

**JAPAN'S TRIPLE DISASTERS IN
MARCH 2011: SECOND CHANCE FOR
THE KAN ADMINISTRATION?**

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Executive Summary

1. On 11 March 2011, Japan was struck by a 9-magnitude earthquake which triggered a devastating tsunami and explosions at a nuclear plant.
2. Japanese Prime Minister Kan Naoto declared: “This is the worst crisis in the postwar history of 65 years. All Japanese are now being tested on whether we can overcome the crisis ...”.
3. The multiple calamities will give Kan the chance to demonstrate his political leadership and mettle, and consolidate his administration until 2013 (when the next Lower House Election must be held at the latest).
4. By early March 2011, the Kan administration was reeling from a series of political setbacks including former Foreign Minister Maehara Seiji’s resignation from his post for receiving illegal political donations from a non-citizen.
5. Kan himself was apparently guilty of the same funding problem and the opposition parties demanded for his resignation too. But allegations of Kan’s financial impropriety were fortuitously overshadowed by the triple whammies of earthquake, tsunami and a nuclear meltdown.
6. Given the multiple catastrophes now facing Japan, the Kan administration will enjoy a temporary respite from the constant sniping of the opposition parties and media, and concentrate on reconstructing Japan. The country’s triple disasters may well turn out to be a silver lining for Prime Minister Kan if he succeeds in galvanizing the nation.
7. The initial economic cost of the disasters is estimated to exceed 10 trillion yen (US\$122 billion).

8. The Bank of Japan also pumped 15 trillion yen (US\$183 billion) into the financial system to stabilize money markets shaken by the country's triple calamities.
9. Despite the simultaneous tragedies, ordinary Japanese in the disaster areas maintained a remarkably stoic countenance and good social order.
10. Perhaps it takes the worst crisis faced by postwar Japan to force the country's political, economic and intellectual elites to forge a national consensus to surmount the recent "Apocalypse" and move on to address its "two lost decades" of economic and political doldrums.
11. Despite various political and territorial problems between the two northeast Asian neighbors, China reciprocated Japan's earlier assistance to the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake by sending a rescue team. This gesture of friendship will go down well with Japanese public opinion.