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Transcultural Dynamics in American and Japanese Aviation Films: Analyzing the Interplay of *Top Gun* and *Best Guy**

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This study examines the cultural interplay of Hollywood's iconic aviation film *Top Gun* (1986) and its Japanese counterpart *Best Guy* (1990). The study begins by tracing Japanese fascination with *Top Gun* and the subsequent production of *Best Guy*. It then demonstrates *Top Gun*'s influence on *Best Guy*, referencing statements from the latter's director and underscoring the collaboration with the Japan Self-Defense Force in an effort to improve public perceptions of the military. Next, it compares the plots of the two films, analyzing the characterization of the pilot protagonists regarding relatability, the use of North American cultural markers such as rock music, and sociocultural representations of the dichotomy between civil and military aviation. The article further explores how both films reflect Cold War geopolitics, highlighting that *Best Guy*'s evasive climax mirrors the inherent contradiction between Japan's "Peace Constitution" and the retention of military forces. In conclusion, the study draws parallels between the *Top Gun* sequel *Top Gun: Maverick* and a similar Chinese aviation film released in the early 2020s, suggesting that *Best Guy* emerged at a time when the Japanese audience could indulge in light-hearted romantic narratives, and this luxury has become less feasible given Japan's current security challenges.

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1. Japanese Fascination With *Top Gun* and the Production of *Best Guy*

When *Top Gun* was released in Japan in 1987, it captivated audiences and became the highest-grossing film of the year, earning 3.89 billion yen in distribution revenue—nearly twice that of the second-place film, *Hachiko Monogatari* (The Story of Hachiko).[1] Stimulated by its massive success in the US, *Top Gun* received unparalleled attention before its release in Japan. For instance, the renowned Japanese film magazine *Kinema Junpo* (Motion Picture Times) featured an extensive article with numerous photographs of the film and praised the film's quality.[2] Unlike in the US, where the film received mixed reviews from critics, *Top Gun* garnered an overwhelmingly positive reception in Japan, even winning the Best Picture and Best Music awards of 1986 from the leading Japanese film journal *Roadshow*.[3] *Top Gun*'s popularity extended beyond movie theaters to Japan's burgeoning rental video market, where it became the most sought-after film. By September 1988, a year and a half after its release, *Top Gun* had sold 140,000 video copies in Japan, the highest number for any film in the Japanese video market.[4] Furthermore, the film's influence transcended cinema. It even impacted fashion trends among Japanese youth, with tens of thousands investing in US-made flight jackets, emulating the style of US military pilots depicted in the film.[5]

Top Gun's tremendous popularity in Japan inspired the 1990 Japanese production *Best Guy* (Figure 1).[6] Stimulated by *Top Gun*'s success, director Toru Murakawa embraced his producer's suggestion to create a "*Top Gun-esque*" film in Japan. In an interview, Murakawa emphasized the need to surpass *Top Gun*:

> It is meaningless unless we create something that surpasses *Top Gun*. Therefore, I started by thoroughly analyzing *Top Gun*. Normally, storyboards are written to determine the composition and cut layout before shooting, but for this project, we went the other way and watched *Top Gun*'s videos hundreds of times and storyboarded each cut to learn how they shot it.[7]

Best Guy was not Murakawa's first foray into aviation-themed films. He was deeply involved with the 1970 Hollywood film *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, a war epic about the attack on Pearl Harbor featuring airplanes and pilots.[8] Murakawa's familiarity with Hollywood-style action and aviation films

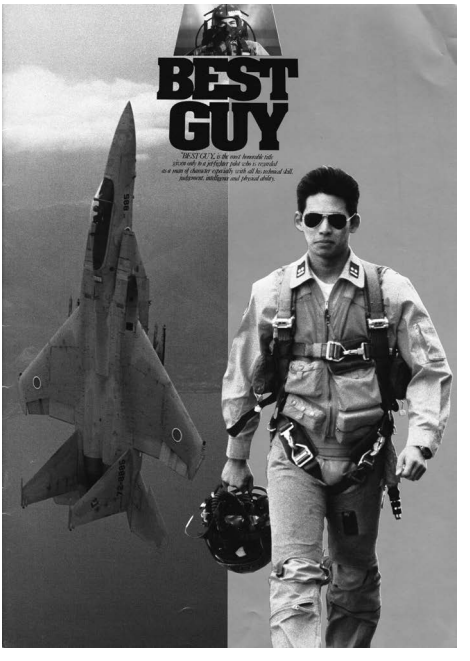

Fig. 1. The official film brochure of *Best Guy* (Toei, 1990) © 1990 Toei

made him the suitable choice to direct the Japanese adaptation of the iconic Hollywood aviation film, *Top Gun*.

Best Guy, a film renowned for its captivating flight sequences featuring the latest fighter jets, was produced through the unprecedented cooperation of the Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF). The JSDF's involvement marked a significant shift in its policy to overcome its historical reluctance to engage with filmmakers. Until 1989, just a year before the release of *Best Guy*, the JSDF refrained from collaborating in theatrical productions for over two decades. As detailed by Noriko Sudo, this reluctance stemmed from past scrutiny by the Japanese Diet following the JSDF's substantial support for the 1968 film *Jet F104 dassyutsu seyo* (F104, Bail Out!), a contentious endeavor involving significant public funding.[9] However, 20 years had passed, and the tide had turned during the Nakasone administration of the 1980s, known for its hawkishness in building a honeymoon relationship with US President Ronald Reagan and in fostering nationalist sentiments. This was a time when the JSDF also faced recruitment challenges, prompting the "Attractiveness Plan" to bolster enlistments.[10] Consequently, the 1990s witnessed a surge in collaborative film projects with the JSDF,

including *Best Guy*.[11]

The extensive collaboration between *Best Guy* and the JSDF has served Japan's Defense Agency's public relations agenda. As elucidated by Sudo, the official document, "The Defense Agency's Criteria for Cooperation with External Film Productions," which was in effect when the film was produced, emphasized the efficacy of promoting defense initiatives and presenting a favorable portrayal of the agency.[12] The JSDF's high expectation of *Best Guy* is exemplified by the 19th Air Chief Marshal Tadayoshi Yonekawa's words: "The film will include scenes of scrambling, which I think will be quite powerful. If the general public sees the F15 pilots, their perception of us will surely improve."[13]

Similarly, the film's Hollywood counterpart, *Top Gun*, received extensive support from the US Navy, necessitating adherence to particular criteria specified in the Department of Defense (DoD) Instruction that "the production, program, project, or assistance will benefit the DoD or otherwise be in the national interest."[14] Given the thematic focus on military aviation, both films required robust backing from their respective national armed forces, requiring them to align with the broader defense policies of their governments. This perspective becomes crucial in assessing the films' relevance to contemporary geopolitical issues, which I explore later in this article.

2. Contrastive Characterizations: Relatability vs. Independence

The story of *Best Guy* revolves around the rivalry between the main character Kajitani (call sign "Goku") and Nadaka (call sign "Imagine") and Kajitani's relationship with Mizuno, a female music video director filming a video at the air base.[15] Kajitani and Nadaka complete a long-term training competition to earn the title of "Best Guy," which indicates the best fighter pilots at the air base. Kajitani also harbored intense animosity toward his instructor, Yoshinaga, who evacuated and was the sole survivor when Kajitani's older brother, a fighter pilot, was killed in an accident. One day, after fighting off a Soviet airspace invader, Kajitani suffers vertigo (a loss of spatial awareness) on his return to the base and loses his aircraft in an emergency evacuation. Although Kajitani loses his confidence and considers quitting his fighter pilot career, he returns to the base to compete with Nadaka in a final air combat simulation to determine who will be the "Best Guy." In this contest, Kajitani notices the hazards of continuing the battle with Nadaka, who is in danger due to an accident

inside the cockpit, chooses to lose the battle, and gives up the "Best Guy" title to Nadaka. The instructor, Yoshinaga, is moved by Kajitani's unselfish actions, praises Kajitani's growth, and reconciles with him. Finally, after completing training, Kajitani makes a dramatic appearance before Mizuno in the JSDF's helicopter to confess his love for her, and Mizuno responds positively.

The characters and plotline reveal the influence of *Top Gun*. The protagonist, Kajitani, an unconventional fighter pilot who flies instinctively, is a direct copy of the hero in *Top Gun*, Pete "Maverick" Michell, played by Tom Cruise. Kajitani's rival Nadaka's calm and collected personality is a dead ringer for "Iceman," Maverick's rival. The similarities in the plots are numerous. They include: the mysterious death of a close relative (also a fighter pilot) that is behind the protagonist's reckless flying; the plotline where the protagonist briefly loses confidence as a fighter pilot because of a flying accident; the development in which the central figure cooperates with the rival to fight off airspace invaders; and finally, the main character's growth from a self-absorbed pilot to a team player who cares about his fellow pilots. Both films share a common ending in which the protagonists fall in love with female professionals who frequent the base and are united with them after they regain their confidence as fighter pilots.

While parallels between the two films are evident, a comparative analysis reveals differences. For example, unlike the characters in *Top Gun*, those in *Best Guy*, including Kajitani, are portrayed as ordinary young people, with the exception of Kajitani's rival Nadaka, who exudes an air of unapproachability. The emphasis on the relatability of its characters reflects the producer's overarching approach. Munechika Harada, the head of the film's distribution, explained the four pillars of its production: "First, we can use the actual F-15 fighter plane. Second, *the pilots are ordinary young men*. Third, the 'sound' of the F-15. And fourth, the music. These are the four [pillars]" (italics mine).[16] This approach contrasts starkly with the portrayal of fighter pilots in *Top Gun*, where the filmmakers envision them as glamorous superstars. Its director Tony Scott once described the characters in *Top Gun* as "rock-and-roll stars in the sky," while writer Jack Epps, Jr. likened the film to a sports movie centered on fighter pilots as elite athletes.[17] Unlike *Best Guy*, *Top Gun* presents a world where extraordinary individuals, not ordinary young men, compete fiercely.

The characterization of the protagonist Kajitani differs greatly from that of Maverick, his Hollywood counterpart. Kajitani's initial scene is imbued with comedy and a sense of folksiness. Unlike Maverick, who rides a

high-performance (Japanese-made) motorcycle, Kajitani drives an old run-down car toward the air base to which he is assigned. Along the way, he encounters obstacles such as livestock blocking the road and his clunker breaking down. After unsuccessfully attempting to hitchhike, he ultimately resorts to pushing his car, thus arriving at the base much later than planned. The comical nature of Kajitani's call sign "Goku," which refers to a comical, easygoing monkey hero from the popular Japanese TV series *Saiyuki* (Journey to the West), is also evident from his colleagues' playful reactions, likening him to an ape upon receiving the call sign from the captain.[18] Throughout the film, various characters embody a folksy charm, including a fellow pilot prone to indecent remarks, an instructor known for his corny jokes, and a mechanic deeply embroiled in unrequited love. In *Top Gun*, while Maverick's amiable partner, Goose, shares a similar folksy demeanor, but he is the exception rather than the norm.

The JSDF likely welcomed the film's portrayal of its officers' down-to-earth qualities. Contemporary surveys examining the public perceptions of the JSDF during the production and release of *Best Guy* underscored the significant challenges it faced. In essence, many Japanese people felt a palpable lack of connection to the JSDF. For example, the 1988 Cabinet Office Public Opinion Survey revealed that more than half of the respondents felt disconnected from it.[19] Subsequent surveys conducted shortly after the film's debut showed that only 5.1% of respondents expressed affinity for the JSDF, 50% were unfamiliar with the JSDF's actual operations, and 26% perceived the organization as either "rigid" or "exclusive."[20] The JSDF hoped *Best Guy* would bridge this gap and foster greater understanding among the Japanese public. For example, an article in the Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) institutional magazine speculated that the film might offer viewers a valuable opportunity to gain insight into the JASDF.[21] Yoshimasa Makino, a retired JASDF officer who contributed to the film's production, recounted his realization that younger generations harbored perceptions of the JSDF as "stern," "somber," and "unfashionable," prompting the decision to utilize visual representations to challenge these negative stereotypes.[22] Murakawa, the film's director, also shared the JSDF's concerns about its public image. In an interview with the JASDF magazine, he expressed frustration with Japanese people's widespread ignorance toward the organization, emphasizing the imperative to dismantle barriers.[23] He concluded the interview by expressing a desire to promote the understanding that JSDF personnel and civilians were "fundamentally alike."[24] Murakawa effectively achieved this

objective through his emphasis on the relatability of the characters in *Best Guy*, a distinct departure from *Top Gun*, in which heroic figures exuded charismatic charm.

Murakawa also faced a dilemma indirectly tied to the film's prioritization of relatable characters. Reflecting on this, he recollected, "The scenes with fighter jets got praise from a foreign producer. But, he said, 'The lead actor is childish,'" Murakawa adding, "This is how the Japanese are seen abroad."[25] As Murakawa suggested, the impression of the protagonist Kajitani as a childish character can be attributed, in part, to foreign racial stereotyping of Japanese men. However, the film itself frequently portrays him as immature. For instance, Kajitani repeatedly challenges his superior officer, even engaging in a fistfight, while actual JSDF officers do not behave in this manner. He also demonstrates immaturity as a fighter pilot, experiencing panic and spatial disorientation during a flight, leading to an emergency escape and loss of the aircraft. He even hesitates to take responsibility for the accident. After the accident, Kajitani leaves the base to visit his former girlfriend and seeks solace from her, revealing a lack of confidence and emotional vulnerability.

In contrast, Maverick, the protagonist of *Top Gun*, does not exhibit such blatant inexperience or immaturity. Although reckless in the air, he adheres to military protocols on the ground, obeying orders without defiance. Despite Maverick's experiencing a similar accident involving an aircraft clash, his crash is attributed to the jet interaction and external circumstances rather than the inadequacy of his piloting skills. Even though Maverick is not responsible for the accident, he still suffers a loss of confidence after it. However, he navigates this challenge maturely on his own, distancing himself from his love interest and embracing the responsibility that his profession of fighter pilot demands.

The differences in the protagonists' depictions may result from the two films' distinct relationships to realism. Originally, *Top Gun* was inspired by a magazine article that faithfully reported on the US Navy Fighter Weapons School, called "Top Gun."[26] The film also greatly benefitted from a former Top Gun instructor, Pete Pettigrew, "a hero who had flown 325 combat missions in Vietnam."[27] Adherence to realism is evidenced by adjustments made to the script to comply with military regulations, such as changing Maverick's romantic relationship from that of a prohibited intra-unit romance to one with a civilian. Moreover, to achieve authenticity in the portrayal of flying sequences, the Navy mandated that actors undergo a three-day training course to experience the rigor of aviation, ensuring

that live-action filming aboard F-14s conveyed a genuine representation of aerial operations.[28]

In sharp contrast, *Best Guy* incorporates numerous scenes that appear overtly artificial, occasionally evoking the realm of video game aerial combat rather than the authenticity of military engagement. The narrative flouts regulations with a storyline involving prohibited romantic encounters within the base, further distancing the film from the realities of armed forces' discipline and the fighter pilot profession. Additionally, the fact that the *Best Guy* actors received no actual flight training and only ground operations experience undoubtedly contributed to the film's lack of realism. Such deviations from authenticity likely contributed to the film's inability to portray the demanding and unforgiving nature of the fighter pilot world.

3. Borrowings from North American Pop Culture

As indicated by its adoption of the primary plotline from the quintessentially American film *Top Gun*, *Best Guy* incorporates many elements borrowed from North American cultural contexts. First, as Sudo suggested, the actual JASDF has no ties to the former Japanese military and was modeled after the US military.[29] The designs of JASDF fighter jets are based on those of American warplanes. For instance, the Mitsubishi F-15J Eagle, JASDF's main fighter jet, which plays a central role in the film, was manufactured by a Japanese company, but the model was licensed and derived from the US-made McDonnell Douglas F-15 Eagle.[30] Just as *Best Guy* would not exist without *Top Gun*, the production of Japan's F-15J was similarly dependent on its American predecessor.

Furthermore, *Best Guy* showcases various pop cultural artifacts borrowed from North America, notably evident in the US-style bar scene where the protagonist, Kajitani, approaches his future sweetheart, Mizuno. This scene brims with symbols of American culture, including the couple's consumption of Miller beer, a slot machine dubbed "Vegas," and especially the recurrent appearances of a photograph of the American pop culture icon, Marylin Monroe, taken during her goodwill visit to meet US soldiers in 1954 during the Korean War (Figure 2).[31] In this poignant image, Monroe, clad in a flight jacket, stands alongside an American fighter pilot atop the wings of a US warplane.[32] The photo epitomizes director Murakawa's deliberate infusion of fighter pilot imagery with American cultural motifs into the film. Ironically, in contrast to *Top Gun*, which seamlessly integrates American cultural markers, such as Budweiser

Fig. 2. The photo of Monroe in *Best Guy* (0:16:09). © 1990 Toei

consumption and the communal singing of an iconic song by the Righteous Brothers, into a similar club scene, the authenticity of the bar scene in *Best Guy* appears compromised by the overemphasis on the stereotypical elements of American pop culture.[33] This overemphasis conspicuously renders borrowed cultural elements foreign, resulting in the irony that the American essence of the bar scene in *Best Guy* is overshadowed by its lack of authenticity.

Top Gun is remembered as a film that effectively used rock music. Its director Tony Scott, who had experienced a box office failure with his first film, bet his survival as a director on creating, in his words, a "rock'n'roll movie" that would appeal to a wider audience.[34] The film also reflects the atmosphere of the Hollywood industry in the 1980s. As indicated by the popular cable channel MTV, the 1980s was a decade in which "[c]-ollaboration between the film and music industries was particularly vital in high-concept Hollywood, as it could serve as both a marketing strategy and a merchandising product."[35] Three years before the release of *Top Gun*, Jerry Bruckheimer and Don Simpson produced the highly successful 1983 film *Flashdance*, perfecting the synergy between pop music and film, as evidenced by the immense popularity of the film and its soundtrack.[36] The success of the *Top Gun* soundtrack was even bigger. A few months after its release, the soundtrack topped the billboard charts for five weeks and became the best-selling soundtrack in 1986.[37] Although the film received extensive criticism from reviewers, the song "Take My Breath Away" by the band Berlin, released as part of the soundtrack, won the Best Original Song award at both the Academy Awards and Golden Globes in 1987.[38]

Rock music plays an essential role in *Best Guy* as well. Kajitani's future love interest Mizuno is a production director of music videos.

Near the film's beginning is a scene featuring her shooting a music video of the 1980s Canadian rock singer Sheree. Sheree is giving a powerful performance at an outdoor theater, when fighter jets suddenly roar out of nowhere in the sky.[39] Mesmerized by the jets' power, Mizuno incorporated footage of them into the music video and begins frequenting the nearby JSDF air base, where she first encounters Kajitani. According to *Best Guy*'*s* distribution head Harada, director Murakawa and his co-screenwriter Makoto Takada considered having a rock-centric plot to be a pivotal element of the film. Harada says, "They decided to use rock for its music and brought in a new Canadian rock singer, Sheree because they felt Japanese rock musicians were not good enough."[40]

Ironically, however, the transplantation and use of a North American rock singer was "not good enough" to create an effective "rock'n'roll movie." The rock music and visuals lack cohesiveness in *Best Guy*, especially when compared with *Top Gun*. In *Top Gun*, the opening scene features a slow-motion backlit image of an aircraft carrier preparing for fighter jet takeoffs at dusk, accompanied by a slow-tempo version of "*Top Gun* Anthem," as the opening credits roll. At the moment when the engines are ignited for takeoff, the music switches to the powerful, fast-paced rock song, "Danger Zone," by Kenny Loggins.[41] Viewers feel uplifted as takeoff footage combines with driving rock music to create compelling images of jet fighters soaring into the sky. Conversely in *Best Guy*, just as Sheree is about to reach the peak of her performance during the music video shoot, JSDF fighter jets fly in, and the roar of their engines drowns out her voice and the music.[42] Instead of blending together, the music and images clash. Just as *Best Guy*'*s* American-style bar scene presents an inauthentic imitation of American culture, the rock music by the North American singer Sheree feels borrowed and seems like a pale imitation of the compelling rock music in *Top Gun*. The phenomenal success of the *Top Gun* soundtrack must have been on the minds of *Best Guy*'s producers. The film's distributors expended considerable effort in promoting *Best Guy*'s soundtrack, as evidenced by the entire back cover of the film's official promotional program being dedicated to its advertisement. However, unlike *Top Gun*, none of the music featured in *Best Guy* achieved hit status. The soundtrack, which relied heavily on Canadian rock musicians who were little known in Japan, failed to resonate with the Japanese public.

4. The Shadow of Civil Aviation

Another significant difference between *Top Gun* and *Best Guy* is the portrayal of professional pilots. The two films differed notably in their settings for pilot training. In *Top Gun*, training occurs at the Naval Air Station Miramar in San Diego, a well-known US Navy base with no civil aviation. In contrast, *Best Guy* was set at the JASDF's Chitose Air Base, which operates in conjunction with civil aviation. Consequently, civilian airliners frequently appear in the film. Unlike the US, where both military and civil aviation hold significant prominence, Japan's aviation sector is dominated by commercial airlines, making it common for the JASDF's air bases to operate jointly with civilian airports.[43]

In addition, given the Japanese public's negative postwar attitudes toward the JSDF, it is unsurprising that civilian airline pilots had a much more positive reputation than JASDF pilots in Japan. Many postwar Japanese in the late 1980s when *Best Guy* was made were undeniably wary of the JSDF, as it reminded them of the military's role in the unprecedented devastation of the country in World War II and appeared to contradict Article 9 of the Constitution, which states that Japan shall not maintain "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential."[44] Aaron Skabelund interviewed a former JSDF officer who had served for over 40 years until 1992 and summarized the retired officer's words about the public's negative image of the JSDF:

> [H]e told me that the force [JSDF] and its personnel were regarded as… "zeikin dorobo (tax thieves)" who were a drain on society and worthless in its defense; and as the "ochikobore (dropouts)" and "hikagemono (outcasts)" of society, whom the public preferred to neither acknowledge nor discuss.[45]

Although the extent to which the Japanese held negative views of the JSDF is debatable, scenes in *Best Guy* portray such sentiments. For instance, Kajitani and Mizuno meet at a bar near the base, and Mizuno shares her plan to feature a combat scene involving JASDF fighter jets in her music video. Mizuno comments, "I think the Japanese Self-Defense Force is a lame place. Just take the good parts and go home, that's all that matters."[46] In Japan, it is unlikely that civilian airline pilots—one of the most prestigious professions, known for its high salary—would be labeled as "dropouts," "outcasts," or "lame," as JASDF officers were often seen.

In *Best Guy*, the prospect of becoming a civilian airline pilot is frequently presented as an appealing alternative to becoming a JASDF pilot. For instance, in one scene, Mizuno and Kajitani have the following conversation in an aircraft hangar on the base while gazing at the night view of the commercial airport terminal visible in the distance on the other side of the base.

> Mizuno: "Kajitani-san, why did you become a pilot?"
> Kajitani: "Everyone dreams of being a pilot when they're kids."
> Mizuno: "Well, you could have gone into commercial aviation. The income would have been very different, right?…"
> Kajitani: "I just don't feel like flying on a set path. Besides, I'm more of a hot-blooded guy compared to the others."[47]

Another significant character, instructor Yoshinaga, faces a deep internal conflict between staying in the JASDF and accepting an international flight pilot position for a commercial airline, a job arranged by his father-in-law. Due to Yoshinaga's career prospects in the JASDF being limited because he was not a cadet school graduate, his wife persistently urges him to transition to a higher-paying and more stable career in an airline company.[48] Thus, the film highlights the JASDF pilots' temptation to switch to civil aviation, reflecting the allure of civilian airlines over military aviation in Japan.

On the contrary, civil aviation is not addressed in *Top Gun*. Like *Best Guy, Top Gun* depicts two pilots who grapple with whether to stay in the military: one who resigns from his fighter pilot career due to trauma from engaging hostile enemy aircraft, and the other, the protagonist who briefly considers leaving the Top Gun program because of his guilt over a fatal accident involving his best friend. Both of these struggles are personal and have nothing to do with the allure of civil aviation. They relate to the pilots' confidence in executing military missions.

Top Gun also portrays an officers' club that attracts numerous young women actively seeking companionship with naval officers, but the American officers do not have a stereotypically "lame" image that was associated with the JASDF. Negative perceptions of the military exist in the US, based on incidents such as the 1960s My Lai massacre in Vietnam, and more recently prisoner mistreatment at Guantanamo Bay, and as well as economic recruitment targeting disadvantaged youths. However, the US has no tradition of questioning the fundamental existence of the military from a constitutional perspective, as is the case with the JSDF. In the US, it is not

uncommon to publicly express appreciation for military service members and their dedicated efforts, as represented by Veterans Day, a national holiday unimaginable in Japan. Military aviation in the US also does not carry the societal stigma of "outcasts," as seen with the JASDF. Unlike *Best Guy*, *Top Gun* portrays military pilots in a straightforward manner as heroes without examining conflicts or psychological tensions toward civilian pilots. Thus, the portrayals of military pilots in both films reflect deep-seated cultural and postwar traditional disparities between Japan and the US regarding aviation and military institutions.

5. The Reverberation of Cold War Geopolitics and Constitutional Restrictions

Top Gun has sometimes been interpreted as a quintessential Cold War nationalist propaganda film from the Reagan era.[49] It has even been suggested that *Top Gun* was a "recruitment ad" for the US Navy.[50] The US military stationed recruiters outside the theaters where the film was screened, and the film's success led to a noticeable increase in applications for military pilot positions in the US.[51] For instance, even NATO acknowledged in documents that "movies that portray the military in a favorable way (e.g., *Top Gun*) can have a serious impact on military recruitment."[52] Despite some initial concerns about the original screenplay, the Navy ultimately viewed the film as "a positive patriotic film" that "could be beneficial to the Navy."[53] Some film critics have also argued that *Top Gun* met significant public interest during the Reagan era for films that helped "redeem [America's] national image of failure in Vietnam and perceived weakness in the late 1970s."[54]

However, *Top Gun* carefully avoids explicitly identifying any particular country as an adversary. Unlike other 1980s Hollywood military blockbusters such as *Firefox* (1982), *Red Dawn* (1984), *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985), and *Rocky IV* (1985), in which the Soviet Union, America's principal enemy during the Cold War, is depicted as the antagonist, *Top Gun* refrains from mentioning the Soviet Union, as exemplified by fictional identification marks on an adversary aircraft (Figure 3). Furthermore, the adversary aircraft is identified as a MiG-28, a nonexistent model. In addition, the Soviet Union at the time was exporting MiG fighter jets to various countries, further making it impossible to link the fictional warplane in the film to any particular nation. In the film, American pilots encounter hostile enemy aircraft over the Indian Ocean, far from Soviet territory.

Fig. 3. The fictional identification mark of an adversary aircraft in *Top Gun* (0:04:30). © 1986 Paramount Pictures

According to the filmmakers' commentary, the adversary's nationality was initially planned to be North Korea. However, this idea was abandoned because the US Department of State was exploring the possibility of normalizing relationships with North Korea.[55] Avoiding portraying the Soviet Union as America's enemy also aligned with the emerging signs of US-Soviet reconciliation. In 1985, a year before the film's release, President Reagan and Soviet Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev held the historic Geneva Summit, where they agreed to seek significant reductions in offensive nuclear arms. On January 1, 1986, the film's release year, Reagan and Gorbachev delivered unprecedented simultaneous television greetings to the people of each other's nations, expressing hope for peace and overcoming differences.[56] While it is uncertain whether these contemporaneous moves at reconciliation directly influenced the film, the filmmakers' decision to avoid making a straightforward anti-Soviet film, unlike other Cold War nationalist movies of the era, was timely.

In contrast, *Best Guy* explicitly identifies the Soviets as the enemy. In Japan, where constitutional restrictions allow only the minimum necessary defense capabilities, potential adversaries are limited to neighboring countries. By 1990, when the film was released, China had not yet emerged as a military superpower, and North Korea was known for its outdated air force capabilities.[57] Consequently, among Japan's potential neighboring adversaries, the Soviet Union was the only realistic choice for an aggressive enemy. Furthermore, unlike the fictitious MiG in *Top Gun*, the aircraft that violates Japanese airspace in *Best Guy* are actual Soviet military models, specifically the Tupolev Tu-16 and Sukhoi Su-27 (Figure 4). These airplanes bear the identification markers of the Soviet military, and the Russian language is used for Japanese pilots' warnings addressed to adversarial pilots.[58]

Fig. 4. Tupolev Tu-16 with the identification marker of the Soviet military in *Best Guy* (0:56:32). © 1990 Toei

Both models were used in the Soviet Union when the film was made. During the Cold War, the JASDF frequently scrambled fighter jets to intercept Soviet Tu-16s, similarly to the events depicted in the movie. For instance, in 1987, just three years before the release of *Best Guy*, a Tu-16 flew over US and Japanese bases in Okinawa, violating Japanese airspace and prompting JASDF fighter jets to fire warning shots with live ammunition for the first time in history.[59] *Best Guy* was screened in 1990 between two major events: the fall of the Berlin Wall one year earlier and the collapse of the Soviet Union one year later. However, as Sudo noted in her study, from 1986 to 1990, the number of scrambles by JASDF aircraft remained high, averaging 850 per year, primarily because of Soviet aircraft.[60] The Soviet Union, Japan's neighboring military superpower, was regarded as the most tangible enemy when the film was produced. In this way, the film's unambiguous identification of the Soviet Union as Japan's definitive foe reflects the geopolitical reality of the time.

It would have also been highly unrealistic for *Best Guy* to recreate scenes from *Top Gun* where military fighter jets take off from an attack aircraft carrier dispatched to the Indian Ocean. Japan's "Peace Constitution," which states that "the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes," restricts offensive uses of force, such as the overseas deployment of the forces for combat purposes and the possession of an "attack" aircraft carrier.[61] In addition, there was discomfort among some Japanese about *Top Gun*'*s* depiction of American pilots shooting down enemy planes. A Japanese film critic wrote:

> There is a feeling that *Top Gun* has crossed the final line. Although they are fighting with "Soviet-made" fighter planes, not the "Soviet Union" or "Libya," it is so bold for [American pilots] to actually shoot them down… This is a dangerous story that depicts America's regular forces openly shooting down MiGs and winning the war against "a certain" eastern country.[62]

In Japan, shooting down enemy aircraft, even for defensive purposes, would be highly provocative. The warning shots that JASDF aircraft fired at the Soviet Tu-16 that had violated Japanese airspace over Okinawa in 1987 shocked the nation.[63] Predictably, in *Best Guy*, although the pilots engaged in serious dogfights against Soviet aircraft, they never shot down their adversaries. Even in fiction, *Best Guy* was created with an understanding of Japan's long-standing tradition of restrictive defense-oriented policies based on its constitution.

However, it can be argued that Japanese films enjoyed creative freedom in their portrayal of military themes, provided they refrained from depicting the JSDF engaging in overseas deployments and shooting down enemy aircraft. Unlike American films, which are typically targeted at both domestic and international markets and whose representation of military conflicts has global impact, Japanese films, primarily intended for the domestic market, neither face the same level of international scrutiny nor have global repercussions. This latitude allowed Japanese filmmakers in the 1980s to "casually" depict the Soviet Union as the antagonist, showcase Soviet aircraft in action, and illustrate aerial dogfights between the JSDF and Soviet forces with relative ease.

This casualness is also evident in *Best Guy*'s unrealistic portrayal of aerial battle. Although differences production budgets and available technology undoubtedly played a significant role in differences between the two films, the intended realism of the aerial combat scene in *Best Guy* diverges greatly from that in *Top Gun*. In *Best Guy*, the Soviet planes in the dogfight scene are composite images like those often seen in video games.[64] This lack of realism in depicting actual battles may be linked to Japan's postwar history. Since the end of World War II, Japan has not deployed its forces in combat, which inevitably distances the public consciousness from the realities of warfare. Conversely, the United States has been involved in multiple conflicts, including the Korean War and Vietnam War before production of *Top Gun* and the Gulf War, Afghan War, and Iraq War since, that resulted in significant casualties and profound experiences of war.

While the aerial combat scenes in *Top Gun* are not entirely realistic, they were produced with substantial input from former actual Top Gun pilots and navy personnel with combat experience. The filmmakers' commitment to authenticity is evident in their efforts to capture actual aircraft in flight to the extent that a prominent stunt pilot tragically lost his life during filming. This dedication to realism contrasts starkly with the approach taken in *Best Guy*.[65]

Perhaps by sensing the limitations of depicting a realistic aerial battle, the producers of *Best Guy* emphasized a narrative grounded on the earth rather than in the air. Specifically, in *Best Guy*, the romance between the main characters Kajitani and Mizuno is highlighted, in contrast to *Top Gun*, in which the dynamic presence of fighter planes flying to rock music is a dominant feature. This distinction is most symbolically expressed in the differences between the climaxes of the two films. The climax of *Top Gun* is, unequivocally, an aerial battle with enemy aircraft near the film's end. Overcoming the trauma of the accident that killed his best friend, Maverick succeeds in shooting down several enemy aircraft and wins the battle. Returning to the aircraft carrier, he is greeted with jubilation for his heroic victory.[66] Although Maverick and his love interest Charlie are reunited in the last scene, this moment is an epilogue rather than the film's climax.[67]

In *Best Guy*, a fierce mock dogfight between the main character Kajitani and his rival Nadaka occurs near the film's conclusion, resembling on the surface the climactic battle in *Top Gun*. However, unlike *Top Gun*, the narrative falls short, with Kajitani conceding victory to Nadaka, who is in imminent danger because of an accident in the cockpit. Following the mock air battle, both pilots receive praise from their instructors and peers for intense combat. Nadaka is celebrated by his peers, revealing his romantic relationship with a female colleague. However, unlike the climax of *Top Gun*, this celebration scene is portrayed with subdued enthusiasm. Reflecting on her uncertain relationship with Kajitani, Mizuno keeps away from the jubilation and quietly leaves the scene.[68]

However, Mizuno's unease is resolved in the subsequent scene, which serves as the film's climax. At a dramatic climax, a JASDF helicopter carrying Kajitani, clad in a military uniform, suddenly appears in front of Mizuno on the upper floors of her hotel. Recognizing each other, they communicate through gestures to meet on the ground where they passionately embrace and kiss. This emotional reunion culminates with Kajitani lifting Mizuno and carrying her away in his arms.[69] This scene pays homage to the iconic finale of the 1982 American film *An Officer and*

a Gentleman, which was immensely popular in Japan. In that film, a young officer in military uniform marches into his friend's workplace, sweeps her off her feet, and carries her away, capturing a moment of romantic triumph similar to that reproduced in *Best Guy*.[70]

This non-original climax in *Best Guy* is an alternative to the standard climax of an aviation film, which typically involves the downing of enemy aircraft after a fierce aerial battle. As mentioned earlier, depicting such combat is unacceptable because of Japan's strict defense-oriented policy and constitutional restrictions. Therefore, catharsis is provided through a peaceful resolution centered on love and reunion instead. This allows the audience to leave the theater immersed in a pleasant romance, diverting attention from the fact that fighter planes are weapons designed to kill. In sum, this evasive finale indicates that despite maintaining substantial military capability, Japan has actively sought to minimize the prospect of engaging in lethal combat, emphasizing a state of pseudo-peace. This way, this climax underscores the inherent contradiction in postwar Japan between its "Peace Constitution" and the existence of a legitimate military force, the JSDF.

6. Epilogue

In 2022, 36 years after the release of the original *Top Gun*, a sequel, *Top Gun: Maverick*, was released and achieved significant success in both the US and Japan.[71] During the intervening 36 years, the geopolitical landscape had shifted dramatically. The Soviet Union had collapsed, concluding the Cold War, and China had emerged as a superpower that challenged the US military dominance. Although *Top Gun: Maverick* did not explicitly depict China as an adversary, the film was excluded from the Chinese market. In what appeared to be a competitive response, a Chinese film company released a film akin to *Top Gun: Maverick*, *Born to Fly*, in 2023, just one year after the latter's global release.[72] *Born to Fly* is a highly patriotic narrative that showcases the development of the Chinese People's Liberation Army's advanced stealth fighters and the courageous test pilots who support the program. A notable scene features the protagonist, a Chinese pilot, repelling an intruder from Chinese airspace, the latter speaking unmistakable American English, implying that the US is the adversary.[73] However, *Top Gun: Maverick* at least initially appeared to try to take a more nuanced approach to US-China relations. The initial trailer for the film removed the Taiwanese and Japanese flags that had been

Fig. 5. The fictional flags on Maverick's flight jacket in the original trailer of *Top Gun: Maverick*. See n.74. © 2019 Paramount Pictures

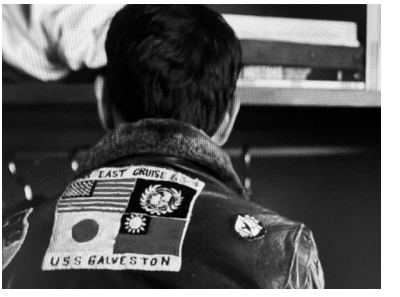

Fig. 6. The restored Japanese and Taiwanese flags in *Top Gun: Maverick* (0:04:16). © 2022 Paramount Pictures

present on Maverick's flight jacket in the 1986 original film and replaced them with fictional flags, likely reflecting self-censorship to avoid Chinese criticism. However, the Taiwanese and Japanese flags were restored in a subsequent trailer and appear in the final version of the film, released in 2022, near the time it was excluded from the Chinese market (Figures 5 & 6).[74]

These developments underscore the impact of geopolitical tensions at play in military aviation films. If a Japanese version of *Top Gun: Maverick* were ever produced, it would likely reflect the region's current security concerns, including threats from China, Russia, and North Korea, as well as the relative decline in US military dominance. The evolving and precarious security environment in the Far East suggests that such a Japanese adaptation might not afford the luxury of a light-hearted romantic subplot, as seen in *Best Guy*. The nostalgic era of carefree romantic escapism can now be viewed as a privileged period of fleeting peace, contrasting starkly with the reality of today's complex and hostile world.

Note

[1] *Top Gun*, directed by Tony Scott (1986, Hollywood: Paramount Pictures, Full Screen Collector's Edition, 2004) DVD. "87 eiga, ōte chintai dokuritsu puro ni shūsaku [The 87th Film: Major Studios Stagnate While Independent Productions Thrive]," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, evening ed., (December 15, 1987), 13. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this essay are mine.

[2] *Kinema Junpo* [Motion Picture Times], no. 947, (November 1986), 42–47.

[3] "Cinema taisyou ni Top Gun, Roadshow-shi [*Top Gun* Wins Cinema Grand Prize by *Roadshow* Magazine]," *Asahi Shimbun*, evening ed., (February 25, 1987), 12.

[4] "Eiga no video koucyou 63-nen 5-man bon ijyou aitsugu [Movie Videos Thriving, Surpassing 50,000 Copies Sold in 1988]," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, evening ed., (September 22, 1988), 15.

[5] "Mini watch MA-1 de notteruze [Mini Watch: Feeling Great in the MA-1 Jacket!]," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, evening ed., (January 11, 1987), 9.

[6] *Best Guy*, directed by Tōru Murakawa (1990, Tokyo: Toei) DVD, distributed by Toei, 2004.

[7] The official film brochure of *Best Guy* (Toei, 1990).

[8] *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, directed by Larry Forrester (American sequences), Toshio Masuda, Kinji Fukasaku, Akira Kurosawa (Japanese sequences) (1970, Hollywood: 20th Century Fox, Tokyo: Toei). Although not officially credited, Murakawa served as a substantive assistant director on this large-scale project for 20th Century Fox, assisting his mentor Toshio Masuda, who took over as one of the Japanese directors after the legendary filmmaker, Akira Kurosawa's sudden departure from the project. See Brett Homenick, "Prelude to a Directing Career!: Toru Murakawa on His Years as an Assistant Director at Nikkatsu Studios!" Vantage Point Interviews, accessed February 9, 2025, https://vantagepointinterviews.com/2022/03/22/prelude-to-a-directing-career-toru-murakawa-on-his-years-as-an-assistant-director-at-nikkatsu-studios/.

[9] Noriko Sudo, *Jieitai kyouryoku eiga:* "*kyou mo ware ōzora ni ari*" *kara* "*meitantei konan*" *made* [Films that Cooperated with the Self-Defense Force: From *Kyou mo Ware Ōzora ni Ari* to *Meitantei Konan*] (Tokyo: Otsuki-shoten, 2013), 75–78.

[10] Ibid., 85.

[11] Ibid., 11.

[12] In 1960, Japan's Defense Agency issued the following criteria: "The film must be deemed to be directly effective in terms of public relations for the Ministry of Defense…, the content of the film must be sound and appropriate, the content of the cooperation must be impossible or difficult to achieve outside of the Ministry of Defense, and the film must be able to be conducted in conjunction with education and training for the Ministry of Defense." (At the time of issue, the agency was referred to as the "Defense Agency," not the "Ministry of Defense"). See Ministry of Defense, "*Bugai seisaku eiga ni taisuru boueisyou no kyouryoku jisshi no kijun ni tsuite* [Standards for the Implementation of the Ministry of Defense's Cooperation with Films Produced Outside the Department]," Boueisho jihatsu kankou dai 160-gō, (August 18, 1960), accessed June 21, 2024, http://www.clearing.mod.go.jp/kunrei_data/a_fd/1960/az19600818_00160_000.pdf. Also see Sudo, *Jieitai kyouryoku eiga*, 34–35.

[13] "Satsuei genba houmon [On Location: Visiting the Film Set]," *Kinema Junpo*, no. 1041 (September 1990), 139.

[14] Department of Defense, *Delineation of DoD Audio-Visual Public Affairs Responsibilities and Policies*, DoD Instruction 5410.15, (January 21, 1964).

[15] A "call sign" is a brief designation distinct from a pilot's real name, assigned to military aircraft pilots to streamline communication with other pilots, air traffic control, and other allied forces. In the Japan Air Self-Defense Force, "call signs" are commonly referred to as "TAC (tactical) names."

[16] "Wakaki sentouki pailotto no ai to yujou egaku [Portraying love and friendship among young fighter pilots]," *Audio & Visual Journal*, (November 1990): 39.

[17] Tony Scott, commentary, *Top Gun* DVD, 0:40:40; Jack Epps, Jr., interview, "Danger Zone: Making of Top Gun," *Top Gun* DVD, 0:08:25.

[18] *Best Guy*, 0:14:34 to 0:14:40. *Saiyuki* was a highly popular Japanese television drama series produced and broadcast by the Nippon Television Network. The series originally aired from October 1, 1978 to April 8, 1979, and later from November 11, 1979, to May 4, 1980.

[19] Cabinet Office, "*Jieitai boei mondai ni kansuru yoron chōsa* [Public Opinion Poll on Self-Defense Force and defense issues]," (January 1988), accessed July 21, 2024, https://survey.gov-online.go.jp/s62/S63-01-62-22.html.
[20] Ibid., (February 1991), accessed July 21, 2024, https://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h02/H03-02-02-24.html.
[21] JASDF, *Tsubasa*, no.34, (1990), 63.
[22] Yoshimasa Makino, *Sora no Best Guy monogatari* [Best Guy story in the sky] (Tokyo: Kobunsha, 1990), 244.
[23] JASDF, *Tsubasa* no.34, (1990), 45.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Shunsuke Yamamoto and Hiroe Sato, *Eiga kantoku murakawa toru: wasei hādo boirudo wo tsukutta otoko* [Film director, Toru Murakawa: the man who created Japanese hardboiled style] (Tokyo: DU BOOKS, 2016), 271.
[26] Ehud Yonay, "Top Guns," *California*, vol. 8, no.5, (May 1983), 94–102, 144.
[27] Meredith Jordan, *Top Gun Memos: The Making and Legacy of an Iconic Movie* (Citation Press, 2022), chap. 1, Kindle.
[28] Ibid., chap 5.
[29] Sudo, *Jieitai kyouryoku eiga*, 69.
[30] See *Nihon no kouku uchu kougyou 50-nen no ayumi* [50 Years of Japan's Aerospace Industry]," The Society of Japanese Aerospace Companies, (May 2003), 38–39, accessed February 10, 2025, https://www.sjac.or.jp/pdf/aboutsjac/50nennoayumi/4_3_nihonnokoukuki3-4.pdf.
[31] *Best Guy*, 0 : 15 : 12 to 0 : 16 : 19.
[32] See "Marilyn Monroe and 2Lt. Gardner Snow admiring an F-84 Thunder jet in South Korea in February 1954," Reddit, accessed July 1, 2024, https://www.reddit.com/r/KoreanWar/comments/11m6mhu/marilyn_monroe_and_2lt_gardner_snow_admiring_an/.
[33] *Top Gun*, 0 : 19 : 18 to 0 : 23 : 04.
[34] Tony Scott, interview, "Danger Zone: Maing of Top Gun," *Top Gun* DVD.
[35] Michael D. Dwyer, *Back to the Fifties: Nostalgia, Hollywood Film, and Popular Music of the Seventies and Eighties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 78.
[36] *Flashdance*, directed by Adrian Lyne (1983, Hollywood: Paramount Pictures).
[37] Jordan, *Top Gun Memos*, 263–265.
[38] See "The 59th Academy Awards, 1987," Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, accessed February 9, 2025, https://www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies/1987; "Top Gun," Golden Globes, accessed February 9, 2025, https://goldenglobes.com/film/top-gun/.
[39] *Best Guy*, 0:02:36 to 0:05:08.
[40] *Audio & Visual Journal*, (November 1990), 39.
[41] *Top Gun*, 0:01:09 to 0:03:04.
[42] *Best Guy*, 0:04:12 to 0:04:22.
[43] As of 2024, the JASDF has nine air wings organized by region, with four of these air wings operating from bases shared with the civilian sector. Specifically, Chitose Air Base (2nd Wing), Misawa Air Base (3rd Wing), Komatsu Air Base (6th Wing), and Hyakuri Air Base (7th Wing) are shared with civilian airports, alongside other bases such as Sapporo, Miho, Iwakuni, and Tokushima. See "Kichi [Bases]" Japan Air Self-Defense Force, accessed July 1, 2024, https://www.mod.go.jp/asdf/base/. Also see "Kuko ichiran [List of airports]," Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, accessed July 1, 2024, https://www.mlit.go.jp/koku/content/001758335.pdf.
[44] Aaron Herald Skabelund, *Inglorious, Illegal Bastards: Japan's Self-Defense Force Dring the Cold War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2022), 1–3.
[45] Ibid., 1.

[46] *Best Guy*, 0:17:28 to 0:17:34.
[47] *Best Guy*, 0:44:50 to 0:45:26.
[48] *Best Guy*, 0:53:16 to 0:54:41.
[49] Michael Paris, *From the Wright Brothers to Top Gun: Aviation, Nationalism, and Popular Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 195–197; Lawrence Suid, *Sailing on the Silver Screen: Hollywood and the U.S. Navy* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1996), 234.
[50] Stephen Prince, *Visions of Empire: Political Imagery in Contemporary American Film* (New York: Praeger, 1992), 71.
[51] Rebecca Martin, "Aiming to be the *Top Gun*: Military Recruitment, Propaganda, and Shaping the Image of War through Popular Media," *Intersect*, vol.16, no.2 (2023), 5.
[52] Quoted in Martin, "Aiming to be the *Top Gun*," 5; Bert Schreurs and Fariya Syed, "Chapter 4A: A Proposed Model of Military Recruitment," NATO, *Recruiting and Retention of Military Personnel*, (2007), 4A-21, accessed July 10, 2024, https://www.sto.nato.int/publications/STO%20Technical%20Reports/RTO-TR-HFM-107/$$TR-HFM-107-ALL.pdf.
[53] Suid, *Sailing on the Silver Screen*, 230.
[54] Ibid., 227; Bryn Upton, *Hollywood and the End of the Cold War: Signs of Cinematic Change* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 83.
[55] Filmmakers' commentary, *Top Gun*, DVD, 1:28:53 to 1:29:20.
[56] "New Year's Messages of President Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev," Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum, accessed July 1, 2024, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/new-years-messages-president-reagan-and-soviet-general-secretary-gorbachev-0.
[57] Tae-Hwan Kwak, "Military Capabilities of South and North Korea: A Comparative Study," *Asian Perspective* 14, no. 1 (1990), 122–123.
[58] *Best Guy*, 0:56:47 to 0:57:05.
[59] See "Japanese Jet Warns Soviet Plane," *The New York Times*, (December 10, 1987), sec. A, p.6.
[60] Sudo, *Jieitai kyouryoku eiga*, 82, notes 23 & 24.
[61] The official English translation of the Constitution of Japan, Japanese Law Translation, accessed July 1, 2024, https://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/ja/laws/view/174/tb.
[62] Ken Masubuchi, "*Top Gun*: Tokushu 1 (*Top Gun* special feature 1)" *Kinema Junpo*, no. 947, (November 1986), 42. Similar comments are also found in the official Japanese brochure of *Top Gun*. Toshiko Minami writes, "It's surprising they shoot down MiGs without any hesitation… I feel a bit uneasy about how much I'm enjoying this unapologetic 'Long live America!' movie." Official Japanese Brochure of *Top Gun*, (1987), 10.
[63] "Japanese Jet Warns Soviet Plane," *The New York Times*, (December 10, 1987), sec. A, p.6.
[64] *Best Guy*, 0:56:18 to 1:00:58.
[65] The stunt pilot who tragically lost his life during the filming of *Top Gun* was Art Scholl, a highly renowned aviator of national acclaim. See Jack Jones, "Famed Stunt Pilot Art Scholl Dies as Plane Plunges into Sea," *Los Angeles Times*, (September 18, 1985), Los Angeles Times, accessed February 9, 2025, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1985-09-18-me-6135-story.html. See also Jordan, *Top Gun Memos*, 216-226.
[66] *Top Gun*, 1:40:07 to 1:41:39.
[67] Ibid., 1:42:45 to 1:44:43.
[68] *Best Guy*, 1:40:29 to 1:43:14.
[69] Ibid., 1:44:00 to 1:47:14.
[70] *An Officer and a Gentleman*, directed by Taylor Hackford (1982, Hollywood: Paramount Pictures).

[71] *Top Gun: Maverick*, directed by Joseph Kosinsuki (2022, Hollywood: Paramount Pictures); Jen Juneau, "Tom Cruise's 'Top Gun: Maverick' Sets New Box Office Record 1 Year After Release," *People* (May 31, 2023), accessed July 18, 2024, https://people.com/top-gun-maverick-new-box-office-record-1-year-after-release-japan-tom-cruise-7506090.

[72] *Born to Fly*, directed by Xiaoshi Liu (2023, Shanghai: PMF Pictures, 2024) Blue-ray Disc. The film was released in both the U.S. and Japan, albeit on a smaller scale. "Jouei gekijyo ichiran [List of screening theaters]," *Born to Fly* official website, accessed July 1, 2024, https://eigakan.org/theaterpage/schedule.php?t=borntofly#area03.

[73] *Born to Fly*, 0:03:55 to 0:06:51, 1:56:15 to 1:58:49.

[74] *Top Gun: Maverick*, 0:04:16; Sian Cain, "Top Gun: Maverick Sparks Joy in Taiwan after Its Flag Features on Tom Cruise Jacket," *The Guardian* (June 1, 2022), accessed July 15, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/jun/01/top-gun-maverick-sparks-joy-in-taiwan-after-its-flag-features-on-tom-cruise-jacket.