

De-militarizing Military: Confirming Japan's Self-defense Forces' Identity as a Disaster Relief Agency in the 2011 Tohoku Triple Crisis

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ABSTRACT

Large scale natural/man-made disasters, such as the 2011 Tohoku earthquake, tsunami and nuclear triple crisis, bear horrible human, social and economic costs. However, they may simultaneously present opportunities for military actors to perform reconstruction and humanitarian efforts that usually receive considerable media coverage. If performed successfully, and covered substantially, these humanitarian activities may influence, change, or confirm public attitudes and understanding of a nation's military role and social acceptance. For Japan's Self-defense Forces, the 2011 Tohoku relief efforts marked the first large-scale domestic opportunity to be successfully utilized, thereby fulfilling its proclaimed mission statement as Japan's primary disaster relief organization (in comparison to the much criticized response to the 1995 Kobe Earthquake). This paper provides an overview of the literature regarding militarized humanitarianism and disaster relief, which has been debated globally since its growing prevalence in the 1990s, and implications for the SDF's public image-making and social positioning. It examines the current identity confirmation of the traditionally insecure existence and role of the SDF in the Tohoku relief efforts as a military by emphasizing this non-combatant aspect.

INTRODUCTION

The pre-war Imperial Japanese Army and its offensive military involvement in the Second World War has been blamed for the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The Imperial Japanese Army was the catalyst while the US Military was the perpetrator of the act. Thus, in postwar Japan, both the successor of the Imperial Japanese Army, i.e., Japan's Self-defense Forces, and the occupying US Forces have for decades been perceived with anti-military sentiments and distrust in the public mind. Nonetheless, 66 years later, in the aftermath of the 2011 Tohoku triple crisis, Japan's Self-defense Forces and the US Military joined in one of the largest domestic humanitarian relief and reconstruction efforts to date, Operation *Tomodachi* (Friend), while most of the available manpower (more than 100,000) and equipment of all three branches (Air, Ground and Naval) of the Self-defense Forces conducted the first-ever joint military operation at so large a scale in the postwar period (Japan Defense Focus, 2011, no. 23). In comparison to the overall civilian government (and TEPCO) response, which received critical to mixed reviews, the military relief and reconstruction efforts of the SDF and USARJ have been lauded and in the media (Asia Pacific Defense Forum, April 26, 2011). Consequently, pertinent questions that emerge in the aftermath involve how, if at all, the media hype affected the public perception of the SDF, and how to interpret the implications of this influence.

*The material presented by the authors does not necessarily portray the viewpoint of the editors and the management of the Asia Association for Global Studies (AAGS).

Vol. 5, No. 2, 2012-13. PRINT ISSN 1884-0337, ONLINE ISSN 1884-0264.

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143-11 Hirato-Ooaza, Hanno-shi, Saitama-ken 357-0211 JAPAN

Large-scale disasters are not anticipated or premeditated publicity stunts; however, in this paper it is assumed that they may provide public relations opportunities for militaries if carried out successfully. This is because humanitarian/disaster relief missions are (usually) not depicted/perceived as military or militarist in nature. As outlined in the literature regarding the Berlin Airlift and the Atoms for Peace campaign, the humanitarian utilization of militaries has been documented to enhance positive public perception by de-emphasizing the combatant aspect of militaries. The hereby attained "de-militarized" image may then provide the public acceptance/support space for further military action/development, which is a cycle that can also be identified with regards to previous SDF humanitarian activities and foreign dispatches.

Nonetheless, so far, for lack of robust Japanese public support, the SDF's scope of military action, while gradually expanding, has remained confined to non-combatant, humanitarian/disaster relief, and rear-end supportive roles. The 2011 Tohoku triple-disaster, however, is worthy of special consideration because of its unprecedented scale of destruction and the consequent unprecedented scale of SDF response in addressing it (World Politics Review, April 13, 2011). What are the PR implications for the SDF, then, after this major humanitarian mission in the domestic theater? If they were largely positive, what would this entail for the expansion of future scope of military activity? In an attempt to answer these questions, this paper will expand upon its review of the literature, thereby developing a pertinent conceptual framework. Based on this theoretical background, the following section will discuss the viability of further media analysis of the aforementioned media representation and discourse of the SDF activities in the Tohoku crisis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The existing literature on SDF activity since the 1990s focuses predominantly on domestic and regional concerns or expectations regarding re-militarization and constitutional revision. These concerns largely emanate from studies that at times overemphasize legislative changes and foreign dispatches or overrate pertinent Japanese public support for remilitarization (Inoguchi, 2006, Matthews, 2003; Tanter, 2005). Conversely, there is a trend of simply discarding such concerns altogether, which is partially reflected in the relative lack of critical analysis regarding the SDF's public relations affairs (with the possible exception of Sabine Fruehstueck's (2007) work). At least, this is the case in comparison to the plethora of such research on the US military and PR, for instance. Thus, recent works such as Paul Midford's (2011) comprehensive analysis of Japanese public opinion on security policy provides rare and valuable insight into the development of both the SDF's expansion of its activities and the genealogy of pertinent public opinion.

The Pacifist Frame of SDF Dispatches and Public Opinion in Japan

"Pacifism" in Japan's public opinion and attitudes toward the Self-defense Forces during the Cold War period. For the purpose of this paper, diplomatic or foreign policy choices are assumed to be shaped and influenced by domestic variables such as national institutions, internal party struggles, and most notably, public opinion. Public opinion toward security issues, specifically regarding the scope and development of foreign dispatches of the SDF, has been a significant indicator of loosening or tightening "pacifist" public attitudes in Japan, which in turn have enabled or restrained elites' foreign policy options. Paul Midford (2011) defines this "pacifism" in Japan as "defensive realist" rather than strictly "pacifist." This is based on the assumption that a "pacifist" Japan would not have believed in establishing and maintaining even a limited defensive force such as the SDF, while in fact public opinion polls reveal that the public, even as early as the 1950s, deemed it necessary to maintain limited defensive military capabilities (Midford, 2011, chap. 3).

Midford further suggests that, "Japanese public opinion during the Cold War was never especially pacifist" (Midford, 2011, p. 50). He explains that as early as the occupational period, the majority of Japanese public displayed rather a variant of realism in their attitudes

toward security, which he refers to as "nascent attitudinal defensive realism" (Midford, 2011, p. 58). According to Midford, this refers to public attitudes that realistically assume that a minimal defensive capability is necessary while simultaneously refusing both over-armament and unarmed neutrality (Midford, 2011, p. 58). This attitude, commonly referred to as "pacifist" public opinion in Japan, consists of a strong historic distrust of the government's capability of controlling the military, as well as of the military apparatus itself, in addition to fears of entrapment in US war efforts (Midford, 2011, p. 50). Thus this paper argues, following Midford's analysis, that "pacifism," in terms of military distrust and entrapment fears, has had foreign policy implications in Japan because "rises in entrapment fears make the Japanese public more opposed to SDF overseas deployments and other policies that could increase the risk of entrapment," while simultaneously "elites recognize that their range of choices in security policy is limited by the Japanese public's attitudes, attitudes characterized as defensive realist" (Midford, 2011, p. 31).

Japan's "pacifist" public and emerging SDF dispatches in the post-Cold War Period. This self-imposed and public "pacifist" restraint in foreign policy has been especially evident in Japanese public reactions to overseas dispatches of the SDF in military missions under the rubric of alliance commitment and burden sharing. Continued efforts to thwart unconstitutional entanglement in US military actions, as former-Prime Minister Sato accomplished during the Vietnam War, solidified the pacifist security stance of Japan's foreign policy, which developed non-military, highly attuned economic and diplomatic alternatives. However, with the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent 1991-1992 Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm), the newly emerging security environment of the post-Cold War era intensified demands for a more pro-active security policy stance in Japan.

Thomas Berger (1996) writes that the demands of the Gulf War in the midst of this newly emerging security environment of the early 1990s caught Japan (as well as Germany) by surprise. According to him, Japan's elite as well as its public were by then highly opposed to the idea of aiding the US war effort and potentially increasing their international military presence beyond the immediate perimeter of Japan. Despite the financial contribution and non-military mine-clearing mission in the aftermath of the war, US pressure demanding more than "check book diplomacy" increased tremendously. Thus, alliance considerations as well as strategic searches for a new security role are considered to have factored into the subsequent Japanese (and corresponding German) elites' decision to push for controversial legislative changes allowing for the SDF to engage in PKO missions (1992) for the first time in its postwar history (Berger, 1996, p. 185). Berger's article was written in 1996, and as of that time, he stressed that despite the fact that engagement in PKO (Peace-keeping Operation) missions "signal[s] a major departure from established German and Japanese policies and an important shift in their political-military cultures ... it is [nonetheless] important to emphasize the incremental nature of this shift and to avoid overlooking the extent to which the old core values of their political-military cultures, especially their anti-militaristic character, remain intact" (Berger, 1996, p.186). Although he emphasized the political opposition and media criticism in both countries for even non-combatant Blue-Helmet activity, he mentions public opinion evidence that was surprisingly supportive of the PKO missions.

This is a characteristic that is highlighted in Midford's (2011) analysis regarding the emerging trend of post-Cold War SDF overseas dispatches as well. He writes that public as well as elite opinion in Japan has been highly skeptical about military approaches in addressing terrorism, humanitarian crises or post-conflict nation building. This attitude is potentially rooted in Japan's defensive realist, or "pacifist tradition," which has denounced the utility of military approaches and has emphasized non-military alternatives. However, Midford argues that, ironically, it is precisely this disbelief in military approaches in addressing these security concerns that have made non-combatant SDF dispatches surprisingly popular among the Japanese public (Midford, 2011, p. 39). Thus, this popularity of non-combatant foreign dispatch experiences, in turn, has "encouraged the government

to resubmit an amendment to the 1954 SDF law that would elevate overseas operations to the status of a "primary duty" alongside homeland defense ... [which] eventually passed in late 2006, together with legislation elevating the Japanese Defense Agency to ministry status" (Midford, 2011, p. 40). Hence, based on his analysis of public opinion and security policy in postwar Japan, it can be assumed that non-combatant foreign dispatch activities carried out successfully, initially restrained in their scope by the "pacifist" tradition in Japan, have enabled further expansion of domestic and international "military" or "non-military" SDF activities.

Does this emerging trend of public acceptance of SDF dispatches in Japan then translate into acceptance of "military" activities and thus signal the emergence of a "normally" militarized Japan?

Japan's "Pacifist Military" and the future of Japan's foreign security policy in the Post-9/11 period. Berger (1996) and Midford (2011) stress the fact that compared to the popularity of non-military humanitarian dispatches, missions involving the possibility of combat activities for the SDF remain highly unpopular. Midford states: "Support for overseas humanitarian operations does not translate into support for a larger military role overseas" (Midford, 2011, p. 41). As a matter of fact, Midford concludes that though the missions in response to 9/11 remained within the "negligent line" of public opinion (i.e., absence of severe public opposition), they were by far not as popular as previous non-combatant PKO or disaster relief missions, instead stoked entrapment fears, and, "[c]onsequently, in the wake of Iraq [Operation Iraqi Freedom] the Japanese public pushed for retrenchment" (Midford, 2011, p. 146), which probably factored into the removal of physical Japanese military presence from Iraq by January 2010 (Hein, 2011, p. 136).

Thus, authors reviewed so far emphasize the fact that it may not be in the near or even medium future that Japan will consider shedding its self-imposed restraints of "pacifism" to pursue overtly assertive security policy or force projection regarding its national interests. On the contrary, based on the literature reviewed, it can be argued that Japan's political-military culture will most likely continue to restrain radical departures from its "pacifist" traditions in foreign policy choices. How does this assumption, then, affect Japan's security policy? Public acceptance shifts have allowed SDF foreign dispatches to broaden in scope so that they now encompass a wide variety of missions (PKO, humanitarian, disaster relief, anti-terrorism/piracy, nation-building, etc.); however, they will probably remain limited to non-combatant operations for the near future. The underlying dynamic that has generated the current range of foreign policy options seems to emanate from the volatile, 60-year-old interaction of Japanese public opinion and elite policies based on Japan's "pacifist" traditions. While Article IX of Japan's constitution has restrained its security policy options, it should be noted that it has probably also enabled the development of "human security" and other sophisticated alternatives to military approaches in which the SDF may emerge as a potent force in future international security considerations (Soeya, 2005).

In short, with Japanese public opinion having evolved in the postwar period, becoming more supportive of the domestic and even foreign role of the SDF regarding non-combat disaster/humanitarian relief operations, this in turn has been re-confirming the SDF's identity as a "pacifist military" (Midford, 2011). Based on Midford's (2011) analysis of public opinion and security policy in postwar Japan, it can be assumed that this image/perception of a non-offensive military has eased the gradual expansion of the scope of military activities that are either supported by, or lie within the "negligent line" of, public opinion in Japan. Thus, it can be argued that the extensive mass media portrayal of large-scale domestic militarized disaster-relief efforts in response to the 2011 Tohoku triple crisis have had yet another reassuring "demonstration effect" on the Japanese public. This reinforces the public image of the SDF as Japan's primary disaster relief agency, and hence further expands the scope for future military action.

The basic argument pursued in this paper is that a de-emphasis of the SDF's military

purpose, by repeated emphasis on its humanitarian/positive aspects, enables its continuation and expansion as a military, because it is not perceived as a "military." This may be considered unique to Japan's military due to its pacifist constitution; however, application of a humanitarian veil for PR purposes is far from unprecedented in global military affairs. Consequently, several such instances deemed relevant should be analyzed and compared to the Japanese case in order to support the aforementioned argument by constructing a larger conceptual framework.

The Humanitarian Frame of Military Technology Discourse

To begin with, two major symbols emerged from, and henceforth determined, the military prowess of any nation in the post-WWII period, namely, aerial and nuclear technology. Ironically, it was these very symbols of military might, in the immediate aftermath of the war, that mark the most publicized media events and public relations campaigns that succeeded in de-militarizing military technology and/or operations. Pertinent literature on these two symbols is thus reviewed, taking into account the PR benefits of 1) unintentional media events, and 2) intentionally orchestrated propaganda in deemphasizing the combatant aspect of said two symbols of warfare.

The Berlin Airlift and the "Candy Bomber." The Cold War ensued within three years of Japan's surrender, of which the first major crisis emerged in the Soviet commencement of the Berlin blockade in June 1948. As a response to the blockade, the Allied Forces airlifted in coal and food supplies for 15 months until September 1949. Roger Miller (2008) provides detailed accounts of the operation's success in conducting the first globally publicized provision of humanitarian aid via military airlift, one that amounted to a propaganda victory for the Allied Forces and successfully pressured the Soviets into lifting the blockade. The significance of the Berlin airlift for this paper, however, lays in the unanticipated PR effect for the (then) recently established US Air Force, as well as the remaking of military symbols through involvement in humanitarian relief missions. This PR significance of the airlift was apparent to William H. Tunner, the man in command of the operation, who stated that it was the greatest PR opportunity in history for the "air transport story" (as cited in Miller, 2008, p. 114). Apart from the overall feat, he was referring to the "Vittles" story that he himself expanded into a major side-operation named "Operation Little Vittles," which involved dropping candy and chocolate to children in Berlin.

This operation, which was expanded from a single pilot, Halverson, dropping chocolate tied to handkerchief parachutes, became the dominant media image that remains to this day about the operation. Military transport planes took off airfields formerly used by the *Luftwaffe* (the Third Reich's Air Force) to bomb chocolate on Berlin, which downtown was almost completely annihilated in the aerial bombing campaigns during the war (Miller, 2008, p. 60). The visual frame of Allied Air Forces bombing German cities was now rivaled by the newly emerging image of the chocolate/candy bomber, henceforth providing a frame apart from destruction in connection to aerial technology.

The "Atoms for Peace" campaign and the "Friendly Atom." On a related note, Kenneth Osgood (2006) analyzes Eisenhower's public relations campaign dubbed "Atoms for Peace," crystallized in a famous 1953 UN speech that was launched with the objective to win the "hearts and minds" of domestic and global publics for the "friendly atom": An atom not to be connected to fears of the bomb, but peaceful, useful and friendly - an atom stripped of its military application and destructive force in the thermonuclear age that was emerging (Osgood, 2006, chap. 5). According to Osgood, "The United States needed to create psychological space for continued nuclear weapons development by exploiting the non-military applications of atomic energy to the fullest... the development of atoms for war required the cultivation of atoms for peace" (Osgood, 2006, p. 156). Osgood further explains how the speech was distributed around the world in the comprehensive follow-up campaign. This follow-up campaign, including everything from commemorative stamps

to financial aid and staged events, culminated in the successful rhetorical reconstruction of the atom, to be understood henceforth as an "atom for peace." As Osgood states: "In seizing upon the peaceful uses of atomic energy, Eisenhower tapped into a psychological need to find something redeeming and worthwhile in this technological marvel threatening the very existence of humanity" (2006, p. 180).

Thus, the atom, which until then was almost exclusively associated with the "bomb" and the "mushroom cloud" in public discourse, was now veiled and baptized with a rival image: peace, life and familiarity replacing the images of war, death and horror. This shift in public perception ultimately enabled the continued development of atoms as weapons, while the friendly atom permeated the daily lives of citizens around the world.

OBJECTIVES

Militarized disaster relief/humanitarian missions are nothing new, though they have been more prominent since the 1990s, and have had public relations benefits/losses for militaries. This began most notably in the powerful images of the Allied PR victory with the Berlin Airlift in the late 1940s. This was the first time that the military took on such a major, visible humanitarian role and it henceforth opened new horizons for humanitarian operations as well as military public affairs. In addition, the Atoms for Peace campaign, initiated by Eisenhower, successfully de-emphasized the disastrous military legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by emphasizing atomic power's positive and peaceful aspects. Thus discourse around nuclear technology was steered away from the military aspect, in turn enabling/legitimizing the continuation of both commercial and military nuclear development and application. There exists a plethora of research on these cases and the US military, but limited research on militarized humanitarianism and its potential PR implications for the SDF.

Thus, this paper attempts to provide a pilot study to enhance understanding of contemporary militarized humanitarianism, specifically in terms of disaster relief, and its impact on the SDF's public image and identity development in Japan. By referencing foreign cases and tracing the genealogy of public opinion regarding the SDF in Japan, this research (and subsequent research) investigates the dynamics of non-military SDF roles, pertinent public support, and various scopes of action enabled by said public support. The ultimate objective of this paper is to provide the basis for further detailed, expanded and full-scale media analysis of SDF media representation with regard to public relations. Assuming that this non-combatant role of military actors has been an expanding global trend, the eventual objective and rationale for this type of research would be in highlighting both the advantages as well as the perils of "de-militarizing" militaries.

METHODOLOGY

In order to attain the aforementioned objective, this study employs a combination of several research methods. To begin with, a critical literature review of pertinent foreign and domestic cases was conducted, so as to provide a conceptual framework by analyzing precedents regarding humanitarian/disaster relief and military PR. Against this conceptual backdrop, then, the PR potential for the SDF of their disaster relief in the 2011 Tohoku triple crisis will be addressed. This will test the conceptual framework's validity before a full-scale media analysis is conducted on a larger sample of documents, by applying qualitative methods of research. At that stage, frames and themes of relevant Ministry of Defense PR documents will be reviewed with the use of qualitative media analysis models such as Altheide's (1996) ethnographic content analysis. This will serve as a preliminary probe for further expanded analysis of television news coverage, PR material, media events, and the like.

In addition, considering opinion changes of the Japanese public, by analyzing opinion polls regarding the SDF, would be vital in assessing the actual PR efficiency of the

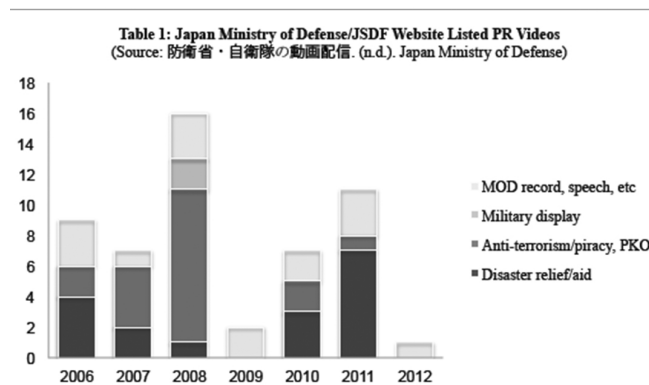
humanitarian/disaster relief frame. Such opinion polls are regularly conducted by various Japanese news and government agencies on a large scale. Results are made available to the public and were also utilized in other academic research such as Paul Midford's (2011) analysis as a valid indicator of public attitudes toward military matters in Japan. Inherent shortcomings of opinion polls such as biases due to the varying political orientation of agencies and wording differences may be compensated for by conducting future individual in-depth interviews targeting relevant populations and experts.

PROPOSED ANALYSIS OF MEDIA DOCUMENTS

Preliminary Study of Ministry of Defense/SDF PR Material of the 2011 Tohoku Response

Apart from the direct link to material regarding the 2011 Tohoku response from the main starting site, there are roughly 50 video clips of the SDF posted or linked to in the "PR and Events" (広報・イベント) video section (動画配信) of the Japan Ministry of Defense/JSDF website. The videos were produced and/or posted between 2006 and 2012, and are available on the site, linked to the MOD YouTube channel (YouTube 防衛省動画チャンネル), or the government's internet TV (政府インターネットテレビ). For the purpose of this paper, which is to conduct a pilot study determining the validity of conducting a full scale media analysis of disaster relief related PR effects for the SDF, a preliminary examination of the list, type, and/or theme of the videos was made.

Under the assumption that media documents of (incidental) activities may be used in the production of public relations material if they bear PR potential, 52 items posted from 2006 to 2012 were divided into four categories according to their title and roughly corresponding theme. This was based on Altheide's (1996) ideas of reflexive media content analysis, i.e., categories are not rigidly predetermined but may be influenced and formed from the process of data collection. Thus, in Table 1, the material was divided into roughly four theme-based categories: Disaster relief/aid/humanitarian missions; Anti-terrorism/piracy/peace; Display of military equipment; and MOD records, speeches, and other.



Overall, despite some inconsistency and irregularity in the postings, the majority of the material depicts non-combatant and strictly defensive activities that are humanitarian/aid, UN PKO or "world peace" oriented. It can further be observed that the number of videos titled/themed around disaster/humanitarian relief experienced an increase in 2011. Among the nine items posted after March that year, three were exclusively about the SDF rescue, relief and reconstruction activities in Tohoku, while four were about the SDF dispatch and activities in Haiti. The 2011 Tohoku response is available in a 15 min 49 sec full version, a 6 min 59 sec version, documenting the actual rescue and reconstruction activities, as well as a message from the Minister of Defense regarding the dispatch. This production

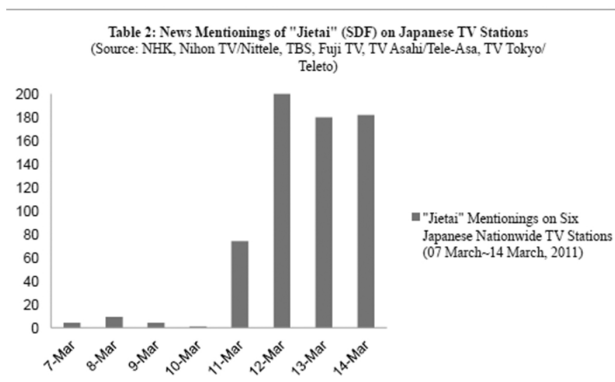
of a separate clip in various versions is similar to the documents depicting overseas dispatches such as to Haiti or Somalia; however, whereas the titles of foreign disaster missions are relatively to the point and "dry," the 2011 Tohoku response is titled "ただ、目の前の命のために～全国民の「想い」を胸に、被災地へ" (Only, for the life in front of [our] eyes, [carrying?] the thoughts/hopes of all Japanese in our hearts, to the victims.) Moreover, it differs from previous domestic relief activity documents, as the SDF activities in the 1995 Kobe Earthquake and subsequent activities are not listed separately, but only briefly mentioned in clips that focused on the general history of the SDF.

Thus, it could be argued that the 2011 Tohoku response is relatively more represented and stressed in the list of available documents of the Ministry of Defense/JSDF PR video website. Further, its formatting into a public relations video, officially posted in such a category, may be understood as evidence for the PR potential of the 2011 Tohoku response footage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SDF and Public Opinion in Post-Tohoku Japan

Government surveys, conducted by the Cabinet Office on the SDF's image prior to the 2011 Tohoku relief efforts, resulted in a combined 75.6 percent that stated a "neutral" to "negative" and "relatively negative" image. Regarding preferred activities for the SDF, "disaster relief activities" surpassed "national defense" as the primary objective for its existence at 78.4 percent (Cabinet Office, 2009). Compared to results of the Cabinet Office survey conducted after the relief efforts in 2012, results for "positive" increased from a previous 19.5 percent to 37.5 percent while "neutral" to "negative" and "relatively negative" decreased to 59.5 percent (Cabinet Office, 2012). Moreover, in post-2011 Tohoku, survey results conducted by news agencies such as Yomiuri Online, reveal that 82 percent rated SDF response as "positive" compared to 6 percent that regarded government response as positive (Yomiuri Online, September 10, 2011). Further, survey results of the three most affected areas (Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima Prefecture) show that 72.4 percent described the activities of the SDF as their "major source of post-disaster encouragement," compared to 27.2 percent that stated the central and/or local government as such (RENGO, November 7, 2011). Whereas the populations in the aforementioned worst-affected areas probably based their opinions by witnessing and experiencing the SDF activities first-hand (in addition to via media outlets), for the majority of the Japanese population, it can be assumed that the substantial media coverage following the earthquake was their major source of information and representation regarding the SDF. Thus, a tentative analysis of increase in coverage, i.e., simple counting of times the word "Jietai" (自衛隊, Self-defense Forces) appeared in six nationwide television networks without (yet) considering concrete context, was conducted (see Table 2).



Interpreting the Analysis Findings

In the four days preceding the disaster, the SDF was mentioned an average of 4.5 times daily on all six channels combined. However, in the four days after the earthquake struck (including the 11th), the SDF was mentioned, or referred to in some way or form, 159 times on average per day. Considered in combination with the increase in popularity related to the Tohoku relief efforts evident in the aforementioned public opinion surveys, it may be argued that, 1) the SDF 2011 Tohoku relief efforts were covered substantially, and thus, 2) favorable public perception increased. This is also supported by the fact that the Ministry of Defense/JSDF lists the response in its PR section. Therefore, it can be argued that a full-scale, detailed and expanded analysis of the media documents of the SDF 2011 Tohoku response is worthwhile. It is planned to be conducted in the next phase of this research project.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CONCLUSIONS

Ultimately, expected findings of this research consisted of supporting evidence that, 1) favourable public perception regarding the SDF rose as a result of the 2011 Tohoku disaster relief operations, and that this in turn, 2) will eventually expand the SDF's scope of military activity. By doing so, this (and further expanded) research would ideally substantiate the initial hypothesis that de-militarizing by accentuating non-combatant functions of the military is not only possible, but also expands the scope of publicly acceptable military activity based on this image. Currently, the results remain limited as far as empirically supporting a positive link between, 1) favorable public perceptions and, 2) expanding the scope of military activity. Thus far, based on the findings of this current analysis, it can be argued that there exists a correlation between the SDF activities in Tohoku, their media coverage, and an increase of popularity, i.e., PR potential, in post-2011 Tohoku Japanese society. Hence, it seems valid to conduct an expanded media analysis, and pertinent follow-up research in the next stage of this research project, in order to solidify the arguments by substantiating data/evidence, to address limitations, and also to improve credibility in relation to the second part of the hypothesis, i.e., expanded scope of action.

Previous academic literature has either over emphasized or understated the evolving role and image of the SDF in Japan. Consequently, studies tend to simply overplay the threat of re-militarization and constitutional amendment, or overlook momentous developments in Japanese society and military affairs. It is for this reason that focus on the SDF is valuable. No other military has had to depend on the de-militarization of its image to the extent of the SDF in the postwar period. Thus, the dissecting of militarized humanitarian/disaster relief in terms of military public relations for the SDF may not only enhance understanding of the involved dynamics and implications for Japan, but it may also provide the basis for further research into the benefits and limitations of militarized humanitarianism, which has become a prominent feature in the post-Cold War period's military-social relations beyond Japan. Finally, momentous developments may not emanate from a single incident even as monumental as the 2011 Tohoku relief efforts. The continued trend of militarized humanitarianism, however, may culminate in considerable ramifications for national, regional and global military-social dynamics, and hence deserves specific academic scrutiny.

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