September 11 in Comparative Perspective: The Antiterrorism Campaigns of Germany and Japan

Peter J. Katzenstein

For the United States, September 11 is a turning point.[1]; For Japan and Germany it brought a sense of déjà vu. The United States' experience with terrorism is not unique, but it is distinctive. How other states, here Japan and Germany, have dealt with terrorism may help put the events of September 11 and their aftermath into perspective. Japan and Germany were not as successful in stemming terrorism as their governments and people would have liked. An analysis of their policies sheds new light on this turn in world politics.

The Political Relevance of Japan and Germany

Although Japan and Germany are comparatively peaceful countries, each has had its share of political terrorism. In the 1970s and 1980s each lived with terrorist threats that had both domestic roots and international consequences. Both states matter politically in several ways: as major powers, as democracies, and as close allies of the United States. Furthermore, history has shaped these two societies in ways that may at this time be of some relevance to theUnited States. Both have a sense of the costliness and futility of waging war that the United States may more fully appreciate in time as it seeks to break up terrorist networks. Searching for individual terrorists is a task undercover police and intelligence operatives accomplish better than high-altitude bombers and long-range artillery.

    1. See Leheny 2002; and Heymann 2001/2002.

There are two dimensions to the antiterrorist strategy the Bush administration has adhered to since September 11. The first focuses on the states that are abetting terrorism, the other on activities in target states. The United States' preeminent position in world politics and the magnitude of the September 11 attack underlie the U.S. attack on Afghanistan on October 7 to defeat the Taliban government and destroy Al Qaeda's military bases and compounds. Although Germany and Japan experienced domestic terrorism in the 1970s and 1980s, there is broad consensus in both countries that war is not a viable policy option for fighting terrorism because of their roles in World War II. To confront the international aspects of their home-grown terrorism, all the German and Japanese governments could do was to wait for a change in the general international environment that might hinder the international operations of terrorist cells that were attacking targets in their own countries.

The United States, however, has the physical and cultural means to wage a war on terrorism. This creates new opportunities and risks. The military campaign in Afghanistan was extremely successful in eliminating the Taliban government. But it is not the template for the future of the war on terrorism. Deploying U.S. special forces will be difficult, even in cases where the government is eager to receive assistance, such as in the Philippines. Therefore, the United States will often have to rely on international police cooperation and economic aid, which constitute the full arsenal against abetting states for countries like Germany and Japan.

The second dimension focuses on activities in targeted states. Here the very different domestic-policing strategies of Japan and Germany merit attention. Since antiterrorist policing rarely succeeds even with the most ingenious strategies, attacks are possible, even likely, for many years to come. Like military action abroad, domestic policing aims to limit rather than eliminate terrorism. Balancing the needs of liberty against those of security in such an open-ended campaign will become important for the United States. The experiences of Germany and Japan may be helpful even though the terrorism they confronted was domestic rather than international and the attacks they suffered were of a lesser magnitude.

Germany and Japan are relevant for another reason as well. They exemplify approaches to national security that are still considered to be unconventional among many U.S. policy analysts and scholars. With the end of the Cold War, students of security affairs have debated whether security should be more narrowly or more broadly defined.[2] The proponents of traditional security studies insist on the continued relevance and central importance of security conventionally understood in the United States in strictly military terms. Their critics argue that since the Cold War many security threats can be understood only with a broader definition that includes a variety of unconventional threats, among them terrorism, technology, environmental degradation, and migration, and this definition extends to human security. September 11 should end this debate. The case for a broad definition of security has become overwhelmingly strong. On the basis of their experience as trading states, Germany and Japan have viewed their national security in broad terms since 1945. In sharp contrast, prior to September 11, Americans understood the concept of na-

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2. See, for example, Walt 1991; Kolodziej 1992; Buzan 1997; and Krause 1998.

tional security primarily in conventional military terms. It is easy to lose sight of the important fact of how atypical, even among liberal democracies, a definition of security is that permits easy recourse to war and that gives so much emphasis to the military dimension of life. Germany's and Japan's approaches to security are useful reminders of this aspect of American exceptionalism.

The German and Japanese experiences point to two major conclusions. First, it is difficult for terrorists to operate without the active support or quiet toleration of abetting or failing states. Waging war on them and the states that abet them may reduce terrorism's reach and effectiveness. The predicament is that this policy may directly or indirectly result in the deaths of innocent civilians. Second, terrorists prey on targeted states. They exploit for their own ends the political spaces that liberal or failing states leave unoccupied. Constraining their freedom to maneuver in targeted states also reduces their reach and effectiveness. The predicament for policymakers is how to weigh the trade-off between security and liberty. How did Germany and Japan react to the security risks terrorism posed?

September 11 and International Action

/Terrorists are helped greatly by having guaranteed access to safe territories from which they can operate. Abetting states offer such territorial safe havens. Germany's Red Army Faction (RAF) had international links that were less consequential for its attacks than for the survival of some of its cadres after the organization's decline.[3] In the 1970s some RAF members received training in Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) camps that operated under the auspices of the Syrian government in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. The links between the PLO and RAF became an international drama when PLO terrorists hijacked a Lufthansa plane in 1976 to force the release of the top RAF leadership from a high-security prison in Germany. When special forces flown in from Germany stormed the plane in Mogadishu and freed the hostages, the imprisoned RAF leaders committed suicide. Still, there was a deep divide that separated the members of these two groups. Lack of access to PLO camps would have impeded the RAF's operation. However, it would not have stopped the RAF from its bombing and kidnapping campaigns in Germany.

More consequential and politically explosive was the fact that Germany's unification quickly led the German police to a number of "retired" members of the RAF who, hosted by the East German secret police, the Stasi, had been living incognito in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). In the 1970s the GDR appears to have been an important transit country for RAF members as they traveled abroad to elude the investigations of the West German police. To this day it remains unclear whether the Stasi looked at these erstwhile members of the RAF, and then good socialist citizens, as comrades-in-arms deserving of support now that their dangerous mission had ended or as potential weapons that could be redeployed in the Federal Republic should the occasion warrant it. One thing is certain: Without the support of the GDR

3. Katzenstein 1990.

state bureaucracy--which provided new identities, false papers, apartments, and jobs--former RAF members, whether active, semiretired, or retired, would have had an exceedingly difficult time surviving in Germany or anywhere else in central Europe. With the crumbling of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the GDR, former supporters of the RAF were robbed of the protective cocoon the GDR had provided.

In contrast to Germany, Japan was much more successful in pushing two terrorist organizations abroad in the early 1970s.[4] Police pressure on the forerunners of Japan's Red Army (JRA) was so intense that at times up to three undercover police officers were shadowing every move of the leading members of Japan's radical Left. Because of their strong international ideology, leftwing radicals relocated to North Korea or the Middle East. From foreign territories they staged daring attacks, such as the attack on the Tel-Aviv airport in 1972, an oil refinery in Singapore in 1974, the French embassy in the Hague in 1974, and the U.S. and Swedish embassies in Kuala Lumpur in 1975. The JRA began operating in Lebanon with two members in the early 1970s; eventually it had up to fifty cadres and a larger group of supporters and sympathizers. In the 1980s the JRA could still count on about thirty core cadres operating abroad.[5] It was involved in numerous bombings and airplane hijackings.[6] Japanese officials were uninterested in and misjudged the significance of Japanese terrorists' operating abroad. The attacks on the embassies in Kuala Lumpur in August 1975, for example, caught the Japanese government and security officials by surprise. And the link between the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the JRA had completely escaped their attention.[7]

The importance of the JRA and its international operations waned in the 1980s, so much so that the JRA publicly debated whether to shift its operations back to Asia. The Oslo Agreement of 1993 accelerated its withdrawal from the Middle East. A change in Syrian policy in the mid-1990s left the JRA no choice but to withdraw completely. Within a few years almost all of the senior JRA cadres who had been abroad were apprehended in Japan, and the threat the JRA had once posed had all but ended.

Japan's and Germany's experiences with terrorism thus support the view that terrorist organizations are helped greatly by governments that provide sanctuary. When this is eliminated, terrorist organizations have a much more difficult time operating and even surviving.

This is not to deny the difficulties involved in deciding which instruments of power to apply. The range of choices available to Japan and Germany was not as broad as it is to the United States. For reasons of both history and capability, Germany and Japan have favored international police action and economic incentives over military force in their fight against terrorism. Since 1945the broad consensus within each polity against using military force would have made its unilateral use

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4. Katzenstein and Tsujinaka 1991, 21.
5. Ibid., 27.
6. See Ibid., 14–29; Farrell 1990.
7. Katzenstein and Tsujinaka 1991, 157.

against terrorists illegitimate. As two of the world's most important political democracies and capitalist economies, Germany and Japan commanded other diplomatic instruments. Their distinctive policies provide useful lessons to the United States as it continues its international antiterrorism campaign beyond the war in Afghanistan.

In the pursuit of specific antiterrorist policies and as part of a broad approach to national security, Germany has sought to foster police cooperation within the European Union, part of a consistent political strategy that has been as central to German foreign policy as its interest in close relations with the United States. Japan has relied on economic aid, its preferred policy instrument, to further its antiterrorist policies. For example, it seems highly plausible to assume that Japanese aid to Syria was shaped by the presence of the JRA in the Bekka Valley. When the Japanese emperor traveled abroad, aid payments to Syria increased sharply, presumably as a *quid pro quo* for Syria's restricting the geographic mobility of the JRA. In 1989–90, official government briefings to the media on Japanese aid policy made this link explicit.[8] Lacking the global power of the United States, Germany and Japan thus favored international cooperation on all matters vital to their security. They waited patiently, were witness to, and capitalized on international changes that they did not help bring about--the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the GDR in the case of Germany, the Oslo Agreement and the Middle East peace process in the case of Japan. September 11 has pushed the governments and citizens in both countries to come to terms with the political necessity of joining international coalitions of states that are prepared to use military force to achieve their political objectives. In contrast, as a global power and almost single-handedly, the United States is engaged in the much more difficult task of trying to bring about a major realignment in world politics, using all the variegated means of coercion, bargaining, and persuasion at its disposal.

September 11 and Domestic Policing

Constructing an international alliance of states opposed to terrorism is a demanding political task. It is, however, easier than locating terrorist cells at home that fuse different national groups from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Algeria, and that have established secure footholds in their host societies throughout Western Europe and North America. Such cells typically operate independently of one another, can stay dormant for years, and are extremely difficult to detect. Their existence encourages states to adopt policies that tend to undercut liberal norms. In the 1970s and 1980s Germany and Japan conducted their antiterrorist missions in very different ways.[9] Yet neither Japan's informal, low-tech approach nor Germany's formal, high-tech one were as important in eliminating terrorism as luck and the passage of time.

8. Katzenstein 1996, 92.
9. Ibid., 153–90.

Germany

In the initial weeks after September 11, Belgian, British, French, Italian, Spanish, and Bosnian police forces arrested over twenty suspects and detained several others for questioning who were known to have or suspected of having links to Osama bin Laden.[10] But it is Germany's importance as a staging ground for terrorist cells that is particularly instructive. Three members of a cell in Hamburg, coming from three different countries, were centrally involved in the September 11 attacks; and the German police have issued warrants for two other members of the cell. At least two other cells in Germany were linked to the cell in Hamburg and to Osama bin Laden.[11] The evidence is clear that terrorists used Germany as a major staging area for the September 11 attacks.[12]

The members of the Hamburg cell resembled others who have been arrested in Europe since SEptember 11: They held fervently religious beliefs, came from a wide variety of national backgrounds, were highly educated, and practiced Western, secular life styles. They moved unobtrusively in the societies they sought to terrorize in the name of jihad.[13] Loosely linked to Al Qaeda, militant Islamicist groups from Egypt and Algeria have been important in Europe, particularly in Germany. The cells of these organizations, loosely linked to each other through a few trusted emissaries, differ from groups traditionally engaged in Left- or Right-wing violence in industrial societies.[14] They appear to have neither a clear network nor a clear hierarchy. In the words of the German Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungschutz), "organizational borders are gradually disappearing" between Al Qaeda and nonaligned Mujahideen cells that both plan smaller terrorist attacks of their own and may provide logistical support for Al Qaeda. Security police in Europe face tremendous obstacles because of a profound lack of understanding of how these religious radicals operate.[15]

10. Chris Hedges, "A European Dragnet Captures New Clues to bin Laden's Network," *New York Times*, 12 October 2001, B10.

11. Ian Johnson, "Role of Germany as Terror Base Grows," *Wall Street Journal Europe*, 24 September 2001, 1, 6.

12. John Tagliabue and Raymond Bonner, "German Data Led U.S. to Search for More Suicide Hijacker Teams," *New York Times*, 29 September 2001, A1, B3.

13. See Hedges, *New York Times*, 12 October 2001, B10; and David Armstrong et al., A Careful Sequence of Mundane Dealings Sowed a Day of Terror, *Wall Street Journal*, 16 October 2001, A1, A8, A10.

14. Katzenstein 1998.

15. See Hugh Williamson and Jimmy Burns, Rivalry and Lack of Clues Slow Hunt for Terror Cells, *Financial Times*, 20 October 2001, 4; Jimmy Burns, Arrests Fail to Shed Light on Global Terror Links, *Financial Times,* 29–30 September 2001, 5; and Deibert and Stein 2002.

Why key terrorist cells were operating from Germany appears to be self-evident, at least in retrospect.[16] Statistical data released by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution suggest that in the late 1980s foreigners living in Germany who belonged to radical organizations (117,000) were more numerous than German members of these organizations (85,000).[17] In 2000, twenty Islamic organizations with a total of 31,000 members were under observation by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution; some estimates suggest that 10 percent of these members might be prepared to commit violent crimes.[18] And the German police force estimates that there are about one hundred radicals currently living in Germany who received training in Osama bin Laden's camps in Afghanistan or Pakistan.[19]

Germany has more foreign residents than any other society in Europe and has a Muslim population of 3 million. Berlin has the third largest Turkish population in the world. The crackdown with which the French government answered a spate of terrorist bombings in the 1990s dispersed some Algerian cells to surrounding countries, including Germany. And large numbers of asylum seekers were admitted to Germany in the 1980s and 1990s, including many from countries whose governments waged war on religious fundamentalism. German privacy and data-protection legislation make it more difficult than in the United States to check personal histories like salary levels and credit-worthiness.

The wave of antiterrorist policies of the 1970s and 1980s equipped the German police with strong powers to protect state security. Indeed, the Federal Security Service (Bundesnachrichtendienst) and the Office for the Protection of the Constitution prepared a long study in 1995 that addressed the threat foreign extremist and terrorist groups posed for Germany.[20] In 2000, after more than a year of investigation, the Federal Criminal Police Office (Bundeskriminalamt) submitted to the Office of the Federal Prosecutor a report detailing various connections between Osama bin Laden and Germany.[21]

Such reports were not sufficiently alarming, however, to shake the liberal legacy of Germany's post-Nazi history. History and memory have a powerful effect on policy. The current generation of political leaders takes pride in having learned the lessons of the past. Germany's Nazi past and the political prominence of the antiauthoritarian 1968 generation in positions of power have created a liberal asylum policy and implemented generous social-assistance programs that have made Germany an attractive location for "sleeper" cells of terrorist organizations. Cooperation with foreign intelligence and police services has been restricted because terrorism was defined only with reference to attacks inside Germany. And only two

16. See Steven Erlanger, In Germany, Terrorists Made Use of a Passion: An Open Democracy, *New York Times*, 5 October 2001, B6; and Hugh Williamson, More bin Laden Suspects Held in Europe, *Financial Times, 11* October 2001, 6.

17. Katzenstein 1996, 155.

18. See Angriff auf den Staat im Staate, *Der Spiegel*, 24 September 2001, 39:28–29.

19 Lieb, nett und niemals bose, *Der Spiegel*, 24 September 2001, 39:22.

20. Angriff auf den Staat im Staate*, Der Spiegel*, 24 September 2001,39:29.

21. Lieb, nett und niemals bose, *Der Spiegel*, 24 September 2001, 39:21.

notable terrorist acts perpetrated by Muslims have occurred in Germany--the assassination of Israeli athletes by Palestinian gunmen during the Munich Olympic Games in 1972 and the bombing of a Berlin nightclub in 1986. Court proceedings in the latter case have dragged out for fourteen years. Germans deeply value privacy and religious freedom, and before September 11 a clause of the German Basic Law prohibited the government from banning any group , that described itself as religious or faith-based, even one advocating terrorism. Germany's Nazi past, not its growing postwar secularism, explains its strong defense of religious freedom.

Japan

The lack of preparedness of the German police for religious terrorism has a striking parallel in Japan. Aum Shinrikyo's 1995 sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway system was the act of a religious sect with an apocalyptic vision. Among its 10,000 members, Aum Shinrikyo counted some of Japan's best and brightest, including students enrolled in elite universities. It stockpiled large amounts of chemical weapons, had plans to attack Tokyo's metropolitan police with laser weapons, and sought to buy nuclear and conventional weapons from Russia where some of Aum Shinrikyo's leadership traveled frequently. Although Aum Shinrikyo was linked, though not conclusively, to a number of murders, dozens of extortions, a smaller-scale gas attack in the spring of 1995, a shooting that the head of the National Police Agency (NPA), Takaji Kunimatsu, barely survived, the hijacking of an ANA jet, and a letter bomb sent to Tokyo's governor, the police did not clamp down prior to the sarin gas attack.

Legislation insisting on a strict separation of church and state and political and police practice guaranteeing religious freedom permitted Aum Shinrikyo to operate largely without restrictions, despite the appearance of criminal conduct. Since 1945 the taboo against police interference in the affairs of religious sects has run very deep in Japan. While police were extremely attuned to the activities of Left-wing radicals in the 1970s and 1980s, they left the criminal activities of religious organizations largely unexamined. Aum Shinrikyo is one of 1,500 religious organizations officially recognized by the government from 1984 to 1993. These sects fill the political space left vacant when Shintoism disappeared as the conservative state religion after 1945. Police restraint was not so much a matter of intent as of ideology, custom, and convenience. Prior to Aum Shinrikyo's 1995 sarin gas attack, the police simply did not conceive of religious groups as posing a serious threat to state security.[22]

After September 11, Prime Minister Koizumi was quick to lend active support to the United States' war on terrorism. By committing the Japanese Self-Defense Forces to providing intelligence support from the Indian ocean, he committed the Japanese military to supporting U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. After close scrutiny for its constitutionality, the "Bill to Support Counterterrorism" was passed by the Diet

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22. Katzenstein 1996, 71–72.

in October 2001 and marked an important step in the evolution of Japan's security policy. Yet Japan lacks its own counterterrorism policy. Its "no concession" policy is based less on internal conviction than on considerations of "international responsibility"; that policy has not been tested seriously in the last fifteen years and may in fact have been violated in 1999. Its Bill to Support Counterterrorism is basically "an initiative to help U.S. action in this specific instance."[23] It does nothing to prepare either the government or the public for the eventuality that the war on terrorism may eventually spread to Southeast Asia.

In sum, September 11 was an intelligence failure of large proportion--not only in the United States but also in Germany--and it parallels Japan's failure of intelligence in the Aum Shinrikyo case. The reason lies, to some extent, in the bureaucratic routines of police organizations and, more importantly, as the German and Japanese cases illustrate, in the historical experiences of the polity.

Conclusion

There are four lessons the United States can learn from Germany's and Japan's experiences with terrorism. First, their antiterrorism policies reveal the heavy hand of history ; fighting an international war against terrorism would have been exceedingly difficult for either nation, even had they had the necessary military capacities or sustained losses comparable to those of the United States on September 11. They relied instead on international police cooperation and economic aid. As the United States' war on terrorism moves from Afghanistan to other regions in the world, it might learn from the successes and failures of Germany's and Japan's reliance on a broad set of policy instruments.

Second, although both states preferred to keep a low international profile and avoid antagonizing other states, they were unconcerned with some of the potentially harmful international consequences of their domestic antiterrorist policies. The Japanese government had no qualms about "exporting" Japanese terrorists, regardless of the problems it created for other countries; once the JRA had left Japan, neither the Japanese police nor the government was concerned about its activities. Germany adopted a policy that focused police attention only on possible terrorist acts committed on German soil. It did not concern itself with the possible terrorist threats that extremist groups, including religions ones, operating in Germany created for other countries. Both states thus betrayed a distinctive narrowness in outlook and inwardness in orientation that can be explained only with reference to their historical experiences in the first half of the twentieth century. In its antiterrorist policies the United States should avoid such beggar-thy-neighbor policies.

Third, Japan and Germany developed distinctive methods of domestic policing that suited the political needs of different groups and distinctive conceptions of legitimate state authority. The United States is doing the same as it creates new gov-

23. Leheny 2001/2002, 5.

ernance mechanisms to deal with its domestic defense.[24] Dealing with internal security is a profoundly political issue that cuts to the core of state power and legitimacy. The issue is too important to be left only to management consultants and organizational theorists.[25]

Finally, Germany's and Japan's approaches to terrorism underline the importance of broadening the definition of national security. U.S. scholarship and policy analysis should learn from the research that European and Asian scholars have done for some time now on "societal insecurity" and on "comprehensive security."[26] A broader conception of security will pay more attention to religion. For reasons of history since 1945 Germany and Japan have accorded special protection and granted special liberties to religious groups. These groups were exempted from the crackdown on secular extremism that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. Yet in the 1990s it was religious groups that posed the greatest threats for mass terrorism. While there is an enormous amount of research in sociology and anthropology on the role of religion, it is terra incognita in the study of world politics, a few notable exceptions to the contrary notwithstanding.[27]

September 11 may be a turning point in world politics, but it is still too early to tell where we are headed: more, less, or different forms of globalization, interstate violence, and nonstate politics? It also represents a turning point for U.S. foreign policy[28] The "war" on terrorism is creating important changes in U.S. politics and policy. This is not, however, the first time the United States has launched such a war. Confronting a different threat in another era, the United States reacted to a powerful enemy abroad and generated a "red scare" at home. Louis Hartz wrote with foreboding of the tendency in the United States to identify "the alien with the unintelligible" and thus to prepare the ground for domestic hysteria.[29] In a vein of greater optimism that history was to prove right, Hartz went on to observe that the contradictions of the early 1950s created the impulse among Americans to transcend their narrow perspective. "The answer to the national blindness that the new time produces is the national enlightenment that it also produces: the race between the two is a fateful one indeed." For scholars of international relations, that race, once again, has begun.

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24. Carter 2001/2002.
25. Ibid.
26. On the former, see Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998; on the latter, see Alagappa 1998.
27. See Byrnes 2001; Gerges 1999; Haynes 1998; Rudolph and Piscatori 1997; Halliday 1996; Beyer 1994; Robertson and Garrett 1991; Hanson1987; and Laitin 1986.
28. See Posen 2001/2002; Walt 2001/2002; and Ahmed 2001/2002.
29. Louis Hartz 1955, 285–87

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