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Disaster and the Body of the Rescue Agency after 3/11

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SUBJECTIFIED BODIES AFTER THE GREAT EAST JAPAN EARTHQUAKE

This paper analyzes the condition of the formation of a subject after the Great East Japan Earthquake. The disaster statistics were grim: 15,870 people died, 2,846 were missing, and 6,110 were injured. Miyagi Prefecture was the most damaged location, where 9,527 people died primarily because of the tsunami and its cascading impacts. In addition, housing and infrastructure suffered serious damage. 129,291 houses were completely destroyed, 264,004 were half destroyed, and 725,918 were partially destroyed¹. It was a serious disaster that completely changed the scenery of the northern part of Japan.

In an emergency, people feel that they should help each other in order to survive and escape from the threat of death caused by disasters. The same situation must have occurred because of the Great East Japan Earthquake. Therefore, it caused serious concern for the body. Human beings were intensely stressed, not merely from the perspective of the rescue mission but also from the (particularly natural) scientific of the subjectification. The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident was an additional and significant cause of this because of both the long-lasting radioactive effect and its non-discriminatory impact on human beings. The problem of the body can be extended to the nuclear workers as well as children, pregnant women, and members of the private voluntary organizations who have suffered from the radioactivity.

The word “body” is, however, not limited to the human beings. The disaster also damaged the body of

the nation-state and its infrastructure. As can be seen in the past, the re-building of a nation and state in an emergency has always been an issue of modernity. As Ichinokawa Yasutaka mentioned, by citing the works of Michel Foucault, one of the significant features of modernity is the shift from the power configuration of a king to *gouvernementalité* that controls the population (Ichinokawa 2000: 19-36). From this transition, “the existence of lives that supports the condition of the existence and perpetuity of society is talked about not through the body of king anymore, but through the population” (Ichinokawa 2000: 36), which exist in the society and must be regulated to manage the nation-state. Taking this transition of power into consideration, the Great East Japan Earthquake destroyed not only the lives of people and infrastructure but also the system of subjectification that was supported by the stable networks of discourse, knowledge, and things.

INVULNERABLE BODY OF/ FOR THE NATION-STATE

Does anyone have the right to flee from any catastrophes? The people’s body has been steadily controlled and mobilized to mitigate the situation after 3/11 in the name of nation-state. In particular, the public body as the rescue agency (therefore, potentially as the soldier’s body in the regime of nation-state) formed a unified nationalism and vice-versa. These subjects rescued many people suffering from the impact of the earthquake, tsunami, Fukushima Daiichi, and its diffusing radioactivity. Although these subjects simultaneously risked their

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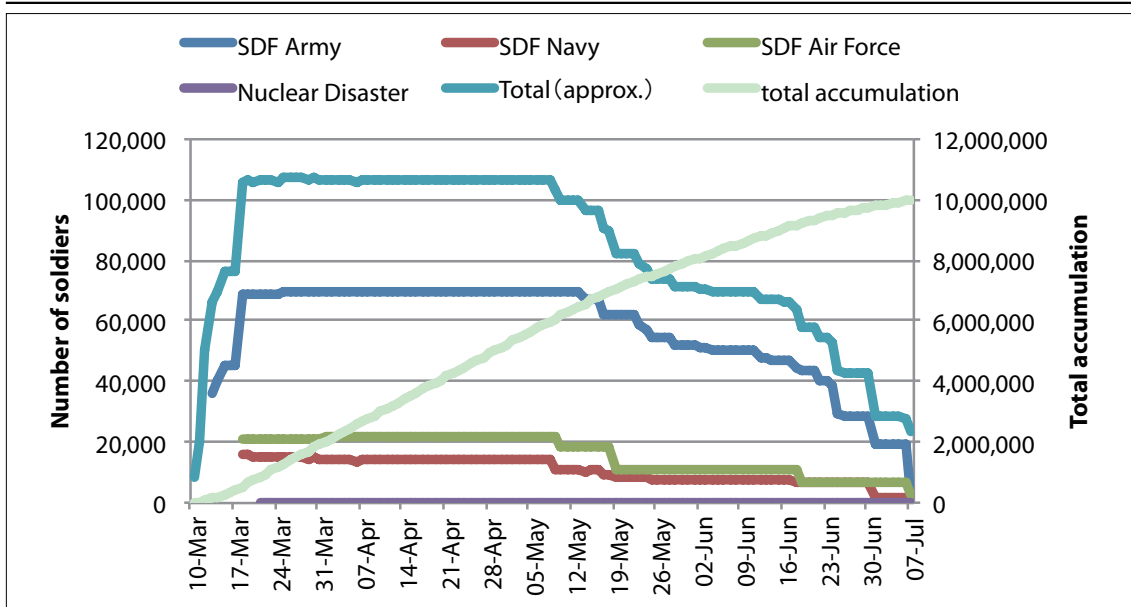


Figure 1 : Number of SDFs deployed from 2012/3/11 to 7/8 (Modified from the source: SDF webpage <http://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/news/index.html>)

lives, the risk involved for the public body was concealed because of superiority to the nation. Some people were able to rescue others; this implied that they had competence superior to normal citizens and were equipped with appropriate technology. I call the people that have the capability of taking such roles as policemen/women, firemen/women, and soldiers as the subjectification of the public body, representing the masculinity of the nation². They are not supposed to lose, be injured, and show their vulnerability.

This subjectification needs a configuration. Configuration is the schema of the process in which the nation represents itself to itself. By doing so, the nation constitutes itself as the subject (Sakai 1997: 28-29). Sakai does not consider the nation-state to be essential, but as the effect (or figuration) of a translation that creates differences in language and representation. Through the translation, the entity of the subjectification can be formed.

As Sakai Naoki (2001) mentioned, to strengthen the narrative of nationalism, there should be a community of sympathy in which people can be able to bond with each other with a strong sense of intimacy. This intimacy separates “us” from “them” by creating

sympathy within “us,” while ending communication with “them.” This encourages a strong sympathy among “us,” “we” shall not be responsible for replying to others to whom “we” do not listen. As a result, “we” believe that “they” always claim credit for what “we” have done in the past; furthermore, “we” come to resent “their” voices because “they” always lie. This retroactive movement of creating itself is the way in which a closed community with sympathy emerges.

After the 3/11 disaster, it seems that Japan and the US have created a configuration of “West and the Rest” and simultaneously have tried to put equal value on both nation-states using words such as “Tomodachi (friendship)” and “Alliance.” This represents an equal-based relationship between both nation-states, while concealing the predominance of the US relative to its military presence after the WW2.

SOLDIERS MAKING NATIONALISM

During the chaos after the disaster, the soldiers of the

Japanese Self Defense Forces (SDFs), policemen, and firemen actively tried to improve the situation by rescuing people and re-building infrastructure such as roads and bridges. The US Forces joined in voluntarily and strategically. There were, however, a variety of people from many different countries, groups, and individuals who tried to rescue and support the people who were suffering³. That initial wide range of support vanished after the new representation emerged when the US government announced "Operation Tomodachi." It started on March 12 after the US made a formal request to support Japan and Japanese Prime Minister received it on March 11. Until the end of the operation on April 30, a maximum of 24,500 US soldiers, 24 warships including a nuclear aircraft carrier, and approximately 189 aircraft were deployed.

The Japanese SDFs started its operation right after the impact of the earthquake based on the SDF act. The Ministry of Defense in Tokyo established Disaster headquarters. Simultaneously, North Eastern Army Aviation Group in Sendai and Maritime SDF 73th Division in Ominato rushed jet fighters to investigate the situation. At 6 PM, the Defense Minister issued an order to dispatch SDFs for the Great Japan Earthquake Disaster. Prime Minister Kan ordered deployment of a 100,000-soldier force, which reached the location on March 18. On March 14, the Joint Mission of Army, Navy, and Air Force was established. On May 16, the SDF Army reserve was called to active duty for the first time since the foundation of SDFs. On April 15, the Navy and Air Force reserves were called to active duty.

On the other hand, there was a serious nuclear plant problem in Fukushima. On March 11 at 7:30 PM, Prime Minister Kan issued a nuclear emergency warning. The Defense Minister announced an order of dispatch to address the nuclear disaster. The following days, on March 12 and 14, SDF soldiers

were dispatched to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, and on March 14 and 15 to Fukushima Daini.

From March 11 to July 8, the total number of soldiers involved in rescuing reached over 10 million. It seemed that this joint-military action had succeeded and acquired great honor from the nation.

TWO FACES OF "TOMODACHI"

For many Okinawan people, the situation was different. The history of oppression of Japan and the occupation of the US military is constantly remembered because of the continuous presence of the military facilities and consequent violence against Okinawans, particularly to children and females in Okinawa⁴. Wakabayashi Chiyo described the situation after 3/11 as follows.

Shortly after the 3/11 earthquake, NHK Okinawa repeatedly reported that the US military had announced that the Marines were ready to be dispatched to the affected areas for disaster rescue, just awaiting a request from the Japanese government. Under the name of "Operation Tomodachi [friendship]," the US Forces with Marines began sending a nuclear aircraft carrier to the coast of Fukushima. The garish impression the operation gave to the public, blended later with another garishness: the killing of Osama Bin Laden, performed as a public execution. Together they seem to have impressed the Okinawan public with a sign of US decline, rather than a fear of its magnitude of power.

Many Okinawans are aware that Operation Tomodachi is more a deception staged for the benefit of the US government and Japan-US alliance than a genuine project for humanitarian aid. It is also thought to be an excuse for the US military to legitimately gain access to public

airports and air facilities for their military use. But it makes us question more fundamental characteristics of the military itself, i.e., as epitomized in Eisenhower's Janus-faced nuclear strategy, it is difficult to believe that their basis of humanitarian aid comes from "good will" while they unfold indiscriminate massacres in Iraq and Afghanistan and commit crimes on a daily basis in Okinawa. Not to mention that Kevin Maher, who branded Okinawans as "stupid" when he was the US Consul General of Okinawa, took charge in mediation for the operation. (Then, in May, he turned out to be a business consultant in a company, working for nuclear fuel recycling industries, in which Richard Lawless, the former Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Affairs during the Bush administration, is one of the executives.) (Wakabayashi 2012)

Before the disaster, Okinawan people were outraged at the contemptuous speech of, Kevin K. Maher, the former US Consul General, particularly, his comments as the "colonizer," such as "although Okinawans grow goya (bitter melon), other prefectures grow more than Okinawa. Okinawans are too lazy to grow goya," or "by pretending to seek consensus, people try to get as much money as possible. Okinawans are masters of "manipulation" and "extortion" of Tokyo"⁵, had remarkable impacts on the Okinawan people. Given these facts, Operation Tomodachi and the statement of the US-Japan Alliance appeared to Okinawans as statements of a continuous colonial master. Furthermore, the deployment of the PAC3 on Okinawa Island, Miyako Island, and Ishigaki Island was completed because of the alleged threat of North Korea's long-range ballistic missiles on April 2012.

SLIT OF CHAIN ARMOR

In the mainland, the joint-military action has succeeded and acquired great honor from the nation. Soldiers, however, have been facing mental diseases and injuries, and have been exposed to the radioactivity by participating in the rescue operation. SDFs raised the compensation for the injury and death of soldiers to 150% for those who were in the act of rescuing⁶. On April 1, a soldier of Ground SDF died. He had to participate in a tough rescue operation⁷. On October 18, a field officer of Ground SDF committed suicide; on October 19, another field officer also committed suicide⁸. According to the survey of the Cabinet Committee of the House of Representatives, the soldiers mobilized to the disaster field have an increased risk of developing PTSD and depression⁹. According to the survey conducted on 58,050 Army SDF after one month of the mission, 3.3% (1,916) were at high risk to develop PTSD, 2.2% (1,277) were at high risk to develop depression, and 4.3% of 6,112 of Maritime SDF (262) were at high risk to develop PTSD. For Maritime SDF, a survey for depression was not conducted. 7.5% of 3,319 of Air SDF (249) were at high risk to develop PTSD and 6.5% of 2,829 of Air SDF (184) were at high risk to develop depression¹⁰.

SDF, like any military institution, has a tendency to experience a high suicide rate because of its vertical organization form, the chain of command, and its masculinity. Konishi Makoto, who was an anti-war soldier of SDF and is now a journalist, has written a variety of books on SDF. He argues that there are serious problems of bullying among SDF soldiers. He founded the Trans-Pacific GI/SDF Rights Hotline in 2003; the number of calls has been increasing since 2005. "The cases come particularly from the families of SDF soldiers, who have a variety of problems of human rights abuse such as suicide, retirement,

depression, bullying, and sexual harassment” (Konishi 2006: 10)¹¹. Why have these problems not led pursuing the causes of the suicides? That is the reason d’être of the military protecting the security and safety of the nation and ruling class, ruling both the nation and its military.

The concept of subject formed in the knowledge of the population is prone to create the homogeneous body of soldier. Michel Foucault’s concept of *gouvernementalité* is therefore useful to cite here (Foucault 2007). Foucault does not regard the state as a natural entity, but rather the effect of unremitting statization with the knowledge and power of the state itself. Therefore, it could be said that the rescue operation of SDF is pre-included into the program of knowledge and institution of the state which creates each body of military constitution that can restore the destroyed soil and population. Therefore, soldiers as population (both within the knowledge and institution) do not possess vulnerability and have to be invincible. This causes a paradoxical anancastia. That is to say, if even one soldier exposes his/her own vulnerability, it might cause a scenario of dissolution of the military. Therefore, the dead (and) body of the soldier has to be monumentalized and included within the state or concealed thoroughly. Within this knowledge and power, the soldier as population is separated from the soldier of the crowd. As Doi Tomoyoshi points out through Foucault, “the divide generated between the population as the object of ruling and the crowds of the individuals is applied as the intermedium on the level of this population when the power relation works. The significant point of Foucault is that hierarchization of the adequate and inadequate was not developed in the axis of the sovereign and subjects, but in the crowd of the individuals that are the subjects of the ruling” (Doi 2012: 399). For the power, the constant populization of population is essential to manage itself. Therefore,

the constant distinction of the subject of nation from the crowds of individuals is crucial. In other words, the crowds are quantified through the technology of the *gouvernementalité* and statistics to the subjects. As a result, the soldiers who deviate from the concept of soldier are discarded in this process and will be stigmatized socially, economically, politically, and epistemologically. Therefore, the soldier as population will be reincarnated; this constant renewal of the soldier’s body lets the military institution survive. This subjectification is simultaneously influenced by the *gouvernementalité* of the Neoliberalism in the present. Both inseparable bodies (of the nation and human subject) have been reformed to the adequate formation of the subjects for the Neoliberalism (Miller & Rose 2008).

CONCLUSION

Each human body differs from the soldier as the population and always and already has differences within¹². Unless one would be a cyborg, the body is always and already vulnerable. What does it mean to be deployed to a field of disaster and get injured? This should not end only by keeping one’s self reminded firmly to serve the country and nation. It might be said that the mechanism of organizing and representing the soldiers as population is nothing new, but rather a core of the Modernization from the end of eighteenth century (when T. M. Malthus published *An Essay on the Principle of Population* in 1798). It should, however, be pointed out that the excessive thought of SDF soldiers as rescuing subjects by the nation after 3/11 has concealed its essential role as soldiers itself and the new strategy of the US Forces in East Asia in the twenty-first century.

This is the beginning of the disaster as you witness US military veterans in the Vietnam War begin to confess the existence of Agent Orange and a nuclear

crisis in Okinawa, more than 40 years after the war (Mitchell 2011; 2012). It takes time. This problem can be extended, as I mentioned at the beginning, not only to the soldiers but also to the nuclear plant workers, children, pregnant women, the crowds in the future and, above all, everyone living on this globe. Moreover, the reformation of US military bases throughout the world is still underway. Much smaller, dispersed, and flexible models of bases, what David Vine mentioned as the Lily-Pad Strategy¹³, is the near future strategy of Pentagon, Japan, and its “Tomodachi” alliances. We should view the real face of military institutions in this globalizing era of the twenty-first century and rethink what reconstruction means and who was the protagonist of this narrative.

Notes

1 Metropolitan Police Department, 2012, “The damage situation and police measures by the Great East Japan Earthquake”, accessed on Sep 8, 2012 (<http://www.npa.go.jp/archive/keibi/biki/higajokyo.pdf>).

2 In case of the SDF Japan, the “camouflaging” of its masculinity through representation of the female gender has been strategically conducted to soften the image of military operations. See (Sato 2012), accessed on September 11, 2012 (<http://www.japanfocus.org/-Fumika-Sato/3820>).

3 Since March 12, 24 countries and areas (Israel, Italy, India, Indonesia, England, Korea, Australia, Singapore, Switzerland, Sri Lanka, Thailand, China, Germany, Turkey, New Zealand, France, the Philippines, America, South America, Mexico, Mongol, Jordan, Russia, and Taiwan) have sent teams of first-aid workers, UNDAC, UNOCHA, FAO, IAWA and WFP to Japan. The Australian Air Force supported transportation. Teams for medical care from four countries (Israel, Jordan, Thailand, and the Philippines) were active. Aid Supply was sent from 163 countries and areas, as well as 43 institutions. More than 17.5 billion yen was donated from 126 countries, areas, and institutions. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, June 19, 2012, accessed on June 22, 2012) (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/saigai/shien.html>).

4 There are, however, of course the Okinawa elites who constantly have had a relationship with the Japanese

and US elites. In this sense, there are homosocial relationships among those to manage the military presence beyond the law. On the politics of homosociality, see (Shinjo, 2010).

5 People's Plan Study Group, 2011, “American University Kevin Maher”, Accessed on July 21, 2012 (<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=explorer&chrome=true&srcid=0B6kP2w038jEANGFhZmJkNDUtYzNiYS00ZmUyLWJjYjEtMGUyMWU4ZTYzOWQ2&hl=en>).

6 Asahi Shimbun, March 25, 2011.

7 Nikkan Sports, April 2, 2011.

8 Jcast News, October 22, 2011.

9 Yomiuri Shimbun, March 7, 2012.

10 The minutes of the Cabinet Committee of the House of Representatives on March 7, 2012.

Vice Minister Watanabe: I received a question about the mental health of soldiers deployed after the Great East Japan Earthquake. Yesterday, a brief overview of the mental health check was reported. So I am going to inform you. A survey conducted for 58,050 soldiers of the SDF Army shows that 3.3% of them were at high risk to develop PTSD, 2.2 % at high risk to develop depression. Some surveys are still in process. One year has passed, as you mentioned, since the Earthquake. Therefore, the new mental health check is supposed to be done soon.

Next, a survey conducted for 6,112 Maritime SDF soldiers shows that 4.3% of them at high risk to develop PTSD. For Maritime SDF soldiers, a survey for the depression was not conducted and the reason for that is demanded. Already five MSDF soldiers are identified as having PTSD. They are under medical care and have been struggling for returning to their work. A survey conducted for 3,319 Air SDF soldiers shows that 7.5% of them were at high risk to develop PTSD and 6.5% were at high risk to develop depression. The possibility of PTSD was not checked.

We, the Ministry of Defense, will continue to tackle the issues of mental care of the SDF soldiers having worked so hard by facing the national crisis. In any case, we want to take care of it by inviting counselors and increasing numbers of clinical psychotherapists over a prolonged period with the fiscal 2012-year budget. That is the situation. Thank you. (The House of Representatives HP, accessed on July 21, 2012 (http://www.shugiin.go.jp/itdb_kaigiroku.nsf/html/kaigiroku/000218020120307002.htm)).

11 The numbers of suicides have been shifting as follows: in the decade after 1995, the total number was 673: 75 in 1998, 62 in 1999, 73 in 2000, 59 in 2001, 78 in 2002, 75 in 2003, and 94 in 2004. The suicide rate of the SDF (per 100,000 people) in 2003

was approximately 39.5. It is much higher than 27.0 of normal citizens (in 2003) (Konishi 2006: 16-7).

12 This insight is related to the works of Brono Latour (Latour (Porter tr.) 1993).

13 David Vine, 2012, "The Lily-Pad Strategy: How the Pentagon Is Quietly Transforming Its Overseas Base Empire and Creating a Dangerous New Way of War," ToDispatch.com, accessed on July 21, 2012 (<http://www.tomdispatch.com/archive/175568/>).

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