# Japan's Worst-case Scenarios: The Nine Blind spots

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After RJIF's first project, "**The Independent Investigation Commission on the Fukushima Nuclear Accident**", it was evident that Japan's crisis management system was vulnerable. Therefore we initiated the "**Crisis Management Project**" in May 2012. We focused on 9 crises that Japan may face in the near future such as natural disasters, terrorism and military clashes and evaluated the current system's issues.

In the project, we had 11 scholars and specialists determine the crisis management blind spots by looking at worst case scenarios per theme. Furthermore, we wanted to determine the process that would be taken if such crises were to occur. We had five researchers and experts conduct an inter-disciplinary analysis of the cases from five different viewpoints (the legislative system, state-citizen cooperation, external strategy, government and communication) and suggest necessary counter-crisis measures. On the occasion of publication, we had editors conduct a rewrite based on the established scenario from the discussions between the authors of each topic and research members.

## Project Summary

The 9 crises we focused on as case studies for this project range from a variety of topics such as natural disasters, terrorism and military clashes listed below (details on the page 2-3):

- Senkaku Incident
- Japan Government Bond plunge
- Tokyo Metropolitan Earthquake
- Cyber terrorism
- Pandemic
- Energy Crisis
- Collapse of North Korea
- Nuclear Terrorism
- Weakened Population

We had experts well versed in each topic (university professors, think tank researchers, specialists and journalists) investigate past crisis management phenomena as well as government responses. Through thorough interviews with government officials and debates we established the mechanisms, triggers and development of crises and created the basis of a "worst-case scenario".

Each scenario is neither a future prediction nor a highly probable situation. It is merely an imaginative thought process of what would happen if the crisis did develop in the worst manner possible. In the investigation of the Fukushima Nuclear Accident, we saw that within the crisis management process, the risks were only explained by 'unforeseen circumstances'. Instead of merely thinking that everything is just an imagination and that it is highly unlikely that it would actually happen, we need to analyze and determine whether or not the current system can withstand a crisis.

In terms of the analysis of the crisis management system, we administered an interdisciplinary analysis of the 9 worst-case scenarios from 5 different viewpoints (the legislative system, state-citizen cooperation, external strategy, government and communication). Through this we were able to identify the problems and causes and suggest specific counter-measures to solve each problem.

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## The 9 worst case scenarios

**1) "Senkaku Incident - the Unexpected Ending to the Defenses and Offenses over the islands"**
Aiming at the Senkaku, China strengthens their offensive capabilities. In order to protect their territory, Japan needs to prepare for a fight that requires collective effort; it requires not only military force but also efforts in diplomacy, politics, economics and information transmission. When defeated, it will dramatically change the order and power dynamics of East Asia.

**2) "Japan Government Bond plunge - the 'boiled frog' risk facing Japan"**
Japan's government debt has soared to more than 200% of the GDP. With only 10% consumption tax, it is merely a drop in the bucket. Nevertheless, due to the competitiveness of the manufacturing industry and the enormity of the economy size, a Southern European type of collapse can be avoided but as a result what will be waiting…?

**3) "Tokyo Metropolitan Megaquakes - collapse of an amazon-type society"**
The probability that an earthquake will directly hit Tokyo within 30 years is more than 70% in some areas. There are preventative measures being taken as a result of the lessons from the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and the Great East Japan Earthquake. However, the idea is merely a "convenient scenario"; it does not assume the worst and therefore it is questionable whether the measures can be effectively demonstrated.

**4) "Cyber terrorism - targeting Urban Infrastructure"**
Apparently, some countries such as Israel, North Korea and China are collecting hackers and creating a cyber attack force in secret. A new war targeting the lifeline, which will paralyze critical infrastructures has begun.

**5) "Pandemic - the Day the Doctors Disappeared"**
In the midst of a raging unknown virus, the medical field will face the crisis of the collapse with a lack of medical staff and equipment. The clue to solving the problem will be whether decisions can be made about who should die first-.

**6) "Energy Crisis - an Invisible Chain of Crises Beginning from the Hormuz Strait Blockade"**
Forty years has passed since the oil crisis due to the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Although there have not been much cry for a review of Japan's energy strategy, there is a growing dependence on the Middle East. The situation where a disturbance in the Straits could lead to a halt in all of Japan is continuing.

**7) "Collapse of North Korea -the Three Anti-nuclear Principles, Japan being forced to make a decision"**
The rise of nationalism, caused by the unification of North and South, stemming from the Korean Peninsula, will spread through East Asia like a domino effect. The forbidden scenario of a nuclear-armed Japan will become a real possibility and this region's international situation will immediately destabilize.

**8) "Nuclear Terrorism - lessons from the 3.11 Incident"**
Nuclear bombs have directly attacked Kasumigaseki and Nagatacho, the two main centers of Japan and government officials including the Prime Minister are all dead. What are the remaining survivors supposed to do at that moment? They should seriously focus on the training based on the worst conceivable situation but…

**9) "Weakened Population - 2050, The Day Youths become Terrorists"**
Gradually but surely, the decreasing population will undermine Japan. Unless action is taken as soon as possible, after a few decades the Japanese society will be dominated by despair. However, to do so we must be prepared to give up the Japanese view of society, family and marriage.

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## Part 2: Analyses of the Scenarios

### 1) Legislation

The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Accident caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake has made clear that there are no effective measures in place when a major crisis occurs because of flaws of the legal system. Under these circumstances, we will analyze the 9 scenarios and investigate the systematic challenges.

### 2) Public-private cooperation

Focusing on the public and private sectors that play an important role in risk governance, we will clarify the problems with the current system and suggest possible improvements.

### 3) International Strategy

Crisis management is required to have defensive capabilities, the legislation needed to use these forces and maintain policy organizations. In addition, the political leader must have the ability to manage politics domestically through crisis communication to society as well as have strategic communication skills to pursue policies that are favorable to one's own country in the international environment.

### 4) Kantei (Prime Minister's Office)

Under a major security threat or a large-scale disaster that crosses multiple areas of jurisdiction of the authorities, the main center for crisis management will go beyond the framework of the inter-minsterial and will be held at the Prime Minister's Office. However, the scenario points out several challenges that arise from the current government's functioning system.

### 5) Communication

Communication is a means to bring a situation to the desired direction. From the perspective of "Risk Communication" and "Crisis Communication", who's purposes are to manage risk and manage crisis respectively, in light of the challenges that emerge from the scenarios we will give suggestions to prepare for the future.

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