



"Now We Show It All!" Normalization and the Management of Violence in Japan's Armed Forces

Author(s): Sabine Frühstück and Eyal Ben-Ari

Source: *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, (Winter, 2002), pp. 1-39

Published by: The Society for Japanese Studies

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4126774>

Accessed: 24/06/2008 14:14

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=sjs>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We work with the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

SABINE FRÜHSTÜCK AND EYAL BEN-ARI

**“Now We Show It All!”
Normalization and the Management of Violence in
Japan’s Armed Forces**

Abstract: Based on a diverse set of sources, the authors argue that since the end of the cold war the SDF has begun to use a complex set of strategies to actively address its problematic status in contemporary Japanese society and to manage its connection to organized violence in new ways. These strategies range from details of language and uniforms to aspects of body comportment; the control, regulation, and aestheticization of information about the SDF for public consumption; policies related to recruitment; the creation of an organizational history; activities that project intimacy and similarity with civil society by consciously adopting roles that do not pertain to the use of organized violence; attempts at linking the SDF to international efforts of goodwill; and the cultivation of multiple ties to the U.S. Armed Forces.

From the time Japan began its accelerated postwar growth, a host of scholars have worried about whether it would develop military capabilities commensurate with its economic power. This concern has led to a number of essays and books with titles such as “Japan’s Defense Policy: How Far Will the Changes Go?” “A Militarized Japan?” “Japan’s Culture of Anti-Militarism,” and “Militarisation and Demilitarisation in Contemporary Japan,” to name but a few. These studies contain implicit assumptions about

This project would not have been possible without the willingness of so many individuals to go out of their way and share their experiences and thoughts about the Japan Self-Defense Force (Jieitai) with us. Special thanks for the opportunity to discuss our project go to Ueno Chizuko and the participants in the Gender Colloquium at the University of Tokyo; the Japan Interest Group at Oxford Brookes University and especially Arthur Stockwin; the East Asian Studies Forum at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; the Okazaki Institute in Tokyo; Verena Blechinger and the participants in the Social Science Workshop at the Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien, Tokyo; to Jonathan Marshall and the participants in the Ph.D. Kenkyukai of

the defining quality of the military as bearers of the legitimate and organized use of violence and are commonly based on the unquestioned premise that a "normal state" necessarily must strive to transform its economic strength into corresponding military power. Thus, in one way or another, such conjectures all focus on the link between Japan's violent past and its potential for aggression in the future.¹

In this article, rather than contributing yet another study about Japan's potential for remilitarization or its full-scale rearmament, we suggest a change of focus. We address the question of how the armed forces handle their "problematic existence" in contemporary Japan. We examine the various explicit and implicit strategies by which, and the various sites within which, Japan's postwar forces manage their existence in an environment marked by considerable antimilitaristic sentiment. This problematic existence or contested position in wider society is the result of an interplay of forces. The legacy of World War II meant that the country's defeat was blamed on "the generals" and that the word "military" (*guntai*) became synonymous with subjugation, destruction, and disaster. This understanding was underpinned by the effects of the atomic bomb which—beyond the sheer misery of hundreds of thousands of people—resulted in the Japanese having been victimized, both by America's actions and by the aggression of Japan's wartime military regime. One of the most important consequences of this state of affairs has been the institution of strong legal limits—Article 9 of Japan's constitution—on the country's right to maintain armed forces and to sustain any kind of offensive security policy.² In the words of

International House, Tokyo; the Institute for Japanese Studies at the University of Vienna; the participants in the Lecture Series for New Faculty at the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center of the University of California, Santa Barbara; and the Center for Japanese Studies at the University of Michigan. We have profited immensely from comments on earlier drafts from Cynthia Enloe, Ehud Harari, Glenn Hook, Peter Katzenstein, Sepp Linhart, Jennifer Robertson, and Ben-Ami Shillony. The research for this project has been supported by a postdoctoral grant from the Faculty of the Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Vienna (Frühstück, 1998–99) and by grants from Sophia University (Ben-Ari, 1998) and the Japan Foundation (Ben-Ari, 1999).

1. See Richard Halloran, "Is Japan a Military Threat to Asia?" *Arms Control Today*, Vol. 24 (1994), pp. 12–17. These myriad titles are found in, respectively, Reinhard Drifte, *Japan's Foreign Policy for the 21st Century* (Oxford: St. Anthony's Series, 1998); David Arase, "A Militarized Japan?" *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 18 (1995), No. 3, pp. 84–103; Thomas Berger, "From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan's Culture of Anti-Militarism," *International Security*, Vol. 17 (1993), No. 4, pp. 119–50; and Glenn D. Hook, *Militarisation and Demilitarisation in Contemporary Japan* (London: Routledge, 1996).

2. Some legal scholars insist that the accurate reading of Article 9 remains open to divergent interpretations; for a revisionist view see, e.g., Kobayashi Hiroaki, "Der Verfassungswandel und die Verfassungsauslegung in der japanischen Verfassung: in Memoriam Friedrich August Freiherr von der Heydte," *Comparative Law* (Nihon University), Vol. 12 (1995), pp. 39–66; or Momoi Makoto's *2001-nen: Nihon no gunjiryoku* (Tokyo: Shōdensha, 1998).

a colonel from the Ground Self-Defense Force (Rikujō Jieitai; GSDF), it was this “destructive chain of experiences” and the need to make sense thereof that have brought about a “military allergy persistent in Japanese society up to this day.”

These circumstances have led scholars to emphasize the significance of an antimilitaristic ethos in Japanese society.³ The burgeoning of a host of social movements devoted to the promotion of world peace, an antinuclear stance, and other humanitarian efforts since the 1950s are commonly taken to be indicators of Japan's antimilitarism.⁴ These movements have focused on three issues: public participation in demonstrations against sending Japanese troops abroad on peacekeeping missions, especially the first dispatch to Cambodia in July 1992⁵; a latent discontent with the presence of Ameri-

The *Yomiuri shinbun* has published a proposal for the revision of the constitution; see Yomiuri Shinbun, ed., *A Proposal for the Revision of the Text of the Constitution of Japan* (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbun, 1994). Most recently the secretary general of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, Yamasaki Taku, as well as former prime minister Mori Yoshiro and current prime minister Koizumi Junichirō, have suggested the revision of Article 9. They wish to delete the second clause of Article 9, which says that land, sea, and air forces will never be maintained and that the right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized. Instead, they call for articulating maintenance of such forces under the leadership of the premier as well as for the country's right to collective self-defense, a provision guaranteed under the UN Charter that allows one country to help defend another under armed attack, even if not under attack itself; see, i.e., “Liberal Party Wants SDF Role Spelled out in Constitution,” *Japan Times*, 4 December 2000; “Mori's Pledges to Enhance Security Role in New Century,” *Japan Times*, 1 January 2001; Okazaki Hisahiko, “Whose Constitution Is It?” *Japan Times*, 29 May 2001. Defense Agency officials have insisted since 22 December 1954 that the constitution does not deny Japan the right to self-defense. On 14 October 1972 this right was defined; see “Nenpyō, Jieitai no tōitsu kaishaku,” *Securitarian*, No. 10 (1997), pp. 11 and 16.

3. Glenn D. Hook, “Education as Business: Whither Peace Education?” *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, Vol. 13 (1982), No. 1, pp. 15–23; and *Militarisation and Demilitarisation in Contemporary Japan*; Andrew K. Hanami, “Japan,” in Constantine P. Danopoulos and Cynthia Watson, eds., *The Political Role of the Military* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996), p. 238; Berger, “From Sword to Chrysanthemum”; Charles Overby, “A Quest for Peace with Article 9,” *AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 25 (1997), No. 2, pp. 39–46.

4. Amano Yasukazu, “Japan's Peace Movement in the Post-Cold War,” *AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 24 (1993), No. 1, pp. 14–22; “Peace and Anti-War: The Postwar Peace Movement,” *AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 26 (1995), No. 2, pp. 32–37.

5. Odawara Atsushi, “No Tampering with the Brakes on Military Expansion,” *Japan Quarterly*, Vol. 32 (1985), No. 3, pp. 248–54; “Suing for the Right to Live in Peace,” *AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 23 (1991), No. 1, p. 10; “Strategies for War: Fujii Haruo and Douglas Lummis Discuss the PKO Bill and the Future of Japanese Militarism,” *AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 23 (1992), No. 2, pp. 32–35; “Blauhelmdiskussion in Japan: Interview mit Tatsuya Yoshioka,” *Bresche* (May 1994), pp. 49–50; Ikeda Itsunori, “Giving the SDF New Fangs,” *AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 25 (1994), No. 2, pp. 7–9. For a more detailed critique see Mizuno Hitoshi, *Kaigai hihai no ronri* (Tokyo: Shinhyōron, 1997).

can bases on Japanese soil⁶; and the participation of the Self-Defense Force (SDF) with American forces in combined exercises.⁷

The immediate postwar antimilitarist turn has accorded with and is sometimes derived from external interests, namely, the continued strong resistance of Japan's Asian neighbors—Korea, China, Taiwan, and the ASEAN countries—to signs of remilitarization in Japan.⁸ For many people in these countries, Japanese atrocities are still vivid, and because Japan has not come to terms with its past it is seen as having the potential to reach a level of military strength that could threaten these neighbors.⁹ Thus, since the early postwar years, Japan has emphasized economic rather than military diplomacy as a means of handling its international relations. In the postwar concept of developing a "comprehensive security" policy, Japan's guiding principles have been to couple economic power with aid and cultural exchange in wielding international influence.¹⁰

Yet despite these rather unfavorable circumstances, Japan does have a substantial military establishment, in terms of the development of a "traditional" military organization that typically perceives enemy invasion as its primary threat, considers the combat leader the dominant military professional, and enjoys a supportive public attitude toward the military in the wider population.¹¹ Its postwar armed forces were established first as a police reserve force in 1951 and in 1954 under their current name—the Self-Defense Force or Jieitai—in the wake of America's involvement in the Ko-

6. Sebastian Moffet, "Back to the Barracks: Okinawa Keeps Fighting, but Japan Quietly Rearms," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 19 September 1996. A recent rape case that involved an ASDF officer and an Okinawan schoolgirl prompted the Defense Agency to send a top official to apologize to Okinawa Governor Inamine Keiichi; see "Keigaku to kunō no Bōichō: Jieikan shojo bōkō," *Ryūkyū shinpō internet nyūsu*, 21 March 2001; "Top Defense Brass apologize over Rape Case in Okinawa," *Japan Times*, 18 March 2001.

7. However, several authors argue that the original drive has long faded. See, e.g., Amano, "Japan's Peace Movement in the Post-Cold War"; Bamba Nobuya, "Peace Movement at a Standstill," *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, Vol. 13 (1982), No. 1, pp. 39–41.

8. Hook, *Militarisation and Demilitarisation in Contemporary Japan*; Peter J. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Tsurutani Taketsugu, *Japanese Policy and East Asian Security* (New York: Praeger, 1981).

9. Halloran, "Is Japan a Military Threat to Asia?" p. 12.

10. Glenn D. Hook, "Japan and the ASEAN Regional Forum: Bilateralism, Multilateralism or Supplementalism," *Japanstudien: Jahrbuch des Deutschen Instituts für Japanstudien der Philipp Franz von Siebold Stiftung*, Vol. 10 (1998), pp. 159–88; Hanami, "Japan," p. 242.

11. Uniformed SDF personnel seem to have these three factors particularly in mind when they talk about their difficult position in Japanese society. In their classification of armed forces, Charles C. Moskos and Peter Burke identify these characteristics as typical for "early modern" or "pre-cold war" militaries; see Charles C. Moskos and Peter Burke, "The Post-modern Military," in James Burk, ed., *The Adaptive Military: Armed Forces in a Turbulent World* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1998), pp. 163–81.

rean War.¹² The SDF now has about 236,000 volunteer soldiers, about 4 per cent of whom are women, and one of the world's largest military budgets.¹³ The SDF is a full-fledged military establishment complete with three services (ground, maritime, and air), the latest military technology (tanks, ships, and planes as well as a variety of state-of-the art weaponry, albeit no nuclear weaponry), and all of the organizational accompaniments common to armed forces (territorial divisions, brigades, and training methods).¹⁴

The difficult combination of strong antimilitaristic forces with the presence of a substantial military establishment finds its expression in the self-perception of members of the SDF. Commentators have noted the irritation, dissatisfaction, and lack of a sense of effectiveness felt by military professionals.¹⁵ Indeed, many officers whom we interviewed commented about the place of the SDF in Japanese society with anger, sadness, or resignation. Several times we were told they would like to be a "normal" (*futsū*) or a "real" (*honmono*) military, as opposed to a "half-baked" (*chūto hanpa*) organization which some of them perceive themselves to be now.

We suggest that the distinction that SDF personnel make between "re-

12. For an overview see R. K. Champan, "Japan and Its Armed Forces," *Asian Defense Journal*, March 1997, pp. 6–13; Martin E. Weinstein, "The Evolution of the Japan Self-Defense Forces," in James H. Buck, ed., *The Modern Military System* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1975), pp. 21–40.

13. Calculating military budgets is difficult because the way figures are calculated often remains nontransparent and differs greatly depending on the agency that does the counting. As a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute further cautions, the amount of information about arms is small, whether it is quantitative data on the value of arms production and arms sales, data by company, or data in terms of national totals. There are two basic reasons for this lack of information: first, the secrecy surrounding arms production, due to the military and political sensitivity of military products; and second, the difficulties involved in defining arms production and drawing the distinction between military and civil products; see Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, ed., *Military Expenditures and Arms Production* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 1999). Hence, available data on total national arms production/arms sales are estimates, based either on special efforts in which companies are asked to provide estimates of their arms sales, or on data on total national arms procurement expenditure excluding arms imports but adding arms exports. Such estimates are made by ministries and by defense industry associations in countries like Japan. Thus for example, the Defense Agency lists Japan's defense budget with \$28 billion (0.98 per cent of GDP) as fifth behind the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. Furthermore, it does not mention other major military powers in its international comparative data on military expenditure; see Bōeichō, ed., *Bōei hakusho 1998* (Tokyo: Bōeichō, 1999), p. 144, graph 3–4. The figures presented by the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, however, are quite different: Japan not only ranks third after the United States and Russia, but Japan also is noted to have spent not \$28 billion but \$50 billion on military matters in 1995; see U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, ed., *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers* (Washington: U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 1996), p. 5, figure 4.

14. Bōeichō, ed., *Bōei hakusho 1999* (Tokyo: Bōeichō, 1999), p. 437, graphs 46 and 47.

15. Hanami, "Japan," pp. 235–55.

militarization" and "normalization" is an important one. It provides the central frame of reference for their self-perception and informs their agenda for organizational changes. Commanders and officers are less preoccupied with remilitarization (in the sense of establishing a stronger military and the preeminence of military considerations above civilian ones) than with the "management" of the SDF's contested existence and their claim for its acceptance as a legitimate arm of a democratic, civilian controlled state. According to higher-ranking *jieikan* (the official term for uniformed personnel of the Self-Defense Force), remilitarization does not merely evoke memories of the imperial military as an organization that brought war to Japan's neighboring countries. Much more importantly from their perspective is the view that the imperial forces failed in their core expertise, war-making. The reasoning at the base of their contentions is that the pursuit of war by the imperial forces was defective because they did not act as a professional military establishment and pursued their own policies in extreme forms at times.

It is for these reasons that contemporary *jieikan* do not speak about remilitarization but rather about normalization: how the SDF should be turned into a "normal" military. Hence, when *jieikan* speak of a "normal" or "real" military, they do not refer to their predecessors, the Imperial Army and Navy, but to the armed forces of other advanced industrialized democracies. People often expressed their envy of other military organizations that are—at least in their eyes—respected as such in their countries and internationally. The most frequently mentioned examples were the U.S. Armed Forces and—in a different way and far less frequently—the German military.

A small portion of SDF personnel is familiar with the U.S. Armed Forces from combined exercises. They tend to be unaware that, in terms of missions, the American military is in fact in the process of becoming more and more like them. SDF personnel also tend to idealize American soldiers' and officers' reputation in wider society and are oblivious to the increasingly apathetic or even skeptical public attitude toward them.¹⁶ In *jieikan*'s eyes, the German military seems to have been much luckier in overcoming negative memories of war and violence. They attribute that perception to the

16. What military sociologists describe as the shift from a "cold-war military" to a "post-cold war" or "postmodern military" may be most difficult for the American armed forces to go through. See Moskos and Burke, "The Postmodern Military." In contrast to the Japanese and other military organizations throughout the world, humanitarian missions in and outside of U.S. borders are rather new for the American armed forces and cause considerable confusion about the identity of armed forces members as warriors; see Laura L. Miller and Charles Moskos, "Humanitarian or Warriors? Race, Gender, and Combat Status in Operation Restore Hope," *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 21 (1995), No. 4, pp. 615–37.

fact that in Germany, generally, national socialists were blamed for World War II and the defeat, while in Japan the military as an organization was blamed. As a representative of the German armed forces posted to Tokyo pointed out to us, SDF personnel also tend to be unaware that Germany had experienced intense public debates about the military and its role throughout the 1970s and has—under the pressure of these debates—introduced several alternative types of service.

The bid for acknowledgment of the SDF as a professional military establishment of course is itself problematic, as its professionalism—unlike that which, say, doctors or lawyers hold—centers on the management and operation of violence. This connection often is only implicit in both scholarly literature and our interviews; but it is nevertheless evident in the extent to which SDF personnel or civilians associate the SDF with abstract concepts such as violence, aggression, hostilities, and war, or more concrete manifestations such as shooting, driving tanks, and flying combat helicopters. While the armed forces of any country are charged with killing and destroying, it is precisely the close link between violence and the military that has become increasingly problematic during the past decade as the SDF has adopted new roles outside of Japan. A shift is taking place, at least since Japan's contribution to the 1991 Operation Desert Storm which once again brought several points of contention to the surface: questions of constitutional interpretation, approaches to U.S.-Japan relations, and the need to define the position of the SDF in Japan and internationally.¹⁷

Conceptual Framework and Methodology

How does one analyze the manner by which the SDF handles its problematic existence? Most recent scholarly work on Japanese defense issues has not dealt directly with the SDF. The vast majority of previous studies by Japanese and Western authors deals with issues such as the East Asian security environment, Japan's defense doctrine, and the achievements of the country's weapons industries. The literature on the SDF and its place in wider society provides few clues to a comprehensive understanding of Japan's military. It is characterized by descriptive accounts or by studies that analyze Japan's military-societal relations from a limited political perspective. Accounts of the inner life and makeup of the SDF occasionally have appeared in journalistic essays or in impressionistic descriptions by retired

17. Yamaguchi Jirō, "The Gulf War and the Transformation of Japanese Constitutional Politics," *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1992), pp. 155–12. Japan's first participation in a peacekeeping mission to Cambodia in September 1992 and its first international disaster relief mission to Honduras in November-December 1998 are but two more recent examples that mark this shift.

military personnel.¹⁸ Yet these books and essays exhibit a very strong descriptive bias, and they do not attempt to provide a systematic analytical framework for investigating the place of the SDF in contemporary Japan or the contested models of professional military behavior that characterize different groups of *jieikan*.

The scholarly literature dealing with the SDF tends to emphasize overwhelmingly the issue of civilian control. The SDF is heavily controlled by civilian bureaucrats and politicians. Civilian control includes the budgetary process, the procurement of weapons and equipment, input into decision making, and the legal structure of civil-military relations. According to scholars Glenn D. Hook and Peter J. Katzenstein, Japan is characterized by an advanced "civilianization" of the armed forces and by "asymmetrical civil-military relations."¹⁹ While differing in their perspectives (Hook focuses on the interplay of public opinion, party politics, and language, while Katzenstein stresses the link between norms, state-society relations, and transnational ties), the authors converge in terms of their interest. Both are interested in the ways antimilitarist norms in Japan limit the country's potential for remilitarization. These kinds of studies focus on the macro level of political elites, the relations between civil and military institutions, and the norms governing political behavior in Japan. Yet both scholars' work falls short of offering a systematic and complex framework for understanding the SDF as a military organization.

The SDF is usually portrayed as a rather homogenous, monolithic entity and as no more than a passive "recipient" of external influences. Such a view, however, tends to close off an examination of the internal processes of the military and of its active role in defining its place in society and in shaping its public image, because it tends to focus the analysis on the national, governmental level. Thus, for instance, Hook shows how the Japanese government is "sandwiched" between pressure from the United States to take a more active role in regional security, and pressure from East Asian countries, the political opposition, and civil society to remain militarily con-

18. See, e.g., Araki Hajime, *Jieitai to iu gakkō* (Tokyo: Naragi Shobō, 1999); Bessatsu Takarajima, *Hadaka no Jieitai! Okashikute yagate kanashiki, sekai daisan'i no guntai no jittai* (Tokyo: Takarajima Bessatsu, 1993); Bessatsu Takarajima, *Ima koso shiritai! Jieitai no jitsuryoku* (Tokyo: Takarajima Bessatsu, 1999); Bōei Kenkyūkai, *Jieitai no kyōiku to kunren* (Tokyo: Kaya Shobō, 1996); Katō Yōzō, *Shiroku: Jieitaishi* (Tokyo: Gekkan Seisaku Seiji Geppōsha, 1979); Maeda Tetsuo, *Bokutachi no guntai* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1990), *Jieitai o dō suru ka* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1992); Nakada Toshitsune, *Bōei daigakkō* (Tokyo: Kyōikusha, 1979); Sugiyama Takao, *Heishi ni kike* (Tokyo: Shinchō Bunkō, 1998); *Heishi o miru* (Tokyo: Shinchō Bunkō, 1999); Mineo Kyūdai, *Jiekan wa kataru: Sono hōfu to kūnō* (Tokyo: Bunkyo Shuppan, 1998).

19. Hook, *Militarisation and Demilitarisation in Contemporary Japan*; Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*.

strained.²⁰ In these conceptualizations, the SDF is seen as no more than an arm or an appendage of the Japanese government, to be used or disused according to the decisions taken by civilian politicians and administrators.

Second, previous works have done little to trace how the civilianization of the SDF on the macro level is expressed within the military at the level of entire units or the individual professionals who staff Japan's armed forces. Even Katzenstein, who has traced out some of the internal manifestations of civilian internal structure and operations, tends to conceptualize the SDF as an unvarying entity entirely dominated by external concerns and SDF commanders as willingly accepting the complete control of the SDF by civilian considerations. In this respect his book, like previous studies, has done little to give voice to, or explain, the internal differences and contentions that characterize Japan's armed forces.

Third, the emphasis found in previous works on asymmetrical civil-military relations suggests rather static ties based on more or less fixed arrangements and procedures. In other words, these studies theorize to a very limited extent, if they theorize at all, the potential or actual ability of the SDF to proactively shape its environment; nor do they analyze the multiple sites through which the SDF acts on its environment.

People and Voices. We have been carrying out ethnographic research on the SDF since 1998. Frühstück has engaged in fieldwork in Japan for 11 months in 1998, 1999, and 2001 and Ben-Ari for four months in 1998 and 1999. Fieldwork involved interviewing over a hundred people inside and outside of Japan's armed forces, visiting camps and headquarters, and reading a wide range of formal and informal material written by and about the SDF. The interviews were conducted during Frühstück's stay in Japan from July 1998 to February 1999 and Ben-Ari's stay during July and August 1998, as well as during our second period of field research from July to August 1999.

We present an ethnography of a whole organization of 236,000 people with a heavy emphasis on the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF), which is the largest branch of the SDF and allocated the largest share of the defense budget.²¹ Our interviews allowed us to peek into unit life as our interviewees told us anecdotes and experiences in units all over Japan. We interviewed several kinds of people in and outside of the SDF. Most interviewees were officers and officer candidates but also noncommissioned officers serving in infantry, artillery, transport, communications, airborne, medical, public relations, and international cooperation units and departments. We encoun-

20. Hook, "Japan and the ASEAN Regional Forum."

21. The GSDF is comprised of 160,000 soldiers and officers. Its budget share is 37.4 per cent; see Bōichō, ed., *Bōei hakusho 1999*, pp. 116 and 131.

tered them on all levels of their careers, from first-year cadets at the National Defense Academy (NDA) to four-star generals and admirals (including retirees), and all between the ages of 19 and 65.

Several interviewees allowed us a closer look into their personal lives by inviting us to their homes where we talked with our—usually male—interviewee for several hours over lunch, dinner, or coffee and cake. In most cases we met their wives who participated in the conversation, provided their views of their lives as *jieikan* wives, and commented on their husbands' statements. These visits to private homes made us realize what it meant for *jieikan* to commute to work three to five hours a day for the sake of a privately owned house, or how it felt to live in a crammed SDF-owned apartment.²²

Besides bases, coffee shops were our most common interview site. We visited the military attachés in their offices or met in coffee shops. Among the Japanese attachés were the army representatives to Austria and Israel, and military attachés residing in Japan representing Italy, Israel, Germany, Korea, and the United States. Many informal interviews and conversations, the content of which is integrated in our description and analysis, took place in bars and restaurants, mostly in the evening and often involving various kinds of alcoholic drinks.

In geographical terms, our interviewees' experiences ranged from service at bases in Kyushu, Shikoku, Hokkaido, Tokyo, Kansai, and Kinki in Japan, and in some cases was extended to six months of peacekeeping or disaster relief missions to Mozambique, Cambodia, the Golan Heights, or Honduras. Many of the SDF personnel were married and had more than one child, while most of those under the age of 27 were unmarried and had no children at the time we interviewed them. About 90 per cent of our interviewees were men and about 10 per cent were women. Thus, women were numerically overrepresented in our sample. We will refer to all of these soldiers and officers as *jieikan* throughout the text. As one foreign military expert posted to Japan pointed out to us, *jieikan* generally can be categorized—beyond their military rank, age, and gender—in four different classes: those who join the SDF for a few years after graduating from high school or shortly thereafter, and then leave again for the civilian world in order to pursue civilian careers; those who serve for about 30 years and—although rising relatively high in the military hierarchy—mostly engage in menial work and spend their entire lives in the SDF; those officers who do not get chosen for the career track and typically retire as colonels or lieutenant colonels; and finally those officers who are on the fast track. Often, the

22. SDF-owned housing facilities are notoriously bad. As a navy major put it, "It's old, it's small, and there are very few of them." See Oka Yoshiteru, ed., *Heisei no Jieitai* (Tokyo: Sankei Shinbun Nyūsu Sābisu, 1998), pp. 298–300.

variety of answers we got was related to which stratum the *jieikan* we talked to belonged.

Other interviewees were affiliated with or had strong ties to the SDF in various ways. These men (all were men) included academics at both the National Defense Academy and the National Medical Defense Academy, and representatives of SDF-affiliated think tanks and research institutes. Individuals included a retired commander of the Northern Army (Hokkaido), a former Imperial Army and SDF officer, as well as representatives of the Imperial Army and Navy Veteran Association and the SDF's veteran association, and a former commander of the U.S. Army in Japan. Also included were journalists who primarily reported on military matters, as well as others who reported only on rare military-related occasions such as 15 August, which marks the commemoration of the end of World War II, incidents such as the North Korean "missile test" in August 1998, cases of corruption involving the Defense Agency, and the implementation of the revised Defense Guidelines which had been discussed since 1997.

Times and Places. The majority of interviews and conversations were held in Japanese, except for some conversations with the foreign experts or Japanese residing abroad with whom we spoke either English or another language native to either of us. We conducted most interviews together and some separately. In most cases, we had to promise that we would not only refrain from using our interviewees' names in publications but also avoid references to their rank, unit, school, base, or anything else that would facilitate their identification by others. Hence, where we refer to conversations with *jieikan* we remain vague in order to protect their identities. As a courtesy to our interviewees, we do not report anything in this article that we were told "off the record."

Our analysis is done on the macro level and is multisited and multifaceted with respect to the sources we use. As opposed to an ethnography on the micro level which would focus on a unit, we visited many different sites of the SDF—thus in a way reflecting a typical *jieikan*'s career, which takes an SDF man or woman all over Japan in just a few years. These sites included visits to bases as "formal visitors" of base commanders. In this way we spent an entire day at the Iruma Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) base, the Nerima GSDF base, and the base of the Tenth GSDF Regiment in Nagoya. Arrangements at each base varied. Generally we were picked up at the nearest station by an aide to the base commander or at the entrance of the base where the officer in charge had been informed of our visit. After a few minutes of polite exchange of greetings and a brief introduction of our project and ourselves, we typically were appointed guides, who took us around the base, introduced us to several *jieikan* at their workplaces, and answered our questions. On one base we interviewed SDF personnel individually but in the presence of our guide. At the other bases, however, we

had the chance to interview people individually at work during lunch, away from our guide, and thus in a more casual and less controlled context.

We do not underestimate the influence of being presented with interviewees selected by the base authorities. It is important to note, however, that our interviewees voiced broadly varying opinions and views of the SDF as an organization and of their personal careers. Many soldiers and officers were eloquent and outspoken in both their appreciation for and their criticism of the SDF, the SDF's American allies in Japan, and "enemies" and obstacles they identified in Japanese society and politics.

Beside these "formal visits" as guests of base commanders, we visited several bases on Open House Days and attended other military festivals. We spent a particularly interesting day at the open house festival of the National Defense Academy (NDA), which was attended primarily by cadets, their families and friends, their instructors, and other local visitors. On 1 November 1998, we had the chance to watch the annual troop inspection (*Jieitai Kan'etsushiki*) of the GSDF in Asakawa, where then-prime minister Obuchi Keizō spoke about the "necessity of tough training of SDF personnel at the sight of the Korean missile test" over Japanese territory and waters. A second visit to the Iruma ASDF base on 3 November 1998 during its open house day enabled us to watch all kinds of airplanes flying over the heads of thousands of visitors. There, we also attended a Miss Airforce Contest (*Misu Kōkūsai*), during which the participants were introduced by a female officer, congratulated by retired SDF personnel, and given gifts by representatives from Lotte, Suntory, Shiseidō, and many other well-known companies. We spent a very hot day in early August at the Matsujima ASDF festival to watch demonstration flights by the ASDF Blue Impulse Team who, after their applauded performance, were joined by a civilian female model for photographs to be taken by visitors. On 22 and 23 July 1999, we found ourselves walking around in the mud at the Fuji Training Ground and the Fuji Officers Candidate School in Gotenba. There, at the foot of Mt. Fuji, we observed fourth-grade cadets during their last three-day maneuver before graduation. We ate with them in their cafeteria, saw them preparing for and eventually walking off to a 30-kilometer night march, greeted them in the morning upon their arrival, wandered about on the training ground observing *jieikan* digging defense holes, and talked with them and their commanders.

Next only to the NDA, the Japan Defense Agency became our most frequently visited site. Many times we entered the General Staff Headquarters and the Ground Self-Defense Force Headquarters mostly to meet with the officers in charge of public relations, recruitment, international cooperation, and personnel planning. In order to learn how these offices work in other parts of Tokyo, we also talked at length to the recruitment officers of the Tokyo City Recruitment Office and the Ueno Recruitment Office. After

several visits to the NDA we were admitted without filling out the visitor's form and were generally greeted with interest and friendliness. Our walks around the NDA, luncheons in the on-campus cafeteria, visits to classrooms, and conversations in meeting rooms and study rooms of students gave us an insight into what the daily life of cadets is like in the hills above Yokosuka Bay, a few minutes away from the American base. Other institutions of higher education we visited were the National Medical Defense Academy and the General Staff College in Ebisu.

In addition to the data we collected from our observations and interviews, we also used written material of various kinds. Among these are materials published by the SDF for either internal or external consumption. These range from factual introductions to the three services—the GSDF, ASDF, and Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF)—to recruitment and public relations material, and several SDF periodicals such as the monthly *Securitarian*. Videos of maneuvers and the annual live fire exercise jointly held by all three services at the Fuji Training Ground complement the written sources. All videos were taken by SDF photographers and are generally shown to external sympathizers, to representatives of schools who invite recruitment officers to instruct their middle- or high school students on how to join the SDF, and to neighbor organizations in the vicinity of bases with which the SDF tries to develop and maintain good relations. Other sources include journalistic books and newspaper and magazine articles on the SDF which depict singular incidents involving the SDF, such as rescue activities after the Hanshin-Awaji earthquake in 1995 or the procurement scandal in 1998. A notable exception is the *Sankei shinbun*, which is considered “the only Japanese newspaper worth reading” by the right wing. The *Sankei shinbun* not only reported extensively on the SDF's first dispatch on an international disaster relief mission to Honduras in November-December 1998, it also—quite exceptionally—printed half-page portraits of *jieikan* every week from May 1996 through August 1998.²³ In addition to these newspapers, the SDF and its personnel are more frequently depicted by weekly and monthly magazines.²⁴

23. The GSDF sent 80 personnel to Honduras from 18 November to 1 December 1998. Another 105 ASDF personnel were dispatched to transport personnel and equipment on 13 November; they returned on 9 December. During this disaster relief mission to Honduras, SDF personnel provided about 4,000 people with medical relief and disinfected about 33,000 square meters of ground; see Bōeichō, ed., *Bōei hakusho 1999*, pp. 169–70. The *jieikan* portraits were also published in book format; see Oka, ed., *Heisei no Jieitai*.

24. In addition to rather guarded reporting on the SDF in mainstream newspapers, a vast array of articles has been published in immensely popular magazines such as *Friday*, *Sapio*, *Fujin kōron*, and *Playboy*, among others, where special feature articles range from “Simulation Report: The Day when the Self-Defense Force Will Become Our ‘National Army’” (*Sapio: International Intelligence Magazine*, 8 September 1999, No. 234, pp. 16–37) to “Soldiers,

Based on this diverse set of sources, our argument centers on the various strategies the SDF uses in order to actively address its problematic status. This active role as an agent is important because it is central to the ways the SDF attempts to blur its *raison d'être* as an organization charged with the control, maintenance, and direction of violence. Some of these strategies are fully explicit and recognized, while others are unintentional effects of the SDF's distinct position in society. Some strategies are carried out in coalition with groups outside the military while others are pursued by the SDF, or parts of it, alone. Some are embodied in the individual soldier, while others are obfuscated and intrinsically intertwined with state politics. Their proximity to or distance from the core expertise of the SDF in handling violence distinguishes the different types of strategies.

One set of strategies the SDF pursues is the creation of feelings or sentiments that the Japanese population needs the military for the defense of the Japanese nation-state. In other words, the SDF can create its indispensability in terms of its special expertise in war making by being associated with the role of "the guardians of national security." This strategy was employed by former prime minister Nakasone Yasuhiro in several attempts to move toward a "normalization" of the SDF. He visited Yasukuni Shrine on 15 August 1986 in his capacity as prime minister, pushed for the strengthening of the force structure, and broke the taboo against speaking about defense matters in public.²⁵ A similar outlook most probably lies at the bottom of media reports about the role of the maritime forces in protecting Japan against the incursion of North Koreans, or Japan's joint development with the United States of a theater missile defense system. This strategy is being pursued slowly, but it remains problematic because of the anti-militarist ethos, the external pressure against Japan's remilitarization, and the fact that Japan has no credible threats to its existence from its neighbors. In fact, it is other sets of strategies that form the core of our analysis, some of which are embodied in the individual soldier, while others are obfuscated and intrinsically intertwined with state politics.

Violence in Disguise

The first set of strategies includes the most immediate and visible everyday procedures through which the SDF disguises its potential for violent

Female Police Officers, Guards: Picture Book of Beautiful Women in Professional Uniforms" (*Denim*, No. 6, 1993, pp. 83–97). Here it should suffice to mention that Japanese websites that depict military matters in general or the SDF in particular have gained an importance that makes them a research object in their own right.

25. Reinhart Drifte, "Japan's Defense Policy: How Far Will the Changes Go?" *International Defense Review*, Vol. 2 (1985), pp. 153–58.

acts. These procedures range from details of language and uniforms to aspects of body comportment.

Languages: The Problems of Doublespeak. One of the most salient ways the SDF disguises its military character is by using and switching between two languages. Among themselves, SDF personnel use a military language that can be found in any armed force. When talking to outsiders, however, SDF personnel use a special language constructed almost entirely after World War II. Leonard A. Humphreys explains that even

the military language has changed in order to break the continuity of tradition: part of the new military terminology derives from American military usage. Other parts are especially constructed in terms for the SDF. Ranks, branch of service names, and unit designations have all changed to prevent any sense of linkage to the old imperial structures.²⁶

While the armed forces of (formerly West) Germany underwent similar processes of inventing new terms, the SDF's terminology disguises its military character in a more complete manner. In official language, uniformed SDF personnel are not called "soldiers" (*heishi* or *gunjin*) but simply "special public servants" (*tokubetsu kokka kōmuin*) or "members of a group or unit" (*taiin*). This distinction unintentionally highlights the problematic status of SDF personnel of being both similar to other civil servants and yet special and different from them. The same disguise of function applies to SDF equipment, ranks, and unit names. Hardly any use is made of words like "war planes," "fighters," or "military planes." Instead, they are called "special planes" or *tokubetsu hikōki*. Ranks are usually referred to by numbers such as *ittō rikusa* for an army colonel, *nitō rikusa* for a lieutenant colonel, and *santō rikusa* for a major. An infantry unit is termed a "general unit" or *futsūka*.²⁷ But the SDF's language policy does not stop here. The "civilianization" of language is also expressed by references to one's place of deployment simply as a "workplace" or *shokuba* rather than "the unit," "the battalion," "the brigade," or "the division." Similarly, one officer told us—and we also heard other personnel saying the same during visits to bases—that when he ordered soldiers to do something he always added "please" (*onagai shimasu*), something that would have been unthinkable in Japan's former imperial military.

In general, the use of special terms for the SDF *vis-à-vis* external audi-

26. Leonard A. Humphreys, *The Way of the Heavenly Sword: The Japanese Army in the 1920's* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 37–38.

27. We found that in first interactions *jieikan* tended to use the more official language but then switched over in later interactions to the more clearly "military language." Obviously, this shift in language was due to growing familiarity with us researchers but probably also was influenced by ourselves when we used more conventional military language.

ences serves to blur its link to violence and to obfuscate its military nature. Hook terms this strategy “desensitization,” the use of euphemisms and metaphors to draw attention away from aspects of militarization and in turn move the SDF closer to civilian organizations.²⁸ But he does not examine the difficulties that the use of these terms raises for Japan’s military professionals. While high-prominence euphemisms and an alternation between languages can be found in organizations as diverse as commercial companies and physicians’ or lawyers’ associations, one feature sets the SDF apart from these other organizations: namely, the high level of awareness and the skepticism regarding linguistic rules and procedures among *jieikan*. In many interviews, SDF personnel commented on, explained, and complained that there *is* an official language and expressed their resentment toward having to use it.²⁹

Disciplining Bodies: Uniforms, Hairstyles, and Body Comportment. Another set of practices serves to create a resemblance between the SDF and civil workplaces and to distinguish it from military establishments elsewhere. One rarely sees SDF uniforms out in the streets of contemporary urban Japan. *Jieikan* change into and out of their uniforms whenever they move into and out of their camps and bases. Even in Tokyo’s Roppongi—home to the headquarters and literally hundreds, if not thousands, of officers and soldiers—one rarely sees uniformed personnel. When we interviewed SDF personnel off base—even if it was in a restaurant or coffee shop across the street from the Defense Agency—they invariably wore civilian suits that made them indistinguishable from businessmen.³⁰ But even when the soldiers are in uniform, the SDF seems to de-emphasize those features of their appearance that could set them apart from civilians in uniforms. Considering that Japan is a relatively “uniformed society,” where people such as male white-collar workers, female clerks, bank employees, elevator operators, taxi drivers, students, and many others are in uniform, the SDF’s hesitation to wear their uniforms off base is noteworthy.

In contrast to middle school and high school uniforms for boys whose

28. Hook, *Militarisation and Demilitarisation in Contemporary Japan*, p. 152.

29. *Securitarian*, a monthly magazine published by the Defense Agency, addressed the question of language as well. In an interview for the magazine, for example, a *manga* artist pointed out that it was difficult for him to draw stories that involve the SDF. While ranks in the former Imperial Army and in foreign military organizations were clear, he said, those in the SDF were rather confusing; see Matsumoto Reiji, “Manga to Jieitai,” *Securitarian*, No. 2 (1998), pp. 11–16.

30. These patterns are true, according to our data, for the large cities, but not to the same extent for units in the country where soldiers do wear uniforms outside their camps. Thus it is in the cities, where 90 per cent of Japan’s population is concentrated, that the existence of the SDF is most problematic; and it is in the more conservative rural areas where the wearing of uniforms off base is more accepted. The fact that the SDF often is a major economic factor in industrialized rural regions contributes to this acceptance.

rigid and stiff designs were originally modeled after European army uniforms,³¹ SDF clothes seem rather loose and relatively unrestricted. The recently introduced custom of wearing baseball caps, which now substitute for conventional berets, further indicates the attempt to design a look that blurs the connection of the SDF to potential acts of violence. School uniforms—at least according to their supporters—are supposed to stand for “youth, diligence, cleanliness, truth, goodness and beauty and have a positive effect on students.”³² SDF uniforms, in contrast, are associated with violence and war, associations the SDF tries to redirect by adjusting its uniforms and overall appearance. Two further aspects contribute to the rather casual image SDF soldiers project: the relatively long hair of men and women and the fact that they do not seem to carry their bodies differently from civilians. While other armed forces relatively strictly prescribe the length of hair and acceptable hairstyles, similar rules do not apply as rigidly to *jieikan*. Sometimes we did encounter the crew cut that is so characteristic of other armed forces, but considerably longer hairstyles seemed far more common. Soldiers we interviewed seemed unaware of any particular restrictions except those against dyed hair, piercing, and beards (moustaches are uncommon but accepted).

A small number of interviewees told us they had been ridiculed for being short and slim when they first joined the SDF, but on our numerous visits to bases and camps we came across hardly any efforts, so prominent in other military establishments, to “enlarge” the soldiers’ bodies. During their cadet years at the National Defense Academy, students have to engage in sports club activities, which range from the less popular judo, karate, and mountaineering to the very popular baseball and tennis clubs. Later in their careers, the emphasis in training is much more on perseverance and cardiovascular training than on muscle building. This emphasis can be attributed both to unsatisfactory sports facilities on many bases, which leave very few options for enhancing physical fitness besides jogging (as opposed to working out on machines, for example). More generally, muscle building clearly is not very high on the fitness agenda of Japanese men, and overly muscular bodies are not considered particularly desirable in wider Japanese society, where lean features are the ideal for both men and women. In any case, we only rarely encountered particularly muscular soldier bodies and body comportment, just as in general we found less disciplining of the body than is reported about other military establishments.³³

31. Brian J. McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology: State, Schooling and Self-Representation in Japan* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), pp. 1 and 47.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

33. See, e.g., R. Wayne Eisenhart, “You Can’t Hack It Little Girl: A Discussion of the Covert Psychological Agenda of Modern Combat Training,” *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 31,

Managing Information and Imagery: Violence Aestheticized

The second set of strategies centers on the ways information about the SDF and especially its association with violence are regulated and aestheticized for public consumption. Like other military organizations around the world, the SDF also maintains public relations offices. It employs about 50 people in Tokyo and about 950 throughout Japan in its public information division.³⁴ These officials serve not only officers and enlisted personnel, but also journalists and photographers for magazines and newspapers such as *Securitarian* or *Asagumo* (Morning clouds) published by the Defense Agency, as well as newsletters that are produced and published by individual SDF bases. A major component of this division's work is the creation, management, and control of information for the wider public. Here we find the processes of the almost-complete suppression of information about incidents that may harm the SDF's image, such as accidents, suicides, or burn-out among troops.³⁵ Another role for the division is the strict control of research and access to the SDF granted to "externals," i.e., foreign military visitors, journalists, and researchers.

The SDF does not, however, simply restrict or suppress information. Instead, during the last few years it has begun to actively create and shape images of itself. As one of the SDF representatives posted to the United States described it, "Until recently we have tried hard to keep a low profile to avoid bad press. Now we show it all! We are naked!" Indeed, the SDF has created several activities and events in order to involve the public and grant them a look "inside." Live fire exercises, held annually by the ground and air forces at the foot of Mt. Fuji, voyage experiences aboard Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) ships in various parts of the country, and aerobics demonstration flights by the Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) Blue Impulse team at base festivals are all opportunities provided for the public to get a first-hand if carefully choreographed glimpse of the SDF. These activities are very much part of what Michael Mann calls mass-spectator militarism.³⁶ As events of entertainment, these occasions convey different messages of seriousness and nonseriousness related to the violence at the

(1975) No. 4, pp. 13–23; David H. J. Morgan, "Theater of War: Combat, the Military and Masculinities," in Harry Brod and Michael Kaufmann, eds., *Theorizing Masculinities* (Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Sage Publications, 1994), pp. 165–82.

34. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, p. 108.

35. "Voices From the SDF," *AMPO Japan-Asia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1993), p. 20.

36. Michael Mann, "War and Social Theory: Into Battle with Classes, Nations and States," in Colin Creighton and Martin Shaw, eds., *The Sociology of War and Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 54–72.

disposal of the SDF and are a means of testing boundaries, i.e., testing to see if the SDF has gone too far in exposing its violent character.

As another way to promote public understanding of the SDF, new employees of private companies and members of other organizations are allowed, at the request of their employers, to "experience daily life in the SDF" (*jieitai seikatsu taiken*).³⁷ Participants in this program stay in barracks at SDF camps or bases for two or three days. In a systematic effort "to make the SDF broadly known and deepen knowledge and understanding of the SDF," civilians go through the same routines as regular SDF personnel. They also participate in discussions with SDF personnel, are introduced to the facilities of a camp, and watch explanatory videos on the SDF. Approximately 42,000 people took part in this program in fiscal year 1996. In one year, 5,000 people or 120 groups visited the Tenth Division on the outskirts of Nagoya alone.³⁸

Many officers we talked to regarded the program more as a nuisance than as a welcome tool to interact with civilians at their workplace. SDF instructors involved in this program, however, point out the importance of civilians "experiencing it [the SDF] with their own bodies and seeing it with their own eyes" in order to understand the SDF as an organization. These people, they note, realized that SDF personnel were in fact not totally humorless as they had expected. Within a few days, they became aware that Japan has military potency, and for the first time in their lives they thought about Japan's military strength. SDF instructors also suggested that participants in the program were able and likely to pass on their impressions of and newly acquired knowledge about the SDF to their families and friends and to the wider society. Company employers testify that the SDF program facilitates the transition into professional life for new employees. They are convinced that the program alerts young employees to the importance of rules and to the fact that the company is not an extension of school and believe that this complex message comes across best if experienced physically. SDF instructors also think the program provides the participants with a good setting for the first shared experience with their coworkers.³⁹

Besides these activities, the SDF attempts to engage the public through the dissemination of a variety of informative, instructive, and entertaining materials. Among these materials are gadgets such as SDF figurines on

37. One example of such a visit can be found in Thomas P. Rohlen, "'Spiritual Education' in a Japanese Bank," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 75, No. 5 (1973), pp. 1542–62.

38. Dai 10 Shidan, ed., *Jieitai seikatsu taiken* (1998).

39. "Taiken nyūtai no haru," *Securitarian*, No. 6 (1998), pp. 62–63; "Daigakusei Jieitai seikatsu taiken tsuā," *Securitarian*, No. 10 (1997), pp. 52–53; Oka, ed., *Heisei no Jieitai*, pp. 268–70.

strings to be attached to mobile phones, stickers in fluorescent colors, special SDF cartoon characters that explain the roles of the SDF in several volumes of a "Prince Pickles' Diary" (*Pikurusu ōji no jieitai nikki*), Internet websites of main institutions and smaller offices, and recruitment posters (see Figure 1). The profusion of these materials is one indication of how the SDF strives to engage various publics and awaken an interest in what they do.⁴⁰

At the same time, though, this new set of means and strategies based on the circulation of material objects enables the SDF to create a space in which it can exercise a higher level of control over the images it projects outward and the information it disseminates. Take, for example, the promotion and visualization of images of the SDF through means such as the dolls of the various SDF service branches or the cartoon characters used in SDF logos. These, we were told by a lieutenant colonel in the Defense Agency, had been created by Dentsū, one of Japan's largest advertising agencies, with the explicit intention of presenting a "soft image" (*sofuto imēji*) to the general public in order to become more "appealing" and "likeable." Another public relations officer for all three services explains that the problems in his line of work center on the fact that the "SDF does not sell a product but [that] the SDF is a product of politics." Hence, balancing its military potency as a defender of Japan in a military conflict and its more civilian uses, the SDF has to draw from both rational and emotional techniques of public relations, disclosing enough of its character to be more appealing to the wider population but not enough to reveal military secrets.⁴¹ An officer of the Airborne Brigade explained that the cartoon-style characters are part of the public relations efforts of the SDF to recruit youth especially and "to deepen the public understanding of the SDF." Although people pay for and decide themselves whether they want SDF imagery (cartoon characters or more traditional symbols of units or services) on their cards, this officer in fact chose to have the character for the GSDF printed on his business card.

These characters (one male and one female for each of the three services) also serve to represent the SDF's image in ways common to all realms of contemporary Japanese society in which cuteness has been objectified, commodified, and commercialized to a considerable degree, "affording it

40. A small number of youth between the ages of 15 and 17 are recruited as "SDF students" (*Jieitai gakusei*) straight out of middle school. The average annual numbers of these are 250 for the GSDF, 60 for the MSDF, and 50 for the ASDF; see Bōei Kyōryōkukai, *Jieitai seitō* (Tokyo: Seizandō, 1999), pp. v.

41. "Tokushū: Kōhō saizensen 'Kigyō no kōhō' to Jieitai no kōhō," *Securitarian*, No. 4 (1998), pp. 7–12.



Figure 1. Cover of "Prince Pickles' Diary." Reproduced with permission of the Japan Defense Agency.

with significant communicative potency among social actors.”⁴² As Sharon Kinsella has observed, a good deal of Japan’s popular culture is “devoted to an escape from reality, and its dominant themes have been cuteness, nostalgia, foreignness, romance, fantasy, and science fiction.”⁴³ The cute characters that represent the SDF, then, do so in a way that is constantly celebrated in Japan’s popular culture and advertising. They look sweet, adorable, harmless, pure, simple, and gentle. For example, in the two-volume instructive *manga* on the SDF, Prince Pickles travels to a foreign country to understand—through his experience and romance with Paseri-chan—and explain to the reader what the SDF is all about: disaster relief, peacekeeping, and combined exercises with the U.S. Armed Forces. The bottom line is that the SDF helps out in times of crises.⁴⁴ This approach draws directly from the mainstream advertising concepts of targeting products at youth and is used in the context of the SDF to soften the image of an organization charged with the means of violence.

The elimination of violent associations is a top priority even in areas marginal to the SDF’s control. Film director Ōmori Kazuki, director of several Godzilla films, remembers that his film *Gojira tai Biorante* (released in 1989) was the first Godzilla film that enjoyed the support of the SDF and was made primarily on the grounds of the SDF’s Fuji School. SDF personnel helped set up scenes inside the school building. The film team also received permission to install two cameras at the Fuji Live Fire Exercise but they were not allowed to film actual soldiers. When Ōmori shot *Gojira tai Gidora* and *Gojira tai Mosura* a few years later, however, SDF officials came up with all kinds of ideas about the film’s characters. They suggested that Mosura, for example, who represents the SDF, should appear “peaceful.” Ōmori had no objections and so Mosura’s character hardly ever shoots a gun in the film.⁴⁵

Engendering Violence in Recruitment Images and Beyond

The third set of strategies the SDF employs comprises policies related to recruitment. Posters, leaflets, and other advertisements of military organizations in advanced industrialized countries commonly emphasize that skills acquired in the armed forces can be converted and used in a civilian labor market. Not so for Japan’s SDF. In Japan, recruitment posters and other

42. Other examples of what Brian McVeigh calls “authority cuteness” are the police mascots Pipo-kun and Pipo-chan. See McVeigh, *Wearing Ideology*, p. 151.

43. Sharon Kinsella, “Cuties in Japan,” in Lise Skov and Brian Moeran, eds., *Women, Media and Consumption in Japan* (London: Curzon Press, 1995), p. 252.

44. Bōeichō, ed., *Pikurusu ōji no Jieitai nikki 1* and *Pikurusu ōji no Jieitai nikki 2* (Tokyo: Bōeichō, exact date of publication unclear [late 1990s]).

45. Matsumoto Reiji, “Manga to Jieitai,” *Securitarian*, No. 2 (1998), pp. 11–16.



Figure 2. SDF recruitment posters have little dogs cry out, "Boku datte, heiwa ga daisuki!" (I love peace). Reproduced with permission of the Japan Defense Agency.

public relations material are dominated by a particular aestheticization of the SDF that centers on three features: a language reminiscent of the speech found in Japanese animation; the absence of traditional military imagery and symbols; and the presence of women. Thus, for example, on various posters cute little dogs say, "Boku datte, heiwa ga daisuki!" (I love peace) (see Figure 2). Models call out in English, "Peace People Japan, Come On!" (see Figure 3). Uniformed office workers suggest, "Ôki na yume o hitotsu motte kite kudasai" (Come to us with one big dream). Uniformed mechanics take things "Step by Step" (in English) in order to become "Hokoreru shokuba de, kagayaku hito" (Shining people at a workplace we can be proud of). Next to a picture of a member of the ASDF, which covers half the poster, we find the slogan "Kawaranu yume ni mukatte" (Turn toward a steady dream).⁴⁶

Similar slogans can be found in advertisements of Japanese companies, but there are other features besides language that further underscore the SDF's efforts to dress itself in the most civilian disguise possible. First,

46. All of the posters mentioned in the text were issued by the JDA and produced in 1998 or 1999 for the purpose of recruitment. One finds them on ward boards next to announcements of festivals, obituaries, garbage information, and other information relevant for people who live in the community. Usually, there are postcards attached to them on which one finds the following information: various ways and patterns of joining the SDF, and phone numbers of recruitment offices. Interested parties either can call a nearby recruitment office or fill in their name and address and send off the card in order to obtain written information.



Figure 3. One of the SDF's recruitment posters from 1998, "Peace People of Japan: Come On!" Reproduced with permission of the Japan Defense Agency.

almost all of the people depicted are professional models, or *tarento*. The woman proclaiming "Peace People Japan, Come On!" for example, is Kanno Yōko, who is known for her songs accompanying animation, and the phrase "come on" of the slogan is a word play upon her last name, as a public relations officer explained to us. Second, there are hardly any depictions of soldiers performing potentially aggressive acts such as shooting rifles or firing tanks.⁴⁷ Rather obviously, the SDF tries to appeal to some kind of average man (and woman). Indeed, recruitment officers made very clear to us that they do not want and would not accept "military freaks" or "radicals of any kind" in the SDF. Instead, they try to appeal to a diverse array of potential recruits, all of whom should be, as recruitment officers emphasize, "ordinary people" (*futsū no hito*). On the very rare occasions when weaponry is depicted explicitly in posters, the faces of young, smiling women always counterbalance it.

Third, women in recruitment posters are overrepresented well beyond their numerical presence in the SDF.⁴⁸ At first glance, the overrepresentation of women in comparison to their numbers in the SDF is simply congruent with advertisement practices in civilian markets. But several other factors come into play and are of particular importance in the case of SDF recruitment posters. Women contribute to the de-emphasizing of the SDF's potential for violence and represent another feature of the SDF's response to its dubious reputation. They seem to suggest that "there are even nice, pretty women in our organization. They wouldn't be here if we were hard, violent, strange, dangerous (or whatever negative characteristic one may associate with us)." In addition, the underlying promise that a male recruit can meet nice young "office-lady"-like women in the SDF suggests that the SDF, like many civilian workplaces, is acting as a kind of dating service.⁴⁹

47. Only one of the posters collected between July 1998 and August 1999 depicts several real soldiers, most of whom are men, and features a more aggressive slogan, "Kimi wa jiritsu dekiru ka" (Can you stand on your own feet?).

48. A recruitment poster from 1971 is the first one in which a uniformed woman appeared together with several men. However, only since the early 1990s do women dominate SDF recruitment posters; see the official SDF Recruitment Poster Gallery at <http://www.jda.go.jp/j/library/poster/index.html>.

49. Media reports on young women in general and women in the SDF in particular typically focus not on their work and careers but on marriage. At least according to these articles, the overwhelming majority of female SDF personnel eventually marry an SDF man. Several features of their everyday lives in the SDF contribute to this choice. Single female soldiers have to live in dormitories on base until they get married (male soldiers have to do the same but only until the age of 30). Only when they get married can they live off base. The relatively isolated life on base generally prevents women (and men) from socializing with civilians on a regular basis. (Marriage consulting offices on base are primarily frequented by men over the age of 35 who are introduced to civilian women through that office.) Women also report that

Every single female uniformed interviewee pointed out another message that was crucial to her decision to join the SDF: women depicted on recruitment posters performing specialized roles (some of which are close to soldiering, while others borrow the fascination of [wo]man and machine) evoke an image of the SDF as both an equal opportunity employer and as a workplace where women have interesting jobs and pursue real careers just like men. Female interviewees emphasized that they had been seeking a job more exciting than working as an "office lady" and a job environment where nobody would push them to get married, have kids, and quit; and they felt that to a large extent they found these conditions in their SDF jobs. This is not to say that expectations of equal treatment are fully met. Women do play a marginal role in the SDF and they are confronted with all kinds of obstacles, some of which are typical of military organization elsewhere, while others are the sort most female professionals describe as common on their way up a company's or a governmental office's internal hierarchy.

But whatever their actual experiences, the use of women in recruitment images also must be seen as an attempt to garner legitimacy through demonstrating the SDF's efforts to comply with the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) promulgated in 1986 and considerably tightened in April 1999.⁵⁰ Both the recruitment problems of the affluent 1980s and the decreasing birthrate accelerated attempts to recruit more women into the ranks of the SDF. However, this strategy is not consistently utilized. The SDF has only very hesitantly reformed its rules for the participation of women, and the first female cadets were accepted at the National Defense Academy only in April 1992.⁵¹ Male SDF personnel have mixed feelings about the full integration of women into the SDF. While cadets and young officers tend to see no problem and view women as equally capable and, in some cases, particularly ambitious, middle-aged and higher-ranking officers feel the EEOL was just one more interference from civil society they

civilian men are far less supportive of their careers and lack understanding of its hardships. Some also say that they increasingly view civilian men as wimps the longer they work in the SDF. See Bandō Tomiko, "Joshi Jieitaiin tte donna seikatsu?" *Fujin kōron*, No. 5 (1990), pp. 284–89; Hiiragi Komachi, "Bōei daigakkō ni manabu joshi gakusei no kyanpasu raifu," *Securitarian*, No. 4 (1998), pp. 42–48; Takayama Tatsuki, "Omuko-san sagashinagara Jieitai ni dōzo," *Securitarian*, No. 12 (1997), p. 64.

50. The situation of women, how they view their male colleagues, and how they are viewed by them is discussed in Sabine Frühstück, "Jieitai nai no danjo" (paper presented at the University of Tokyo, 28 January 1999).

51. Bōeichō, ed., *Bōei hakusho 1998*, p. 451. For a brief overview of the gradual acceptance of women into the SDF, see Nakayama Michiko, "Ronten toshite no 'josei to guntai,'" in Ehara Yumiko, ed., *Sei, bōryoku, nēshon* (Tokyo: Keiso Shobō, 1998), pp. 31–60.

are stuck with. Male SDF personnel who were critical of the integration of women typically volunteered stories rooted in what a military analyst termed the "anxiety about the feminization of the SDF."⁵²

"Women," a GSDF officer candidate from Hokkaido pointed out, "just can't urinate in the field." An ASDF captain told us that because women menstruate they could not be fully relied on in a military conflict. A GSDF base commander in charge of the preparations for the annual troop inspection had found that women needed much more training than men before they could march properly. And even a high-ranking public relations officer in the JDA reasoned that a few women here and there would be desirable as they increased the competition among men, but many women would eventually destroy the morale of the troops. In any case, the initial if modest enthusiasm for recruiting women in order to solve the recruitment problem faded somewhat during the economically critical years of the 1990s, when more men with high aptitudes volunteered to join. Thus, the large number of women represented in posters (as opposed to the ranks of the SDF) resonates with the efforts at civilianization; it is the same message all government offices try to transmit to the public. Here again, the SDF seems to be saying that it is like any other governmental organization.

Writing History: When Does the Past Begin?

The fourth set of strategies centers on the creation of an organizational history. The celebration and valorization of past heroes is part of the identity building and the writing of history in many organizations. Just as companies commemorate founding fathers and innovators, armed forces celebrate war heroes, great leaders, and strategists, or particularly courageous men. The processes of writing this kind of history are never unproblematic, and failures are often suppressed or rationalized in curious ways.⁵³

The SDF creates and presents a narrative of the past that emphasizes a distance from the Imperial Army and Navy. This kind of narrative is exhibited in a number of rather modest on-base museums run and maintained by uniformed officers. The museum at Iruma ASDF base, for example, is housed in a shabby building that was constructed in 1938. A board inside the entrance gives a brief overview of the building's history: in its begin-

52. Shikata Shunsuke, "Otsukaresama desu! Guntai to sekuhara mondai," *Securitarian*, No. 8 (1998), pp. 36–37.

53. Perhaps the most apparent cases of these kinds of historiographical consequences are the Vietnam War for the United States and World War II for Germany, Austria, Italy, and Japan; see, e.g., Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 97, No. 2 (1991), pp. 376–420.

nings it was part of the Imperial Army Academy (Kyūrikugun Shikan Gakkō). During the occupation period it was used by the U.S. Armed Forces. After Japan regained independence and the U.S. Armed Forces left the base, it became an SDF building. Unlike the War Memorial Museum at Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine which is open to the wider public, but similar to other on-base museums, this one is open generally only to SDF personnel and their families and is visited only occasionally by groups of veterans or school children from the region.

In several rooms, visitors find a collection of Imperial Army uniforms, miniature models, and photographs of airplanes used during World War II, including an Oka, the kind of plane used by suicide pilots during the last months of the war. Short biographies of battle commanders, a lower leg prosthesis supposedly handed over by the Showa emperor to an injured soldier, and a board that lists names of pilots whose planes crashed during the war complement the Imperial Army collection of exhibits. Somewhat less room is reserved for replicas of the SDF's various uniforms and photographs of rescue activities performed after numerous smaller earthquakes. Next to them are letters of gratitude handwritten by rescued victims, and more official documentation of these activities. The guided tour ends in front of an empty room we are prohibited from entering. Our guide, an officer from the ASDF, explains that the Showa emperor had honored the academy with a visit on 28 March 1941. The small empty room was used as the "emperor's honorable rest room" (or, as the sign at the entrance says, *Tennō heika go-zasho benden*) on that day in late March—a few months prior to Japan's attack of Pearl Harbor. The rooms with SDF-related exhibits are next to the rooms with Imperial Army exhibits without much explanation of the relationship between the two military establishments.

Unlike the collection of exhibits in these on-base museums, neither exhibitions at Open House Days of bases nor exhibits at the National Defense Academy display items related to the Imperial Army or Navy. These exhibits are confined strictly to pictorial representations of civilian achievements of the SDF, pictures of individual anonymous soldiers at work, or photographs of former base commanders and academy directors in the style of galleries of ancestral portraits. Sometimes one sees a portrait of former Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru, while a minor role is granted to portraits of the directors of the Defense Agency.⁵⁴

54. While directors of the JDA have always been civilian bureaucrats (the current JDA director, Nakatani Gen, an NDA graduate with a *jieikan* career, is the first exception to this rule), the fact that they are replaced as often as most other Japanese governmental officials indicates their relative irrelevance for the construction of the identity and history of "great" SDF men.

In the everyday life of SDF personnel, references to and representations of imperial figures and traditions also are hardly tolerated. When they do appear they seem accidental, individual, and come as a surprise to SDF personnel themselves. A navy officer, who described himself as someone who had always thought of the emperor in a rather disparaging manner, told us in a moved and almost embarrassed way how honored he felt about being greeted by the emperor when he returned to Japan from a peacekeeping mission. He could remember every word the emperor had said to him and reported his own feeling of having been "touched by something higher." This very brief encounter with the emperor, he told us, made him realize and feel something like "a national identity as a Japanese," "what it really meant to be a soldier," and his "responsibility of guarding one's country."

We were confronted with a completely different attitude to the past military at the annual Open House Festival of the National Defense Academy. Structured in a way similar to Open House Days at bases, the Open House Festival is visited mainly by civilian and uniformed instructors who are affiliated with the NDA, by cadets themselves, and by their families and friends. The festival character is emphasized by performances on the stages, stands for food and drinks, the decoration of the NDA premises, and the masquerades of some cadets. Some come cross-dressed as women with wigs, short skirts, and full makeup, some come wrapped from top to toe as mummies, and a small number come in Imperial Army or SS uniforms. The latter explained to us that they were studying the German Wehrmacht's battles in North Africa in their military history course and wore the uniforms to emphasize their interest in the course. They told us the uniforms cost more than they earn in a month and the festival annually held at the NDA is the only occasion to wear them. NDA instructors only smiled at our startled faces and told us not to take this festival so seriously as cadets "just dress up [as women or as Imperial Army or SS officers] to draw attention to themselves."

As opposed to these singular examples, the SDF has created points of reference in order to anchor and nurture a sense of its origin and identity, not just outside its ranks but also in ways that cautiously circumscribe any connection to its predecessor. A GSDF officer trained at the NDA pointed out that this conscious distancing from the imperial military is rooted particularly deeply in graduates from the National Defense Academy. Names of commanders of the imperial military are never mentioned, nor are attempts made to whitewash the Imperial Army. Indeed, dissociation goes so far as to make one wonder how much *jieikan* know about what they so thoroughly dissociate themselves from. Little wonder, then, that a defense attaché of one of Japan's East Asian neighbors expressed his anger when we discussed his view of the SDF's qualities:

They are very professional and reliable. I am sure that something like Japan's aggressive war against Asia will never happen again. But what makes me really angry sometimes is that I have to explain to 50-year-old officers what their fathers did to my people. They don't know anything!

When asked about whom they respect, admire, or would like to be like, *jieikan* commonly deny having any military idol or hero. Some refer to the U.S. military (and depictions thereof in popular culture) among other armed forces of advanced industrialized countries. Younger *jieikan*, especially, aspire to be like four-star General Norman Schwarzkopf, Vietnam volunteer Chris Taylor (Charlie Sheen's character in Oliver Stone's film *Platoon*, 1986), Captain Karen Walden (Meg Ryan's character in Edward Zwick's film *Courage Under Fire*, 1996) or Captain John Miller (Tom Hanks's character in Steven Spielberg's film *Saving Private Ryan*, 1998). As for "indigenous" military heroes, some *jieikan* relate themselves to the images of the warrior tradition of premodern Japan. Representations of premodern warrior culture in historical television series or *jidaigeki* typically portray *bushi* as the Robin Hoods of the poor and powerless (conveniently ignoring what Tanaka Yuki termed the "corruption of *bushidō*" during World War II).⁵⁵ In a similar fashion, many *jieikan* perceive themselves as servants of the population even though they are aware that they are not necessarily appreciated as an organization.

"For the Collective Good": Community Outreach and Disaster Relief

To project intimacy and similarity with civil society by consciously adopting roles that do not pertain to the use of organized violence is the goal of the fifth set of strategies. Here the SDF has adopted a variety of community works including, most importantly, participation in disaster relief and humanitarian aide. These efforts have been carried out primarily within Japan, but in the past decade they have been increasingly, if slowly, taking place outside of it as well. These activities create an impression of the SDF's "indispensability" but they do so in nonmilitary forms. Indeed, in official parlance, a number of roles that the SDF carries out are aimed at "furthering the collective good" (*kokumin seikatsu e no kōken*).⁵⁶ These activities center on three elements: the special commitment of the SDF to the public; the need to constantly maintain contacts and exchanges with local communities; and the SDF's special organizational capabilities that can be utilized in roles

55. Tanaka Yuki, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 206–11. We must be careful, however, in interpreting these impressions. In general, it seems that the GSDF are most cautious about and aware of the war of the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) simply because war atrocities are ascribed mainly to the IJA and not to the Imperial Japanese Navy.

56. Bōeichō, ed., *Bōei hakusho 1998*, pp. 286–95.

unrelated to violence—the capacity to work under stressful conditions, for instance, or the efficient use of resources.

Missions and actions related to the SDF's public responsibility include donating military land for public amenities such as high school buildings, building sports grounds at schools, using SDF sports facilities together with civilians, or helping at major sports events such as the Olympic Games in Tokyo in 1964 and in Nagano in 1998.⁵⁷ As a GSDF officer in charge of the preparations for the Olympic Games in Nagano told us, immediately before and during the event, the JDA produced 100,000 public relations pamphlets to be distributed by the on-site press center. Several thousand copies of an introductory pamphlet of the Twelfth Regiment that was primarily responsible for the preparations and maintenance of the site were also distributed at the press center. Two videos featuring the SDF on site were distributed to the media and SDF support groups.⁵⁸ In addition, the JDA also frequently updated an Internet website on its involvement at the event that was created particularly for that occasion. These public relations activities, the same officer pointed out to us, had a double function: to increase the understanding of and familiarity with the SDF but also to increase solidarity and morale within the SDF ranks.

As a former commander of Japan's Northern Army (stationed in Hokkaido and considered most prestigious within the SDF throughout the cold war) explained, it has always been the engineers rather than the combat units who were most needed. It was the engineers who helped rebuild Japan's cities after the war and who even to this day are asked to step in to rebuild infrastructure after natural disasters in remote and relatively inaccessible regions when commercial enterprises consider such tasks too difficult or risky. "When walking through Tokyo today," he told us, "I look with pride at some of the buildings we helped rebuild." Similarly, the commander of an ASDF base pointed out to us that today's soldiers consider themselves technicians rather than defenders of their country or guardians of the nation.

Indeed, many of the cadets we interviewed report that they had an interest in technology. Due to their lack of financial resources, they thought they could only pursue this interest at the National Defense Academy where cadets do not pay tuition but receive a monthly salary. It is also important to note that for many cadets the NDA is a second-choice school when they fail

57. "Jieitai no minsei kyōryoku," *Securitarian*, No. 5 (1998), pp. 29–33; Kinoshita Hi-deaki, "Jaianto na Jieitai no taiiku," *Securitarian*, No. 5 (1998), pp. 6–25.

58. According to an SDF liaison for various support groups, the SDF public relation officers differentiate between four kinds of support groups. The Parents Association (Fukeikai) with about 117,000 members, the Veterans Association (Taiyūkai) with about 136,000 members (not to be mixed up with the Imperial Army and Navy veterans' associations), the Defense Association and the SDF Cooperation Association with about 630,000 members, and about 100 employment support organizations with about 15,000 members.

the entrance exam at another university. Many cadets begin to identify with the notion of national defense only toward the end of their education at the National Defense Academy, while many others apparently never do. Rather than looking at the SDF as a military, an army major on maternity leave told us we should see it as a governmental service organization, just like a huge organization of plumbers. Similarly, before he saluted us and left the room, a first-year recruit at a GSDF base closed the interview by saying, “No, I never think of a military conflict and what I would do in such a situation. I don’t think of the SDF as a military.”

A closely related set of activities is termed “community outreach” (*kokumin to no kōryū*, “exchanges with the populace”)—namely, all those efforts that promote active exchanges with local communities (*chiiki shakai to no kōryū*).⁵⁹ Many units offer open houses, tours of camps, voyages aboard vessels of the maritime forces, or the opportunity to board aircraft. Since March 1997, the bands of the ground, maritime, and air forces hold yearly joint concerts in Tokyo.⁶⁰ At the request of local communities, SDF facilities such as athletic grounds, gymnasiums, and swimming pools are opened to the public. These facilities are used for sports meetings of elementary, junior, and senior high school students as well. As the white paper on defense states, SDF personnel “stay actively involved with local residents on an individual basis” as “the country’s defense is the basis of a nation’s existence, which is shouldered by every single citizen just as the activities of the SDF rely on the support of the populace and society.”⁶¹

Common to all these activities is the message to the public that the SDF represents and is involved in the collective good and is very much an integral part of society. Thus, the SDF presents itself as one of the representatives of the state involved in guarding and maintaining the collective good. At the same time, it contrasts itself to prewar concepts of the military as embodying the state by demonstrating that it is not a “caste” apart from and above society. Katzenstein suggests that the way civil-military relations in Japan are organized isolates the military from the civilian public.⁶² Hence, the activities that center on contributions to the public good and interaction with civilian society must be understood as active efforts undertaken by the SDF to overcome its social segregation. As defense officials do not get tired of repeating over and over again, the aim here is to “deepen the populace’s understanding of the SDF” (*kokumin no rikai o fukameru*).

Another related, albeit analytically distinct, undertaking involves a host of disaster relief activities. The framing of disaster relief commonly is con-

59. Bōeichō, ed., *Bōei hakusho 1998*, pp. 295–98.

60. This event also is documented on video; see Bōeichō, ed., *Jieitai ongaku matsuri. Marching Festival '98 in Budokan* (Tokyo: Adachi Video Seisakushitsu, 1999).

61. Bōeichō, ed., *Bōei hakusho 1998*, p. 299.

62. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, p. 22.

nected to the SDF's capabilities: as an organization it can help because it has efficient, cohesive units with the proper training and resources to work under stressful conditions. Moreover, SDF units have the built-in infrastructure and mechanisms to respond quickly to emergency situations. All three SDF services maintain disaster relief organizations to ensure that they can be deployed easily and rapidly.⁶³ Disaster relief activities also represent important ways to reinforce the SDF's legitimacy and to assure support.⁶⁴ As Hanami observed, the military has resorted to volunteering its forces primarily for disaster relief in order to win wider acceptance among the population.⁶⁵ Significantly, the SDF not only resorts to these activities but actively seeks them and visualizes these activities in its public relations material, i.e., glossy paper brochures and videos for internal and external use.⁶⁶

As became clear from our interviews, the SDF hopes to gain internal legitimacy as a military or at least as a useful and necessary organization through missions in and increasingly outside of Japan. While this goal is clearly on the minds of many *jieikan* independent of their rank and age, hopes are also expressed of being recognized by the international community as an equally capable military. Excitement over the first international disaster relief mission led one of the coordinators to express this strategy rather explicitly: "In our country the allergy against the military has survived up to this day. In order to clear that problem we try to contribute to the international community by way of disaster relief operations, in order to upgrade ourselves. Now, everything will change."

However, there is a different process at work here too. For quite a few younger *jieikan*, the prospect of being deployed to a disaster relief mission was the primary motivation to join the SDF in the first place. Many of the "hero stories" we heard in interviews revolve around incidents such as the Japan Air Lines (JAL) plane crash in 1985 or the Hanshin-Awaji earthquake in January 1995. The harsh criticism for the SDF's slow and inefficient performance after the Hanshin-Awaji earthquake was redirected by *jieikan* toward the complicated command structure that is controlled not by uniformed SDF personnel but by civilian bureaucrats. Thus even today *jieikan* refer to the activities in the Kobe area exclusively in positive terms. They report about individually expressed gratitude for their help. They consider their rescue performance as the main event that boosted public opinion in their favor. And they view it as an experience that instilled in them a more

63. Leonard A. Humphreys, "The Japanese Military Tradition," in James H. Buck, ed., *The Modern Japanese Military System* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975), pp. 21–40.

64. Drifte, *Japan's Foreign Policy for the 21st Century*, p. 140.

65. Hanami, "Japan," p. 238.

66. While the brochures are available at SDF events and in recruitment and public relations offices, we found some of the videos in regular bookstores; see, e.g., Bōeichō, ed., *We are Rikujō Jieitai. Catch Your Dream* (Tokyo: Bōeichō, 1999).

concrete sense of usefulness and self-potency that reaches far beyond those who took part.⁶⁷ While one of the officers who was employed in the rescue activities after the JAL plane crash could remember almost 15 years later the names of each person rescued, other younger *jieikan* spoke with pride of the fact that they knew someone who was employed in relief efforts after the Hanshin-Awaji earthquake. While for many other armed forces of advanced industrialized societies, disaster relief missions have only recently become core military tasks, for Japan's SDF these missions have always been one of its main activities. Clearly, disaster relief figures in the self-perception of SDF personnel in terms of their concept of professionalism.

"Contributing to the International Community:" Peacekeeping

The sixth set of strategies centers on linking the SDF to international efforts of goodwill. These efforts use the special organizational capabilities of Japan's armed forces to lower or reduce violence outside of Japan. Here the role of the SDF is linked both to multinational efforts at goodwill (Japan is invited by external bodies to participate) and to participation dedicated to peacemaking as opposed to war making. In 1992 the SDF began to participate at the margins of international peacekeeping missions. Deployment began shortly after the government issued its vision of the SDF's contribution to worldwide peace in August 1991.⁶⁸ To this day, the Japanese armed forces have been deployed to places as far away and culturally diverse as Cambodia (September 1992-September 1993), Mozambique (May 1993-January 1995), Rwanda (September-December 1994), the Golan Heights (since January 1996), and East Timor (1999).

While the deployment of troops abroad may contradict the spirit of Japan's constitution, it does fit with the SDF's notion of "doing good," with its self-image of humanitarianism, and with growing sentiments that Japan must take its "rightful place in the world" and "contribute to the international community" (*kokusai kōken*). Participants speak of these missions as identity forming and thus highly significant for their self-image. It was his deployment to Mozambique, a navy officer told us, that made him realize for the first time in his career as a *jieikan* what "guarding a country and being a soldier" meant. In fact, so important has assignment to these mis-

67. This view also is reflected in journalistic assessments of the SDF as well as the SDF's publications for primarily internal use; see Araki, *Jieitai to iu gakkō*, pp. 1-3 and 168; Hiiragi, "Bōei daigakkō ni manabu jōshi gakusei no kyanpasu raifu," pp. 42-43; "Tokushū: Kōhō saizensen 'Kigyō no kōhō' to 'Jieitai no kōhō,'" pp. 7-12.

68. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ed., *UN Peace-Keeping Operations: Japanese Policy and Practice* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1997); for an English translation of Japan's Peace Keeping Operations Law, see *Law Concerning Cooperation for United Nations Peace-Keeping Operations and Other Operations* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1992).

sions become that in addition to subjective impressions and interpretations of their experiences, officers who have been deployed abroad are often chosen for the quick promotion track.

There is, however, another side to these generally satisfactory experiences. Deployment abroad is accompanied by the feeling among participants that while they are highly appreciated as a military abroad, they are not accorded the same recognition at home. Each deployment since Cambodia has been accompanied by intense media coverage, ceremonies, and official visits of government officials, all of which add to the enormous pressure to perform flawlessly. Katzenstein reports that in Cambodia, a "press corps as large as the entire SDF contingent covered every move. The operation was a political success, media coverage was favorable, and the troops were given a hero's welcome on their return to Japan."⁶⁹ Participation in these missions abroad allows the SDF to legitimize its efforts overseas in semimilitary terms: i.e., in terms of its military capabilities contributing to the stabilization or cessation of violent conflict elsewhere. In this respect there are differences between taking part in disaster relief and taking part in humanitarian efforts. But because of its problematic existence at home and because the potential for violence is present in any peacekeeping operation, the SDF finds that it must participate selectively in international peacekeeping efforts.

To a significant extent, debates on Japan's participation in peacekeeping operations revolve around issues related to the proximity of Japanese troops to violence. Indeed, this issue was not resolved when the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Bill was passed in the Diet in 1992. The law contains multiple stipulations circumscribing Japanese participation. It regulates the establishment of a cease-fire agreement, the acceptance of UN peacekeeping operations by both warring parties, the neutrality of the UN operation, the ability of Japan to withdraw troops immediately if necessary, and the equipping of the SDF only with the minimum necessary weapons. Troops can be deployed only under UN mandate, only at the invitation of local parties, and then only for nonmilitary missions such as those related to logistics, medical relief, and transport. In effect, SDF forces are deployed only in relatively stable environments, while military commanders continue to worry that the situation might suddenly destabilize and SDF troops then would need to use violence to protect themselves. According to the current law, Japanese forces would have to back out of an area if violence were to occur. According to their testimonies, *jieikan* realize the restrictions even more in comparison to soldiers of other armed forces, who they feel are much better equipped for self-defense.

69. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, p. 127.

Denationalizing Violence: Hiding Behind the U.S. Armed Forces

A final important if little observed set of strategies designed to manage the SDF's link to violence entails the cultivation of multiple ties to the U.S. Armed Forces. First, the SDF's formal structures of combat and training are modeled on the American system. The SDF has three services with an internal division of labor similar to the American forces, and its techniques for training military personnel are basically the same as those practiced in the United States. Second, combined exercises and drills are a major mechanism for linking the SDF to American armed forces deployed in Japan and East Asia. These maneuvers include all three services and have been held since 1986 both in Japan and in the United States. Third, the similarity in force structure and the cumulative effects of experiences in combined exercises allow for a relatively smooth integration of the SDF into various American contingency plans for the region. In these ways, as Hook observes, Japanese forces are becoming integrated with the U.S. forces in a system of American making.⁷⁰

Indeed, one can look at the Japanese forces as appendages to the larger and much more conspicuous American forces. One may grasp the extent to which this situation serves, perhaps unintentionally, the interests of the SDF in the imagery found in Japanese media. In various media reports, units of the SDF are commonly described as additions to rather than full-fledged partners in joint exercises. For example, smaller ships of the MSDF are depicted as accompanying American aircraft carriers, and they appear either in the margins of the news texts or at the margins of photographs. Fourth, for the past decade but especially since the beginning of the review of the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation in June 1996, several American warships have visited civilian ports in Japan. While they ostensibly are part of an effort to cultivate "goodwill," these ships also carry out scouting missions to investigate which harbors can be used in times of emergency and to promote a readiness in the Japanese populace for accepting the presence of the American military. Hook interprets the U.S.-Japan security treaty system as "the source of Japanese militarisation" giving way to pressure from the United States to play a greater regional role. In rather provocative terms, he suggests one can view the process of linkage to American forces as a "denationalization" of the Japanese military.⁷¹ From our perspective, however, the point is that under the guise of being appendages of the American military, the SDF can create (in tandem with other strategies) an impression of its indispensability and legitimacy while signaling that the major actors in the defense of the area are the U.S. Armed Forces. The link to U.S. forces allows the SDF at once to signal its impor-

70. See Hook, *Militarisation and Demilitarisation in Contemporary Japan*.

71. Hook, "Japan and the ASEAN Regional Forum," pp. 159–88.

tance for national security, its limited role in the wider defense of the area, and its close relation to the hegemonic power of the world.

Conclusion: Space, Legitimacy, and the "Normal" Military

In this article we have examined multiple strategies utilized by the SDF in order to manage its contested or problematic existence. Japan's armed forces produce specialists in inflicting death and destruction—men and women who are trained to perform efficiently, effectively, and on command. Hence, while all these strategies deal with the link between the SDF and its monopoly over the means of violence, they all entail different aims and levels. They aim at dissociating the SDF from the Imperial Army, at emulating the armed forces of other advanced industrialized countries, and at blending with civil society. Clearly, the various strategies are directed at different publics: diverse constituencies or groups that range along a continuum from sympathizers to other groups that have yet to be convinced of the legitimacy and usefulness of the SDF. Thus, for example, events for the "wider public" such as the Open House Days or the live fire exercise at the foot of Mt. Fuji attract mainly people who already share a fascination for the military or for weaponry, or who at least have positive feelings for the SDF. Here critics of the SDF are invisible, if not entirely absent.

Other activities and material such as recruitment posters and other advertising are directed at an anonymous "widest public." This "anonymous public" is dominated—in the imagination of *jieikan*—by left-wing teachers' associations, younger generations who are somewhat less hostile but share a vague resistance to the SDF, and a large silent, ignorant, and apathetic majority. It is this last public, the silent majority, to which the SDF's public relations officers try to appeal—using a peculiar combination of caution and thoroughness—if only because this public seems most susceptible to the military's entreaties. In fact, some of the activities directed at external audiences also serve internal ends. Events that demand a significant commitment to planning, preparations, and training—like public parades, air shows, or live fire demonstrations—are used to keep up morale and strengthen confidence in the professional abilities of the units that carry them out.

However, the multilayered strategies discussed above, as well as the many individual accounts of soldiers' everyday lives we encountered, point to attempts at a "normalization" that is not informed simply by an idealized version of a more "traditional" military organization like the U.S. Armed Forces. At first glance, the SDF seems to carry out the same missions other militaries around the world are now charged with conducting. The armed forces of advanced industrialized countries have been moving toward an operational concept that is based on participation in multiple missions and

that includes—apart from the preparation for and fighting of wars—a wide range of tasks that respond to a variety of needs. These tasks include the maintenance of domestic security requirements, addressing threats posed by weak states, protection against terrorist threats, control of immigration and refugee flows, humanitarian and disaster relief, and various types of peace-keeping.⁷² In contrast to most of these military establishments in advanced industrialized societies, however, Japan's armed forces have been engaged exclusively in "nontraditional" military roles. The fact that such roles in other armed forces have become the norm is regarded by the SDF as an unexpected blessing. It has enabled the SDF, yet again, to underscore its basic similarity to other military establishments which carry out multiple missions and which have realized that they too have to justify their existence by carrying an increasing number of nonmilitary assignments.

In interviews SDF officers and soldiers often commented about the high level of respect they accord to the U.S. military and repeatedly called them "truly professional." When we questioned them about this attitude, the answers we received were quite insightful in regard to the SDF's attempts at becoming what they envision as a "normal military." *Jieikan* are not impressed by the Americans' performance in training situations *per se*. They do not think American soldiers necessarily shoot better, are fitter, or are more courageous when jumping from planes. Rather, some of them describe combined exercises as "culture shock." "I knew instantly that I had a real [*honmono*] military in front of my eyes," a navy major described his impressions. "American soldiers run from morning to evening because they think that the basic ability to fight lies in a strong body. You hardly ever see SDF personnel run."⁷³ Another navy major pointed at the different sense of safety among Japanese and American military personnel. During the joint exercises, he recalled, two American soldiers wanted to give up because of the cold. He continued,

we would have told them to go inside to get warm. There is no such sense of sympathy among American commanders. Even if these two soldiers would have suffered permanent effects from being out in the cold too long, that seems to be considered less undesirable than the damage to the morale of the troops in case they were let inside. In the SDF, where safety is a primary issue [*anzen dai'ichi no jieitai*] this is unthinkable.⁷⁴

72. For a broad discussion of recent developments, see the chapters by James Burk, Charles Moskos, and Robert L. Holmes in Burk, ed., *The Adaptive Military*; Boas Shamir and Eyal Ben-Ari, "Leadership in an Open Army? Civilian Connections, Interorganizational Frameworks and Changes in Military Leadership," in James G. Hunt, George Dodge, and Leonard Wong, eds., *Out-of-the-Box Leadership: Transforming the Twenty-First-Century Army and Other Top-Performing Organizations* (Stamford, Conn.: JAI Press, 1999), pp. 15–40.

73. Oka, ed., *Heisei no Jieitai*, p. 88.

74. *Ibid.*, pp. 89–90.

When *jieikan* say that American soldiers are true professionals, they also mean that after training Americans leave the training area behind like they would turn their backs on a battleground after the battle is over. Japanese soldiers are not allowed to do that. The training ground must be surveyed for cartridges and other potentially dangerous leftovers. Everything must be carefully picked up after training as misuse and accidents must be avoided by all means.

Consequently, the efforts invested by members of the SDF to create a space for themselves should be understood in a two-fold manner, literally and metaphorically. Many officers indicated that one reason for their frustration with their jobs was the spatial restrictions of training and exercises. Certain weaponry cannot be tested or trained within Japan because of restrictions concerning noise and other cautions. Thus, while Article 9 of Japan's constitution is widely cited as the obstacle against the development of a "normal" military, for those in the field it is not the constitution that worries them most, although they are aware of its high symbolic significance. It is rather the host of laws and regulations related to Article 9 that prescribe in great detail every single step taken by the SDF that they would like to get off their minds and legal papers.

In a metaphorical sense, the notion of the creation of space for the SDF entails gaining legitimacy as well as freedom to develop an image—or rather, images—of itself. Despite the high level of bureaucratic control and the particular norms and institutions that seem to force it to merely react to outside pressures, the SDF now finds itself in a situation where it can create and shape images of itself better and to a larger extent than ever before. Thus, we suggest that a more accurate picture of the SDF must take into account its capacity to mold its organizational environment. While there are firm limits to the manner and extent to which the SDF can act on its environment, it is far from a feeble entity and is constantly initiating a host of activities aimed at different publics. The very fact that the SDF sends out mixed messages—as a potent military force at the Fuji Live Fire Exercise *and* as "just another governmental institution" in public relations material—underscores the impression that the SDF has a voice of its own and indeed makes itself increasingly heard and seen.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA, AND
HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM