

# The Emergence of the State in Civil Society after the Earthquake: Military Governmentality in Japan

Keisuke MORI

## INTRODUCTION

What kind of governmentality emerged after this disaster? Invisible infrastructures became visible in the wake of the destruction caused by the combined tsunami, earthquake, and nuclear catastrophe on March 11-12, 2011. What did this tragedy actually mean? In modern states, what comes after the panic caused by urban destruction? In this article, I will argue that, in the case of Japan, the military emerged as a state device for creating new infrastructures, and also that it penetrated civil society.

## THE NATION STATE AND THE MILITARY IN GLOBALIZED GOVERNMENTALITY

### *Governmentality in Globalization as an Analytical Perspective*

Aihwa Ong (2006), a cultural anthropologist, has explained how *neoliberal governmentality* functioned and developed in the East Asian region. Ong emphasizes that East Asian neoliberal formations embedded as *Special Economic Zones* were formed through the convergence of neoliberal reason and governmentality, in a state of exception or emergency (Carl Schmidt's concept of *Ausnahmezustand*).<sup>1</sup> As result, neoliberal policies in East Asia strengthen state power, which depends on the ability to create a "space of exception."

In this context, what is the role of the military?

In the East Asian region,<sup>2</sup> political tension between the US-Japan alliance and China seems to be increasing. Furthermore, those governments seem to have appropriated international tension and used it to strengthen their domestic policy strategies.<sup>3</sup> This appropriation can be analyzed using Michel Foucault's insightful analysis of state *governmentality*. Seen from this perspective, the expanding role of the police and military institutions exercises the physical power of discipline in order to create a space of *security*. Stephen Graham, an urban sociologist, has critically examined the penetration of military reason into contemporary urban areas (Graham 2011). Contemporary *security* is characterized by undifferentiated police and military functions. In other words, as David Harvey has argued, the replacement of urban *social reason* and *social justice* (Harvey 1992) with *military reason* and state authority collaborates in creating a state of neoliberal exceptionalism.

The military's role in creating the infrastructure of the state emerges through disaster and destruction. It emerges as a *rescue agent*<sup>4</sup> after the collapse of civil society. The modern state military completes its ontology with the co-figuration (in the Kantian sense) of itself as a *rescue agent* and of the nation (or its legitimate population) as *rescued agent*. Regardless of the cause of the destruction, the rehabilitation process begins by defining the *security* of the state (and its capital). The Japanese Self Defense Forces (JSDF) and US Forces emerged in this context after the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Keisuke MORI, Research Fellow (PD), Japan Society for Promotion of Science, International Christian University

***The Military as a Rescue Agent***

The role of the military as a disaster rescue agent has acquired popularity through the joint mission of the JSDF and US forces. While both forces share a common military function and possess a legitimized monopoly over state-sponsored violence, the US forces also function as a global network, and have created a global order of violence. They provide a transnational flow of physical power, which is different from the economic governmentality that creates the conditions for domestic civil society.<sup>5</sup> For the US, the bilateral security agreement is essential for the overseas deployment of its troops. For this reason, a consensus of civil society in the host nation is critical; if there is no public consensus, than it is necessary to gain the agreement (or at least the silence) of members of the government or congress.<sup>6</sup> At this point, US Forces have to “intervene” in a civil society that has experienced destruction in order to gain public support in the host nation. To achieve this, the US provided both humanitarian aid and an anti-nuclear military mission (Mori 2012). Taking into account the findings of previous studies, I will clarify the relationship between governmentality and military reason by focusing on three points. First, I will explain the historic relationship between the Japanese military and disaster aid. Second, I will analyze how the JSDF mobilized and cooperated with US forces. Finally, I will clarify how the cognitive space was divided through geographical difference by the military missions in Tohoku and Okinawa.

**DISASTER AND THE MILITARY  
IN MODERN JAPAN*****The Imperial Army of Japan and its Role in  
Providing Disaster Relief***

The modern military has played a more or less significant role in rebuilding urban areas. The Great Kanto earthquake of 1923 was the Imperial Army’s

first experience of a situation in which normal countermeasures could not be effectively applied. The Army mobilized to provide disaster aid because of the massive scale of the destroyed area (Yoshida 2012: 28). Yoshida has pointed out that the physical power of the modern state is normally instrumentalized as military force for external threats, and as policing for internal matters. However, when the scale of a disaster or riot is really significant and impossible for the police alone to control, in the end, the military must be mobilized to resolve an internal issue (Yoshida 2012: 29). For this reason, both disaster aid and the maintenance of security are categorized as belonging to the *internal function* of the military (Yoshida 2008: 73).

In the beginning, the Imperial Army was not obliged to provide disaster aid. However, as military institutions gradually stabilized, the provision of disaster aid was institutionalized. The turning point came in 1891, when the third division of the Imperial Army provided rescue aid without any legal obligation to do so, achieving national recognition after the Noubi Earthquake. The aid was not merely “effective physically, but also useful for creating a sense of affinity toward the military” (Yoshida 2008: 80). Disaster aid was officially institutionalized after the Japanese-Russo War in 1905 (Yoshida 2008: 89). After the war, the relationship between the military and the public worsened, due to the burden imposed by an enormous military budget. The Army’s Central Command therefore sought to develop military disaster aid in order to obtain public support. As a consequence, the Command amended the Garrison Act at the end of Meiji era (Yoshida 2008: 92).<sup>7</sup> What is interesting here is that “the institutionalization of disaster aid was a process for the Imperial Army to recognize the *nation* as a constitutional element of the state” (Yoshida 2008). The military’s disaster aid created a legitimate population on one side and an illegitimate population on the other.<sup>8</sup> After the Kanto

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earthquake, however, the large scale support provided by the US Forces was received with ambivalence by Imperial Japan, which considered the US a potential enemy during that period (Saito 2012).

After World War II, the Imperial Army was disbanded and a pacifist, postwar constitution was created by the Japanese government and the American New Dealers. This pacifist denunciation of war was amended in 1950, during the tensions of the Korean War. In August of that year, the General Headquarters/SCAP established a National Police Reserve that was a *de facto* reincarnation of the

Japanese military forces. It changed its name to the National Security Forces in 1952, and the SDF Act came into effect in July 1954. In 1950, the number of Defense Agency personnel was 75,100 (including civilians). This number increased to 119,947 in 1952, and to 164,539 in 1954. While an updated version of the security treaty in 1960 generated a wide variety of anti-treaty social movements, the number of SDF-affiliated personnel increased to more than three times as many as in 1950. In 1990, the SDF had more than 300,000 personnel (Figure 1). The National Defense Expenditure began to increase in the 1970s,

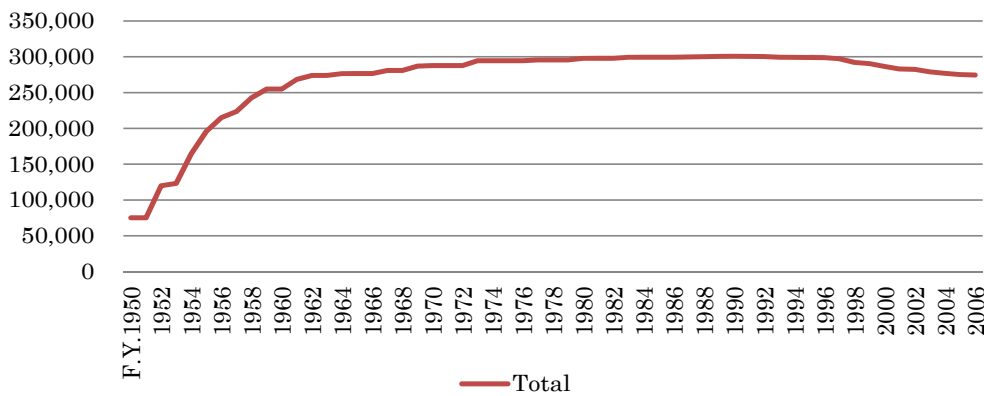


Figure 1. The Number of Defense Agency Personnel (FY 1950–2006)  
Source: <http://www.stat.go.jp/data/chouki/zuhyou/31-03.xls>.

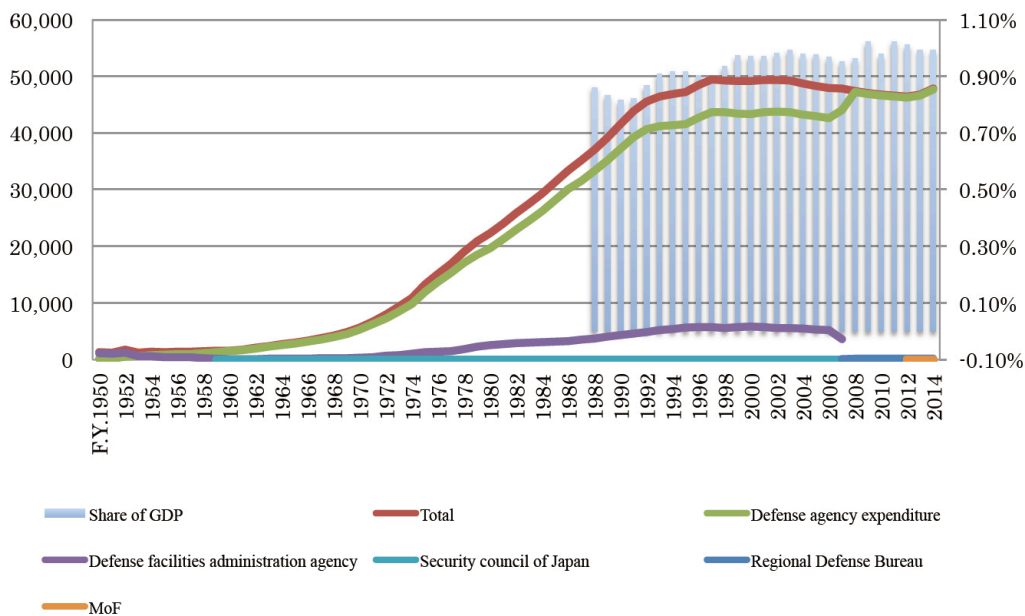


Figure 2. Japan's National Defense Expenditure (FY 1950–2014) [100mil. Yen]  
Source: <http://www.stat.go.jp/data/chouki/zuhyou/31-01.xls>, Defense Handbook, 2014; SIPRI, 2015.

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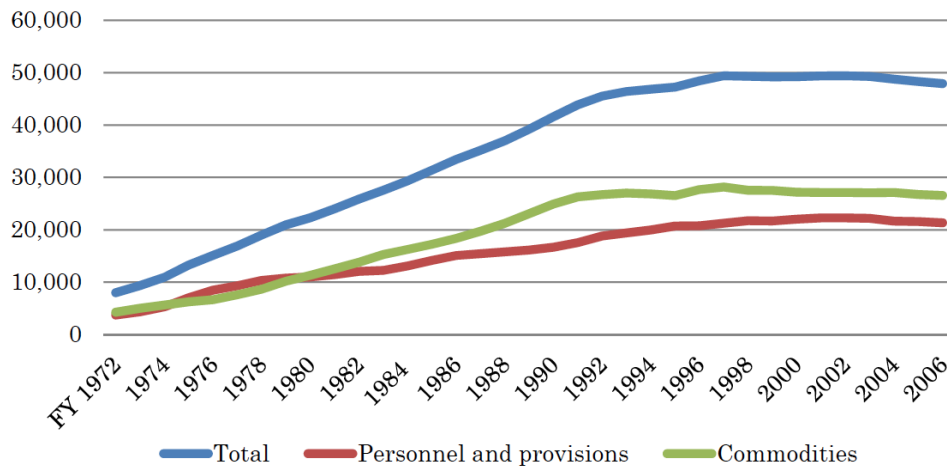


Figure 3. The National Defense Budget by Use (FY 1972–2006) [100mil. yen]  
Source: <http://www.stat.go.jp/data/chouki/zuhyou/31-02.xls>.

reflecting the modernization of Japan’s military infrastructure (Figure 2). The share of GDP shows a slight increase in defense expenditure after 1988. Breaking down the budget by category makes the trends much clearer (Figure 3). The increase in the defense budget reflects expenditure on personnel and provisions, the appreciation of the yen, and the cost of commodities. Debates about the SDF’s disaster aid reemerged after the Great Hanshin earthquake in 1995. The end of the European Cold War brought into question the *raison d’état* of SDF, as well as its size and effectiveness. The earthquake refocused the

role of SDF as a rescue agency (Sato 1997). As a result, the LDP created its quick disaster aid plan; the authority of the SDF as a provider of disaster aid was strengthened (Ministry of Defense 2011).

## DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY THE EAST JAPAN GREAT EARTHQUAKE

### *The Military as a Ubiquitous Backdrop*

The TV news of the tsunami striking the coasts of northern Japan made a spectacle out of the disaster.

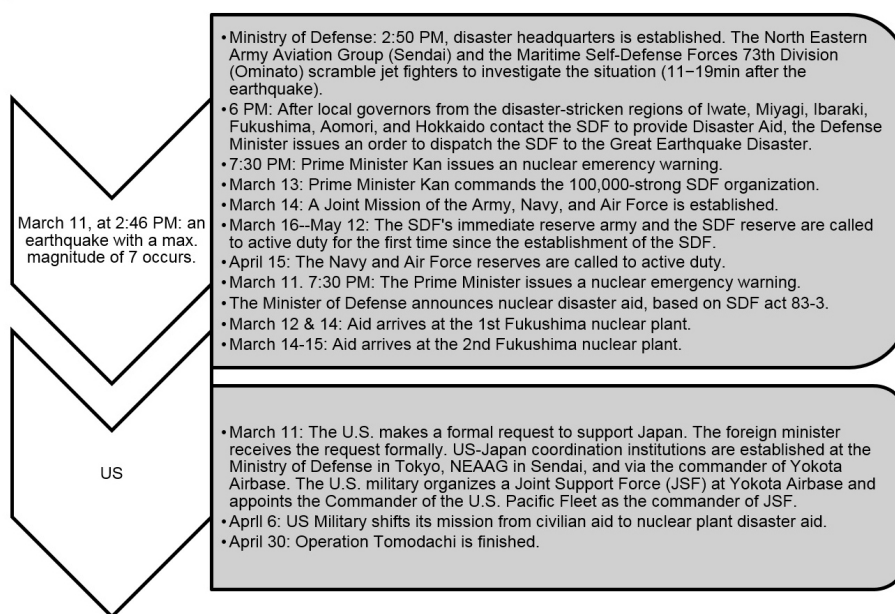


Figure 4. The Beginning of the Mobilization of SDF and US Forces  
Source: Study Group on Infrastructure and Society (2011).

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The tsunami crashed over dikes, reaching houses, cars, and even fleeing people. The SDF began the rescue mission in accordance with the SDF Act on Disaster Aid (Figure 4). The North Eastern Army Aviation Group was immediately established in Sendai, a central urban area adjacent to the disaster-stricken area. During the night of March 11, the Prime Minister authorized a nuclear emergency warning, and the SDF announced the nuclear disaster, in accordance with SDF Act 83-3. The US

government contacted the Japanese Prime Minister and offered disaster aid. On the same day, US-Japan Coordination Institutions were established in Tokyo, Sendai, and at the Yokota US Air Force base to increase the effectiveness of the disaster aid. US Forces established a Joint Support Force at the Yokota Airbase, and designated the US Pacific Commander as the commander of the JSF. By doing so, Japan and the US networked their joint governmental institutions. In addition to the US Forces, Australian,

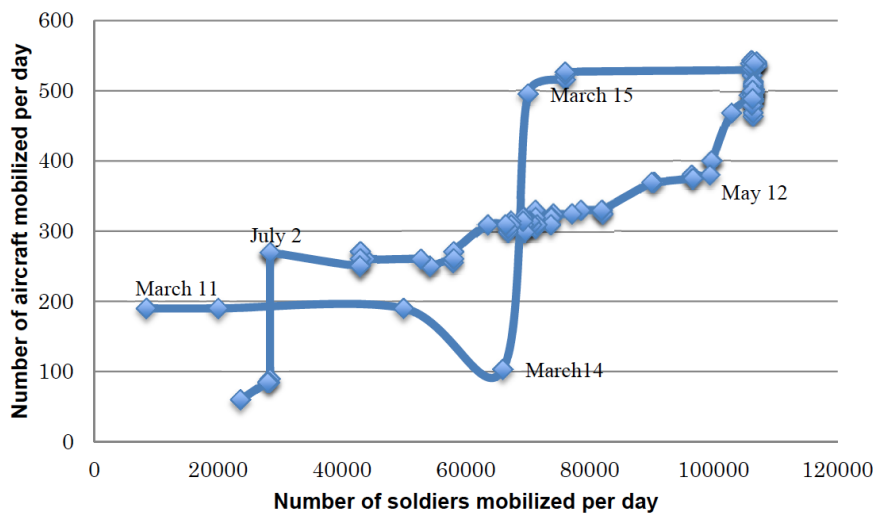


Figure 5. The number of SDF soldiers mobilized × mobilized aircrafts, March 11–July 8  
Note: Created using data from DIS Chronicle and <http://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/news/index.html>.

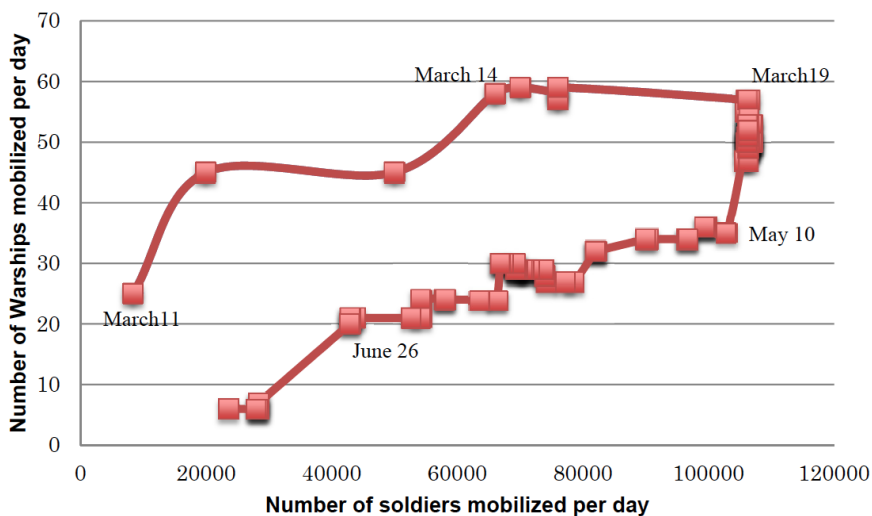


Figure 6. The number of SDF soldiers mobilized × mobilized warships, March 11–July 8  
Note: Created using data from DIS Chronicle and <http://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/news/index.html>.

South Korean, Thai, and Israeli Forces also supported the SDF's disaster aid. Approximately 100,000 SDF personnel a day were mobilized throughout the period of disaster aid, from March 11 to May 11. After May 12, the number of mobilized soldiers decreased, as the intensive rescue mission came to an end (Figures 5, 6). During this activity, the total number of mobilized SDF soldiers reached 9.8 million (including the reserves) by July 1. The US Forces conducted "Operation Tomodachi" (Friends) and mobilized a maximum of 24,500 personnel, 24 warships (including nuclear warships), and 190 aircrafts by the end of the operation, on April 30. From April 6, the US Forces changed from providing civilian rescue services to nuclear disaster aid.

### **THE NATIONAL REPRESENTATION OF THE MILITARY AS A RESCUE AGENT**

The scenery of the devastated areas looked like a war zone. The built environment was almost entirely destroyed. What made it different from a war zone was the fact that the primary cause of the disaster was not human but natural. The earthquake shook not only the Tohoku area but also metropolitan Tokyo. Massive public scrutiny of disaster images strengthened perceptions of the military as a rescue agency responsible for overcoming the "crisis of a nation." Even before this inflation of its national image, the marketing strategy of the SDF played a significant role. As Haruko Sudo has clarified, SDF-sponsored movies were already promoting public relations. Sudo cites Michel de Certeau in defining the arts policy promoted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology as a "narrow" definition of cultural policy, while the national policy (including the politico-economic intentions of other ministries and economic areas) is considered a "broad" definition (Sudo 2013: 22-23).

More recently, the role of economic policy has been further enhanced: "it's more important to consider the broad definition of cultural policy, not merely the SDF-supported movies but many cases" (Sudo 2013: 23). In particular:

The key word in most SDF-supported movies is *to defend* (*mamoru*). Stories that involve defending your sweetheart, family, and friends show the clear ontological significance and organizational character of the *Defense Agency*, *Self Defense Forces*, *Japan Coast Guard*, and *Fire Defense Agency* (Sudo 2013: 312).

The verb, *to defend* symbolizes the SDF's role as a *rescue agent*. Not surprisingly, the documentary film about the SDF's disaster aid excessively emphasized its responsibility *to defend* (Ministry of Defense 2011). It is also significant that, while previous SDF films were restrained in portraying a predominantly military image, this movie reinforces the SDF's *defending* role both repeatedly and sentimentally. In reality, the disaster aid was a joint military mission of the SDF and US Forces.

### **MILITARY REASON AND STATE ALLIANCE: "OPERATION TOMODACHI" AND THE US**

Although many countries came to support Japan after the earthquake, America's *Operation Tomodachi* attracted the most attention. While mainland Japan was preoccupied with the nationalism-led image of the rescue agent provided by both militaries, a representation of the SDF as a war-making agent gained its ontology by announcing to "protect" the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in Okinawa. Simultaneously, in Okinawa, the colonial discourse of Kevin K. Maher, an ex-officer of the US State Department, was

sharply criticized by the local media (Mori 2012). In order to strengthen ties between Japan and the US through “Operation Tomodachi,” Okinawa had to be negatively mediated. As a result, the military as a *rescue agent* repeatedly strengthened *the nation* as its counterpart. The *rescued agent* thus created an imagined community in its axis of subjugation. However, what was primarily concealed at this moment was the agency of the military as a *war-making agent*. The concept of the military as a *rescue agent* thus covered up its essential nature.

Has the disaster aid provided by the SDF and US Forces influenced public awareness of Japan’s defense policy? What crucially changed (or at least emerged) as a strong discourse in civil society after the disaster? Was it the legitimacy of the military as a device for maintaining the infrastructure of the nation-state? An opinion poll about the SDF conducted by the Cabinet Office shows another perspective. After the Great Hanshin earthquake in 1995, “disaster aid” sharply increased to 66% while “state security” gained only 57% of the public vote, in response to the following multi-choice question: “the reason why the SDF exists—you can choose two answers” (Mainichi Shimbun 2012). In 2014, “disaster aid” gained 81.9% and “state security” 74.3% of the public vote. This shows that the Japanese public primarily supported the military’s role as a *rescue agent*, followed by its responsibility for protecting the security apparatus of the state (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan 2014).

## **CONCLUSION: MILITARY GOVERNMENTALITY IS PENETRATING CONTEMPORARY CIVIL SOCIETY**

First, I have clarified the relationship between military and disaster aid in Japan. The modern Japan

Imperial Army was not an agent for delivering disaster aid from the beginning. This role was established after the Russo-Japanese War, which was the first opportunity for the military to promote the concepts of *rescue military* and *rescued nations*. After its defeat in World War II, the post-World War II Japanese military was reestablished in response to the Korean War. An increase in personnel and modernized equipment characterized the modernization of the SDF. Quick disaster aid was institutionalized in response to feedback on the Great Hanshin earthquake of 1995. This was simultaneously connected to the enactment of *war-making* acts, such as the anti-terrorism act of 1999, or the national defense act influenced by 9/11. Second, I demonstrate how the SDF was mobilized and cooperated with US Forces to provide disaster aid. The SDF initially provided disaster aid in accordance with the SDF Act. Although SDF soldiers suffered severe physical and mental disorders (such as suicide and depression) as a result of this aid mission, this fact was not widely circulated by the mass media. US forces launched “Operation Tomodachi” and partly succeeded in embedding discourse about the military as a *rescue agent*, while covering up its function as a *war-making agent*. Finally, I have argued that particular sorts of representation of the military were made spatially through military mobilization, while explaining the geographical differentiation of social awareness of the military. While the military as a *rescue agent* gained legitimacy in the disaster-stricken area, the military as a *war-making agent* was criticized for its penetration into civil society. After the Great East Japan earthquake, the military gained legitimacy, at least in mainland Japan. However, this public approval was limited to the military’s role as a *rescue agent*. Nevertheless, we have witnessed the penetration of a strengthened military reason into civil society, first at a grass roots level, as a disciplinary force through disaster aid, and also as

a repressive force through the presence of military bases.

The current role of the SDF seems more significant, due to the decreasing national budget of the US government under its bilateral security treaty with Japan. The continually changing role of the SDF has led to crucial disputes about Japan's military role, resulting in massive protests in urban areas,<sup>9</sup> while the capitalist growth of the defense industry has been boosted by the LDP regime (Lewis and Harding 2015). Here again, we should consider the governmentality of the process of accumulating capital, as Harvey explains below:

Capitalism, it is sometimes held, is stabilized through the defense budget, albeit in ways that rob society of more humane and socially worthwhile programmes. This line of thinking is cast, unfortunately, in the underconsumptionist mould. I say “unfortunately” not so much because that interpretation is wrong, but because the present theory suggests a rather more sinister and terrifying interpretation of military expenditures: not only must weapons be bought and paid for out of surplus of capital and labour, but they must also be put to use. For this is the only means that capitalism has at its disposal to achieve the levels of devaluation now required. The idea is dreadful in its implications. What better reason could there be to declare that it is time for capitalism to be gone, to give way to some saner mode of production? (Harvey 1984: 445)

## Notes

1 Ong's *exceptionalism* is much more widely conceptualized than Giorgio Agamben's definition. “As conventionally understood, the sovereign exception marks out excludable subjects who are denied protections. But the exception can

also be a positive decision to include selected populations and spaces as targets of “calculative choices and value-orientation” associated with neoliberal reform (Ong 2006: 5).

2 This politically spatialized word even emerged as military jargon. See Ishihara (1999).

3 In Japan, the LDP's Abe regime has been criticized for covering up rehabilitation issues after the Fukushima nuclear disaster, in the context of international tensions. As a result, nuclear issues have tended to be marginalized.

4 This concept emerged from endless but exciting debates among DIS research group members, including Takefumi Ueda, Yutaka Iwadata, and Saki Sunaga. I define the *rescue agent* as a relational concept emerging simultaneously with the nation as the *rescued agent*. This relational concept shows the relation and representation of the military in civil society. The military as a *rescue agent* marginalizes the quintessential function of the military as war-making agent.

5 Or, as Doi (2013, 2014) has pointed out, the structural flow maintains itself by segregating the population through legitimized nationality and citizenship.

6 See Yeo (2011) and Holmes (2014).

7 There were two processes for military mobilization: the first depended on orders given by prefectural governors; the second on orders given by the commander of a garrison (Eiju). Every garrison commander was obliged to prepare disaster aid and to communicate with local public officers on the possible disaster situation.

8 This is closely connected to the Korean massacre and the Amakasu incident (massacre of anarchists) which happened as a result of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 (Kita 2010).

9 In particular, the Students Emergency Action for a Liberal Democracy (SEALDs) became a popular group in the anti-security bill movement. (Hoffman 2015).

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