

TERRORISM: JAPAN'S EXPERIENCE FROM RADICAL LEFT TO NEW BREED OF VIOLENT RIGHT

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INTRODUCTION:

The terrorists who are at war with society prefer force to argument in pursuit of their political, religious or magical goals. The terrorists argue that there is no alternative course of action since governments disregard or refuse to tackle issues like injustice and inequalities in the society. The "ramifications of terrorism transcend" national boundaries as in case of terrorist attacks against U.S. embassy in Kenya and retaliatory missile attacks against Sudan and Osama bin Ladin's hideouts in Afghanistan in 1998. The menace of terrorism is spreading like some modern plague and poses a serious threat to international security and democracy.

The urban guerrilla warfare which appeared in shape on bombing city centres, kidnapping ambassadors and businessmen and hijacking aircraft is at least the beginning of the late 1960s and the early 1970s. The urban guerrilla warfare or terrorism cannot be equated with rural guerrilla warfare. Unlike terrorism, the control of territory is important in rural guerrilla warfare.

Japan, otherwise a peaceful society, had experienced a left-wing terrorism and violence during the late 1960s and the 1970s. The Japanese terrorist organizations stained the 1970s and the 1980s with blood. The most notorious terrorist group in Japan who turned to terrorism was the Japanese Red Army (JRA) whose activities were similar to Red Brigade in Italy and Baadar Meinhoff Group in former West Germany. Currently Japan is facing a new breed of ultra-nationalist terrorists, whose violence is directed against liberal elements in Japan.

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The worldwide recognition to curb the spread of transnational terrorism grew in the early 1990s, especially after the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the East European Communist states and the Soviet Union.

This paper will first address the meaning and various definitions of terrorism. Then it will focus on Japan's experience to terrorism. Finally, the paper will discuss Japan's efforts to curb transnational terrorism in the post-Cold War period.

MEANING AND DEFINITION OF TERRORISM:

There are at least four types of terrorism: political, psychic, criminal and war terrorism. Grant Wardlaw in his 'Political Terrorism' divides political terrorism into three types:

Revolutionary terrorism: with the objective of bringing about political revolution;

Sub-Revolutionary terrorism: whereas revolutionary terrorism seeks total change, sub-revolutionary terrorism is aimed at more limited goals, such as forcing the government to change its policy on some issue, warning or pushing specific public officials, or retaliating against government, and

Repressive terrorism: a systematic use of terrorist acts of violence for the purpose of suppressing, putting down certain groups, or individual.¹

According to the Encyclopedia of Terrorism and Political Violence, "Definitions of terms relating to terrorism are constantly changing, depending from which side of the ideological divide they are viewed".² The U.K. Prevention of Terrorism Act 1976 define terrorism as, "the use of violence for political ends, [including] any use of violence for the purpose of putting the public or any section of public in fear".³ Paul Johnson says that "terrorism is the deliberate, systematic murder, maiming and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear in order to gain political ends.....Terrorism.....is intrinsically evil, necessarily evil and wholly

evil".⁴ Some people consider the torture and execution of political prisoners as an act of terrorism. But James Lee Ray does not consider the arrest and torture of political prisoners as an act of terrorism. He consider these acts of "unjustifiable governmental violence" as an "atrocitiy, a massacre, barbarism, or even genocide, but not terrorism."⁵

There is, however, no generally accepted definition of terrorism. It is difficult to distinguish a "terrorist" from a "freedom fighter". "One person's terrorist is another person's hero". For example, the resistance by Hizbullah to Israeli-occupation of Lebanese territory is never considered by Lebanese as an act of terrorism. Their armed actions against Israeli army are always being considered as acts of self-determination of the Lebanese people. Every time Israelis are killed in Gaza, West Bank and Southern Lebanon, the Israeli government not only condemn them as acts of pure terrorism but also retaliate violently. The Israeli retaliations in Southern Lebanon have been labeled by Lebanese nothing short of "state terrorism".

Another form of terrorism discussed by Steve Chan was the Japanese army's atrocities in the Far East and South East Asia during World War-II occupation.

In all such cases the electronic and print media have use of terrorism. In this regard the former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher identified the basic link when she stated: "Publicity is Oxygen of Terrorist". There is no doubt that survival of terrorist campaign depends decisively on publicity it receives.

TERRORISM IN JAPAN:

Japan had experienced the "revolutionary terrorism" with aim to seek a total change in Japanese society during the late 1960s and the 1970s. In political terms the year 1960 was the most critical year for Japan since the end of the Second World War. The year marked the beginning of the violent demonstrations involving left-wing guerrilla organizations, such as the Japanese Red Army (JRA). Like contemporary European revolutionary organizations, such as the Italian Red Brigade and the West

German (former) Baadar Meinhoff Group, French Action Direct and Belgian Fighting Communist Cells, the Japanese groups had used violence to attempt a radical change in social order. Almost all these Marxist groups originated in the student unrest, generally known as the "Generation of 1968" or the "New Left". Like their European counterparts they were ideologically inclined towards internationalism. The U.S.-Japan defence relations were the driving force behind the military actions of the radical left in Japan.

The outrageous demonstrations started in Japan on January 16, 1960 in which a left-wing student group struggled to prevent the liberal democrat prime Minister of Japan Kishi from flying to Washington, D.C to sign the Security Treaty with the United States of America.⁶ After some peaceful years Japan's internal politics was once again rocked in 1968-69 by violent protests again involving the anarchic Red Army guerrilla organization against the U.S. domination.⁷

The left-wing radicalism in Japan during the late 1960s and early 1970s came under close police surveillance from the beginning, especially when the group began their armed attacks. The leaders of Sekigun (a JRA forerunners) were involved in these violent attacks. Because of the round-the-clock police surveillance and with no chance to carry-on armed attacks in Japan Seikgun hard-core terrorists moved to North Korea and the Middle East in the early 1970s leaving behind few hundred sympathizers. Since then the JRA has been operating abroad.⁸ Japan's lack of concern for the consequences of pushing terrorists abroad, "says Katzenstein", is based on the "Hobbesian" view of the society of states.⁹

According to the Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Diplomatic Bluebook 1991, there has been no apparent signs that JRA had been involved in terrorist attacks since 1988. However, it still declares to fight against the "imperialism" and the Emperor system in Japan. The Diplomatic Bluebook of 1998 indicated that five members of the JRA for whom international procedures had been taken into custody in Lebanon in February 1997. All five had been sentenced to three years' imprisonment. Another JRA member was taken into custody in Bolivia in

November 1997, deported and subsequently arrested by the Japanese police. According to the same Bluebook, seven Red Army members for whom international procedures have been taken are still at large, as well as five suspected by having been involved in the hijacking of flight Yodo.

According to one Japanese police report of 1995/96 the JRA has about two dozen cadres abroad and a few hundred sympathizers inside Japan.¹⁰ The JRA is not the only terrorist group, the number of militant cadres vary greatly. The police report of 1995/96 estimates that four of Japan's five radical groups and ten of about thirty affiliated sects are prone to violent or terrorist actions. The radical left appears to have about 14,000 activists and 20,000 sympathizers in Japan.¹¹ It is quite a big number of violent elements in a otherwise peaceful country like Japan.

Throughout the period of violent demonstrations in Japan during the late 1960s and the early 1970s the militant students had remained fairly isolated from unionized workers—apart from few thousand who had joined the youth committee against war and radical railway workers who had joined in political strikes against the Japanese—American alliance. The nationalism and devotion to duty are said to be main reasons which had discouraged widespread protest movements in Japan.¹² Despite the Japanese sense of “nationalism and devotion to duty”, the Japanese police reported 236 bombing attacks and 531 guerrilla attacks between the period 1969 and 1988. These violent attacks occurred in waves.¹³

Unlike the “revolutionary terrorism” of the 1960s and the 1970s, Japan at the moment is facing a wave of “sub-revolutionary terrorism” with the objective to achieve “limited goals”. The rise of nationalist fundamentalism in Japan in recent years is alarming in a sense that like radical left these ultra-nationalist right-wingers are committed to violence and terrorism against any religious, political or media men they consider enemies. Unlike the Red Army and other radical left groups who are against the monarchy in Japan, the right wing militants love the Royal family and to protect it at any cost. The focus of their violent attacks is liberal moderate politicians and the liberal press.

Between 1995 and 1997 this new breed of right-wing extremists for example, shot and wounded two liberal politicians, bombed parliament building and political party head quarter and few liberal journalists were made hostage.

Unlike the Red Army whose number was in hundreds, the number of right-wing activities, according to one police report, is nearly one hundred thousand. Unlike the hard-core Red Army members who were forced to flee Japan because of round-the-clock surveillance in the early 1970s, the successive Japanese governments have to tolerate the presence of right-wing groups. This situation is not only "alarming" for liberal elements in Japan, but for Japan's immediate neighbours as well who have experienced the Japanese atrocities during the first half of the twentieth century. One of the prime goals of the radical right is to bring back the past glory of Japan.

In addition to ultra-left and ultra-nationalists terrorism, Japan has experienced one of the worst terrorist attacks in March 1995 by Aum Shinrikyo, a religious cult, when they released sarin gas in Tokyo sub-way killing twelve innocent commuters. The chemical weapons production facility owned by Aum-Shinrikyo was destroyed and an inspection was conducted to confirm it is December 1998.

The radical groups operating in Japan are facing a declining support in urban areas. But it seems that new recruits are coming from the countryside. The police method in Japan to deal with new breed of right-wing militancy is to contain their operations rather than eliminate them altogether. The strategy appears to work as they did with Aum Shinrikyo in 1995.¹⁴

JAPAN AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION:

Japan consider international terrorism as a transnational problem require to be tackled on a global level, but the country still lacks the active international stance in this regard. According to Ikutaro Shimizu, "the renunciation of military power distorted national life [in Japan]. By relinquishing military strength, Japan ceased to be a state, and instead became simply a society whose

essence is economic activity.”¹⁵

Kitchitaro Katsuda, professor of political thought at Kyoto university illustrate the “disgraceful weakness of post-war state” by quoting an example when JRA hijacked Japan Airline jet in 1977 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in which government not only paid \$ U.S. 6 million ransom but had to release several JRA terrorists from jail as demanded by the hijackers. The government justified its action by proclaiming that “a single human life is weightier than the earth.”¹⁶

Twenty years later, Japan showed its “disgraceful weakness” once again in December 1997, when Tupac Amaru guerrilla made 72 people hostage in Japanese Ambassador's residence in Lima, Peru, including two dozen Japanese diplomats and corporate executives. Until the dramatic end of hostage crisis on April 22 1997, the Hashimoto government tried tooth and nail for a peaceful settlement of the crisis. Since day one the Peruan president Alberto Fujimori made it clear that Peru would not free imprisoned Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) guerrillas in exchange for the release of captives.

Throughout the crisis period, the State Foreign Secretary of Japan Komura Masahiko was wondering throughout Central and South America looking for a country willing to take in the guerrillas as part of a peaceful settlement. So much so, Masahiko went to Cuba, requested Fidel Castro to grant asylum to MRTA terrorists in return of foreign-aid-money. According to Fukuza Kazuka, if foreign minister Ikeda Yukihiro, “wanted that badly for the guerrillas to leave Peru, he should have invited them to live in his own home.”¹⁷

It seems that the Japanese ambassador's residence was selected by MRTA guerrillas, because they knew about Japan's “soft” stance in this regard or what professor Kichitaro Katsuda called the “disgraceful weakness” of Japan.

Despite all these “weaknesses” discussed above, like may other countries Japan is devoted to the prevention of international cooperation in counter-terrorism. The basic principles confirmed

repeatedly at the annual G-7 summits and other occasions to combat all forms of terrorism, to make no concession to terrorists and to apply the rule of law so that terrorist will brought to justice.¹⁸ In addition, Japan is cooperating with the member countries of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to combat terrorism at the regional level as well.

CONCLUSION:

In addition to about fourteen thousand left-wing activists, the number of about one hundred thousand right-wing activists is certainly an alarming phenomenon for a country like Japan. The right-wing extremists are further encouraged with the victory of Shintaro Ishihara as newly elected governor to Tokyo, whose election campaign slogan was against the United States. The fading economic glory and the current economic recession worst since the Second World War are additional factors for the revival of the new breed of right-wing militants in Japan. The possibility cannot be ruled out that in addition to their armed attacks, though not frequent, against liberal elements in Japan, they could direct their militant actions against U.S. interests in Japan as well. There is also likelihood that extreme left and right join their hands together in future and use violence against U.S. interests in Japan. Both right and left extremists are campaigning to scrap the U.S.-Japan Defence Treaty and the removal of the U.S. military presence from Japan.

Like European neo-fascists whose violence is focused against Jews and coloured people, the violent right-wingers could divert their terrorist attacks against Korean and Chinese living in Japan. The problem with the government in Japan is that it is not capable of handling these kind of crisis situation.

Even though, like the Western donor nations, the priority of Japan's foreign policy is primarily focused on to curb terrorism, criminal syndicates and drug trafficking, Japan is still lacking a strong will to fight international terrorism. To combat the international terrorism, Japan and rest of the developed world should provide assistance to democratic forces in the developing countries as one of the preventive measures in this regard.

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