

## **A new security policy for Japan: HA/DR capacity building and disaster-mitigation social infrastructure export**

By Takashi Kawamoto

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With the inauguration of the Abe administration in 2013, Japan announced that it would pursue a “Proactive Contribution to Peace,” by which it would work more energetically to secure peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. In March, at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo spelled out the Sendai Cooperation Initiative for Disaster Risk Reduction, through which Japan would provide \$4 billion for disaster risk reduction and train 40,000 government officials and local leaders over the next four years.

In Japan, discussion of security policy tends to focus on the military/defense arena. What is really needed, however, are individual strategies based on the “Proactive Contribution to Peace,” especially in the realms of energy, environment, cyber, science, and technology. In particular Japan should help countries in the Asia-Pacific to cultivate self-sufficient/recovery capabilities to deal with national catastrophes through innovative collaboration with Japan's Self-Defense Force (JSDF) Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HA/DR) capacity building program and disaster-mitigation-type social infrastructure exports.

### **Asia-Pacific risks: natural disaster x domestic insurgents**

The Asia Pacific region has a high concentration of rapidly growing economies backed by abundant labor forces and surging population growth; the region also experiences many natural disasters. The International Disaster Database EM-DAT notes that the risk of natural disasters including earthquakes, tsunami, typhoon/cyclone, and flood in the Asia-Pacific is 6.2 times greater than North America, 3.1 times higher than Europe, 1.8 times higher than Africa, 10.2 times more than the Middle East and 2.4 times more than Latin America. In recent years, the region has experienced the Great East Japan Earthquake (2011), the Great Sichuan Earthquake (2008) and the Indian Ocean Earthquake (2004). Data from the US Geological Survey shows approximately 67 percent of the earthquakes over 7.0 magnitude during the last five years (2010-2014) occurred in the Asia-Pacific. Climate change is intensifying typhoon/cyclones and floods. Not surprisingly, financial damage in the Asia-Pacific caused by natural disasters totaled \$783 billion, 1.5 times more than that of North America, 6.2 times more than Europe, 136.5 times higher than Africa, 71.8 times that of the Middle East, and 6.9 times that of Latin America. Unfortunately, many of these countries do not possess the capacity to deal with large-scale

natural disasters, either to mitigate their effects or to recover and rebuild their societies.

Many Asia-Pacific nations also face domestic insurgencies. This combination – a high risk of catastrophic natural disasters and domestic insurgencies – can be toxic: insurgents exploit instability caused by natural disasters to overturn a government. This combination is evident in armed conflicts between the government and insurgents near Mindanao in the Southern Philippines and in Sabah State of easternmost Malaysia. Domestic instability triggered by natural disaster was a key factor in the independence of Bangladesh. In 1970, the East Pakistan government poorly responded to the Bhola cyclone, which resulted in over 500,000 deaths. The poor response instigated civil conflict that resulted in independence the following year.

### **Expansion of vulnerability and risk in Asia-Pacific**

These vulnerabilities are increasing as economic growth continues, business assets are concentrated in the region, and the scale of disasters grows. The region has become the core of a number of global supply chains. According to the World Bank's World Development Index, approximately 36 percent of global Foreign Direct Investment poured into the nations in the Asia-Pacific (in 2013). The Asia-Pacific region also accounts for approximately 27 percent of world Gross National Expense. In other words, damage to companies operating in the region would have ripple effects throughout the world economy.

Concerns are also mounting as a result of the region's growing interest in nuclear power. According to the Power Reactor Information System of the International Atomic Energy Agency, there are 127 reactors in active operation (28.9 percent of the global total) and 44 reactors under construction (64.7 percent of the global total) in the Asia-Pacific. China has 24 reactors in active operation and 25 under construction, most of which are located along the coasts of the East China and South China Seas. India currently operates 21 reactors and has six more under construction, and proposes to add 35 more. Other countries in the region currently without nuclear power plants including Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Bangladesh are proposing or constructing new plants.

Plainly, there is a need to cultivate capabilities to minimize damage and enable prompt self-recovery in the Asia-Pacific.

### **Linking HA/DR and disaster-mitigation technology**

HA/DR capabilities are the capabilities a country has that allow it to establish a foundation for recovery in a devastated environment; in other words it is a military operation-like capability without combat actions. Typically at disaster sites, all transportation infrastructures like roads, ports and airports

are destroyed. Therefore, first responders are required to hew their way forward, approaching the shore with amphibious vehicles, and have to build temporary airstrips as logistic hubs to receive aid as well as to build facilities for accommodation, information and telecommunications, and for command & control. In Japan, only the Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) can conduct this mission.

What is needed is the cultivation of self-sufficient/recovery capabilities through collaboration between the JSDF's HA/DR capacity building program with armed forces in the region and disaster-mitigation social infrastructure exports to local municipalities and private sector.

When the Great East Japan Earthquake hit Japan in 2011, the Japanese public behaved in an orderly manner; there was no rioting, looting or other violent displays. The social circumstances in Japan are unique; as a result, there are real risks of domestic instability caused by natural disasters elsewhere in the region. It is critical therefore to design crisis management scenarios in advance with a district-level focus for allocation of resources that uses a comprehensive analysis of data on domestic insurgencies and geographic vulnerability to natural disaster. In other words, governments must identify high risk areas by utilizing civil society infrastructure and engage in persistent information gathering to create more practical crisis management scenarios, and use that information to forge self-sufficient/recovery capabilities through improvement of HA/DR capabilities along with the scenario.

### **Organization and budget compilation**

Contrary to much reporting, the February 2015 revision of the ODA Charter did not open the door to Japanese support for foreign militaries in the field of disaster relief. This type of assistance including HA/DR was available under the previous ODA Charter (it was just more clearly articulated in this version). Nevertheless, Japan has not pursued a HA/DR capacity building program of sufficient scale for Asia-Pacific nations because the Japanese government did not budget the associated costs for target nations, annual frequency of training per nation, and program contents suitable to each nation's own capability.

In fact, JSDF came to upgrade international cooperation activity as primary mission from subordinate mission in 2017, earning the recognition of disaster-response and PKO other than combat-related missions. It is, however, based on the perception that Japan had better "participate as member of the international community," not Japan should "lead/initiate HA/DR opportunities as fixed-routine mission like joint exercises focusing on HA/DR capacity building". If Japan holds out the strategy to lead the peace and stability in Asia-Pacific under "Proactive Contribution to Peace," should not it upgrade the perception of "proactive" to the next level? To build adequate HA/DR capabilities, JSDF needs to develop and pursue an HA/DR capacity building program that leads to development of a regional armed force that would engage in disaster relief as the first responder. There is a need for an organization that could allocate funds for personnel, procurement, and repair and maintenance. Given the need to

ensure public accountability to explain what it is, why it is needed, how it is conducted, and why the allocated amount is reasonable in Japan's difficult fiscal conditions, it is difficult for any organization other than the Ministry of Defense to serve this role.

The role of the armed forces and civil-military relationship is evolving in Japan. This disaster management initiative is a departure from the traditional Japanese security discussion. Yet, it possesses mid-to-long term political sustainability that should gain much support not only among traditional defense experts but other politicians, primarily because it pursues mutual economic interests to create an opportunity for the private sector to thrive by decreasing the vulnerability of supply chains in Asia-Pacific. The region awaits Japan's "Proactive Contribution to Peace" to be crystalized. A first step is writing this proposal into the FY2016 defense budget for the budget discussions this summer.

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