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Abstract:

In early March 2011, a 9.2 magnitude surprise earthquake and 133 feet tsunami hit Japan and caused over fifteen thousand deaths. The Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami that severely impacted the Eastern Japan was recorded one of the strongest quake ever recorded in centuries. No one in Japan was warned about this devastating event that is so tragic. This research paper discusses about the incident and how people involved took it and how did the media respond to it. Amazingly, within two years Japan made an impressive rapid recovery from this disaster. Buildings were rebuilt, roads were paved, and all sorts of damages caused by this event were resolved in a nick of time.

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PART I: The Event/ Issue

The strongest earthquake in history took place in Chile during 1960 with a 9.5 magnitude. Over thousands were killed, injured and left homeless. It was not long till the second strongest earthquake happened in Prince William Sound, Alaska with a magnitude of 9.2 four years later. Not as many lives were taken compared to the earthquake in Chile but it did cost about \$311 million USD in property loss. The third strongest earthquake occurred in the area off the West Coast of Northern Sumatra during year 2004. This magnitude 9.1 terrifying earthquake took away lives of tsunami that came after in a total of fourteen countries in East Africa and Southeast Asia. After this particular disaster, no one would have thought that the next most terrorizing earthquake would happen in just a few years time. An earthquake triggered near the East Coast of Honshu, Japan with a 9.0 magnitude in 2011. The Tōhoku Earthquake was the cause of the uproar not only countries in Asia but media everywhere else in the world took notice about it. The Tōhoku Earthquake is listed number four in the ranking of World's Biggest Earthquakes and is also the most recent worst ones that mankind ever experienced (Largest Earthquakes in the World Since 1900).

The Tōhoku Earthquake took part in Japan on March 11, 2011 at 05:46:23 UTC and lasted for approximately six minutes. The 9.0 magnitude earthquake slowly triggerd from the north-western Pacific Ocean at a fairly shallow depth of 19.9 miles with its epicenter which was approximately 45 miles east of the Oshika Peninsula of Tōhoku , Japan (Sample). Lucky for Japan's highly advanced technology, the Hapan

Meteorological Agency (JMA) sent out warning signals to millions of citizens one minute before the earthquake was detected. The Earthquake Early Warning system which triggered the alarm has managed to save many lives (Talbot).

After the shocking earthquake which hit Japan, it was said that the upthrust on a very wide seabed offshore from the east coast of Tōhoku caused a major tsunami that destroyed almost everything along the Pacific coastline of Japan's northern islands (Great Tohoku, Japan Earthquake and Tsunami). The devastating tsunami was so strong that it spreaded throughout the Pacific Ocean region, extending and reaching the whole Pacific coast of North and South America – from Alaska to Chile. Fortunately, the other countries that felt the impact was only a minor one (Lah, Chance and Belcher). This particular tsunami was not like any other normal ones. It caused huge areas of Kuji and the southern area of Ofinato almost entirely destroyed, including the port area (Yasuda). Rikuzentakata where the tsunami was reported at least three-storeys high was also severely damaged. Many other cities like Kamaishi, Yamada, Higashimatsushima, Natori, Soma etc. was also very badly wrecked by the tsunami.

This event of life-taking earthquake and tsunami caused many tragic stories for a huge population of citizens in Japan. A total of 15,883 deaths, 6,149 injured citizens, and a total of 2,652 people went missing after this devastating event. Several news reported that most of the deaths were caused by drowning. When the earthquake hit Japan and triggered the tsunami in less than an hour, it managed to flood an area of approximately 217 square miles in Japan (Lockridge, Whiteside and Lander). This death defying waves not only drowned and took away lives of these citizens but also overtopped and ruined the protective tsunami seawalls at a few locations. This terrifying incident caused over thousands of families to lose their homes and their

loved ones. Businessmen and owners of companies also went through a disastrous fear as buildings were tumbling down and those who had depended on their own businesses were thinking on how to live on and sustain a proper life for themselves and their families. This happening caused a lot of tears and heartaches to the Japanese nation.

The deaths that were caused by this Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami not only left the involved areas with dead bodies floating around but also leaving those who managed to escape this horrifying nightmare without enough food and water, not to mention shelter as some follow-up deaths were because of insufficient necessities to survive. Hajime Sato, a government official in Iwate Prefecture said, “People are surviving on little food and water. Things are simply not coming. We have repeatedly asked the government to help us, but the government is overwhelmed by the scale of the damage and enormous demand for food and water,” Sato-san also stated, “We are only getting around just ten percent of what we have requested. But we are patient because everyone in the quake-hit areas is suffering.” (Alabaster and Pitman)

Other than people getting badly injured and lives being sacrificed, there were also a major account on the buildings, ports and damaged a lot of technological systems in Japan. A recorded total of 754 cultural properties in Japan were ruined; stone monuments and national treasures were also destroyed. Temples and shrines in the Nikko region were tumbled down. All these important monuments that were once in history of Japanese art and culture are now literally history (Affairs). Despite that, there are news saying that the companies who are responsible in this area are trying their best to restore these major artifacts that symbolises what Japan culture and history is all about (Kitagawa). Japan's Matsushima Air Field of the Japan Self-Defense Force which is located in Miyagi was also damaged due to the impact of the

tsunami. While fighter-jets and aircrafts along with other military objects were badly damaged, a total cost of at least 80 billion Yen which equals to \$1 billion USD was needed as funds for repairing these damages.

In other areas, telecommunications were down as utility poles were damaged and both cellular and landline phone service endured critical disruptions. In addition to that, transportation networks in the areas involved with this disaster also caused havoc as bridges were down and roads were in severely and conditions; not to mention the fear going through locals' minds of driving in such a time. A main electricity provider company – Tōhoku Electric Power (TEP) was left without any power causing around 4.4 million households to live without electricity for days. Cosmo Oil Company located in the Chiba Prefecture – east of Tokyo was also on fire due to the effects of the quake. More citizens were injured and the oil and gas industry was also left in jeopardy (Imamura and Anawat).

Among all these destructions, the worst one was the nuclear meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. It was due to the tsunami that hit Fukushima resulting in a cooling system failure that caused a level seven nuclear meltdown and thus the releasing of very poisonous and dangerous radioactive materials. The leak of the meltdown slowly oozed to the Pacific Ocean, affecting the marine life and also the fishermen's job. Fishes caught from the fishing boats could not be sold in markets due to the poisoning. More than 200,000 residences in that area were evacuated to a much safer place where there was not any harm caused by the nuclear meltdown (Japan initiates emergency protocol after earthquake). It was not safe for any residence to live in the areas infected as there were reports indicating that iodine and radioactive cesium were present in tap waters in certain areas. At other areas, soils that were contaminated by radioactive cesium, iodine, strontium and other harmful elements

caused by the nuclear meltdown also had to be replaced (原発から40キロの土壤、高濃度セシウム 半減期30年).

Everyone who thought that after the huge terrifying Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami was all that there were definitely was a wrong assumption. There were still many aftershocks even after this horrifying incident. Earthquakes of 6-7 magnitudes still occurred, due to the shakes of the main happening but none more severe than what the residences have experienced in March 11th (Baptie). These aftershocks earthquakes and tsunamis continue injuring citizens of Japan and in some ways puts a threat to those owning business related to agricultural and also fishermen who sells fishes for a living. They suffer from not getting profit as the fishes they caught in the ocean have been poisoned by the nuclear meltdown causing them to not have enough to feed themselves and their families. The following earthquakes and tsunami aftershocks took away lives of several unfortunate locals but was not recorded as a huge threat to all (Shinohara, Yamada and Nakahigashi).

After the massive destruction caused by the Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami, the nation in Japan started planning immediately how to make their beloved country recover from this disaster. Precautions and plannings were made as soon as people were aware of how critical the situation was. The government of Japan have spent millions and millions of funds on massive repairs and networks of ocean bottom sensors and tidal gauges to counteract any missed estimations of quakes and tsunami happenings in the future. Fumiko Tajima, a seismologist at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, Germany who was also one of the work forces involved in improving better conditions for future safety of Japan mentioned, “There is no guarantee of earthquake safety unless you prepare for it properly. We do have the ability to issue an alarm, so that people near the coast can move to a higher area

because of tsunamis. People should know that there's no guarantee in an earthquake area, but if they prepare for risks associated with tsunamis properly, they can reduce or avoid hazards.”

Schools have been constantly teaching students the steps for safety precautions in case of a sudden earthquake. Most schools that can afford it also implement swimming as a mandatory skill for students in case of any accidents or floods caused by tsunamis. The schools in Japan has always been practicing this and after the Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami which killed so many lives, they have strengthen these implementations. In addition to that, schools and most of the working places often carry out fire drills, tornado evacuations, and earthquake evacuations in order to prepare residences to not panic and evacuate the buildings safely. These protocalls are enacted for mainly safety purposes and also raise the awareness of citizens living in areas or countries that often encounter such natural disasters.

Japan received help in many forms such as medical, financial and supplements by different countries and organizations including Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, International Medical Corps, World Health Organization and more. Around 116 countries and twenty-eight international organizations lend a helping hand to Japan during Japan's time of needs. Aids from countries like United States of America, South Korea, Australia, and etc were specifically requested by Japan. The people of Japan all felt very grateful indeed to receive assistance worldwide. The help they received includes medical aid, rescue forces saving those trapped or stranded, financial help for the Japanese government to repair and rebuild all things destroyed during the disasterous event (Nebehay).

Besides that, Japan Society also came up with the Japan Earthquake Relief Fund on March 12, 2011 (Japan Earthquake Relief Fund). It serves as a foundation

and corporation that brings the people of Japan and the United States closer together through mutual understanding, appreciation and cooperation. Everyone works together in order to create a better future for Japan. Other than that, there has been many other societies around the world that helped Japan spread the news of this tragedy to raise funds and create awareness around so that when people realize the conditions in Japan, they are more fond of helping those poor souls. Media has also reported the happenings and situations in Japan and has it spread around through mass media around the world to further emphasize on the situation of how residences in Japan are struggling and trying their best to fight for a better future.

When everyone else from other countries are helping Japan to create a better future, local citizens from Japan are sure to perform better in a sense that this is their own country they are fighting for. Locals have never lost hope in trying to save as many lives trapped in buildings or stranded places. They are also willing to sacrifice their own precious lives in order to save others especially during the nuclear meltdown. The older generations were willing to use their bare hands just to stop the leak from getting worse in nuclear meltdowns in certain areas. According to them, they rather they themselves get sacrificed than having to sacrifice the younger generations that would possibly bring much more hope and innovation in making their country a better place to live in in the future (Harner).

The Japanese government along with the citizens worked very hard for a better living for future generations in Japan. They did their very best to make sure that all that can be fixed is repaired and all that can be restored is back to however the place was suppose to be. Day and night along with everyone's tears and sweat have successfully made it through a rough but yet a very pleased satisfactory result of how Japan turned out to be in a very short period of time from disastrous thorn down place

to a nicely refurbished land (Taylor). Japan has done it again with lightning speed progress of turning the country downside up since the March 2011 Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami. It is now again a very beautiful country with many places worth visiting.

During this terrifying incident of the Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami, Japan has received quite a handful of media coverage. The media worldwide was basically interested in these main issues like, what exactly happened, how did the residences handled the situation, who did the government receive help from, what procedures are being taken to restore Japan to its current state, etc.. Among the few main channels that were involved reporting the incident of the Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami on the spot were NHK and Japan Satellite Television. Other TV broadcast stations like Ustream Asia, TV Asahi, TV Kanagawa, Tokyo Broadcasting System, and our very own famous CNN were also involved in getting the news to everyone worldwide (NHK).

Not only did the media covered the happening Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami, but they were also very muc interested in the insight story of the progress of the recovery of Japan and some media were also very keen in helping Japan spread the news for awareness and help raise funds for the country. During the national crisis, the Japanese government also eld a number of press conference to update everyone on their recovery and current status. Japan's Prime Miniseter Naoto Kan along with the Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano were very much involved with these press conferences held throughout the period of time when Japan was struck by this disaster (公明党).

Two years have passed since the terrifying life-taking event of Japan's Tōhoku Earthquake and Tsunami took place. Although some of us are still feeling sad and still

are mourning for those whose lives got taken away, but still we celebrate in great glory that Japan has made such massive recovery from its previous devastating state having almost everything destroyed. Plus, with all the generous support and help the Japanese nation have received from all around the world, it is safe to say that Japan is now on a very steady and firm path to further recovery. God bless, Japan.

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PART II: Question & Answer

I decided to interview a local citizen from Japan. Who else better to obtain first-hand news than people who experienced the earthquake themselves? 古村重徳さん Shigemori Komura-san is a fifty eight years old local from Japan and being a residence in that country he had experienced not only this Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami but also some other common natural disasters that occurs in Japan. Although I have not personally met Komura-san but fortunately through a friend I managed to set up an interview with him. I conducted this question & answer through e-mail and managed to get some awesome replies. Komura-san is a residence in Miyagi, Japan. The following is his address. (宮城県石巻市あけぼの一丁目 7-1) and this is the e-mail I used to contact him – komurashi78@hotmail.com. Below is the translated questions and answers from the original text I used to interview him.

1. It was announce that the Tōhoku earthquake lasted for about 6 minutes with a 9.0 magnitute, probably the highest record ever. What was your feeling/ expression when the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami hit Japan? Also, how were some of the reactions of the people who were affected by the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami hit Japan?

Answer: I wasn't there at the exact area hit by tsunami, but earthquake level was 5+ magnitude. Since our area sometimes has earthquake, my house was well prepared for evacuation. However, when they broadcast the emergency tsunami alert, we were so upset although we know what to do in those situations. In our area, one-meter tsunami was observed, which wasn't so devastative. But a day later, we got information about devastated areas. It was so shocking, but what we did firstly was confirming friends near the areas. I think everyone did so, and few people could contact people on the phone immediately. Days later, special cars providing cellular radio wave came, and enabled us to use phones. It was great response.

2. There were 15,833 deaths, at least 6,149 injured victims and about 2,652 people missing after the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami. What are your thoughts about it? More importantly, how did the families, relatives and friends of those who were involved with this tragedy take this event?

Answer: We know that earthquakes and tsunamis are natural disaster, but every time it happens, we tend to believe that we or government could do better. In my opinion especially, by getting people more involved in helping out with the tragedy. Actually, our preparation gets better and better, but it cannot be altered to victims.

3. Did the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami made you more prepared and aware of what to do and how to stay safe in the following aftershocks? What were some of the precautions?

Answer: Yes, we revised emergency standards and guide on building evacuation especially focusing on dangerous areas in hazard maps. Also, areas hit by tsunami were install with much more effective wave blockers. Individually, my family talked about where to meet in emergency situations, and reconsidered and improved our emergency bags.

4. Please do tell me about then nuclear meltdown incident that happened caused by the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami. And what were some critical and crucial steps that the people in Japan took to solve this problem.

Answer: I don't want to complain about preparation because it is always incomplete. However, company's decision was delayed by government's evaluation of dangerousness. I believe they could keep pollution less.

5. After a short period of just two years, Japan had successfully made a very impressive recovery. All the tears and sweat that the citizens overcome and endured. What are your comments about it?

Answer: It was great to have such a quick recovery in some areas, but we still have some unrecovered areas, especially near the polluted areas. However, we are happy to have good support from citizens, companies, countries, government, and Japanese self-defense force. The self-defense force did quick and great work for us.

6. In your opinion, what was the major lead or motivation that made this recovery such a triumphant and effective one?

Answer: Since we live in a country natural disasters often occurs, our preparations were relatively good compared to other areas. For example, we had Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995, and people who were there did big dedication for recovery in this case.

7. Tell me a bit of sacrifices that the citizens were willing to go through to make sure that Japan would recover to its original state.

Answer: Some people including those who came as volunteers tried to move rubble by their hands despite of the danger to be injured. And one comedian

carried stuff to restricted areas for others safety although being aware of its dangerousness.

8. What are some core values that were present inside the citizens of this amazing country that managed to lift up the spirits within them to overcome this incident

Answer: I'm not sure, but I believe people think that humans are like animals which help each other during the time of need. Especially, since we are in a small country, we feel a stronger bond with citizens.

Questions & Answers (Japanese)

1. Q: 過去最大のマグニチュード9といわれている東北地震ですが、地震や津波に対してどのような印象を受けましたか？また、人々の反応はどのようなものでしたか。

A: 津波被害を受けた地域そのものにいたわけではありませんが、震度五強の揺れが観測されました。時々地震が起こるので、私の家は準備万端でした。しかし、いざ地震が起こるとするべきことを知っているはずなのに非常に困惑してあせりました。私たちの地域では1mの津波が観測され、壊滅的被害は受けませんでした。しかし、一日が経つと各地の地震被害が明らかになりました。とてもショックを受けましたが、それよりも知人の安否を確認することが先決でした。多くの人が連絡を試みましたが、電波状況によって成功した人は少なかったです。数日後電波供給車両が来て携帯が使えるようになりました。とても素晴らしい対応だったと思います。

2. Q: 犠牲者 15,833 名 , 負傷者 6,149 名、行方不明者 2,652 名という今回の地震について、どう思いますか？ また、遺族の方はどう思っていると思いますか？

A: 津波や地震が天災だとわかっているけど、毎回あきらめきれませんね。特に悲劇に深くかかわった人は、今回の出来事による意識強化があっても、親族や知人の死は戻ってこないの、後悔の念が強いですね。

3. Q: 東北地震を受けて、余震を含めてその後のさらなる準備や警戒をするようになりましたか？ また、どのような予防措置を考えましたか？

A: はい、災害地図の避難所と危険区域を更新し、津波被害を受けた地域より効果的な防波ブロックを設置し、個人的には、家族で非常時の集合場所を決め、救急バッグの中を見直しました。

4. Q: 原発メルトダウンに関してどう思いますか？ また、東電や政府の対応について重要点はありますか？

A: 完璧な準備は存在しないので、準備について強く文句をいうつもりはありません。しかし、東電の対応が政府の危険度評価によって遅れたことは、汚染と被害を増やしたと思います。

5. Q: 2年という短期間で素晴らしい回復をとげた日本の姿は印象的でしたが、多くの人の汗と涙についてコメントしてください

A: 多くの地域では素晴らしい復興を見せましたが、まだ復興しきれてないところもあります。しかしながら人々、企業、国、政府、自衛隊の良い支援を受けることができ嬉しいです。特に、自衛隊は早く正確に仕事をこなしていました。

6. Q: 何が人々の回復へのモチベーションであったと思いますか？

A: よく地震が起きるので、ある程度の準備ができていたのだと思います。阪神大震災が1995年にあり、その時の被災者の方々が積極的に支援してくださいました。

7. Q: 復興のために人々の払った犠牲について話してください。

A: ボランティアできた人を含めた何人かは、怪我のおそれを気にせずがれきを運んでいました。あと、一人の芸人が物資を危険区域に運んでいました。

8. Q: 事後の素晴らしい回復を支えた日本国民の価値観はなんだと思いますか？

A: 断言はできませんが、人間は助け合う動物であることを皆が自覚しているからだと思っています。特に、日本は狭いので、国民の間に強い絆を感じます。