Appropriate Assistance[*]

Responses to Offers of Foreign Support Following

the Great Hanshin Earthquake

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Within an hour of the violent earthquake that devastated significant portions of Japan's Hanshin region (between Kobe and Osaka) on January 17, 1995, offers of assistance from foreign governments and organizations began to flood into various public offices both in the Hanshin area and in Tokyo. The responses by Japanese officials to these offers were widely reported by national and international media as being disorganized, and even inept (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1996; *Aftershocks in Japan*, 1996). Furthermore, many editorials declared that these government responses were evidence of Japan's enduring insularity and determination to avoid foreign obligations, even in a time of crisis (Yomiuri, 1996, 163). Some critics even argued that with more timely and better coordinated responses, fewer lives would have been lost, and destruction could have been minimized (The Japan Times, 1995, 24).

There is no question about the disorientation and lack of leadership immediately following the earthquake. Criticisms have been leveled at virtually all government authorities from the Prime Minister to local emergency personnel. However, unlike residents in the Tokyo region, most in the Hanshin area had generally not expected a quake of that magnitude, so adequate preparations had not been made, either by the authorities or private citizens. Furthermore, the bureaucratic style of governing in Japan tends to emphasize strict adherence to procedures, so it is not surprising that such a major disaster taxed the decision-making process beyond its capabilities.

Because of the earthquake experience, efforts are being made to revise emergency procedures and prepare improved communication and supply options. Whether these recent efforts will result in a better response in the event of a future disaster will depend on how well public and private groups, both in Japan and abroad, are able to follow through with substantive changes in their modes of operation.

This paper will examine some of the ways in which a bureaucratic style of decision-making affected the success of the Japanese response to the disaster in general, as well as to offers of assistance from foreign groups. In addition, the types of assistance which were offered will be evaluated and their "appropriateness" for the situation will be assessed. If there is some question about the utility of a form of aid, offering it may simply add to the bureaucratic chaos in an emergency and exacerbate an already difficult situation. My contention is that many of the offers of assistance from foreign parties were not made with a clear understanding, either of the Japanese decision-making process or of the usefulness of the service or commodity being offered. In fact, the foreign groups simply added another dimension to the spectrum of bureaucratic responses to the tragic disaster. Any errors or misunderstandings by the international assistance providers must not obfuscate the need for revamping the crisis management system in Japan, but groups eager to offer aid must also understand that even well-intentioned gestures of help can add to the chaos after a disaster, and perhaps threaten friendly relations.

Bureaucratic Procedures and Expectations―the Gap

Although all governments must rely on bureaucracies to accomplish the complex tasks that modern states require, most observers of the Japanese system agree that its bureaucrats have relatively more power than their counterparts in other parts of the world (Campbell, 1989; Drifte, 1996; Johnson, 1995; Miyamoto, 1994; etc.). Japanese bureaucrats, especially those in the national ministries who attain their posts only after qualifying through extremely competitive examinations and selection procedures, have generally been regarded as capable and effective, both in creating and implementing public policies. Therefore, many Japanese citizens assumed that disaster management plans had been formulated and approved by relevant authorities for all regions and for most types of contingencies. After all, Japan is subject to regular earthquakes, and much research has been focused on the means of minimizing damage and injuries. In fact, Kobe and other cities in the Hanshin area did have emergency plans which included earthquake response procedures. Unfortunately, these plans proved to be far from adequate, and the efforts by government officials to innovate in the face of disaster were not seen as successful by their constituents.

Yet Kobe is certainly not the first place to have experienced government dysfunction at the time of crisis. In her study of public disaster management, Schneider (1995) evaluates government relief efforts according to the gap between existing bureaucratic norms (disaster contingency plans and procedures) and "emergent norms," or crisis reaction expectations which develop among the victims. When the gap is small, officials are responding appropriately to the needs of the affected population. In contrast, a large gap in norms indicates that government performance and public expectations are far apart, and media publicity will likely reinforce citizen perceptions of shortcomings in relief efforts. Schneider argues (p. 56) that there are three factors which affect the size of this gap:

    (1) the magnitude of the disaster
    (2) the degree of governmental preparedness, and
    (3) the prevailing orientations of the affected population .

In order to assess the performance of the Japanese authorities in responding to the domestic crisis, as well as the offers of foreign assistance, I will use Schneider's three factors as criteria to determine whether circumstances present after the earthquake created a significant gap between bureaucratic norms and citizens' expectations.

Magnitude of the Disaster

By any means of measurement, the Great Hanshin Earthquake must be classified as a major disaster. As of September 1996, the official death toll from the tragedy has been listed as 6,310 people (Last 2 missing..., 1996). Nearly half a million households were affected by destruction or damage to their homes and workplaces, so costs are mounting beyond ten trillion yen, or nearly one percent of national assets (Miyamoto, 1996). In Kobe, a metropolis of 1.4 million people, half of the central city was completely destroyed (p. 6). Electricity was cut off to 1 million consumers, water was cut off to 1.27 million households, and 478,000 telephone lines were severed (International Federation, 1996, 71). Although most utilities were restored to remaining homes by the end of April (three and one half months later), the initial impact of service loss was severe. Even people whose homes were still standing suddenly had to cope with lack of water, telephone communication, and other utilities. Much of the damage in the older Nagata ku neighborhood of Kobe was caused by raging fires which spread quickly though the dense settlement of aging wooden structures, fueled by broken gas lines and damaged water mains which left firefighters without the means to stop the inferno.

The Great Hanshin Earthquake would have been a daunting event to live through even if the

buildings, roads, and train tracks had been built to withstand a quake of its magnitude (7.2 on the Richter scale). Although most temblors in Japan move the ground about 20 centimeters in a horizontal motion, on January 17th, 1995 the ground moved up to four meters, not just horizontally, but vertically, and in a twisting motion all at once (International Federation, 1996, 68, 69). Because the quake struck before six a.m., many people were still in bed where they were hit or crushed by falling furniture. However, even those who were standing at the time were thrown off their feet and were unable to get back up until the shaking stopped.

Degree of Governmental Preparedness

The Great Hanshin Earthquake certainly qualifies as a disaster of the highest magnitude, but how well had the authorities planned for such a crisis? The second factor identified by Schneider as affecting the gap between bureaucratic norms and public expectations is the degree of government preparedness. As mentioned earlier, the various levels of government responsible for the Hanshin area did have crisis management plans, but Kobe was particularly complacent in its preparation for a large earthquake. According to the Japanese quake intensity scale of one to seven, levels one through six are considered manageable, but level seven signifies a seismic event in which 30 percent of the traditional wooden structures in the affected area are destroyed (International Federation, 1996, 67). After damage assessment of the Hanshin Earthquake, its intensity was officially declared as level 7, but Kobe's crisis management plan had included preparations for no more than a level 5 quake. Nearby Kyoto had planned for an intensity 7 earthquake, while Osaka based its emergency plans on a possible level 6 quake. Because of Kobe's overly optimistic predictions, its disaster plan had not included the construction of even one quake-resistant fire cistern (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1996, 223).

Many of Kobe's citizens and leaders were confident that a large earthquake would not occur in their area, but a number of scientists and government workers had been warning authorities for many years that conditions were ripe for a large quake in that region. However, whether it was because of disbelief in the possibility of such an earthquake, the lack of funding, different government priorities, or resistance by residents to redevelopment projects, serious preparations had not been made for a truly devastating earthquake and the resulting fires (pp. 220―223).

Response to the Domestic Situation

One of the major problems posed in the aftermath of the great Hanshin earthquake was the failure of technology designed for response in just such disasters. Telephone communication was severely restricted by damaged wires and relay stations, and even the sophisticated satellite communications system established in Hyogo prefecture (where the Hanshin area is located) four years earlier to send disaster reports to government offices nationwide was soon rendered useless. The satellite system required electricity which was an early casualty of the disaster, and even the emergency generators were short-lived solutions because they depended on water-cooling made impossible by severed supply pipes. To make matters worse, all four of the specialists in charge of the communication system were victims of the disaster themselves, and were busy trying to assist family members buried in the debris, thus preventing them from reporting to work (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1996, 59). In addition to the communication problems, transport was drastically curtailed as a result of damage to the primary highways and train systems that had been designated as rescue and supply routes. Of course remaining roads were soon clogged with automobiles and trucks carrying people desperate to move in or out of the affected area and as a result, access by emergency and relief vehicles became virtually impossible.

Communication and transportation difficulties served to compound the problems inherent in bureaucratic decision-making. For example, police and fire departments around the affected area

were unaware of the extent of damage, and were busy dealing with crises in their immediate vicinities. Even the prefectural office could not determine the magnitude of the disaster because only isolated reports were received via damaged telephone lines. The governor was reluctant to initiate any large-scale rescue plan until the damage could be assessed, and the Self Defense Forces (SDF) could not be deployed without a formal request from the governor (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1996, 60－61). Some news and scientific agency helicopters were able to take photographs of the damaged area, but for one reason or another, the necessary information was not relayed to the appropriate authorities. Many decisions to take action were made based on images being broadcast on television (p. 104).

As in the United States, national-level response to disasters in Japan depends upon requests from the state/prefecture-level. For example, the Self Defense Forces (SDF) offered the use of helicopters for aerial spraying when it became obvious that the lack of water was preventing success in fighting Nagata-ku's fires. However, because of suspicion towards the SDF and uncertainty about using the water-dumping technique in an urban setting, the local disaster authorities deliberated until it was too late for the spraying to have any effect. There is still some question as to whether far more could have been done to contain those fires if all relevant agencies had been willing and able to work with each other (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1996, 156, 157).

The Japanese National Land Agency's Disaster Prevention Bureau was to coordinate the relief efforts of 23 ministries and agencies represented in the Emergency Disaster Management Headquarters, but with the lack of communication among the involved groups, criticism began to mount. In fact, by the third day of the disaster, complaints of government ineffectiveness were becoming so vociferous that the Chief and Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretaries decided to supersede the Disaster Prevention Bureau's oversight with the creation of a new Crisis Response Headquarters led by the prime minister himself (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1996, 214, 215). Even so, Prime Minister Murayama's administration came under heavy fire, particularly from opposition party members and the media, for the delays and inadequate response to the earthquake crisis (pp. 216, 217). Because of Japan's traditional reliance on the bureaucrats in Tokyo (Orr, 1990, 11), political leaders generally did not have the independent sources of information or power to take action in the absence of directives from the ministries. Although crises generally demand more concentration of power for the sake of expedience, the relatively weak Prime Minister failed to grasp the opportunity for leadership and deferred to the dominant bureaucratic reliance on standard operating procedures which, in this case, were not adequate for the emergency situation.

Qualifications must be made, however, before recommending stronger executive powers for disaster management. As dramatic events, disasters can offer tempting backdrops for political grandstanding. The broadcast media are often partners in utilizing disasters for political purposes. Wamsley and Schroeder (1996) discuss the Bush administration's response to televised criticism when local and FEMA officials were unable to react as swiftly as expected in the wake of Hurricane Andrew. By sending his representative (Secretary of Transportation, Andrew Card) to "take charge," President Bush received much positive media coverage, but the change in leadership midstream caused more disruptions than benefits in disaster relief.

Response to Offers from Abroad

As it attempted to manage the disaster, the Japanese government was widely criticized for its handling of foreign assistance offers. Beginning only minutes after the earthquake, these offers began to arrive from major powers, as well as from less obvious sources such as Madagascar and Romania (Aftershocks in Japan, 1995). In all, 76 such offers were received and the government ultimately accepted 41 of them (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1996, 207). Furthermore, Kobe alone received goods from 77 organizations in 24 countries (Kanemitsu, 1995, 130).

The offers were initially directed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, either directly from the governments abroad, or through their embassies in Japan. Although it was contacted because other

governments were accustomed to dealing with Japan through the Foreign Ministry office, it was not one of the 23 ministries and agencies represented in the Emergency Disaster Management Headquarters (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1996, 114). Because there was no precedent, Foreign Ministry officials had no idea how to respond, and they deferred to the National Land Agency (NLA) which was serving as emergency headquarters secretariat. Unfortunately, the director of that agency was on his way to assess the disaster, and was not available to make a decision on the matter. The remaining personnel, already burdened by numerous demands, began to discuss the offers, knowing that their own information about the disaster was still rather sketchy.

> The bureaucrats continued to argue among themselves. What about interpreters, lodgings, and determination of who goes where? Where would they get the vehicles to bring the teams from the airport into Kobe? Wasn't overseas assistance a Foreign Ministry area, anyway? If all Switzerland and France were sending in was a hundred people, they could easily muster that many people in Japan. With the first 48 hours the most crucial for saving lives, could they divert personnel to help out the foreigners? The U.S. itself had refused foreign assistance after the Northridge quake. And Japan already had fiberscopes and other advanced rescue equipment.....There was nobody with the authority to make such an important decision, and nobody to coordinate the responses of the different ministries. It was not so much that nobody wanted to take responsibility: There was simply no system in place to deal with the situation (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1996, 115).

Foreign Ministry officials who were dealing with the various embassies began pressing the NLA bureaucrats for a decision, but nothing had been settled, so more time was requested. When the Foreign Ministry relayed the message, most of the embassies assumed that it was a refusal of aid, and the international media began to put their spin on the story. The Washington Post described, "Japan's isolationism," the Singapore Strait Times commented, "Japan, the world's largest donor nation, does not require assistance from other countries," and the Italian press editorialized on the unusual inefficiency of the Japanese bureaucracy in this matter. While the rest of the world was learning about Japan's response to the foreign assistance, authorities in Kobe City and Hyogo Prefecture did not even know that such aid had been offered (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1996, 163). However, the Japanese media began to pick up the story from the foreign press, and pressure increased for the Japanese authorities. By the cabinet meeting on January 18th, Foreign Minister Kono Yohei, reacting to international pressure and the lack of a decision by the NLA, suggested that the foreign aid be accepted. He did realize that the aid would place additional burdens on the local governments in affected areas, but the Foreign Minister admitted that it was being accepted for diplomatic reasons, and that local needs could not be considered (pp. 206, 207).

In my interview with Kanemitsu Kiyoyuki, Director of Kobe City's International Division, he expressed frustration with the Foreign Minister's arbitrary decision to accept assistance. The Director understood the pressure from both foreign and domestic media, but he believes that if the national authorities made the decision, they should be the ones to implement the process without adding yet another responsibility for the overburdened local governments. Early in the post-disaster period, only 20 percent of the Kobe International Division employees were able to report for work, so the additional responsibilities weighed heavily upon those few.

In "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications" (1972), Allison and Halperin describe a model of policy-making which can be recognized in the Japanese response to foreign assistance.

> Players choose in terms of no consistent set of strategic objectives, but rather ac-

cording to various conceptions of national security, organizational, domestic, and
personal interests. Players make governmental decisions not by a single rational
choice, but by pulling and hauling (p. 174).

When bureaucratic practices were found wanting, media reports interpreted the slow response
by Japanese authorities as evidence of incipient nationalism, or at least a distaste for foreign in-
volvement in domestic affairs (Yomiuri, 1996, 163; Kanemitsu, 1995, 125). One Japanese sociologist
suggested that the authorities were loath to admit that a superpower like Japan needed help from
abroad, and were reluctant to lose face by having their country observed to be in such disarray (El-
liott, 1995, 236). However, as Allison and Halperin's model suggests, the Japanese reaction had far
more to do with a clash of domestic priorities (primarily within the bureaucracy) and the lack of
planning for such disasters rather than with a particular attitude toward foreigners. The same me-
dia that put pressure on the Japanese ministries also served to reinforce preexisting foreign stereo-
types of Japan and its society. Not only the inaccurate international perceptions of the disaster re-
lief, but inappropriate foreign assistance as well, can be traced to misleading images appearing in
the media (International Federation, 1996, 65).

One major problem with the acceptance of foreign assistance was the logistical dilemma of proc-
essing and transporting large quantities of items. A vast array of food, clothing, and emergency sup-
plies began to arrive by sea, air, and rail, almost immediately after the disaster. Some were in large
shipments from government and relief agencies abroad, while others were boxes of items sent
through the postal system to Kobe by individuals. Regardless of their source, quantity, or contents,
the items had to be recorded and then transported to warehouses or drop-off locations where they
could be distributed to those who needed them. During the first month, many domestic and interna-
tional transport companies did not charge for their services to carry relief items to their destination.
However, so many of the storage facilities and roads had been damaged that it was an extra burden
to have to process the huge assortment of items which arrived on a daily basis. Because Japan is an
affluent nation, and the earthquake-damaged region was relatively small, there were plenty of food,
water, clothing, and emergency supplies available domestically. Monetary gifts would have been
most efficient to purchase needed items in Japan, but they may have been less satisfying to the giv-
ers, and it is difficult for recipients to request aid in the form of money when goods and services are
being offered (Kanemitsu, 1995, 132).

Not all foreign donations were regarded by the Japanese authorities to be inconvenient. The as-
sistance offered by the U.S. military stationed in Japan was considered by most observers as appro-
priate, perhaps because they were in country and more aware of general conditions. Kanemitsu de-
scribed the U.S. strategy of presenting a 13-item list of relief aids to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
as being particularly helpful. Items in temporary short supply such as bottled water, blankets, and
tents were delivered within days of the earthquake (Kanemitsu, 1995, 131). Other functional items
of material assistance which came from a variety of other countries included food, clothes, and plas-
tic sheets, but offers of human support were more problematic (130). For example, specialized res-
cue personnel, some with dogs, were offered by Switzerland, France, and Britain. (There was broad
media coverage of the initial requirement that the dogs would have to go through quarantine before
being allowed in Japan, but they were ultimately allowed to enter the country as guide dogs, with
minimal paperwork). The Kobe fire department was asked to host the Swiss team, and the city's In-
ternational Division provided an interpreter, Karin Zaugg, the Coordinator for International Rela-
tions. In several interviews, Ms. Zaugg described to me the challenges of cross-cultural communica-
tion in a crisis situation. There was no doubt about the humanitarian motives of the rescue team
members or their professional training, but it was difficult not to wonder if their skills were really
appropriate for the Hanshin situation. Because the foreign rescuers began arriving more than two
days after the earthquake, there was little chance that survivors would be found in the rubble. The
types of structures in the communities and the pattern of destruction was such that the chances of

finding survivors, even several hours after the quake, was very slim (International Federation, 1996, 73). The dogs were trained to locate victims in a large area such as in an avalanche or a mud slide. However, the locations of most of the people buried in the earthquake were known to their families and neighbors, so the accommodations required by the dogs' techniques (such as stopping all activity in the vicinity to allow the dogs to find a scent) became irritating to the other relief workers (Kanemitsu, 1995, 127).

If nothing else, the presence of the foreign rescue teams was a visible symbol of concern expressed for the victims of the Great Hanshin Earthquake by people far away, and there is no way to measure the value of such a gesture. However, in terms of substantive assistance, neither the foreign rescue workers nor medical personnel provided services which were truly necessary but unavailable in Japan. In spite of difficulties with coordination, every level of government in Japan has emergency rescuers who are at least familiar with general procedures and have no language barrier. On the day of the earthquake, 3,100 rescue specialists from various fire and police departments, as well as SDF personnel arrived in Kobe. By the following day, 13,600 rescue forces were on the scene, so domestic organizations had responded rather quickly (Kanemitsu, 1995, 126). Foreign rescuers claimed that they would not need special accommodations, but the Japanese hosts felt obligated to treat them as guests, find places for them to stay, provide transportation, and locate interpreters for them. All of this took time and resources away from other rescue work which each of the hosting agencies was conducting.

Medical assistance too, though well-intentioned, was provided on the basis of misleading media reports and the lack of knowledge about Japanese medical practices. For example, the services of a medical emergency team from California was finally accepted after some political and media pressure. The Japanese method of reporting casualties, which is based on an actual count of cases with cause of death confirmed, made it appear as though large numbers of victims were continuing to die each day during the first week, when in actuality, most of them had perished within the first few hours of the quake. Therefore, by the time the California team arrived, there was no need for the trauma specialists, and the American medical personnel felt underutilized in the refugee shelters where they were asked to assist Japanese physicians in the treatment of flu, colds, and indigestion. Part of the problem was the restriction on medical workers without Japanese licenses, but there was also a significant difference in medical cultures, so the foreign professionals did not have the treatment "language" which would have made them more effective (Kanemitsu, 1995, 129).

On the other hand, a group of medical personnel from Korea was more successful. These workers had received much of their training in Japan so were familiar, not only with the local practices, but with the language as well, so they were able to operate a clinic in one of the refugee centers for an extended period (Kanemitsu, 1995, 129).

In sum, the Japanese bureaucratic response to foreign assistance was muddled at the outset because there were no procedures for dealing with such offers, particularly during a time of crisis. However, the lack of information and understanding about the Hanshin situation, and Japanese procedures in general, among many of the would-be donors, created more complications than necessary for Japanese authorities trying to struggle to meet their constituents' needs. The mismatch between donor intentions and recipient needs could have been much worse if it had not been for a variety of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) which took charge of hosting some of the foreign relief personnel and distributing many of the materials donated from abroad. According to Kanemitsu, stronger links will have to be forged in the future between government agencies and NGOs so that during emergency situations, there will be a basis for communication and coordination between the two types of organizations, each of which is vital to the successful response to disaster management.

Prevailing Orientation of the Affected Population

If both the magnitude of the earthquake and the level of government preparedness contributed to a large potential gap between response and expectation, Schneider's third condition, prevailing orientation of the affected population, worked more as a moderating factor in the case of the Hanshin disaster. Unlike disoriented people in some crisis situations who resort to looting or other extreme, antisocial behavior, the victims of the Hanshin earthquake were reported to be very orderly and patient. In the nine days immediately following the temblor, Hyogo police reported that the number of burglaries was only one-sixth of those reported in the same period one year earlier (Japan Times, 1995, 10). According to Schneider, "Close-knit communities with long traditions of cooperative interaction are more likely to provide mutual support and reinforcement for their members when a disaster strikes" (1995, 61). The Mano district of Kobe is known for its residents' activism in several community movements through the years and is a good example of Schneider's assertion. As a result of their previous activities, the citizens were accustomed to working with each other, and proved to be particularly effective in rescuing neighbors from collapsed buildings and keeping damage to a minimum, even before local authorities arrived after the earthquake (Miyamoto, 1996, 14, 15). Because the quake affected a variety of communities ranging from rural villages on Awaji Island to urban high-rise apartments in Kobe suburbs, there was also significant variation in the degree of long-standing social ties among the residents. However, the media featured some accounts of neighbors helping each other, even though they had not had any previous contact (Japan Times, 1995, 10).

Schneider (1995, 61) also describes previous disaster experience as being important in helping affected people orient themselves to a new crisis. Because the Kobe area had not suffered a major earthquake during the lifetime of most of its residents, there had been a sense of immunity from such disasters. As noted earlier, the long lull in seismic activity in the area encouraged official laxity towards developing serious disaster plans, and it also meant that there were few people who could draw on their own experience to recognize what had happened to them and to know what to do. Nevertheless, the fact that Japan has been subject to a variety of natural threats besides earthquakes throughout its history (for example, typhoons, tidal waves, and fires), has meant that many people developed a fatalistic view of such disasters, and viewed them as inevitable. Such passiveness may prevent progress in disaster preparation efforts even when public officials attempt to initiate training or financial assistance (Hirayama, 1996). Therefore, the overall cooperative behavior of the Hanshin victims can be seen as a mixed blessing when the initiative is not taken to demand improvements and disaster readiness within the communities.

If people experiencing a crisis are unable to refer to their usual social norms to explain the situation, they may adopt different, non institutionalized behavior norms in order to cope (Schneider, 1995, 50). Human interactions based on these temporary norms to deal with extraordinary conditions are known as "collective behavior." Usually, collective behavior begins with milling, then rumor circulation after people emerge from their homes to assess the damage (p. 51). In the case of the Hanshin earthquake, a variety of rumors began to circulate as the affected people tried to understand what had happened. For example, there were rumors about whether there would be aftershocks, where there were shelters, who would be allowed in temporary housing, and so forth (Tsuganesawa, 1996). These rumors served to fill in where no official information was available, but the lack of communication regarding government services initiated a wave of resentment toward public officials (p. 116). Many people unable to locate official shelters created their own in places as diverse as city buses, coffee shops, and pachinko parlors, making it difficult for officials to deliver food, water, and other services to them (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1996, 133−135). Although the media actually transmitted some of the rumors fabricated during the disaster, the efforts of the radio and

print media were successful overall in restraining the spread of dangerous rumors and were able to reduce the sense of isolation which can develop in crisis situations (Tsuganesawa, 1996, 138).

Some people who were not directly affected by the earthquake became involved in collective behavior as well. For example, an unprecedented number of volunteers descended upon the stricken area in the hopes of assisting in any way possible. Volunteerism is still a rather new concept in Japan, and 70 percent of the volunteers polled in March, 1995 had never done any volunteer work before their post-earthquake efforts (Nakata, 1996, 22). A large proportion of these eager helpers were young college students who happened to be on break at the time, but some were homemakers and others were professionals and company employees (p. 24). Unfortunately, the already disorganized city and prefectural officials seemed bewildered by the offers of assistance, and ultimately grew irritated by the large numbers of volunteers who gathered asking for ways to assist. However, rather than become discouraged, the volunteers pitched in where they could and eventually created a coordination system led by experienced NGO personnel (p. 22). Between January and March, nearly 1.2 million volunteers traveled to the Hanshin area to lend assistance, but by the beginning of April when the new school year began, the numbers plummeted, causing many to question whether the new interest in volunteerism was fleeting phenomenon. As an example of collective behavior, the volunteerism movement demonstrates how large numbers of people can participate in unusual behavior, and then as the situation normalizes, they revert to the original ways of conducting their lives. It also shows how unprepared the government was in dealing with these eager volunteers. Rather than welcoming them and appreciating their willingness to assist, many of the bureaucrats resisted the volunteers, causing one observer to write, "Volunteers' services (were) wasted by bureaucratic red tape" (Japan Times, 1995, 23). Although a large proportion of the volunteers ended their support activities by April, a substantial number continued to visit the affected neighborhoods and donate their time on behalf of the quake victims. Nevertheless, reduced financial contributions have cut the numbers of professional staff available to lead the remaining volunteers (Nakata, 1996, 25)

Evaluation of Relief Implementation

By applying the factors discussed above to Schneider's disaster management model, it appears that the conditions immediately following the Hanshin earthquake put the response processes neither in the very effective nor totally ineffective categories. Schneider (1995, 65, ff) designates three different levels of relief implementation depending on the size of the gap between government norms and expectations by the affected population. The first pattern of implementation is called "the bottom-up approach," in which local governments respond quickly to the immediate crisis and request assistance from higher levels as it becomes necessary, particularly for funding local initiatives. Because the "bottom-up approach" exists when public officials follow their preexisting emergency plans and the affected population reacts according to prior expectations, the gap between bureaucratic and emerging norms is very small.

At the other extreme, Schneider describes the implementation pattern she calls, "the top-down approach." As the label suggests, a disaster which renders most local government efforts useless, and the affected population behaves beyond their control may require a management take-over by the national government. For example, national troops may have to be sent to restore order, and national agencies may have to take charge of relief efforts because local offices have been damaged, and their personnel overwhelmed. Accordingly, the gap between bureaucratic norms and victim expectations becomes very wide in this scenario until order is restored and reconstruction is well on its way.

Finally, between the "bottom-up" and the "top-down" approaches is the level of implementation which Schneider calls, "the confusion pattern." Confusion can occur early when bureaucratic norms

are not adequate for the situation, or they can emerge later when rebuilding efforts fail to meet ex-
pectations.

> ...there may be little coordination between individual actors, public agencies,
> and governmental levels. When these conditions exist, there does seem to be a
> great deal of governmental activity; however, there is no overall framework or gen-
> eral order to guide the emergency effort...In most instances, relief efforts are al-
> ready under way, and disaster victims are trying to deal with their own problems.
> But the process develops in such a way that the two sets of actors tend to "work
> past each other" rather than in coordinated ways that effectively resolve the disas-
> ter conditions (p. 67).

Judging from the information about the Hanshin earthquake, it appears that the gap between
bureaucratic norms and expectations of the affected population (emergent norms) cannot be classi-
fied as either very small or very large. The confusion pattern seems to fit best because there were
many bureaucratic missteps within and between levels of government. However, the chaos never
reached the point that required total control by the national government.

Conclusion

In spite of government ineptitude, neither the victims of the Great Hanshin Earthquake, nor
those who traveled to assist them, created the kind of anarchy that would necessitate force to sub-
due them. And yet the success or failure of government response depends upon the public percep-
tion of that performance (Schneider, 1995, 71), so when media images influence the perspective that
observers have of the disaster, they are also influencing the evaluation of the government relief ef-
fort. Therefore, the persistent critiques of government blundering which continued to appear in the
media (Gibney, 1996) fueled public attitudes, both in Japan and abroad, that the crisis was man-
aged very poorly.

The task ahead for Japanese organizations, public and private, is to learn from the experience
of the earthquake, and to forge as many ties as possible within and outside each community so that
victims of a future disaster will have the means to begin providing their own relief. Many sugges-
tions for reforming the Japanese administrative system include a provision for stronger central
leadership in the time of disaster so that coordination of all the available resources, including those
being offered from abroad, can be accomplished more smoothly (Hayao, 1993; Ozawa, 1994). In re-
sponse to the critical role of media images, greater effort must be made, to ensure an accurate flow
of information not only to those directly affected by the disaster, but to the rest of the world as well.

Although such accurate information is valuable for foreign organizations wishing to assist with
relief efforts, the Great Hanshin Earthquake provided a strong message of caution for potential do-
nors. Before making assumptions about what sort of services or materials are needed, communica-
tion with coordinating agencies should be made first in order to inquire about what assistance
would be most helpful. To that end, regular contact should be established between emergency man-
agement leadership in Japan and in other nations so that in the event of a disaster, there will be a
better understanding about what resources are available domestically, and who should be contacted
to offer assistance.

Further inquiry is necessary to study the interactions of government, business, and nonprofit
groups in addressing crisis situations. As structural reforms are attempted in Japanese government,
the ability of bureaucrats and politicians to work with a variety of groups, both in and out of Japan,
will be tested. More generally, the case of the Hanshin Earthquake adds to growing evidence that
foreign aid of any kind must be offered, received, or refused with great care. Not only are there im-

portant political ramifications for the aid donor and recipient governments, the value of aid to those in need must be understood for both the near and long term as well. In the field of disaster management, more attention must be paid to understanding the predictable convergence behavior (Fritz and Mathewson, 1957) from throughout the international community, evaluating the resulting foreign disaster assistance, and proposing guidelines for determining the types of assistance and processing which are most appropriate for a particular country and disaster category.

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Appropriate Assistance

Responses to Offers of Foreign Support Following
the Great Hanshin Earthquake

ABSTRACT

Beginning just an hour after the violent earthquake which devastated Kobe and its surrounding area, offers of assistance began pouring in from governments and other organizations abroad. Most post-disaster evaluations agree that government officials were poorly prepared for such a large-scale earthquake, but criticisms were particularly leveled against bureaucrats who appeared to obstruct the implementation of foreign assistance. In fact, it is alleged by many individuals that lives would have been saved, and homeless people's conditions would have been restored more quickly if certain foreign assistance had been accepted. Through interviews with responsible government and NGO personnel in Japan and an examination of documents related to foreign disaster assistance, this study attempts to analyze the bureaucratic response to offers of assistance from abroad. By noting the difficulties caused by the offers of aid, recommendations are made for those wishing to assist disaster areas, particularly in economically developed foreign countries. Most important among them is the necessity of knowing the organizational, personnel, and cultural situation, as well as the material needs of the affected region before sending relief.

Key words: disaster assistance, Hanshin-Awaji earthquake, Japanese bureaucracy, foreign assistance