

# Analysis of the Japanese NEOs with war-gaming approach

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## Preface

Taiwan Strait has drawn the world's attention since Taiwan President Tsai, In-Wen made a congratulated phone call to President Donald Trump in 2016. The Chinese leader angers about anything that might increase Taiwan's visibility and sends enormous jet fighters and vessels to cross the so-called "median line" in Taiwan Strait to express dissatisfaction about any friendly posture towards the small island.

China has never given up its claim to unify the island with "necessarily means", which is an "unsolved territorial issue" to them. It has specified that a few situations in which Taiwan cannot be unified with the "mainland" will trigger the "Anti-Secession Law" legislated in 2005 to regulate Taiwan MUST BE embedded to China in the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, as a vibrant democratic country, Taiwan has devoted itself to the international society with different aspects like medical care, semi-products of the world's supply chains, agricultural techs output, and most importantly, as a beacon of a successfully reborn country from four-decade martial law history by its liberal, freedom and democracy.

Due to the tensions in the region, many think tanks and research centres have published a series of papers to discuss the possible scenarios of conflicts between cross-strait. However, few of them discuss the non-combatant evacuation operations of other nations if the war occurs.

Japan is close to Taiwan emotionally, historically, and geographically. There are at least 25,000 Japanese living on this island. If the war outbreaks, not only the Japanese territory will force to be involved in a war, but also those Japanese who live in Taiwan will be in grave danger. This article is to discuss the possible needs of the non-combatant evacuation operations of Japan while the conflict occurs.

Keywords : cross-strait, NEOs 、 blockade



Regardless of a paper published by RAND Cooperation, analysis of China's top five war plans by Project 2049, or the latest strategic review by the Centre for a New America Security, discuss the possible scenarios of China's aggression against Taiwan. Those analyses and papers tell us when China will attack Taiwan, how China will engage in the war, and what will impact other countries. However, few articles discuss a straightforward question : What should every other country do to their people when the war on Taiwan outbreaks?

In the scenario built by the Centre for a New America Security, to further signal its military might and coerce Taiwan to obey its will, China launched a surprise attack against Dongsha (東沙島) under cover of an exercise and captured 500 Taiwanese marines. The report indicates that China taking Dongsha might be the way for it to test the waters ahead of a more aggressive campaign such as a direct attack against the main island of Taiwan. However, the report suggested that Taiwan and its allies could take minimal options to retake the losing territories.<sup>1</sup>

Another analysis of the RAND Corporation emphasised that China will take necessary moves to seize air and naval supremacy and bombard Taiwan's critical basements and facilities in the first and following waves. Further, the report indicates that China's "immediate and full-scale invasion" is the most likely form of conflict between China and Taiwan compared with traditional perspectives. Under this premise, the analysis stipulates four steps of the attacks, as mentioned earlier.

Nevertheless, those studies showed details about the war, but without a vital topic that affects those foreign citizens who live on this island. According to the statistics, there are at least eight hundred thousand foreign residents living in Taiwan. To those countries, the operations of non-combatants evacuations while the war occurs will be their top priority to those governments. The famous battle of World War II, where at least four hundred thousand soldiers had been evacuated from Continental Europe, the Battle of Dunkirk became a "turning point" to allies counterattack Nazis due to the strength has been saved.

In the evacuation, allies expropriated hundreds of military and civil vessels to shuttle that personnel with the support of air supremacy. Still, there were thousands of troops

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Dougherty, Jennie Matuschak, and Ripley Hunter, "The Poison Frog Strategy — Preventing a Chinese Fait Accompli Against Taiwanese Islands", *Center for a New American Security*, Oct 2021

captured and killed. Most importantly, the personnel have retreated in the Battle were combatants, and those who needed to be evacuated in Taiwan were "non-combatant".

## 2. Meaning, Module and Operation

In the Self-Defense Force Act article 84-3 and 84-4, the law regulates the operations of Protective measures for Japanese overseas and Transportation of Japanese overseas. However, there is still a slight difference in Japanese definition between non-combatant evacuation operation (hereafter NEO) and rescue of Japanese nationals overseas (hereafter RJNO) . RJNO means the rescued object will be Japanese citizens ONLY; comparatively, the targets of NEO might have foreigners involved.

In any country, the NEO is related to the operating country's law, the host country's law, the Charter of the United Nations and the international laws. Sometimes, the operation violates the host country's sovereign rights because the host country refuses foreign troops acting in the country. Though, the international laws and the UN Charter could be another severe subject to discuss, it can't be done in this article.

In the understanding of NEO, it can be defined as "an operation conducted to relocate designated non-combatants threatened in a foreign country to a place of safety."<sup>2</sup> In the definition of the US Department of Defence, a NEO is "to assist in evacuating US citizens and nationals, DOD civilian personnel, and designated persons to an appropriate safe haven."<sup>3</sup>

The doctrines of both countries listed vital elements that affected the success of a NEO, like units involved, funding, communications, multinational command, and, most importantly, planning. Yet, the environment must be evaluated before the operation. Hence, some characteristics can be divided due to the situation of the object country, such as a "permissive, uncertain, and hostile" environment.<sup>4</sup>

A permissive environment marks the host country is willing and capable of assisting the operations; the operating environment can be seen as stable and safe, the "primary

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<sup>2</sup> «Joint Doctrine Publication 3-51 — Non-combatant Evacuation Operations» , *Ministry of Defence* (UK) , p. 3

<sup>3</sup> «Joint Doctrine Publication 3-68 — Non-combatant Evacuation Operations» , *Department of Defence* (US) , p. 3

<sup>4</sup> «Joint Doctrine Publication 3-68 — Non-combatant Evacuation Operations» , p. 68

concerns may be logistic functions involving emergency medical treatment, transportation, administrative processing, and coordination with DOS (Department of States) and other agencies involved in the evacuation."<sup>5</sup>

In an uncertain environment, the host government cannot provide services thoroughly, and the security situation is likely unstable but not in imminent danger. Intelligence circumstances can broadly function. However, the host country cannot provide a complete safety guarantee to the civilians; hence the evacuation troops need to be prepared for conflicts in the process. In this situation, medical logistics support and combat units must be ready to escalate the situation.

Lastly, the hostile environment indicates that the situation has gone wild. A civil disorder, terrorist action, or even full-scale combat has begun. The act of evacuation will be similar or related to a conflict. High casualties and the interfusing of intelligence assets of the third country are expected. Communication can be terrible, and the information cannot be transferred freely; consequently, the rules of engagement and the evacuation plan can be decisive.

Before initiating a NEO, according to different countries' doctrines, the government will analyse the situation and divide it into four alert stages, which are :

Stage 1, the status is unclear, the society is unstable and might have some chaos so that the citizen will suggest to "Be alert and stay at home";

Stage 2, the danger is expected, so "Go unless there is an urgent need to stay";

Stage 3, the condition is getting out of hand, the host government is dysfunctional, the citizen recommended to "Leave";

In stage 4, the government will set up a reception centre or extraction point, and the citizen must report to it.

A NEO will usually initiate in the late of stage 3 and early of stage 4.

In general, a NEO can be defined as above as a country to evacuate and relocate personnel from dangerous places to safety. Procedures and points must be considered to those executors and planers, such as the amount and resources of vehicles. Also, the relationship

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<sup>5</sup> «Joint Doctrine Publication 3-68 — Non-combatant Evacuation Operations» , p. 68

between diplomats and military personnel is needed to be examined. Even though the evacuation does not necessarily mean the failure of diplomacy, in some cases of NEO, the diplomats will refuse to leave, which could delay the procedure or lead to higher casualties.

In the case of the "2012 Benghazi attack", the intelligence community of the United States had a large amount of evidence showing there are likely facing significant attacks against American personnel. However, the States Department and diplomat Ambassador Christopher Stevens refused to leave or increase security response capabilities, due to political reasons,<sup>6</sup> which led to the death of the Ambassador and two US officials.

The cooperation of the host government can also be vital. When the Haiti earthquake in 2010, the Haiti and Canadian government worked together to evacuate at least 4,000 Canadian civilians without any interference.<sup>7</sup> Including the city transportation control, air traffic control, port security maintenance, informing those civilians, and essential communication channel protection, all are critical to the operation executive to ease the burden. These pretty much depend on the assistance from the host country and its will. We will discuss these points mentioned above in the next paragraph.

### 3. Case Study

There were some cases of NEO after the cold war, and most were a success; however, some failed.

In the second half of the year 1990, rebels were fighting against the Somalia government, and there were signs of disintegration of government by late November. The US Ambassador called for voluntary departure of non-essential personnel in early December, with some following casualties in the next weeks. Notably, according to his intelligence, the NEO was initiated by the ask of a local high diplomat, and DOD sent troops to engage the operation. Fortunately, credit to Ambassador Bishop's early warning and demand, the NEO caused no fatality and successfully evacuated hundreds of diplomats and civilians.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph I. Lieberman, Susan M. Collins, "Flashing Red: A Special Report On The Terrorist Attack At Benghazi", *United States Senate Committee On Homeland Security And Governmental Affairs*, December 30, 2012, Accessed October 2021, <https://bit.ly/3HbD010>

<sup>7</sup> Ryan Eyre, "Complexities in Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations" Dissertation, *Canadian Forces College*, 2011

<sup>8</sup> Adam B. Siegel, "Eastern Exit: The Noncombatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) From Mogadishu, Somalia, in January 1991", *Center for Naval Analyses*, 1992

Every American embassy has standing evacuation procedures or an Emergency Action Plan to sequence the priority of personnel evacuation. The spouses and children of embassy officials, for example, are usually the first wave of evacuating. The rest of the officials could be at the next echelon, such as trade commissioners, police, or educational officials. In the first few waves of evacuation, personnel leave by economic transportation are expected. However, some fatalities could be seen in the uncertain and hostile environment while the situation worsens, and the military and required vehicles could execute the withdrawal.

The Operation Sharp Edge of the United States in Liberia in 1990 was a large-scale military operation involving two amphibious assault ships, landing ships, transport ships, destroyers, involving a total of more than 4,000 members of the Navy and Marine Corps. The entire operation continued to evacuate from August 1990 to February 1991, with nearly 3,000 people from 59 countries evacuated.

In the latest case in 2021, "Operation Allies Refuge" is the evacuation of Afghanistan after landslide failure of military actions. Due to limited intelligence capabilities and a massive amount of personnel needed to pull out; further, the Taliban took over the country suddenness of a thunderbolt swept across. The US and the allies could not retreat in time. The US troops were forced to conduct the NEO under a hostile environment that could not identify friendly personnel or enemies. To say, the situation was disaster, even some enemies mixed into the crowds. Despite the rules of engagement should be established well ahead of any NEO, and should provide "maximum flexibility so as not to unduly restrain the use of force." But in this case, chaos was nationwide, exploded and gunfire was everywhere.

Under the demand of the Federal Aviation Administration, all unnecessary commercial flights were prohibited, and many airways responded to the requirements and joined the NEO. However, the aeroplanes were still far from enough. Almost 6,000 US troops were participating in this mission, and British soldiers were nearly 1,000. However, there were over 100,000 people needed to be evacuated. Due to the Taliban seizing the whole country, all the Capital transportation was under its control, meaning the situation became hostile from an uncertain environment within hours. Lacking vehicles, unknown numbers of people left behind, and under the threat and attack of the Taliban, there were at least 190 personnel died during the operation.

In the evacuation of Afghanistan, the Japanese evacuation failed because Afghans were included in those evacuees, and the Taliban government decided to intervene to prohibit more Afghans from leaving. As a result, the Self-Defense Force aircraft could not land at the airport smoothly, and the evacuation failed.

Compared with the cases above, the critical elements between success and failure could be listed as follows; the success depends on :

1. the host country and personnel's degree of cooperations;
2. the unobstructed intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, including the mastery of evacuated targets and possible hostile;
3. the smoothness sufficient of traffics;
4. the balance between timing and political consequences;
5. the sufficient firepower and enough deterrence;
6. the timing of military intervention;
7. the clear and precisely convey of order and commands;
8. the integration and establishment of capabilities of medical treatment;
9. the maintenance of crucial extraction points;
10. the cooperation with the third country

Expect of these, some details could be affected to the mission. For example, if the operation teams have enough funds while they need to pay the local residents for further assistance. Moreover, international laws should be considered in some more extreme cases while the host country refuses the troops to enter its territory. Prior to the adoption of the UN Charter in 1945, the right of a State to protect its nationals abroad was widely accepted; however, any use of forces must not threaten the "territorial integrity or political independence of any state".<sup>9</sup>

The use of force, in most cases, is crucial to the security of the operation team and evacuated targets. With the protection of firepower, the operation might indicate more unnecessarily casualties. On the other hand, using force in the NEO does not mean any intention of intrusion into any country. Contrary, the operation is to "leave the country"

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<sup>9</sup> "Article 2(4) of the UN Charter", accessed November 11, 2021, [https://legal.un.org/repertory/art2/english/rep\\_supp7\\_vol1\\_art2\\_4.pdf](https://legal.un.org/repertory/art2/english/rep_supp7_vol1_art2_4.pdf)

instead of invading. The use of force might argue theoretically; however, it was hard to abandon in practice.

#### 4. Analysis of possible scenario in Taiwan Strait conflicts

With all the conflicts and wars among history comprehensively, this article assumes there are "five stages of conflicts" before a war : peacetime, grey zone conflicts, para-conflict, limited blockade, and full-scale conflict. Different stages would have various forms of situation, reaction, and outcomes.

##### Scenario 1 – Peace Time

Before initiating any battle against Taiwan, China will likely deter Japan and the US from interfering with its so-called "domestic affairs". The first thing China might do is harass, intimidate, and even attack Japanese civilians living in Taiwan for spreading fear to Japan. The "fifth column", or "hydra", as the movie says, is the inside man of PLA responsible for subverting Taiwan society's stability and creating turmoil.

The most prominent Taipei Japanese School is in Tianmu, just opposite Taipei American School, with seven hundred more students. Those students and its family could be the "doddles" and the first front line facing security threats from China. Fake news is outbreaking on the internet. The school wall has been painted with dirty words, the explosive was suspiciously found in the playground, and news media successfully intensified the spread of fears.

Fake news and whisper crept into the Japanese community that intimate those who live on the island will be harmed. Despite the Police Department vow to solve the case quickly and put much force to secure the school, the fear is spreading. The Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association delivered the concerns to the Taiwan government and hired security services around the school at their own expense. The Japanese government clarifies that there is no sign of imminent danger nor intention to execute the NEO.

##### Scenario 2 – Grey Zone Conflicts

A few days after the Japanese government's statement, suddenly hundreds, nearly thousands of fishing boats and ships, tugboats, iron hull ships, and tankers appeared around

"Senkaku Island (釣魚台)", some of the vessels anchoring in the disputed area and some of them sailing towards to Miyako Strait and moored. The vessels claim that EMP has attacked them, so all the generators were gone.

Coast Guard from Taiwan and Japan send their patrols for surveillance. Japanese Coast Guard tried to drive those Chinese vessels away but got bumped against them. Japanese Coast Guard fire water canon for a response, the Chinese vessels call Chinese Coast Guard for help then.

Chaos on the lane of the Nansei Islands, all the possible channels were blocked by the vessels from Taiwan, Japan, and China. The confrontation between the Coast Guards from three countries remains. The JCG issued a warning and ordered ships to leave the area and stop approaching.

At the same time, massive fake news claims that the "war" between China and Taiwan outbreak and spreading on the internet, the news channels exacerbated disturbed, people emerged into stores for panic-buying for staples. Airlines suggested there is a sign of the number of people flying abroad increasing.

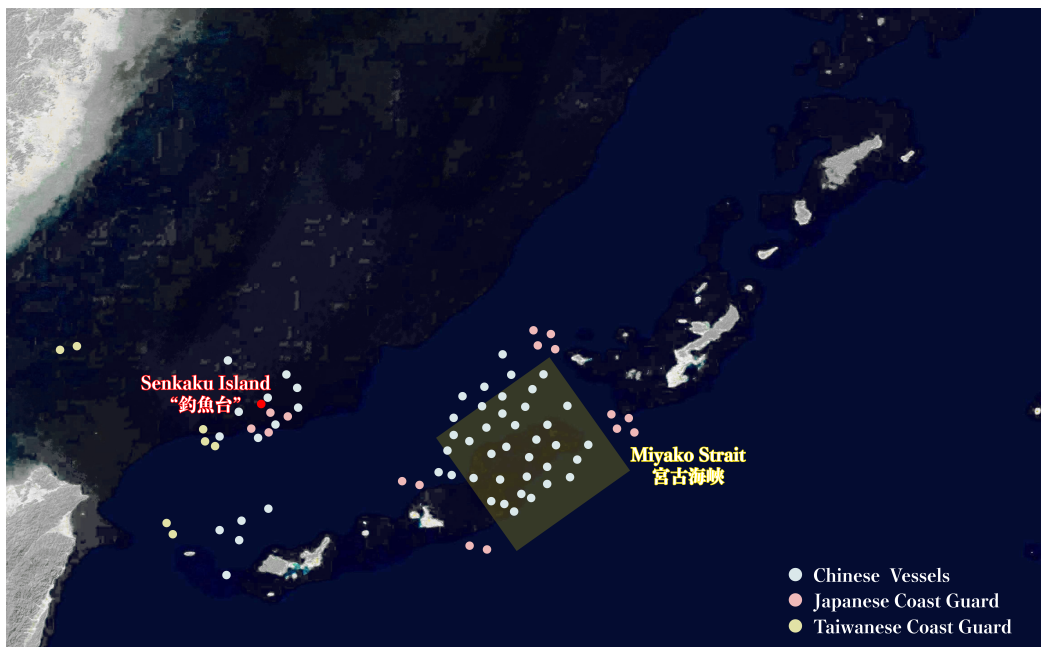


Figure 1: Scenario — This imagination image indicates that thousands of Chinese vessels occupy the Miyako Strait. Source: the author





Figure 2: Maps of Submarine Cables, [www.submarinecablemap.com](http://www.submarinecablemap.com)

### Scenario 3 – Para-Conflicts

On the ocean, Chinese fishing boats and iron hull ships begin to crush and bump into Coast Guard's ships of both Japan and Taiwan. Some of the Chinese vessels are approaching Senkaku Island to attempt to get onto it. JCG called JMSDF for assistance; the Japanese government then sent two cruisers with Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (水陸機動団) for surveillance and reconnaissance. However, the intelligence showed there are more groups of Chinese Coast Guard close to the disputed area.

During the confrontation, Taiwan "National Centre for Cyber Security Technology and Information (行政院資安會報技術服務中心)", "Communications and Electronic Force Command (本部資通電軍)" signal the submarine cables, *APCN-2* and *New Cross Pacific (NCP) Cable System*, might have been cut off. The people of northern Taiwan complain of no external communications, causing chaos that people misunderstand the war outbreaks. According to the reports, it might took four-six months to fix them.

While the standoff between Chinese vessels and JCG, one of the Chinese fishermen has been rushed into the sea by the water canon, therefore the CCG sailed into 12 NM of Senkaku Island, which dragged more Japanese Coast Guard into this area.

## Scenario 4 – Limited Blockade

Due to the accident of a fall of the Chinese fisherman, the Chinese government issued a **STRONGLY CONDEMN** that both Taiwan and Japan had violated their sovereignty and announced to send its East Sea Fleet to the disputed area. Japanese government summon the Chinese representative for *démarche* to protest contrarily. On the other hand, Taiwan also criticises that Chinese violet its sovereignty by sending numerous ships toward northern Taiwan.

Both reactions from Japan and Taiwan have provoked Chinese government, announcing the "blockade" around Taiwan follows. Nevertheless, to limit the damage, the Chinese government declared that all its allies might apply necessarily sailing under its "assistance", as long as they are not helping Taiwan.

Although Reuters simulating the war between China and Taiwan might begin with China's blockade of "Matsu Islands" and "Kinmen", this article assumed that the blockade would begin with Taiwan Strait and the norther Taiwan directly.

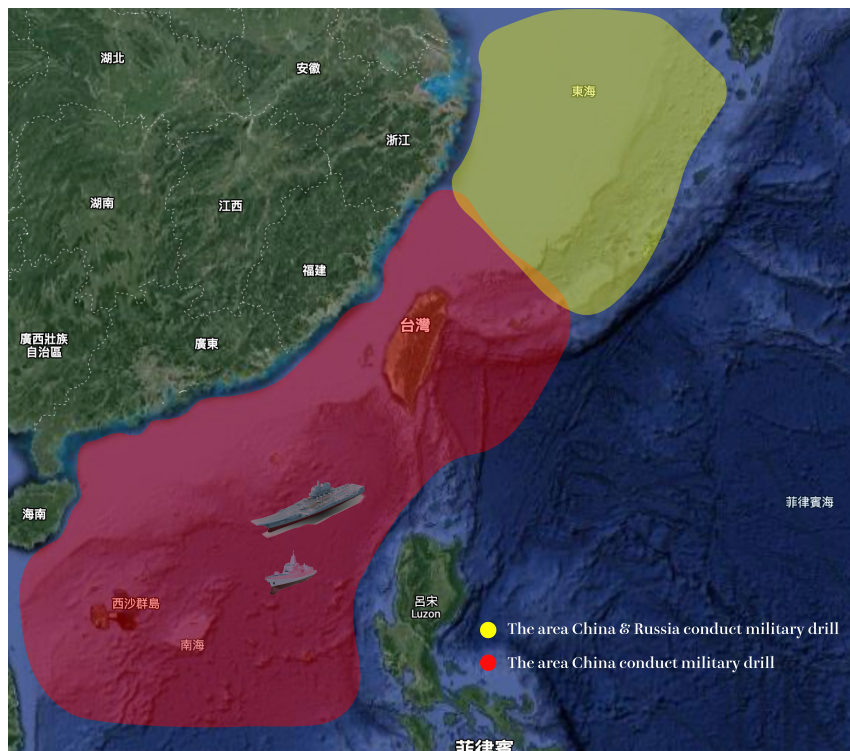


Figure 3: This image indicates the range of PLA's military drill

## Scenario 5 – Full-scale Conflict

Around Dongsa Islands (東沙島) on the southern Taiwan Strait, two Chinese Carriers Groups launch monthly military exercises and announce the restricted areas. Moreover, in northern Taiwan, Russia and China conduct drills simultaneously. Not only that, more PLA Navy, CCG and maritime militia ships deploy around Taiwan to enforce the quarantine, intercepting ships attempting to approach the island without approval from Beijing.

The PLA jet fighters set up temporary ADIZ above the area and cruised. All the cargo ships were introduced to Chinese ports for further investigation and inspection. Taiwanese vessels were threatened to be destroyed if they were to leave their port. Hence, the Taiwanese garrison on Dongsa Islands has been isolated. The 500 more troops on the island seem to be bargaining chips that China force Taiwan goes onto the negotiation table. In northern Taiwan, the military exercise continued.

The US and many countries in the international society urged China to lift up the blockade; the US and Australia sent their fleets approaching the blockade area but without the drive-in. China, however, decided to put more pressure on Taiwan to call the fifth columns to go up for riots and make more chaos. False information on the news shows the troops on Dongsa Islands have surrendered. Fear continues to spread on the island. Stock markets and house prices are falling, immigration wave seems to be coming.

During the blockade, most of the cargo schedules were delayed, which caused oil prices to go crazy up in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. The total annual trade of Japan in 2020 was one trillion and two hundred billion USD;<sup>10</sup> and the Nikkei Stock Average was nearly 30,000. However, under the blockade, the trading numbers and the Stock was down by at least 5%.

## Discussion

In all the scenarios above, we could say Taiwanese government is likely to have complete control of the country before full-scale conflict, which we could say the operation environment is permissive. In the government's alert stages, the Japanese government should begin the warning stage 1 in the para-conflicts scenario. By the scenario 4, the Japanese government might ask its civilians to leave Taiwan and arrange flights and cruise

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<sup>10</sup> 《令和2年分貿易統計(速報)の概要》, 財務省, 令和3年1月21日, <https://bit.ly/3Cmh1uB>

ships to evacuate them. Consider the cases before, Japanese government is prefer use their "special transport plane (特別輸送機)" rather than cooperate with airlines.<sup>11、12</sup>

Once the timing is correct, Taiwanese government is no reason to refuse to work with Japanese government for the NEO; meaning the cooperation of the host country and the balance between timing and political consequences have been taken into account for both sides. Hence, before sending the military to execute NEO, there is only one thing to consider : is Japan's capability of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance good enough to know all the 25,000 civilians information and gather them all to exactly position.

The capability of intelligence and the connection between Japan and Taiwan governments indicate more time for the Japanese government to do necessary works. Before withdrawing, for example, the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association might need to dispose of some of the classified documents or not-carry equipment. Further, it means both countries would have more time to arrange the transportations and do crisis management.

Further, the capacity of aeroplane 777-300ER that JSDF uses for evacuation is 500 personnel; without cargo ships or other assistance, it will take 50 times to evacuate all its citizens in Taiwan. Hence, the reasonable choice might be cargos ships and cruise ships. Keelung harbour is the only two of the large port in northern Taiwan, and it is the only military-civilian sharing harbour. It can easily transport 25,000 people in hours with cruise liners. Or, the dock is also regularly deployed by a few destroyers.

Suppose the evacuation was by the sea, whether by cargo ships, cruise ships or destroyers, maritime security should be Japan's and Taiwan's priority concern. As mentioned, the primary bombardon targets to China should be Taiwan's military airports and harbours. Second, if China wants to seize the evacuation targets as bargain chips with Japan and the US, the evacuation vessels should be guarded by military forces then. While the evacuation vessel set sail, it will encounter the scene of conflict and confrontation on the northeastern route and may even enter the Chinese exercises restricted zone. Under the circumstances, clear and precise rules of engagement would be needed, which should be vital.

Another option will be evacuated by airlines. However, in northern Taiwan, it apparently will not be a good idea. Despite there being two airports in Songshan and

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<sup>11</sup> 武田康裕編，〈政府専用機による在外邦人輸送をめぐる課題と対策〉，〈グローバルセキュリティ調査報告第1号〉，防衛大学校先端学術推進機構，2018，pp. 3-4

<sup>12</sup> The JDF now has three types of evacuation airplane, which are two C-130, one C-2, and one special transport B-777

Taoyuan, but under the "accompanied effect", the two airports seem to cannot take off and land simultaneously. While at the stage of para-conflicts, the Songshan airport must be ready for military jets and air transports of heads of state. It means the operational capabilities might be limited. The time of evacuation could take days. However, the advantage is that the planes can join the Japanese Flight Information Region in just ten minutes.

Japan has only two experiences of NEO so far: In the Iraq War in 2004, a few reporters were evacuated by C130. The second was the 2013 terrorist attack in Algeria. The remains of local businesses from the attack, seven survivors and nine victims were transported by Boeing. Due to the 2013 incident, the Abe government initiated the revision of the legal system related to the Self-Defense Force. So far, Japan's domestic laws and regulations require the host country's consent to implement NEO unless the applicable evacuation complies with UN resolutions. With regard to the use of weapons, the current Japanese government tends to agree to use them for self-defence, subject to the consent of the territorial state and compliance with international law.

## 5. The AAR and IP among operations and Conclusion

Whether by plane or by sea, the protection of evacuated vehicles is a key point that the Japanese and Taiwanese governments should consider. Especially for the Japanese government, as mentioned above, maritime evacuation will face the risk of entering the restricted navigation zone after going out to sea, and even China may deliberately include the southwestern islands within the scope of its military exercises to threaten Japan's intervention in the Taiwan Strait situation.

Since Japan is only 110 kilometres away from Taiwan, when a war breaks out or is in a phase of the blockade, the Nansei Islands will inevitably be involved in disputes. Although there are currently only 25,000 Japanese in Taiwan, there are at least 100,000 residents of the Nansei Islands. How to effectively evacuate those are the focus of the SDF and the Japanese government.

In addition, in past cases, the Japanese government's strict "cautious" use of weapons can win the respect of the host country. However, when encountering dangers and situations

similar to Afghanistan’s obstruction, is it possible that the withdrawal failed caused by refusing to use force? It is also an issue that the Japanese government has to deal with.

Finally, Taiwan and Japan currently have no diplomatic relations, and much information and intelligence transmission are limited to minimal exchanges. However, when a crisis occurs, if there is no cooperation by legal of the Taiwan government, rather relying only on the goodwill of a certain ruling party, it will create an unstable situation that cannot be determined by both Japan and Taiwan. Therefore, the establishment of an effective and substantive information exchange system between the two parties seems to be a way to solve the problem once and for all.

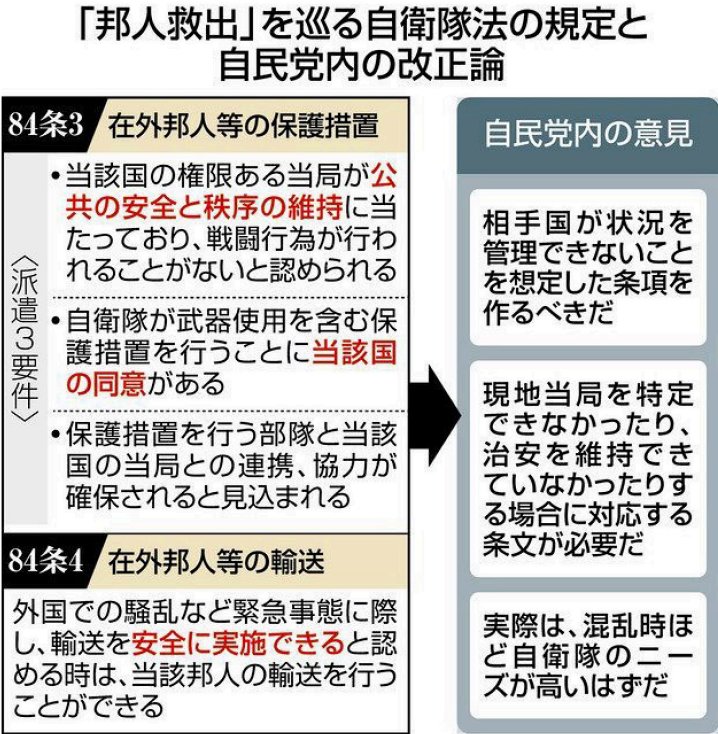


Figure 4: Current Liberal Democratic Party's Law Amendment Goal