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3.11 AND PUBLIC OPINION OF THE JAPANESE SELF-DEFENSE FORCES: TRENDING TOWARD NORMALIZATION?

by

Veronica M. Kennedy

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Thesis Advisor: Robert J. Weiner
Second Reader: Cristiana Matei

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When the largest earthquake ever recorded in Japan's modern history struck on the afternoon of March 11, 2011 (3.11), the resulting tsunami and nuclear disaster contributed to the crisis quickly spinning out of control. While the central government's reaction was lambasted by the media and the public, the positive reception of the Japanese Self-Defense Force's (SDF) response efforts represented a possible shift in the place and perception of the organization. This research seeks to find what lasting effect, if any, 3.11 had on public opinion toward the SDF. It also investigates whether any such potential shift has an observable impact on Japan's recent moves toward apparent normalization. It analyzes the events and trends during and following 3.11 as well as those surrounding comparable disasters in Japan's past. Several modern case studies from disasters in Chile, Indonesia, and China are also analyzed to see if 3.11 can serve as a useful marker for determining shifts in civil-military relations in Japan and perhaps beyond. Findings reveal that 3.11 caused enduring positive trends in the SDF's popularity even several years after the crisis as well as a recruitment surge in the years following. While overall changes in hard numbers and statistics were ultimately noteworthy yet modest, 3.11 and several of the case studies most importantly revealed an underlying and perhaps unmeasurable tectonic improvement in the relationship between the public and the SDF.

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3.11 AND PUBLIC OPINION OF THE JAPANESE SELF-DEFENSE FORCES: TRENDING TOWARD NORMALIZATION?

Veronica M. Kennedy
Lieutenant, United States Navy
BA, Cornell University, 2010

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September 2018**

Approved by: Robert J. Weiner
Advisor

Cristiana Matei
Second Reader

Mohammed M. Hafez
Chair, Department of National Security Affairs

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ABSTRACT

When the largest earthquake ever recorded in Japan's modern history struck on the afternoon of March 11, 2011 (3.11), the resulting tsunami and nuclear disaster contributed to the crisis quickly spinning out of control. While the central government's reaction was lambasted by the media and the public, the positive reception of the Japanese Self-Defense Force's (SDF) response efforts represented a possible shift in the place and perception of the organization. This research seeks to find what lasting effect, if any, 3.11 had on public opinion toward the SDF. It also investigates whether any such potential shift has an observable impact on Japan's recent moves toward apparent normalization. It analyzes the events and trends during and following 3.11 as well as those surrounding comparable disasters in Japan's past. Several modern case studies from disasters in Chile, Indonesia, and China are also analyzed to see if 3.11 can serve as a useful marker for determining shifts in civil-military relations in Japan and perhaps beyond. Findings reveal that 3.11 caused enduring positive trends in the SDF's popularity even several years after the crisis as well as a recruitment surge in the years following. While overall changes in hard numbers and statistics were ultimately noteworthy yet modest, 3.11 and several of the case studies most importantly revealed an underlying and perhaps unmeasurable tectonic improvement in the relationship between the public and the SDF.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

3.11	earthquake-tsunami-nuclear triple-disaster affecting Tohoku region of northeast Japan on March 11, 2011.
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CMR	civil-military relations
CSD	collective self-defense
DPJ	Democratic Party of Japan
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
GAM	Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, Indonesia)
HA/DR	humanitarian assistance/disaster relief
IJA	Imperial Japanese Army
IJN	Imperial Japanese Navy
JDA	Japan Defense Agency
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party (Japan)
MOD	Ministry of Defense (Japan)
MOOTW	military operations other than war
MPR	People's Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyaaratan Rakyat, Indonesia)
PAP	People's Armed Police (PRC)
PLA	People's Liberation Army (PRC)
PLAAF	People's Liberation Army (Air Force, PRC)
PLA(N)	People's Liberation Army (Navy, PRC)
PRC	People's Republic of China
SDF	Self-Defense Force (Japan)
SDPJ	Social Democratic Party of Japan
TEPCO	Tokyo Electric Power Company
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USFJ	United States Forces Japan

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This thesis was inspired by the hardworking Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen—both Japanese and American—that toiled to deliver aid in the sometimes-dangerous aftermath of the 3.11 disaster. My heart broke while in Japan on March 11, 2011, but it was because of them that I now believe in superheroes. It was an honor to serve alongside their exhaustive efforts to save lives and help return prosperity to Japan and its people.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

This research seeks to find what impact, if any, the armed forces' response to the earthquake-tsunami-nuclear disaster triple crisis of March 11, 2011, (hereafter referred to as "3.11") had on lasting public opinion toward the Japanese Self Defense Force (SDF). Does any potential shift in public opinion toward the SDF as a result of its response and recovery efforts following this event have an observable impact on Japan's recent moves toward apparent normalization? Can 3.11 serve as a useful marker for determining shifts in foreign security policy in Japan and perhaps beyond?

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

When the largest earthquake ever recorded in Japan's modern history struck on the afternoon of March 11, 2011, the crisis quickly spun out of control. Aside from the damage caused by the tremor itself, the tectonic shifts occurring below the bed of the Pacific Ocean triggered a devastating tsunami that killed thousands and displaced many more. The wave additionally caused a nuclear disaster at the site of Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, compounding the sense of catastrophe.

While the central government's reaction was lambasted by the media and the public, the SDF rapidly mobilized. Its tremendous efforts, alongside those of local governments, citizens, and the U.S. military, were lauded. While certainly not devoid of its own shortcomings, the SDF's response was comparably swift, selfless, and benign in service to the people. This research suggests that this represented a possible shift in the place and perception of the SDF.

The normalization of the Japanese military has been a topic heavily scrutinized by scholars throughout post-World War II history, by American policymakers concerned with bilateral military operations and Mutual Defense Treaty implementation, and by regional neighbors wary of Japanese remilitarization. The general scholarly consensus is that despite the conflict between pacifism and defense with which the Japanese people and government constantly seem to grapple, there has been an ongoing move toward

remilitarization and so-called normalization. While the trend appears gradual, drastic shifts in this direction might be punctuated by events outside the government's control and subsequent response. The study of an event on the order of magnitude of 3.11 might yield an effective litmus test on the Japanese government's reactionary attitude toward normalization. More importantly, this research potentially reveals the scope of the impact that domestic disaster relief operations can have for a military seeking to improve its standing with the general public at home, particularly among democracies and developing democracies.

The uniqueness of Japan's security status quo within Asia cannot be overemphasized, and perhaps contributes to the belief that any and every move toward normalization seems drastic. Constitutional restrictions on the military in Japan post-WWII and follow-on policy established through the Yoshida Doctrine ensured that Japan's baseline for violent conflict was much different than most, if not all, other contemporary examples. The actions and effectiveness of the SDF within Japan are scrutinized much more heavily than those of many peer military forces; therefore, it is useful to examine the direction of public opinion swings in response to military operations, even military operations other than war (MOOTW) such as Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR).

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been extensive scholarly debate on the process of remilitarization—or "normalization," as many scholars call it—particularly in the wake of perceived shifting security threats in the region since the end of the Cold War. To be sure, 3.11 was only one of several factors potentially influencing the SDF, public opinion, and the overall security narrative in contemporary Japan. China's rapid militarization, ballistic missile and nuclear weapon tests in North Korea, and contested territorial claims by Japan and its neighbors have all contributed to the most recent political discourse on militarization, constitutional reviews, and reexamination of bilateral partnerships and security policy.

1. The Reality of Normalization: Japan, the Military, and Security

The post-Cold War years transformed the perceived security situation for Japan in Northeast Asia. The common refrain of the day reminded both the public and civilian elite policymakers that the threat had shifted from a Soviet invasion of Hokkaido to growing Chinese and North Korean threats.[1] Despite this changing security environment, however, Japanese defense reform remained stubbornly slow-paced and reactive instead of forward leaning—owing largely to an aversion to seeming too aggressively militaristic.[2] This study is meant to examine one specific isolated variable from among the many that contribute to Japan's security narrative: namely, the impact of effective domestic HA/DR operations on public opinion. Several scholars, military experts, and even Japan's own Ministry of Defense have expressed interest in the comparative effect 3.11 and the SDF's response may have had on this narrative, making this particular event a crucial focal point in this sort of study.

Few would deny that these increasing security tensions in East Asia prompted Japan to revisit its security policy, particularly through the 2014 discussion over interpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution and the potential for collective self-defense. The issue of collective self-defense was a controversial topic that received particular attention through the decades, given the robust Japan-U.S. security cooperation relationship. Pekkanen and Krauss revealed interesting trends in public opinion that reflected changes to support for constitutional revision, showing that support was increasing marginally between the 1990s and the 2000s.[3] They attributed this to a desire within the Japanese public for increased flexibility in dealing with the U.S. military alliance, and in 1999 and 2014 Japanese policy saw two remarkable shifts that could be walked back to these developments: the revised "Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation" of 1999 and

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[1] Giuseppe A. Stavale, "The GSDF During the Post-Cold War Years, 1989–2015," in *The Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force: Search for Legitimacy,* ed. Robert D. Eldridge and Paul Midford (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 184.

[2] Stavale, 222.

[3] Robert Pekkanen and Ellis S. Krauss, "Japan's 'Coalition of the Willing' on Security Policies," *Orbis* 49, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 442, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2005.04.002.

the 2014 official reinterpretation of Article 9 by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's cabinet, giving the Japanese military greater leeway for mutual self-defense.[4]

Significantly, there is relative consensus that change is happening in Japanese security policy. Oros theorizes that Japan is in the midst of a security renaissance spanning the decade sandwiched between two eras of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's leadership. He writes extensively about a combination of domestic policies and institutions, public opinion, and changes in the regional security environment, with particular emphasis placed on domestic political factors. Ultimately, Oros believes public attitudes continue to reflect dovish preferences and contribute to sustained and organized opposition to conservative political decision-making, strongly suggesting "that Japan's postwar antimilitarist legacy will also continue to critically shape Japan's security future."[5] Overall, this work serves to examine the role of the current political atmosphere in what he believes to be a significant shift in the status quo of security policy.

Samuels makes the particularly bold claim that pacifism, while assuming an important role in the security policy of postwar Japan, never dominated the political discourse at all.[6] It never dominated, he claimed, because it was, in fact, indulged by the conservative mercantile realists of the Yoshida doctrine, who believed that prosperity could be used to achieve prestige, whereas pacifists believed that prosperity would lead to autonomy.

Because none of these changes happen in a vacuum, it is critical to understand the many contexts—political, historical, or otherwise—that apply here. Liff's examination of the 2014 official reinterpretation of the constitutionality of collective self-defense (CSD) reiterates the point made by many authors and scholars that the security changes Japan is undergoing are gradual. They are "evolutionary rather than revolutionary," perhaps in contrast to Stavale's earlier-stated observation that Japan is reactionary in its foreign

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[4] Pekkanen and Krauss, "Japan's 'Coalition of the Willing' on Security Policies," 436.

[5] Andrew Oros, *Japan's Security Renaissance: New Policies and Politics for the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 184.

[6] Richard J. Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 189.

policy.[7] We can perhaps take from this that Japan merely takes advantage of external factors in order to enact change very gradually, but only whenever the spotlight is thrust upon the issue of security and defense.

The preamble to the 2014 cabinet decision to permit CSD states that "the international community also expects Japan to play a more proactive role for peace and stability in the world, in a way commensurate with its national capability."[8] Certainly, there is an expectation in some camps that the country even has an obligation to do so, particularly in the areas of disaster response.[9] This external desire to capitalize on the successes, failures, and lessons learned by outside countries can come in direct contrast with the general preference by the Japanese public, many elite decision-makers, and Japan's closest neighbors not to appear to be exporting defense capabilities provided by the SDF. Such is the dilemma faced by the SDF and MOD leaders.

In Japan's case, such considerations find particular weight when considering the nation's state of security—namely, the question of what security threats would prompt a military reaction by Japan given general aversion toward the SDF. Described by scholars as the "military allergy," this "condition" can be attributed to a wide number of factors.[10] These range from World War II militarism and entanglement theory to a wide-scale contrived public norm for pacifism.[11] This unique relationship between the public and the Japanese SDF was rooted in decades of postwar history and collective memory.

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[7] Adam P. Liff, "Policy by Other Means." *Asia Policy,* no. 24 (July 2017): 140, https://doi.org/10.1353/asp.2017.0035.

[8] Liff, 171.

[9] Robert D. Eldridge, "Why Preparation is Necessary: Some Personal Experiences," in *Preparing for Japan's Next Major Disaster: New Approaches to Civil-Military Cooperation in Japan as Proposed by U.S. Marine Corps' Participants in "Operation Tomodachi"* (Osaka, Japan: Reed International, 2018), loc. 291 of 2266, Kindle.

[10] Paul Midford, "The GSDF's Quest for Public Acceptance and the 'Allergy' Myth," in *The Japanese Ground Self Defense Force: the Search for Legitimacy*, ed. R. D. Eldridge and P. Midford (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 336.

[11] "Contrived" in the sense that, until the decade after their defeat in the Second World War, "pacifism" was far from a norm for Japan and its people. This returns to a fundamental argument by Martha Finnemore and other constructivists that norms are constructed and socialized over time. See Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkik, "International Norm Dynamic and Political Change," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (2001), 393, quoted in Elizabeth G. Matthews and Rhonda L. Callaway, *International Relations Theory: A Primer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Since its World War II defeat, Japanese history has been bookended by a fundamentally pacifist constitution, reinforced by a policy developed in the 1950s and known as the Yoshida Doctrine. While the very ability to exercise force as a sovereign right was removed by Article 9 of the Constitution, the Yoshida Doctrine further defined those limits; the doctrine's "core ideas came to be embraced across the board as Japan's consensus view of its national security identity."[12] Three principles that arose from Article 9 and the interpretation that followed formed Japan's postwar approach to the use of force against other nations. The country was limited to the use of force for self-defense only when there was "an imminent and illegitimate act of aggression against Japan," there were "no other means of stopping that aggression," and "the use of armed force [was] confined to the minimum necessary level."[13]

It is furthermore crucial to understand the structure and history of the SDF in order to fully appreciate the challenges it faces and the changes it might or might not be undergoing. Understanding the complicated history and legacy of Japan's "non-military" defense forces contributes to an understanding of the controversy that surrounds any perceived militarization of the country's armed forces. Although the Constitution was imposed by the victorious American powers-that-be, adherence to its spirit over the decades far surpassed that of a "normal" oppressed occupied nation. Indeed, Midford explains, "because of widespread belief that the military hijacked the state and led Japan into a devastating and even irrational war, distrust of the military and the state's ability to control it has been deep seated."[14] Indeed, Hikotani describes the SDF as "seen sometimes as kind-

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[12] Samuels, *Securing Japan*, 36.

[13] Bryce Wakefield, "Abe's Law: Domestic Dimensions of Japan's Collective Self-Defense Debate" (presentation, Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars Conference on "Japan's Vision for East Asia: Diplomacy Amid Geopolitical Challenges," Washington, DC, March 5, 2014), https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/WakefieldEssay.pdf, 2.

[14] Paul Midford, *Rethinking Japanese Public Opinion and Security: From Pacifism to Realism?* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011), 14.

hearted rescuers in case of natural disasters, while at the same time depicted as dangerous descendants of the imperial military."[15]

2. Public Opinion, the SDF, and Civil-Military Relations

Japan's prospects of this aforementioned normalization take into account a crucial evolution in Japanese Civil-Military Relations (CMR). At its most fundamental level, CMR concerns the balance between the coercive power of a military and the control civilian power wields over it. It is a triad relationship, bounded by the "interactions among the civilian public of a state, the civilian government of that state, and the military of the state."[16] In Japan, as in other democratic governments, the civilian public elects professional civilian representatives to government, who then make policy decisions that employ, arm, and deploy military power as seen fit. Ideally, if a civilian population respects its military institution, then it will elect lawmakers that support it in turn. Figure 1 demonstrates this relationship.

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15 Takako Hikotani, "The Paradox of Antimilitarism: Civil-Military Relations in Post World War II Japan" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2014), 169, https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/download/fedora_content/download/ac:203046/content/Hikotani_columbia_0054D_12379.pdf

16 Jessica Blankshain, "A Primer on U.S. Civil-Military Relations" (adapted from Mackubin Owens "What Military Officers Need to Know About Civil-Military Relations," Naval War College faculty paper, Newport, RI, April 2015), 1.

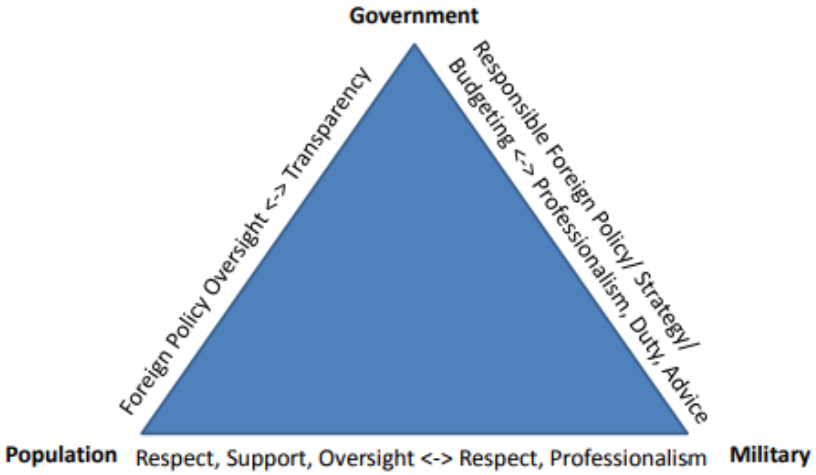

Figure 1. The Civil-Military Relations Triad[17]

It is for this reason that public opinion matters so much in Japan to begin with. The public of postwar Japan was, as Midford describes, "often distrustful of the state's ability to control or wisely wield the sword."[18] This contrasted with the generally ascribed opinion of a pacifist Japan: the country was never truly pacifist; it merely had a deeply ingrained distrust of government control over the military, a fundamental cornerstone to CMR theory.[19] A gap in CMR "refers to the difference in opinion and attitudes among civilians and the military over values, norms, and security policy."[20] Huntington argued that the civilian-military gap was natural in democratic societies, but that the key to civilian control was the professionalization of the military.[21] This was why civilian government control and oversight of the military are considered so important in democratic—and, to an extent, even in other more authoritarian—regimes.

To put it simply, public opinion's role in policymaking, especially in Japan and in security, matters. Although elitist theory pushes a "guardian model" of governance that

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[17] Source: Blankshain, 1.

[18] Midford, *Rethinking Japanese Public Opinion and Security*, 2.

[19] Midford, 2.

[20] Hikotani, "The Paradox of Antimilitarism," 165.

[21] Hikotani, 167.

seems to suggest that decision-makers have the freedom to disregard public opinion "in the best interests of the nation," they do so at their own risk.[22] A more likely model, according to Midford, is that of pluralists, who "view public opinion as stable and based on rational and coherent attitudes that respond in intelligible and often predictable ways to new information."[23] Pluralism, which contrarily represents both a demonstration of the public's powers and their limits, generally holds that public opinion constrains but does not *make* policy. This is still extremely significant in terms of constraining security legislation and the role of the SDF. Democratic control, after all, is dependent on the "societal scrutiny of the armed forces, largely exercised through civil society groups and the media. Their participation in the management of defense policy and its implementation are crucial additions to the traditional concepts of 'civilian control.'"[24]

In the study of CMR, there exists a claim that the greatest indicator of success against external enemies is the outright avoidance of armed combat.[25] There are three means through which this can be accomplished: "the perception that the defenders possess overwhelming force; success in the use of diplomatic tools; or the integration of an aggressor into an alliance that mitigates ambitions or grievances."[26] In the years since its wartime defeat in 1945, Japan has inarguably sought the effective use of the second and third means. It may be the case that the first is finally an objective of the Japanese government.

The relationship between the Japanese public and the SDF is complicated in that it seems to shift depending on the audience being analyzed. Despite generally high public opinion-poll support for the organization, there remains a lingering sense of overall aversion to the SDF. This seems to stem from a combination of factors, including ignorance

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[22] Midford, *Rethinking Japanese Public Opinion and Security*, 10.

[23] Midford, 10.

[24] Marcus Mietzner, *Military Politics, Islam, and the State in Indonesia: From Turbulent Transition to Democratic Consolidation* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), 6.

[25] Cristiana Matei, "A New Conceptualization of Civil-Military Relations," in *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Cristiana Matei (New York: Routledge, 2013), 32.

[26] Matei, 32.

about the role of the SDF, a self-perception of marginalization within the SDF, and the perception that any use of the SDF in a hostile manner violates Article 9 of the Constitution. With regard to this last factor in particular, any observed change in public opinion on the SDF is scrutinized carefully both within Japan and among its neighbors as a potential signal for so-called normalization of the country's security policy.

Midford quite explicitly calls out hawkish Japanese politicians for exploiting "a confusion of attitudes toward the SDF with those regarding the use of force."[27] Their claim, he argues, is that the Japanese public cannot be said to truly support the SDF until all restrictions imposed on the SDF regarding overseas combat are lifted. However, Midford sees this as impossible in the current public environment, because, he argues, the Japanese are predominantly defensive-realists. He claims that the Japanese public recognizes the SDF's defense function with regard to national territory, but not in missions overseas with debatably offensive or power projection slants. "Thus," he concludes, "the Japanese public supports the [Ground] SDF, not only as a disaster relief organization, but also as a traditional military that defends national territory."[28] They are simply averse to combat engagement on foreign soil, not at all to the Self Defense Forces themselves. SDF legitimacy has not been in question for many years, according to Samuels, and any concerns about civilian control that may have existed in a country that once lived in fear of resurgent militarism are long receded.[29]

In a different approach to the same idea of gradual change, Midford cites the "allergy myth" identified in Frühstück's anthropological study of the SDF. Frühstück examines both Japan's sensitivity toward the SDF and, perhaps most uniquely, the SDF's perception of itself. She finds that the SDF clings to the myth of its own unpopularity, which is bolstered by its prevalence in media. Mainstream Japanese public opinion was, significantly, not opposed to the SDF itself, but instead opposed "a significant expansion

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[27] Midford, "The GSDF's Quest for Public Acceptance and the 'Allergy' Myth," 336.

[28] Midford, 336.

[29] Samuels, *Securing Japan*, 77.

of the SDF's military role" thanks to a deep-seated doubt in the central government's ability to control it.[30]

Despite challenging the allergy as a myth, Frühstück's viewpoint does seem to endorse a theory that Japanese sentiment toward military, somewhat similar to the possibility in Germany, might have evolved to change the meaning of a "normal state." In this vein, violence, especially in the European context, is no longer viewed as a regrettable but necessary part of the international order; states are no longer simply defined by their monopoly on violence but by the nature of those violent means and the ways in which they are legitimized. The bottom line proposed by Frühstück is that the question of whether or not the SDF is approaching normalization should be countered with the suggestion that a peace and recovery force like the SDF could be the new global norm that other countries should be considering in the wake of true interstate conflict.[31] Therefore, public endorsement of the SDF is constrained by the desire to keep its actions within a strictly defensive scope.

Stavale further explains the evolving trajectory of Japanese defense policy. Ultimately, he highlights that Japan's political leaders today, in line with their predecessors dating back to Prime Minister Yoshida, are "careful not to push defense reform too aggressively."[32] He highlights a particularly poignant quote by PM Yoshida from his 1957 address to the first graduating class of the National Defense Academy, "It is possible that many of you may finish your career at the Self Defense Force without ever being thanked or welcomed by the people … because it is only when our nation is facing crisis and confusion, when we are attacked by foreign forces or when necessity arises for you to embark on disaster relief missions, that the people will appreciate and praise the SDF. I want you all to bear with the life in the shadows."[33]

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[30] Midford, *Rethinking Japanese Public Opinion and Security*, 14.

[31] Frühstück, *Uneasy Warriors,* 182.

[32] Stavale, "The GSDF During the Post-Cold War Years," 222.

[33] Stavale, 223.

That being said, the SDF has spent its several decades of existence since the 1950s attempting to disassociate its public image from its predecessors in the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) and Navy (IJN). Most operations undertaken have served the dual purpose of defense of Japan as well as reputation building, "designed to convince citizens that [the SDF] poses no threat to the public or to peace, and can benefit them."[34] Midford notes that scholarship on such types of reassurance "suggests that an actor can build trust in its intentions in the eyes of others through repeated unilateral acts benefitting the observer that are not tied to reciprocity or to social norms of obligation."[35] He further applies these observations to the lead role taken by the SDF in both disaster relief and civil engineering projects over the years, emphasizing how this long-term strategy to reassure the Japanese people has successfully contributed to disassociating the SDF from the negative legacies of its military predecessors.

The MOD perceives public support and understanding as "indispensable for the defense policy of Japan and the activities of the MOD/SDF."[36] Annual Defense White Papers reflect the continued goal of the MOD to forge a positive impression of SDF activities and to educate the general public on security legislation. The intent is to forge and "further [deepen] the mutual trust between the local community and the people, and the SDF, not only contributing to the enhancement and strengthening of the foundation sustaining national defense capabilities, but also instilling a sense of pride and self-confidence in SDF personnel."[37] The desire to prove the reliability and dependability of the SDF remains a constant theme in each year's rendition of the Defense White Papers, with the edition following 3.11 proving no exception. In the 2012 edition, a column by Yokosuka's mayor praises the rapid response of both Maritime SDF ships and U.S. vessels

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[34] Midford, "The GSDF's Quest for Public Acceptance and the 'Allergy' Myth," 297.

[35] Midford, 297–298.

[36] Gen Nakatani, "On the Publication of Defense of Japan 2016," from *Defense of Japan White Paper* (Tokyo: Japan Ministry of Defense, 2016), www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2016/DOJ2016_Foreword_web.pdf.

[37] Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2011* (Tokyo: Japan Ministry of Defense, 2011), 415, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/2011.html.

in response to Operation Tomodachi, saying that the residents of Yokosuka City felt they were "reliable in case of an emergency."[38]

Notably, any observed change in public opinion on the SDF is scrutinized carefully both within Japan and among its neighbors as a potential signal for so-called normalization of the country's security policy. Does a culture of pacifism create an "allergy" toward the militarization of the SDF, or can events overcome such a mentality to transform public support in the direction of a broader role by Japan's homegrown protectors?

3. Narrowing the Focus

Why focus on natural disaster? Why would a state deploy its military in response to an intangible threat such as an earthquake at all, when there are other organizations and institutions that could respond? There is, after all, no opposing army, no state, and no foe to vanquish. "A disaster," such as those examined here in these case studies, is a "consensus crisis … in which there is a general overall agreement about goals and about what should be done."[39] This is in contrast to a "contentious crisis," such as protests, rebellion, or civil war, because it "involves specific external threats and related practical tasks in solving immediate and technical problems."[40]

Natural disasters are an abstract enemy that may require a security response. In the event of mobilization, the only thing stopping a domestic military from achieving a job-well-done is its own inability to confront the disaster; it is the perfect opportunity to achieve a "rally around the flag" effect without any moral questions that might be associated with

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[38] Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2012* (Tokyo: Japan Ministry of Defense, 2012), 371, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/2012.html.

[39] E. L. Quaranteli, "Emergent Accomodation Groups: Beyond Current Collective Behavior Typologies," in *Human Nature and Collective Behavior: Papers in Honor of Herbert Blumer,* ed. Tamotsu Shibutani (Englewood-Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 114, quoted in Bin Xu, *The Politics of Compassion: the Sichuan Earthquake and Civic Engagement in China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017), 22.

[40] Russel Dynes and E. L. Quarantelli, "The Absence of Community Conflict in the Early Phases of Natural Disaster," in *Conflict Resolution: Contributions of the Behavioral Sciences,* ed. Clagett G. Smith (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971) 200–204, quoted in Bin Xu, *The Politics of Compassion,* 22.

more traditional military activities.[41] Furthermore, both militarization and utilitarian arguments are applicable to a military's role in natural disaster: for the former, responding to natural disaster—if done well—can improve a military's public perception, staff morale, and training opportunities; therefore, in the latter, militaries can use the experience to diversify their missions, roles, and areas of expertise.[42] Disaster relief is both important as a support and protection mechanism for the population *and* as a pragmatic way to build positive public opinion for domestic military forces—as long as a good job is done.

Furthermore, the role of MOOTW, including a spectrum of operations from peacekeeping to counterinsurgency to disaster relief, is expanding in a post-Cold War world. Edmunds describes the evolving roles of Europe's militaries in the wake of the departure from "the traditional core functional imperative of the defence [sic] of the state from external threat."[43] By moving away from these traditional warfighting roles within Europe to the professionalization of expeditionary warfighting forces, peacekeeping, and disaster relief, the relationship between society and the military "may significantly alter the underlying bases for armed forces' legitimacy in their societies."[44] Given that Japan started from a different baseline of limited aggression by the SDF implies a somewhat variant interpretation of its legitimacy, the theory nevertheless provides value in the context of claims made by Frühstück and others. After all, "For many, support for the SDF's continued existence was predicated on the assumption that its primary role would be non-military disaster relief."[45] Indeed, response to domestic natural disasters was consciously used by Yoshida and then incorporated in policy thereafter and significantly built legitimacy for the SDF among the public.

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[41] Matthew A. Baum and Philip B.K. Potter, "The Relationships Between Mass Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11 (2008), 45, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.060406.214132.

[42] Marjan Malešič, "The Impact of Military Engagement in Disaster Management on Civil–Military Relations," *Current Sociology* 63, no.7 (2015): 991. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392115577839.

[43] Timothy Edmunds, "What *Are* Armed Forces For? The Changing Nature of Military Roles in Europe," *International Affairs* 82, no. 6 (2006): 1062, JSTOR.

[44] Edmunds, 1075.

[45] Midford, *Rethinking Japanese Public Opinion and Security*, 14.

That being said, no single work seems to have dedicated a significant amount of content to the explicit study of effective military response to 3.11 and its impact on the civilian population's perception of the SDF in a CMR context. With several years having passed since the crisis, a current study into the changes of public perception of the military is well timed. The SDF's effective response to the disaster was good for public opinion and positive exposure; that much seems to be agreed upon. The MOD is on a mission to improve relations, understanding, and education on the civilian front. Does public opinion about the SDF hinge on perceptions of its effectiveness, and did 3.11 in turn help on the long road toward normalization?

D. ROADMAP

The uniqueness of the SDF heretofore explored will give a new significance to the following examination of the crisis on March 11, 2011. Chapter II discusses 3.11 event and the SDF's response to it in detail, and in particular, highlights the challenges, criticisms, and outcomes for the public and the SDF. Chapter III will explore several disaster case studies within Japan, highlighting in particular the Hanshin-Awaji earthquake of 1995 and exploring the way in which this precursor to 3.11 was different—and very much the same. Chapter IV will leave the borders of Japan and explore domestic military action and public reaction to several major disasters around the world, with a focus on the 2008 Sichuan, China earthquake, the devastation in Indonesia following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, and the 2010 Chilean earthquake. Observation indicates that despite the drastically different political situations in each location, public opinion in these countries indeed motivated government behavior and action with regards to domestic military forces—and may have improved perception of the military in the long term.

American policymakers must remain cognizant of such trends in Japanese security policy, as they have and certainly will continue to affect the bilateral relationship between the governments and their militaries. Additionally, policymakers in other countries that experience similar challenges in CMR should consider these ways in which a country whose public majority is so thoroughly entrenched in a pacifist mentality can effect an improved perception of the military and more permissive attitudes toward the military.

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II. THE DISASTER

Nearly unfathomable in its scope, 3.11 was a complex, multifaceted disaster. This chapter describes the event in detail, revealing how inept responses by Tokyo Electric and Power Company (TEPCO) and the central government at Fukushima seemed to exhaust the media and the public, who were eager for a good news story amid a sea of tragedy and despair. The valiant—and, perhaps more importantly, valiantly portrayed—responses of the Self-Defense Forces in part provided that. The SDF operation, multilateral yet spearheaded by Japanese forces, not only operationally legitimized the SDF in its own *and* the Japanese public's eyes, but also bolstered public opinion to previously unseen heights.

A. THE NARRATIVE: A TRIPLE CRISIS

Early in the afternoon on March 11, 2011, northeast Japan experienced a cataclysmic combination of disasters. At 14:46 JST, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake–the largest ever in Japan's recorded history–struck off the Pacific coast of the northeastern Tohoku region.[46] The tremor created a massive tsunami that engulfed coastal areas—fifty-feet high and sweeping 6 kilometers inland in places—wiping entire ports off the map and decimating villages. The destruction was absolute, and the death toll was staggering: over 19,000 people were killed.[47] Figure 2 shows satellite imagery obtained by NASA of the Sendai region—one of the most affected by the tsunami—several days before and after the disaster struck, displaying the demonstrable change made by the wave to the shoreline.

46 "Japan 3.11: Disaster Overview," NHK Japan Broadcasting Corporation, September 1, 2014, http://www.nhk.or.jp/japan311/status/overview.html.

47 NHK Japan Broadcasting Corporation.

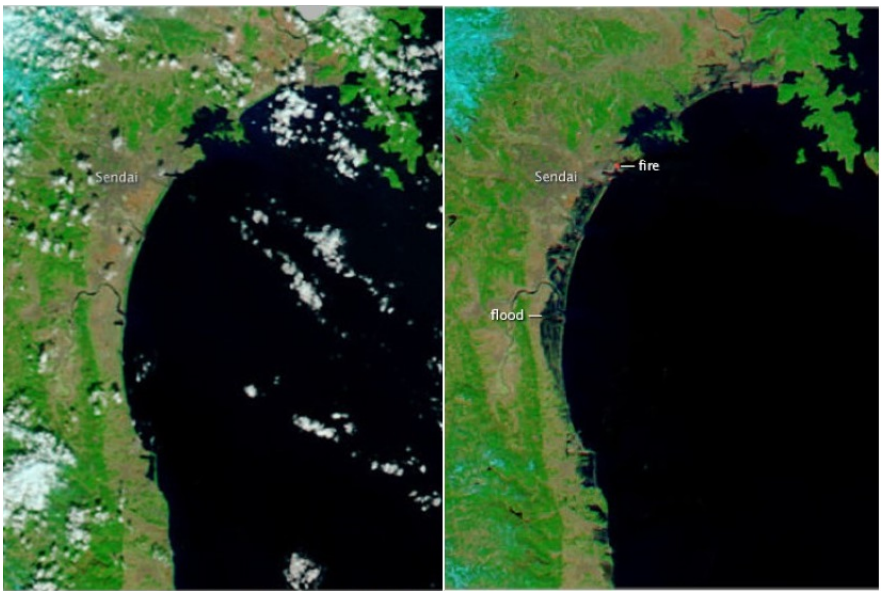

Figure 2. Aerial NASA Imagery of the Devastated Sendai Region, Before (Left) and After (Right) Tsunami[48]

1. The Dimensions of the Disaster

To compound the sense of crisis, the tsunami tested the safety and security measures in place at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear facility about 100 miles (155 kilometers) from the epicenter and found them sorely lacking for a crisis of that magnitude. The fifty-foot high wave breached the concrete seawalls and caused a total station blackout at units one through four.[49] Reactor cooling mechanisms failed, exposing the reactor cores and the spent-fuel ponds, together leading to a devastating reactor core meltdown, multiple hydrogen explosions, and the release of extremely dangerous radioactive substances into the environment.[50] It forced the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of citizens from their homes, the majority of whom could not return for several years.

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[48] Adapted from "Tsunami Flooding Near Sendai, Japan," NASA Earth Observatory, accessed July 30, 2018, https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/49634/tsunami-flooding-near-sendai-japan.

[49] David Lochbaum, Edwin Lyman, Susan Q. Stranahan, and the Union of Concerned Scientists, *Fukushima: The Story of a Nuclear Disaster* (New York: The New Press, 2014), 10.

[50] Kaoru Naito, "Security Implication of the Fukushima Accident," in *Learning from a Disaster: Improving Nuclear Safety and Security after Fukushima*, ed. Edward D. Blandford and Scott Douglas Sagan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 61.

Recovery response was immediate. International organizations, local law enforcement, and, especially, community and grassroots organizations took action. The tremendous scope of the disaster, however, meant that a military response was well suited for the earlier stages of chaos, uncertainty, and destroyed infrastructure. The Japanese government and present U.S. military forces stationed in Japan mobilized to effect HA/DR efforts. With tens of thousands dead or missing and sweeping damage along the coastline, the actions taken by the SDF and outside agencies saved countless lives and livelihoods in the aftermath. The SDF was directly responsible for the rescue of 70 percent of all disaster victims; nearly 19,000 people were saved thanks to tireless search and rescue efforts, to say nothing of the additional aid provided through transport assistance, logistics, medical, and livelihood assistance.[51] The productive cooperation between the Japanese SDF and the U.S. military was particularly remarkable. It served to drastically improve the domestic image of both organizations, which traditionally received a lukewarm reception from the Japanese public, with the "new level of alliance coordination" during Operation Tomodachi possibly "among the most enduring accomplishments of [then Prime Minister] Kan team's response to 3.11."[52]

2. Fukushima Draws Ire

That was where the good news ended. In the days that followed the tremor and deadly wave, one crisis followed another. While most loss of life was attributed to the tsunami itself, the disaster at Fukushima Daiichi arguably bred the most controversy and criticism by media and the public. Delayed situational reports by TEPCO, the company that owned and administrated the plants, and generally poor standards at the aging locations prompted public outcry domestically and a critical eye from international organizations and governments. The Prime Minister was similarly criticized for his failure to control the problem as it blossomed into a complex battle against time. Ultimately, 3.11, along with several other mishandled high-profile events, were widely seen as responsible for the

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[51] Ministry of Defense, *Special Feature: Response to the Great East Japan Earthquake* (Tokyo: Japan Ministry of Defense, 2011), 3, www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2011/04SpecialFeature.pdf.

[52] Richard J. Samuels, *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 23.

Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ) losing its first-time control of the Japanese government and ceding the Diet and role of prime minister to Shinzo Abe and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the party that had controlled government nearly without interruption since its founding in 1955.

The problems began early for TEPCO and the Japanese government after the tsunami struck the plant location. At 15:36 on March 12, fewer than 24 hours after the earthquake that triggered the disaster, the top of the Unit 1 reactor building at Fukushima Daiichi was blown off by an enormous hydrogen explosion.[53] Dangerous radioactive emissions were blown skyward and drifted away on prevailing winds. The next morning, Unit 3 experienced a total reactor meltdown, although heroic efforts by workers to inject seawater for cooling prevented an explosion.[54] This lasted only until March 14 when, at 11:00, the Unit 3 reactor building exploded. The situation continued to prove dire as, on March 15 at 06:00, while workers tried to stabilize the Unit 2 reactor, the Unit 4 reactor building also exploded.[55] This meant that three of the four nuclear reactors were releasing plumes of radioactive materials into the atmosphere, the surrounding land, and the Pacific Ocean.

The response by responsible government agencies and plant safety organizations bungled the operation beyond escape of public scrutiny and discontent. They appeared overly reliant on predictions, superior technology, an inefficient nuclear crisis administration system, and the myth that nuclear safety equaled nuclear security. When updating the Japanese people and the international community on the status of the disaster at Fukushima, the Japanese government "consistently deployed reference levels in such a manner as to exclude backup plans and stifle local initiatives."[56] In other words, when the true situation yielded unfavorable perceptions of the Japanese government's handling of

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[53] Lochbaum, Lyman, Stranahan, and the Union of Concerned Scientists, *Fukushima,* 55.

[54] Lochbaum, Lyman, Stranahan, and the Union of Concerned Scientists, 67.

[55] Lochbaum, Lyman, Stranahan, and the Union of Concerned Scientists, 75.

[56] Toshihiro Higuchi, "Radiation Protection by Numbers: Another "Man-made" Disaster," in *Learning from a Disaster: Improving Nuclear Safety and Security after Fukushima*, ed. Edward D. Blandford and Scott Douglas Sagan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 128–129.

the crisis, the national authorities abused "radiation protection by numbers" as a political tool in order to control knowledge of the situation and decision-making, thereby stifling the deployment of backup plans and local initiatives.[57]

In the affected region, thousands of civilians were evacuated three separate times in expanding concentricity from the area near Fukushima's ground zero as a preventative measure. Deteriorating conditions caused officials to order citizens to flee to a distance of 3 kilometers and then 10 kilometers from the plant.[58] Shortly after the explosion at Unit 1, Tokyo expanded the evacuation area to a 20-kilometer radius around the plant, prompting confusion and turmoil from a local population that had already been made to deviate from established safety procedures. Some unlucky civilians within the most highly affected areas of contamination only learned of the order to evacuate on March 16, unable as they were to receive television or cellular signals within the area affected by the earlier earthquake and tsunami.[59]

This massive human migration would continue to haunt the Japanese government for several years. While the total extent of the radionucleide release was believed to be lower than that of Chernobyl, 48,000 residents would still remain displaced from a nearly 250 square mile region more than two years later, due to continued measurements of dangerous air doses.[60] Nearby local communities' livelihoods were adversely impacted by the radioactive contamination of land, groundwater, and the adjacent ocean. Long-term evacuation orders prevented people from returning to their homes, farms, and businesses, and the impact on public well-being in the region was long lasting.[61]

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[57] Higuchi, "Radiation Protection by Numbers," 128–129.

[58] Higuchi, 113.

[59] Lochbaum, Lyman, Stranahan, and the Union of Concerned Scientists, *Fukushima,* 59.

[60] Higuchi, "Radiation Protection by Numbers," 109.

[61] Edward D. Blandford and Michael M. May, "Beyond Fukushima: Enhancing Nuclear Safety and Security in the Twenty-first Century," in *Learning from a Disaster: Improving Nuclear Safety and Security after Fukushima*, ed. Edward D. Blandford and Scott Douglas Sagan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 188.

B. A NEED FOR GOOD NEWS: SDF HEROICS

In the immediate aftermath of the triple disaster, Japanese media lambasted government response efforts, accusing elected officials of politicizing the recovery effort and blaming poor infrastructure, bureaucratic entanglement, and cover-ups on the overall poor response. Among all organizations, however, the Japanese Self Defense Force (SDF) came out most unscathed; and, in fact, public opinion was improved overall as a result of its tireless response efforts.[62] SDF members were praised by the media and the public as heroic responders who, alongside their American allies and other international assistance, rescued countless lives in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami and placed themselves in harm's way to mitigate the evolving disaster at the nuclear plant facility in Fukushima.

By March 18, a week after the wave swept the coast, over 100,000 SDF personnel were mobilized in the Tohoku region in response to the disaster.[63] For the first time in history, the Ground SDF Ready Reserve and SDF Reserve System personnel were mobilized for a real-world event.[64] Operation Tomodachi was created as a combined effort between the SDF and its American military counterparts to respond to the effort. Significantly, the operation was coordinated largely by the SDF, with the American military component, represented by U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ), operating as a "Joint Support Force" instead of a "Joint Task Force."[65] This distinction was important because it represented the SDF's taking the lead in a bilateral operation between the two nations for the first time. It perhaps also marked a shift in maturity of the SDF, which historically used "its relationship with the USFJ to achieve viability and self-respect as a uniformed force."[66] The effect was clearly to legitimize the SDF, which was historically seen by its counterparts—and, perhaps most significantly, by itself—as a junior partner.

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[62] Samuels, *3.11,* 80.

[63] Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2012*, 211.

[64] Stavale, "The GSDF During the Post-Cold War Years," 214.

[65] Chris Ames and Yuiko Koguchi-Ames, "Friends in Need: 'Operation Tomodachi' and the Politics of U.S. Military Disaster Relief in Japan," in *Natural Disaster and Nuclear Crisis in Japan: Response and Recovery after Japan's 3/11,* ed. Jeff Kingston (New York: Routledge, 2012), 214.

[66] Ames and Koguchi-Ames, "Friends in Need," 214.

In addition to the approximately 107,000 personnel mobilized at the peak of operations, the SDF also dispatched roughly 540 aircraft and nearly 60 ships.[67] Although some suffered damage, SDF bases and camps within the affected area served as coordination and logistics hubs for dispatched units and their emergency missions. The SDF conducted assistance operations such as SAR and recovery, transport assistance, livelihood assistance (including water supply, food, fuel, and bathing assistance), emergency rehabilitation assistance, and coordinated response to the nuclear disaster.

The multifaceted nature of the disaster led to a common analytical differentiation between the absolute devastation of the earthquake-tsunami natural disaster and the crisis at the TEPCO-managed Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant. Many accounts of the event portrayed a tumultuous crisis that dragged out for months beyond the initial tremor and tsunami due to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear emergency. The Union of Concerned Scientists report *Fukushima: The Story of a Nuclear Disaster*, for example, recounts in vivid detail the nerve-wracking play-by-play that led to the meltdown at the TEPCO-administrated nuclear facility struck by the tsunami, providing dates, times, politician and media reactions, and, most relevantly, an account of the roles played by the Self Defense Forces and U.S. military in response to the meltdown. According to the MOD report that followed operations, the SDF unit dispatched to the scene was responsible for "pumping water to cool the used fuel pools, decontaminating personnel and vehicles, and monitoring amounts of airborne radiation as well as temperature changes in the reactors."[68]

Similarly, Kushida provides a similar, if less theatrical, account of the disaster, specifically with regard to its effect on several nuclear plants on Japan's northeast coast.[69] Here again, Kushida provides only a marginal account of the SDF's role but does concede the significance of a potentially impactful group that emerged from the crisis: a "robust Japanese democracy filled with well-informed, active citizens" filled the empty space

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[67] Ministry of Defense, *Special Feature*, 3.

[68] *Special Feature*, 14.

[69] Kenji E. Kushida, "Japan's Fukushima Nuclear Disaster: an Overview," in *Learning from a Disaster: Improving Nuclear Safety and Security after Fukushima,* ed. Edward D. Blandford and Scott D. Sagan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 11.

created by politicians' and the bureaucracy's failure to respond to the crisis effectively.[70] In many cases, local communities worked directly with the SDF in organizing shelters and aid processes.

These civilians saw first-hand the exhaustive efforts made by SDF troops on the front lines of the disaster. Many of the responding service members, some 100,000-strong, were themselves victims of the tsunami, but news outlets regularly reported on their selfless service despite their own personal tragedies.[71] Domestic media published feel-good accounts of Ground SDF troops working with local communities devastated by the events. NHK, for example, reported on an SDF effort to set up temporary bathhouses in areas stricken by the disaster and in locations to which civilians evacuated.[72] Aside from the general utility of the facilities in promoting hygiene and routine, the bathhouses provided a sense of comfort and familiarity to those who had otherwise lost all their material goods.

The SDF also played a crucial and visible role in turning the tide even during the nuclear crisis. Although the central government and politicians faced tremendous criticism, there emerged a widely held opinion that the SDF's effective deployment contributed to turning the fortunes of the efforts to combat the nuclear crisis. Of particular interest is specific mention of the SDF's reactor cooling efforts on March 17 and the "psychological turning point" these created in a recovery effort fraught with miscommunication, controversy, and despair.[73] It was said that "the cheers from Ichigaya could be heard throughout Japan" when two Ground SDF helicopters were filmed by media outlets dropping seawater on reactor number 3 in an effort to stem the rapidly increasing radiation levels.[74]

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[70] Samuels, *3.11,* 199.

[71] "Over 100,000 SDF on Front Lines," *Daily Yomiuri*, March 29, 2011, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic.

[72] Jason Hancock, "Soak for the Soul: Mobile Baths for Evacuees," *NHK: Japan Beyond 3.11*, December 8, 2011, http://www.nhk.or.jp/japan311/stories/tmrw3-soak.html.

[73] Kushida, "Japan's Fukushima Nuclear Disaster," 22.

[74] Stavale, "The GSDF during the Post-Cold War Years," 215.

1. Conflicting Interpretations

Three interpretations began to emerge from the SDF's most recently proven efficacy on 3.11's potential role in normalization. Groups mostly from the political right believed 3.11 to be "Japan's wakeup call, a warning that it was past time to make the military more muscular, more capable, and more independent of the U.S."; alliance managers and political centrists were convinced that 3.11 proved Japan should "stay the course," with SDF performance having provided a "welcome proof of concept"; and left-leaning thinkers "saw 3.11 as justification for disarmament and a stricter interpretation of the original intent of article 9 of Japan's postwar constitution."[75] Even pundits for "putting it in gear," though, also had to question what a future focus on HA/DR operations could do for the SDF.[76] Would further focus build acceptance, legitimacy, and ultimately provide funding for training and military expansion, or would it "pigeonhole" the SDF's capabilities, making it even harder to expand warfighting proficiency?[77] Several studies have already delved into the psychological aspects affecting aspects of soldier identity. Frustration experienced by professional soldiers in militaries worldwide during peacekeeping operations such as HA/DR sometimes manifest in "fighting armies" who view certain MOOTW "as emasculating, demilitarizing, and frustrating … and [able to] undermine the readiness of the armed forces to win a war."[78]

Samuels' research seems to indicate that the second of these security models prevailed. Despite public opinion's leaning further than ever toward the legitimacy of Japanese security forces and the military alliance forged with the United States, "this new level of support did not seem to embolden officials to seek new budgetary allocations or acquire major new weapons systems."[79] Defense budgets, in fact, continued to fall, and

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[75] Samuels, *3.11,* 82.

[76] Samuels, 82.

[77] Robert Weiner, "Evolving Security Policy: The Politics and Impact of 3/11" (lecture, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, December 7, 2017).

[78] Sabine Frühstück, *Uneasy Warriors: Gender, Memory, and Popular Culture in the Japanese Army* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 74.

[79] Samuels, *3.11*, 189.

Japanese bureaucracy continued to rebuff calls by the U.S. alliance to expand bilateral coordination in the wake of extraneous external security concerns following 3.11, such as North Korean missile tests and provocation by the PRC. Before examining these numbers in detail, however, some attention must be given to the overall reliability of reporting in Japan.

2. Examining Press Freedom in Japan: The Whole Story for Public Consumption?

Before examining the effect had on the public by this devastating event, consideration must be given to Japan's scores and rankings in various global freedom-ranking scales. While general expectations are that Japanese press is largely democratic and reliable, it is worthwhile to establish the role played by Japanese media in portraying and reporting on 3.11, as opposed to the MOD's assumedly objective take. Freedom House reported Japan's 2018 "Freedom in the World" score as one out of seven, with an aggregate score of 96 (out of 100), both among the best in the world.[80] Japan's 2017 "Freedom of the Press" score, however, also obtained from Freedom House, received a total score of twenty seven out of one hundred—which, although considered "free" overall, was significantly impacted by the domestic political environment.

Some groups, in fact, argue that media coverage of 3.11 was unusually biased and constrained compared to traditional reporting in Japan. Analysis by Reporters without Borders directs criticism at current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's administration for a decline in media freedom since his election in 2012.[81] It states that currently "journalists have difficulty serving the public interest and fulfilling their role as democracy's watchdogs," thanks largely to media self-censorship, government resignations and dismissals laced with controversy, among other issues.[82] But delving further into Reporters without Borders' claims reveals that in its 2010–2011 assessment, Japan—a historically

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[80] "Freedom in the World 2018: Japan Profile," Freedom House, 2018. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/japan.

[81] "The Threat from Shinzo Abe," Reporters without Borders, 2018, https://rsf.org/en/japan.

[82] Reporters without Borders.

good performer in these investigations—dropped several places, from 12th to 22nd, in the world. This, according to the organization, was largely attributed to the tsunami and nuclear disaster at Fukushima, which it holds gave "rise to excessive restrictions and exposed the limits of the pluralism of the country's press."[83] Ultimately, one question in particular haunts the media process in Japan: while considered free, self-censorship abounded during this time of crisis. Was it, however, due to state control or a cultural reticence to criticize authority?

On the other hand, Japanese media has tended toward almost hypertransparency when it comes to civilian control of the SDF: "The Japanese media and the Internal Bureau are obsessed with any remark or action taken by uniform officials who could be perceived or invested into a challenge or threat against civilian control."[84] Despite this norm, however, Japan's service members performed their rescue and relief work effectively, and no one could question their commitment to democratic values.[85]

This inherent and even "cultural" reluctance, although difficult to measure, was tangible in even the most objective analyses of coverage of the disaster. In one study of domestic and international online coverage of the disaster, the author remarked on the "intrinsic sense of responsibility about managing the crisis and not sparking hysteria" by the Japanese press, something that those familiar with "The CNN Effect" might find counterintuitive.[86] The author went on to further scrutinize media's coverage of the escalating nuclear disaster at Fukushima, questioning whether the initial lack of emphasis placed on it in the early days following the disaster might reflect the Japanese media's

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[83] "World Press Freedom Index 2011/2012: At the Top, the Good Boys Turn Bad," Reporters without Borders, 2012, https://rsf.org/en/world-press-freedom-index-20112012.

[84] Robert D. Eldridge, "Organization and Structure of the Contemporary Ground Self-Defense Force," in *The Japanese Ground Self Defense Force: the Search for Legitimacy*, ed. R. D. Eldridge and P. Midford (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 45.

[85] Samuels, *3.11*, 198.

[86] Leslie M. Tkach-Kawasaki, "March 11, 2011 Online: Comparing Japanese Newspaper websites and International News websites," in *Natural Disaster and Nuclear Crisis in Japan: Response and Recovery after Japan's 3/11*, ed. Jeff Kingston (New York: Routledge, 2012), 121.

making a "deliberate choice or [a] lack of information regarding the nuclear and radiation problems."[87]

While it is important to note that media bias may have played a minor role in shaping the public's perception of the SDF in the wake of 3.11 activities, this does not seem to undercut or disqualify the results of this research. Since much of the criticism seemed focused on the Fukushima aspect of the crisis, it can be assumed that the aforementioned hypertransparency toward SDF behavior continued throughout reporting of the 3.11 disaster response. If anything, once the potential for biased reporting of government and TEPCO actions at Fukushima was revealed, increased scrutiny on all involved organizations likely increased as well; the SDF thrived despite the magnifying lens its actions would inevitably attract.

3. 3.11 and Public Opinion

With this in mind, we can turn to the variety of polls reflecting public opinion in the aftermath of 3.11. First, in a poll by the Pew Research Center in June 2011 that focused on the future of the country, citizens were asked about their views on the official response to the earthquake and tsunami disasters. The results were particularly grim for most organizations. Only 18 percent of respondents rated actions taken by then-Prime Minister Naoto Kan as "good."[88] The national government as a whole rated similarly at 20 percent. Perhaps surprisingly, news organizations earned only a small majority of 54 percent ranking their response to the disaster favorably. Most interesting and relevant to this particular study, however, are the exceptional marks earned by the Self Defense Forces. They earned a positive response from 95 percent of respondents, among whom 62 percent rated the SDF's performance as "very good."[89] The Japanese public applauded "how the country's Self Defense Force has responded to the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, but

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87 Tkach-Kawasaki, "March 11, 2011 Online," 121.

88 Andrew Kohut et al., *Japanese Resilient, but See Economic Challenges Ahead: U.S. Applauded for Relief Efforts* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2011), http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/06/01/japanese-resilient-but-see-economic-challenges-ahead/.

89 Kohut et al.

is highly critical of the how the government and the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) have handled the multiple disasters."[90]

A special edition of the Ministry of Defense annual White Papers in 2012 seemed to reflect this post-3.11 high public opinion of the SDF. In a Cabinet Office opinion poll conducted in January of 2012, respondents were asked to rate their opinion of the SDF in relation to the SDF's HA/DR role in the aftermath. The Ministry reported that 97.7 percent of responses fit in either the "I have a very high opinion of them" or "I have a fairly high opinion of them" categories, mirroring the results of the Pew Research Center poll from the previous year.[91]

Indeed, in routine public surveys conducted by the Ministry of Defense every three years, the public's impression of the SDF reached its highest level to date, experiencing a new high after 3.11. This supports the argument that 3.11 propelled pro-SDF sentiment to the highest in its history. Figure 3 tracks these trends. The 2012 survey showed that 91.7 percent of those polled had an overall good impression of the Self Defense Force, up significantly from the previous survey's 80.9 percent in 2009.[92] Similarly, the share indicating a bad impression of the SDF reached a low of 5.3 percent in 2012. Both measurements continued along this trend into 2015, although at a markedly decreased rate, and despite an increasingly tumultuous security environment in the theater surrounding Japan. These spikes were notably accompanied by an increase in "interest in the SDF and defense issues" to a high of 69.8 percent, followed by a continued upward trend at a slower rate into 2015.[93]

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[90] Kohut et al., *Japanese Resilient, but See Economic Challenges Ahead*.

[91] Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2012, 2*11.

[92] Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2017* (Tokyo: Japan Ministry of Defense, 2017), 518, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2017/DOJ2017_reference_web.pdf.

[93] Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2017*, 518.

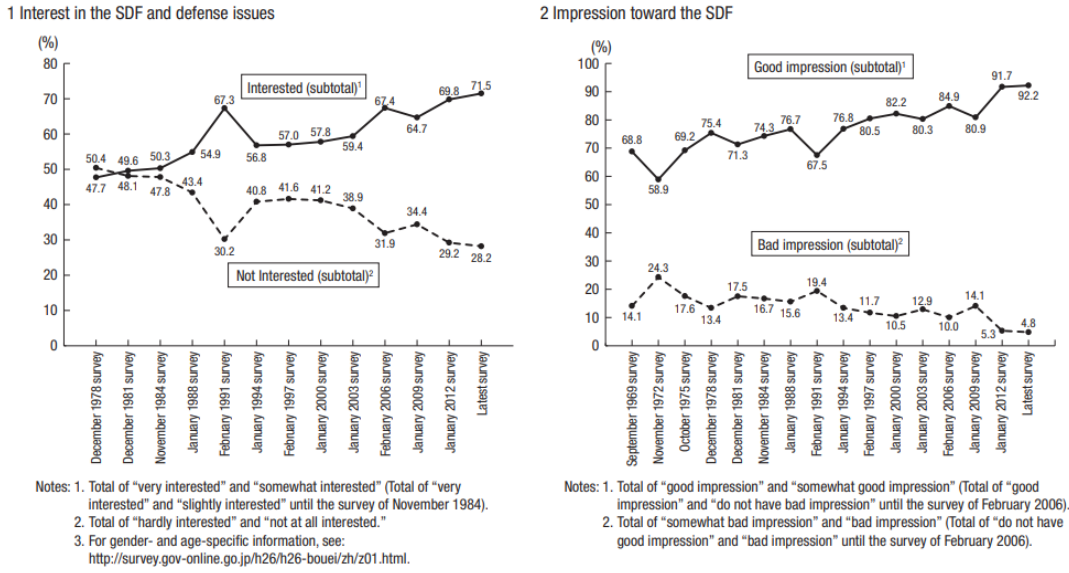

Figure 3. Public Opinion Survey on the Self Defense Forces and Defense Issues[94]

What effect has this had on the Self Defense Force's budget and ability to recruit new members? Military expenditure as a percent of GDP declined in Japan in the years following 2011, as seen in Figure 4.[95] Similarly, the number of armed forces personnel as a percent of the total labor force experienced a slight uptick between 2011 and 2012, following a trend that began after the 2008 financial crisis, but then took a slight downward turn after 2012 (see Figure 5). This was despite Japanese labor force totals increasing steadily since 2012.

[94] Source: Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2017*, 518.

[95] "Military Expenditure (% of GDP)," World Bank, accessed March 5, 2018, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?locations=JP.

Figure 4. Japan Military Expenditure (% of GDP)[96]

[96] Adapted from World Bank, "Military Expenditure (% of GDP)."

Figure 5. Armed Forces Personnel (% of total labor force)[97]

While this ran counter to expectations of a surge in military membership after the boost in popularity the SDF experienced upon 3.11, it is perhaps more telling to look instead at recruitment than at overall personnel employed. In numbers released by the Ministry of Defense, the number of newly employed personnel joining the SDF jumped roughly from 10,000 in 2011 to 15,000 in 2012.[98] Subsequent years provided similarly high yields of new recruits, with a slow decline that still left the number at approximately thirteen thousand in 2015 (Figure 6). All of this, the MOD highlighted, came despite a steadily decreasing pool of eighteen to twenty-six year olds—those of an age eligible to enter the Self Defense Forces.

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[97] Adapted from World Bank, "Armed Forces Personnel (% of Total Labor Force)," accessed March 5, 2018), https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.TOTL.TF.ZS?end=2016&locations=JP&start=1990&view=chart.

[98] Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2017*, 394.

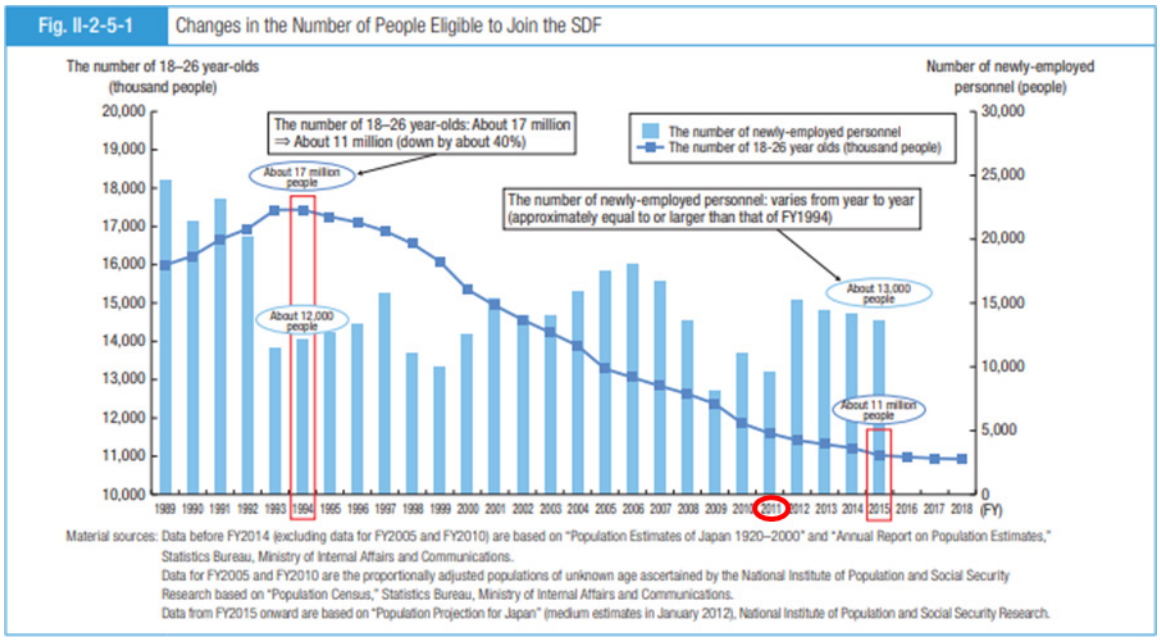

Figure 6. SDF Recruitment Trends to FY2018[99]

In the years leading up to the 2012 spike, recruitment seemed varied and full of peaks and valleys. In a 2016 story, NHK reported that the SDF had doubled its public relations budget over the past ten years but still failed to reach its recruiting goals each year.[100] A stated goal by the Ministry of Defense was therefore to ensure the SDF was introduced to a wider audience, and recruitment tactics had in the past ten years been revamped in an effort to appeal to broader groups within the proper age bracket. It seemed, however, that it took the SDF's dominating the headlines in a positive light for it to finally reach its intended audience. Even with this new positive trend, however, the MOD's rhetoric still seems to be one of borderline crisis, given the overall declining numbers, as well as, possibly, the poor self-perception previously remarked upon by Frühstück.[101] Therefore, despite the advantage 3.11 gave recruitment, it is possible that either the MOD failed to take full advantage of this boon or—in a worst-case scenario for recruitment

99 Adapted from Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2017*, 394.

100 John LaDue, "SDF's New Recruitment Tactics," *NHK World*, March 24, 2016, https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/editors/3/2016032402/

101 Frühstück, *Uneasy Warriors*, 47.

strategists—that even peak recruitment reflected overall demographic challenges currently facing Japan.[102]

4. Revisiting Normalization in Japan

These are the direct effects of 3.11 on the SDF itself, but the question of impact on overall normalization remains. To briefly restate points made in Chapter I: Japanese postwar history has been bookended by a fundamentally pacifist constitution imposed by the American occupation and reinforced since the 1950s by the Yoshida Doctrine. Article 9, although the subject of debate and the occasional reinterpretation, has remained unchanged since its ratification and implementation in 1946–47. This has made the mere existence of the SDF a subject of controversy for decades within Japan—although modern Japanese tend to no longer question its existence. Where the very ability to exercise force as a sovereign right was removed by Article 9 of the Constitution, the Yoshida Doctrine further defined those limits; the doctrine's "core ideas came to be embraced across the board as Japan's consensus view of its national security identity."[103] The country was limited to the use of force for self-defense only when there was "an imminent and illegitimate act of aggression against Japan," "no other means of stopping that aggression," and when "the use of armed force [would be] confined to the minimum necessary level."[104] Ultimately, however, scholars seem to agree that security change is occurring in Japan, although the rate at which it is happening is under debate. Many scholars insist that the change has been gradual since the very inception of Japanese democracy, and that hawkish realists in Japanese politics make concessions to the Japanese public's pacifist identity by scaling back change every time it is proposed.[105] Others believe that this change is largely

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[102] Previously cited works by Frühstück, Hikotani, and Stavale provide some discussion on this topic throughout several of their works.

[103] Samuels, *Securing Japan,* 36.

[104] Wakefield, "Abe's Law," 2.

[105] Adam P. Liff, "Policy by Other Means: Collective Self-Defense and the Politics of Japan's Postwar Constitutional Reinterpretations," *Asia Policy,* no. 24 (July 2017): 140, http://nbr.org/publications/asia_policy/free/ap24/AsiaPolicy24_Liff_July2017.pdf; Matthew Perry and Bryce Wakefield, "Right Angles: Examining Acts of Japanese Neo-Nationalism," *Pacific Affairs* 81, no. 4 (2008): 555, https://doi.org/ 10.5509/2008814537.

reactive, and that proponents of securitization use each new security crisis—whether an external threat, internal threat, or natural disaster—to advance the normalizing Japanese security policy.[106] The ultimate question, then, as it pertains to the research in this thesis, is whether 3.11 was not a turning point on public opinion of the SDF at all, but instead a litmus test for an already potent evolution in opinion on the efficacy of the SDF and the impact that might have on permissiveness for securitization.

By the time his book was published several years after the disaster, Samuels concluded that 3.11 was not the "game changer" predicted by many. He did concede at the time, however, that it was likely still too soon to tell definitively. He guessed that perhaps the narrative was still "under construction."[107] He finds that while 3.11 had no long-term or long-reaching effects on changing security policy, it did manage to improve overall public perception of the SDF. This result, as suggested by the data presented throughout this chapter, is in and of itself significant enough to warrant careful attention. Although security policy itself seemed to have not been greatly affected by public reaction to the SDF, there is evidence that the public's mentality—the very culture surrounding its understanding of its armed forces—underwent a transformation that cannot be ignored.

Samuels, in fact, seems to support the idea of 3.11 as a high-visibility litmus test for the SDF and public. His research reveals that the media- and government-conducted surveys, alone, yielded data that public support for the SDF, recruitment support, and trust were at an all-time high.[108] He also, however, highlights the perhaps even more telling anecdotal evidence provided by "overwhelmingly positive media treatment," public pride in uniformed service members, and an absence of controversy when deploying troops abroad later that year for humanitarian reasons.[109] Even the present author's personal experiences confirm such a noteworthy shift in in mentality throughout Japan, where ubiquitous post-disaster "*Ganbarō Nippon!"* ("Let's succeed together, Japan!") slogans

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106 Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy under the "Abe Doctrine": New Dynamism or New Dead End?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 56.

107 Samuels, *3.11*, 200.

108 Samuels, 92–93.

109 Samuels, 92–93.

and posters around the country often portrayed SDF service members dedicated to their heroic relief activities, something previously uncommonly experienced in regions outside of heavy force concentration areas in Japan. Although changes in hard numbers and statistics were ultimately noteworthy yet modest, 3.11 managed an underlying and perhaps unmeasurable tectonic shift for the relationship between the public and the SDF.

Oros surmises that Japan is in the midst of what he coined a "security renaissance" in the span of years sandwiched between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's first and most recent terms of office.[110] He notes a combination of changes on domestic policies and institutions, public opinion, and changes in the regional security environment, but places particular emphasis on domestic political factors. Public attitudes, according to Oros, continue to reflect dovish preferences even with so-called dovish political parties on the decline in recent years.

Certainly, such dovish attitudes held by the Japanese public might stymie normalization in a robust democracy such Japan's. Even more significantly, though, this perceived "military allergy" should prevent the public from creating a permissive environment for military action at all, even in purely domestic and/or such benign operations as HA/DR. These changes in the SDF's standing in the public eye should then be interpreted as a significant step in breaking down this first barrier to military action within a state where civilian control of the military is so crucial and ingrained.

[110] Oros, *Japan's Security Renaissance*, 15.

III. THE SDF AND NATURAL DISASTER: JAPAN'S CASE STUDIES

This chapter explores military response to two disasters in Japan, the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 and the Kobe earthquake of 1995, and their applicability to recent disasters. This will contribute to increased understanding of the mixed reactions that military response to such disasters breeds among the Japanese public, and to revealing the impetus for resistance.

Several examples of disaster response both domestically within Japan and elsewhere in the world in the past few decades illustrate just how significantly government response can impact—positively or otherwise—public perception of the capabilities of the organizations involved. 3.11 was obviously not the first devastating natural crisis of its kind to wreak havoc in Japan. Famously seated along the edge of the Pacific "Ring of Fire," Japan has experienced millennia of earthquakes, volcanic activity, and tsunami. The word tsunami is itself borrowed from Japanese.

Scholarly works seem to be in consensus on the value of good performance during disaster relief operations on the SDF's public image.[111] While that seems intuitive to many, the pervasive belief that the Japanese public is "allergic" to the military is so prevalent that gratefulness for a job well done in the face of devastation such as that wrought in March 2011 is surprising to some. This may come as a result of general public suspicion of any military mass mobilization, even for what would otherwise be categorized as non-combat goodwill operations. Research calls into question the parallels one might observe between the military response to 3.11 and to the time period after the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, when the military used its positive public image following effective relief efforts to take advantage of extant political turmoil.[112]

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111 Samuels, *3.11*, 80–81.

112 The Japanese government in 2011 was controlled by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the second time ever in Japan's democratic history that the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was not at the helm. They lost this advantage in the aftermath of their handling of 3.11 and other political black eyes.

The Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 created an opening for the IJA to hijack politics during a tumultuous time in Japanese history. This contributed to the initial aversion to use of the SDF in response to the 1995 disaster—the largest of its kind since 1923.This stoked the fires of distrust toward the efficacy of bureaucratic control of defense forces that pervaded disaster response till Kobe, where reforms shaped the systemic improvements in time for 3.11.

A. THE GREAT KANTO EARTHQUAKE (1923)

Although rooted in an earlier and distinct era, the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 nevertheless offers a relevant cautionary tale for CMR watchdogs and enthusiasts, given how it "paved the way for political domination by the Japanese military" in an era that until then had seen the steady decline of the Imperial Forces during a period of increasing democracy and civilian rule.[113] Despite differences between it and more modern cases, the 1923 example still illustrates the dynamics at issue in this thesis, particularly when civilian democratic control of the military is not guaranteed and tenuous at best.

1. The Political Situation

The Tokyo and Yokohama areas on the eve of the Great Kanto Earthquake were flourishing metropolises, both urbanized industrial centers and multicultural ports to a globalizing society and massive population. The IJA and IJN both faced downsizing as the government experimented with varying levels of democratization. The central government, however, faced a challenge that would contribute to the all-out crisis about to germinate.

On August 24, mere days before the fateful disaster struck, the prime minister of Japan, Tomosaburō Katō, succumbed to his cancer and died.[114] Admiral Gonnohyōe Yamamoto, serving as acting minister, was in the process of selecting cabinet ministers days later when the crisis unfolded. As the disaster struck, the acting leadership faced great confusion as to their authority to deploy police and military forces to respond. Ironically,

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[113] Samuels, *3.11*, 55.

[114] J. Charles Schenking, *The Great Kanto Earthquake and the Chimera of National Reconstruction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 49.

this mirrored similar hesitation by the central government in the Kobe disaster over seven decades later in the Kobe disaster. It has been suggested that the Kanto event "may have emboldened right-wing forces at the very moment that the country was poised between military expansion and an embrace of Western democracy, only 18 years before Japan would enter World War 2."[115]

2. The Disaster

At midday on September 1, 1923, Tokyo and Yokohama were jarred by a magnitude 7.9 earthquake and a series of dangerous aftershocks.[116] In the ten days that followed, the epicenter at the mouth of Tokyo Bay generated 1197 aftershocks strong enough to be felt throughout the Kanto region. A tsunami, 40 feet tall in places, surged the coastlines of Kamakura and other adjacent cities.[117] In municipalities ill prepared for the magnitude of devastation wrought by the quakes, poor city planning flattened entire districts; and, perhaps most devastatingly, infernos from overturned cooking fires within wooden houses erupted and incinerated those people and properties in their paths. In the seven prefectures most affected by the temblors, 107,858 people died, and 13,275 remained missing over a year after the event.[118]

3. Military Response

In the days and weeks that followed, violence, arson, and vigilantism spread throughout the cities, with murders of Koreans and other foreigners occurring as a result of the perpetuation of false rumors.[119] It was not until a week into the chaos that a semblance of order was restored with the declaration of martial law and the deployment of nearly 52,000 IJA soldiers in the region. There was, as Schenking describes, a perceived

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[115] Joshua Hammer, "The Great Japan Earthquake of 1923," *Smithsonian Magazine*, May 2011. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-great-japan-earthquake-of-1923-1764539/

[116] Schenking, *The Great Kanto Earthquake,* 16; "The Great Kanto Earthquake," *The Economist* (Online), March 14, 2011. http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/857040501?accountid=12702

[117] Hammer, "The Great Japan Earthquake of 1923."

[118] Schenking, *The Great Kanto Earthquake*, 38.

[119] Schenking, 28.

need for "a concerted national effort to restore normalcy, provide relief, rebuild Tokyo, and launch Japan on a course of recovery. To this end, the [IJA] and [IJN], two of Japan's most important and well-known national institutions, along with a host of public and private relief aid organizations would play important roles."[120]

The organized response efforts by the military presented a "turning point for its fortunes" and invited opportunity for it to increase in relevance once again.[121] As noted previously, the central government faced confusion regarding the deployment of military troops. Finally, at 16:30 on the day of the initial disaster, Tokyo's top police official took it upon himself to contact the IJA general in charge of local troops and ask for any and all assistance in recovery and restoration of order in the city.[122] The new emergency cabinet ministers were sworn in on September 2, and martial law was established, mobilizing troops from all around Japan for deployment in Tokyo. This was the "largest peacetime domestic mobilization and deployment of the army in Japan's pre-World War II history," and martial law remained in place formally until November 15, over two months later.[123]

4. A Significant Precedent

The political elite and decision-makers of the day learned several lessons from this catastrophe. Firstly and perhaps most clearly, the disaster seemed to warn how ill prepared the Japanese government was for a potential future calamity on this scale.[124] The central government's shortcomings needed to be confronted and corrected. The public saw a stark contrast between "the military's restoration of order and the sustained bickering among politicians over how to pay for reconstruction."[125] While not suffering from any similar perceived plights of standing as the SDF at the time of the earthquake, the IJA was quick to capitalize on the heroic image it projected. Despite facing the same austerity cuts as

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120 Schenking, 45.

121 Samuels, *3.11*, 57.

122 Schenking, *The Great Kanto Earthquake*, 50.

123 Schenking, 51.

124 Schenking, 73.

125 Samuels, *3.11*, 55.

other government organizations in the face of post-disaster recovery attempts, the military's standing regardless improved at a steep rate after the 1923 disaster. Claims were made that the materialism and hedonism of then-modern Japanese culture might benefit from the temperament, discipline, and nationalistic selflessness demonstrated by the IJA forces that restored order and assisted with recovery. The military succeeded in banding the nation together in a "rally around the flag" manner, as emphasized in Chapter I. Thus, "the hand of the Imperial Japanese military was strengthened after a period in which it had been waning."[126] Every new misstep by the central government was mirrored by justifications for further return to so-called traditional values, reminiscent of the pre-World War II German "concept of military tradition, which served as an ideological bulwark against party politics, [and] later made soldiers" and arguably civilians susceptible to extremist legitimization.[127]

Where this deviates from similar lessons learned later by the SDF, however, is significant. The present day SDF, prior to 3.11, saw a security environment already turning in its favor in the decade prior, with public opinion on a gradual incline and funding, training, and permissiveness slowly increasing. In contrast, as described earlier, the 1923 Imperial military was one in steady decline. The government was in the process of "[streamlining] its military forces for strategic as well as economic reasons."[128] The IJA and those in power in the central government saw the 1923 disaster as a wakeup call, believing that it was extremely likely that in the event of a future cataclysm military troops might be engaged in unlimited war much like that waged in Europe in the previous decade, and that in that event "police, local government, and the people" would have to respond.[129] Certainly, the factors that contributed to Imperial Japan's descent into militarism and total war were many and not limited to the earthquake and its aftermath. Ultimately, however,

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126 Samuels, *3.11,* 55.

127 Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 291.

128 Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: from Tokugawa Times to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 175.

129 Schenking, *The Great Kanto Earthquake*, 73.

the political instability and the empowerment of the Imperial military that followed were in part directly influenced by the cataclysm of 1923 and would serve as a warning call to present-day citizens.[130]

B. HANSHIN-AWAJI EARTHQUAKE (1995)

Kobe's 1995 earthquake disaster is particularly useful when interposed between the events of 1923 and 2011, highlighting just how differently SDF response could have been after 3.11 had public opinion affected permissiveness as it did in the mid-1990s.[131] The largest temblor since the Great Kanto Earthquake, the Kobe quake killed more than 6,400 people and demolished significant swathes of office space and docks at Japan's largest port.[132] Amid the similarity of the circumstances surrounding the disaster event, there was the important exception of government actors' willingness to deploy the SDF immediately as a reactionary measure. The burden of blame—although initially shared by the admittedly procedurally underprepared SDF—shifted away from the organization once the argument emerged that its efforts were hampered by government mismanagement.

Japan had by this time long met the criteria that made for a modern democratic regime, such as legislatures and executives chosen through fair, open, and free elections; universal suffrage; freedom of press, expression, and assembly; and elected officials in possession of the actual authority to govern.[133] But despite long-consolidated democracy, narratives from the disaster reveal "deep divisions about SDF legitimacy," and the resulting disconnect between military and civilian authorities likely contributed significantly to the SDF's problematic disaster response and bungled deployment.[134] Samuels, in fact, credits the failures endured during this quake with increasing the frequency, complexity, and

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130 Samuels, *3.11*, 57.

131 Samuels, 57.

132 Samuels.

133 Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, "Elections without Democracy: the Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (April 2002): 53, https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2002.0026.

134 Samuels, *3.11*, 57–58.

acceptance of joint disaster management exercises between local governments and the SDF.[135]

The Kobe quake could therefore almost serve as an outlier in this research, given the improvement of public perception of the SDF despite poor performance. More likely, however, is that the poor performance of the SDF was attributed to the broken civilian-military relationship between it and civilian government decision-makers. The SDF was believed to have done the best job possible given the difficult circumstances presented to them.

1. The Post-Cold War SDF

At the time of the Kobe earthquake, Japan was still over a decade from forming an independent Ministry of Defense. Instead, it operated its armed forces under the heavily scrutinized and subordinated Japanese Defense Agency (JDA). This segregation contributed to a "restricted place in the Japanese state" for the SDF, "relatively isolated from a skeptical public that is not supportive of military entanglements."[136]

In particular, general popular and some elite sentiment sometimes questioned the point of a de facto military in a de jure pacifist nation. This became especially concerning when the SDF could not effectively protect or rescue its own citizens from the most politically and militarily neutral of foes: Mother Nature. In a country that occasionally questioned the constitutionality of its defense forces in the first place, this did not help the argument for the SDF's continued existence. Of course, domestic disaster relief dispatches had been used since the conception of the SDF to help legitimize its existence; Prime Minister Yoshida in the 1950s consistently advocated for the SDF's role in such operations.[137] If it was perceived that the SDF could not effectively complete such a benign

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135 Samuels, *3.11,* 63.

136 Peter J. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 100.

137 Tomoaki Murakami, "The GSDF and Disaster Relief Dispatches," in *The Japanese Ground Self Defense Force: the Search for Legitimacy,* ed. R. D. Eldridge and P. Midford (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 267.

operation as recovery from the 1995 earthquake, however, then what was the point of the organization in the first place?

Early disaster relief dispatches were rocky, with proactive commanders reprimanded often by a central government fearful of losing civilian control of the Defense Forces; it took several decades of extremely gradual reform and legal revision before the central government developed a truly manageable process. In the decades that followed, and throughout the Cold War, public opinion of the SDF very gradually increased, largely thanks to improved action in disaster relief rather than from any defense of the nation from an outward human threat.[138]

That said, public opinion was said to be one of four primary explanations for determining Japan's security politics, and "even as early as the 1980s there was a noticeable trend toward greater public acceptance of the Self Defense Forces and of Japan's becoming a 'normal nation' again."[139] The conclusion of the Cold War shifted public opinion dramatically, as "the positive impression of the SDF grew in nearly a straight line from the mid-1970s, according to Cabinet Office polls."[140] According to Samuels, this was largely attributed to positive press following disaster relief operations, as well as successful peacekeeping operations in Cambodia and Mozambique. Samuels finds that disaster relief was perceived as a top priority for the SDF from 1997–2003, and for the first time Japan saw consistent deployments abroad for disaster relief operations.[141] This perhaps suggested that the public was capable of embracing the SDF while not necessarily supporting a new national security mission.

2. The Disaster

Early in the morning on January 17, 1995, residents of the fifth most populous of Japan's major cities were shaken from their beds by a magnitude 6.9 tremor lasting 11

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138 Murakami, "The GSDF and Disaster Relief Dispatches," 277.

139 Pekkanen and Krauss, "Japan's 'Coalition of the Willing' on Security Policies," 430.

140 Samuels, *Securing Japan*, 81.

141 Murakami, "The GSDF and Disaster Relief Dispatches," 282–283.

seconds.[142] Since it struck at 05:46, many in the area were still in their homes and public transportation volume was not yet at its daily peak. Still, the disaster and resulting aftershocks and series of uncontrollable fires—known altogether as the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake by seismologists—were responsible for the deaths of over 6,400 people and the injuries of more than 15,000 in Japan.[143] Additionally, damage was estimated at $95 billion, over 106,000 homes were destroyed, and at least 319,000 people were left temporarily homeless in the dead of winter. It was the worst earthquake to strike Japan in almost 70 years, second at the time only to the Great Kanto earthquake of 1923 that killed 142,000 and displaced 3.4 million people.[144]

Reaction from the rest of Japan was slow. With the immediate area cut off from the outside, television stations in locations that were only slightly affected, on the outskirts of the epicenter, gave audiences a falsely mild impression of the damage incurred.[145] It was well into mid-morning, hours after the earthquake struck, before aerial camera footage "made the scale of the devastation apparent to all."[146] Coverage by national news outlets provided the impetus for relief operations to mobilize, but challenges surfaced almost immediately.

3. SDF Response

The SDF initially came under intense scrutiny for a delayed, sluggish, and disorganized deployment of troops to the scene of the Kobe quake.[147] Five and a half hours passed before a National Land Agency responded, and only 2,300 SDF troops were initially

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[142] Hiroshi Higashiura and Peter Walker, "Earthquake Perceptions and Survival: Kobe," in *World Disasters Report, 1996*, ed. Nick Cater and Peter Walker, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 65.

[143] Daniel P. Aldrich, "The Power of People: Social Capital's Role in Recovery from the 1995 Kobe Earthquake," *Natural Hazards* 56, no. 3 (2011). http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11069-010-9577-7. http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/852311607?accountid=12702.

[144] James Daniell, "Sichuan 2008: A disaster on an immense scale," *BBC News: Science and Environment*, May 9, 2013. https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-22398684#panel1.

[145] Higashiura and Walker, "Earthquake Perceptions and Survival," 67.

[146] Higashiura and Walker.

[147] Frühstück, *Uneasy Warriors,"* 10.

dispatched because the (quickly established) National Emergency Center did not have sufficient information from ground zero as to the full extent of damages and challenges.[148]

While blame seemed to be initially laid at the feet of the SDF itself, the narrative that emerged in the following days as recovery efforts played out shifted the culpability elsewhere. Some criticism found its origin in party politics. Krauss argues that "the government's slow response to using the SDF extensively was because of his and his party's long ideological opposition to the SDF's constitutional legitimacy," referring to several widely circulated media accounts of the military-averse Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama and his party, the coalition cabinet of the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ).[149] This explanation supported the understanding that the civilian government had a long-standing "allergy" to anything resembling domestic military action, as described earlier.

An alternative avenue of blame for the fumbled SDF response found origins in much lower sections of government and reflected a different norm altogether: one of strict adherence to procedure, even at the expense of independent thought and action that could have saved lives. The SDF Middle Army's then-commanding General Matsushima Yuusuke laid the blame for the SDF's slow response on "unprepared local officials."[150] SDF members were able to exercise the skills for which they had been trained and acted on their own initiative within affected areas that fell immediately under their responsibility. Anything outside these units' immediate jurisdiction, however, required prefectural authorities to put out official requests for assistance. Therefore, even though Middle Army officials made attempts to contact Kobe administrators immediately after the earthquake struck, they were unable to render assistance even after establishing contact because of general confusion and lack of information on the part of the prefectural administration. To make matters worse, officials at the municipal level were unable to "tell the SDF where to

148 Pekkanen and Krauss, "Japan's 'Coalition of the Willing' on Security Policies," 189.

149 Eliss Krauss, "Crisis Management, LDP, and DPJ Style," *Japanese Journal of Political Science,* 14, no. 2 (May 2013): 190. https://doi.10.1017/S1468109913000029.

150 David Hunter-Chester, *Creating Japan's Ground Self Defense Force, 1945–2015: A Sword Well Made* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016), 185.

deliver food or other relief aid."[151] Finally, to worsen already compounding frustrations, certain civilian officials would not allow SDF aircraft delivering aid and expertise to land in the region's civilian airports, citing lack of precedence for the action.

4. Reaction

Again, in the end, despite mounting complications in the frustrating and nightmarish scenario, very little blame seemed to fall directly on the SDF. Opinion polls approximately two weeks after the earthquake "showed that a majority of the public did not support the government's response to the disaster, citing lack of preparation for the rescue, decision-making problems, and lack of effective leadership by the prime minister."[152] The central government and local authorities took the brunt of the public's discontent, and a rare (for Japan) call was raised to review the autonomy granted to the SDF in similar scenarios in the future. A main argument centered on the question of how, given Japan's propensity for regular natural disasters, the central government could have been so ill-prepared to coordinate and deploy for this mission even though one of the SDF's primary defense missions was touted to be that of disaster relief.

Despite this, however, the lessons learned for the SDF and government were abundant. Both the Disaster Measures Basic Law and the National Disaster Prevention Basic Plan saw significant changes implemented after a study panel convened to examine them.[153] The earthquake additionally "forced the military to modernize its disaster relief operation equipment and training."[154] The SDF even began to ramp up the dispatch of troops overseas on peacekeeping operations and, most relevantly, began disaster relief efforts abroad. The public overall supported this transition, especially with the SDF's "good reputation in Japan as a disaster relief organization," and under the "condition that this did not lead to overseas combat."[155]

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[151] Hunter-Chester, *Creating Japan's Ground Self Defense Force*, 186.

[152] Krauss, "Crisis Management, LDP, and DPJ Style," 190.

[153] Hunter-Chester, *Creating Japan's Ground Self Defense Force*, 187.

[154] Frühstück, *Uneasy Warriors*, 10.

[155] Midford, *Rethinking Japanese Public Opinion and Security*, 97.

Likewise, SDF troops and leadership reported participation in recovery efforts to be very rewarding. Frühstück finds that many new recruits to the SDF and cadets at the National Defense Academy looked forward to primarily to participation in such operations as disaster relief, "hoping … to rescue people who would be grateful to them, and to possibly be acknowledged in the TV news for their efforts."[156] She further observed that such an operation served tremendously in building identity for participating service members.

Interestingly, an alternate result of disaster relief and humanitarian assistance was also emerging. Leaders within the SDF. as well as those in prominent positions within the government, feared that highlighting the organization's mission as humanitarian in nature misrepresented its primary role as the main line of defense for Japan. Peacekeeping missions such as those involving humanitarian assistance or disaster relief could "undermine the readiness [of] the armed forces to win a war."[157] The mission sometimes provoked discontent among ranks of service members who felt that peacekeeping operations were not consistent with the role they imagined themselves playing; this perhaps revealed a disconnect between the military's identity and the identity the public projected on it (a Huntingtonian argument, to be sure).[158]

As noted earlier, the initial failure of the SDF created narratives that showed "deep divisions about SDF legitimacy," and the observed disconnect between military and civilian authorities caused by it likely contributed significantly to its problematic disaster response and bungled deployment.[159] As the narrative of the disaster evolved, though, and blame shifted elsewhere, there was widespread recognition in both the general public and within the Japanese government of the need for improved cooperation between the SDF and government agencies. The taboo associated with the mere discussion of the military's

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156 Midford, 97.

157 Frühstück, *Uneasy Warriors*, 74.

158 Hikotani, "The Paradox of Antimilitarism," 165.

159 Samuels, *3.11*, 63.

role in such an operation practically vanished, and there was general acceptance of the SDF's role in domestic disaster relief operations.[160]

In Japan, the failure of the system to efficiently provide disaster relief gave the general public the opinion that the central government had failed an SDF organization that deserved better. This meant improving the structure for combating future disasters. Both the 1923 and 1995 disasters revealed a public that was supportive of the military, although the central government in both scenarios took advantage of that in vastly different ways. The chapter that follows will explore other scenarios from around the world in an effort to explore further whether varying levels of democratization contribute to civilian reaction to military response.

[160] Samuels, *3.11,* 63.

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IV. DISASTERS ABROAD: THE CASE FOR A GOOD SHOWING

The case studies presented earlier examined natural disaster's apparent effect on CMR within two different stages of democratization in Japan. Chapter IV casts a wider net by taking a broad look at contemporary examples from major disasters around the world. These examples reflect an array of governments, from democratic to transitionary to non-democratic. They examine the unique effect military action in response to major natural disaster might have on the relationship between the military and the public.

In readdressing the applicability to CMR, namely the interdependence between the civilian public, the civilian government, and the military, the search for empirical evidence from worldwide examples proves fruitful when considering the relationship between the public's respect (or lack thereof) for the military, permissive policy, and democratic oversight. In the face of turbulent civil-military relations, effective disaster relief response is significant, possibly generating credibility to a military organization in a country where public support for it is not guaranteed. It can lessen opposition toward changes in security policy, permitting militarization and mobilization.

More broadly, this dynamic shift can also be observed in militaries that emphasize other non-traditional roles beyond HA/DR. The Mongolian military, for example, underwent several transformations in the years following the country's democratization, reflecting similar attitude shifts to those seen in Japan's postwar decades. Bruneau and Mendee find that whereas civil-military relations were once ideological and heavily militarized, following transition into democracy there was greater civilian control exerted over the military and a general increase in professionalism was observed.[161] In a near exact parallel to the military's role in Japan, these changes caused the military to lose "its salient status in the society while politicians and the public eventually lost their interest in military affairs."[162] They emphasized that it was only in 2003 that the role of the military reentered

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[161] Thomas C. Bruneau and Jargalsaikhan Mendee, "Discovering Peacekeeping as a New Mission: Mongolia," in *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Cristiana Matei (New York: Routledge, 2013), 208–209.

[162] Bruneau and Mendee, 209.

public awareness and political discourse, upon deployments to the Middle East and Africa. In this example, it was the role of the Mongolian military in peacekeeping operations abroad that built credibility for the military and reignited a debate on the relevance of military forces, causing civilian leaders to consider this new role as an effective foreign policy instrument and reform tool for security organizations.[163] Peacekeeping is even said to have improved public affairs, positively impacting both the "quantity and quality" of recruits and vastly improving public opinion on participation in peacekeeping operations abroad.[164] Could normalization of the Japanese SDF follow a similar trend, with HA/DR operations such as 3.11 and Operation Tomodachi at the forefront?

This chapter begins by introducing the 2010 earthquake and tsunami in Chile, a country with an established democratic government, but a military bearing some of the burden of its pre-democratic legacy. Public exposure to effective military response efforts measurably boosted the military's credibility and reinforced the perceived maturity of the Chilean military as a proper, civilian-controlled democratic institution. Next, Indonesia's response to the devastating earthquake and tsunami of 2004 is examined. With a newly elected president taking power after the first supposedly free and fair election since democratization, the Indonesian example highlights a transitionary government's military response, public reaction, and the role the disaster played in ending a long-running internal conflict and contributing to effective civilian control of military actions. Finally, the massive 2008 earthquake in China's Sichuan province is explored, offering insight as to how these hypotheses might apply in a non-democratic state and revealing the weight given to public opinion by a non-democratic government when military credibility is called into question.

A. CHILE (2010)

Chile's example perhaps most closely parallels the reactions by the Japanese civilian government and general public following the Kobe and 3.11 quakes. Untested and

[163] Bruneau and Mendee, "Discovering Peacekeeping as a New Mission: Mongolia," 210.

[164] Bruneau and Mendee, 213.

not fully trusted after a legacy of human rights violations while under military rule, the Chilean military would discover that its newfound credibility following the 2010 disaster would not only ensure high public opinion of the organization, but also demonstrate the long way civilian control of the military had come in a post-democratization era.

1. The Political Situation

Chile's transition to democracy, beginning in 1988, ended a ruthless dictatorship. It also marked the beginning of three stages of increase in democratic control over an otherwise "strong, independent, and influential military."[165] The following twenty years was a battle for compromise fraught with tension, conciliation, and a desire for "normalcy" in CMR, somewhat reminiscent of the "normalization" buzzword familiar to Japan scholars, with investigations over a multitude of human rights violations over the course of decades of dictatorship. By 2010, in the month after the earthquake struck, President Michelle Bachelet—a proponent of increasing civilian supremacy over the military—turned over her office to President Sebastián Piñera, who was responsible for executing the Law on the Organization and Functioning of the Ministry of Defense during his term.[166]

2. The Disaster

Early in the morning of February 27, 2010, a magnitude 8.8 earthquake struck off the Chilean coast, affecting several highly populated regions between the capital city of Santiago and the second most populous, Concepcion. Approximately 20 minutes later, a tsunami washed inland up to 2,000 feet in some areas, compounding the damage and casualties.[167] According to officials, the final death toll came to 525, with 25 persons listed as missing.[168] The estimated number of those displaced soared to approximately 2 million

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[165] Cristiana Matei, and Marcos Roblado, "Democratic Civilian Control and Military Effectiveness: Chile," in *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*, ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Cristiana Matei (New York: Routledge, 2013), 284.

[166] Matei and Robledo, 288.

[167] June S. Beittel and Rhoda Margesson, *Chile Earthquake: U.S. and International Response*, CRS Report No. R41112 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2010), 1.

[168] "Informe Final de Fallecidos y Desaparecidos por Comunas," Ministerio del Interior y Seguridad Pública (archived November 14, 2012) http://www.interior.gob.cl/filesapp/listado_fallecidos_desaparecidos_27Feb.pdf.

out of a population of 16.6 million people.[169] Buildings, bridges, phone and power lines, and other infrastructure elements were severely damaged, and it took some time for the extent to be broadcast to the world.

3. The Military Response

In the days that followed, upon observing the police's inability to handle growing civil unrest but after initial hesitation to do so immediately, President Michelle Bachelet announced a state of disaster so that military troops could be involved in recovery efforts and restoration of order.[170] This delay took 48 hours and was widely questioned, with some critics arguing that it arose from President Bachelet's personal mistrust of the military—a result of her imprisonment by the ruling military dictatorship of the pre-democratic era—and resulting reluctance to deploy it.[171] Others attributed this delay to decentralization of the deployment decision-making process following efforts to reduce military "involvement in civil affairs" after dictatorship.[172] At least 16,000 domestic military personnel were deployed.[173] Significantly, this State of Catastrophe was the first time such a measure was declared since the Chilean government had returned to democracy in 1990.[174] The announcement was a step short of declaring martial law, in that it was meant to restrict certain liberties and civil rights until order could be restored in the area. The military ultimately completed its mission expeditiously, handling looters, distributing relief supplies, and restoring order, but staying its hand from any overly aggressive response to petty crime.[175]

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169 Claudia Bucciferro, *For-get: Identity, Media, and Democracy in Chile* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2012), 91, Beittel and Margesson, *Chile Earthquake,* 1.

170 Matei and Roblado, "Democratic Civilian Control and Military Effectiveness," 291.

171 Beittel and Margesson, *Chile Earthquake*, 4.

172 Bucciferro, *For-get*, 92.

173 Beittel and Margesson, *Chile Earthquake,* 1.

174 Beittel and Margesson, 3.

175 Jason Beaubien and Scott Newman, "Not Since Pinochet, Chile's Army Back on the Streets," NPR (March 4, 2010), https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124303332.

Initially, the Chilean Navy faced some culpability for failing to broadcast a timely tsunami warning in the wake of the earthquake. President Bachelet, however, managed to deflect some of the blame. The head of the Navy's catastrophic warning unit was fired, the Navy acknowledged the faultiness of their warning system, and Bachelet's successor announced a modernization of the tsunami warning system as soon as he came into office only a month later.[176] Aside from this criticism, however, the Chilean military's image emerged quite improved after the conclusion of its relief efforts.

4. The Aftermath and Lessons Learned

Following earthquake recovery operations, the Chilean armed forces came to be highly trusted by 96 percent of the nation's public.[177] Given that most accounts suggest a moderate-at-best support level for the military prior to this, it seems safe to conclude that this 96 percent result represents a significant improvement. In Chile, where the transition from military dictatorship to democracy in 1990 left a civilian population weary of rearmament, the armed forces' effective response to the 2010 earthquake "demonstrated the maturity of Chilean CMR, in terms of both democratic control ... and effectiveness."[178] The armed forces earned a tremendous amount of popular trust and support, at a level not previously experienced during democratization. As with reactions toward 3.11 operations described previously, civilian response to the military overall was positive—perhaps surprisingly so, given the generally uneasy relationship between the public and military forces after democratization in 1990.

The Chilean example, according to Matei and Robledo, supports the theory that implied effectiveness of military operations, when given proper exposure to the general public, can serve to bolster public opinion of the military. Following extensive legislative and doctrinal change to Chile's armed forces, humanitarian aid and "participation in peace operations [were] part and parcel of … endeavors to boost the Chilean armed forces

176 Beittel and Margesson, *Chile Earthquake,* 4.

177 Matei and Roblado, "Democratic Civilian Control and Military Effectiveness," 291.

178 Matei and Roblado, 291.

effectiveness."[179] This conclusion seems consistent with observations within Japan following both the 1995 Kobe earthquake and effective SDF response to the events of 3.11.

B. ACEH, INDONESIA (2004)

The earthquake and tsunami that devastated the northwest coast of Sumatra in December 2004 resulted in the largest international humanitarian response ever. Nations from around the world devoted billions of dollars in funds, sent experts from aid organizations, and even deployed their militaries to take part in combined humanitarian aid and disaster relief operations throughout the affected countries. Sources tend to vary on the precise number of deaths given the sheer breadth and magnitude of the devastation, but according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), "more than 228,000 people died in 14 countries in Southeast Asia and South Asia, and as far away as Africa … and the damage totaled nearly US$10 billion."[180]

As devastating as this series of destructive waves was all around the Indian Ocean, no region suffered more than the northwest side of Sumatra, in the semi-autonomous province of Aceh. Not only was this area closest to the epicenter of the originating earthquake, but it was also in the direct path of some of the most powerful waves of the tsunami. In addition, in the several decades prior to the disaster, this region had experienced decades of unrest, insurgency, and turmoil as a result of conflict between the Indonesian military and separatist groups seeking independence.

1. The Political Situation

From the start of Suharto's New Order in the late 1960s, security strategy in Indonesia was largely inward facing. During this period, "Emphasis on domestic priorities [stemmed] from the general belief, particularly among the military elite, that the greatest

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[179] Matei and Robledo, 290–291.

[180] "South Asia: Earthquake and Tsunami - Dec 2004," ReliefWeb-UNOCHA, accessed June 12, 2018, https://reliefweb.int/disaster/ts-2004-000147-idn?country=120&source_type=271#content.

threats to Indonesian national security [came] from within the country itself."[181] Suharto's new government, in which the military played an impactful role, feared the overall heterogeneity of the country, given both religious and ethnic diversity and the sprawling geography separating the archipelagic nation, combined with the perpetual threat of communism that was so prevalent at the height of the Cold War. This mentality prevailed until 1997, when the New Order regime saw signs of its impending collapse. New elections around this time brought with them a new experiment in Indonesian democracy that has fared far better than the country's flirtation with liberal democracy from 1949 to 1959.

The Indonesian Armed Forces worked for many years to meet the priorities dictated by the central government, which identified the primary threat to the state as internal.[182] The military enjoyed a prominent, even praetorian position in politics and the government, and it certainly had a powerful role in national decision-making until well into Indonesia's process of democratization in the late 1990s and 2000s. Upon the end of the New Order and at the onset of democratization, its dominant role in domestic politics was finally called into question. Amid over a decade of further undue influence throughout the Indonesian government, more balanced civil-military relations typical of more mature democracies began to emerge during Yudhoyono's presidency in the late 2000s.[183] Still, the military was a prominent actor in several internal conflicts leading up to this, including that with separatists in East Timor prior to that country's independence, and violent security crackdowns in the provinces of Aceh and Papua.[184] This is all, of course, in direct contrast to the modern Japanese and Chilean examples, in which disempowered and distrusted militaries used HA/DR to improve their standings.

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[181] Dewi Fortuna Anwar, "Indonesia: Domestic Priorities Define National Security," in *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 478.

[182] Ian MacFarling, "The Dual Function of the Indonesian Armed Forces: Military Politics in Indonesia*," Australian Defence Studies Centre* (New South Wales: 1996), 1.

[183] Mietzner, *Military Politics, Islam, and the State in Indonesia.* 17. See this work for an outstanding analysis of civil-military relations within Indonesia during these transitionary years, namely the dynamic between perceived internal threats within Indonesia and the domestic military's argument over its indispensability in order to confront those threats.

[184] Mietzner, 211, 226.

Retired general Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was elected to the presidency in October 2004, along with his vice president Jusuf Kalla.[185] His election held particular significance for Indonesia. His sweeping victory against incumbent Megawati symbolized a new phase in Indonesia's democratic transition. This was the first direct presidential election in the newly democratized Indonesia, as the process had been approved by the Majelis Permusyaaratan Rakyat (MPR, or People's Consultative Assembly) only three years before, in 2001.[186] His win was widely interpreted as legitimate by both domestic and international audiences and watchdogs, and his unprecedented popular legitimacy shielded him from a military that historically sought concessions from presidents with questionable paths of ascension.[187]

Throughout both terms of his presidency, Yudhoyono was driven by a desire to see Indonesia rise to prominence on the world stage. He was keenly interested in foreign affairs, and even during his military career it was apparent that his presidency would revolve around foreign policy.[188] Before Yudhoyono could direct his attention outward, however, he and his administration had several domestic issues that needed addressing. Yudhoyono's "legacy on internal security" would be determined by his handling of three main issues he inherited: the Aceh insurgency, "violence in Papua," and terrorism.[189] While his success across all three is debatable, he is generally credited for the peace agreement brokered during his tenure between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, or GAM) and the mostly enduring end to hostilities. The catalyst for its timing, however, would come at a tremendous price.

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185 Sidney Jones, "Yudhoyono's Legacy on Internal Security: Achievements and Missed Opportunities," in *The Yudhoyono Presidency: Indonesia's Decade of Stability and Stagnation,* ed. Edward Aspinall, Marcus Mietzner, and Dirk Tomsa (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2015), 139.

186 Edward Aspinall, Marcus Mietzner, and Dirk Tomsa, "The Moderating President: Yudhoyono's Decade in Power," in *The Yudhoyono Presidency: Indonesia's Decade of Stability and Stagnation,* ed. Edward Aspinall, Marcus Mietzner, and Dirk Tomsa (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2015), 5.

187 Mietzner, *Military Politics, Islam, and the State in Indonesia*, 293.

188 Aaron L. Connelly, "Sovereignty and the Sea: President Joko Widodo's Foreign Policy Challenges," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 37, no. 1 (2015): 3.

189 Jones, "Yudhoyono's Legacy on Internal Security," 136.

Unrest began in Aceh as early as 1952, when "political mishandling by Jakarta" led to a series of events that caused decades of unrest within the region.[190] That year, the central government incorporated Aceh into North Sumatra, reducing its status from a province. This led to protest in Aceh that was interpreted by the central government as a revolt. Tensions escalated into on-and-off violence over the course of the next several decades over religious and socioeconomic grievances, as well as when separatists sought to establish an independent Acehnese state. Overt conflict ravaged Aceh episodically after 1976 with the founding of GAM, with nearly 15,000 lives lost to the fighting.[191] While "most elements of Jakarta's political elite wanted to settle the separatist conflict in the province in a peaceful way," a failed attempt at a settlement by the Megawati administration through an accord in 2002 led to a 2003 breakdown and subsequently renewed an all-out offensive between the rebels and the central military forces deployed to the region.[192] Resolution became a hot campaign topic in the run-up to presidential elections in 2004, where incumbent President Megawati Sukarnoputri faced a former member of her administration in Yudhoyono. Upon taking office, Yudhoyono and his vice president Kalla spearheaded efforts to bridge the gap and bring the conflict to an end.

Yudhoyono was given a rare opportunity by the destruction wrought by the tsunami. With both sides ordering a ceasefire, the possibility for an end to the conflict in Aceh was closer at hand than ever. The response by the international community was immediate and overwhelming. Governments and independent organizations alike sent massive amounts of aid in the form of funds, equipment, and military intervention. The conflict in Aceh still created tremendous impediments, however.

2. The Disaster

On December 26, 2004, at 07:58 local time, a shuddering 9.0 magnitude undersea earthquake struck in the Indian Ocean, only 99.4 miles west of Sumatra at a depth of 18.6

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190 Anwar, "Indonesia," 493.

191 "Deal reached in Aceh peace talks," *Al Jazeera,* July 17, 2005, https://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2005/07/200849161325265987.html.

192 Mietzner, *Military politics, Islam, and the State in Indonesia*, 299.

miles.[193] The tremor triggered a devastating tsunami that affected regions all around the Indian Ocean and as distant as Africa, killing over 200,000 people. The worst of the waves, reportedly as high as 100 feet in some locations and flooding miles ashore in low-lying areas, swept freight ships inland and lifted entire buildings off their foundations.

The damage to Indonesia alone seemed incalculable. The first of the massive waves reached Aceh within fifteen minutes. Within the city-proper of Banda Aceh, the waves inundated land as far as 2.5 miles inland, resulting in 71,000 killed or missing in that city alone.[194] The total number of victims in Indonesia amounted to nearly 170,000—the vast majority of casualties. Along the west coast of Aceh province, in the region of Lho'nga and approximately 6.2 miles from Banda Aceh, tsunami heights reached a staggering 50–100 feet, wiping the whole village off the map.[195]

3. The Military Response

The government did not come out from this event unscathed, however insurmountable the disaster seemed. Indonesia's domestic military response was rife with complications. Damage and casualties to their own forces, infrastructure, and to other government and administrative agencies both national and local, and the military's own lack of means to effectively deliver aid were only a part of the significant challenge.

Hampered further by the political situation impacting the Aceh region, international aid organizations and foreign journalists encountered many roadblocks when trying to attain access to the regions most impacted by the tsunami.[196] According to a January 2005

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[193] Pradyumna P. Karan, "When Nature Turns Savage," in *The Indian Ocean Tsunami,* ed. Pradyumna P. Karan, Shanmugam Subbiah, and Dick Gilbreath (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 7; Koji Fujima, "Environmental Damage in the Maldives from the Indian Ocean Tsunami," in *The Indian Ocean Tsunami,* ed. Pradyumna P. Karan, Shanmugam Subbiah, and Dick Gilbreath (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 127.

[194] Karan, "When Nature Turns Savage," 13; Masatomo Umitsu, "The Geoenvironment and the Giant Tsunami Disaster in the Northern Part of Sumatra Island, Indonesia," in *The Indian Ocean Tsunami,* ed. Pradyumna P. Karan, Shanmugam Subbiah, and Dick Gilbreath (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 51–54.

[195] Umitsu, "The Geoenvironment and the Giant Tsunami Disaster," 58.

[196] "Indonesia: Aceh Faces Aid Delivery Crisis, Lack of Volunteers, Poor Coordination," *Jakarta Laksamana,* December 31, 2004, Open Source Enterprise.

Associated Press report, in an announcement merely two and a half weeks after the disaster, the Indonesian government required foreign aid workers to be escorted by the military at all times into areas facing insurgent violence.[197] It also required foreign troops rendering HA/DR aid to depart the country within the next two months. Many organizations attempted to render aid without coordination with the military, despite the risks posed by conditions, unrest, and insurgents. There was a great deal of mistrust within the Aceh province as to the intentions of the Indonesian military and its commitment to the declared ceasefire in the wake of the disaster. Additionally, domestic criticism began piling on the Indonesian government and military for their initial handling of relief efforts, hampered as these institutions both were by their security concerns within the region.[198]

4. The Aftermath and Lessons Learned

The direct effects the earthquake and tsunami had on the military and its perception by the public remain unclear, but the indirect impact was significant: it provoked a solution to one of Indonesia's most visible and violent internal conflicts involving the military. This, in turn, lessened the military's resistance to civilian control and increased international attention and scrutiny on military behavior in the region. In interviews, President Yudhoyono shared that "as long as Aceh remained a battlefield, the military was unlikely to subordinate itself to democratic rule, budget transparency standards, and internationally acknowledged human rights codes," and that it appeared he "hoped to advance military reform by removing one of the hotbeds of military abuses, insubordination, and exploitation."[199]

This distrust of the central military in the region and the unpredictable actions of GAM seemed to spur a need for compromise. This long-sought peace between the Indonesian central government and GAM would not have been reached without the tsunami as a catalyst. The very memorandum signed between the government of Indonesia

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197 "Indonesia Reasserts Control Over Aid," Fox News, January 13, 2005, http://www.foxnews.com/story/2005/01/13/indonesia-reasserts-control-over-aid.html.

198 "Indonesia: Aceh Faces Aid Delivery Crisis, Lack of Volunteers, Poor Coordination."

199 Mietzner, *Military Politics, Islam, and the State in Indonesia*, 299.

and GAM in August of 2005 emphasized in its opening that both parties were "deeply convinced that only the peaceful settlement of the conflict will enable the rebuilding of Aceh after the tsunami disaster on 26 December 2004 to progress and succeed."[200] In it, the GAM abandoned its quest for full independence, and the central government declared it would withdraw its troops once the rebels disarmed and turned in their weapons.[201]

While Yudhoyono would certainly claim this as a hallmark of his successes—"the crown jewel," as Jones would dub it—he could not take all of the credit.[202] Famously moderate and quite indecisive, "without the 26 December 2004 tsunami to give peace-making a new impetus and urgency, Yudhoyono's habitual dithering would almost certainly have led to endless discussions without a clear resolution."[203] Even with the tsunami as a diplomatic catalyst, it was, in fact, his vice president, Kalla, who was credited with spearheading the majority of the diplomatic negotiations. Yudhoyono was unprepared to make the concessions that the GAM demanded of the government of Indonesia, and he feared political reprisal if he went too far. The tsunami was, in the end, proof of Yudhoyono's reactive domestic security policy, and perhaps indicative of his decision-making habits later during his time in office once he was finally able to direct policy outward into the international sphere.

Clearly, Yudhoyono's plan was significantly more visionary than simply bringing aid and reconstruction to a devastated region. As indicated here, he also sought to use this as an incentive to eliminate a longstanding domestic conflict that took up a great deal of his, his government's, and his military's attention. This could in turn permit that attention to be focused elsewhere—namely, the international theater, his primary concern. Even beyond bringing the conflict in Aceh to an end, though, what happened in Indonesia had even more far-reaching implications than these: one such goal was greater civilian control

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200 "Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the free Aceh Movement" (official memorandum, Helsinki, Finland: Crisis Management Initiative, 2005), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/15_08_05_aceh.pdf.

201 *Al Jazeera,* "Deal Reached in Aceh Peace Talks."

202 Jones, "Yudhoyono's Legacy on Internal Security," 138.

203 Jones, 137.

of the military. The aforementioned interviews with President Yudhoyono highlight as much; he stated explicitly that a resolution to the dispute in Aceh was part of his calculus to further subordinate the military to democratic rule and advance the process of democratization in Indonesia.[204] What this interview further implies, however, is that ending the conflict in Aceh could "improve state control over the military," paving the way for what Mietzner heralded as "one of the key factors in successful transitions from authoritarian rule to democracy," democratic control of the armed forces.[205]

Freedom House reporting on the tsunami in 2006 highlighted the causal connection between the tsunami and the Aceh peace accord, and the organization credited the combination of this end of conflict and Indonesia's latest phase of democratic transition with earning the country its highest freedom rating in the state's history to that point. This report also held that although early response by the government made press freedoms and military actions seem regressive, international pressure and scrutiny "focused on the area began to produce unanticipated benefits," opening the country to the eyes of the rest of the world.[206]

Why, then, did the Indonesian public not respond with greater criticism, given the unfathomable loss of life in an otherwise small geographical region, the international consensus that the domestic government was slow to act, *and* the military's being hampered by poor relations with GAM? The cases examined previously suggest that such a finding would likely coincide with greater public demand for reform meant to boost the effectiveness and credibility of military disaster response effort under streamlined civilian control and oversight. Perhaps the limitations of this research—namely, language barriers and document access—skewed results. Public opinion polling on issues dominating Indonesia are rare in English. But perhaps the peace resolution brokered between the GAM and Indonesian military forces that resulted from pragmatic efforts to bring relief to the insurgency-ravaged area for 30 years overcame most potential for negative sentiment.

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[204] Mietzner, *Military Politics, Islam, and the State in Indonesia*, 299.

[205] Mietzner, 324–5.

[206] "Indonesia: Freedom in the World 2006," Freedom House, accessed May 30, 2018, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2006/indonesia.

After all, the Peace Agreement was touted as one of President Yudhoyono's most significant achievements during his time in office, despite consensus that he might not have achieved it without the devastation wrought by the tsunami.

Further research into public opinion poll trends might offer more insight. Ultimately, the Indonesia example thus proves relatively inconclusive with regard to shifting public opinion, aside from anecdotal evidence and commentary by scholars and watchdogs. The disaster did, however, contribute to consolidating civilian control over military actions and contributing to democratization within Indonesia.

C. SICHUAN, CHINA (2008)

Among the cases presented in this chapter, China is the farthest outlier in terms of its form of government, censorship, and civilian control of the military. China's political situation in 2008 was extremely different from Japan's in 1995 and 2011, and analysis reveals that tight reporting of the earthquake, reflecting the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) strict censorship and propaganda methods, contributed to some of the most obvious differences between reactions to the similar disasters encountered by both countries. Still, the CCP seemed to take into account any public backlash on response efforts, tailoring military action and the narrative to paint a picture of effective response.

1. The Political Situation

After the Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s, China became an independent regional power through its leadership within the global Communism movement, the detonation of its first nuclear weapon, and "China's diversification of diplomatic relations with non-Communist industrial countries."[207] By the 1980s, prevailing security strategy as promulgated by Deng Xiaoping determined that China should focus on domestic development and security given the likelihood of overall stability in the international environment.[208] Some of that strategy went awry by the 1990s, however, as the United

[207] Suisheng Zhao, *Power Competition in East Asia: From the Old Chinese World Order to Post-Cold War Regional Multipolarity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 118–119.

[208] Bates Gill, *Rising Star* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2007), 3.

States unexpectedly (to China) rose to play a hegemonic role on the international stage and Chinese domestic struggles simultaneously increased. The military's deployment in the Tiananmen incident of 1989, in particular, was a particularly traumatizing event for the social and political stability of the CCP. It further fueled a tendency toward censorship, the internalization of deliberation and leadership rifts, and conversely also revealed a hypersensitivity to public attitudes.[209] The CCP and not the government of China, after all, controls the PLA. Ultimately, internal threats appeared more menacing to the central government than external ones (unless one counted Taiwan).

Having emerged from the international discord of a post-Cold War unipolar world, China found itself entering center stage both regionally and globally in 2008. It was only a few years away from bypassing Japan as the second largest economy in the world, its military was undergoing rapid reform and restructuring (the development of new platforms and strategies), and the international community's eyes were upon the nation as it prepared to host the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing. Human rights watchdogs were heaping criticism on the central government for its treatment of ethnic minorities in "strategically important border regions" such as Tibet, Xinjiang, and Mongolia, and internal unrest and discontent with those situations tended to depend on effectiveness of government censorship and access to alternative and uncensored reporting online.[210]

To that effect, the Freedom in the World and Press index that year was 85 on a scale from 0 to 100, with 100 indicating the least possible freedom. This reflected an overall worsening trend compared to years prior: "China's media environment remained one of the world's most restricted for both domestic and foreign journalists."[211] Even the state-owned Chinese media itself was unable to report on protests occurring within its borders.[212] There was tight control over reporting on the Tiananmen incident of 1989, more recent protests, or anything else that might imply CCP weakness. Given this, a

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209 Susan Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 39, 53.

210 Shirk, *China*, 58.

211 "China: Freedom of the Press 2009," Freedom House, accessed June 15, 2018, https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2009/china

212 Shirk, *China*, 56.

disaster on the scale of the Sichuan earthquake in a new era of Internet connectivity, social media, and tremendous domestic and international scrutiny in advance of the Summer Olympic Games meant the response to the immense disaster could make or break perception of the CCP's control over and ability to take care of Chinese citizens and its military.

Jiang Zemin, the president and chairman of the CCP in the years immediately preceding the Sichuan earthquake, sought to consolidate and promote the growth of CCP rule by enhancing the CCP's legitimacy through promotion of "economic growth and social stability," as well as "[confining] the PLA to narrow military technical tasks."[213] Ultimately, Jiang hoped to improve the boundaries of civil-military relations, make the PLA more cohesive and reducing the CCP's reliance on military intervention for social cohesion; this was especially important in preventing incidents like Tiananmen, which prompted his shift to power in the first place and were at the forefront of the politician's—and the military's—mind. Although many agencies, organizations, and even international aid contributed to recovery efforts, this mentality clearly did not hold when it came to the PLA and deployment to domestic disaster areas.

2. The Disaster

The May 12, 2008, earthquake that struck Sichuan was devastating to the region in several ways. Measured at a Richter magnitude of 7.9, the epicenter was located 19km below the surface in Wenchuan County, the hardest-hit area and where 23,871 fatalities were counted.[214] It struck in the middle of the afternoon, at 14:28 local time, "when school and university classes were being taught, office workers had returned to their desks from lunch, and the Sichuan working day was in full swing."[215] Altogether, a staggering 87,150 people were reported killed or missing and 4,800,000 were left homeless as a result of the

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213 Nan Li, "Chinese Civil-Military Relations in the Post-Deng Era: Implications for Crisis Management and Naval Modernization," *U.S. Naval War College China Maritime Studies* (Newport, Rhode Island: Center for Naval Warfare Studies, Naval War College, 2010), 11.

214 Daniell, "Sichuan 2008."

215 "M 7.9 - Eastern Sichuan, China," USGS Earthquake Hazards Program, accessed June 14, 2018. https://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/eventpage/usp000g650#executive; Daniell, "Sichuan 2008."

earthquake. It was believed to be the third deadliest disaster in the PRC's history, after the Great Leap Forward of the 1950s and the devastating 1976 Tangshan earthquake, which killed an estimated 240,000 people.[216]

Like the earthquake almost a decade earlier in Kobe, the Sichuan earthquake was among the ten costliest disasters of its type in the world between 1900 and 2013 based on direct loss estimates at the time of the event. This was second only to the tremor and tsunami that rocked the Tohoku region of Japan in 2011—other comparable disasters are seen in Figure 7.[217] The over two minutes of shaking "exposed the poor construction quality of buildings, especially the schools, many of which fell and killed at least 5,000 children in Sichuan."[218] Here was where domestic outrage at the central government was most abundant. It was believed that preventative measures to construct buildings with greater earthquake safety standards could have prevented the deaths of many of the region's most vulnerable.

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[216] Bin Xu, *The Politics of Compassion: the Sichuan Earthquake and Civic Engagement in China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017), 2.

[217] J.E.Daniell, B.Khazai, F. Wenzel, and A.Vervaeck, "The CATDAT Damaging Earthquakes Database," Natural Hazards and Earth System Sciences, March 26, 2013, https://www.nat-hazards-earth-syst-sci.net/11/2235/2011/nhess-11-2235-2011.xml.

[218] Daniell, Wenzel, and Vervaeck, "The CATDAT Damaging Earthquakes Database.

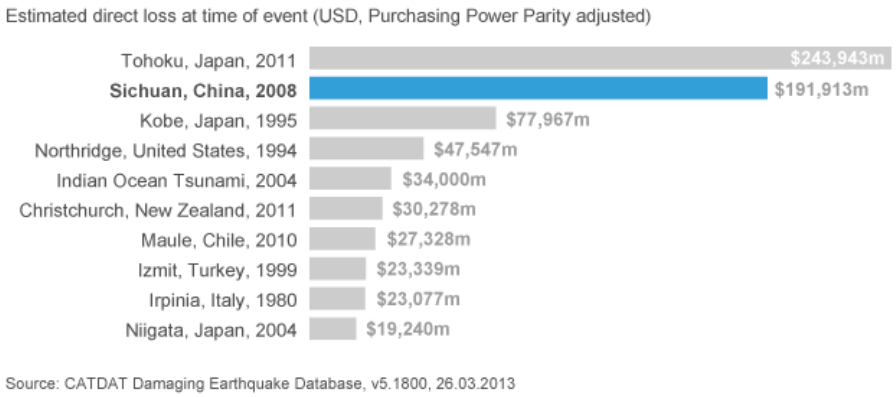

Figure 7. Ten Costliest Earthquakes, 1900–2013[219]

3. The Military Response

Sixteen thousand troops from regional PLA divisions, the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF), and the People's Armed Police (PAP) were mobilized and deployed within three hours of the tremor.[220] Merely 12 hours later, another 34,000 troops were headed to the stricken zones from more distant regions, and by May 14 an additional 32,600 troops were on the ground responding to the disaster. The naturally treacherous terrain in the mountainous region, however, prevented easy access by the over 100,000 troops and rescuers to the areas most affected by the earthquake. "Catastrophic landslides and falling rocks had destroyed the roads and blocked their access to the most devastated places," and rescuers often found themselves trekking over obstacles on foot in order to reach their destinations.[221]

While a great deal of international reporting stated sentiment to the effect that "China was praised for the speed and efficiency of its relief and reconstruction programme," a deeper look at the nuances of the response revealed similar impediments to military response faced by the SDF troops in Kobe over a decade prior.[222] The Hoover

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219 Source: James Daniell, "Sichuan 2008: A Disaster on an Immense Scale," *BBC News: Science and Environment*, May 9, 2013. https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-22398684#panel1.

220 Li, "Chinese Civil-Military Relations in the Post-Deng Era," 26.

221 Xu, *The Politics of Compassion*, 7.

222 Xu, 7.

Institute's *China Leadership Monitor* published a report on military leadership's response to the crisis, highlighting that "Chinese propaganda organs provided the usual statistical information to support the contention that the PLA response was 'orderly and efficient.'"[223] Early criticism of the military response included accusations that command staff was leading the efforts remotely instead of operating from the front lines alongside response units.[224] In response, state and military media soon after began showing PLA generals leading from the front, with (oftentimes comically exaggerated) accounts of the men leading the troops through valiant and self-sacrificing actions.

4. The Aftermath and Lessons Learned

However, the PLA's sluggish response and inability to overcome local bureaucratic barriers in the early days of the 2008 earthquake's aftermath resulted in an entirely different reaction from the central government and ministries in charge of its deployment. Domestic media almost immediately overcame government censorship to show the scope and human tragedy of the disaster, and the central government quickly recognized the futility of its efforts. In a *Los Angeles Times* report published several days after the earthquake struck, Barbara Demick reported that "the Communist Party's central propaganda department issued an order that Chinese news organizations not send reporters to the scene, but instead only use material from CCTV or from the official New China News Agency."[225] Indeed, in the 2009 report by Freedom House on freedom of the press within China, several journalists were said to have defied directives issued by the central government's propaganda department in order to ensure the scope and human tragedy of the disaster were broadcast to the rest of China and the world. Instead of avoiding the area and leaving acquisition of official footage to the state arm of the media, Xinhua, the authorities were eventually "prompted to allow one of the most open media environments seen in the

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223 James Mulvenon, "The Chinese Military's Earthquake Response Leadership Team," *China Leadership Monitor,* no. 25 (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 2008), 1.

224 Mulvenon, 4.

225 Barbara Demick, "Amid the Tragedy Lies Opportunity: China Casts Itself as Modern, Responsive and Compassionate," *Los Angeles Times,* May 14, 2008. Accessed June 5, 2018. http://articles.latimes.com/2008/may/14/world/fg-image14.

country in recent years."[226] In one of the most shocking turns for censorship, China allowed reporters and photographers unaffiliated with Xinhua and other central government agencies to enter the stricken areas to take and publish photos and accounts for several weeks after the earthquake.[227]

The domestic public was not blind to the PLA's shortcomings, and there was widespread recognition of the failures and successes of the operation. Only a few months earlier, the public "criticized the government for its inadequate response to a historic snowstorm in January and February."[228] However, the PLA seemed to emerge with a bolstered public image domestically. The army's response to the Sichuan earthquake "reinforced its popularity among the Chinese people, building upon the positive imagery of the PLA's efforts during the 1998 flood fighting and the 2007 ice and snow storm" and, by some academic accounts, wiping its association with the Tiananmen Square incident of 1989.[229] While certainly exercising caution and a certain amount of skepticism given the tightly controlled nature of such information from official Chinese sources, by all official accounts the public perceived that the PLA performed a primary role successfully and professionally, and even muted criticism of the government did not seem to touch the army itself.

Despite this lack of overt outcry, the government and military still took significant action to improve the mechanisms in place for future PLA disaster relief response efforts. Recognizing the "lack of appropriate PLA force structure, equipment, and training for nonwar military operations," evidence showed that the central government and PLA together attempted several restructures with regards to disaster relief.[230] Tension between government civilians tasked with coordination and military leaders executing those orders revealed a rift in civilian-military relations that left the ruling party nervous. In the months

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[226] Freedom House, "China: Freedom of the Press 2009."

[227] Demick, "Amid the Tragedy Lies Opportunity."

[228] Xu, *The Politics of Compassion*, 8.

[229] Mulvenon, "The Chinese Military's Earthquake Response Leadership Team," 6.

[230] Li, "Chinese Civil-Military Relations in the Post-Deng Era," 27.

following the relief efforts, significant changes implemented included the mobilization of local reserve units controlled by local military districts for disaster relief, ensuring familiarity with the region, culture, and social aspects as well as personal investment.[231] This would also smooth the way for dual chains of command, improving civil-military interaction in the event of a future crisis.

These findings were found, too, in research for the PLA's response to the Sichuan quake. Having deflected most of the blame through government censorship of the response's shortcomings, the Chinese central government nevertheless took action to ensure that future PLA response to domestic natural disasters would go more smoothly. Any underlying aversion toward the military likely vanished with the positive narrative that was promulgated on the PLA's actions following the earthquake.

The "outpouring of goodwill" toward the military solidified domestic disaster relief on the roster of primary duties of the soldier.[232] In China, MOOTW such as disaster relief were emphasized as a priority for the PLA, behind "'safeguarding national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity' and 'aiming to win local wars.'"[233] Despite the turn toward power projection in the years after the quake, the PLA also sought to "develop its capabilities with missions involving military operations other than war."[234]

Multiple failures in the 1995 Kobe earthquake response would push the Japanese MOD to improve reaction in order to further legitimize the SDF given the prominence of the role of disaster relief for the Japanese forces. China, on the other hand, outwardly marketed the PLA's response to the 2008 earthquake as flawless and patriotic, overtly using the event to bolster the image of the military in a bid at recovering face after multiple delegitimizing events. Internally, however, the central government recognized failed mechanisms and ultimately improved equipment and procedures in preparation for similar

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231 Li, "Chinese Civil-Military Relations in the Post-Deng Era," 29.

232 Shannon Tiezzi, "The Softer Side of China's Military," *The Diplomat*, August 8, 2014. https://thediplomat.com/2014/08/the-softer-side-of-chinas-military/

233 Tiezzi.

234 Marc Lanteigne, *Chinese Foreign Policy: an Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 112.

events in the future. Both states therefore took similar lessons learned, but in China this was seemingly in response to security norms and not public pressure. Both nations took actions to improve military disaster relief procedures, training, and even equipment in the wakes of their respective crises. They also simultaneously ensured that disaster relief was highlighted as a primary mission area of their militaries. For Japan, however, the mission was vaulted to the forefront of the SDF's purpose, while the PRC left it further down the line, given its primary focus on external security threats. This was reflective of a China on the cusp of turning security concerns outward. What this research also revealed was the scope and scale—perhaps unsurprisingly—of the tremendous role that censorship may have played in China, at the same time that the central government decided to take actions to improve military disaster relief response even without the public opinion backlash faced in a similar scenario in Japan.

Perhaps the degree of censorship in China, however, revealed that disaster relief indeed did fall much higher on the continuum of security priorities. It was, after all, in this time period that the new Chinese leadership was attempting to consolidate power and control over the PLA and to assure the public that it maintained significant control of the military. At a time when it was trying to consolidate domestic political control before becoming more outward facing, a proven failure in the system between the PLA and government officials could have crippled public faith in these structures and compromised the goals and control of the CCP.

V. CONCLUSION

What this research sought to determine was twofold. First, the goal was to see what effect, if any, 3.11 HA/DR efforts by the SDF had on Japanese public opinion regarding the organization. Second, the objective was to deduce whether that change in public opinion might have any measurable impact on normalization as seen through changes in security policy. While the results were not explicit in all areas, there was a clearly observable sustained increase in public opinion of the SDF, as well as increased recruitment numbers following SDF involvement in recovery operations, seen in detail in Chapter II.

A. THE STATUS OF NORMALIZATION

One of the core focuses of this study was the remilitarization of Japan. Significantly, Hughes reminds his readers to use the term "remilitarization" dispassionately, without any of the fearmongering and negative connotations opponents might prescribe to it.[235] Indeed, instead of allowing the term to be hijacked by harkening back to the SDF's Imperial predecessors, the goal, according to Hughes, is to strictly understand and utilize the term from a social science standpoint. Given the easy politicization of the term, however, most scholars prefer the term normalization, whatever added implication that might contribute to understanding.

The reality of normalization in Japan is that it is a gradually occurring process, with various visible markers in the post-Cold War era and even a "security renaissance" as identified by scholars like Andrew Oros and discussed in Chapter I.[236] While a generally dovish public may help curtail drastic changes in security policy, an improved perception

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[235] Christopher W. Hughes, "Japan's Remilitarization and Constitutional Revision," in *Demilitarization in the Contemporary World*, ed. Peter Stearns (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 128.

[236] Oros, *Japan's Security Renaissance*, 184.

of the SDF over the years has created greater legitimacy for the beleaguered defense institution in Japan.[237]

Ultimately, scholarly consensus suggests that security change is occurring in Japan, although at a debatable pace. While many scholars insist upon a gradual trend toward normalization since the defanging of Japanese troops following World War II, others believe that it is instead a reactive process, responding dramatically to each new security crisis with major shifts toward normalization. It is important, then, to consider whether 3.11, as one such major security crisis, served as a public opinion turning point at all, or, rather, whether it is instead better characterized as a litmus test for an already measurable change in the SDF's credibility and further implications for securitization.

B. PUBLIC OPINION'S ROLE

Of course, the working assumption throughout this research has been that public opinion matters in the first place for Japanese security decisions. As highlighted in Chapter I, Midford demonstrates this interrelationship in detail, arguing "that Japanese public opinion matters in the context of comparative global opinion as a major advanced industrial democracy, as the oldest East Asian democracy, and as one of the oldest non-Western democracies," and that "it is stable, coherent, and, regarding beliefs about the utility of military force, not easily or quickly swayed by elite attempts to influence it."[238] Although complex, nuanced, and highly circumstantial, public opinion influences policymaking in democratic states, and in Japan's MOD, gauging the public opinion on the SDF is seen as crucial to continued democratic control of the armed forces.[239]

MOD numbers reviewed in Chapter II revealed an improved public opinion of the SDF immediately following the 3.11 disasters, as indicated in Figure 3. Even after the passage of time, poll numbers returned to a higher average than they were before the

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[237] Paul Midford and Robert D. Eldridge, "Introduction," in *The Japanese Ground Self Defense Force: the Search for Legitimacy,* ed. R. D. Eldridge and P. Midford (New York City: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 7.

[238] Midford, *Rethinking Japanese Public Opinion and Security*, 7.

[239] Nakatani, "On the Publication of Defense of Japan 2016."

disaster, revealing that a measurable effect on public opinion. Still, despite this, there did not seem to be a significant impact on defense spending or other measurable impact on security policy that could be attributed to this change in public opinion.

The more far-reaching effects on general CMR certainly cannot be ignored, either. As was demonstrated in the 1995 Kobe earthquake and beyond, SDF response to disaster has a large "positive impact on service members' sense of purpose and recognition."[240] Based on extensive media attention, publicized victims' gratitude, and a positive cumulative experience of a Japanese organization prepared to mobilize in the face of disaster, the SDF's experience in each of these major disaster response operations initiated a measurable, if not remarkable, shift in civilian perception of their profession. This sort of exposure likely impacted how Japanese civilians viewed the profession of arms in their country, given once again that their exposure to it before these events tended to be rare.

A military that demonstrates competency generally improves its credibility among the populace it is created to protect. Indeed, CMR experts declare that "in a democracy, policymakers craft and implement security decisions and policies" that when successful, "go hand-in-hand with effective security forces."[241] In a democracy facing a supposed military "allergy" as Japan, however, part of the challenge in improving civilian perception of the military may lie in the shortage of opportunities to demonstrate that competency. With a severely restrictive constitution and a wary public attitude toward traditional military operations, the SDF lacked opportunity to prove its capabilities to the Japanese public. Throughout the years of its existence, however, it found its best chances to do so were during responses to natural disaster.

It is also worth noting the nature of the "conflict" the Self Defense Forces encountered, and exactly how that may have shaped public perception of their behavior. Carruthers described total war as total conviction, "whole-hearted participation and unswerving commitment to the cause."[242] With the survival of the state itself apparently

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[240] Frühstück, *Uneasy Warriors*, 75.

[241] Matei, "A New Conceptualization of Civil-Military Relations," 29.

[242] Susan Carruthers, *The Media at War*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 46.

at stake, there is no one outside the reach of war's effects. Furthermore, in total war the so-called protagonists fight "with unusual unity of purpose against an enemy whose malignance required no embellishment."[243] From the perspective of the Japanese people, there was perhaps no greater enemy in recent memory than the indiscriminate destruction delivered by the wave of disasters of 3.11. The preventability of the Fukushima nuclear disaster made a villain of TEPCO, various politicians, and the several fumbling government institutions involved. Actions by the SDF to save lives, clear wreckage, and deliver comfort to the people most affected, sometimes at the expense of their own health and comfort, therefore became a campaign without criticism.

As noted by Edwards, the roles of Europe's militaries evolved in the wake of the departure from "the traditional core functional imperative of the defence [sic] of the state from external threat."[244] By moving away from these traditional warfighting roles within Europe to the professionalization of expeditionary warfighting forces, peacekeeping, and disaster relief, the relationship between society and the military "may significantly alter the underlying bases for armed forces' legitimacy in their societies."[245] That Japan started from a different baseline of limited aggression by the SDF implies a somewhat variant interpretation of their legitimacy, but the theory nevertheless provides value in the context of claims made by Frühstück discussed earlier.

To that effect, it seems throughout most scholarly works that there is consensus on the value of good performance during disaster relief operations on the SDF's public image.[246] The military "allergy" that seemed to prevail throughout Japan's postwar history stood to potentially threaten the likelihood of that being the case, but despite a remaining general public suspicion of military mass-mobilization, the SDF's 3.11 efforts appeared to boost its credibility with the Japanese public. Samuels cautions that significant systemic and bureaucratic change was not forthcoming after 3.11, but this thesis suggests that the

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243 Carruthers, *The Media at War,* 90.

244 Timothy Edmunds, "What *are* Armed Forces for? The Changing Nature of Military Roles in Europe," *International Affairs* 82, no. 6 (2006): 1062.

245 Edmunds, 1075.

246 Samuels, *3.11*, 80–81.

fundamental revelation of support *for* the SDF, even if not in a combat context, is significant in and of itself.[247]

By moving beyond the context of 3.11, this research was able to recognize parallels between the 3.11 experience and those had by other countries following major disasters—even when forms of government did not match. The 1995 Kobe earthquake and the 2010 Chile disaster were circumstantially very similar to the Tohoku disaster, number of casualties aside. The tsunami that struck the Aceh region in Indonesia provides a glimpse into the challenges—and, notably, similarities—encountered in a transitioning democratic state, and particularly highlighted the impact the tsunami had on consolidation of democratic control over the armed forces. Surprisingly, this thesis finds that even in China, the controlling CCP's legitimacy benefitted from mobilization in response to the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. Although focused on the extolment of the "benevolence and glory" of the Party, propagandists candidly used response to natural disasters in order to improve approval ratings.[248] Simply put, the relevance of such research cannot be ignored, and should be scrutinized further in the hopes of legitimizing a professional, competent military under the complete control of democratic decision-making.

C. FUTURE STUDY

This research was largely empirical, relying on narratives and a comparative analysis of existing scholarly research on military response to disaster. Looking to the future, further study would benefit greatly from large-scale collection of polling data from various media sources within Japan. Analyzing the trend of public opinion toward the SDF from just before the Kobe disaster of 1995 to more current polls, ensuring the data covers several years following 3.11, might more precisely identify the trends observed, ensuring they were general experiences and not significantly swayed by political affiliation. This would be beneficial throughout the case studies examined in this thesis, including the international examples analyzed in Chapter IV. Resource, timing, and language barriers

247 Samuels, *3.11*, 108.

248 Christian P. Sorace, *Shaken Authority* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017), 44.

prevented this research from delving into such quantitative analyses, but it would be fascinating to explore in future research.

Further research could also investigate the types of military investments approved by the MOD and Diet following major disasters and any resulting effects on warfighting capabilities and normalization. For example, Japan identified an amphibious capability gap after 3.11 and in light of the reliance on such heavy lift vessels from the United States during Operation Tomodachi. More broadly, the same can be done with any available data from democracies around the world to examine how civilian elite responses trend after major HA/DR operations.

D. THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

This thesis highlights enduring trends in the SDF's popularity even several years after the crisis, as well as the surge in recruitment the organization experienced in the years immediately following. It may therefore be conjectured that the SDF's response to 3.11 and its subsequent coverage did have an enduring effect on the popularity of Japan's security forces, and its effect on recruitment cannot be ruled out. Its overall effect on security policy, however, is yet to be seen.

Remilitarization, or normalization, in Japan will likely come as a result of many combined factors. It would be naïve to say that HA/DR alone will be the central cause for remilitarization or even for a return of the SDF to more traditional military roles. Certainly, as stated before, everything from regional security and partnerships with other nations, particularly the United States, could serve as impetus to normalize in the long run. Individual events threatening Japan's national security have and will instigate reevaluation of current policy and perhaps punctuate gradual movement toward remilitarization. The impact that 3.11 had on Japanese normalization in this way was small but unmistakable. The positive coverage given to the SDF in the wake of its humanitarian actions had a measurable improvement on public opinion on the organization.

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