

Strategy Research Project

Strategic Communication in Pursuit of National Interests

by

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN PURSUIT OF NATIONAL INTERESTS

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ABSTRACT

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The United States employs all available instruments of national power to pursue its national interests. Although the military element often plays a hard power role toward that end, it can and must perform a soft power function in operations such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Operation Tomodachi conducted in Japan after the devastating earthquake and tsunami in spring of 2011 provided an opportunity to examine how the military could play a soft power role in support of U.S. national interests in the Asia Pacific region. During the operation, strategic communication played a critical role, enabling military and political agencies to engage with the host nation to achieve cognitive effects among target audiences that helped achieve mission goals and objectives. This paper uses a case study examination of Operation Tomodachi to verify that the strategic communication process, which starts with a deep understanding of audiences and dialog, can foster trust and confidence between the military and key audiences during peacetime. It also demonstrates that it is imperative to employ strategic communication efforts that link tactical objectives with strategic goals in order to achieve a desired endstate that supports U.S. policies.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN PURSUIT OF NATIONAL INTERESTS

Nations have their own national interests, which drive them to secure resources, advance technology, accumulate expertise and build relations. Regardless of their differing strategic objectives or regional and geopolitical environment, nations employ available instruments of national power to pursue their interests. The military is arguably the most powerful instrument of national power, and a nation would employ it in two distinctive manners. Kinetic operations or military demonstrations represent a hard power application of military force; and humanitarian assistance or disaster relief operations belong to soft power approaches. In recent years, the United States has heavily relied on hard power to achieve strategic objectives in theaters of operation such as Iraq or Afghanistan. However, the United States has also used soft power applications of military capabilities to play effective and critical roles in support of national interests during humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the role of strategic communication in the military's execution of soft power missions in support of national interests. First, this paper will review national interests and the instruments of national power and discuss how the military instrument can successfully leverage its capabilities in support of U.S. national interests. The paper then analyzes *National Security Strategy* (NSS) guidance in order to identify feasible soft power applications of military capabilities and examines the effectiveness of such application in an international context. The paper then proceeds to discusses the concept of strategic communication and its role in Operation Tomodachi, a U.S.-Japan disaster relief operation conducted in Japan in the aftermath of the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami disaster. During this discussion, this paper

analyzes the operation's strategic communication efforts by applying the nine principles of strategic communication to examine the operation's effect on the overall U.S.-Japan bilateral relationship. Fourth, this paper examines how proper application of strategic communication could augment the U.S.' ability to pursue its national interests in the region at large. Finally, this paper concludes with recommendations for future operations.

Interests, Instruments and Approach

National Interests. The current *National Security Strategy*, published in May 2010, describes the following enduring national interests: (1) the security of the nation, its citizens, U.S. allies and partner nations; (2) a strong and innovative economy in order to promote opportunity and prosperity; (3) respect for universal values; and (4) an international order to promote, peace, security, and opportunity through cooperation.¹ Although the values and philosophy behind these interests existed since the founding of our nation, the environment in which we pursue them has changed dramatically. The demarcation line between domestic and international issues involving these interests is becoming less distinctive in this globalized and interdependent world. The blurring of this boundary introduces new challenges, which subsequently requires a new strategy capable of achieving a new endstate shaped by these interests.

Instruments of National Power. Traditionally, the U.S. government employs four instruments of national power when pursing its national interests and strategic goals: diplomatic, information, military, and economic (DIME). Diplomacy allows nations to engage in dialogue and interaction with one another in order to promote understanding and trust while bringing solutions to issues and potential challenges. Nations have been

conducting diplomatic efforts since the birth of modern diplomacy brought forth by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.²

Information is an integral part of national power. Not only does this instrument collect and disseminate information critical to national interests, it also employs strategic communication to create cognitive effects among intended audiences in order to shape, influence, and alter decisions and behaviors in ways that support national and military strategy and policies.³

The use of the military as an instrument enables a nation to wage war, which, as Clausewitz described, the continuation of a policy by other means in order for political dialogues to continue.⁴ When used, the military often employs coercive measures; however, it also utilizes other measures such as disaster relief and humanitarian assistance operations as well as training events and exercises in order to pursue strategic goals.

Economic power is becoming more important in a world where trade, economic, and financial transactions cross borders simultaneously; currency, resources, and people operate in a multinational environment. Economic measures could deter, compel, or coerce an antagonist through trade embargos and economic sanctions.⁵ Economic incentives could also promote growth and cooperation through economic partnership and trade liberalization.

A Strategic Approach. *The National Security Strategy* also discusses a strategic approach that the nation must employ in order to shape the environment in ways that are conducive for pursuing our national interests. It emphasizes the importance of using all instruments of national power (DIME) in order to “position the United States to

champion mutual interests among nations and peoples.”⁶ This approach consists of three components: building our foundation, pursuing comprehensive engagement and promoting a just and sustainable international order.⁷

Creating and shaping the environment through a strategic approach requires engaging with different elements and actors within the environment by effectively utilizing the instruments of national power.⁸ Therefore, it warrants due consideration of two different DIME applications in order to take full advantage of their characteristics and strengths as power. Power is the nation’s ability “to influence the behavior of others to get a desired outcome”⁹ and generally uses either one or a combination of two or more elements of DIME in a form of hard power or soft power.

Hard power is a coercive or corrective measure to forcefully achieve a desired endstate. Military and economic instruments often take this form to compel, deter, or destroy adversaries in pursuit of our national interests. It entails a Machiavellistic logic that nothing great is achievable without danger.

Soft power seeks to obtain an outcome through cooperation and attraction; it is a gentler form to encourage adversaries to comply. Traditionally, diplomatic and informational instruments represent soft power. Diplomatic dialogue in conjunction with cultural and educational exchange programs, arts and sciences as well as films and music are all classic forms of American soft power.¹⁰ However, even the military can function as soft power through cooperative engagement programs such as security assistance training and exercises or humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.¹¹

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief as Military Soft Power

Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) is arguably among the most traditional avenues to employ the military in soft power roles. It has the distinctive and effective soft power appeal, and its core element is cooperation. The U.S. military has conducted numerous domestic and international HADR operations as one of its primary missions.¹² Although each state utilizes its National Guard as the primary body to carry out domestic HADR operations, Hurricane Katarina in 2005 serves as a reminder that the U.S. military as a federal body has a critical role in a domestic disaster situation.

In foreign humanitarian assistance operations (FHA), the U.S. military would play a supportive role to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) or Department of State (DOS); its mission would be limited in scope and duration. Such a mission objective would be to relieve or mitigate the consequences of a man-made or natural disaster¹³ by using “rapidly deployable capabilities . . . in supplementing lead relief agencies” abroad.¹⁴ Recent examples of FHA missions conducted by the U.S. military include the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004; the South Asia earthquake in October 2005; the Southern Leyte Philippines mudslide in February 2006; the Java earthquake in May 2006; and the Japanese earthquake and tsunami in March 2011.¹⁵

In the context of national interests, an FHA mission provides a unique opportunity to engage foreign governments and their citizens. Although they are generally portrayed as good will missions, past operations have helped to develop cooperative relationships and foster trust and confidence between the United States and other nations; they helped to bring about a positive change in the public sentiment toward the United States and improve the U.S. ability to pursue its national interests.¹⁶ These positive aspects of

FHA missions, however, depend largely on how the military assesses, plans, executes and evaluates such missions, and one of the ways to improve the probability of success is effective strategic communication (SC). Strategic communication is “essential to sustaining global legitimacy and supporting our policy aims”¹⁷ and is an enabling factor for military HADR operations.

Strategic Communication

Definition, Role and Purpose. The concept of strategic communication is not new. Businesses have been using it in order to promote their products or to create a better image of what they represent through TV commercials, advertisements and public relations activities.¹⁸ Recently, it has also become an important process in the U.S. government. However, it is still somewhat of an abstract concept, and the government and military have debated amongst themselves over differing definitions.

A report by President Obama to the Congress in March 2010 defined SC as ““the synchronization of words and deeds . . . deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences.”¹⁹ The Department of Defense (DOD) has a slightly different version that emphasizes the relationship among actions, DIME and national interests. The DOD defines SC as “efforts to understand and engage key audiences . . . for the advancement of USG interests, policies, and objectives”²⁰ through “coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with and leveraging the actions of all instruments of national power.”²¹

Despite the semantic differences, a common denominator among all definitions is that strategic communication is a *process*. It is a coordinated process to synchronize all the actions “at a critical time and place to accomplish a specific objective”²² in order to produce an “effect on the cognitive dimension” of the target audience.²³ It is “receiver-

centric, rather than sender-centric”; and it is less about what we say but more about “what others hear and understand.”²⁴

Identifying the right audiences is critical to the success of SC. An audience could be any organization or entity, a group of people or even a nation, and sub-audience groups often exist within larger audiences. Moreover, it is also important to understand that peripheral audiences could reside outside an area where actions take place.²⁵ When an intended audience is international, “the totality of message will determine how people abroad relate to”²⁶ the United States. Therefore, a SC process must start “from understanding other countries’ needs, cultures, and peoples and then looking for areas to make common cause,”²⁷ which allow the practitioners “to understand the international repercussions of their actions.”²⁸ Without such understanding, well-intended SC efforts could result in a disastrous effect.

Doctrinal Enablers. While SC consists of many communication functions, the DOD employs three main SC enablers: information operations (IO), public affairs (PA), and defense support to public diplomacy (DSPD). The main purpose of IO is to “to influence the behavior of target audiences” to change their “ability to make decisions,”²⁹ while PA aims to educate and inform the audience by disseminating and communicating “timely and factual unclassified information about DOD activities.”³⁰ The process of DSPD includes DOD activities that facilitate public diplomacy efforts in support of the U.S. government’s foreign policy objectives.³¹ When synchronized, integrated and coordinated with themes, messages, images and actions, these enablers create a synergy that helps to shape an environment that maximizes the SC process to inform and engage key audiences.

Risks and Weakness. In addition to benefits, there are risks when applying SC, including ethical issues. When the aim of SC is to affect the cognitive domain of a selected audience, an inherent risk exists for unintentionally harming the audience or relationships with the audience. Even with a well-intended message, it is still difficult to gauge its second- or third-order of effects that could potentially cause severe harm.

In addition, there is an issue regarding “the legality of disseminating information to foreign audiences that clearly advocates on behalf of U.S. Government policy positions. . . .”³² Such a view regards SC as an officially sanctioned action that could “result in political domination through manipulation of the populace” of a foreign country.³³

Risk is a legitimate concern that warrants a critical review of the SC process by the United States. Credibility of the communication source can deteriorate if audiences perceive a dichotomy between the words and the deeds that the United States intends to communicate. Adherence to a framework that evaluates strategic communication effectiveness mitigates this risk.

Nine Principles of Strategic Communication. At the time of this writing, only a draft SC doctrine exists. *The Principles of Strategic Communication* provides some of the best guidance available for SC practitioners in the DOD community. This document, published in August 2008, is a result of the DOD Strategic Communication Education Summit in March 2008.³⁴ It provides nine specific principles that any strategic communication effort should incorporate:

- Be a leadership-driven communication process
- Be credible in terms of conveying truthfulness and respect
- Conduct dialogue that fosters a multi-faceted exchange of ideas
- Exercise unity of effort with integration and coordination
- Be responsive to the right audiences, with messages that are appropriate for the time and place
- Have deep comprehension of others
- Be pervasive for every action sends a message
- Pursue a results-based approach that links to a desired endstate, and
- Practice continuous analysis, planning, execution, and assessment.³⁵

These principles emphasize that the leadership “must decisively engage and drive the strategic communication process.”³⁶ The document highlights that it is a process, not a collection of individual actions, that determine the success or failure of their strategic communication efforts.

Case Study: Operation Tomodachi

Operation Tomodachi was a disaster relief operation conducted by U.S. forces in Japan after the massive earthquake and tsunami devastated the northeastern region of Japan in March 2011. Operation Tomodachi serves as a useful case study to analyze the effects of SC on a HADR operation in pursuit of U.S. national interests and to ascertain the applicability of military soft power as part of the strategic approach. Using the nine principles of strategic communication as a measurement of effectiveness, this study attempts to determine if Operation Tomodachi created a desirable effect on the audiences’ cognitions and, hence, generated a positive perceptual change among the

audiences toward the United States. The analysis focuses on tasks and operations conducted by the U.S. ground component (comprised of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps), which was the counterpart to the lead component of a Japanese joint task force, Japan Ground Self Defense Force (JGSDF).

Disclaimer. The author participated in this operation; therefore, her experience may represent forms of personal bias that could interfere with her ability to provide objective analysis. To manage these biases, the author relied on other primary sources of information as well as an extensive literature review to supplement the analysis process. In addition, this is a single case study with limited scope; the author's intent is to arrive at a deeper understand of this case. Therefore, the assessments from this case study are neither generalizable to all HADR or FHA missions conducted by the U.S. military nor applicable to the analysis of other cases. Furthermore, data represented in this case study are not proof that this particular operation achieved the desired endstate; rather it indicates an association between outcomes produced by this operation and SC. It requires further study to establish a specific correlation between the data and the achievement of the desired endstate.

Background. A magnitude 9.0 of earthquake struck Tohoku Region of Japan at 2:43 p.m. (local time) on 11 March 2011.³⁷ A massive tsunami generated by the earthquake ravaged the surrounding coastal area, destroying port facilities, train tracks and bridges as well as schools, hospitals and residential houses, claiming thousands of lives. On 12 March, the tsunami-induced loss of electricity triggered a hydrogen explosion at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, further compounding the disaster.³⁸ The majority of casualty and damages wrecked three prefectures (Miyagi,

Iwate, and Fukushima) within the six-prefecture Tohoku region; however, the overwhelming power of this calamity inflicted destruction throughout the entire region and beyond.

Immediately after the disaster struck Japan, the United States began providing assistance to the country. President Obama made a statement on 11 March 2011 that the “friendship and alliance between our two nations is unshakeable, and only strengthens our resolve to stand with the people of Japan. . . .”³⁹ In addition, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) announced that it was dispatching a 75-member Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to assess the situation and to provide support as needed.⁴⁰ On 15 March, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton met with Japanese Foreign Minister Takeaki Matsumoto to discuss bilateral cooperation on the disaster situation. She expressed the U.S. “solidarity with the government and people of Japan” and that “the world comes together to support Japan in its hour of need.”⁴¹ On 22 March, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates approved the initial amount of \$35 million in Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid (OHDACA) funding for the U.S. disaster relief efforts in Japan.⁴² Additionally, on 17 April, Secretary Clinton announced that the United States and Japan would create a public-private partnership to assist Japan with rebuilding the communities devastated by the disaster.⁴³

Japanese Efforts. Japan Self Defense Forces (JSDF) reactions were swift. They established a Response Headquarters in less than 10 minutes following the earthquake and set up Joint Task Force Tohoku (JTF-TH) on 14 March 2011 at Camp Sendai, Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture. LTG Eiji Kimizuka, Commander, Northeastern Army, Japan Ground Self Defense Force, assumed command of the joint task force. The next day,

JSDF activated 700 members of its reserve forces, and subsequently they mobilized and deployed 106,000 JSDF members into the region. These forces rescued 4,789 persons on 13 March alone and, during the course of their operations, provided medical support to 23,370 persons, delivered 30,195t of water, provided 4,483,245 meals and operated bath facilities for 1,044,275 persons.⁴⁴

U.S. Forces Operations. The U.S. Pacific Command established Joint Support Force (JSF), commanded by ADM Patrick Walsh, U.S. Pacific Fleet, and LTG Burton Field, U.S. Force Japan, as his deputy. Its mission was to assist JSDF with their disaster relief and humanitarian assistance efforts as part of the U.S. HADR operation “Operation Tomodachi.” The US Army Japan (USARJ) and the III Marine Expeditionary Force on Okinawa (III MEF) formed the Joint Force Land Component Command (JFLCC). Within two weeks, the U.S. committed 20 naval ships, 140 aircraft and 19,703 personnel, delivering 227 tons of relief supplies to the affected areas.⁴⁵ In addition, the Chemical Biological Incident Response Force (CBIRF) deployed to Japan in order to assist the Japanese government to cope with the nuclear situation at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant. The 155-person team arrived in Japan on 3 April, which gained widespread attention and created many questions for audiences in and around Japan.⁴⁶

Analysis of Strategic Communication Effects

Strategic Communication was a significant part of the overall operational efforts during Operation Tomodachi. Although the disaster resulted in devastating human loss and suffering, it also presented an unprecedented opportunity for the United States and Japan to demonstrate the significance of its bilateral alliance. At the same time, the operation was subject to unforeseeable situations, where a simple mistake could

severely damage the bilateral relationship. Therefore, it was imperative that the United States make concerted efforts to ensure “the synchronization of words and deeds.”⁴⁷

The theme of this operation was three-fold. First, the United States had a treaty requirement to meet the security alliance obligation. Article 3 of *the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America* states that the two countries shall cooperate “by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid . . . whenever the security of Japan or international peace and security in the Far East is threatened.”⁴⁸ Second, it was a stated mission of USARJ to cooperate with JGSDF to face and counter a wide variety of contingencies. Third, as an ally and a friend, the United States desired to conduct a good will mission to alleviate the suffering of the affected population.

The U.S. public affairs guidance (PAG) included the overarching message for this operation. It stated that the “Japanese Government has requested assistance from the United States” and the U.S. forces are “poised to help as much as possible” to “minimize human suffering” using available assets to “include a wide range of equipment and air, sea, and ground capabilities and expertise.”⁴⁹ At the same time, the PAG cautioned against “publicizing assets that are not used” and that all personnel must fully understand that the U.S. forces were not the lead but supporting the Japanese government and Japan Self Defense Forces’ efforts.⁵⁰

The PAG alluded that the United States utilized its military as a defense support to public diplomacy in order to highlight the strong bilateral relationship between the nations and to show the readiness and availability of the U.S. to assist its ally in any way possible. In addition, the theme and messages established a link for the operation

to the desired endstate: to highlight the strategic importance of the U.S.-Japan security alliance. Therefore, Operation Tomodachi had an implied task to demonstrate a “global function in which the alliance [was] . . . conceived as a means to advance broader global strategic interests.”⁵¹

Generally, strategic communication involves many communication functions; however, the analysis below focuses on the public affairs aspect of Operation Tomodachi. In particular, it centers on the activities of the Joint Force Land Component executed by USARJ as the counterpart to JGSDF. The analysis uses the nine principles of strategic communication to evaluate how participants executed the operational tasks and assess if the operational outcome contributed to the overall national security interests of the United States.

Leadership-Driven. On 15 March, MG Michael Harrison, Commanding General, USARJ, visited Camp Sendai to meet with LTG Eiji Kimizuka, Commander, JTF-TH. This visit occurred only four days after the earthquake, and frequent aftershocks interrupted the leadership meeting. The intent of this meeting was for MG Harrison to express his professional and personal support for LTG Kimizuka, in addition to ascertaining the needs and requirements of JTF-TF and the types of assistance that USARJ could provide. After the meeting, LTG Kimizuka arranged an aerial tour of the coastal area affected by tsunami, which provided MG Harrison an opportunity to witness firsthand the magnitude of devastation and the daunting task confronting his counterpart.

This first meeting was symbolic in nature rather than substantive; however, it laid the groundwork for the subsequent U.S. operations and bilateral cooperation. In the

ensuing days, MG Harrison made trips to the area regularly in order to assess the situation on the ground, to discuss any issues with his counterpart, but most importantly to demonstrate leadership-driven SC efforts. The visible and cooperative efforts of these leaders set the tone for SC in the operation.

Be Credible. On 14 March, USARJ Disaster Assessment Team (DAT) deployed to Camp Sendai.⁵² The main mission for the team was three-fold:

- Assess the scope and scale of the devastation
- Establish a Bilateral Crisis Action Team-Forward (BCAT) with the JTF-TH at their HQ
- Provide daily reports back to USARJ HQ at Camp Zama to inform the U.S. leadership of the unfiltered assessment of the situation on the ground so that the U.S. could execute required relief operations in support of JTF-TH.⁵³

The DAT demonstrated the credibility of U.S. commitment not only through its expeditious deployment to the area but also by putting experiences from the past exercise into action. In February 2010, a USAJ DAT participated in the Northeastern Army's disaster relief command post exercise with Miyagi and Iwate Prefectures. During the exercise, the team learned the Japanese command and control mechanism for a disaster situation and established a professional network among HADR practitioners.⁵⁴ This experience allowed the DAT members to present themselves as truthful and respectful, thereby enhancing the credibility of the U.S. forces during the real-world disaster.

Multi-Faceted Dialogue. The USARJ DAT and the forward element of III MEF integrated themselves into the BCAT-Forward at Camp Sendai. At the onset, there were

some misunderstandings with regard to the operational and administrative aspects of the BCAT. Some were due to the unknowns owing to the disaster, but others were attributable to different communication styles and cultural mindsets. Because these units worked side-by-side, however, it was relatively easy to engage in direct conversations on issues and challenges. When a situation was sensitive, the DAT and III MEF reported to their respective HQs to seek guidance or to request their leadership to engage with their Japanese counterparts. Neither forward elements nor their leadership were able to solve all the issues; however, daily interactions facilitated exchanges of opinions and more importantly provided insights into areas that needed improving for future operations.

Unity of Effort. Unity of effort was one of the most challenging aspects of this operation. Because Operation Tomodachi was not a military operation but entailed extensive interagency coordination, the complicated coordination processes sometimes delayed the delivery of needed supplies and support, possibly creating a perception that unity of effort was lacking. Regardless of efforts put forth by participants, the bureaucratic mechanism required for such a massive operation hindered smooth execution of tasks. This issue was mainly, however, at the tactical and operational level, which helped to keep the negative impact on the strategic level at minimum.

Be Responsive. The JFLCC executed tactical operations based on specific requests and needs by JTF-TH. One example is Sendai Airport recovery efforts. The tsunami water crippled this major regional airport, depriving military and civilian organizations of a logistical hub to bring in aid supplies into the area. From 19 to 30 March 2011, members of JGSDF and U.S. forces along with representatives from the

Japanese government and civilian organizations worked together to remove debris and restore runways in order to turn the airport operational as soon as possible.⁵⁵ As a result, the airport reopened for commercial flights on 13 April, with the first passenger jet arriving at 8:00 am, by which time U.S. military personnel had withdrawn from the site to another location in order to continue executing other requests.⁵⁶

Another request resulted in a mission that had a direct impact on the affected population: Operation Field Day. It was a school clean-up operation based on a request by LTG Kimizuka.⁵⁷ Teams comprised of USARJ and III MEF cleaned 12 schools in the most devastated areas from 30 March 2011 through 19 April 2011 so that children could start a new academic year without a further delay.⁵⁸

Understanding. The USARJ have five field-grade officers, each working as a liaison officer at the five Regional Armies of JGSDF. These officers are in close contact with their counterparts on a daily basis, learning JGSDF's tactical and operational issues as well as its organizational culture, tradition and history. They provide critical input and invaluable knowledge to the Commanding General, USARJ, so that he can make informed decisions on issues that would affect the host nation and the overall bilateral relationship. During Operation Tomodachi, these liaison officers functioned as critical nodes, linking JFLCC and JTF-TH, filling knowledge gaps on respective capabilities and resources, and helping the U.S. personnel to better understand key audiences, their needs and requirements as well as potential issues.

In addition, regular bilateral engagement activities conducted by USARJ such as reciprocal unit visits, tactical and operational training events as well as annual field training and command post exercises paid significant dividends during the operation.

Professional and personal relationships formed through such activities prior to the disaster facilitated the U.S. personnel's ability to gain a deeper appreciation for their counterparts and assisted them in tailoring U.S. servicemembers' actions and behaviors to meet the social and organizational norms of the host nation.

Be Pervasive. The sheer magnitude of the disaster drew media attention from all over the world. USARJ took advantage of this opportunity to tell stories of the U.S. commitment to the bilateral relationship. In addition, through social media such as USARJ Web site and Facebook, USARJ kept in contact with the Japanese public to inform them of the U.S. activities and other relevant information. Moreover, MG Harrison invited Mayor Mikio Endo of Zama City, which is home to the USARJ HQ, to the Command Center so that Mayor Endo could observe the U.S. activities and obtain the first-hand knowledge of USARJ's capabilities to assist Japan in a disaster situation.

Results-Based. Tasks and activities by USARJ focused on delivering results that would lead to a desired endstate. From personal meetings by the USARJ Commanding General with his counterparts and request-based operations to various media engagements, the intent of activities was to strengthen the bilateral security alliance.

At the end of April, when USRJ units began to reposition from forward operations to home station for re-set and preparation for future operations, the USARJ leadership carefully developed an SC message with the endstate in mind. The core of the message to the host nation was that the U.S. reposition would not mean retrograde operations; USARJ would remain ready to provide support for JTF-TH as required; and the bilateral alliance and relationship would remain strong.⁵⁹

Continuous. USARJ leadership made continuous efforts to evaluate the SC impact. During the daily situation report, U.S. Army liaison officers working at JGSDF Regional Army headquarters reported the counterparts' reactions, comments or requests regarding the U.S. tasks and activities; and USARJ public affairs officers evaluated host nation media coverage and commentary on Operation Tomodachi.

In addition, USARJ leadership conducted an Interim After Action Review (AAR) on 8 April to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the Operation and make adjustments where needed. On 4 May, immediately after the reposition, USARJ held a final AAR. The Commander's intent for the final AAR was, among others, to "capture lessons learned and recommendations for improvement for any facet of our operations" and to empower "topic leads to discuss and nest their issues and recommendations with the other sections or units involved."⁶⁰ Furthermore, USARJ and JGSDF held a bilateral AAR on 7 December 2011. Main discussion topics were bilateral coordination between BCAT Sendai and JFLCC-FWD, information sharing, procedural differences and expectation management as well as Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement related issues.⁶¹ All of them were critical areas for the operation's endstate in terms of bilateral relationship and security alliance.

Strategic Communication Effect in Support of National Interests

The ultimate intent of a strategic approach described in the National Security Strategy is to inform and influence the way foreign "publics interpret . . . U.S. values, motivations, and qualities."⁶² Depending on how audiences view U.S. actions, it "can create an enabling or a disabling environment."⁶³ The SC effort through Operation Tomodachi, therefore, provided a critical opportunity to make an impact to the host

nation's perception toward the United States, which in turn could bring about a significant impact on the U.S. national security interests.

Host nation media have reported some positive changes in attitudes of host nation populations. Overwhelming numbers of Japanese people were appreciative of the U.S. efforts to assist Japan in order to address this catastrophic disaster. Even among residents on Okinawa, where an anti-U.S. forces sentiment is usually strong, there were signs that empathy for U.S. Marines was emerging.⁶⁴ In addition, partially due to the U.S. contribution during the disaster, the government of Japan approved a recommended level of Host Nation Support and the Special Measures Act (188.1 billion yen or approximately 2.02 billion dollars) that would provide financial support for the U.S. forces stationed in Japan.⁶⁵

Some perceptual changes even took place in the relationship between U.S. forces and JSDF. A general perception held by JSDF members about U.S. Marine Corps was "rough and bold"⁶⁶ mainly due to the expeditionary nature of their operations. However, dedication and professionalism exhibited by Marine Corps members who participated in one of the clean-up operations was nothing but contrary to the perception.⁶⁷ The images, words and actions associated with the delicate work they engaged in preserving family photos and treasured items out of masses of debris matched to the U.S. mission to assist Japan and to alleviate pain and suffering. As exemplified by this Marine Corps engagement, the U.S. forces left an image of compassion and friendship, reinforcing the desire to further strengthen bilateral relationships.⁶⁸

There were also negative reports about U.S. forces. A perception existed that Operation Tomodachi was a way for the United States to pursue the national interests in the region⁶⁹, describing the operation as an opportunity for the United States to demonstrate its military might toward China and Russia.⁷⁰ Moreover, some critics interpreted the approved Host Nation Support as a payment for Operation Tomodachi⁷¹ and that the “friendship”⁷² would cost Japan approximately 188.1 billion yen annually for the next five years.⁷³

Nine months after the disaster, the Japanese government conducted a survey on how Japanese people viewed the United States. The result showed that 82 percent of those surveyed felt favorable or somewhat favorable toward the United States. This represented a 2.1-point improvement since the previous survey conducted the year before. The government credited Operation Tomodachi for the improved rating.⁷⁴

Considering SC as a process, the national survey result is arguably the most significant change. The relationship between the United States and Japan had experienced difficult times due to the SMA negotiations and the U.S. base realignment within Japan. Although no proof exists to substantiate the direct correlation between the operation’s SC efforts and the perceptual changes, Operation Tomodachi contributed to bringing about a positive cognitive effect on important audiences, fostering a favorable environment for the U.S. presence in the country and the region.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Operation Tomodachi successfully achieved the operational objectives to meet the security obligation, to execute the stated mission and to conduct a good will mission. Moreover, it provided ample lessons learned and opportunities for both the United States and Japan to assess and evaluate readiness for a future HADR operation. The

SC efforts of this operation also highlighted opportunities for improvement in order for the United States to execute more effective SC operations in the future.

For Future Operations. Required assistance and needs differ depending on the conditions of the affected country. Many of the U.S. FHA operations in the past took place in countries where disasters not only destroyed social infrastructures but also paralyzed government functions. For Operation Tomodachi, the Japanese government, despite the scale and magnitude of the disaster, was intact and able to conduct a disaster relief operation of its own.

Some members of JGSDF described U.S. forces as “eager to offer their assistance” and it was “extremely painful” when they were not able to satisfy their “enthusiasm in a timely fashion.”⁷⁵ When executing a FHA operation, it would be counterproductive if the United States appeared too assertive and too willing to help. As mentioned in the bilateral AAR session, it is critically important to continue exchanging information in order to understand capabilities and procedural differences between the forces so that both parties can appropriately manage expectations and avoid appearing too enthusiastic to help. In the future, bilateral exercises should include a FHA mission that focuses on coordination and communication procedures and mechanisms vis-à-vis a presumed host nation in order to provide appropriate assistance in a manner and fashion that the host nation desires.

Draft Doctrine. Strategic communication is essential in conducting any type of mission during peacetime, conflicts, war, or a disaster. However, it starts with a continuous effort to build a relationship during peacetime since it would be a challenge to establish an effective process to engage and affect strategic audiences when a

situation is antagonistic or unstable. Operation Tomodachi demonstrated the importance of this point through its leadership-driven dialogue and liaison officers' deep understanding of the host nation that had begun long before the disaster struck Japan.

However, the current draft doctrine for strategic communication (at the time of this writing) does not sufficiently address the critical foundation on which strategic communication efforts should take place. It is essential to understand SC as a process rather than a single act or a message. In order to begin "the process of understanding how . . . key target foreign audiences . . ."⁷⁶ interpret the U.S. policies, strategies and actions, however, it is imperative to invest time and resources first in relationship building in order to cultivate trust and confidence in each other's capabilities, strengths and procedures. The relationship building effort must be the starting point of the SC process.

Operation Tomodachi. Operation Tomodachi was a success in that it provided lessons learned and opportunities for future SC efforts. First, it exemplified that SC is a process of daily engagement and dialogue that can come to fruition during a dire situation. Second, it highlighted that request-based and result-oriented actions would help diminish the say-do gap and establish credibility. Third, it demonstrated that pervasive and responsive actions could facilitate a positive perceptual change among key audiences but concurrently it could encourage unilateral interpretation and misunderstanding of the actions by subordinate audiences. Fourth, it established that operational objectives and tasks, depending on how well executed, could have a significant effect on larger strategic goals. Finally, it illustrated the successful use of military force as soft power in a way that attracts foreign audiences to engage.

Operation Tomodachi validated that “the lines between strategic, operational, and tactical are blurred beyond distinction”⁷⁷ and SC is an enabler to support actions, policies and strategies that are in U.S. national interests.

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