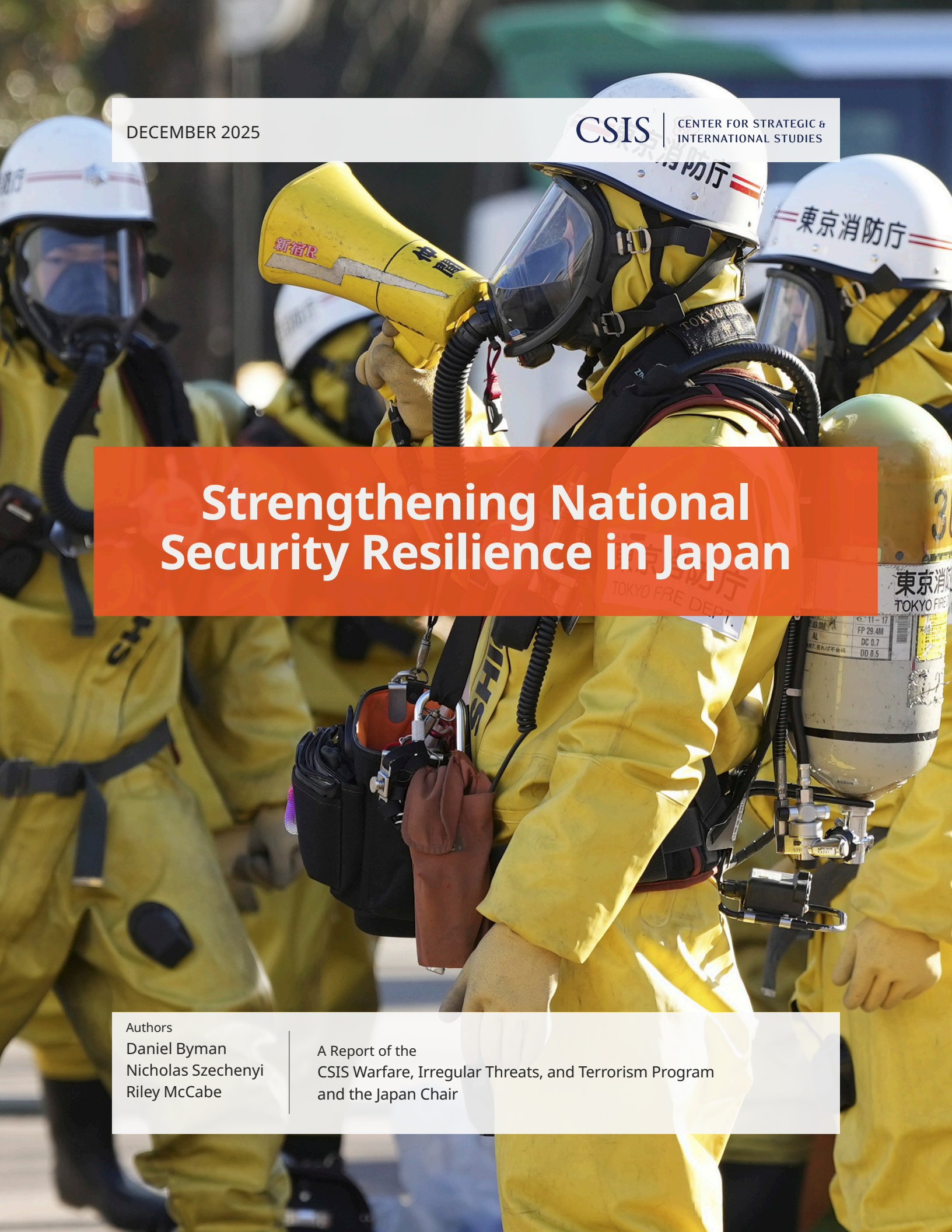

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Strengthening National Security Resilience in Japan

Authors
Daniel Byman
Nicholas Szechenyi
Riley McCabe

A Report of the
CSIS Warfare, Irregular Threats, and Terrorism Program
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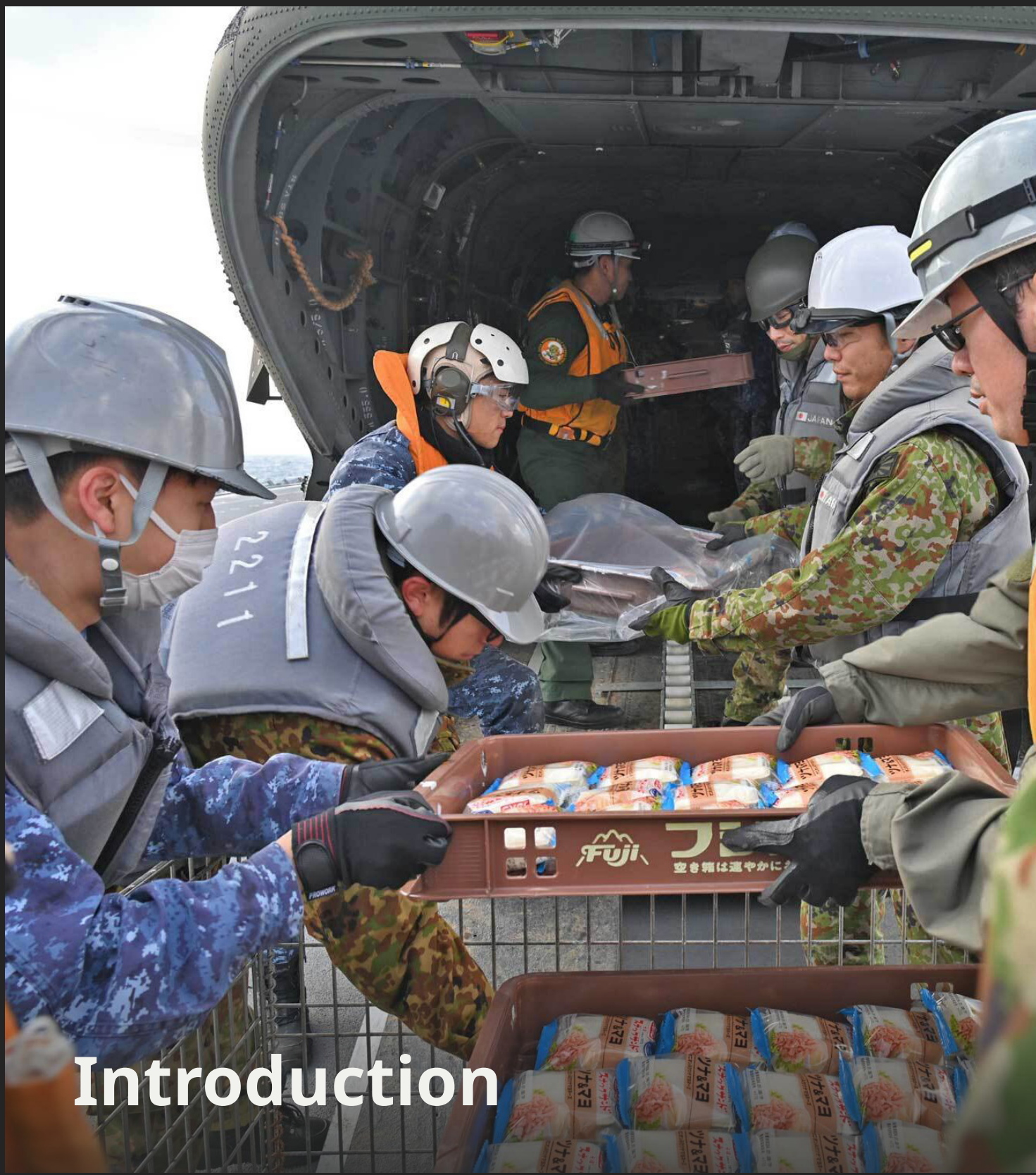


Introduction

Japan's Self-Defense Forces unload food and medical supplies intended for individuals affected by the Noto Peninsula earthquake.
Photo: Japanese Ministry of Defense/Anadolu via Getty Images

Japan has long been one of the most important U.S. allies, and its importance is growing as U.S.-China competition dominates U.S. strategic thinking. Beijing might seek to pursue its sovereignty claims over disputed islands, undermine Japan's security relationship with the United States, and prevent Japanese help in the defense of Taiwan, either directly or by stopping Japan from assisting U.S. efforts. Some of this coercion may involve military force, but much of it will likely involve "gray zone" methods such as subversion, disinformation, economic pressure, sabotage, cyberattacks, and other methods that fall short of open war. To coerce Japan, China may also use limited military force, such as missile attacks or shows of force near Japanese waters.

In addition to maintaining a close alliance with the United States and a powerful military of its own, Japan needs to be resilient in the face of Chinese pressure. Resilience is a concept that is both powerful and vague. It expresses how well Japan can resist, respond to, and adapt in the face of Chinese pressure. Resilience focuses on society, not the military, and its components are quite distinct from typical military measures. Ukraine showed its resilience in 2014 and again in 2022 in the face of Russian pressure. Despite losses of territory and tremendous civilian suffering, Ukrainians endured, and Russian pressure, if anything, strengthened societal bonds and support for government efforts to fight back.

In addition to maintaining a close alliance with the United States and a powerful military of its own, Japan needs to be resilient in the face of Chinese pressure.

Japan has many strengths that give it tremendous potential for resilience. Perhaps most importantly, it has endured numerous typhoons, earthquakes, and other disasters. As a result, the government has developed a strong disaster response capability, including well-resourced government ministries focused on local warning systems, infrastructure redundancy, and an extensive legal architecture to prepare for and respond to many contingencies. With some exceptions, this government infrastructure has bolstered Japan's resilience against disasters. Local government capacity in Japan is impressive, and localities often take the lead in responding to disasters. In 2022, Japan became the first country to pass comprehensive economic security legislation.

Japan is actively building upon this strong foundation for resilience. The Japanese government has numerous offices, agencies, and plans that are preparing national security–related resilience activities. Tokyo is also openly increasing its security focus on China, emphasizing supply chain security, the hardening of military sites, and efforts to address shortages in ammunition and air defense, among other measures. Japanese officials, to their credit, often recognize the country's weaknesses and limits: The new National Cybersecurity Office (NCO), for example, is a worthy attempt to build up the country's long-neglected cyber defenses.

While acknowledging these strengths, the authors of this report find that Japan would benefit from additional preparatory measures for many national security–related contingencies, such as disputes with Beijing over contested islands or Chinese pressure related to a blockade or invasion of Taiwan. Further investments are required to bolster relatively undeveloped elements of national security resilience that China or another foe may seek to exploit. Challenges include the following:

- an overall mindset on resilience that focuses on natural disasters, not national security, leading to plans that do not incorporate national security realities or necessities;
- a cautious mindset among many Japanese officials that does not always keep pace with the overall threat;[1]
- a stovepiped system, where national security agencies are not always well integrated with each other and with civilian agencies and local governments;
- limited government integration with key companies on important resilience-related objectives and an exchange that is often one-way, with the government receiving information from companies but not providing sufficient support in return;
- a lack of security clearances for key private sector personnel;
- a lack of financial incentives for critical infrastructure companies to fully participate in resilience-related planning and other activities;
- a nascent cybersecurity system that needs considerable work to resist formidable Chinese capabilities;
- a lack of preparedness for foreign disinformation and other malign information activities in national security crises;
- citizens who do not fully understand the ongoing national security–related risks facing Japan, suggesting problems with strategic communications;
- a lack of engagement with citizens about the strategic value of Taiwan for Japan's security;
- limited engagement with allies about expectations during a crisis on supply chain assistance, evacuation of nationals, and other essential responses; and
- at best, a limited will to fight and preparedness for nonviolent resistance among the Japanese people.

Japan could improve its resilience through several steps. In general, Japanese planners should place equal emphasis on security-related disasters and natural disasters; provide consistent resources to local governments on security-related issues; increase the hardening of shelters; create bigger reserves for food,

energy, and medicine; and clarify responsibilities for issues such as combating disinformation in a crisis. Japan must also make sure its government agencies have the necessary authorities to disrupt subversion and counter disinformation. Public education and government communication with the public are vital, including raising awareness of the importance of Taiwan for Japan and the risks of capitulation to China, helping citizens recognize disinformation and understand the roles they should play in a crisis, and developing communication plans that the government would use in a crisis.

Government agencies also need to share more with private companies responsible for cybersecurity and critical infrastructure and facilitate companies' efforts to share more with one another on security-related matters independent of the government. Private companies should receive additional resources to facilitate the security clearance process. Expediting and subsidizing the clearance process for private companies is vital to ensure they are quickly brought into planning for cybersecurity and the destruction of physical infrastructure and can receive sensitive information. Japan should also work with the United States and regional allies and partners to "friendshore" parts of its industrial base and stockpiles and increase planning with regional partners for noncombatant evacuations and other scenarios. In general, Japan and regional partners should be clear about expectations in various contexts. Many of these steps are politically or bureaucratically difficult, and others are costly. But combined, they would greatly advance Japan's resilience.

The U.S.-Japan alliance is an important part of both countries' security, and the United States can assist Japan's resilience efforts in several areas. These include cybersecurity, missile defense, critical infrastructure protection, and resilience-focused exercises. Washington can also foster dialogue with Australia, the Republic of Korea, and other key partners. Perhaps most importantly, the United States and Japan must anticipate various crises beyond a canonical Chinese invasion of Taiwan scenario and establish reasonable expectations for what each would provide in a crisis.

This research draws on four types of materials. First, to develop the evaluation framework, the project team built on academic and government work on national security resilience. Second, team members met with leaders and reviewed reports from countries as diverse as Finland, Israel, Taiwan, and Ukraine, among others, to learn about their practices for ensuring societal resilience in national security situations. Third, the team reviewed a wealth of Japanese-language government and think tank reports related to various resilience factors. Fourth, and most importantly, team members traveled to Japan in July 2025 and interviewed 57 experts across the policy community for their perspectives on resilience. All the interviews were on background, but that should not diminish their importance to the research.

> **"Japanese planners should place equal emphasis on security-related disasters and natural disasters; provide consistent resources to local governments on security-related issues; increase the hardening of shelters; [and] create bigger reserves for food, energy, and medicine.**

The remainder of this report has five sections. Section 1 defines resilience and explains its importance, including eight factors that help determine resilience, ranging from strategic planning and strong public-private partnerships to developing a will to fight. Section 2 briefly explains how and why China might try to undermine Japan's resilience. Section 3 assesses Japan on the eight factors of resilience, noting the country's strengths and weaknesses. Sections 4 and 5 offer recommendations for Japan and for the United States.

1.

Why Resilience Is Important and How It Can Be Measured

Japanese citizens are seen sheltering in the Higashi-Nakano subway station during a security drill.
Photo: Takashi Aoyama/Getty Images

Resilience is vital at multiple stages in a potential conflict. Perhaps most importantly, resilience bolsters deterrence: Countries that lack resilience are easier to invade or coerce. Those fortified by resilience are more difficult to occupy and less likely to bend under pressure. Finland, a country that has long focused on resilience in the face of potential Russian aggression, bases its national defense strategy on an old proverb: "Even the biggest bear will not eat a porcupine."[2] In practical terms, becoming a porcupine means building up national resilience such that would-be aggressors think twice before engaging in an invasion that promises to be too costly to sustain.

Resilience is vital when seeking to resist gray zone warfare in addition to all-out war. Gray zone warfare works, in part, by intimidating, disorienting, and weakening foes.[3] More resilient societies will be less affected by such disruptions and will rally in support of opposition to foreign aggressors. Gray zone activity often accompanies conventional warfare, as happened in 2022 when Russia began its full-scale invasion of Ukraine while conducting assassinations, spreading disinformation, attempting sabotage, supporting puppet politicians, launching cyberattacks, and employing other gray zone methods. Ukrainians nevertheless restored critical industries and infrastructure, ignored the disinformation, and rejected the puppet politicians, enabling them to resist effectively.

Finally, resilient societies can better resist occupation in anticipation of eventual liberation. They can maintain their cohesion and assist their true government. Resistance to occupation also raises the overall price of occupation for an adversary, reducing the economic rewards of aggression and forcing an attacker to expend tremendous resources to police the society.

Components of Resilience

Previous CSIS research defines resilience as "the will and ability of a country, society, or population to resist and recover from external pressure, influence, and potential invasion as well as major natural disasters such as hurricanes and pandemics."[4] In practice, resilience has many aspects, ranging from practical questions such as how to keep the lights on to ineffable but vital issues such as building a will to fight among the population. Resilience is related to resistance, which includes nonviolent and violent activities to reestablish independence after conquest by a foreign power.[5] Resilience goes beyond preventing a threat to the speed of recovery and adaptation after a disruption.[6] Counter to much national security analysis, resilience focuses not only on the government or the military but also on society as a whole.

This report focuses on resilience in the context of demanding national security scenarios such as a Chinese invasion or blockade of Taiwan or Chinese pressure on Japan over contested islands. Chinese pressure could include economic coercion, sabotage, influence operations, or limited military activity, among other measures. The report then assesses Japan's national resilience using a framework developed in a recent CSIS analysis of Taiwan's resilience capacity.[7] Drawing on the experiences of the Baltic states, Israel, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and especially Finland, the analysis identified eight core components of resilience: strategic design and command structures, legal authorities, strategic communications and public education, civil defenses (part of what Japan refers to as "civil protection"), critical infrastructure, will to fight, nonviolent resistance and stay-behind networks, and integration with allies and partners (Table 1). These categories offer a framework for understanding how a state prepares for, potentially survives under, and recovers from foreign malign influence and coercion. The following subsections discuss these categories. Section 3 then applies this framework to Japan. Although Japan and Taiwan face distinct geopolitical contexts, the framework offers a consistent benchmark for assessing national preparedness and identifying areas of relative strength and vulnerability.

Strategic Design and Command Structures

A country's strategic design and command structure form the institutional foundation of resilience. They include the plans, interagency coordination mechanisms, and lines of authority that guide national responses to external threats and crises.[8] Creating a strategic design and command structure requires identifying lead agencies, defining the division of labor among ministries, establishing protocols for peacetime and wartime transitions, and ensuring integration with civil society and the private sector.

Effective strategic design ensures a coherent national approach to resilience by clarifying who is responsible for what, under what conditions, and with what resources. It minimizes the risk of bureaucratic confusion or duplication of effort, particularly during periods of acute stress. It allows governments to activate contingency protocols quickly and maintain continuity of operations when core institutions are under strain or partially incapacitated.

> **A country's strategic design and command structure form the institutional foundation of resilience.**

TABLE 1
Eight Components of Resilience

Component	Overview
Strategic design and command structure	Overall plan incorporating various aspects of resilience, such as general goals, division of labor, conditions under which parts of the plan go into effect, budgeting, and other essentials
Legal authorities	Laws, policies, and procedures regarding necessary actions to take in or leading up to a national emergency
Strategic communications and public education	Communication with and education of the public in advance of a crisis and during a national emergency, including during situations when communications are disrupted, disinformation is high, or some of the population is under occupation
Civil defenses	Civilian preparations for a national emergency, such as storage of batteries and water at home, training for medical and rescue services, and preparation for guerrilla resistance
Critical infrastructure	Public-private sector preparations to continue critical infrastructure services during an emergency, such as in the energy, communications, transportation, water, financial services, healthcare and public health, food and agriculture, emergency services, and information technology sectors
Will to fight	Willingness of a population, part of a population, or country to resist an adversary in various ways, including by fighting
Nonviolent resistance and stay-behind networks	Networks designed to stay behind in the event of an occupation to help organize local intelligence. Stay-behind networks might include those focused on logistics, messaging, education, transportation, sabotage, or medical support
Integration with allies and partners	The establishment of diplomatic, economic, and military relationships with external allies and partners to bolster resilience

A command structure that encompasses a whole-of-society approach can dramatically improve a country's capacity to respond to gray zone coercion, hybrid threats, and outright military aggression. Finland's model, for example, includes the Security Committee, housed within the Ministry of Defence, which comprises representatives from various ministries, the private sector, and civil society.[9] The committee meets monthly in peacetime to coordinate preparedness and conduct proactive contingency planning. This type of clear and practiced strategic design enhances deterrence by signaling that a state is not only well prepared but also capable of mobilizing society quickly and cohesively in the face of adversity.

Budgeting is also interwoven with planning. Countries seeking resilience need to resource relevant government agencies and ensure proper staffing. Countries must also offer private financial incentives to the private sector for their cooperation. Finland, for example, maintains a separate budget line to subsidize private company stockpiles, redundancy, and personnel linked to critical infrastructure.[10]

Legal Authorities

Legal authorities are a critical foundation for national resilience, especially for democracies like Japan. They define the powers, procedures, and restrictions that govern how a state prepares for, responds to, and recovers from national emergencies, including armed conflict. Resilient legal frameworks clarify when emergency laws take effect, who has the authority to act, what actions are permissible, and how continuity of governance will be maintained under stress.

In peacetime, legal authorities determine the extent to which governments can preemptively mitigate risks, such as regulating foreign ownership of critical infrastructure, mandating preparedness standards, or requiring national stockpiling. In wartime or occupation scenarios, legal frameworks outline emergency powers, including civil-military coordination, relocation of government functions, and the denial of legitimacy to puppet or occupation governments. They also enable the mobilization of civilian and industri-

al resources and ensure that key actors retain legal standing after crises pass.

Legal preparedness for crises is essential. Without clearly defined authorities, responses may be delayed or legally challenged. Finland offers an example of this principle in practice. Its Emergency Powers Act authorizes sweeping but legally bound state actions during national emergencies, including control over civilian industry and forced recruitment into military service.[11] These legal tools must be updated and stress tested during peacetime to ensure relevance under modern threat conditions.

A resilient legal system must also anticipate adversary subversion and hybrid threats. This includes preventing hostile foreign ownership near sensitive sites, granting law enforcement sufficient surveillance and investigatory powers, and enabling the rapid transition from normal governance to emergency rule when conditions deteriorate. At the same time, resilience depends on sustaining democratic legitimacy during crises. Thus, legal frameworks must balance exceptional powers with safeguards and public trust.

Strategic Communications and Public Education

Strategic communications and public education are foundational to national resilience and encompass the government's ability to communicate effectively with its population before and during crises, as well as its efforts to build long-term societal awareness of threats, foster trust in institutions, and inoculate the public against psychological manipulation.

In peacetime, strategic communications help prepare society for crisis by shaping expectations, building shared understanding of potential threats, and reinforcing national resolve. These efforts are particularly vital in democratic societies, where adversaries may seek to exploit open information environments to sow confusion, amplify social divisions, and undermine confidence in government. During periods of heightened tension, gray zone activity, or armed conflict, clear and credible communication is essential to counter adversary narratives, reduce panic, and sustain public morale.

Effective resilience requires the technical ability to maintain broadcasts, deliver emergency alerts, and disseminate unified messaging when standard communication channels are compromised due to events such as cyberattacks, power outages, or infrastructure damage. Education also plays an important role. Latvia, for example, teaches resilience concepts to high school students.[12] Populations equipped with media literacy skills, a basic understanding of civil defense, and a shared vocabulary of national resilience can respond cohesively under pressure. These efforts should begin early and can be reinforced regularly through schools, public campaigns, and community-based training. In resilient societies, strategic communication includes building and maintaining trusted institutions and preexisting relationships between government, media, and the public.

Some states ban foreign propaganda or otherwise take tougher measures. Ukraine in 2014 banned Russian television channels, and in 2017 it banned access to Russian social networks, among other steps.[13] Disinformation is a particular challenge to effective communication, as adversaries can deliberately inject false information into a country's media environment (often via social media) or inflame accurate but controversial and divisive opinions and stories, often involving government mistakes or tensions within society. The spread of large language models and deepfakes makes it even easier for hostile governments to spread disinformation.[14]

Civil Defenses

Civil defenses refer to the systems, resources, and institutional arrangements that prepare and protect the civilian population in times of crisis. These include both physical measures, such as shelters and emergency supply stockpiles, and social infrastructure, such as public training programs, medical response capacity, and mechanisms for coordinating with volunteers.

Robust civil defense planning ensures that civilians have access to protection and assistance and that essential services can function under duress. Effective systems integrate national and local governments with civil society and the private sector. Municipalities often manage the implementation of shelter networks and evacuation plans and may serve as the first line of response in a crisis.[15] Where possible, dual-use infrastructure—such as underground parking

structures or sports facilities—can be adapted to serve as shelters, storage sites, or emergency coordination centers. Likewise, volunteer organizations and nongovernmental organizations often play a vital role in training civilians and delivering aid.

Preparedness at the individual and household levels is also essential. Civil defense strategies that educate citizens about emergency procedures, self-reliance measures, and their potential roles in a crisis can reduce panic, increase trust in public institutions, and improve the effectiveness of responses in a crisis.

Critical Infrastructure

Critical infrastructure encompasses the essential systems and services that underpin a country's security, economy, and daily life. This includes sectors such as energy, telecommunications, water, transportation, food and agriculture, healthcare, emergency services, and financial systems. Resilience in this category refers to the ability of these systems to operate effectively under stress, recover quickly from disruption, and support broader societal functions in times of crisis.

Infrastructure resilience requires both hardening and redundancy. Systems must be protected against physical sabotage, cyberattacks, natural disasters, and wartime degradation. At the same time, countries must build backup capacity to ensure that essential services can continue even if primary systems fail.

Because many critical infrastructure assets are owned or operated by private firms, coordination between government and industry is vital.[16] Companies can anticipate disruptions and try to mitigate threats through defenses, redundancies, and stockpiles, among other measures.[17] Resilient countries develop formal mechanisms for public-private cooperation: joint planning bodies, sector-specific working groups, shared threat intelligence, and legally mandated standards. Trusted relationships built in peacetime enable rapid response and coordinated recovery when crises strike.

Because many critical infrastructure assets are owned or operated by private firms, coordination between government and industry is vital.

Equally important is supply chain security. Countries reliant on single-source imports for fuel, food, or spare parts may face cascading disruptions if access is interrupted. Strategic reserves, local production capacity, and diversified sourcing arrangements all help reduce this risk. Cybersecurity is also a critical concern. As infrastructure systems become increasingly digitized, protecting them from espionage, intrusion, and manipulation becomes central to national resilience. Resilient infrastructure sustains the economy, mitigates the effects of crises, increases public morale, and raises the costs for would-be aggressors seeking to exploit technical or logistical vulnerabilities.

Will to Fight

Will to fight refers to the determination of a population to actively resist aggression, support national defense efforts, and endure the hardships of conflict.[18] It is a deeply psychological component of resilience, shaped by national identity, perceived legitimacy of the government, and expectations of success or support. A high level of social trust often encourages a will to fight.[19]

A high will to fight can alter the strategic calculus of potential adversaries. It signals that a population will not quickly capitulate, even under occupation or sustained coercion, and that military conquest will be met with broad resistance. Conversely, a society perceived as apathetic, divided, or dependent on foreign intervention may invite aggression, either through miscalculation or opportunism. In what proved a costly miscalculation for the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russia underestimated Ukraine's will to fight, assuming that the Ukrainian people would capitulate in the face of Russian pressure and even welcome the invading forces.[20]

Governments cannot manufacture will to fight overnight. It must be cultivated deliberately over time through civic education, national identity, strong institutions, and a clear articulation of what is at stake. Shared experiences such as conscription, national service, or participation in preparedness programs can strengthen social bonds and prepare individuals

“Governments cannot manufacture will to fight overnight. It must be cultivated deliberately over time through civic education, national identity, strong institutions, and a clear articulation of what is at stake.

with a sense of responsibility.[21] Public perception of leadership also matters. Populations are more resilient when they believe their leaders are competent and committed and share their burdens. Clear expectations of allied support, especially in smaller or geopolitically vulnerable nations, can further bolster morale and readiness.

Will to fight is notoriously difficult to predict but often proves decisive in conflict.[22] It determines not only whether a society will fight but also how long it will endure, how quickly it will recover, and how effectively it can mobilize international sympathy and assistance.

Nonviolent Resistance and Stay-Behind Networks

Nonviolent resistance and stay-behind networks are critical components of societal resilience in the event of occupation, partial loss of territory, or breakdown in central authority. These tools enable a society to continue resisting through decentralized, often clandestine means in order to buy time, preserve legitimacy, and complicate an adversary’s attempts at control. Nonviolent resistance includes a wide range of activities such as organizing protests, distributing underground media, engaging in civil disobedience, maintaining clandestine education or governance systems, and symbolically asserting national identity.[23] These actions serve to erode the occupier’s legitimacy, sustain morale, and draw international attention to the plight of the occupied population. Importantly, they also help prevent normalization of occupation and preserve the groundwork for future recovery or liberation.

Stay-behind networks, by contrast, involve preplanned military and intelligence structures embedded in society and designed to activate if formal command structures are compromised. These may include personnel trained in sabotage, communications, logistics, intelligence gathering, or the protection of political leadership.[24] Such networks require early planning, strict secrecy, and often legal flexibility to enable operations during extraordinary circumstances.

These forms of resilience are not substitutes for conventional defense but essential complements for dire scenarios. They ensure that resistance continues even in the face of territorial loss or occupation, and they signal to adversaries that societal defiance will persist in multiple forms, increasing the long-term costs of aggression.

Integration with Allies and Partners

Most states do not resist alone. Integration with allies and partners enhances national resilience by enabling a state to draw on external diplomatic, economic, military, and informational support. Resilient states build these relationships well before conflict arises.[25] This includes formal security partnerships, participation in multilateral forums, legal agreements on mutual support, and economic partnerships. Exercises, joint planning, and shared stockpiles deepen interoperability and operational trust in conflict scenarios and reduce friction when real-world crises occur.

Integration also creates deterrent value. When adversaries understand that aggression against one state will activate transnational networks of resistance and response, the perceived costs of coercion increase substantially. In this way, international partnerships serve not only as sources of material support but also as strategic multipliers that reinforce a nation’s overall resilience posture. Moreover, integration can bolster public morale and will to fight. When people know that they can receive outside assistance, it offers additional hope of ultimate victory.

At the same time, reliance on allies must be balanced with self-sufficiency. Excessive dependence on external actors can weaken the internal will to prepare and respond. Integration should therefore complement, not replace, domestic resilience efforts.

2.

How China Might Attempt to Coerce Japan

A Japan Coast Guard helicopter simulates the rescue of a man from the sea during a maritime exercise with the Philippine Coast Guard and the U.S. Coast Guard in the waters around the southern city of Kagoshima.
Photo: Richard A. Brooks/AFP via Getty Images

Before assessing Japan's resilience in the eight categories outlined in the previous section, this report briefly examines the threats Japan faces from China that require it to build greater resilience. Japan is a pillar of the U.S. security architecture of Asia.[26] China may try to coerce Tokyo both because of the close U.S.-Japan security relationship and because of Japan's disputes with China that are independent of the U.S.-Japan security relationship.

A confrontation could occur over the Senkaku Islands, which are disputed between Japan and China. For Japan, preventing such an attack is a top priority. The United States does not take a position on sovereignty but recognizes that the 1960 U.S.-Japan security treaty, which applies to all territories under the administration of Japan, covers the islands.[27] Accidental escalation is also a possibility. China consistently deploys large numbers of naval, coast guard, and government-directed fishing vessels in the waters around the disputed islands. These often intrude into Japan's contiguous zone and territorial seas.[28]

But it is Taiwan that holds the greatest potential for sparking a confrontation between Japan and China. Both Japan and the United States encourage the peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues and oppose any attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force. A China-Taiwan confrontation is perhaps the top U.S. global security concern. Should China attack Taiwan, the United States would expect to flow forces

from and through Japan, use bases in Japan, and otherwise draw heavily on Japan. Likewise, U.S. efforts to relieve Taiwan would rely heavily on Japan if China chose to blockade or quarantine the island. Japan is essential for surging forces and for using tactical aircraft against China, and in a blockade scenario, Japan is a vital transshipment point.[29]

There is a high chance of Tokyo being drawn into a conflict even if it does not immediately join the fray or support U.S. forces. China might seek to deter Japan from acting, coerce Tokyo into halting assistance to the United States, preempt U.S. military activity in Japan, or simply punish Japan for aiding Taiwan directly or indirectly.[30] China's gray zone activities would probably seek to advance two related goals: The first is to separate the United States and Japan, and the second is to separate Japan from Taiwan.[31]

In addition to seeking to stop Japan from acting, China would benefit if it simply delays any Japanese response. A RAND study notes that while Japan will likely provide support for the United States, this will take time as Japanese leaders weigh their options—probably far more time than the United States would like.[32] China may use gray zone or other activities to cause confusion or otherwise hinder effective decisionmaking.

China has many ways to coerce Japan. Some pose low costs and limited risk for Beijing, whereas others are far harder and could easily escalate into all-out war.[33] Possible Chinese measures include the following:

- harassing fishing vessels near Japanese waters;
- engaging in espionage and sabotage, including assassinations;
- conducting military exercises and missile launches near (or, more provocatively, in) Japanese waters;
- launching information operations to undermine the U.S.-Japan relationship and sow division in Japan;
- cutting trade and investment to pressure Japan;
- exploiting the strong economic interdependence between Japan and China to harass Japanese companies and disrupt trade;
- denying critical minerals, personal protective equipment, and other supplies that are difficult for Japan to replace;[34]
- launching missiles near the Second Island Chain to make it clear that China can and will go to war with the United States in the event of a crisis;[35]
- conducting cyberattacks on Japanese banks and critical industries, among other targets;
- blockading or quarantining all or select islands of Japan; and/or
- nuclear saber-rattling, including increasing rhetoric about nuclear use, testing a nuclear weapon, or otherwise raising the prospect of nuclear war.

China has many ways to coerce Japan. Some pose low costs and limited risk for Beijing, whereas others are far harder and could easily escalate into all-out war.

It is also plausible that China may target parts of Japan, such as U.S. bases in Okinawa, while avoiding efforts against the rest of the country. This would be an attempt both to degrade U.S. forces and send a message to Japan about Beijing's seriousness and capabilities while avoiding a more massive strike that might force Tokyo to act.

China is already doing some of this in peacetime, as evidenced by economic and military forms of coercion employed after comments by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi in November 2025 about the potential implications of a Taiwan contingency for Japan's national security.[36] China has intensified its military presence in waters and airspace close to Japan, including the deployment of two aircraft carriers—Liaoning and Shandong—which operated together in the Pacific, marking the first such bilateral carrier drill. These carrier groups conducted aircraft launches and landing operations around islands south of Japan, including those near Okinotorishima and the Second Island Chain.[37] In addition, Chinese fighter jets have flown unusually close to Japanese reconnaissance aircraft—on one occasion coming within 45 meters—prompting Tokyo

to file diplomatic protests over reckless and aggressive maneuvers.[38] China has also deployed large numbers of coast guard vessels, as well as fishing and other non-governmental vessels that operate under government direction.

Further, Japan has linked hundreds of cyberattacks to Chinese actors in recent years. Japan has a poor record of cyber defense and has been the target of cyberattacks from China, Russia, and North Korea, with Chinese attacks being the most sophisticated.[39] China also promotes disinformation in Japan and otherwise manipulates the information space to advance its interests.[40] For years, the complexity of the Japanese language made foreign disinformation at scale difficult, but artificial intelligence is removing this barrier.[41] Japanese interlocutors note that private Chinese companies linked to the government have established an infrastructure for spreading disinformation in Japan, using some of the same companies that regularly conduct disinformation in Taiwan. In Japan, however, the infrastructure is not frequently used and is probably being saved for a crisis. In addition, in a crisis, China would be likely to use artificial intelligence to generate deepfakes and otherwise seek to sow confusion in Japan.

Chinese information operations are likely to amplify any Japanese public distrust of the United States.[42] China might push themes of a potential lack of U.S. support for Japan in a confrontation with China and the dangers for Japan of supporting Taiwan and U.S. military operations.[43] As one interviewee noted, China would emphasize the question, "Why should Japanese die to defend Taiwan?" Such messaging is likely to occur before a crisis, with China saying, "If you help the United States, *only* then would China strike Japan."[44] Successful disinformation might deter Japan from supporting the United States in a crisis, which in turn would hinder U.S. efforts to back Taiwan and discourage Taiwan from resisting China's aggression—"three birds with one stone," as one interlocutor noted.[45] Although Japan does not have deep social cleavages that China could exploit with disinformation or virtual amplification of internal debates, Japan, like all societies, has divisions that China would likely attempt to worsen.[46]

More narrowly, China has long promoted information campaigns in Okinawa focused on the U.S. bases there.[47] Beijing promotes pro-China narratives, such as stressing China's historical ties to Okinawa, while trying to inflame anti-U.S. sentiment.[48] China would likely intensify such messaging during a crisis in order to spread anti-Okinawan sentiment in Japan and promote anti–mainland Japan sentiment in Okinawa.[49]

3

Assessing Japan's Resilience

Officials from the Japan Coast Guard, customs, and police board a ship to inspect its cargo during a maritime interdiction exercise at a port in Tokyo.
Photo: Kazuhiro NOGI/AFP via Getty Images

This section examines Japan's strengths and weaknesses in the eight components of resilience: strategic design and command structures, legal authorities, strategic communications and public education, civil defenses (civil protection), critical infrastructure (including cybersecurity), will to fight, nonviolent resistance and stay-behind networks, and integration with allies and partners.

Strategic Design and Command Structures

Various government agencies involved in responses to natural disasters manage many of the components of resilience in Japan, and the country has taken significant steps in recent years to strengthen its national crisis management architecture. Much of this crisis response architecture is well tested and well funded, and Japan is a world leader in many areas. Japan also began integrating economic and energy security into its national security thinking in the 1980s, ahead of most countries, including the United States. However, gaps remain in national-level integration, public engagement in exercises, budgeting, and procedures for cross-ministerial coordination during high-end crises. Overall, resilience in Japan is mostly framed as a response to natural disasters, and Japan lacks an overarching concept of resilience that brings in na-

tional security, especially contingencies involving the use of military force.[50]

The Cabinet Secretariat has a well-designed plan for national security crises that is similar to but different from plans related to natural disasters. In contrast to natural disaster planning, the plan brings in the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and other national security–focused organizations, centralizes decisionmaking more, and includes consultations with private companies responsible for critical infrastructure and cybersecurity. Recent reforms proposed under Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's administration reflect a concerted push to improve funding, staffing, and central coordination capacity for disaster planning.[51] These changes build on a long-standing legal and institutional foundation for emergency preparedness, including government-mandated drills and a codified leadership succession system.

Japan's budgeting and organizational design for emergency response are expanding significantly. Under the Ishiba administration, the Japanese government doubled the fiscal year 2025 budget for the Cabinet Office's disaster management division, allocating over 14 billion yen to improve evacuation shelter conditions and fund pre-disaster preparation measures.[52] Notably, 2.7 billion yen of this amount was earmarked for "push-type" emergency support, enabling the central government to dispatch supplies immediately without waiting for requests or local approval.[53] This shift represents a movement toward a more proactive operational posture.

To strengthen command and coordination, the government also created a 1.7 billion yen Comprehensive Promotion Fund for Pre-Disaster Measures, intended to support interministerial coordination initiatives.[54] The fund will double the staff of the disaster division (to more than 110 personnel), and the division will be headed by a newly established disaster management commissioner, ranking equivalent to a vice minister.[55] These changes are intended to enhance the capacity of the Cabinet Office to operate as a central node for planning and coordination.

Japan also has a clearly codified and operationalized system for leadership succession. The National Security Council Establishment Act stipulates that when the prime minister is absent, a predesignated cabinet minister assumes their duties, and that vice ministers may carry out the prime minister's responsibilities in emergencies when necessary.[56] The succession framework proved functional in a real-world crisis in July 2023, when North Korea launched a ballistic missile toward Hokkaido while Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi were both abroad. In their absence, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno assumed the roles of acting prime minister and acting foreign minister, chaired the emergency four-minister National Security Council, and directed safety confirmation measures, coordinating with Kishida via telephone.[57]

> **"Much of this crisis response architecture is well tested and well funded, and Japan is a world leader in many areas."**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also institutionalized annual antiterrorism and antikidnapping drills since 2018, following the 2016 Dhaka attack in Bangladesh. These exercises have involved approximately 100 participants from the ministry and private sector, including corporate representatives, and have focused on crisis scenarios affecting Japanese nationals overseas.[58]

Despite these considerable strengths, concerns remain about the depth and breadth of national-level coordination. The Cabinet Secretariat has many authorities, but much of its role is to coordinate rather than give orders during peacetime. Companies are not obligated to participate in training and exercises, and they do not receive financial incentives. In addition, although companies report to the government, they do not, in turn, regularly receive updates from the government and do not coordinate with each other.[59] While emergency drills are legally mandated and routinely conducted, they do not consistently test real-world civilian evacuation scenarios. For example, the public has criticized drills related to nuclear emergencies for not addressing logistical and behavioral challenges during fast-moving disasters.[60]

Evaluation also needs improvement. Although Japanese government ministries regularly evaluate plans

and capabilities, the lack of outside scrutiny allows problems to continue.[61] Additionally, some observers have expressed concern that the proposed creation of a standalone Disaster Management Agency may duplicate the functions of existing ministries—particularly the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications—potentially introducing new layers of bureaucratic friction unless roles and mandates are carefully clarified.[62]

Past responses to typhoons, the 2011 Fukushima disaster, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the 2024 Noto Peninsula earthquake indicate that government coordination issues remain.[63] More broadly, there is no publicly available evidence that Japan conducts complex joint simulations that involve cabinet-level decisionmakers, cross-ministerial war-gaming, or contingency planning for gray zone coercion or hybrid threats. Similarly, there is little documentation of written crisis playbooks, escalation protocols, or integration mechanisms between civilian ministries and the SDF. Many of these elements are critical to strategic design but remain opaque or absent from the public record.

Japan has many excellent first responders and officials with deep expertise on natural disaster preparedness but few experienced planners on the national security side. Experts interviewed for this project noted that recruitment challenges for the SDF could complicate future efforts to enhance requisite planning expertise for national security contingencies.[64]

In general, Japan's systems empower local government responses, but national security crises, unlike many natural disasters, will affect the whole country (some areas more than others). However, some areas of the country pay little attention to national security–related preparedness and thus do not focus on tasks like the possible evacuation of citizens in the area and are more skeptical of an SDF presence.[65] The emphasis on local government leadership often leads to coordination issues between localities and difficulties in national-level coordination, which could be particularly challenging in a geographically broad national security crisis.[66]

Legal Authorities

Japan has developed a broad set of legal authorities to support crisis governance. Japan relies on a series of specialized legal frameworks to authorize extraordinary measures during emergencies, natural disasters, pandemics, or national security contingencies. These authorities are dispersed across multiple laws, often situationally activated, and occasionally limited by implementation gaps or political sensitivities.

Japan's legal architecture mandates and supports a broad spectrum of government-sponsored emergency drills. The Disaster Countermeasures Basic Act requires disaster prevention officials to conduct regular drills and obligates relevant staff to participate.[67] It also authorizes officials to request cooperation from residents and public or private organizations to ensure the realism and effectiveness of these exercises.[68] The act provides the prime minister with emergency powers, including the authority to declare a state of emergency (though he must then get approval from the Diet). The government is also empowered to issue emergency ordinances during times when the national legislature is not in session or has been dissolved, covering issues such as essential supply distribution, price controls, and postponement of debt payments.[69] Complementing this, the Act on Emergency Measures for Stabilizing Living Conditions of the Public enables price stabilization for essential goods, while the Act on Emergency Measures Concerning the Hoarding and Reluctance to Sell Daily Necessities authorizes compulsory sale orders and warehouse inspections in the event of supply disruptions or hoarding during abnormal price conditions.[70]

For national security crises, the "Act on Measures to be Taken by the National Government in Relation to Actions by the Armed Forces of the United States of America, etc. in Armed Attack Situations, etc., and Survival-Threatening Situations" and its related laws authorize the prime minister to lead a central crisis response headquarters to coordinate defense and civilian protection activities.[71] Additionally, peace and security legislation passed in 2015 defines authorities for the SDF, from peacetime to armed attack, as well as the less clear situations in the gray zone between open conflict and peace. The potential application of certain

designations, such as "survival-threatening situation," to real-world scenarios is exceptionally complex and depends on the circumstances.[72] Even standard designations such as "armed attack" are often unclear in Japan because Tokyo's defense-oriented policy means it can use force in self-defense only if an armed attack is initiated, not merely if there is a threat of attack.[73] Japan also has specific authorities for situations in between peace and wartime, such as "important influence" situations and "survival-threatening" situations that do not involve a direct attack on Japan.

Japan's legal tools for requisitioning private property are well defined but rarely invoked. The Land Acquisition Act authorizes the expropriation or use of land for public-interest projects such as roads, airports, medical facilities, and defense infrastructure.[74] It also establishes clear procedures for dispute resolution and compensation. The Disaster Relief Act extends this authority by allowing governors to requisition land and goods during disasters and to designate emergency shelters and construct temporary facilities such as medical stations or housing. It also allows prefectural governors to approve land use for SDF operations without the usual delays.[75]

Despite these authorities, legal requisition is politically sensitive. A notable case in March 2023 involved the Fukuoka Prefecture Expropriation Committee ordering the Kyushu Foreign Language Academy to vacate its land by March 2024. The academy publicly objected, citing relocation difficulties and negative social and economic consequences.[76]

"In contrast to its expansive economic and disaster response legislation, Japan lacks a dedicated legal framework for the internment of suspected saboteurs or spies conducting gray zone or wartime activities.

Japan also maintains laws governing state control over critical industries. The Act on Promotion of Security through Integrated Economic Measures allows the government to designate sectors such as energy, transportation, and finance as essential to public welfare and to block activities that threaten national security.[77] The Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Act enables the government to screen foreign investment in sensitive sectors and block cross-border transactions that pose security risks.[78] However, implementation gaps have been noted. Firms report difficulty assessing which transactions are at risk, and the absence of a clearly responsible department has caused regulatory uncertainty.[79]

In contrast to its expansive economic and disaster response legislation, Japan lacks a dedicated legal framework for the internment of suspected saboteurs or spies conducting gray zone or wartime activities. Japan's legal tools do not currently cover the risk of agents of foreign powers acquiring property near sensitive sites that could be used for surveillance or sabotage. While the Subversive Activities Prevention Act permits imprisonment for activities like promoting insurrection or preparing for politically motivated crimes, it does not create a preventive detention regime.[80] In practice, authorities have relied on the Unfair Competition Prevention Act to prosecute espionage-related offenses, particularly involving foreign students and researchers accused of intellectual property theft.[81] Moreover, Japanese intelligence does not gain greater authority in a national security emergency.[82]

Strategic Communications and Public Education

Japan maintains a well-defined framework for strategic communications during crises. The Cabinet Public Affairs Office serves as the central hub for issuing government announcements, while the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications manages the technical systems required to disseminate messages through public broadcasting channels. Prefectural

governors and municipal mayors are responsible for relaying these messages at the local level, operating under guidance from the central government.[83] Under the Disaster Countermeasures Basic Act, designated administrative bodies, local governments, and public institutions are required to collect and transmit disaster-related information to federal authorities to inform decisionmaking. The Broadcasting Act requires Japanese public broadcasters to disseminate critical information before and during emergencies.[84]

Japan's J-Alert system serves as the country's primary emergency warning infrastructure. It is a government-operated network of software and hardware that broadcasts real-time alerts across multiple media, including loudspeakers, radio, TV, email, and smartphones. However, the system has faced technical and credibility challenges. In November 2022, a J-Alert issued for a North Korean missile launch was criticized for its delay, prompting concerns about evacuation timing.[85] In April 2023, the system issued another missile warning for Hokkaido, but recalibrations intended to prioritize speed resulted in the alert being sent to an overly broad area, creating confusion.[86] Japanese officials have acknowledged the need for improvements to the system.[87] Additionally, non-Japanese residents have raised concerns about the system's limited multilingual support, reducing its effectiveness in a diverse population.[88]

In some instances, the Japanese government has also expanded its role in countering foreign disinformation. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched a communications campaign in 2023 to counter disinformation surrounding the release of treated water from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.[89] Using artificial intelligence–empowered tools, the ministry monitored online content, rebutted false claims such as forged documents and fabricated media reports, and coordinated with overseas diplomatic missions to issue corrections. At the same time, it promoted accurate information through multilingual outreach under the hashtag #STOP風評被害 (#STOPfūhyōhigai, or reputational damage), producing infographics and animations in 10 languages and a YouTube video that attracted more than 5 million views. The ministry paired these efforts with the Beauty of Fukushima initiative, showcasing local products and culture to both domestic and international audiences. The government has also begun incorporating disinformation risks into the exercises it conducts.[90]

In addition, the Ministry of Defense is working to build long-term capabilities in the cognitive domain. Japan's Defense Intelligence Headquarters (DIH) has increased resources devoted to detecting and countering disinformation and focuses on SDF-related activities.[91] Other interlocutors noted the DIH effort is still in its infancy.[92] By 2027, Japan intends to have the capacity to assess the authenticity of social media content and identify disinformation disseminated by foreign actors.[93] Outside of the ministries, Japan's laws are also catching up to the risk of disinformation. The Information Distribution Platform Act entered into force in 2025, making social media companies more responsible for disinformation and authorizing the removal of disinformation.[94]

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted some of the strengths and limitations of Japan's strategic communication structures. As the pandemic evolved into a prolonged, complex public health emergency, the Japanese government faced criticism for insufficient coordination with municipal actors.[95] One expert noted that Japan's overall communications structure led to conflicting messaging that still has not been resolved. They added that Japan's communication with its citizens was poor during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly on the scientific basis of Japan's decisions. The expert also noted the system was rigid, and it was hard to move money quickly during the crisis.[96] Many recommendations, such as switching to digital health records, have been voiced for years but have still not been fully implemented.[97]

Overall, Japan appears poorly prepared for the likely significant Chinese disinformation that could accompany a national security–related crisis.

Misinformation was also a problem during the Covid-19 pandemic, including medical advice from social media influencers and ordinary citizens that was well meaning but false and harmful. Some Japanese officials hid information from the public to avoid panic, but that backfired, reducing faith in government integrity.[98] Many Japanese do not trust information from government agencies, and many receive their news from social media instead of government websites. Perhaps most importantly, the government has, at best, limited ties to U.S. social media companies, making it harder for the government to take down false reports.[99] For now, disinformation is mainly checked by the media and private fact-checking organizations.[100]

Many Japanese offices handle different elements of disinformation, but it is unclear who is ultimately responsible for countering national security–related disinformation in Japan. Some interviewees noted, for example, that DIH and the Cabinet Intelligence and Research Office both gather information on disinformation, but the Cabinet Public Affairs Office handles the response side.[101]

Overall, Japan appears poorly prepared for the likely significant Chinese disinformation that could accompany a national security–related crisis.[102] As one expert noted, "Japan does not have the ability to stop disinformation from Chinese intelligence."[103] A 2024 Cabinet Office white paper on disaster management highlights the importance of public education campaigns focused on media literacy, though these efforts tend to focus more on natural disasters than on national security crises.[104] Various aspects of resilience, such as what citizens should do in the event of an attack, the role of the military in protecting Japan against today's threats, and how to guard against disinformation, are not incorporated into the country's curriculum.

Although public awareness is growing regarding the security threats China poses, there is much to be done in this area. Japan's 2022 National Security Strategy explicitly mentions Taiwan and the threat posed by Chinese coercion, noting that Chinese activities "present an unprecedented and the greatest strategic challenge in ensuring the peace and security of Japan and the peace and stability of the international community."[105] China's claims to the Senkaku Islands, regular missile launches, and aggressive naval activity near Okinawa and other areas have greatly increased negative views on China in Japan.[106] In general, however, the government is not communicating consistently on China and other national security threats with the Japanese people.[107]

Some interlocutors indicated a tension in government communication with the public. Too much emphasis on the threat from China might frighten the population and generate fears of entrapment in conflicts stemming from the security relationship with the United States, especially around Taiwan. As a result, the government has moved incrementally over the years to increase information sharing with the public about the China threat. Exercises are also a way to increase public awareness of potential threats. Many government measures, such as hardening shelters, can be linked to Taiwan contingencies, but this is not openly acknowledged.[108] Remarks in 2022 by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe—who noted that Japan could not stand by if China attacked Taiwan because "a Taiwan contingency is a Japan contingency"—were seen as an important marker of change in how political leaders communicate on Taiwan.[109]

Public concern about Taiwan has increased in recent years. After the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, over 75 percent of those polled feared that the Ukraine war might spill over into various Taiwan contingencies.[110] However, in general, the public does not see Taiwan as an urgent issue, and it does not understand why Japan has a strategic interest there.[111] The vast majority of the public sees China as a top threat but is more cautious about the role Japan should play in the event of Chinese aggression against Taiwan, though increasing numbers support Japan exercising the right of collective self-defense generally.[112] As one official noted, the problem is not teaching the Japanese people about the threat but rather educating them on the role of Japan in regional security.[113]

Civil Defenses (Civil Protection)

Japan has taken important steps to develop its civil defense architecture—or civil protection as it is known

there—focusing on volunteer mobilization, public shelter expansion, emergency information dissemination, and community-level crisis preparation. In many areas of civil protection, Japan is a world leader. Due to the large number of typhoons, earthquakes, and other nonsecurity threats it faces, Japan has excellent early warning systems, emergency operations centers, and coordination between local and national governments.[114]

However, some of Japan's expertise on natural disasters does not necessarily transfer to the realm of national security, and much of its civil response capability is not connected to the Ministry of Defense. Overall, much of the system is stovepiped, and progress is uneven. Implementation challenges persist, particularly in the areas of volunteer registration, civilian training, evacuation of Japanese nationals, and public trust in warning systems.[115]

Multiple statutes support volunteer engagement during crises. The Act on Measures for the Protection of Citizens in Armed Attack Situations requires national and local governments to support voluntary civil protection activities.[116] It also extends this obligation to emergency response operations. Similarly, the Fundamental Plan for National Resilience encourages support for disaster prevention volunteers, and the Disaster Countermeasures Basic Act mandates national awareness campaigns to encourage citizen involvement.[117]

Despite these laws, civilian training and preparedness remain weak points in Japan's civil protection measures. While the Basic Act on Disaster Countermeasures Enforcement Regulations mandates standardized training for municipal and prefectural officials, and other statutes call for fire safety and public health preparedness, implementation is inconsistent.[118] The Fundamental Plan for National Resilience encourages the creation of user-friendly guides for civil servants and crisis manuals for water utilities, but it is unclear how widely these resources are distributed or used.[119] Although Japanese citizens play important roles as first responders in natural disasters, it is unclear if they are prepared for national security emergencies.[120] Although some prefectures are conducting more civil protection exercises with the national government, the level of engagement varies among prefectures.[121]

While the National Security Strategy highlights the importance of joint exercises between the SDF, coast guard, and police, and Japan participates in NATO-led cyber defense exercises, these activities tend to exclude civilian participants. The Fire Service Act and pandemic legislation impose specific training requirements on public facility managers and health officials. In general, however, most frameworks for civil protection training are insufficiently developed or standardized nationwide.[122]

In July 2025, Japan launched a centralized national registry system for volunteer and nonprofit organizations. Under the amended Disaster Countermeasures Basic Act, organizations can register with the Cabinet Office to coordinate with local governments in emergencies.[123] In order to register, these groups are required to submit records of past activities, operational areas, and capabilities. The information is shared with local governments, enabling direct requests for assistance and fostering long-term relationships between authorities and civil society organizations. While this system is designed to improve preparedness, it remains limited in scale. Due to the standards for approval, the Cabinet Office has projected that only a few dozen organizations will register.[124] Without broader participation, such initiatives may be insufficient to make an impact on coordinating volunteer responses and avoiding uncontrolled influxes of unregistered civilian volunteers during major crises.

Government funding is also being used to build databases for mobile kitchens and trailer houses, improving Japan's capacity to surge relief assets immediately after a disaster.[125] However, there is no available evidence of laws or policies requiring reserves of fuel, food, or emergency equipment at private bases, hospitals, or industrial sites, despite the fact that such supplies may be essential during disruptions of national supply chains. Similarly, the Japanese people are not urged to maintain personal supplies of essentials such as batteries and water in the event of supply disruptions in a crisis.

Japan has made more measurable progress in shelter development. Under the 2004 Civil Protection Law, local governments must designate shelters, underground facilities, evacuation areas, and other essen-

tials, though in some municipalities the designation process is still underway.[126] As of April 2024, the country maintained a national registry of 58,589 designated evacuation facilities, 3,926 of which were underground shelters.[127] The Civil Protection Law requires prefectural governors to manage this registry, which is publicly updated every year. The Enforcement Order of the Act on Measures for the Protection of Citizens in Armed Attack Situations establishes that facilities are assessed on five core criteria for designation as an evacuation facility: location, capacity, structure, natural disaster resiliency, and accessibility by vehicle.[128]

In May 2025, the Cabinet Secretariat identified almost 1,500 additional underground facilities in commercial and government buildings, which are expected to add 4 million square meters of shelter space to the existing 4.91 million square meters.[129] Further expansion of shelters has focused on urban areas. In January 2024, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government designated 75 new underground shelters—including at Azabu-Juban, Tokyo, Ueno, and Ginza stations—and outfitted several with emergency supplies, ventilation, power, and communications systems.[130]

Although Japan's expansion of emergency evacuation facilities represents meaningful improvements, most efforts are focused on natural disaster responses relative to national security crises.[131] Evacuation facilities for natural disasters are designated under the Disaster Countermeasures Basic Act (108,638 facilities as of November 2024), whereas emergency temporary evacuation facilities are designated under the Civil Protection Act for civil protection purposes (58,589 nationwide, including 3,926 with underground structures). The overwhelming majority of Japanese evacuation centers do not offer full protection against direct missile strikes.[132]

In other locations, however, the Japanese government has assisted in the construction of underground shelters designed to protect against missile threats. These shelters are intended for short-term evacuation until residents can relocate. They are increasingly common on remote islands such as the Sakishima Islands in Okinawa Prefecture and are designed for blast protection against conventional weapons.[133] To improve situational awareness in a crisis, the Japanese government has promoted the publication of Civil Protection Act–designated shelters on online maps. Local governments also have emergency communication systems in place for natural disasters that are available through both online and traditional media such as radio.[134]

Evacuation of Japanese nationals and the creation of non-Japanese refugees could prove a tremendous challenge.[135] In a crisis, tens of thousands of Japanese nationals will seek to return from Taiwan and mainland China.[136] The Japanese government has not coordinated extensively with private companies on evacuations from China.[137] In addition, nationals in areas that are likely to be under threat, such as Okinawa, may seek assistance with evacuation to the mainland. Other countries, including the United States, may seek refuge in Japan for their nationals in the area during a crisis.[138] In addition to transporting and caring for the refugees, Japanese officials would need to be wary of national security threats. It is possible that Chinese intelligence would plant spies among the refugees.[139]

Critical Infrastructure

Japan has developed a dense web of policies and plans aimed at protecting and sustaining its critical infrastructure during crises. Legal frameworks support the diversification of energy supplies, reinforcement of government and military facilities, and the use of information security clearance systems. However, while government policy has emphasized resilience through geographic redundancy, physical protection, and information sharing, implementation remains uneven, as does response planning for hybrid threats such as sabotage and gray zone interference. In addition, public-private partnerships for critical infrastructure protection are widely underdeveloped.

Japan often has strong physical defenses for critical infrastructure due to its preparedness for natural disasters, and multiple backups in case some systems fail.[140] Large private companies are encouraged to have contingency plans in the event of natural disasters such as earthquakes or typhoons.[141] In general, large corporations have numerous communication channels with the government, often via Japan's equivalent of a chamber of commerce.[142]

While government policy has emphasized resilience through geographic redundancy, physical protection, and information sharing, implementation remains uneven, as does response planning for hybrid threats such as sabotage and gray zone interference.

Japan does not currently mandate geographic redundancy for its energy grid, and efforts to incentivize greater regional dispersion of power generation have had limited traction. The Fundamental Plan for National Resilience recommends diversification across thermal, renewable, and hydrogen energy sources, and encourages the development of evacuation centers and urban areas that are energy self-sufficient.[143] Legislation such as the Electricity Business Act and the Act for Cross-Regional Coordination of Transmission Operators facilitates interregional power transmission during emergencies. However, in 2023, when a government initiative offered to keep thermal backup power plants online, no companies opted in, citing unprofitability.[144] This suggests that government interest in energy diversification exists but lacks sufficient incentives for commercial participation.

Japan is taking steps to overcome the vulnerability of the electric power grid and other critical infrastructure to cyberattack. The 2014 Basic Act on Cybersecurity called for a plan to ensure critical infrastructure protection based on close coordination between the central government and social infrastructure providers, and the 2022 Economic Security Promotion Act mandates that the installation of critical infrastructure protection facilities be subject to government screening.[145] But the responsibility for managing cyber threats against electric power infrastructure rests primarily with private businesses, and initiatives are largely focused on peacetime rather than responses to contingencies.[146] Communication protocols between the government and operators of critical infrastructure were enhanced in the 2025 Active Cyber Defense Act, which requires operators to inform the government when they suffer a cyberattack or introduce new information technology systems.[147]

Japan also faces challenges in protecting its water systems. Several laws require municipal and industrial water providers to maintain service continuity plans and stabilize supplies during armed attacks or disasters.[148] Despite this, a July 2025 study by the Ministry of Finance showed that 99 percent of water utilities lacked the necessary funds to upgrade infrastructure and that water rates would need to rise by over 80 percent to fund complete upgrades.[149] Over 20 percent of Japan's water pipes have exceeded their legal service life.[150] Meanwhile, the water services workforce has declined by more than 45 percent since its peak.[151] These vulnerabilities significantly undercut the resilience of Japan's water infrastructure during extended crises, particularly if some of the existing infrastructure is damaged or destroyed.

Emergency fuel distribution is another area where planning exists but implementation remains opaque. The Fundamental Plan for National Resilience recommends strengthening emergency fuel logistics by supporting resource transport from refineries and oil depots, encouraging distributed power generation at essential facilities, and addressing fuel desert areas.[152] The Petroleum Stockpiling Law requires companies to submit emergency coordination plans to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, which also retains authority under the Petroleum Supply and Demand Optimization Act to direct fuel sales during shortages.[153] The Disaster Regional Energy Supply Base Development Plan provides funding for underground tanks and backup generators.[154] While these policies exist in detail, there is no publicly available evidence that they have been tested, coordinated, or widely implemented in practice, raising concerns about operational readiness in an extended fuel disruption scenario.

Japan maintains some energy stockpiles, which are necessary as the nation depends entirely on other countries for crude oil, natural gas, and coal.[155] Approximately two months' worth of supplies are on the archipelago at any given time. For oil and gas, the government has also sought to diversify suppliers to reduce the impact

of a supply shock from the Middle East or other parts of the world. The government does not subsidize companies for maintaining stockpiles or for redundancy, though it does offset losses for natural gas if stockpiles must be sold before they expire.[156] Stockpiles for ammunition and energy, among other items, may also need to be larger. The 2022 National Security Strategy did not anticipate that wars might last for years, as has happened with Russia and Ukraine.[157]

Japan has also taken steps to reduce its dependence on China for rare earths and other critical minerals, though this remains a vulnerability. Japan's efforts began after 2010, when China implemented a rare earths ban, which ended after three months following an incident involving the Senkaku Islands. Japan's efforts include stockpiling, promoting alternative technologies, and investing in rare earth resources outside China. Nevertheless, Japan remains dependent on China for more than half of its rare earths use.[158]

Japan's policies on physical hardening and structural protection for key infrastructure are robust on paper but also lack documented follow-through. The National Security Strategy, defense buildup program (defense procurement strategy), and the 2024 Cabinet Office defense white paper all emphasize underground construction, electromagnetic pulse protection, and structural reinforcement for government buildings, command centers, and military facilities.[159] These documents also identify critical lifelines—such as nuclear power plants, alert hangars, and fuel storage facilities—as priority sites for protective upgrades. As of 2024, the government had created a construction system officer position to oversee expanded infrastructure spending for military facilities, including those related to F-35 aircraft operations. But the degree to which physical protections have been installed at civilian government sites is unclear.

The Economic Security Promotion Act emphasizes resilience in global supply chains and budgets to assist with stockpiles. As of June 2025, the Japanese government had secured approximately 2.4 trillion yen ($16 billion) in budgetary resources for supply chain resilience, and within the budget, the government had approved 135 projects proposed by industries, totaling a subsidy allocation of roughly 1.44 trillion yen ($9.6 billion).[160] Under the Economic Security Promotion Act, 15 sectors are designated as critical infrastructure, including electricity, gas, oil, water supply, financial services, medical services, and various forms of transport.[161] The government provides funds to stabilize supplies of 12 specified critical products, such as semiconductors and batteries. Critical industry companies must gain government approval for key hardware components, usually avoiding those from Huawei or other Chinese companies.[162] These industries also have mandatory reporting requirements.[163] However, officials noted this was more of a "gentleman's agreement" and the guidance on not using Chinese companies was unclear.[164]

Military planners were not included in designing or implementing the Economic Security Promotion Act. For example, the government assumed that in a crisis, maritime traffic would not be impeded when military planners would recognize that China might attack or otherwise threaten maritime traffic in order to coerce Japan in a conflict. Thus, to help with natural gas supplies, it procured another tanker—a sensible step for peacetime but one that may fail in conflict.[165]

Responding to sabotage is primarily the responsibility of the police unless the event is recognized as a national defense contingency, in which case the SDF may assume command. Training between prefectural police and the SDF has taken place since 2012 to build joint response capacity.[166] Japanese intelligence is beginning to increase monitoring of pro-Chinese organizations and individuals who might conduct sabotage.[167] Moreover, experts also noted that Japan's preparation for natural disaster–related accidents gives it some protection against sabotage.[168]

One particularly acute gap is the protection of undersea communication cables, which are vital to an island nation. These assets facilitate 99 percent of Japan's international data traffic and are concentrated in a few geographic locations, such as the Bōsō and Shima Peninsulas.[169] The Action Plan for Strengthening the Industrial and Technological Basis for Economic Security recognizes their importance and outlines the need for repair and maintenance capabilities.[170] However, no national-level protocols have been adopted for peacetime protection, and the SDF has not

“Japanese government communication with private companies is often incomplete or one-way, with the government of Japan receiving threat information from, but usually not providing information to, critical infrastructure companies.

been tasked with regular oversight of cable infrastructure. The vulnerabilities of this system were illustrated during the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, which damaged 10 cables and disrupted services for six months.[171] In addition, while Japan has some satellite capability, it would be insufficient should undersea connectivity be disrupted.[172] The Economic Security Promotion Act will be amended in the 2026 Diet session to provide funds for services such as the installation and maintenance of undersea cables.[173]

Tokyo also lacks the authority over Japanese companies that the U.S. government enjoys over U.S. companies through the Defense Production Act.[174] As a result, Japan cannot quickly compel its defense industrial base to step up or change production in a crisis. Large Japanese companies involved in critical infrastructure are required to prepare business continuity plans, including for war-related contingencies, and they have participated in Taiwan-related tabletop exercises.[175] However, these contingency plans are focused on natural disasters, not war or gray zone activities, and some experts argue that many private sector firms are not prepared for such eventualities.[176]

Moreover, Japanese government communication with private companies is often incomplete or one-way, with the government of Japan receiving threat information from, but usually not providing information to, critical infrastructure companies.[177] Companies also often do not receive direction from the government on what capabilities they should develop.[178] Metadata sharing from the government might be particularly useful for companies seeking to build their defenses, as would be information on Russian and Chinese activities. As one private sector expert noted, “Any kind of operational support would be very helpful.”[179]

In many areas, large companies are not required to provide security-relevant information to the government (this is changing in cybersecurity, where new laws are designed to require more reporting from companies). Rather, there is hope that companies will embrace this information sharing on their own.[180] Communication is often one-way, though the government tries to declassify and share some threat information.[181] Several experts noted that Japanese companies will seek to evacuate their employees from Taiwan and China in the event of a crisis, and they often have naïve assumptions about how easy this would be.[182]

Cybersecurity

Japan is increasing its cyber defense efforts with a new office, the National Cybersecurity Office (NCO), which emphasizes critical infrastructure. The NCO is modeled after the U.S. Joint Cyber Defense Cooperative and was formerly known as the National Incident Response Cybersecurity Center.[183] The office is slated to grow in size and seeks to introduce zero trust architecture and a risk management framework on cyber and help secure defense industries.[184] Japan is also planning to establish a council that will bring together relevant government agencies and, on a voluntary basis, essential critical infrastructure providers and others. The police and SDF are also expanding their cyber operations, with the SDF establishing a cyber school, among other efforts.[185]

New laws require critical infrastructure companies to report major breaches or other problems. One new law allows Japan to collect foreign communications, which previously had been restricted, and makes it easier legally to collect Japan-linked communications with foreign countries if there is a threat.[186]

Despite these genuine advances, Japan is starting from a low level and has much catching up to do, especially given China’s skill in the cyber realm. Although Japan does cyber exercises, many are still at the tabletop stage and do not get into operational details. Nor does the government constantly test its own systems at the pace that private companies do.[187] As one expert put it, “We are not yet prepared.” Another judged that

cyber defense effectiveness in a crisis is "probably low," while yet another noted that the Japanese government often lacks the cyber expertise that private companies have.[188] Other interlocutors pointed out that for many key services, Japan relies on the expertise of U.S. companies.[189] Moreover, companies are not involved in the evaluation process in a systematic way, even though "the private sector is in the front rank," in the words of one critical infrastructure company official.[190]

Japan is now authorized to conduct offensive cyber operations (euphemistically referred to as "active cyber defense"), but it largely lacks the capability to do so.[191] To conduct such operations, Japan might need to operate from outside the country, and it is unclear if it has the capacity to do so. Moreover, the requirements, legal and bureaucratic, for such operations are both significant and vague, such as the requirement for the remote neutralization to be consistent with international law.[192]

In 2025, Japan launched the "compliant operator" designation system under its new Active Cyber Defense Law, intended to allow private firms access to sensitive threat intelligence by providing them security clearances. With security clearances, private sector employees could gain access to sensitive government data, including some intelligence provided by the United States and other foreign countries. This, in turn, would enable them to better plan and defend.[193]

However, high costs—reportedly reaching tens of millions of yen in registration fees—and unclear security facility requirements have discouraged many firms from applying.[194] As one official noted, it is unclear if companies will need their own secure facilities and how they should handle non-Japanese employees.[195] Other officials noted, "For CEOs, 'security' means 'cost.'"[196] Moreover, the government has not yet created a centralized portal for classified threat sharing, causing businesses to remain skeptical of the system's scope and reliability. Without improved public-private information exchange, Japan's infrastructure protection strategy remains incomplete, especially in sectors that rely on corporate networks and operations for service delivery.

Will to Fight

Unlike much of the post–World War II period, when the SDF had a negative reputation, Japan now exhibits relatively high public support for its SDF. But the depth of civilian willingness to participate in national defense remains unclear, and public polling suggests it is limited. Public attitudes reflect a broad trust in the SDF's domestic role in disaster relief and civil assistance but comparatively weaker alignment with its military or deterrence functions. Unlike South Korea or Taiwan, Japan has no conscription and, in general, has a pacifistic orientation.

According to 2020 public opinion polling, 90.8 percent of the public held a favorable view of the SDF.[197] Negative sentiment was limited to just 5.0 percent of respondents. In the same survey, 78.2 percent of respondents expressed interest in the SDF. The primary reason cited was the SDF's contributions to disaster response and civilian life (53.0 percent), while only 28.0 percent pointed to its role in national security. Among the roughly 20 percent of respondents who reported no interest, the leading cause was a lack of understanding of what the SDF does. On force structure, 41.5 percent supported expanding the SDF, 53.0 percent preferred maintaining its current size, and only 3.6 percent supported a reduction.

However, willingness to engage in national defense dropped sharply when translated into personal commitment. In a hypothetical invasion of Japan by a foreign power, only 4.7 percent of respondents said they would join the SDF. A further 51.1 percent said they would assist in noncombat roles, while 17.0 percent said they would resist without violence. Nearly a quarter—24.3 percent—reported that they "cannot say." These numbers suggest that while public trust in the SDF is high, especially in nonmilitary functions, the population is not prepared for large-scale civilian mobilization in the event of a national security emergency. As one official noted, the good news is that there is more support for the SDF than in the past, but the bad news is that there is little engagement: Most families would not want their child to join the SDF.[198]

The government of Japan does not focus on instilling a will to fight among its own people. Japanese public attitudes are taken largely as givens or issues to be addressed incrementally rather than something that government policies can shape proactively.

As in many countries, there is little focus on national security during most Japanese elections, and polls show that ordinary citizens prioritize other issues.[199] However, there has been some increase in security awareness. High school textbooks, for example, now discuss recent defense guidelines—a significant change from Japan's more pacifistic approach in the past.[200] After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a record 64 percent of respondents in an *Asahi Shimbun* poll believed that Japan should increase its defense capabilities.[201] This shift in public opinion has enabled the passage of a number of new national security laws and policies.

The public's will to fight probably varies by contingency. Several experts argued the Japanese people would favor fighting if China attacked the Senkaku Islands. But with Taiwan, one interviewee noted, "It would be a problem. . . . The strategic importance of Taiwan is not understood by the Japanese people."[202]

The government of Japan does not focus on instilling a will to fight among its own people. Japanese public attitudes are taken largely as givens or issues to be addressed incrementally rather than something that government policies can shape proactively. Japanese leaders are aware that the prospect of war related to Taiwan and the possibility that Japan might be attacked are highly sensitive subjects and that the risk of political backlash is high.

Nonviolent Resistance and Stay-Behind Networks

Japan has not developed policies or programs related to civil resistance or stay-behind networks. For example, there is no available information on the publication of guidebooks for civil resistance actions or evidence of involvement by nongovernmental organizations in preparing for such activities. These gaps stand in contrast to resilience strategies pursued by countries like Finland and Taiwan, where the prospect of occupation has prompted deliberate efforts to train civilians in nonviolent resistance and maintain continuity under foreign control. In Japan's case, the relevance of this domain is less immediate. Given its geographic insulation, strong alliance with the United States, and relatively low likelihood of occupation, civil resistance planning has not been prioritized within the broader national resilience agenda.

Integration with Allies and Partners

Japan has made meaningful progress in integrating its SDF with the militaries of the United States and other international partners for joint crisis response and resilience-related activities. This cooperation is especially visible in large-scale humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, where bilateral coordination frameworks have been repeatedly activated to support rapid and effective response efforts. Military-to-military coordination also encompasses many resilience-related national security crisis activities.

Japan's National Security Strategy emphasizes the critical role of the U.S.-Japan alliance in disaster response, citing the Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM) as the principal channel for bilateral coordination.[203] The ACM was successfully utilized during the 2016 Kumamoto earthquake and the 2024 Noto Peninsula earthquake, providing a structured forum for aligning Japanese and U.S. military logistics, aviation support, and civil-military coordination. The Self-Defense Forces Law authorizes

the minister of defense to enter into mutual supply arrangements with treaty allies, further facilitating interoperability in joint operations.[204]

Historical precedent for such cooperation is strong. Following the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, Operation Tomodachi marked an unprecedented level of U.S.-Japan coordination. The United States deployed 24,000 personnel, 189 aircraft, and 24 naval vessels—including the USS *Ronald Reagan* aircraft carrier—in support of Japan's relief efforts.[205] Joint operations included aerial reconnaissance with manned and unmanned aircraft, supply airlifts, debris clearance, and the rapid restoration of critical infrastructure such as Sendai Airport and the ports of Hachinohe, Miyako, and Kesennuma. This set a precedent for future military-to-military crisis integration.[206]

More recently, the 2024 Noto Peninsula earthquake saw effective bilateral support, with the U.S. military providing supply transport and logistical assistance. In a strategic enhancement to these capabilities, Japan established a new Joint Operations Command in Tokyo on March 24, 2025.[207] The command is designed to centralize operational decisionmaking and reduce communication lags across time zones and service branches. It facilitates streamlined interagency coordination between the SDF and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, reinforcing the alliance's capacity for rapid mobilization.

Internationally, Japan participates in numerous multinational emergency drills such as Large Scale Global Exercise, Multi Big-Deck Event, Noble Wolf, Noble Typhoon, Noble Raven 23, Noble Buffalo, Noble Stingray 2, JIMEX2023, Talisman Sabre 23, and Malabar 2023—many of which focus on interoperability in maritime and surface warfare alongside U.S. and regional partners. Japan has also signed reciprocal access agreements (RAAs) with Australia, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom, and acquisition and cross-servicing agreements (ACSAs) with Australia, India, and a host of European partners. The ACSAs enable exchange of supplies and services between the SDF and other country forces, whereas the RAAs allow mutual access to partner bases and facilitate joint exercises and training.

Japan's integration efforts also extend into multilateral forums. The Japan Coast Guard participates in regional coordination platforms such as the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum and the Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting, which address complex emergencies, natural disasters, and maritime environmental crises requiring joint responses among Pacific nations. Australia and South Korea are particularly important partners for China-related contingencies.[208] Japan is a formal partner of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and is privy to a menu of cooperation activities and trainings, as well as exercises.

"Perhaps most importantly, Japan and its allies must set expectations regarding resilience-related activities for national security crises.

Secure communications is a potential weakness for Japan. This is especially pronounced for multilateral communication, such as when South Korea, Australia, or other potential partners are involved.[209] In addition, Japan needs to deepen efforts with allied countries for its critical supply chains, building on ongoing efforts such as the U.S.-Japan Critical Minerals Agreement and the Japan-Australia-India Supply Chain Resilience Initiative. These relationships are particularly vital given Japan's geographic position. Japan could also draw on allies such as the United States for assistance with offensive cyber operations and disinformation, among other activities.

Perhaps most importantly, Japan and its allies must set expectations regarding resilience-related activities for national security crises. How much countries can and will help one another, evacuation plans for endangered nations, and mutual economic and supply chain aid are only some of the areas that would benefit from better communication of expectations.

4.

Recommendations for Japan

Personnel in protective suits take part in a joint public-private anti-terrorism drill ahead of the anniversary of the Tokyo subway sarin gas attack.
Photo: STR/JIJI Press/AFP via Getty Images

Japan could improve its resilience with a wide range of measures focused on the eight categories identified. Many of these are politically or bureaucratically difficult, and others are costly. In many cases, the government is making progress, but the pace of change is too slow. Nevertheless, to be truly prepared in the face of Chinese pressure, Japanese planners must make numerous changes.

Strategic Design and Command Structures

- Give potential security-related disasters the attention given to natural disasters, which often involves crossing numerous local jurisdictions to ensure coordination and resourcing and otherwise adopting a more top-down approach.
- Engage outsiders to conduct reviews of critical infrastructure and civil defense readiness, among other resilience necessities, bringing in the private sector and relevant outside actors, as well as government officials.
- Provide more transparency about the results of exercises so they can be examined by the media, released to the public, or otherwise scrutinized outside government.[210]
- Provide consistent resources to fund resilience-related activities, such as private sector integration, government strategic communications capabili-

ties, and anti-disinformation efforts, as Finland does, so national and local government entities can better develop long-term capabilities.

- Consider subsidies to key companies to help them with clearances, handling secure information, maintaining stockpiles, and creating redundancy.
- Incorporate gray zone and conflict-related threats such as disinformation and cyberattacks into natural disaster exercises and clarify the role of the SDF in such circumstances.
- Increase budgeting for resilience as a critical component of the Defense Buildup Program.

Legal Authorities

- For national security–related emergencies, consider granting some bureaucracies greater power to coordinate private entities and providing more authority to domestic intelligence services to increase surveillance and act rapidly to disrupt potential subversion in a crisis.
- For external crises such as a Taiwan contingency, clarify both internally and privately with U.S. counterparts the applicability of the "important influence situation" and "survival threatening situation" designations, as well as Japan's permitted responses.
- Review government authorities to stop foreign malign influence operations, including malign amplification, to ensure adequate power, recognizing the importance of maintaining strong privacy protections.
- Provide the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications with more legal authority to seize property to guard against spies and sabotage.

Strategic Communications

- Designate individuals to provide regular briefings to the public during national security crises and allow the media to ask questions or otherwise clarify what the public must know. The individual or small group of individuals must be able to speak for multiple government ministries.
- Clarify who in the government is responsible for disinformation and give that office greater direction and coordination authorities.
- Develop a communications strategy with the public about weighing national security imperatives against constitutional protections of the right to privacy.
- Expand resilience-related education. There should be a greater effort in schools to teach the military role of the SDF, how to recognize disinformation, and the role of citizens in national security crises. It would be useful to bring former officials and military officers into the schools to educate the public on national security–related issues.
- In both education and statements by government officials, go beyond the China threat to the Senkaku Islands and East China Sea to include the implications of a Taiwan contingency for Japan's national security to build the will to fight and budgets for resilience activities.
- In both education and statements by government officials, discuss the risks of war with the public to ensure proper budgeting and public preparedness. As one expert noted, "Everyone knows a huge earthquake will hit Japan every 30 years, but people don't like to talk about potential war."[211]
- Create ties to technology companies for two-way information sharing to identify disinformation, better communicate with the public, and establish trusted information sources.
- Track foreign malign influence aggressively and be prepared for a coordinated response to counter it.

Civil Defenses

- Build on coordination measures instituted in the context of disaster response operations to educate civil society in the form of local community groups focused on their town or neighborhood as part of a

broader societal education campaign and incorporate them into planning as civil auxiliaries.

- Create more food and medicine reserves and consider asking citizens to keep several days' worth of supplies in their own residences.
- Continue efforts to harden shelters so they can better withstand missile attacks.

Critical Infrastructure

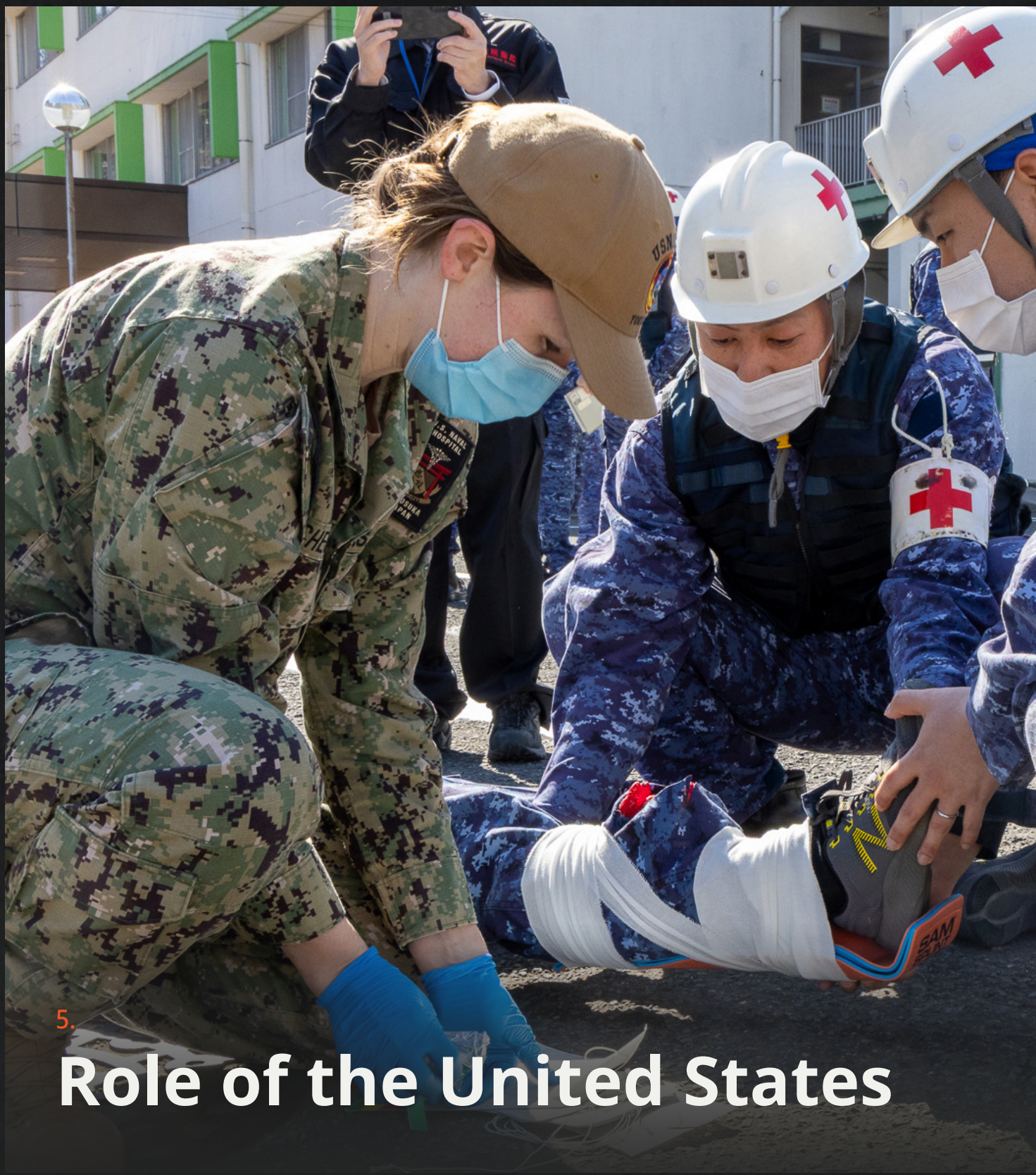
- Improve information sharing between government agencies and private companies responsible for critical infrastructure and facilitate greater sharing among companies. Threat information, best practices, and government planning are examples of areas in which to share.
- Aggressively advance cybersecurity efforts, though the new cybersecurity office is an important step forward. Particularly important is bringing a wide range of private companies into government discussions, especially on technical evaluation, simulations, and other essentials. The government should also shape the broader conversation on active cyber defense and its implications.
- Make the undersea cable infrastructure more robust by increasing redundancy, diversifying routes, and hardening key nodes.
- Increase satellite capacity for communication in the event that undersea cables are disrupted.
- Build more nuclear power plants and maintain existing capabilities to ensure energy supplies during a crisis.
- Expedite the security clearance process for private companies to ensure they are quickly brought into planning and can receive sensitive information. The government can further assist this process by helping establish secure facilities, paying for training and lost personnel time, and otherwise assisting companies that require the use of classified information to assist with resilience-related efforts.
- Harden some critical infrastructure, such as nuclear power plants, whose disruption or destruction would be consequential in a crisis and would risk grave civilian harm.

Will to Fight

- As part of a public education campaign, help citizens gain a sense of agency by letting them know what they can do in the event of a national security crisis. This might include tasks such as assisting with evacuations, providing medical care, and helping the elderly to shelters.
- Communicate to the public the importance of Taiwan to Japan's security to increase the chances the Japanese people will be willing to sacrifice for Taiwan in a crisis.
- Stress in government communications the humanitarian, strategic, and financial costs of capitulation.

Foreign Integration

- Continue to work with the United States and regional allies and partners such as the Republic of Korea to friendshore parts of Japan's industrial base and stockpiles. Any affected country could then draw on these stockpiles in a crisis.[212]
- Increase government-to-government communication with Taiwan in general, focusing on creating realistic expectations about what one can expect from the other in a crisis.
- Increase planning for noncombatant evacuations in Taiwan and China, including coordination with the United States and various private sector companies in Japan.



5.

Role of the United States

Members of Japan's Self-Defense Forces and U.S. Navy personnel conduct triage operations during a joint disaster response drill.
Photo: U.S. Navy/Al Hazama

Japan's strong economy and impressive government capabilities give it tremendous potential capacity for resilience. The U.S.-Japan alliance is an important part of both countries' security, and the United States can assist Japan's resilience efforts in several areas.

U.S. cyber expertise can increase preparedness in Japan, and the United States can provide metadata and share lessons on protecting critical infrastructure and coordinating with the U.S. private sector. Washington can also assist with active cyber defense and missile defense and continue to push Japan to improve secure communications.

The United States can also design and participate in resilience-focused exercises. Many of these should have the gray zone in mind, such as simulating conditions of disinformation and active sabotage of undersea cables and other critical infrastructure as part of conflict-focused scenarios.

Washington can also foster dialogue with Australia, the Republic of Korea, and other key partners (and, more quietly, with Taiwan). Japan will depend on regional allies and the United States for friendshoring and other aspects of resilience.

Perhaps most importantly, the United States and Japan must anticipate various crises beyond a canonical Chinese invasion of Taiwan and establish reasonable expectations for what each would provide in a crisis. This includes areas such as assistance with supply chain resilience, noncombatant evacuations, and basing and access.

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Recommendations for Japan

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