The Militarization of the 1960s Student Movements: 
Analysis of Strategies and Tactics in the University of Tokyo Struggle

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This paper aims to present a more multifaceted and three-dimensional image of the student movements that were frequent and widespread in the 1960s, especially given the tendency of past research to positioning them solely as responses or challenges to large-scale social changes. To this end, this paper analyzed the strategies and tactics evinced in the social movements theories as a novel approach to the 1960s student movement. This paper particularly examines the strategies and tactics employed during the University of Tokyo Struggle that occurred between 1968 and 1969 at the University of Tokyo. The results of the analysis are as follows. First, direct action strategies were adopted in the University of Tokyo Struggle, which were inclined more toward counter-violence than non-violence. Thus, one’s physical strength or stamina, his relative merits in the struggle, and his eligibility to participate in the conflict were linked. Second, in the final stages of the University of Tokyo Struggle, the counter-violence tilted toward a competent military battle, and the participants’ practices was militarized. Next, two factors led the direct action strategy in the 1960s student movements to counter-violence. One was the tendency toward physical combats and militarization possessed by both new and old leftist movements, and the other was the participants’ third worldism that was influenced by decolonization and independence endeavors that occurred in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

This paper further demonstrates that these findings could also contribute to the gender studies on the 1960s student movement by introducing the concept of military masculinity. The gender-based division of labor and the marginalization of women in the 1960s student movements exerted substantial influence on the women’s liberation movement that began in the 1970s. Studies of the 1960s student movements from the perspective of gender theories have accumulated a body of knowledge that attest to this reality.

The information contained in this paper can potentially be developed in several directions in the future. By approaching the motivations and experiences of the women participants in the 1960s student movements from the perspective of military masculinity, it will be possible to further illuminate the militarization of the 1960s student movements and the influence of such actions on the evolution of the movements.

Key words: The University of Tokyo Struggle, strategies and tactics, direct action, counter-violence, military masculinity