

Terrorists, Terrorism, and Japan's Counter-Terrorism Policy

Mizukoshi Hideaki

In an increasingly globalized world, no country is an island that can hope to seal itself off from the changes, upheaval, and threats now shared in every corner of the world. No strangers to terrorism, war, and venality, Japanese can call on a variety of approaches to meeting new security and defense challenges.

Within a matter of hours, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States claimed more than 3,000 victims. They dealt a massive blow to the most prominent symbols of American economic and military might and sent out a completely new kind of security challenge to the entire free world. These were not military attacks using heavy weapons, but assaults that exploited the nature of a free and open society, making use of highly developed global communication systems—the Internet in particular—global systems of transportation and commerce, and the free movement of people.

The following day, Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro expressed his resolve to combat such vicious acts of violence in cooperation with the international community. He directed his cabinet members to do their utmost to promote measures for countering terrorism.

Japan's fight against the al-Qaeda network began that day, and we are still battling the invisible enemy, more than twenty months after the attacks of September 11th. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which provided sanctuary to al-Qaeda, is gone, toppled by coalition forces, and Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq has collapsed, but international terrorism has by no means been wiped out. On the contrary, judging from events following September 11th, it is proliferating in all parts of the world.

In this article, I examine the terrorist threat to Asia and to Japan, explain Japan's counter-terrorism policy at home and in the world, and point out some policy options to consider to cope with the threat of terrorism more effectively. Finally, I propose some principles for countering terrorism.

The Terrorist Threat in Asia

Late in the evening of 12 October 2002, two powerful bomb blasts at a popular night club in Kuta, Bali, killed more than 200 people, mainly Western tourists, including two Japanese, visiting that popular destination in Indonesia. This horrendous act carried out on a peaceful island brought the world's attention to the grim reality of rising terrorism in Southeast Asia.

Islamic extremism in Southeast Asia is by no means a new phenomenon, pre-dating the arrival of al-Qaeda by decades. Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) is a major terrorist group, and it is suspected of involvement in the Bali bombing and of having strong links with al-Qaeda. It dates back to the 1940s, when it was called Darul Islam. At first, Darul Islam and other Islamic extremist groups concentrated mostly on their local separatist agenda, but once the local groups forged links with al-Qaeda, their activities became radicalized and the level of threat they posed rose dramatically. In recent years, the local programs have been swept up into the al-Qaeda behest for world jihad, and al-Qaeda appears to be giving them both financial and technical support. This is accomplished through visits by al-Qaeda operatives to Southeast Asia as well as participation of Southeast Asian militants with experience in training camps in Afghanistan.

The seriousness of the threat in Southeast Asia became clear enough to the international community in late December 2001, when the authorities in Singapore arrested fifteen persons, including thirteen JI members, who were planning a series of attacks targeting Western and Israeli interests. When the nightclub in Bali was bombed in October 2002, there was no mistaking the kind of threat Southeast Asia faced. The Bali bombing announced to the world that terrorist groups might just as easily target economic or entertainment establishments as government or military facilities. This development has grave consequences for the economy and political stability of all the Southeast Asian countries, which depend heavily on foreign investment and tourism in the region.

As for Japan itself, the economic ties and flow of people between our country and Southeast Asia are stronger and more active than between Japan and, for example, the Middle East or Africa. Because of these connections, the burgeoning Islamic extremism in Southeast Asia poses a serious threat to our nation and its interests.

Another reason for concern is Japan's relationship with the United States. On 12 November 2002, Osama bin Laden issued an audio message that was aired by Al-Jazeera, a major Arabic-language TV broadcasting station based in Qatar. In it, he named the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, and Australia as enemies. He did not specifically name Japan, but I believe that because Japan is an important ally of the United States, it may be included on al-Qaeda's list of target countries.

There have been signs indicating that Japan is, indeed, a possible target for

Islamic extremist groups. Imam Samudra, alleged mastermind of the bombing plot in Bali, explicitly declared in his website that he would exterminate the citizens of the United States and its allies, including Japan. The bombing of a Toyota showroom in Makassar in Sulawesi, Indonesia, on 5 December 2002 seems to be yet one more sign.

Although the main focus here is the Islamic extremist terrorism that has emerged since September 11th, North Korea must also be considered, if briefly. The threat that North Korea poses goes well beyond the traditional concept of terrorism, as some of its recent activities show all too clearly. In 1983 North Korea carried out a bombing killing South Korean cabinet members on a state visit to Rangoon, Burma and shot down a commercial Korean Air Lines flight in 1987. Almost more shocking, in a series of abductions, North Korean agents kidnapped a number of innocent Japanese nationals, including a student, from within Japan. Also, for some time North Korean spy ships suspected, among other things, of dealing in illegal narcotics have been active in Japan's territorial waters. However, the most imminent threat from North Korea at present is the suspected nuclear weapons development program. Although we do not know for sure how far it has advanced, the international community needs to do everything possible to persuade North Korea to dismantle its entire nuclear weapons program.



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Japan's Counter-terrorism Policy

There are several aspects to the counter-terrorism policy of Japan. The government's paramount responsibility is to guard the security of Japan's territory and citizens against terrorist acts, and so it is vital that Japan also be a part of the global fight against international terrorism. On the one hand, Japanese can contribute in the effort to destroy the headquarters and training camps of al-Qaeda, as we did by providing logistical support to the American and coalition forces in Afghanistan, and we can also help to build global and regional net-

works designed to combat terrorism by denying terrorist groups safe haven and the means to pursue their goals.

Protection of Japanese people and territory

The difficulty of containing the threat of indigenous terrorist groups became tragically apparent on the morning of 20 March 1995, when thousands of commuters in the Tokyo subway suddenly collapsed, some of them fatally poisoned. Given first aid and rushed to nearby hospitals, the victims were found to have been exposed to an extremely toxic gas released in the subway, and a panic ensued in the center of Tokyo. A few days later, members of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police garbed in chemical protection suits raided the huge facility of the religious cult Aum Shinrikyo located near the foot of Mt. Fuji. Most of the members of the cult who committed crimes were arrested, tried, and sentenced. The group was placed under the surveillance of the Public Security Investigation Agency in accordance with the Act Pertaining to Control of Organizations That Commit Indiscriminate Murder, which was enacted after the sarin gas incident.

These measures so far have prevented further terrorist acts by Aum Shinrikyo, but the organization still has not abandoned the dangerous dogma that sanctions manslaughter whenever Asahara Shoko, the leader of Aum, so instructs, and many members appear still to be under the mind control of this man, even though he has been incarcerated for years. For those and other reasons, the government decided to extend the period of surveillance for three more years and is continuing to watch the organization closely.

Aum Shinrikyo is by no means the only indigenous terrorist group arising in Japan in recent decades. The Red Army, founded by members of the Red Army Faction of the Communist League, successfully implanted itself abroad, despite all efforts by the Japanese government to suppress it. In 1971 Shigenobu Fusako, Okudaira Tsuyoshi, and other Red Army activists went to Lebanon, which they used as a training and recruiting post for the purpose of building international bases for the Japanese Red Army. Since then the group has carried out terrorist operations in numerous places, beginning with the Lod Airport (Tel Aviv, Israel) Massacre of 29 May 1972. This incident is regarded as having had some influence on the character and momentum of terrorism in the Middle East.

The Japanese Red Army suffered a serious blow in February 1997 when the Lebanese authorities arrested many of its members and deprived the group of its most important base. Three years later, in November 2000, Shigenobu Fusako, one of the principal members of the Japanese Red Army, was arrested by the Japanese police in Osaka. The Red Army today is considered to be much weaker than it was, but the police in Japan are still on high alert in their effort to arrest remaining members.

Keeping terrorist groups out of Japan

Japan has sharply upgraded security procedures relating to visa, immigration, and customs to strengthen border control and deny access to terrorists. Among the measures being taken are the following:

- Enhanced interagency and international information exchange regarding immigration;
- Denial of entry into Japan of individuals and entities listed by the United Nations Sanctions Committee established in accord with United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1267, which aims to place sanctions on the Taliban and al-Qaeda;
- Use of advanced technology in Japan's major airports to identify forged documents;
- Introduction of machine-readable visas as a counter-measure against forgery;
- Enhanced inspection of hand baggage;
- Enhanced inspection of export-import goods with stricter examination of documents and use of x-ray inspection and metal detection equipment.

Security measures taken since September 11th

Since 11 September 2001, Japan has augmented its terrorism prevention measures, including added police guard and security checks for American military facilities, nuclear power plants, international airports, and other major public facilities. Aviation security has also been upgraded.

In addition, in November 2002, the Koizumi cabinet adopted a basic government strategy to counter chemical and biological (CB) terrorism. It aims primarily at tightening control over chemical and biological agents and enhancing the capability of security agencies to prepare for and deal with the consequences of CB terrorism.

These efforts were firmly reinforced during the FIFA World Cup 2002, which was co-hosted by Japan and South Korea, and also at the time of the military action by the United States and the United Kingdom in Iraq this year. On both occasions, the government of Japan successfully prevented the occurrence of any terrorist incidents.

Japan's International Contributions

Al-Qaeda is a multinational enterprise operating in more than ninety countries. The cooperation of all members of the international community is required to build international mechanisms capable of disrupting and dismantling its global network. Japan is actively participating in that effort through the United Nations, G-8, FATF (Financial Action Task Force), and other institutional channels. Furthermore, Japan passed the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law

and is actively engaged in cooperation and support activities for U.S. and other troops fighting terrorism on its own initiative.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has created within its Foreign Policy Bureau an International Counter-terrorism Cooperation Division whose main task is to facilitate working closely with the international community. The foreign ministry has also appointed an ambassador in charge of international counter-terrorism cooperation to represent Japan in consultations and delegations concerning counter-terrorism.

Fortifying the international legal framework

The international community must have ways to deny safe haven to terrorists around the world, and, therefore, requires a system to prosecute or extradite terrorists wherever they are found. The glue of such a system is the coverage provided by counter-terrorism conventions. After September 11th, Japan accelerated its ratification of pending counter-terrorism conventions. Now, hav-

ing put its stamp on the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism in 2002, Japan is a party to all twelve existing conventions related to counter-terrorism, and it is trying to persuade countries that have not yet ratified all the conventions to follow suit.

The foreign ministry is currently making preliminary plans to hold a seminar in FY 2003 to exchange practical, working level experience in the implementation of counter-terrorism conventions. Japan is also actively participating in the negotiations in the U.N. General Assembly's Sixth (Legal) Committee as it undertakes the

drafting of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism and an international convention for the suppression of nuclear terrorism.

Japan's role in the U.N. and the G-8

Within the United Nations, the Sixth Committee has had an important role in tackling the issue of eradicating international terrorism, which has been on the agenda of the General Assembly since 1972. The committee has adopted a number of counter-terrorism conventions, most recently the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. The Security Council also has become a key actor in the fight against terrorism. On 12 September 2001, literally "the morning after," it formally pronounced the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon to be a threat to international peace and security (UNSCR 1368). Further, on 28 September 2001 the Security Council adopted UNSCR 1373, which calls on U.N. members to take

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comprehensive counter-terrorism measures, most notably to disrupt terrorist financing, and it created the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) to monitor the implementation of the resolution. Japan is supporting these actions of the United Nations in a number of ways.

The G-8 also has become increasingly important in the international effort to combat terrorism since September 11th. On 18 September 2001, the G-8 heads of states and governments issued an emphatic statement condemning the terrorist attacks and urging government leaders to take concrete action. The counter-terrorism experts in the G-8 redoubled their efforts to identify areas where the eight countries can effectively cooperate. Their hard work bore fruit: at the G-8 foreign ministers meeting in June 2002, the member countries issued the G-8 Recommendations on Counter-Terrorism, and at the Kananaskis summit in Canada in June 2002 they formalized two documents, Cooperative G-8 Action on Transport Security and G-8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction.

The G-8 leaders further announced their G-8 Action Plan on Building International Political Will and Capacity to Combat Terrorism at the Evian summit in early June 2003. The main thrust of the new G-8 action plan is the creation by donor countries of the Counter-Terrorism Action Group, whose function is to coordinate assistance given to developing countries for the purpose of improving their various counter-terror capabilities. Japan, together with the United States, was the main proponent of this unique initiative.

Concrete Actions

On a practical level, Japan is helping to cut off terrorist financing. Money is essential for a terrorist operation. The critical importance of depriving terrorists of their financing became starkly evident when it was learned how well the nineteen hijackers of September 11th were funded, and that the money was transferred from outside the United States.

Japan is doing its part to cut off those funds wherever possible. Among other things, it has frozen funds and other financial assets of individuals and entities, including the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and those associated with them in accordance with UNSCR 1267, 1333, and 1390. Japan has also frozen assets of individuals and entities with terrorist ties in accordance with UNSCR 1373. As of 7 March 2003, Japan had cut off access to assets of a total of 376 individuals and entities.

Japan concluded the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism in June 2002 and at the same time enacted domestic legislation that criminalizes the financing of terrorism. Further, Japan amended the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Law in 2002 in order to facilitate information exchange among competent ministries and agencies concerning financing of terrorism.

Japan is also pursuing ways to strengthen cooperation with other Asian countries. Counter-terrorism rose to the top of the agenda in Asian countries after September 11th, but it took on even greater urgency after the bombing in Bali. Now, efforts to stamp out terrorism are taking place within the regional framework of ASEAN, ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum), and APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum), as well as globally.

Japan's campaign to help Asian and other countries to increase their ability to combat terrorism has been focusing on the six areas of immigration control, aviation security, customs cooperation, export control, police work and law-enforcement, and interdiction of terrorist financing. In 2001, a total of 220 officials from other Asian countries received training in Japan in these areas, and 249 officials were slated for similar training in 2002.

Japan is now organizing a training program under which 30 officials responsible for anti-terrorism policy and measures from Asia will be trained annually from 2003 to 2007, making a total of 150 in five years. The main purpose is improving crisis- and consequence-management capability to enable an effective response to terrorist acts involving chemical or biological weapons. Through this program we aim to share the experience Japan gained from the Aum Shinrikyo sarin gas attack with neighboring countries.

As for multilateral initiatives, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore held a workshop on the theme "Counter-Terrorism Measures for Major International Events" in October last year. The goal of this workshop was to pass on to other Asian countries the know-how accumulated through the experience of the FIFA World Cup 2002 held in Japan and South Korea.

Japan also hosted a Regional Counter-Terrorism Conference in March 2003. This time the participants included officials working in some area of counter-terrorism from Central Asian and Southeast Asian countries as well. The main objective was to determine ways to facilitate information exchange in the region.

Key Policy Options for the Future

There are a number of policy options concerning counter-terrorism that have not yet been fully addressed in Japan. I will discuss some of the most important ones, beginning with the need for new kinds of legislation to respond to the evolving situation of terrorism.

Comprehensive anti-terrorism legislation

In 1952 Japan created the Subversive Activities Prevention Act to deal with radical left-wing groups and their activities, and recently the government passed the Act Pertaining to Control of Organizations That Commit Indiscriminate Murder (the so-called anti-Aum Act) in order to keep Aum Shinrikyo under surveillance legally. However, these laws are not always applicable to terrorist groups based in foreign countries.

After September 11th, Japan enacted new legislation designed to interrupt terrorist financing and amended some existing laws, but it still has no comprehensive legal mechanism for designating and monitoring terrorists or terrorist group. In the United States, there is a mechanism to legally designate certain foreign organizations which are put under surveillance in financial and other regards. Similar legislation has been passed in the United Kingdom and Australia.

In the case of Japan, any new anti-terrorism legislation is always controversial and runs up against problems rooted in the history of freedom of association and other civil liberties. As the threat of terrorism targeting Japan rises, however, the need to work out new mechanisms to combat it is becoming increasingly urgent.

International network for consequence management

Since 11 September 2001, international cooperation in intelligence sharing, law-enforcement, and terrorist financing has become much more active and effective. However, cooperation in the area of consequence management in response to terrorist incidents still has not been fully addressed. Every possible effort must be made to prevent a terrorist attack before it happens, but in the case that it does, it is just as important to mitigate the consequences and thereby minimize casualties. The panic caused by the epidemic of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) is a good illustration of what can happen when societies are unprepared for the rapid spread of infectious disease. Terrorists might take their cue from the SARS situation and, exploiting it, resort to bio-terrorism.

According to several American government reports that have been made public, al-Qaeda probably possesses weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons. Having dealt with the sarin gas attacks in our own country, the Japanese government has gained some experience in managing the consequences of CB terrorism. This is an area where Japan, which is highly advanced in methods of emergency medical treatment, can perform a valuable role helping other Asian countries prepare to handle worst-case eventualities. Japan is planning to host a seminar entitled "Crisis and Consequence Management in CB Terrorism" this year and will invite officials mainly from Asian countries. This could be an important step toward building an international network for consequence-management cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Political settlement of terrorist groups' local agenda

Eradicating terrorism by getting at the root causes is a difficult task. In the case of terrorist groups like al-Qaeda, which calls for world jihad against Western democracies in general, it is almost impossible and, in any case, unacceptable to negotiate for political settlements. In the case of local terrorist groups that have

a regional agenda, however, political negotiation is an acceptable and effective way to eradicate terrorism and bring about long-term peace and security.

Japan has already taken the initiative to encourage peaceful settlement of regional disputes. In the case of Sri Lanka, for example, it is playing an important role in backing up the peace process between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelan (LTTE) and the government.

At the Tokyo Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka, which was held on 9 and 10 June 2003 in Tokyo and was co-chaired by Japan, Norway, the United States, and the European Union, the Tokyo Declaration on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka was issued. The objectives of the conference were to provide the international community with an opportunity to demonstrate a strong and unified commitment to the reconstruction and development of Sri Lanka and to encourage the parties to redouble their efforts to make further progress in the peace process. Although the absence of the LTTE at the conference was regrettable, fruitful results were achieved, such as pledges of more than 4.5 billion US dollars in assistance over a four-year period, 2003–2006, by participating countries and international organizations. These commitments to the reconstruction and development of Sri Lanka demonstrate the dividends of peace to all the parties concerned.

Three Guiding Principles

The immediate prospects for the fight against terrorism are not bright. Even as I write, news reports of terrorist incidents keep coming in, one of the latest describing the bombing attacks on three residential compounds for foreigners in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. As the situation appears now, our campaign against terrorism promises to be long and hard, probably continuing throughout the twenty-first century.

Terrorist methods as well as the organization of terrorist groups keep changing, which means that counter-terrorism policy must be continually revised. There are some principles, however, that should not change. I would like to conclude this article by proposing the following three guiding principles for an effective policy in the international fight to vanquish terrorism.

1. Counter-terrorism policy must address every stage of terrorism.

We must understand and tackle the root causes of terrorism. At the same time, we must find ways to prevent planning, preparation, and implementation of terrorist activities while preparing to manage the consequences of terrorism.

2. Counter-terrorism policy must be multidisciplinary.

Counter-terrorism measures involve diverse fields of expertise and multiple sectors of government. Government counter-terrorism policies must be comprehensive, and so the work of coordinating the various types of expertise and the many government sectors is vitally important.

3. International society must unite to eradicate terrorism and the threat of terrorism.

We have seen more active, directed, and extensive international cooperation against terrorism since the September 11th attacks. We can do much more to expand the areas of cooperation further still and make it more effective. A united effort and a common goal are essential to help us cope with the continuing threat of terrorism.

About this Article

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