

# Civil-Military Cooperation in Japan's Peace Support Operations

## - JSDF in search of NGO partners in South Sudan

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### Abstract

Civil-military cooperation in Peace Support Operations (PSO) is still a relatively new concept for Japan. The Japan Self-Defence Forces (JSDF)'s cooperation with civilian organisations, particularly non-governmental organisations (NGOs), has just started in a few limited instances in Iraq, Haiti, and South Sudan. The existing civil-military cooperation policy in Japan has impelled the JSDF in its South Sudan mission to design and implement projects that are of their specific and independent (i.e. outside the UN-mandate) civil assistance activities for local communities and to find civilian collaborators, particularly Japanese NGOs. This unique practice may well entail conflicts of interest with other stakeholders, including the local beneficiaries, the UN and NGOs in South Sudan. Tokyo's policy for civil-military cooperation in PSO therefore needs to be redirected.

**Keywords:** civil-military cooperation, peace support operations (PSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Japan Self-Defence Forces (JSDF), Japan, South Sudan, United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

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## 1. Introduction

Civil-military cooperation in Peace Support Operations (PSOs) is still a relatively new concept for Japan. The Japan Self-Defence Forces (JSDF)'s cooperation with civilian organisations, particularly non-governmental organisations (NGOs), has just started in a few limited instances. The existing civil-military cooperation policy has impelled the JSDF to design and implement projects that are of their specific and independent (i.e. outside the UN-mandate) civil assistance activities for local communities and to find civilian collaborators, particularly Japanese NGOs. This unique practice may entail conflicts of interest with other stakeholders, including the local beneficiaries, the UN, and NGOs.

Civil-military cooperation practice in Japan's PSO is characteristic by a number of features. First is the creation and functions of the Joint Coordination Office (JCO) attached to the Japanese Contingent of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). The JSDF Contingent stationed abroad under the UN mission has an independent unit which specialises in designing and coordinating civil assistance activities with civilian organisations. The JCO "excavates" new independent projects for the local communities – development assistance for the benefit of local communities such as school-building, bridge construction, road laying, etc. JCO officers visit offices of the local communities, city halls, local authorities,

UN organs, and local and international NGOs to inquire whether there are potential civil assistance projects that are deemed necessary but left undone.

Second is the so-called "All-Japan" Policy. The JCO particularly seeks such civil assistance projects that can be done in cooperation with civilian organisations like NGOs, preferably Japanese ones.

Third is the point that the JCO's "excavations" are done voluntarily, sometimes even beyond or outside the mandates of the UN PKO Command.

This article explains that the reasons for this uniqueness in the Japanese PSO are rooted in the national policies for PSO abroad laid down from 2006 onwards that require the JSDF to implement civil-military cooperation in civil assistance activities in collaboration with civilian organisations, including Japanese NGOs. The JCO in South Sudan has naturally been tasked with implementing this policy.

This article also analyses the fact that, because the Ministry of Defence expects the JSDF's civil-military cooperation activities to produce concrete results, the JSDF units operating in the missions abroad have been under heavy pressure to excavate, design, and implement civil-military projects wherever the opportunity arises. This trend is dangerous as the means and goals of the JSDF's assistance have been confused, leading it to overlook the fact that the necessity for development assistance is to be formulated on a needs and

request basis, and allowing its projects to mismatch the needs of the local communities.

The authors will further discuss the JSDF's attempts in seeking such civilian assistance in cooperation with NGOs in South Sudan and the potential pitfalls that could entail conflicts with the interests of other stakeholders.

This article will proceed by the following steps. The first part will explain the existing legal frameworks, policy guidelines, and experts' recommendations submitted to the Cabinet that have shaped civil-military cooperation policies in today's Japan. Second, the establishment of the JCO will be discussed, since its unique presence and functions have been the central factor driving the JSDF's civil-military activities in current Japanese PSO. Third, the JSDF's incentives and understandings towards civil-military cooperation will be identified.

In order to proceed with this research, the authors first examine the existing legal documents as well as documented experts' discussions and policy recommendations submitted to the Cabinet, particularly after 2002 when Japan first delegated the JSDF to PSO in Iraq. Furthermore, the authors conducted interviews in February 2013 in Juba, South Sudan, with the JCO's Director, Col. Tsuchiya, and his subordinate officers, as well

as with Cabinet Office PKO liaison officers, Japanese NGO staff, and UNMISS officials. Interviewing the JCO Director is appropriate and relevant methodology for this research; civil-military cooperation in PSO abroad is administered by the Central Readiness Force (CRF) and the only PSO currently being carried out abroad are in South Sudan where the JCO is responsible for the JSDF's civil-military cooperation from the operational aspect. Thus, its Director's responses are sure to reflect and thus be relevant to the JSDF's approach towards civil-military cooperation.

## **2. Legal frameworks for civil-military cooperation in Japan**

Since the Act on Cooperation for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations of 1992 stipulated the scope and conditions of the JSDF's participation in UN peacekeeping operations, no specific laws regulating civil-military cooperation have been created.<sup>1</sup> Japan's current practice of civil-military cooperation in PSO activities abroad has been directed not by the established legal frameworks but driven by a series of informal discussions and advisory groups' policy recommendations submitted to the Cabinet. Such informal reports have urged the JSDF to engage in civil assistance activities harnessing Japan's Official Development Aid (ODA) and in cooperation with humanitarian NGOs.

<sup>1</sup> International guidelines such as the Oslo Guidelines which regulate activities of the military and international humanitarian agencies have been created and developed since the 1990s. However, this paper only discusses such laws and rules that regulate the JSDF's ranges of activities during its CIMIC operations.

Present PSO policies are based on the Report of an Advisory Group on International Cooperation for Peace (*Kokusai Heiwa Kyoryoku Kondankai*) released on 18 December 2002, which was submitted to then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. It indicated that the range of PSO within which Japan can operate under the current legal frameworks is limited to non-military, engineering projects. Hence, Japan must search for its distinct approach to UN PSOs in areas where the JSDF can collaborate with civilian organisations such as government agencies, medical organisations, research institutions and NGOs. The Report also concluded that the military or political approaches to PKO are not in themselves enough to resolve or mitigate conflicts, but a Comprehensive Approach must be pursued whereby the JSDF's engineering activities are supplemented and consolidated by harnessing Japanese ODA.<sup>2</sup>

When the Government of Japan launched the Iraq Restoration Assistance Program with the JSDF's participation in December 2003, it stipulated that the JSDF's engineering operations and civil assistance projects using Japanese ODA should be carried out concomitantly, using the metaphor of the relationship between the two as "two

halves of the whole." The Operations in Iraq provided the very first opportunity for the JSDF to cooperate with civilian organisations in its contemporary operational history, allowing it to acknowledge the importance and challenges of civil-military cooperation.

The National Defence Program Outline, or *Boei Taikou*, – mid-term defence policy guidelines reviewed and rewritten intermittently by the Cabinet – was released in 2004 and was based on the conclusions drawn by the Report of the Advisory Group of 2002. The Outline stresses the need "to promote active diplomacy including strategic use of ODA," suggesting for the first time in Japan's postwar defence history that Japanese PSO activities should be accompanied and supplemented by Japanese ODA.

Two important legal revisions made to the JSDF laws in 2007 gave rise to some changes in Japan's PSO policy. First, the Act for Particular Revision of the Act on Establishment of Defence Agency of 2007 identified international peace cooperation as one of the three principal roles allocated to the JSDF after territorial defence and disaster relief. Secondly, the Central Readiness Force (CRF)<sup>3</sup> was established on 28 March 2007 in order to enhance capabilities to deal with

<sup>2</sup> Report of an Advisory Group on International Cooperation for Peace (*Kokusai Heiwa Kyoryoku Kondankai*) released on 18 December 2002. Retrieved November 1, 2013, from <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/kokusai/kettei/021218houkoku.html>

<sup>3</sup> *Defence of Japan* (Annual White Paper) (2009). Retrieved November 1, 2013, from [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/2009.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/2009.html)

new issues such as peacekeeping operations and anti-terrorist operations. The International Peace Cooperation Activities Training Unit was also established under the CRF command structure aiming at providing specialised training for officers assigned to future PSO activities abroad.

The first mention of civil-military cooperation in a formal policy document came in “Japan’s Visions for Future Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era: Toward a Peace-Creating Nation,” a report produced by the Council on Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era, released in August 2010, and submitted to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)’s Administration.<sup>4</sup> It states that “the JSDF’s activities in cooperation with civilian organisations are strongly encouraged, particularly such activities as emergency humanitarian assistance, long-term vocational training, job creation, and rehabilitation of post conflict communities in close cooperation with government organs and the private sector. The MOD and the JSDF need to further strengthen coordination with ministries and private sector entities from Japan operating abroad, such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA),

and with foreign governments, international organisations, and international NGOs. The MOD and the JSDF should also undertake detailed studies as to how to coordinate among these organisations, taking into consideration the specific nature of each organisation, since some NGOs may prefer not to collaborate with military forces.”<sup>5</sup> The Report also stresses that “Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) has become an important factor in peacebuilding. The NGO side is showing interest in collaborating with the JSDF, now that the JSDF has assumed international peace cooperation as one of its major mission areas, and Japan should enhance its peacebuilding capabilities through practicing CIMIC activities. In order to enable the JSDF to actively and effectively participate in international cooperation activities in its PSO abroad, Japan must avoid sectionalism by carrying out an ‘All-Japan’ type of international cooperation.”<sup>6</sup>

In 2011, the Advisory Council on PKO in turn issued a medium-term report emphasising that the JSDF should pursue civil assistance activities utilising Japanese ODA in collaboration with civilian organisations including NGOs so that the cooperation could involve “All-Japan” actors.<sup>7</sup> It was these policies that led to the creation of the JCO

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<sup>4</sup> “Japan’s Visions for Future Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era: Toward a Peace-Creating Nation,” a report produced by the Council on Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era, submitted to the Democratic Party of Japan, August 2010. Retrieved November 1, 2013, from [http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/shin-ampobouei2010/houkokusyo\\_e.pdf](http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/shin-ampobouei2010/houkokusyo_e.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Council on Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era, “Japan’s Visions,” Authors’ translation.

<sup>6</sup> Council on Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era, “Japan’s Visions,” Authors’ translation.

<sup>7</sup> Advisory Group Medium-term report on future PKO (*PKO no arikata ni kansuru kondankai Chuukan Torimatome*). Retrieved November 1, 2013, from [http://www.pko.go.jp/PKO\\_J/info/pdf/20110704.pdf](http://www.pko.go.jp/PKO_J/info/pdf/20110704.pdf)

within the Japanese Contingent in South Sudan.

### 3. Establishment of the JCO and the “All-Japan” policy

On October 2011, at UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon’s request, the Japanese Cabinet decided to send three JSDF Staff Officers and 330-strong Engineering Unit to the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) – established by UNSC Resolution 1996 on 8 July 2011. The officers were first sent to support UNMISS activities in the capital Juba and the suburbs. Later in May 2013, the JSDF’s presence was extended to East and West Equatoria states.

The main characteristic of the JSDF’s international PSOs in South Sudan is the presence and practice of the Joint Coordination Office (JCO). While the roles of the JSDF commissioned by UNMISS (hereafter the “Japanese Contingent”) is to implement projects assigned by the UNMISS command, the JSDF also voluntarily seeks extra – non-UNMISS projects deemed beneficial to South Sudanese communities. The JCO functions as a “coordinator” between UNMISS and the Japanese Contingent so that such additional civil assistance activities can be notified to UNMISS and thus avoid conflict with UNMISS interests.

As mentioned earlier, the “All-Japan” policy was formulated by the Ministry of Defence and the Cabinet when the JSDF was sent to Iraq in 2003. It is a government

policy that defines the JSDF’s PSO abroad as those of civil assistance to be carried out in cooperation with civilian organisations like NGOs. This has put pressure on the JSDF at the operational level. While it is already under pressure to implement UN-assigned tasks in compliance with Japanese law on peacekeeping abroad, the “All-Japan” emphasis is such that it has to find additional civil assistance projects that must be done in collaboration with Japanese civilian organisations. The Japanese Government’s expectation that the JSDF could pursue “All-Japan” cooperation in peace support missions was already high when the JSDF was despatched to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The UN mission had been operational for over twenty years prior to the year of the earthquake so that military units, humanitarian agencies, and NGOs were already active and able to undertake prompt stabilisation and relief activities.

According to Lt. Col. N. Urakami, who served in the Japan Disaster Relief Team and later with the PKO missions in Haiti, the JSDF sought two possible combinations: a) the JSDF cooperating only with public players from Japan (e.g. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan) plus international (i.e. UN) agencies; or, b) the JSDF cooperating with a blend of Japanese public and private actors (e.g. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs plus Japanese NGOs). In the event, his team succeeded in realising both forms of

such civil-military cooperation in Haiti. An example of the former was a combined use of funds from Japan's Grassroots/Human Security Grant and the UN's Quick Impact Project for constructing an orphanage. An example of the latter was the joint construction of community gardens with a Japanese NGO (Urakami, 2013).

When carrying out PSO in UN operational areas, each UN-contributing unit took its orders from MINUSTAH. This meant, for example, that even if the Japanese Contingent receive a request for assistance directly from a Japanese NGO in joint community garden construction, it is not allowed to mobilise assets like personnel, fuel, and construction facilities without MINUSTAH's authorisation. For this reason, in order to mobilise, JSDF Staff Officers working at MINUSTAH HQ negotiated for the construction works to be regarded as a MINUSTAH task (Urakami, 2013: 200-201). Simultaneously, the JSDF advised the NGO to "request the MINUSTAH Command's cooperation in a joint activity with the JSDF" so that the Staff Officers could then request a formal mobilisation order from MINUSTAH.

During the Haiti mission, such coordination with the UN was assigned to JSDF officers within the Engineering Unit on a temporary basis. However, such officers were neither trained as civil assistance specialists nor experienced in preparing NGO-cooperation project proposals. This put a heavy

burden on those officers, leading to calls for assistance from the civilian Liaison and Coordination Officers attached to the Cabinet Office's PKO Desk. Yet, because these officers were only responsible for providing logistic support to individual officers on duty in Haiti, their role remained limited. Learning from this, the JCO, a local coordination office, was newly established for the South Sudan mission, designed specifically to seek out – so to speak "unearth" or "excavate" – non-UN civil assistance projects and to coordinate with UNMISS.

As of February 2013, three JSDF Staff Officers and approximately 330 Engineering Unit officers had been sent to UNMISS. Apart from these officers, about 20 officers plus 3 civilians (1 desk officer and 2 civil engineers from the Ministry of Defence) are seconded to the JCO. Its functions are essentially threefold. The first function is to "excavate" its own independent JSDF civil-military cooperation projects. To make this possible, the JCO visits UN, governmental and NGO offices where Japanese officials are serving and inquires about civil assistance projects that could be done together. The JCO's second function is to coordinate with UNMISS. The JCO is responsible for informing UNMISS of the existence and scope of its own projects to ensure they do not conflict with or downgrade UNMISS tasks; and to negotiate with and request UNMISS so that the Japanese Contingent can operate under a

legitimate UNMISS task order. Thirdly, the JCO coordinates internally; it is responsible for administering the Japanese Contingent's resources and allocating the time necessary for "All-Japan" projects while executing UNMISS tasks. It is the JSDF's first attempt to run its PSOs with two separate offices of implementing body and coordinating office (Yamamoto et al., 2013: 318).

Col. Harutoshi Tsuchiya, Director of the JCO, states that "the JCO's role is to therefore "All-Japan" civil-military projects into ones that are under UNMISS orders; the JSDF's mission in Iraq is a clear example of such civil-military cooperation where all actors involved were from Japan and their activities were visible to the Japanese people at home. The JCO is aiming at implementing such civil assistance activities under the framework of UN peacekeeping operations." Of late, South Sudan has been the JSDF's only peacekeeping mission theatre since Japan completed its withdrawal from the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights in January 2013. In these circumstances, the twenty or so officers staffing the JCO are under considerable pressure to realise and develop such civil-military cooperation. How then, are such "All-Japan" projects being excavated and blueprinted by the JCO?

#### 4. The JSDF's incentives for and understandings towards civil-military cooperation: case of the JSDF's cooperation with NGOs in South Sudan

Given the presence and functions of the JCO with some two dozen officers specifically engaged in the JCO's responsibilities – where no other country generates its own independent projects outside of UN-assigned missions – it is essential to analyse why its presence and practices are so significant to the Government of Japan and what effects they are likely to bring about for the JSDF's future civil-military cooperation in PSOs. It is therefore important to analyse in what way the JCO apprehends the "All-Japan" policy and what challenges it has encountered. In order to respond to these questions, the authors conducted a series of interviews in February 2013 in Juba, South Sudan, with Director Col. Tsuchiya and his subordinate officers in the JCO, Cabinet Office PKO liaison officers, Japanese NGO staff, and UNMISS officials. The interview questions centred on the following four major points:

- (1) The JSDF's understandings towards civil-military cooperation
- (2) The JSDF's understandings of the aims and significance of cooperation with NGOs (the JSDF's incentives towards cooperation with NGOs)

(3) The relationship between the JCO and the JSDF Engineering Unit (Internal coordination mechanisms within the Japanese Contingent)

(4) The JSDF's understanding of UN's perception of the JCO (Coordination with external stakeholders)

*(1) The JSDF's understandings towards civil-military cooperation*

How has civil-military cooperation been accepted and understood by the JSDF? The JCO officers unanimously responded to this question by saying that “it is not too much to say that the biggest challenge for the Japanese Contingent in South Sudan is to realise the ‘All-Japan’ policy. We are obliged to translate the “All-Japan” policy into concrete and visible projects.”

Col. Tsuchiya mentioned three kinds of incentives for CIMIC: humanitarian, the PR effect, and morale raising. He emphasises that what is important is not the “All-Japan” policy itself but to identify new projects that meet local needs and can be achieved in cooperation with all Japanese civilian stakeholders in South Sudan. According to him, there are three approaches.

(a) “All-Japan”/CIMIC projects: The Government of Japan funds a project; JCO coordinates with UNMISS so that this project becomes UNMISS-assigned task; the JSDF implements this task.

(b) CIMIC projects: UN organs or, the national (South Sudanese) government fund a project; the Japanese Contingent implements it under the task order by UNMISS orders.

(c) Ordinary projects: The JSDF implements UNMISS orders, utilising JSDF budgets, equipment, and fuel.

An example of the approach (a) is the JSDF's project for maintaining Juba Na Bari Community Road, funded by the Government of Japan's Grant Assistance for Grassroots and Human Security Projects<sup>8</sup>.

The approach (b) is that UN humanitarian agencies and the host country's government provide construction materials while the Japanese Contingent provides the manpower. Land-developing and construction for the UNHCR's temporary shelters in Juba falls into this category.

Col. Tsuchiya explains that the JSDF's prime purpose in excavating “All-Japan”/CIMIC projects is humanitarian. He

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<sup>8</sup> Japan's Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Project is a part of Japan's ODA, promoting human security and supporting small-scale projects directly benefiting the grassroots level as well as contributing to the socio-economic development of the recipient counties. Funds are provided directly to NGOs or local government agencies that address Basic Human Needs (BHN) such as access to health, water and sanitation, education, income generation skills, and other means to maximize opportunities for individuals.

believes that such independent projects are for the benefit of the local community. According to him, such independent JSDF projects are nonetheless the ones that UNMISS could and should eventually formally adopt as UNMISS tasks. Meanwhile, by currently excavating projects within the permitted range of its mandates and capacity, the JSDF believes that it can carry out activities that come much closer to meeting the needs of the local community members.

In return, Col. Tsuchiya continues, the JSDF has high expectations for the PR effect vis-à-vis the Japanese taxpayers as well as the South Sudanese population, highlighting of the JSDF's activities in a distant post-conflict part of Africa. An example of the "All-Japan" and CIMIC model may be that "JICA constructs bridges, while the JSDF prepares the ground for the road construction that follow the bridges. JICA then supports the running of the hospitals and schools that are built along the roads and sidewalks for which the JSDF had laid the ground." Another combination may be that "the JSDF prepares the way for the construction of roads, allowing the local people better more access to arable land, which they can then farm with JICA's support."

Furthermore, Col. Tsuchiya hopes that "the strength of the Japanese people, which is in the art of manufacturing, will benefit the South Sudanese people to the extent that it becomes well known that these projects

were all facilitated by the Japanese people." He also hopes that each road that the JSDF helps to build will become known as 'the Japanese Road' within the local community. He further believes that the more aware of Japan's contribution the local communities are, the more publicity of Japan's contribution will receive back home. This will increase Japanese taxpayers' awareness and support of the JSDF's international PSO, in harmony with Japan's national interest.

The Japanese Contingent furthermore engages in projects that meet local needs but are judged to be too unsuitable as UNMISS tasks; in such cases, the JSDF does volunteer activities during the weekend without using UNMISS equipment, fuel, or manpower. Examples include performances of Japanese drums by JSDF officers and visits to orphanages and local churches. An intriguing example is the "zebra project"; in cooperation with UNICEF, the JSDF painted zebra stripes (pedestrian crossing marks) on the road in front of an elementary school, using the white paint left over after painting the Japanese Contingent's container houses.

The third rationale for promoting civil assistance activities including volunteer activities is, Col. Tsuchiya explains, to raise the morale of the Japanese Contingent members. Among these are National Support Element (NSE) officers who are paid not by the United Nations but by the Government of Japan. While there are NSE officers in every PSO

unit, the number in the Japanese Contingent is higher than any other participating country under UNMISS. To date, of approximately 350 Japanese Contingent members, about 250 are paid by the UN and the rest are NSE logistic officers paid by the Government of Japan, including communication officers, guards, shelter technicians, and cooks. These officers rarely have contact with locals but stay in the camp simply performing routine tasks, making it difficult to feel that they are “actually contributing to the peace of the South Sudanese people.” Voluntary work is thus important for the Japanese Contingent, and particularly for the NSE officers, to keep their morale high.<sup>9</sup>

(2) *The JSDF's incentives for cooperation with NGOs*

Although the JSDF is not necessarily obliged to cooperate with NGOs, it has been under heavy pressure to do so. Col. Tsuchiya explains the JSDF's cooperation with NGOs by saying that “while the JSDF is now required to make “All-Japan” project proposals and put them into practice, it is not absolutely essential for the JSDF to cooperate with NGOs, whether Japanese or otherwise. However, it would be helpful for the JSDF if

NGOs could advise it of any useful information on projects that would be beneficial to the local people.”

In contrast to the JCO Director's response, many Japanese Contingent members indeed have high expectations from the JSDF's cooperation with Japanese NGOs. When asked whether the JSDF's cooperation with JICA/ODA might be insufficient and thus call for extra cooperation partners from among NGOs, some CRF officers who served in the Haiti mission responded that “we know that NGOs operate closer to the local beneficiaries; working with them will thus help the JSDF to make its activities more visible to the Japanese people at home.”

In response to the authors' question to clarify what exactly the JSDF wants to make visible to whom, they answered:

*“Both ‘activities where the beneficiaries receiving the JSDF's assistance are visible to the Japanese people at home’ and ‘assistance where the JSDF's activities are visible to the beneficiaries’ are important. Such visible activities can considerably raise the morale of the Unit members. At the same time, if the JSDF's activities are being seen to arouse the gratitude of the local people, this will be directly linked to Japan's national interest.”*

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<sup>9</sup> For example, the NSEs occasionally visit an orphanage in Juba for cultural events. The Asagumo Shimbun reports that those who participate in such events do not have local contacts with the locals and thus it is an important opportunity for the NSEs themselves too. “Shisetsu butai ga kojin o imon (The Japanese contingent pays a visit to an orphanage)”, *The Asagumo Shimbun*, 26 September 2013.

On the other hand, one JCO officer revealed that there was a clear but undocumented instruction from the Ministry of Defence to realise certain cooperation projects with NGOs in South Sudan. An official from the Ministry of Defence also reveals:

*“It is not an exaggeration to say that the most significant outcome from the JSDF’s mission in Haiti was successful collaboration with a Japanese NGO. The Government of Japan so highly evaluated this collaboration also that it instructed the Japanese Contingent in South Sudan to likewise strengthen ties with Japanese NGOs.”*

Asked whether the MoD sees cooperation with NGOs as a primary component of “civil-military cooperation,” the same MoD official responded:

*“There has not yet been a clear definition of civil-military cooperation although a number of internal discussions were held. Earlier during the Haiti mission, the MoD once called civilian assistance – such as the JSDF performed – “Civil-Military Cooperation.” However, in the MoD nowadays “Civil-Military Cooperation” rather refers to cooperation with NGOs. In this regard, the definition of civil-military cooperation in Japan is distinct from that in other countries. The JSDF mission in Haiti had one occasion to assist with French / Canadian NGOs’*

*transportation under MINUSTAH task order. But the MoD did not count this as an example of Civil-Military Cooperation. This implies that the Civil-Military Cooperation as the MoD understands its needs a Japanese NGO’s involvement.”*

As indicated by the above responses, a difference can be observed in the understandings of cooperation with NGOs between the Ministry of Defence and the JSDF. For the Ministry of Defence, cooperation between the JSDF and NGOs is a means of creating a positive image for projects under the “All-Japan” policy. Therefore, civilian partners with whom the JSDF cooperates are preferably Japanese NGOs. On the other hand, for the officers in the Japanese Contingent in South Sudan, cooperation with NGOs is understood to be an instrument for making the JSDF’s civil assistance visible to the Japanese taxpayers at home. Therefore, for the JSDF, as long as it can implement projects visible to the Japanese people, its NGO partner does not necessarily have to come from Japan. Likewise, as long as the activities are visible, its partners do not necessarily have to be NGOs but can be international humanitarian assistance agencies or humanitarian institutes like orphanages, because they satisfy three main requisites: (a) meeting humanitarian needs; (2) good PR, and (3) higher morale of Japanese Contingent members.

Another officer who served in Haiti also revealed:

*“Nonetheless, the Japanese Contingent members are usually very poor in foreign languages so that they can barely communicate with the UN organs and non-Japanese NGOs in English or other foreign languages, to say nothing of negotiating with them over cooperation details. It could rather be true for the JSDF that they have only limited choices for cooperation partners amongst a very small number of organizations where the staff speak Japanese and think comfortably in a Japanese way. For them, it would be convenient if they could find Japanese NGOs cooperation partners. To be honest, it seems that, rather than deliberately following the government’s “All-Japan” policy, the JSDF is simply unable to find other partner institutions than Japanese ones. It is for this reason the JSDF emphasises the “All-Japan” to justify its limited options and capabilities.”*

*(3) Relationship between the JCO and the JSDF Engineering Unit*

The authors asked about the relationship between the JCO on the one hand – whose function is to excavate civil-military cooperation projects with Japanese collaborators – and the Engineering Unit on the other – whose function is to implement those activities. Asked whether it has been difficult for the JCO to allot civil-military cooperation projects

and volunteer works to the Engineering Unit during weekends on top of the UN-assigned missions, Col. Tsuchiya explained:

*“The JCO always inquires whether the Engineering Unit has spare time and manpower to execute civil-military cooperation projects from an early stage, and for that purpose, regular meetings are held between the two offices. With regards to weekend volunteer activities, the JCO always consults with the Engineering Unit on its availability and it is always free to decline. I do not feel any problem in this regard.”*

*(4) Coordination with external stakeholders*

Asked whether the JCO’s seeking out of new independent projects and negotiating with UNMISS to turn them into UNMISS tasks assigned to Japan could actually cause conflicts and tensions with UNMISS, one JCO officer replied;

*“The JSDF does not prioritise other tasks in disregard of UNMISS orders, and the JSDF’s weekend volunteer activities do not involve any UNMISS assets.”*

Col. Tsuchiya adds:

*“Coordination between the JSDF and UNMISS on that point is what the JCO indeed is expected to function for. The JCO does not only excavate new projects but is expected to maintain close contact with UNMISS so that sound coordination can be achieved.”*

*“For this reason, the JCO’s Director, Deputy Director and three of its project officers have tenure of one year whereas most JCO officers have a six-month tour of duty. UNMISS commanders do tell the JCO officers to ensure that JCO projects would not hamper the principal UNMISS tasks, but I believe they show understanding towards the projects the JCO suggests to UNMISS.”*

*“If the JCO can explain why its projects can be suitable as UNMISS tasks and explain what effects such projects can bring, then it would be mutually beneficial. If the JCO can excavate projects that can meet local needs but are yet to be formulated as UNMISS task orders, and they are such that the South Sudanese government or local government alone cannot carry them out and if the Japanese Contingent can then integrate them into UNMISS task orders, it will be a win-win solution for the local populations, the JSDF, and UNMISS.”*

With a limited geographical range (Juba and its suburbs) and limited functions (Engineering) under the Japanese peacekeeping operations law, and given orders by the MoD that “All-Japan” projects must be implemented in South Sudan, the JCO officers are independent and self-motivated in coordinating not only internally between Tokyo and the Japanese Contingent in Juba but also

between UN organs, Embassies, and local governments. Under such conditions, the JSDF clearly acknowledges, as Col. Tsuchiya’s responses suggest, that good coordination with non-Japanese actors like UNMISS and reaching clear understandings with them are imperative if the JCO wishes to implement “All-Japan” projects in a multilateral environment where various international and national players are actively involved in the same operational field.

As of mid-2013, the Japanese Contingent had pursued only a few minor projects in cooperating with Japanese NGOs under UNMISS task orders. Many Japanese NGOs raise concerns over cooperation with the JSDF fearing that their independent status – their political freedom – could be compromised under the JSDF’s influence, or that their activities would be utilised in favour of the JSDF’s PR interests. NGOs also fear that the JSDF might treat their beneficiaries too generously – perhaps out of ignorance of development assistance principles, e.g. extravagantly providing aid materials without proper planning or consideration of gender, social mores and community regulations – to the detriment of the beneficiaries rather than bringing assistance.

Asked how NGOs’ concerns are accommodated by the Japanese Contingent, Col. Tsuchiya emphasised that JSDF activities must prioritise humanitarian needs, saying:

*“The Japanese Contingent does not necessarily have to seek cooperation with Japanese NGOs; therefore, if they feel uncomfortable in any way, we will not insist. As explained earlier, the principal goal is to raise the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance; so if Japanese NGOs consider such a form of cooperation would not bring benefits to the local people, then the JSDF will never interfere with their activities.”*

On the other hand, as discussed above, many Japanese Contingent members show great eagerness to realise cooperation with NGOs that can then be presented to the Government of Japan as a successful result of their tenures and made known to the Japanese taxpayers at home. The Embassy of Japan in South Sudan shows its interest in widely demonstrating such results as a good example of cooperation amongst the JSDF, NGOs, and JICA/ODA to the South Sudanese and Japanese public and elsewhere.

## 5. Conclusion

Civil-military cooperation has yet to develop in Japan, and cooperation between the JSDF and NGOs in PSO has just made a start with only a few concrete examples available. The JSDF implemented one case under MINUSTAH with a Japanese NGO in Haiti in 2010 and another small project on job training is underway in Juba, South Sudan as of 2013. In March 2007, the Government

of Japan established the CRF, one of whose main functions is to promote civil-military cooperation in PSO. After more than five years since its establishment, only one or two examples of such military-NGO cooperation is in practice. It is not easy at this point, nor was it the purpose of this article, to judge whether this number is high or low; it is nonetheless critical to acknowledge the likely challenges and pitfalls that the JSDF may well encounter in the future, should it wish to increase military-NGO cooperation in PSO under the prevailing circumstances explained earlier.

The research showed the uniqueness in the Japanese approach to civil-military cooperation in PSO: 1) the presence of the JCO, a separate unit from Japan's proper Engineering Unit, specialising in civil-military cooperation tasks; 2) the civil-military cooperation activities that the JCO wishes to engage in are likely to be those of civil assistance for the benefit of the local community members, which the JCO wishes to be done preferably by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Japanese NGOs and other civilian organisations; and, 3) these activities are initiated by the JCO independently and outside of UN mandates, thus letting the JCO then “sell” its projects and negotiate for them to be included under a UN mandate.

The implementation of Japan's civil-military cooperation policy in South Sudan has led the JSDF to have incentives, and under-

standings towards, civil-military cooperation in three ways: 1) meeting local humanitarian needs; 2) raising the PR effects targeted at the Japanese taxpayers; and, 3) elevating the Unit members' morale.

This list suggests pitfalls and dangers in at least the following three aspects.

First, the JSDF in South Sudan has been under heavy pressure by the adoption of a top-down style civil-military cooperation policy that has virtually compelled the JSDF to design and implement civil assistance activities with NGOs and bring "visible" results back to Tokyo. Consequently, the JSDF may tend to limit its civil-military activities only to "visible" ones. The interview responses show that the Contingency members persist in conducting activities "visible" to the media and the local people. While PR is an important part of its practices, "visible" assistance is not always best way to assist the partner NGOs and the beneficiaries. It will be counterproductive to any actors involved if the JSDF blindly believes that more contacts with the beneficiaries would automatically deepen its understanding of their local needs, and that its assistance would likewise automatically improve. Furthermore, such blindness may suggest a lack of understanding of international cooperation, civil assistance, and NGOs. The JSDF may wish to commit itself to learning their ways of thinking about development aid. In order for that to be effective, the JSDF needs more consistent dialogue with NGOs.

Moreover, the JSDF has been driven by a policy based on the premise that promoting civil-military will more easily gain public support than stressing the military component of the Japanese peacekeeping operation. The policy guidelines and experts' recommendations submitted to the Cabinet as described earlier have presumed that such civil-military cooperation *must* be done regardless of the availability or otherwise of NGO partners or projects in the field. This trend is likely to drive the JSDF away from the basic principle that assistance occurs in response to local needs and not vice versa.

Secondly and closely related to the above, this pressure has driven the JSDF in South Sudan to establish the JCO and excavate its own community projects outside of the UN mandates. Too aggressive an attitude to realising the JSDF's own version of civil-military cooperation – meeting local humanitarian needs that are visible and able to elevate Unit members' morale – may well entail the risk of understanding relations with the UN, which has its own assistance projects assigned to each contingent, and result in the JSDF becoming isolated from the local communities as well as from potential collaborating NGOs.

Thirdly, the JSDF's persistent attempts to practice the "All-Japan" policy may lead it to forget that cooperation with NGOs is only a means to achieving and improving its international PSO, not a goal in itself. This often means that the type of

cooperation the JSDF perceives as the best approach may not be equally good needs for the NGOs and intended beneficiaries. Should the JSDF wish to keep the meeting of humanitarian needs as its primary *raison d'etat*, it may also want to reduce the type of civil-military cooperation it participates in and limit itself to a smaller scale activity such as simple information-sharing, or even to no cooperation activities at all. The JSDF therefore may eventually have to detach itself from the inward-looking "All-Japan" policy of international PSO. This policy may not only hamper the JSDF's role in international peace support but also degrade the quality of assistance, paradoxically damaging the intended local beneficiaries. Very few JSDF officers are proficient in foreign languages, particularly English, and their communication skills have thus been under question<sup>10</sup>. Under such limitation, the JSDF may easily seek (or may have no other option but to seek) cooperation partners who speak the same language and share the same culture. Such an approach may serve as a good starting point for developing civil-military cooperation in PSO in the short term. However, the JSDF should also acknowledge that such an approach ultimately limit its opportunities and thus its ability to communicate with global

actors in the same field, and hinder, rather than promote, wider publicity for its activities. If the JSDF satisfies itself with the lukewarm situation with the familiar faces and hesitates to extend to global partners, then there may be a danger that their activities would be perceived incorrectly by the local beneficiaries and other actors, or worse, might hamper its entire PSO. The JSDF must acknowledge that the "All-Japan" policy is only a short term and indeed risky approach to military-NGO cooperation, and that it is a policy that the JSDF should relinquish in the near future.

Civil-military cooperation is still new to the JSDF and its current practice in South Sudan on which the Government of Japan has set new civil-military cooperation policy guidelines is only a few years old. The JSDF's unique approach to cooperation with NGOs and other civilian organisations has a number of challenges to overcome. Should it fail, the interests of the JSDF, the UN, NGOs, and the local beneficiaries may well mismatch, increasing the likelihood of wasting the JSDF's efforts.

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<sup>10</sup> There has not been any formal documentation indicating the foreign language proficiency of the Japanese contingent members in general; however, some scholars do warn that such a language barrier hinders its roles in international cooperation. For example, Hirono (2006) points out that only 0.08 percent of the JSDF officers speak English fluently.

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