *Strong, Safe, and Resilient: A Strategic Policy Guide for Disaster Risk Management in East Asia and the Pacific* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2013).

⁴ Joanna Sugden, "What 1934 Told Nepal to Expect about the Next Big Quake," *Wall Street Journal*, India Real Time, April 26, 2015, <http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2015/04/26/what-1934-told-nepal-to-expect-about-the-next-big-quake>; and "Nepal Earthquake Death Toll Rises to 8,413," *Times of India*, May 7, 2015, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/Nepal-earthquake-death-toll-rises-to-8413/articleshow/47187088.cms?from=mdr>.

⁵ "Indonesia Quake Toll Jumps Again," BBC, January 25, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4204385.stm>.

annual precipitation levels have contributed to extensive flooding and prolonged periods of drought, both of which negatively affect food production.⁶

Fourth, environmental change—primarily the result of human activity—heightens the vulnerability of South and Southeast Asia to natural disasters. Reckless land use, unsustainable irrigation practices, contamination of surface water resources, depletion of groundwater reserves, and the destruction of forests, including mangroves, all serve to exacerbate regional vulnerability. The consequences of such actions can be far-reaching. Tropical rainforests, for example, play a crucial role in maintaining stable weather and rainfall patterns in Southeast Asia. Yet this fragile system is likely to become progressively unstable due to deforestation, contributing to changes in weather patterns that increase the incidence of extreme weather events and lead to prolonged flooding and drought.⁷

Fifth, climate change is profoundly affecting weather patterns in the region. Normal climate patterns are giving way to bouts of hydro-intensive activity that cause either extreme precipitation events or droughts. In Southeast Asia and large parts of South Asia, such events previously occurred on average every twenty years but have now become more frequent. This is primarily the result of the greater retention of water in the atmosphere as the earth warms, with the capacity of the atmosphere to hold moisture projected to rise by as much as 7% for every one degree Celsius increase in surface temperature.⁸ As a consequence, South and Southeast Asia will become increasingly humid, rainfall will likely become heavier, and cyclones, hurricanes, and the resulting floods may become more frequent and more devastating. Yet just as a major storm system can destroy infrastructure, a prolonged drought in a country dependent on agricultural production, such as Afghanistan or North Korea, can be equally devastating. The unpredictability in the timing, magnitude, and duration of these kinds of disasters adds to the already difficult job of preparation and response.

Sixth, rapid urbanization will heighten South and Southeast Asia's vulnerability to natural disasters. Populations that were once more diffusely scattered in rural areas are now concentrated in urban centers. In the past 25 years, the number of cities with populations between 600,000 and one million increased to eight hundred.⁹ The concomitant urbanization that the region is experiencing will have both positive and negative implications. While higher concentrations of people can allow for more centralized dissemination of supplies and aid, thus affording the possibility of more rapid and effective relief efforts, urbanization conversely creates fiscal constraints on the capacity of cities to manage potential risks. Large population centers present immense logistical challenges, particularly in terms of organizing evacuations and potentially managing significant numbers of displaced persons. Transporting the necessary quantities of resources to assist large population centers can be highly complicated, particularly if critical infrastructure has been destroyed or is inoperable, making distribution difficult or creating resource bottlenecks. It has become increasingly challenging for regional cities to ensure that they have appropriate and disaster-resilient infrastructure.

⁶ "Strategic Assistance: Disaster Relief and Asia-Pacific Stability" (presentation at National Bureau of Asian Research and Japan Center for International Exchange workshop, Singapore, March 8–9, 2014).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Typhoon Haiyan, known as Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines, is a case in point. This typhoon killed 6,201 people, displaced 4 million people, and resulted in over \$12.9 billion in damages.¹⁰ Considering the Philippines' material and economic disadvantages—which are commonplace throughout South and Southeast Asia—effectively preparing for or responding to such a disaster was difficult.

Seventh, economic progress is another factor in the region's vulnerability. Although economic development increases the availability of resources to cope with potential disasters, it also tends to increase asset risk, particularly if critical infrastructure is concentrated in highly vulnerable areas, such as low-elevation coastal regions. Moreover, merely possessing a large pool of resources or maintaining a robust response capacity does not necessarily translate into greater preparedness or resilience; rather, the appropriate and effective application of resources is the crucial factor. However, in disaster scenarios with a multitude of interests and sectors competing for government attention and for response and recovery resources, the effective application of even significant resources is rarely a simple process. Indeed, directing resources to address the needs that are most critical and pressing, while ensuring that relief efforts have as broad a reach as possible, is an essential but fraught task.

Last, in addition to these challenges, disasters in one country will increasingly have spillover effects for other Asian economies, as trade networks and other forms of economic interconnectedness increase through the process of globalization. For example, in 2011, flooding in Bangkok ravaged seven major industrial sections of the city that produced components for transportation equipment, setting back global industrial production by around 2.5%. This had a negative impact on economic productivity in Japan in particular, as 449 of the 804 companies in the seven affected industrial sections were Japanese.¹¹ Furthermore, while burgeoning coastal cities and infrastructure accelerate trade relations among regional countries, these areas, as discussed above, are inherently vulnerable to natural disasters, which can drastically affect region-wide economic activity.

As a consequence of these trends, South and Southeast Asia face a growing number of interconnected risks and vulnerabilities—a “disaster nexus”—that will pose a grave threat to the security of hundreds of millions of people in the region.

Geopolitical Implications

As was made clear by Typhoon Haiyan, which struck the Philippines in November 2013, the direct, secondary, and residual effects of catastrophic events on human and national security are interwoven and often far-reaching. These effects can significantly compound the severity of the initial disaster and complicate response efforts by multiplying the immediate challenges that must be faced to prevent additional loss of life. Rapid-response capabilities, including the ability to provide basic services such as clean water and food, are thus crucial in stemming the tide of casualties and can help prevent or mitigate secondary effects—such as the outbreak of disease—that can multiply the effects of the initial disaster.

¹⁰ “Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda,” U.S. Agency of International Development (USAID), Fact Sheet, no. 22, April 21, 2014, <http://www.usaid.gov/haiyan/fy14/fs22>.

¹¹ Japan Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), *White Paper on International Economy and Trade 2012: Extending the Frontiers of Growth through Global Linkages* (Tokyo, 2012), chapter 2, section 3, <http://www.meti.go.jp/english/report/downloadfiles/2012WhitePaper/2-3.pdf>.

In addition to the human suffering caused by disasters, the inability of governments to provide basic goods to their people in times of great emergency will likely compound political and societal instability. In nations already experiencing internal political turmoil, major disasters can exacerbate tensions and provoke further conflict. Prior to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Sri Lanka was in the midst of a decades-long civil war between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Despite hopes that an international presence delivering humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka would help ease the tensions or bring a cessation to the hostilities, aid instead became politicized and the rift between the sides deepened.

Such instability could have broad regional ramifications, especially if multiple countries are affected by a disaster, as was the case in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, or if instability in one country spills over into neighboring states. Globalization ensures that political and societal instability in one state will have some degree of impact—whether economically, demographically, or politically—beyond that state’s immediate borders. Nations unaffected by the disaster itself may feel its effects through the migration of displaced persons, restricted access to trade, or adverse impact on business sectors. As nations struggle to recover from a large-scale disaster, the financial strain has the potential to threaten economic stability. Major disasters in South and Southeast Asia thus pose a significant challenge to the security of the entire region.

Toward a Robust International Response

The prospect of South and Southeast Asia facing natural disasters that are more frequent, more intense, and more devastating will naturally increase demand for capabilities that address and assuage the effects of these disasters. Past instances of international responses to natural disasters in South and Southeast Asia offer important lessons for future efforts. Moreover, past experiences and dialogues associated with this project reveal important views from countries likely to need international disaster response in the future. The following analyses should inform any new strategy seeking to enhance international response strategies.

International and Interagency Coordination

In response to Typhoon Haiyan, the Philippines attempted to foster an effective relief scheme that incorporated international assistance in an effort to overcome the country’s many vulnerabilities. Manila initiated interagency efforts through the Ministries of Customs, Finance, Immigration, Foreign Affairs, Social Welfare, Health, and Civil Defense and created a “one-stop shop” to provide food and shelter for personnel at airports and seaports and foster information sharing among the various actors. Additionally, the government helped with importing food and military assistance so that it could overcome several challenges, such as coordinating donations and distribution with other countries. Because the Philippines had previous experience in conducting combined military exercises with foreign counterparts and in cooperating with international aid and relief organizations utilizing the UN cluster approach, international assistance was relatively well-coordinated and effective. This approach provided a clear point of contact and reliable information to determine appropriate levels and disbursement of humanitarian assistance and ultimately fostered effective coordination.

Nevertheless, despite the successes described above, several challenges remain. Coordination problems persist among many national institutions and between host nations and outside

actors (including foreign countries and international NGOs). For example, some NGOs are not willing to cooperate with other NGOs or engage with militaries, creating inefficiencies that reduce the speed and effectiveness of their overall response. Some private groups and NGOs simply arrive at affected sites and act as “disaster tourists.” Both of these issues were manifest in the international response to Typhoon Haiyan. Such lack of coordination can add to the burden of responding governments, NGOs, and militaries.

Another major challenge in South and Southeast Asia is whether the host government can provide mechanisms to effectively coordinate operations among the private sector, NGOs, foreign governments, and their counterparts. Too often, affected nations lack the ability to coordinate a robust international response—the result being a less effective response. For example, China’s inexperience with requesting appropriate aid and coordinating response teams during the 2008 Sichuan earthquake highlighted the importance of effective host government response management. In 2009, the response to an earthquake in Sumatra, Indonesia, saw a mismatch by the host nation between the amount and type of aid requested and the actual conditions on the ground.¹² Overall, the region needs to increase its capacity for effective coordination between states as well as with international and regional organizations, such as the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). To this end, it is imperative that regional capacity be improved across several areas.

Recent efforts at enhancing regional coordination mechanisms have seen mixed results. Since the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, there have been a number of improvements in terms of cooperation, resulting in new regional frameworks and joint military exercises, such as the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), ASEAN Regional Forum Disaster Relief Exercises, and ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) experts’ working groups on HA/DR. However, improvements in coordination efforts are not simply a response to the threat of severe natural disasters but rather due to strategic calculations in the context of changing security dynamics in East Asia. Indeed, the regional geopolitical state of affairs can serve as both an accelerator and a hindrance to enhancing regional HA/DR mechanisms. While these common challenges have spurred some efforts within the region to improve multilateral collaboration and coordination on disaster preparedness and response, especially through ASEAN, a significant gap in capabilities remains.

Lessons Learned from Operation Tomodachi

During the first six months after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, approximately 100,000 personnel from the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) deployed in support of the rescue and relief effort—the largest operational deployment in the JSDF’s history. Recognizing the severity and complexity of the unfolding crisis, the United States and Japan quickly activated alliance mechanisms to enable a rapid combined response. Operation Tomodachi (“friend” in Japanese) involved the U.S. military’s mobilization of approximately 24,000 personnel, 189 aircraft, and 24 naval vessels, including the USS *Ronald Reagan* carrier strike group, in support of JSDF operations. The operation represents the “first time that full-scale bilateral cooperation was carried

¹² Jon Ehrenfeld and Charles Aanenson, *Strengthening the Alliance: HA/DR Cooperation in the Asia Pacific* (Seattle: Peace Winds America, 2013).

out from decision-making to the implementation of response under the existing Japan-U.S. security arrangements.”¹³

Operation Tomodachi was carried out in three overlapping phases: emergency response, relief, and reconstruction. During the first phase, the U.S. military, in conjunction with the JSDF, the Japan Coast Guard, and local emergency and rescue personnel, delivered emergency aid and conducted joint search-and-rescue operations in devastated coastal areas. In the second phase—relief—U.S. forces, again in conjunction with the JSDF and local authorities, transported significant amounts of essential follow-on supplies and personnel to the affected areas. In the third phase—restoration—combined U.S.-Japan forces focused on rebuilding critical infrastructure. A prime example of this was the effort to restore the functionality of Sendai Airport in order to open up a crucial artery through which relief personnel and resources could flow into the surrounding area. Operations at Sendai Airport were restored just five days after the disaster, with the first transport carrying aid arriving three days later on March 19. Over the two-month duration of Operation Tomodachi, the U.S. military delivered over 280 tons of food, 7.7 million liters of water, and 45,000 liters of fuel. These efforts undoubtedly saved countless lives and demonstrated the tremendous operational utility of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

While the March 11 triple disaster and the response it generated were unique, Operation Tomodachi may be particularly instructive for developing a joint framework to enhance U.S.-Japan cooperation and coordination on HA/DR. First, Operation Tomodachi demonstrated the long-standing principle of HA/DR operations that “speed is life.” The ability of Japanese and U.S. military forces to rapidly supplement civilian first responders and provide critical resources such as food, water, shelter, and medical care, as well as information and logistical support, was crucial in preventing the further deterioration of an already incomprehensible catastrophe.

Operation Tomodachi also demonstrated the strength of the U.S.-Japan alliance in the face of disaster. The combined efforts of U.S. and Japanese military forces throughout the operation served to highlight, and indeed reinforce, the important strides the two allies had made toward improving interoperability and broad-level coordination. Moreover, despite being faced with an unimaginably complex crisis, the allies demonstrated a remarkable degree of flexibility and adaptability in their response—attributes that were absolutely essential in addressing the dynamic nature of this particular disaster. Additionally, U.S. and Japanese military forces gained significant real world experience in executing combined operations, while also enhancing operational familiarity and trust between the two forces at a person-to-person level from command down to the tactical echelon.

Operational coordination was achieved through the establishment of bilateral coordination centers at Ichigaya, Yokota, and Sendai. While originally intended to facilitate U.S.-Japan combat operations, the bilateral coordination centers were repurposed to support HA/DR operations in response to the March 11 disaster. Personnel from the JSDF, U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ), the Japan Ministry of Defense, and the Japan Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, along with local government officials, civil aviation control, and private first responders and NGOs, were consolidated in these centers to enhance coordination of the response effort across the various actors involved.

¹³ Akihisa Nagashima, “Genpatsu taisho: Nichi-Bei kyoryoku no butaiura” [Response to the Nuclear Accident: The Behind Scenes of Japan-U.S. Cooperation], *VOICE*, July 2011.

Because U.S.-Japan contingency planning is focused primarily on combat operations, there had been little in the way of detailed preparation for combined HA/DR operations. While this situation was exacerbated by the severity of the developing crisis, the *ad hoc* nature of the response resulted in a number of challenges related to information sharing, the division of roles and responsibilities, and operational coordination between U.S. forces and the JSDF. Indeed, the broad and multifaceted nature of the crisis made it quite difficult for the allies to develop a clear and unified operating picture during the initial phases of the response. Poor communication, inadequate mechanisms for sharing information, and coordination difficulties further hindered the development of a unified operating picture as Operation Tomodachi progressed.

Information sharing, in particular, is absolutely essential when faced with a severe crisis for which there has been little preplanning. Developing both a unified picture of the operational capabilities of the major actors involved—civilian and private as well as military—and methods to assess and disseminate information regarding the situation at hand allows for a more effective division of responsibilities and labor. Further, shared situational awareness allows for more effective delegation of tasks and responsibilities and for better coordination of forces operating across a wide range of activities. Such coordination was limited in Operation Tomodachi because of unclear lines of communication between forces, information overload, a lack of knowledge in the USFJ and the JSDF regarding the other's specific HA/DR capabilities and organization, technical issues inhibiting communication, and generally restricted access to classified operational information and materials.

Despite these difficulties, the rapid military response most certainly saved lives and prevented an already horrible catastrophe from worsening further. To address the above issues in future operations, however, the United States and Japan have agreed on the need to further enhance bilateral coordination and contingency planning. Both sides possess significant capabilities that can be brought to bear in support of disaster response and relief efforts. Given the potentially destabilizing effects of major disasters, and the moral imperative to render assistance to those in need, the United States and Japan should seek to increase their ability to respond to major disasters, both domestically and in the region.

The need for greater bilateral contingency planning is the most important lesson from Operation Tomodachi. The allies must consider how combined response and relief efforts can be made most effective in advance of disasters, rather than relying on ad hoc measures enacted during contingency operations. Preplanning for future contingencies must learn from and seek to alleviate the communication and coordination issues that hampered the effectiveness of Operation Tomodachi. In-country prepositioning and heightened force interoperability—two factors that greatly contributed to the effectiveness of Operation Tomodachi despite the communication and coordination issues—are unlikely to similarly benefit action in regional contingencies. This further highlights the need to engage in serious advanced planning before the next major disaster occurs.

In addition, to the extent that Tokyo and Washington can engage with other regional actors to prepare for and support regional HA/DR efforts, the tolls of future disasters may be lessened. Many hands make light work, and it is good to have friends who are willing and able to provide their support. However, the presence of multiple actors can also significantly complicate operations and under some circumstances may limit the overall efficacy of HA/DR through confusion or redundancy. Moreover, political difficulties are likely to prevent more comprehensive engagement and preplanning among the region's major powers.

The Geopolitical Context of HA/DR Cooperation

While most countries in South and Southeast Asia tend to agree with the purpose and necessity of improving cooperation on HA/DR, particularly with strong and capable actors such as the United States and Japan, these efforts cannot be disassociated from the region's geopolitical context. This causes a number of concerns for some countries, and as such, regional states each have a different perspective on the prospect of cooperation on HA/DR, including Strategic Assistance.

India. India has played an important role in enhancing regional HA/DR activities. As it demonstrated through participation in the Tsunami Core Group activities in 2004, the Indian military, particularly its naval force, is emerging as a net provider of security in the Indian Ocean region and beyond. Indeed, India views HA/DR operations as a key component for military engagement with the international community, including the United States, Japan, and other actors in the Indo-Pacific littoral. In addition, with India's growth and prosperity increasingly tied to the globalized economy, its security interests have expanded beyond its traditional concerns with territorial defense and internal security.

However, Indian strategists have competing views on improving multilateral HA/DR cooperation. On the one hand, in terms of external relations, three factors affect their views regarding international HA/DR activities. First, India seeks to avoid any foreign military presence or intervention, especially from great powers, due to its emphasis on national sovereignty. Second, Indian leaders are highly sensitive to issues along the country's periphery and within what it perceives as its own sphere of influence, and New Delhi views attempts by external actors to shape regional security with great trepidation and suspicion. Third, Indian nationalism is rising in tandem with the country's economic development. Because of these three factors, India is unlikely to accept U.S.-Japan HA/DR operations on its soil, or on the subcontinent, and is concerned about the possibility that the United States will negotiate status of forces agreements or other arrangements with states on India's periphery, such as Bangladesh and Maldives.

Despite these concerns, India considers HA/DR cooperation useful for its balance-of-power strategy and policy of heightened engagement throughout the greater Indo-Pacific region. In the aftermath of the April 2015 Nepal earthquake, India was the first nation to respond to the crisis, dispatching relief and rescue teams in what it termed Operation Maitri. With India and China each vying for influence in Nepal, both nations rushed to offer aid and support, causing many to note the geopolitical competition underlying the relief efforts.¹⁴ In the context of a rising China, India could strengthen its defense ties with the United States and Japan, while showing its commitment to the region by cooperating on HA/DR through regional multilateral frameworks such as ASEAN and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

Finally, given the frequency of natural disasters in India, New Delhi has also developed an internal management mechanism, enacted by the Disaster Management Act in 2005 and the Disaster Management Policy in 2009. This mechanism emphasizes prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, relief, and rehabilitation and considers use of the armed forces only as a last resort. Nevertheless, this change is a relatively recent phenomenon, and some from the political and strategy communities argue that the role of the military needs to be concentrated only on traditional security concerns.

¹⁴ Niharika Mandhana and Charles Hutzler, "Nepal Earthquake: India and China Send Rescue Teams to Himalayan Nation," *Wall Street Journal*, April 26, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/nepal-earthquake-china-sends-search-and-rescue-team-to-katmandu-1430032246>.

Indonesia. Indonesia's views on HA/DR are similar to India's. Indonesia regards regional cooperation on HA/DR as highly important, particularly given the country's intense vulnerability to natural disasters, which is clearly illustrated by its experience with earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, landslides, droughts, and forest fires. Because of these challenges, the Indonesian government has sought to strengthen its mechanisms for managing national disasters. These efforts include the creation of a five-year disaster-management plan mandated by Indonesian law, the establishment of the National Disaster Management Agency and local disaster-management offices, and its efforts to enhance the capacity for disaster-response and recovery programs. This heightened awareness of the necessity for disaster management propelled the government and Indonesian society to shift their focus from reaction to prevention and incorporate principles of disaster risk reduction into mainstream national policies.

To implement these national initiatives, however, it is imperative that Indonesia create further cooperative linkages inside and outside the country. Nationally, although the National Disaster Management Agency acts as the coordinating institution, it still depends on cooperation from local communities and the private and the public sectors. Regionally, Indonesia focuses on building cooperation through ASEAN, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the ADMM-Plus. Internationally, coordination with organizations such as the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is important. Within this three-tiered context, Strategic Assistance based on the U.S.-Japan alliance could contribute to building Indonesia's capacity through technical and financial assistance, human development, knowledge management, and policy coordination. This support would increase Indonesia's capability to mitigate the effects of disasters and maintain regional stability in East Asia.

Nevertheless, the Strategic Assistance concept carries geopolitical implications that could trigger Indonesian sensitivities. One of the country's security principles is its aversion to military or security pacts, as illustrated by former foreign minister Marty Natalegawa's doctrine of "dynamic equilibrium." Whether or not an operation is motivated by geopolitical considerations, Jakarta will inevitably perceive Strategic Assistance with great skepticism from the standpoint of its own national sovereignty, as well as potentially in the context of the emerging competition between the United States and China. Because Indonesia's foreign and defense policy preference (mirroring that of many Southeast Asian nations) is to maintain an equidistance from both great powers, supporting Strategic Assistance would be a difficult task. Consequently, any concept based on the U.S.-Japan alliance would create a number of political complications for Jakarta. Indonesia would likely offer lukewarm support for Strategic Assistance by stating either that HA/DR efforts need to be coordinated through multilateral frameworks, such as ASEAN, or that Strategic Assistance should focus on institutional capacity building for the four-stage cycle of disaster management—prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.

Myanmar. Myanmar is also concerned about its vulnerability to natural disasters. In May 2008, Cyclone Nargis affected over 2 million people and caused approximately 140,000 deaths in Myanmar. In the aftermath of the disaster, the ruling junta did not immediately accept international assistance. Only after harsh global criticism did it take action and begin responding to the disaster with the formation of the National Disaster Preparedness Central Committee. ASEAN played an important role in convincing the Myanmar government to accept international assistance, after which the regional body formed the coordination mechanism for the post-Nargis response. ASEAN established the Tripartite Core Group to provide an operational umbrella to

facilitate and lead the post-Nargis efforts between the Myanmar government, ASEAN, the UN, and international NGOs.

Like Indonesia, Myanmar is also quite sensitive to East Asian geopolitics. Although the government has become increasingly cooperative in the area of disaster management with the international community—including with the United States and Japan—China’s continued importance to Myanmar’s economic prosperity, not to mention the 2,400 kilometer border between the two nations, would make it difficult for Myanmar to fully support Strategic Assistance unless China were also comfortable with the concept. Because of Myanmar’s desire to maintain a stable and peaceful regional environment, relations between major powers become an important factor in determining whether the country endorses great-power initiatives. In this setting, ASEAN-led frameworks are perceived as better mechanisms for pursuing regional cooperation, including on issues like HA/DR. If Strategic Assistance could operate in conjunction with these regional frameworks and with other major regional powers, Myanmar would be much more comfortable with the concept. However, because the country has a weak civil society and national NGOs, it is important that its civilian capabilities for disaster management are enhanced through international cooperation. Although many challenges would need to be overcome, Myanmar could greatly benefit from Strategic Assistance if it were implemented with due consideration to national and regional political concerns and perspectives.

Thailand. Over the past decade, Thailand has faced sporadic but devastating natural disasters. The country had not experienced a major disaster event for some time before the 2004 tsunami. Only seven years after the 2004 disaster, however, Thailand experienced a large and destructive flood in 2011. These events drove Bangkok to take action, and the Thai government fostered interagency cooperation among the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, and Ministry of Defence aimed at strengthening each component of Thailand’s disaster-management cycle. For political reasons, however, Thailand still faces difficulties in effectively coordinating these efforts. Moreover, every actor involved in Thailand’s HA/DR activities has its own agenda, which complicates these coordination problems. Ongoing and long-term national political turmoil has only exacerbated this issue.

Like many other Southeast Asian nations, Thailand is sensitive to regional geopolitical pressures. It is a formal ally of the United States, but its economy is largely dependent on China, thus necessitating that Bangkok seek to balance, to some degree, the interests and perspectives of the two greater powers. Consequently, Thailand may be unwilling to move too far too fast in engaging the United States and Japan on HA/DR out of concern that it might antagonize China and feed Beijing’s perceptions that Washington seeks to use U.S. allies and partners in Asia to contain China. General mistrust among countries in the region makes it even more difficult for Thailand to smoothly carry out HA/DR cooperation. To overcome such difficulties, it is necessary to foster confidence-building measures among Southeast Asian countries through such means as education, training, and Track 2 activities.

Singapore. Singapore also views national sovereignty as essential. In terms of civil-military cooperation, the Singaporean government takes the lead in every dimension of disaster management at all domestic levels. In terms of international cooperation, the Singapore Armed Forces are widely spread throughout the world for training, including in areas as varied as New Zealand and Texas. It is for this reason that the Singapore Armed Forces were able to contribute to HA/DR activities during Hurricane Katrina relief efforts and following the 2010 Christchurch

earthquake in New Zealand. These cases demonstrate Singapore's unique position as one of the few nations in the region capable of contributing to HA/DR operations abroad, which the government views as instrumental for strengthening its national soft power.

However, Singapore shares many of the same geopolitical concerns as its regional peers and would likely want the Strategic Assistance concept to be multilateralized through regional institutional frameworks. Although Singapore would prefer approaching Strategic Assistance through regional frameworks—multilateralization efforts based on a “coalition of the willing” model—the concept might also be acceptable if conducted with political adroitness, as Singapore views HA/DR activities as an important aspect of maintaining regional stability.

Australia. Australia understands that the Asia-Pacific needs stronger HA/DR cooperation. This emphasis places some strain on Australia's military resources and has resulted in a degree of HA/DR fatigue, but the country remains ready and willing to provide and support operations through a highly transparent, predictable, and phased approach.

Although Australia, as one of the United States' treaty allies, is comfortable with Washington's leadership in the region, Canberra recognizes the political sensitivities that inhibit greater cooperation on the part of other regional actors. Consequently, while it would likely support and contribute to a primarily U.S.-Japan bilateral approach to Strategic Assistance, Australia can be expected to counsel that the allies need to adopt a more multilateral approach that leverages existing regional political frameworks. Moreover, because Asia already possesses several HA/DR frameworks led by ASEAN, Australia would likely argue that Strategic Assistance needs to be carefully coordinated with these initiatives so that it can be more politically palatable to regional states. In this sense, multilateralizing HA/DR activities is a less controversial policy option that a number of states could pursue. However, if multilateralization is pursued too vigorously, these efforts might undermine operational effectiveness or the visibility of contributing states to the point that some states may question the value of incurring the burdens associated with HA/DR efforts.

From the Australian perspective, the best way to enhance regional disaster-management capabilities is to work within existing frameworks, in particular the East Asia Summit (EAS). The EAS has already developed several schemes for disaster response, making it less burdensome to develop this HA/DR framework, particularly through existing capacity-building mechanisms. However, rather than focusing only on response, greater effort needs to be devoted to the planning, preparedness, and recovery phases.

The Question of Legitimacy

Given these regional perceptions, it becomes clear that the effectiveness of any HA/DR activities led by foreign actors can be seen as a function of their legitimacy. Foreign intervention, therefore, will need to occur in accordance with terms stipulated by the affected nation. It is equally important that any foreign nation providing assistance also possess an effective and rapid exit strategy, timed to prevent the rise of local or national political doubts among affected populations over the intentions of the intervening power.

The legitimacy question has direct implications for how nations in South and Southeast Asia might perceive and respond to Strategic Assistance. In particular, questions over how the concept might be structured to alleviate these concerns, whether the concept would be seen as potentially encroaching on the sovereignty of regional nations, and whether it should be structured as an

exclusive, alliance-oriented framework or an inclusive, multilateral mechanism are crucial from the standpoint of regional actors.

With respect to the question of sovereignty, while many states in the region would benefit from the higher capabilities of the U.S.-Japan alliance, there are concerns about the degree to which assistance might be intrusive with regard to a nation's physical territory and surrounding sphere of influence, as well as whether it might undermine the political legitimacy of the government of the affected nation. These concerns partly stem from the traumatic legacy of colonialism and more recently from concerns over interventionist doctrines such as the "responsibility to protect" (R2P), which is viewed in some circles in the region as merely an excuse to legitimize external intervention in the domestic affairs of other nations.

The question of whether Strategic Assistance should be exclusive or inclusive is also a source of particular concern for some countries. Due to the ongoing shift in the regional balance of power between the United States and China, many nations currently seek relations with both great powers and are quite wary of taking actions that might be misperceived and create tension with either side. The multilateralization of Strategic Assistance is one potential way to address this issue. Thus, it is important for the United States and Japan to consider a more nuanced and less visible approach to cooperative regional disaster management, such as leadership from behind.

The United States and Japan, therefore, face a difficult quandary should they seek to enhance cooperation and coordination on HA/DR in South and Southeast Asia. While political legitimacy in the eyes of the region is an essential factor, it must be weighed against operational effectiveness. Indeed, a criticism that is constantly levied against existing regional and international coordinating and assistance organizations is that their open nature diminishes the speed and efficiency with which they are able to act—at times with dire human consequences. As the Strategic Assistance concept continues to evolve, it will be imperative that an appropriate balance be struck between political legitimacy and inclusiveness, on the one hand, and operational effectiveness, on the other. Both components will be crucial to realizing the objectives of Strategic Assistance.

Building Strategic Assistance

Owing to the two countries' unique combined capabilities, the U.S.-Japan alliance is an ideal platform to deliver enhanced HA/DR operations within Asia. A joint U.S.-Japan approach to HA/DR stands to become an essential component of regional stability and security. Implementing such an approach will require significant effort from both Tokyo and Washington. If successful, however, Strategic Assistance stands to benefit the Asia-Pacific region immensely by providing stability in the face of serious nontraditional challenges.

Why the United States and Japan?

To date, the United States, owing to its robust capabilities, has been the country most able to rapidly respond to disasters in the Asia-Pacific. Indeed, HA/DR operations consistently place the greatest demand on U.S. forces in the region. Senior leaders from U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) have commented that forces in their area of responsibility conduct HA/DR operations on average once every eight weeks.¹⁵

¹⁵ See, for example, the prepared remarks by Admiral Robert F. Willard at the Hearing on National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 and Oversight of Previously Authorized Programs before the Committee on Armed Services, March 1, 2012.

Japan is also especially well-positioned to play a more significant role in future regional HA/DR operations. Japan's active involvement in international disaster relief began on the basis of the Law Concerning the Dispatch of Japan Disaster Relief Teams in 1992. Since then, Japan has actively participated in a number of operations, including the Honduras hurricane in 1998, the Pakistan earthquake in 2005, the Pakistan flooding in 2010, the Haiti earthquake in 2011, and the Philippine typhoon in 2013. Through these missions, Japan learned many important lessons—for example, that intelligence coverage and force protection must be taken into consideration in order to execute effective operations. Because operations are sometimes conducted in unsafe areas, the operational teams need to gain information on the ground beforehand, and the staff needs to be protected. For this reason, it became clear that disaster-relief operations should at times be conducted in conjunction with other operations, such as counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, depending on local conditions. In addition to being (unfortunately) well-experienced in these types of operations domestically, Japan's geographic location makes it well-suited to serve as a highly capable first responder to major disasters in the Asia-Pacific. Moreover, Japan's constitutional limitations on the use of its military forces make HA/DR a potentially attractive core mission for the JSDF.

However, Japan faces a number of challenges that may limit its ability to conduct successful combined HA/DR missions. These include difficulties communicating with other actors in English or other languages, limited military contact and cooperation with countries other than the United States, and legal restrictions that prevent it from participating in HA/DR operations that include a peacekeeping component.

Japan has extensive experience in cooperating on HA/DR operations with the United States. The most notable instance of U.S.-Japan cooperation on HA/DR was Operation Tomodachi, which propelled the two countries to institutionalize coordination mechanisms for future HA/DR activities, including bilateral response procedures for practical cooperation, the Nankai Trough earthquake response plan, procedures for local government cooperation, and a revised acquisition and cross-servicing agreement. The creation of extensive human networks between American and Japanese personnel through joint exercises and training has also facilitated the development of common procedures.

Cooperative mechanisms and initiatives developed by Japan and the United States through and following Operation Tomodachi allowed the two allies to better cooperate and coordinate with one another during disaster-relief operations in response to Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. For example, the Philippine government at first did not allow outside military forces unless the country had a visiting forces agreement (VFA). The United States, as a VFA country, could quickly send troops to the Philippines. Through consultation and cooperation with the United States and the Philippines, Japanese forces were allowed to enter and provide assistance.

With demand for HA/DR capabilities in the region likely to increase in the coming years, expanding cooperative operations is already a topic of discussion in the U.S.-Japan alliance. However, despite calls from the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee for the establishment of an HA/DR logistics hub in Japan and for expanded dialogue, HA/DR has yet to become a significant driver of alliance mechanisms, capabilities, and planning.¹⁶ Moreover, while U.S.-Japan

¹⁶ "Joint Statement of the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee," U.S. Department of State, Media Note, June 21, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/06/166597.htm>; and Deogsang Ahn, John Bradford, James Newberry, and Harold Wescott, "The Case for Establishing a Civil-Military Disaster-Relief Hub in Northeast Asia," *Asia Policy*, no. 14 (2012): 51–78.

cooperation on HA/DR is firmly grounded in alliance mechanisms, any initiative to enhance it must branch out to utilize all elements of national power. Although military capabilities are essential to an effective response to such disasters, there is a danger that HA/DR initiatives can become militarized and thus undermine some of the purposes, benefits, and political support for such a response.¹⁷ Indeed, HA/DR efforts cannot focus solely on military capabilities or diplomatic initiatives but must integrate military capabilities with civilian government initiatives, alongside the essential work of NGOs and the private sector, to form a cohesive strategy.

The United States and Japan currently maintain—individually and collectively—robust capabilities to meet the challenges that major disasters pose to the region. Grouped in broad categories, these encompass a wide range of military, civilian government, and private and NGO resources.

Military Capabilities

Throughout its history, the JSDF has been deployed on numerous HA/DR missions.¹⁸ It possesses a formidable array of forces capable of rapidly responding to major disasters both in Japan's immediate vicinity, as well as farther afield. The Maritime Self-Defense Force possesses multiple strategic sealift assets, most prominently the Hyuga-class helicopter destroyer, as well as a number of smaller amphibious landing and transport vessels. These capabilities are supplemented by a short-range helicopter airlift capability and a more limited strategic airlift capability that primarily relies on C-1 cargo planes from the Air Self-Defense Force. In addition to its rapid-response capabilities, the JSDF is equipped to provide medical support, follow-on transport (sealift and limited airlift), and force protection. Emergency roles and response measures are assigned and integrated through joint training exercises among the JSDF's various service branches. These capabilities are also incorporated into the broader scope of combined Japan-U.S. military exercises and reinforced through combined deployments, such as the Pacific Partnership series of humanitarian assistance missions sponsored by the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

The United States has demonstrated in past international crises that it can rapidly bring considerable capabilities and resources to bear during HA/DR operations.¹⁹ For example, during the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, PACOM's establishment of Joint Task Force 536 to direct Operation Unified Assistance exemplified the U.S. military's ability to quickly organize and conduct disaster-relief operations. Through the course of this particular operation, PACOM provided fifteen thousand personnel and 24 million pounds of relief supplies and established both the Combined Support Force 536 and Combined Coordination Center in U-Tapao, Thailand, to optimize coordination of international relief efforts. In terms of tactical-level support, the U.S. Navy

¹⁷ See William G. Moseley, "Stop the Blanket Militarization of Humanitarian Aid," *Foreign Policy*, July 31, 2009; Pierre Krahenbuhl, "The Militarization of Aid and Its Perils," International Committee of the Red Cross, February 22, 2011; Christian Denckla, "The Militarization of Aid and the QDDR," *Building Markets*, January 3, 2011; Whitney Grespin, "The Militarization of Aid," United Press International, September 27, 2012; Bradford Byrnes, "U.S. Military Support to International Humanitarian Relief Operations Legal/Fiscal Limits & Constraints," *Liaison* 4, no. 1 (2008); and Charles M. Perry and Marina Travayiakis, "Reforming Military Support for Foreign Disaster Relief and Humanitarian Assistance," *Liaison* 4, no. 1 (2008).

¹⁸ In Northeast Asia, the JSDF has conducted HA/DR missions in Russia (2005); in Southeast Asia, it has conducted missions in the Philippines (2013), Indonesia (2005), and Thailand (2004–5); in South Asia, in Pakistan (2005) and India (2001); in the Middle East, in Iraq (2004–6), Iran (2003–4), and Turkey (1999); and in South America, in Haiti (2010) and Honduras (1998). A map of these missions is available from the PBS website at <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/episodes/japans-about-face/map-japans-self-defense-forces-deployments/1275>.

¹⁹ HA/DR activities conducted outside the United States and its territories are referred to by the U.S. Department of Defense under the umbrella term "foreign humanitarian assistance," which includes foreign disaster-response operations. The Department of Defense updated its joint-force doctrine governing foreign humanitarian assistance in January 2014. See Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Foreign Humanitarian Assistance*, Joint Publication 3-29 (Washington, D.C., January 2014).

and Marine Corps deployed 4 P-3 Orion patrol aircraft, 19 SH-60 Seahawk helicopters, 24 CH-47 Chinook helicopters, and 2 C-130 Hercules transport aircraft in order to distribute aid and personnel and provide necessary reconnaissance, transportation, and logistical support. From its ships, the U.S. Navy was also able to provide affected areas with road-building supplies, electrical power generation, and, most importantly, up to 100,000 gallons of potable water per day through onboard water purifiers.

The combined potential strength of forward-stationed U.S. military forces in Asia that could immediately contribute to regional HA/DR operations alongside the JSDF is substantial. The most prominent of these forward-deployed forces reside in Japan. The USFJ—composed of the Seventh Fleet, which is the world’s only permanently forward-stationed aircraft carrier strike group; the Fifth Air Force; and the III Marine Expeditionary Force—features a wide range of capabilities and provides the United States with the majority of its forward-deployed heavy-lift capability (air, sea, and amphibious).

In addition to the capabilities of USFJ, the United States maintains military access or basing rights in a number of strategic locations throughout East Asia and the Indian Ocean. The first in a series of planned forward deployments for the U.S. Navy’s new littoral combat ships to Changi Naval Base in Singapore was completed in late 2013. Owing to its ability to accept a wide array of mission modules tailored to specific functions, the littoral combat ship is a highly flexible platform that is well positioned to support larger HA/DR operations. Changi Naval Base is a particularly important logistics hub for U.S. Navy operations in Southeast Asia and is capable of supporting capital naval vessels, including aircraft carriers. In addition, the United States is currently allowed access to air and naval facilities in the Philippines for maintenance and refueling. Further, Washington has negotiated with Manila to increase rotational military access to the Philippines, and the United States stands to benefit significantly from the proposed expansion of naval and air facilities in strategically positioned Subic Bay.

The United States’ other ally in Southeast Asia, Thailand, has also provided critical access to enable past HA/DR operations and allows continued low-level U.S. military access to facilities at the U-Tapao airfield, which is capable of accommodating both C-17 and C-130 transport aircraft. The United States has proposed to expand its access to U-Tapao by setting up a regional HA/DR hub to complement the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Regional Development Mission for Asia in Bangkok. Although Thailand has long been thought to support such a plan, ongoing domestic political tensions, the Thai public’s general aversion to allowing any semblance of permanent foreign military basing, and Thailand’s ongoing policy of strategic hedging between the United States and China have stymied progress. Other regional facilities, such as Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, further supplement the U.S. forward posture and allow for the prepositioning of significant levels of resources. The resources that the United States has devoted to the Asia-Pacific—and will continue to devote as part of strategic rebalancing—are considerable and afford the capacity to serve as an effective and rapid first responder in the event of a significant regional disaster.

Crucially, the United States and Japan may be thought of as greater than the sum of their parts due to their long-standing alliance, which allows for more regular communication and information sharing as well as for a relatively high degree of interoperability between their military forces. Official lines of command and communication are reinforced by informal and personal relationships. These ties serve to support mutual understanding and expectations,

particularly with respect to operational roles and responsibilities across a broad range of mission sets. Over time, this experience has translated into better coordination between the JSDF and the U.S. military, even when operations have been carried out on an ad hoc or contingency basis. Such cooperation has been essential to developing an effective partnership that is now capable of taking on a greater regional profile by carrying out combined HA/DR operations.

However, while the U.S. and Japanese militaries afford many unique and robust capabilities and may be particularly crucial in serving in a first-responder or triage capacity, it is important to understand the limits and potential drawbacks of military power in HA/DR operations. A strategic approach to HA/DR must incorporate all aspects of national power and not be overly reliant on the military component. Civil government and private and NGO actors play integral leadership roles in HA/DR operations. Indeed, in the U.S. system of disaster response, the military responds to requests for assistance by the Department of State and USAID, which are civilian agencies with the responsibility for leading and coordinating U.S. disaster-response operations abroad.

Civilian Government Capabilities

Due to their expansive authority over manpower and resources, national governments play a key role in disaster-response operations. In addition to sanctioning rapid military action to stabilize a situation, governments can provide financial aid, as well as institutional support and expertise, directly through official development assistance (ODA) dispersed by a number of civilian agencies that have immediate access to funds and personnel. Crucially, ODA resources can be quickly mobilized once a request has been made by a victim nation or the government rendering aid assesses that there is an immediate need. This contrasts with assistance that is provided by the private sector and NGOs, where resources typically must first be built up—usually through charitable donations or the redirection of otherwise committed resources—before they can be effectively committed to relief efforts.

The government of Japan coordinates its official nonmilitary relief efforts through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which oversees Japan's ODA disbursement. In addition to having the authority to disperse official Japanese government financial aid, JICA maintains disaster-relief teams specializing in specific functional areas of relief support, including search and rescue, emergency medicine, and engineering. For example, JICA dispatched thirteen teams—including over 250 specialists in search and rescue, emergency medicine, and engineering—in response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

ODA from the United States is issued through USAID. In past relief efforts, U.S. government assistance has been funneled through USAID contributions of direct monetary support, as well as through the deployment of disaster assistance response teams (DART) and locally or regionally based response-management teams. For example, in response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, USAID provided nearly \$26 million in grant aid (out of \$84 million in total U.S. government funds contributed to the effort); sent a large contingent of over 160 specialists to the region, including the deployment of a DART team; and established a response-management team in Washington, D.C., to coordinate relief activities. USAID also helped manage the influx of emergency relief supplies through contracted airlifts and assisted in establishing and coordinating emergency programs focused on providing water, sanitation, health services, and cash-for-work and other livelihood programs in the affected areas. Similarly, in response to the 2010 flooding in Pakistan, USAID dispatched a DART team to the region to, among other things, assist with coordinating air traffic.

In all these cases, civilian government agencies and the military often operated in tandem, each supporting the other according to its particular strengths. The significant rapid-response capabilities available to Japan and the United States make government action (both civilian and military) an essential tool through which to first stabilize the immediate situation and then enable follow-on efforts—composed of a mixture of government, private-sector, and NGO aid—to support relief and recovery operations.

Private-Sector and NGO Capabilities

The private sector and NGOs collectively form a critical third leg in response and recovery efforts. While specialized civilian agencies (potentially with the support of the military) typically contribute the majority of first-response capabilities, private-sector actors working alongside NGOs provide, coordinate, and often manage a significant portion of the all-important long-term aid programs and funding that are required to support recovery in affected areas. The United States and Japan both maintain a large number of private-sector and NGO actors capable of making substantial contributions to disaster relief and recovery efforts.

The ability of international NGOs to engage with affected populations directly at the local level—either through long-standing relationships with local NGOs, government officials, and private citizens or through formal or informal NGO networks—is an important dimension of major relief efforts. Specifically, as a result of their local access and knowledge, local and on-the-ground foreign NGOs can be highly useful in identifying needs and directing the initial flow of aid. Furthermore, given their ability to maintain a longer-term organizational focus, NGOs are essential for coordinating and managing follow-on relief efforts and programs and acting as channels for government and private aid.

Japan possesses a vibrant community of NGOs and private-sector actors that are dedicated to providing support for those affected by major disasters. The Japan Platform is a consortium of Japanese NGOs and private corporations operating with support from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). This consortium serves as an effective official conduit for coordinating and deploying emergency and humanitarian aid from Japanese NGOs. For example, it coordinated the efforts of fourteen NGOs as part of the relief and recovery effort following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. The Japan Platform was similarly engaged in NGO recovery operations in the aftermath of the 2010 floods in Pakistan.

U.S. NGOs have likewise been involved in both advocacy and operational efforts aimed at providing relief to areas in Asia that have been affected by major disasters. For example, after the March 11 triple disaster in Japan, U.S.-Japan cultural organizations in the United States mobilized their communities to donate aid. The Japan Society alone amassed over 23,500 donations totaling more than \$13.5 million, which was then dispersed to 33 organizations working on relief projects in the affected Tohoku region.

The private sector—either acting indirectly through NGOs as a principal donor to on-the-ground relief efforts or engaging in direct action to provide relief to affected areas—also plays a vital role in supporting disaster response, relief, and recovery efforts. During the 2010 floods in Pakistan, aid generated by U.S. private-sector donations topped \$25 million, while private-sector aid in response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami surpassed \$700 million. Moreover, while financial contributions are crucial, the private sector is also able to contribute to relief and recovery efforts in more direct ways. A significant portion of private aid following the 2004 tsunami came in the

form of specialized equipment, technical expertise, and logistical assistance. UPS, for example, provided significant logistical support, such as airlift capacity, for local and foreign government response efforts. Likewise, Dow Chemical provided water purification equipment, while ExxonMobil supplied significant quantities of fuel.

Partnerships between government and the private sector are becoming increasingly important for effective response and recovery efforts. In many cases, the private sector can offer capabilities that either mirror or augment crucial military capabilities such as heavy airlift, communications, logistics, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR)—particularly in the form of satellite imaging and damage assessment. For example, Intelsat and Cisco are now partnering with the U.S. Department of Defense to provide high-speed Internet connections and communications in forward areas of operation, including in support of disaster-relief missions. Similarly, the United States and Japan might leverage other existing relationships—such as the partnership that exists between TNT Express, UPS, and Agility, on one side, and the UN Global Logistics Cluster, on the other—to augment joint U.S.-Japan HA/DR capabilities. Relying more heavily on private-sector capabilities can be a useful way to control costs; more importantly, it can also ameliorate the local political concerns that are often associated with allowing foreign military assistance.

Regional HA/DR Architecture

East Asia has several multilateral frameworks that have propagated mechanisms that aim to deal with natural disasters, most of which are led by ASEAN. ASEAN +1, ASEAN +3, the ARF, the ADMM, the ADMM-Plus, and the EAS all have discussed the dangers of natural disasters and their potential impact on political, economic, and social infrastructure in East Asia. A number of these initiatives were seriously considered in the 2003 Bali Concord II, which aimed to create ASEAN communities by 2020 (later the timeline was advanced to 2015), including a political-security community, an economic community, and a socioeconomic community. As the 2007 ASEAN Charter describes, these communities are principally centered on people, and the governments planned to reach out at local levels to foster unity and address issues that most affected the livelihood, prosperity, and security of their populations, including natural disasters. In this context, ASEAN created the AADMER, which went into force in 2009. A number of initiatives have already been undertaken under the agreement, and rather than reinventing the wheel, it will be important to build on the existing initiatives. Strategic Assistance can contribute to strengthening these frameworks.

However, these initiatives are far from complete, and ASEAN faces several challenges in implementing them to achieve its objective vis-à-vis regional disaster preparedness, management, and response. First, a significant economic gap exists among ASEAN member states. The level of infrastructure differs significantly from nation to nation (as well as among local communities within nations), and thus so does vulnerability to major disasters. To increase regional resiliency, this gap needs to be narrowed, which speaks to the need for greater region-wide development. Second, ASEAN still operates on the belief that economic development should be based on traditional concepts of macroeconomic development and growth. However, improving sociocultural infrastructure, including local resiliency to natural disasters, has a large impact on such growth. For this reason, ASEAN should factor in this element to enhance regional strength. Third, resilience at the local community level is still weak. To address this challenge, four areas need to be reinforced: economic development, information and communication, social capital, and

community competence. Fourth, AADMER has yet to develop a rigid implementation mechanism. Admittedly, there has been some progress, such as the creation of the NGO networks supporting AADMER, which include Child Fund International, HelpAge International, Mercy Malaysia, Oxfam, Plan International, Save the Children International, and World Vision International APG. However, implementation is still weak.

Ultimately, the opportunities and challenges to realizing and utilizing Strategic Assistance in South and Southeast Asia depend on how the United States and Japan develop and link the concept to existing regional frameworks. As mentioned above, this decision has both geopolitical and operational implications. Regarding the geopolitical implications, the future development of Strategic Assistance without first considering its political impact may send the wrong signal to the region. Not only could such an approach raise concerns over national sovereignty and external intervention, but it could simultaneously be misinterpreted as an attempt to build a balancing coalition to contain China. In order to mitigate the risk of such misperceptions, it is imperative to foster more favorable political perceptions of Strategic Assistance by clarifying the concept's objectives and operational focus.

In fact, the concept can have at least four policy objectives that may be either directly attributed to it or inferred from it by others: contributing to the creation of an effective HA/DR cooperative mechanism; utilizing HA/DR cooperation as an alliance management tool; utilizing cooperation on HA/DR to enhance engagement with regional nations, including China; and utilizing cooperation on HA/DR to actively balance or hedge against China. While the first three items listed should be, and indeed are, objectives of Strategic Assistance, the fourth is not, and this should be explicitly stated to mitigate any suspicions.

Operationally, the U.S.-Japan alliance can principally focus on prevention and preparedness in order to increase resilience in South and Southeast Asia. To this end, strengthening national and local capacity and improving the coordination mechanisms between governments, international organizations, NGOs, and community-level entities are necessary first steps. In addition, because these HA/DR activities are desired by regional states but geopolitically sensitive, efforts to build benign “hard capacity” (e.g., building airports capable of accommodating large cargo aircraft, building roads, and enhancing the resilience of national and local electrical and communications networks) and “soft capacity” (e.g., improving information sharing and education at the community level) would be less controversial options to increase preparedness and resilience within the region. The government, private sector, and NGOs from the United States, Japan, and other countries should participate in these efforts.

Regular communication among various groups of actors is essential, particularly because they may have the same overarching goals but very different approaches or organizational outlooks that otherwise blunt their ability to cooperate effectively. To the extent that these various entities can interact with one another prior to a crisis—for example, through preplanning, exercises, or real world operations—greater mutual understanding will enable them to work more effectively toward achieving shared goals. International coordination efforts through organizations such as the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the newly established Asia Pacific Alliance for Disaster Management, as well as through regional and national initiatives such as the AADMER and the Japan Platform, represent important means of managing and routinizing complicated, and otherwise often ad hoc, relationships. A flexible response system, encompassing a combination of civil government, military, private-sector, and NGO capabilities, is essential for

effective disaster response. While no two crises are the same and the capabilities required can vary significantly and be highly context-dependent, the complex and often rapidly evolving nature of major modern disaster events necessitates that each of the various actors described above engage in a concerted fashion so that their collective response is most effective.

Finally, engaging the Strategic Assistance concept with or through regional political institutions involves a difficult balance between legitimacy and effectiveness. Engagement is certainly necessary to mitigate regional concerns over Strategic Assistance, but this should not come at the expense of severely diluting operational effectiveness. Given this, the ADMM-Plus could be an effective instrument for approaching Strategic Assistance in the region in the short and medium term. As the region's leading framework for defense cooperation, the ADMM-Plus could help facilitate greater technical and functional cooperation between and among member states. This framework would also be useful in fostering greater trust and confidence among the various participants. Crucially, the decision-making process of the ADMM-Plus is strictly based on the concept of ASEAN centrality, with the ADMM setting the agenda, and it thus may help lessen suspicion of and between regional great powers.

Challenges to Developing a Framework for Strategic Assistance

The Strategic Assistance concept seeks to apply some of the lessons of Operation Tomodachi and other recent HA/DR operations to U.S. and Japanese strategies, plans, and postures for future disaster responses in South and Southeast Asia. Specifically, Strategic Assistance encompasses a whole-of-society, joint U.S.-Japan approach to HA/DR.

Incorporating Strategic Assistance into the U.S.-Japan alliance framework serves the overarching strategic interests of both nations and adheres to Article IV of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. As the probability of natural disasters increases, especially in South and Southeast Asia, the need for significant HA/DR capabilities within the region will continue to grow. Deepening alliance cooperation and coordination on HA/DR will serve to enhance regional stability by alleviating and containing the effects of the very worst disasters, which is a particularly important consideration as the region becomes more economically integrated and essential to propelling global prosperity. At the bilateral level, this enhanced shared focus on HA/DR will further strengthen the U.S.-Japan relationship by increasing opportunities for the two nations to gain practical experience working alongside one another across a broad range of functional areas while making a tangible contribution to regional stability. Regionally, Strategic Assistance will support U.S. and Japanese soft power while also offering both nations the ability to further enhance relations with other actors. Finally, having been designed to be a relatively open and inclusive framework, Strategic Assistance may support greater multilateral engagement and cooperation among Asian nations, either as a stand-alone initiative or by incorporating the concept into existing regional institutional frameworks such as the EAS or the ADMM. To that end, it may also serve to alleviate political tension in the region and help build confidence between regional stakeholders that often find themselves at odds with one another politically.

There are, however, a number of immediate issues that may challenge the development of the Strategic Assistance concept. First and foremost is the need to recognize the very real fiscal constraints faced by both the United States and Japan, which are likely to limit the overall level of near-term investment in defense. In particular, platforms that may be ideally suited for conducting

HA/DR operations—for example, large amphibious vessels such as the mobile landing platform afloat forward staging base—may be shelved as funding tightens. Moreover, lightened operations and maintenance budgets limit the capacity of the military services to maintain a robust forward presence and high operational tempo. With financial realities affecting readiness and potentially curtailing the scope of operational exercises, HA/DR planning and exercises may be seen as surplus to requirements. Further complicating matters, despite the general popularity of HA/DR operations, it is unclear whether domestic political constituencies in either Japan or the United States will be willing to support a more strategic approach to regional HA/DR operations. Strategic assistance, although offering far better returns over time than the current ad hoc approach, would require a greater initial investment.

While these budgetary and associated political issues are quite problematic, maintaining or building HA/DR components into existing exercises, while also heightening the overall emphasis on real world operations, may not necessarily be prohibitive based on expense. In many ways, this approach may serve to optimize the allocation of resources. By placing additional strategic emphasis on HA/DR operations, the U.S. and Japanese militaries may be able to gain crucial real world experience that is readily translatable into warfighting scenarios and contingencies, while also addressing a potentially significant threat to regional stability. “Training by doing” would allow for more effective and efficient use of resources and thus could serve as a force multiplier.

As Operation Tomodachi demonstrated, HA/DR operations require fungible skillsets that are in many cases applicable to training and preparing for wartime scenarios. Many of the capabilities necessary for mounting effective HA/DR operations—rapid response, civilian evacuation operations, population control, casualty treatment, communications, ISR, and logistics and supply-chain management, to name several areas—would also apply across a wide range of conflict scenarios. HA/DR operations may provide military forces with a singular opportunity to engage in the real world exercise of multiple competencies that are critical to warfighting without engaging in combat. By expanding the opportunities of the military to engage in realistic, high-end operations, the United States and Japan stand to make absolute gains in terms of the capacity, competence, experience, and interoperability of their military forces.

From a bureaucratic standpoint, developing an efficient and effective interagency process in both the United States and Japan that can then engage in complementary consultation and action on a bilateral basis to steer the development and ultimately implementation of a joint U.S.-Japan approach to HA/DR will be highly difficult. This effort faces a separate hurdle when attempting to incorporate private-sector elements, many of which have their own missions and agendas and often have radically different, and at times opposing, institutional approaches to HA/DR. The key will be specialization and the selection of components that enhance the whole operation and afford unity of focus, at least at a general level. Developing greater understanding among the various sectors about each actor’s organizational structure, ethos, and capabilities will be central to success in this endeavor.

If the United States and Japan are to place greater emphasis on HA/DR operations within South and Southeast Asia, they must also consider national political dynamics and reactions to what would be a more active regional presence. In particular, a number of vulnerable countries within the region will likely be reluctant to accept direct military assistance from either the United States or Japan. In such scenarios, military assistance may be much more effective if it is felt but not seen. China is also likely to view increased U.S.-Japan activity in the region with

trepidation, and potentially even with hostility, and might consider such operations to be at least indirectly aimed at containment. The United States and Japan could find it difficult to fully engage with potential recipient states seeking to walk a narrow line between Beijing and Washington. Moreover, an emerging Sino-U.S. strategic competition could begin to have an impact on HA/DR operations as the two sides engage in “assistance competition.” While the emergence of such a competition would be beneficial in terms of the overall level of resources devoted to any one disaster, it might also diminish the effectiveness of response efforts and contribute to heightened inefficiency by complicating the operational picture, increasing redundancy, and injecting an unnecessary political element into relief operations. Regardless, encouraging China to take on a greater regional profile with regard to HA/DR and potentially inviting it to take part in subsequent multilateral iterations of Strategic Assistance will be important considerations for U.S. and Japanese policymakers moving forward.

Despite such regional political sensitivities, U.S.-Japan combined HA/DR operations within South and Southeast Asia could significantly bolster the soft power of both countries, while also demonstrating the positive role of the alliance in sustaining regional stability. In addition to enhancing perceptions of the United States and Japan as positive actors, a joint approach to HA/DR may strengthen existing regional frameworks and institutions and improve the region’s overall capacity to overcome major disasters, while also strengthening political, private, and military networks. Such engagement could also have beneficial second-order effects, particularly by easing existing tensions through regular interaction and creating a greater sense of regional community.

The Operational Components of Strategic Assistance: Resilience, Response, and Recovery

Operationally, the Strategic Assistance concept can be thought of as comprising three broad, interrelated components: resilience, response, and recovery. The following sections will analyze each component and provide recommendations.

Building Resilience

Resilience is the most crucial component of Strategic Assistance. The objective of the resilience component is to decrease the vulnerability of potentially affected nations to major disasters. Resilience will therefore primarily be focused on developing approaches to increase U.S.-Japan coordination and cooperation on an array of programs—including development, capacity building, preplanning, and preparedness initiatives—that stand to enhance the ability of vulnerable nations to withstand major disaster events. Activities directed by civilians, such as more robust private-public coordination and cooperation, will be key throughout this steady-state phase of Strategic Assistance. Civilian-led government engagement will be necessary in terms of capacity building, although in many cases government initiatives are likely to rely on the existing on-the-ground efforts of NGOs and private-sector actors to direct the flow of aid, build critical infrastructure, and generally utilize local knowledge and networks. In this way, development assistance supplied by the United States and Japan can decrease regional vulnerabilities to major disasters while simultaneously stimulating local economic growth. Resilience is different from the other two components in that it largely consists of low-level activities that are not carried out in reaction to a specific contingency but rather as part

of the proactive, steady-state relationships among the United States, Japan, and potential recipient nations of Strategic Assistance.

Opportunities and challenges. Opportunities within the resilience concept are many and varied, and yet they are accompanied by inherent challenges. Resilience fundamentally comprises regular aid and development programs (e.g., economic, infrastructure, and agricultural) that have the opportunity to reduce vulnerability over the long term and build indigenous capacity to mitigate and respond to the effects of significant disasters. Challenges to achieving greater resilience include issues with communication and coordination, as well as the current lack of capacity-building institutions.

Recommendations. Japan and the United States should implement the following measures to build resilience.

1. *Japan and the United States, in consultation with other regional governments through existing multilateral frameworks, should develop regular joint HA/DR threat assessments that highlight existing and likely future vulnerabilities to major disasters.* Such an approach will be useful in directing contingency planning and coordinating development initiatives by highlighting areas where specific types of allied capabilities or assistance may be required or most useful. Whenever possible, the United States and Japan should seek to engage the governments of potentially affected nations in developing these assessments to better understand existing vulnerabilities, while making their disaster-management processes as transparent as possible. However, the United States and Japan must understand that these are sensitive topics and potentially affected nations may be unwilling to share this information.

Bilateral vulnerability assessments should include the regular involvement of the U.S. and Japanese private sectors and NGOs in order to benefit from their unique insights and access. This may also allow for better preplanning and delineation of responsibilities in response efforts. Assessments can also advance recommendations to better synergize private-public efforts and reduce redundancy.

2. *U.S. and Japanese development and aid agencies should seek to better coordinate their respective efforts to reduce vulnerability through long-term development programs directed at potentially affected nations.* These agencies should develop communication channels whereby they can inform one another of ongoing aid and development initiatives in order to increase the complementary nature of their respective programs. Programs designed to build national capacity among potentially affected nations in order to bolster their self-reliance should be areas of increased focus. In keeping with the above, the United States and Japan, as part of increased bilateral coordination on regional development programs aimed at reducing vulnerability among potentially affected nations, should pursue capacity building to strengthen domestic infrastructure, civil response capacity, and response training and education.

3. *U.S. and Japanese steady-state aid and development programs should, in keeping with the Hyogo Framework for Action, place greater emphasis on establishing and strengthening disaster-management institutions within potentially affected nations at both the national and local levels.* Programmatic focus should be split between risk management and preparedness and the development of indigenous response capabilities, including the capacity to engage in damage assessment and coordinate requests for aid from international responders.

4. *Defense aid programs should be focused on organization building, enhancing C3 infrastructure, and procuring multipurpose platforms such as transport helicopters and coastal patrol craft.* Military

forces can be critical in disaster preparedness and evacuation operations before a disaster strikes. Japan's new rules governing ODA, for example, could be leveraged toward greater defense capacity building in vulnerable regional states.

Japan and the United States have recently sought to provide increased defense aid to a number of regional actors, particularly through the sale of major military assets such as coastal patrol craft and helicopters. When contemplating military sales to regional allies and partners, Tokyo and Washington should highlight the importance of purchases that will be applicable across a broad range of defense contingencies, including disaster response.

Strengthening Response

The response and recovery components of Strategic Assistance are primarily driven by sudden, high-impact disaster contingencies, such as major earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, and severe storm systems. The response phase occurs in the immediate hours, days, and weeks after the major disaster incident, with military, government, and NGO first responders assuming primary responsibility for initial on-the-ground rapid-reaction efforts and national-level response coordination. Enhancing combined communications, decision-making, and action coordination capacity across a range of actors is a necessary aspect of this component. During this immediate emergency response phase, command, control, and coordination efforts should flow from a more centralized combined structure or mechanism.

Opportunities and challenges. During the response and recovery components of Strategic Assistance, the U.S. military and the JSDF are uniquely suited to provide robust first-responder capabilities, primarily because of their relative preponderance of strategic airlift, sealift, and ISR capabilities. Additionally, the United States and Japan can effectively supplement—or in some extreme cases provide—centralized command and control by organizing a more coherent operational picture and assisting in coordinating on-the-ground response efforts. Such capabilities will require the establishment of clear and efficient lines of communication, including, to the extent possible, open access to operational information across a wide range of actors. As private-sector capabilities come online following a major disaster and a modicum of stability is restored on the ground, military responders can begin to transition a number of their responsibilities—such as communications, logistics, damage assessment, ISR, and transport—to private actors capable of carrying out these essential tasks. This will enable military forces to draw down from their high-tempo operations and ensure that they do not overstay their welcome, while also maintaining a ceiling on expensive operational costs.

Recommendations. Japan and the United States should implement the following measures to strengthen response.

1. *The United States and Japan, stemming from conducting regular HA/DR threat assessments, should develop a combined and joint CONPLAN series to cover a likely range of disaster events that could affect regional stability.* Planning should account for the range of conditions that will necessitate a heightened state of readiness or the activation of major civilian and military resources, general orders of operations, and transitioning from the response phase to the recovery phase.

2. *The United States and Japan should establish an HA/DR coordination and command center to facilitate and coordinate the decision-making process regarding combined mobilization of government resources and agencies—both civilian and military.* Building institutional ties and

exchanges between U.S. and Japanese agencies will enable the two sides to engage in a more complementary and efficient manner, taking advantage of specialization and yielding greater impact. Ultimately the goal should be the development of a robust combined institutional mechanism—a coordination and command center—to coordinate the actions of the joint resources and agencies once a decision to mobilize has been reached. This mechanism would serve to centralize command of bilateral response efforts while also being the point of contact for international and other foreign aid organizations, agencies, and private actors.

Toward that end, the United States and Japan should incorporate the concept of an HA/DR coordination and command center into ongoing discussions about command and control integration between the U.S. military and the JSDF. While the development of a combined interagency HA/DR command center will likely be an iterative process due to multiple bureaucratic, political, and budgetary issues, the two allies should immediately develop a robust consultative and information-sharing process so that both sides can be aware of the other's actions and tailor their own efforts accordingly to reduce redundancy and enhance overall impact.

3. *The United States and Japan, as part of a new combined interagency coordination process, should develop a joint doctrine regarding decision-making on when and how to initiate combined response operations.* This doctrine should include an overarching framework for combined military assistance operations. While this component should generally conform to the Oslo Guidelines,²⁰ it must also take into account the possibility of the need to activate military capabilities in support of response and assistance operations in extreme circumstances like those following the 2010 Haiti earthquake. This option should be available when the national governing authority in an affected nation has been decimated to the point where it is nonfunctional, unresponsive, and incapable of making a formal and expedient request for aid.

In keeping with the Oslo Guidelines, the United States and Japan should seek to conclude agreements in advance with potentially affected nations for their approval to engage in response operations under such extreme cases where national government has collapsed. While the conclusion of such agreements is ultimately dependent on the potentially affected nations, the United States and Japan should simultaneously coordinate with regional political institutions in advance and as part of this process to determine what conditions would constitute a total collapse and begin to establish standard operating procedures should an extreme emergency event occur. The United States and Japan should strengthen communications channels with regional political institutions in order to be able to inform them should a decision be reached by the allies that an immediate emergency response is necessary without the formal invitation of the affected state.

In so doing, however, the United States and Japan must acknowledge and seek to alleviate regional concerns that such an approach might harken back to debates over the R2P doctrine, wherein military intervention might be justified on humanitarian grounds. In the long term, this may require revising the Oslo Guidelines in order to develop a legal structure for action under the unlikely, but not impossible, scenario when the government of an affected nation is entirely eroded or collapsed to the point that it is unable to make a request for aid or provide consent.

4. *The United States and Japan should, as part of any response operation, seek to develop a shared picture of the operational environment.* In keeping with the issues highlighted as inhibiting

²⁰ The Oslo Guidelines provide guidance on the use of foreign military and civil defense assets in disaster relief. They stress that military and civil defense forces should only be called on as a resource in humanitarian disasters as a last resort, when no comparable civilian alternative exists, and that any use of these resources should take into account the sovereignty and leading role of local authorities of the host nation.

coordination during Operation Tomodachi and other efforts, of crucial importance will be the establishment of clear and efficient two-way lines of communication to ensure that needs are assessed, prioritized, and communicated; capability gaps quickly filled; and redundancies reduced. This may mean loosening some of the current restrictions regarding the sharing of classified data or, more appropriately, certifying the Japanese elements within the combined command center to receive access to classified information necessary to the operation at hand.

5. *The United States and Japan should consider developing interagency civil-military teams, operating under the USAID and JICA combined coordination and command, that can facilitate “hour zero” response management and disaster response.* These interagency teams could also be in a position to coordinate U.S.-Japan national response packages with the government of the affected nation or through international organizations such as the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance.

Prior to the onset of a major disaster incident, these interagency teams should regularly engage with their respective domestic HA/DR NGO and private-sector counterparts. Engagement efforts should be geared toward the development of “pre-prepared” NGO and private-sector response packages that (depending on the situation) augment existing government capabilities. The establishment of such response packages would be intimately tied to the combined regional threat assessments that would be conducted and regularly updated as part of the resilience phase of Strategic Assistance. The interagency teams could convene and provide coordination assistance among the various private actors coalescing to form the national response packages. Once a major disaster occurs, the interagency teams would seek to selectively activate and assist in coordinating the deployment of the various NGO and private-sector response packages, depending on the situation and assessed need. In particular, private-sector capabilities—especially communications, logistics, heavy lift, and ISR—should be brought online as quickly as possible to complement and, to the extent possible, replace capabilities otherwise provided by military forces.

National response packages could be further organized as part of a “national cluster system” that reflect their specific capabilities, institutional interests, and areas of operation and knowledge. Although this system would not necessarily need to correspond to the UN Cluster Approach, grouping national capabilities according to the UN functional approach would allow national-level cluster groups to “plug into” UN organizational structures with relative ease.

6. *The Japanese Central Readiness Force, operating with the support of regionally based U.S. forces—for example, elements of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit from the III Marine Expeditionary Force stationed in Okinawa in conjunction with forward-stationed naval and air force assets—should constitute a rapid reaction force in the event of a major regional disaster.* The United States and Japan might also consider allowing specialized civilian agencies and NGO personnel, particularly with backgrounds in damage assessment, civil engineering, and communications and logistics, to embed with rapid reaction military forces.

7. *Both the United States and Japan should seek to develop enhanced corps of information and liaison officers to facilitate coordination bilaterally and with potentially affected nations in the region.* This cadre of officers should be drawn from JICA, USAID, the U.S. and Japanese militaries, MOFA, and the U.S. Department of State.

Moreover, in extreme circumstances, the combined coordination and command center should have the capacity to second staff from MOFA, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Defense, and the private sector if necessary. Toward that end, it may be beneficial as part of

the preplanning and early coordination process to develop reserve components within the private sector that can be surged into government to deal with emerging crises as needs dictate. These most often would be area and functional experts. Importantly, this capability would not necessarily apply only to HA/DR but could be utilized across a wide range of contingencies.

8. *U.S. and Japanese military forces should seek to expand engagement and participation in bilateral and multilateral military exercises that include rigorous HA/DR components.* Heightening the profile of HA/DR operations as integral parts of existing multilateral military exercises within the region—such as Cobra Gold and the Balikatan series—would serve to enhance interoperability among the various participants, while also enabling additional concrete mechanisms through which to begin to engage in broad-level contingency planning for disaster scenarios. In a very positive first step, the Japanese defense community has recently taken on a more active role in these regional exercises. Regular bilateral and multilateral exercises incorporating HA/DR components must be supplemented by recurring bilateral and multilateral planning sessions focused on HA/DR at the working and leadership levels between Washington, Tokyo, and the potential recipient nations of Strategic Assistance.

The United States and Japan should seek to further incorporate civilian elements into HA/DR components of military exercises. Incorporating civilian elements such as the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance's DART team into previously military-centric HA/DR exercises, as well as engaging with NGOs and private-sector members of the HA/DR community to the extent possible, will bolster combined U.S.-Japan capabilities while also providing an additional venue in which civilian actors and their military counterparts can interact and acclimate to one another. Importantly, these exercises should include simulations that involve practicing transitioning between response and recovery operations. This will enable the various private and government actors involved to better understand the capabilities, needs, and gaps likely to occur in the recovery phase and adjust accordingly.

9. *The United States and Japan should seek to sustain, and where possible improve, access to the region.* This should include efforts to continue to increase rotational deployments of U.S. Navy, Marine, and Air Force assets and detachments; bring online rotational deployments of DART and Japanese disaster-response teams during peak storm seasons; improve prepositioning and stockpiling of essential materials and supplies; and support strengthening regional HA/DR coordination centers. In particular, the United States and Japan should seek to develop additional cooperative security locations throughout South and Southeast Asia that can be used during an emergency response. Access to these locations can also be pursued through third-party contractors to alleviate some political concerns.

The United States is already engaged in increasing its regional presence through negotiating enhanced-access deals in the Philippines, Australia, Thailand, and Singapore. Japan should consider pursuing similar arrangements with these nations to allow for JSDF access to key bases and facilities in the event of a major disaster.²¹

10. *Japan should make efforts to streamline the interagency process governing the deployment of JSDF components.* The current structure of the interagency process is far too cumbersome to allow

²¹ Such arrangements would likely need to be based on informal agreements that comply with the 1992 Act on Cooperation for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations (Kokusai Rengo heiji katsudo-to ni taisuru kyoryoku ni kansuru horitsu), available at http://www.pko.go.jp/pko_j/data/law/pdf/law_e.pdf.

for the activation and deployment of rapid-reaction forces to out-of-area theaters when time is of the essence.

11. *The United States and Japan should invest, as possible given budgetary restrictions and procurement priorities, in dual-use platforms that can be utilized in HA/DR operations.* In particular, Japan should seek to augment its tactical and strategic air-lift capability. This might include additional investment in aircraft such as the C-17 and C-130, as well as rotary-wing aircraft. Modularity should also be a requirement in future platform procurement plans, particularly with regard to large-displacement naval vessels. Finally, given the close defense relationship enjoyed by the United States and Japan, integrating or embedding units between the forces for short tours of duty and training may further encourage interoperability.

12. *The United States and Japan should continuously demonstrate bilateral disaster-management capabilities and coordination mechanisms in multilateral joint exercises.* Through exercises such as ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on HA/DR, the United States and Japan can incorporate capable states into their coordination frameworks whenever possible in order to further promote confidence building among regional states. Clarification of a regional division of labor in HA/DR operations should also be pursued, which would foster the political process of regional cooperative agreement through such multilateral frameworks as the EAS.

Enhancing Recovery

The recovery component of Strategic Assistance will follow quickly on the heels of the initial response. There will be a high degree of fluidity between these two phases. Under certain circumstances, response and recovery operations will be carried out nearly simultaneously, whereas in other situations the response will quickly transition to recovery. These two phases are principally delineated by the nature of the operations being carried out by the central actors involved. In the response and initial stabilization phase, the central actors will be operating primarily in an emergency triage capacity. As stability is re-established, the initial emergency efforts subside, and additional follow-on actors arrive, response efforts may transition to the recovery phase, wherein operations are characterized more in terms of re-establishing essential social functions and capacities. While centralized control will and should diminish significantly during this phase owing to the plethora and complexity of local demands and conditions dictating reconstruction and recovery efforts, overarching coordination between U.S. and Japanese actors can still be useful, particularly as a means of investing resources and transitioning back toward more steady-state recovery and development programs.

Opportunities and challenges. In contrast with the response phase, which has a relatively short time horizon, the recovery phase encompasses a broader array of functions over a longer period of time. Indeed, in many ways the recovery phase leads back to the re-engagement of the resilience component, only now at a higher baseline.

Recommendations. Japan and the United States should implement the following measures to enhance recovery.

1. *Owing to their unique and specialized array of capabilities, as well as their ability to remain on the ground for prolonged periods, NGOs and private-sector actors should play the central role in the recovery phase.* These efforts should be supported by civilian government agencies.

2. *While the combined coordination and command center should continue to serve in a support capacity to on-the-ground actors—principally by matching funding streams with operators—overall*

command of the recovery phase should devolve to one that is highly localized. At this stage, duplication and competition among relief actors as a result of the decentralization of command is likely to result in greater efficiency than would be possible under a centralized command structure that is overwhelmed by the diversity of need and often undermined by systemic collective action problems by constituent actors.

3. *Recovery operations should be geared primarily toward restoring the function of critical social infrastructure, assisting in the long-term care of displaced persons, and supporting the re-establishment of core social functions, such as agricultural production and education.* Such operations constitute the first step in rebuilding and subsequently enhancing resilience in affected nations. Financial assistance from foreign governments in the weeks and months following a disaster is crucial to supporting these on-the-ground efforts. Toward that end, the United States and Japan should create a joint fund devoted to sustaining recovery efforts in affected nations following devastating disaster incidents.

4. *The U.S. military and JSDF may consider leaving a small advisory contingent in the affected nation during the recovery phase.* Based on the requests and needs of the affected state, this contingent would work to assist with tasks such as defense reconstitution, civil engineering works, and other recovery efforts.

Conclusion and Moving Forward

As the probability of major disasters increases, especially in South and Southeast Asia, the need for significant HA/DR capabilities within the region will continue to grow. Deepening alliance cooperation and coordination on HA/DR will serve to enhance regional stability by alleviating and containing the effects of the very worst disasters. Bilaterally, an enhanced collective focus on HA/DR will further strengthen the U.S.-Japan relationship by increasing opportunities for the two nations to gain practical experience working alongside one another. Indeed, Strategic Assistance aligns with both countries' respective national interests and is in keeping with Article IV of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. Furthermore, it stands to benefit both nations individually. For the United States, this is an opportunity to leverage Japan's interest in HA/DR to develop and implement a strategic approach to this unique challenge that will benefit regional stability and allow Japan to shoulder a greater share of the burden of providing regional public goods, thus alleviating pressure on U.S. resources. For Japan, this is an opportunity to build a new area of cooperation with the United States and develop a niche role for the JSDF in the Asia-Pacific, a role that could greatly enhance Japan's soft power while also contributing to an important regional public good. Regionally, Strategic Assistance will support U.S. and Japanese soft power by offering both nations the opportunity to further engage regional actors across a range of issues and potentially through existing institutional frameworks such as the EAS or the ADMM.

Fundamentally, if the United States and Japan seek to move toward a more combined and cooperative approach to regional HA/DR, the alliance partners must first walk before they can run. Indeed, perhaps the best way to progress toward building a combined approach to regional HA/DR will be to first enhance bilateral coordination to address the threat that future large-scale disasters pose to the Japanese mainland. This focus will enable the allies to build a more stable and extensive foundation upon increased formal and informal institutional and networked ties among Japanese and U.S. aid agencies, defense apparatuses, and NGOs and private partners so as

to enhance Japan's security in the face of major future disasters while also providing the necessary capacities to support the regionally focused Strategic Assistance concept.

Given the likelihood of future incidents occurring in the region, U.S.-Japan defense planning should heighten its focus on major disasters as a source of instability. While HA/DR has recently taken a less prominent role in U.S. defense planning, the opposite is true from the Japanese perspective. However, this shift represents movement toward a more ideal division of labor between the two allies, wherein an increasingly capable and regionally focused JSDF serves as the principal actor, while the United States serves primarily in a support capacity. HA/DR operations represent for Japan a less politically troublesome method of exercising its expanding martial capabilities—indeed a potential means by which to improve domestic and international perceptions of the JSDF—while making unmistakable contributions to regional stability and the alleviation of suffering. Japan's growing focus on HA/DR and other nontraditional aspects of regional security also reduces the burden on U.S. forces operating in the region, allowing the United States to focus its attention and energies on higher-end operations and capacities. Major disaster incidents, including natural disasters that threaten the Japanese homeland, must be included in U.S.-Japan bilateral defense contingency planning—potentially to the extent that a combined CONPLAN series is developed regarding future disaster scenarios in Japan. This will require revising pertinent Japanese laws that currently prohibit such exercises (at least as far as planning for domestic disaster contingencies is concerned). This foundation will support greater coordination and cooperation between the United States and Japan on HA/DR, though defense disaster contingency planning and response should take place under the auspices of and be coordinated by the respective aid agencies of both nations.

Finally, Strategic Assistance will need to be tailored in such a way as to mitigate or lessen regional political concerns and sensitivities, while also understanding the broader geopolitical context in which the concept is to operate. Questions over intentions and political legitimacy, as well as broader geopolitical connotations, may require the United States and Japan to vest Strategic Assistance within existing regional institutional frameworks. At the very least, significant effort will need to be directed toward increasing engagement with the region on these issues.

Owing to the two countries' unique combined capabilities, the U.S.-Japan alliance is an ideal platform to deliver enhanced HA/DR operations within Asia. Developing a strategic, joint approach to HA/DR will be difficult. It will require sustained support from political and military leaders, particularly as resources are constrained and domestic politics remain fragmented. Yet the need is apparent and the challenges are real. Moreover, placing greater emphasis on HA/DR provides the United States and Japan with the opportunity to deepen their bilateral relationship, enhance interoperability, and gain added real world experience. At the same time, Strategic Assistance would allow both countries to engage with regional actors in a way that provides an essential public good while highlighting the importance of the United States and Japan to maintaining regional stability.

About the Strategic Assistance Project

The Strategic Assistance Project is a collaborative research initiative between the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) and the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE), drawing on the generous support of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership. The project seeks to develop a strategic, joint U.S.-Japan approach to HA/DR operations in South and Southeast Asia that incorporates militaries, government, NGOs, and the private sector into an all-of-society effort—a concept termed Strategic Assistance. Given that emerging demographic and climatological trends will over time only intensify the consequences of Asia’s vulnerability to natural disasters, this project is designed to develop an effective mechanism through which U.S. and Japanese officials and policy analysts can implement the following measures:

- Exchange analyses of recent and forthcoming security, political, economic, demographic, and climatological developments in order to deepen mutual understanding regarding the importance of HA/DR operations in addressing and mitigating the severe impacts of natural disasters and other calamitous events in Asia
- Identify strategies, policies, and posture changes necessary to build and maintain bilateral and multilateral efforts to address the challenges posed by natural and man-made disasters in Asia, as well as develop the capabilities and organizational structures needed to address the disasters that will inevitably affect Asia in the future
- Develop a framework for a broader coalition of mutually concerned Asian nations to engage in collective action in advance of and in response to regional disasters

NBR and JCIE convened three workshops over the course of 2013 and 2014. The first, a two-day workshop in Washington, D.C., in September 2013, included the participation of 24 Japanese and U.S. scholars, practitioners, and specialists on HA/DR and related issues. Experts discussed the current approaches in both Washington and Tokyo to HA/DR, assessed the likelihood of an increased regional need for HA/DR capacity because of shifting factors within the regional environment, and explored potential avenues for enhancing bilateral U.S.-Japan collaboration and coordination within a joint strategic framework. The specific topics of discussion included the following:

- Demographic, developmental, and hydro-meteorological trends in South and Southeast Asia that are likely to result in substantially increased demand for robust HA/DR capabilities within the region in the medium to long term
- The capabilities currently employed by the U.S. military and JSDF in conducting HA/DR operations
- Lessons learned from previous U.S.-Japan cooperation on HA/DR, such as during operations following the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami and during Operation Tomodachi following the March 11 triple disaster that struck northeast Japan
- The capabilities, investments, posture, and organizational and policy changes that will be necessary to implement the Strategic Assistance concept in order to meet future regional demand for HA/DR
- Methods of improving interaction between the military and other elements of U.S. and Japanese government and society tasked with responding to humanitarian disasters

The first workshop concluded by considering a basic framework for Strategic Assistance aimed at building a joint bilateral strategy toward regional HA/DR operations.

The second two-day workshop was held in March 2014 in Singapore and included the participation of 28 scholars, practitioners, and specialists on HA/DR and related issues from nine countries: the United States, Japan, Australia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. The participants discussed a number of topics, including regional vulnerability, indigenous capacity for managing major disasters, the utility of multilateral regional organizations in South and Southeast Asia in facilitating HA/DR initiatives, and the perspectives of regional nations on the prospect of the United States and Japan approaching HA/DR operations in a more coordinated and strategic fashion. Specific items of discussion included the following:

- Geographic, geological, climatological, and other environmental factors, which stand to increase vulnerability to major disaster events in South and Southeast Asia
- Regional perceptions regarding foreign HA/DR activities and operations conducted in South and Southeast Asia, and the implications for the development and implementation of Strategic Assistance in the region
- The challenges and opportunities for capacity-building efforts conducted individually and collaboratively by the United States and Japan in South and Southeast Asia
- The strengths and weaknesses of existing regional multilateral frameworks designed to facilitate HA/DR cooperation and the potential contributions of the Strategic Assistance concept to their objectives

The second workshop concluded by emphasizing the necessity of developing a comprehensive approach to mitigate the effects of major disaster events and the importance of appropriately situating the Strategic Assistance concept geopolitically and strategically. It also raised a series of geopolitical challenges to the implementation of such a concept—challenges that the United States and Japan will need to account for in order to ensure the long-term efficacy and sustainability of their efforts.

The third two-day workshop was held in Tokyo in September 2014 and included the participation of 27 scholars from the United States, Japan, Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The participants began the process of developing a U.S.-Japan alliance strategy toward regional HA/DR operations and assessed how NGOs, private-sector participants, and the greater international community could enhance U.S.-Japan HA/DR efforts. Specific items of discussion included the following:

- Potential strategies for the United States and Japan to coordinate a whole-of-society approach to future HA/DR capabilities in South and Southeast Asia, as well as the response of South and Southeast Asian nations to such a strategy
- NGO-government engagement for HA/DR operations, including the local capacity of NGOs and the difficulties of NGO-military engagement
- The incorporation of private-sector organizations into the Strategic Assistance concept, given their financial reserves and lack of capacity for delivering aid in crisis situations
- The role of international organizations, especially the UN and ASEAN, in the Strategic Assistance concept, including the coordination of mechanisms and the creation of a multilateral narrative



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