Transformation of JSDF image in recent Japanese animation

Orlando, D Hermawan
Japanese Department, Faculty of Humanities, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia 11480
orlando.leopa21@gmail.com; daniel.hermawan@binus.edu

Abstract. Since Shinzo Abe elected as the Prime Minister of Japan, he had concentrated his effort to change Japan to be a “normal” country by trying to change article nine of Japanese Constitution. But even if Shinzo Abe had tried since 2006 to change the constitution, this effort still opposed by the Japanese people. Mass media is one of the tools that could be used to communication through people. Gate : Jieitai Kano Chi te kaku tatakaeri, is one of Japanese anime that represent Japanese Self Defense Force in mass media. Through this research author will analyse the narration of Gate Jieitai Kano Chi te Kaku Tatakaeri, and show how have Japanese Self Defense Force have been represent in this anime in its relation to the Special Region, which I argue was the representation of the country that Japan had been invade during the world war II.

1. Introduction

No one outside Japan had expected Japan to be able to defeat Russia in Russo-Japanese War. It’s the turning point of the modern world history, the first time Asian country able to defeat European great power [1]. After that Japan had start invading fellow East Asia country and later to Southeast Asia Country, in need of the resources [2,3].

But Japan’s invasion in Asian Country was ended by the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at 6th and 8th August 1945 respectively. Japan had to surrender to alliance power and under the command of General Douglas MacArthur transform into democratic nation. One of the results of Supreme Command of Allied Power (Acr. SCAP) was the new constitution that was effectively goes into effect in 3rd May 1947 [3].

Draft of 1947 Constitution was typed by the SCAP staff and then being translated to the Japanese people. But there is a problem within the constitution that is the article nine of Japanese constitution. The problem with article nine it is stated that “aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained”. This paragraph mean that Japanese nation would never maintained any military power. But because the American soldier was sent into Korea peninsula, which left Japan defenseless. Through this problem, General Douglas MacArthur had sent order that Japan should form a Police Reserve Forces. This force was later being renamed as Japanese self-defense force (Acr, JSDF). JSDF was being allowed cause the Japanese people had reinterpreted the article nine and said that Japan could have military power for “defense purpose only” [4].

In recent year, Japan decision to kept on with the reinterpretation of article nine was questioned. With economic rise of China and South Korea, also the never end threat of North Korea nuclear missile.
Japan’s defense policy was outdated, unable to give protection to Japanese people before some incident have taken place. Because of this problem the discourse of article nine reappear in Japanese politician, Ichiro Ozawa who started the term “normal nation”. Japan should be a “normal nation” who could contribute to international community and especially Japan itself [5].

The debate about the Japan defense policy was argued not only among politician, but it also concerns the Japanese citizen. This debate was also appear in popular medium, in form of anime, title GATE 自衛隊 彼の地にて、斯く戦えり(Read :GATE:Jieitai Kare no Chi nit e Kaku Tatakaeri), a 26th episode Anime aired in Japan during April 2015~December 2015. In this anime, JSDF was depicted as hero, not only when they protect the people of Japan but also people from the special region that somehow have similarities when Japan invaded the South East Asian country.

![anime GATE opening sequence.](image)

**Figure 1.** anime GATE opening sequence.

## 2. Japan Self Defense Force and Media

To analyze the appearance of Japanese Self Defense Force in anime GATE, author would like to present some study about media and military representation in the past.

Military depiction in Japanese popular media was not a new occurrence. Even before the First World War had happened, even popular media as children novel was used as propaganda tool to evoke nationalism among young readers [6].

But after the World War II military power in Japan was being labeled as the war criminal, and the one that drag Japan to make the mistake they have done in the World War II. This is why when we see war film around the US occupation period most of the time soldier of Japan will be depicted as the antagonist of the story [7].

In recent research that there is transformation in how soldier is being depicted in movies. Before 1990’s soldier was depicted as coward, who will do anything for their own self-interest while leaving the civilian suffering from the effect of war. But this is drastically change when we see a movie in 2010’s where soldier was depicted as the world savior, and have courageous act to protect the civilian, even if it cost his own life.
The reason that author choose the anime GATE (1) This anime depicted Japanese military as the JSDF rather that any fictional armed force (2) Even if they were targeted to a much younger audience, the content of this anime was far more serious. The movie could also be a reflection of the current discourse in society. In war time the movie could be anti-war, and etc. [8]

From the context author had been describe in this section we can see how Japan was familiar with propaganda tactics and we would like to see how the depiction of military power could lead to hegemonic values which will transform the JSDF in Japanese minds.

3. Research Findings

This section will be divided into three section, one will be focusing on the image of soldier in anime GATE, second will be focusing on the special region and what it representation, and three is the analysis using cultural hegemonic theory.

On Anime series GATE, we are following story of a young man name Itami Seiji. At first Itami Seiji was found as a slacker, is shown wearing t-shirt and shorts, he also said that he will prioritize his hobby rather that his work. This is opposite of typical working man in Japan who will wear formal suit and would prioritize his work rather that his hobby.

But he suddenly changed when a group of monsters came into Ginza, Tokyo through a dimensional hole. Seiji suddenly calm enough to lead people and try to save as many live as he could, and later shown entering the Japan Self Defense Force. He shown as a clumsy person in the army, but most of the military people will follow him and stated it as a responsibility to protect a comrade and Japanese people this had shown.

The other member of Japan Self Defense Force was also depicted in several scenes. They are capable of handling weapon, and have determination and courage to defend innocent people of Special Region even if they don’t have that responsibility. Not only in combat capabilities the Japan Self Defense Force was seen as teaching civilian how to protect themselves, could engage with children, and provide health service to the civilian in special region.

To add the sense of reality there are several seen in Gate Knouchi nit e kaku tatakaeri that show how Japan Self Defense Force have been treated in their own country. In one scene we see how the parliament of Japan criticize the army for letting civilian people die, despite their effort had save many other liver. Also how media said in other scene a media person talk about how JSDF was only shows the media the good side of the army.

From the data above we could see how this anime structure its story about JSDF. JSDF is always shown as the hero, and they have been treated unfairly in its homeland. So we learn what is the stance of the author of the anime when making this anime series.

Second we will see how the special region or tokuchi that being represents in anime Gate Kanouchi Kaku Tatakaeri. Tokuchi was a place beyond the dimensional Gate that appears in Ginza area in Tokyo. But unlike Ginza area in Tokyo that was considered as the luxury place in Tokyo, Special region is the opposite of Ginza. The area was dominanted with forest, with most of its people was live under the command of the kingdom.

Most of the people in Special region was living under Kingdom, with a king rule over the place. But unlike people in Japan the people of Special Region was not treated as equal, especially for half human race that cannot be accepted to receive any proper work for them. Before the JSDF came to Special region all of the special region area was not safe for the civilian as well. They live under threat from thief, health problem, and even killer dragon.

But after the appearance of JSDF in this area, they became a helper for the civilian in special region. Like been mentioned before the JSDF soldier was shown as friendly people even though they have a
tough personality. They teach technology to the special region people, like how to be able to get hot water in house, teaching the civilian how to fight against their lives against the dragon.

The story of special region was reminding author about the people that is being invaded by Japan in the early 1940’s. Many survey conducted Japanese about the situation but people But instead of being invaded and took it’s resource, in this anime, JSDF was able to contribute to society. Even if the search for new resource was being stated at the first episode, but until the end they were never shown to capitalize to the resources in special region, instead it is shown how Japan and special region to have a diplomatic relation in between the two country.

The condition of Special region was comparable to country like China, Korea, or even Indonesia who at that time was not as advance as Japan. That’s why it’s being suspected that this movie is about changing the public opinion and even international society toward Japan.

For the last section we will be discussing about the cultural hegemonic theory by Gramsci. In Gramsci theory, power does not achieve by forcing dominant power, but by persuading moral intellectual ideology to make them voluntarily supporting this idea. (A) Like we have been describing the Gate: Kanouchi nit e kaku tatakaeri, we were shown how Japanese govern ment would want to hegemonically turning the ideological perspective toward the JSDF.

We have seen that how JSDF had only shown on how they have fought courageously, protecting all of the people in Special Region. This is different from the era of World War II until the 1990’s where military army was commonly depicted as the culprit of the story, the one who will get the civilian punished or even worse die because of the problem caused by the army.

But in GATE, we see how the army (1) will do anything to protect the civilian (2) have caring side to the civilian (3) was always accused by the government and media even if they had try at their best to avoid victims while in Special region side we see after their contact with JSDF they (1) had a secure life, well protected (2) improve their living standards (3) have social securities by having work, health, etc.

From the finding above we can see how systematically GATE has been made as the agent of transforming public opinion toward JSDF. Even if the society still have doubt about JSDF, shown from the public disagreement toward the revision of article nine, but slowly people opinion toward JSDF itself will change. People will see there is no harm in having JSDF to protect the world, and they will replace the old ideology of how the military had made the world, especially Japanese to suffer in World War II.

In Cultural Hegemonic Theory which was developed by Antonico Gramsci. The word of Hegemonic itself derived from Greek word which means “to dominate, or to control”. In cultural hegemonic theory, people don’t control idea, rather than idea control people. That’s why to control people you need to make people to consent on an idea.

When Japanese government needs to derive the usual image of JSDF that came from World War II, they counter them using media and transform the JSDF image through the use of media. This kind of act will sustain a system using the popular media as a tool to convey the idea. This has given a proff media as effective tool to make a sustainable ideology in a nation.

4. Conclusion
One of Shinzo Abe goal is to revise the article nine of Japanese constitution to change Japan into a “normal country”. Since first elected in 2006, up until now, he hasn’t been successful in revise the constitution, but one by one he had successfully changing the Japanese policy toward his vision.

But he doesn’t achieve it by himself, but rather than from the power of mass media. In this paper I have shown how the Japanese people had been gradually shown the image of military army, in slight different manner from what they usually depicted pre 1990’s. This transformation of image of JSDF had gradually changed the ideology of the people. This is what Gramsci had been said as Cultural Hegemonic,
how people are voluntarily given their support to the government policy, even the society had once condemned it.

From this paper we can see how media being a tool for the government to unconsciously change the ideology toward JSDF. Especially in this digital era when we don’t need to go in front of television, but people will get the media in their palm.

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