

Japan: Extremism and Terrorism

On July 8, 2022, a gunman assassinated Shinzo Abe, Japan's then-prime minister, in Nara, Japan. Abe was delivering a speech at a campaign event prior to being fatally shot by Tetsuya Yamagami, a 41-year-old who used a homemade gun. Police quickly apprehended the assailant who confessed he intended to kill Abe. Reportedly, Abe associated with a group of which the assailant held "a grudge" against. Yamagami has been charged with murder. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#))

Prior to Abe's assassination, Japan has dealt with limited terrorist activity. Given Tokyo's effective containment of terrorist threats within the country and beyond, on May 20, 2022, the U.S. Department of State revoked its designation of Aum Shinrikyo as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). According to the State Department, the group—which carried out a deadly sarin nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway system killing 14 people and injuring 6,300 others in 1995—was "no longer engaged in terrorism or terrorist activity" and no longer has the "capability and intent to do so." Aum's former leader, Asahara Shoko, along with 12 other group members, were executed in 2018 for their role in the subway attack as well as other crimes. Although the group is no longer an FTO, the group's assets within the United States will remain frozen. (Sources: [NHK World-Japan](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

On January 1, 2019, a man deliberately rammed his car into a group of New Year's revelers in Harajuku, central Tokyo. At least nine people were injured in the attack. The assailant, Kazuhiro Kusakabe, drove through a road which was closed for traffic as it is close to the Meiji Shrine, a shrine popular with Japanese residents seeking to pray for good fortune every New Year. Police later found large amounts of kerosene in the assailant's car and suspect he sought to spray kerosene on his victims to light them on fire. The suspect claimed to have driven the car down the street to protest Japan's death penalty. Additionally, Kusakabe claimed that the attack was in retaliation for "the execution of Aum cult members" who were executed in July of 2018. Aum Shinrikyo (Aum) is an internationally designated terrorist organization responsible for the 1995 sarin gas attack in Tokyo which killed over 13 people and caused over 6,000 people to seek medical treatment. The last report on the case on February 3, 2019, claimed Kusakabe is undergoing psychiatric evaluation to determine if he is fit to stand trial. As of March 2020, there have not been any developments in the case. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [CNN](#), [CNBC](#), [Japan Times](#))

Overview

The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs recognizes a high threat of terrorism directed against Japan. An important ally of the United States in counter-extremism efforts, Japan has frequently been identified as a target by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and its affiliates, and was specifically cited in speeches by former AQAP leader Osama bin-Laden. Japan currently views AQAP as its chief terrorist threat. While largely insulated from extremist threats, Japanese counterterrorism capabilities are likely to be tested closer to 2020—a year that Japanese police have dubbed the "first year of high-tech security"—when Tokyo was originally planned to host the Summer Olympics. Following the onset of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in early 2020, Japan rescheduled the Olympics to begin on July 23, 2021. (Sources: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#), [New York Times](#))

Compared to Europe, homegrown radicalization of Japanese nationals to Islamic extremism is minuscule. However, in October 2014, Tokyo police began questioning a group of young Japanese men apparently preparing to join ISIS in Syria. The investigation potentially represents the first serious stirrings of support for ISIS from among Japanese nationals. (Sources: [Al Arabiya](#), [Foreign Policy](#))

While similarly infrequent, Japan has nonetheless suffered at the hands of domestic extremist groups, most notably Aum Shinrikyo (now known as Aleph). Aum Shinrikyo members released sarin nerve gas in several Tokyo subway lines, killing 12 and injuring perhaps thousands more. In recent years, the group's activities have receded as it has come under increasingly close scrutiny from Japan's Public Security Intelligence Agency. According to retired FBI agent Edward Shaw, Japanese intelligence has better physical surveillance operations than any other country in the world. According to the Japan Times, following the death of Aum Shinrikyo's leader in 2018, the group was reportedly divided into successor groups, including Aleph, Hikari no Wa (Right of lights), and Yamada-ra no Shudan. The groups reportedly remain active as of June 2022. On May 20, 2022, the U.S. Department of State revoked its designation of Aum Shinrikyo as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). According to the State Department, the group was "no longer engaged in terrorism or terrorist activity" and no longer has the "capability and intent to do so." (Sources: [Japan Times](#), [BBC News](#), [Japan Times](#), [Asahi Shimbun](#), [Japan Times](#), [NHK World-Japan](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Japan has been at the vanguard of counter-extremism globally, especially through ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), the regional organizational body. Japan regularly provides large non-military aid packages – including infrastructure and humanitarian assistance for countries hosting refugees – for countries countering extremist violence. Following the January 2015 execution of two Japanese hostages taken by ISIS, Prime Minister Abe reiterated Japan's determination to "resolutely fulfill its responsibility to the international community in the fight against terrorism."

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(Sources: [New York Times](#), [BBC News](#), [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#), [ASEAN](#))

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

Homegrown Radicalization

Compared with many European countries, Japan has experienced little homegrown radicalization. However, non-political religious extremist entities have found their roots in Japan, such as the apocalyptic cult Aum Shinrikyo which carried out an attack on Tokyo in 1995. More recently, reports from late 2014 suggest that several young men were radicalized either online or at a bookstore in Tokyo to the point of joining ISIS. (Source: [New York Times](#))

Aum Shinrikyo

Aum Shinrikyo (Aum) was a Japanese cult founded by Shoko Asahara in 1984. It followed a “dangerous religion and strict practices” that reflected a “twisted blend” of Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, and Taoist elements, with the promise of an impending apocalypse. Its aim was to control Japan and eventually the world, creating a global utopian society. The group received international infamy in March 1995 when members carried out a chemical attack by releasing the nerve agent sarin in the Tokyo subway system, killing 14 and injuring over six thousand. The United States designated Aum as a foreign terrorist organization on October 8, 1997, with the European Union listing the group as a designated terrorist organization on June 17, 2002, and the Canadian government following suit on December 10, 2002. According to the U.S. Congress, Aum was the first terrorist group to have used weapons of mass destruction. (Sources: [National Police Agency of Japan](#), [Council on Foreign Relations](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Library of Congress](#), [Government of Canada](#), [EU Law and Publications](#), [Federation of American Scientists](#))

Aum leader Asahara was arrested in May 1995 under suspicion of masterminding the March 1995 sarin gas attacks and was sentenced to death in February 2004. Asahara, and seven other Aum members were executed in July 2018. (Sources: [Los Angeles Times](#), [New York Times](#), [BBC News](#), [Japan Times](#))

Aum is suspected of having cells in Russia and Montenegro, with over 30,000 suspected members in Russia alone. It was reported in 2017 that Aum had a successor group called “Aleph,” headquartered in Sapporo. Aum denounced Asahara in January 2000 and officially renamed the group to Aleph, seeking to regain legitimacy from the Japanese public as well as distance itself from its former incarnation’s violent practices. Following a report of illegal recruiting methods including embezzling funds from unsuspecting recruits, Japanese police raided Aleph’s facilities in 2017. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [New York Times](#), [Kyodo News](#), [New York Times](#))

According to the Japan Times, following the death of Asahara, the group was reportedly divided into successor groups, including Aleph, Hikari no Wa (Right of lights), and Yamada-ra no Shudan, that reportedly remain active. In October 2021, Aleph reportedly failed to report to the government, as part of a punitive surveillance action imposed on subversive organizations in January 2000, that could potentially subject the group to limiting its membership and daily operations. The group, which reportedly has 1,310 members, has assets including 540 million yen. (Sources: [Japan Times](#), [Asahi Shimbun](#), [Japan Times](#))

Although many of Aum Shinrikyo’s senior members were executed in 2018, on April 26, 2022, a former senior member of the cult was released from a central Japan prison. Makoto Hirata, who was given a nine-year jail term for his involvement in the abduction and confinement of a Tokyo notary clerk as well as the bombing of an Aum facility and condominium in 1995, turned himself in to police in 2011 after almost two decades on the run. The bombing of the condominium and firebombing of the Aum facility in March 1995—which took place on the eve of the cult’s sarin nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway system—were aimed at impeding a police investigation into the religious group. (Source: [Japan Times](#))

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Foreign Fighters

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In October 2014, Japanese police reportedly investigated several nationals suspected of planning to travel to Syria to fight with ISIS. The suspects were described as male university students in their twenties. One of the men was believed to have been recruited at a bookstore in Akihabara, Tokyo, where notices reportedly advertising unspecific work in Syria. According to the police, another man had been recruited online. According to a Japanese newspaper, the police confiscated the men's passports. (Source: [New York Times](#))

In September 2014, Israeli intelligence informed the Japanese Air Force that nine Japanese nationals had joined ISIS's ranks. (Source: [Jerusalem Post](#))

Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

On March 20, 1995, Japan suffered its worst terrorist attack to date when a group of religious extremists attacked the Tokyo subway system. The group, Aum Shinrikyo, launched five coordinated strikes with heavy use of sarin gas that injured scores of commuters and left a dozen dead. Additionally, the attack caused over 6,000 people to seek medical treatment. More than 180 Aum members are indicted for the attack, with Aum's leaders later being sentenced to death. The Japanese government revoked Aum's legal status as a religious organization following the attack. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Japan Times](#))

In October 2003, Osama bin Laden issued a message threatening all nations participating in "unlawful" military operations in Iraq. At the time, units from Japan's "self-defense force" were dispatched to Iraq, but under strict conditions that excluded any combat role. Bin Laden declared that these nations, including Japan which was mentioned by name, would suffer a "retaliatory attack" by al-Qaeda "at the proper time and place." Numerous subsequent attacks were made on Japanese nationals in Iraq. In November 2003, two Japanese government officials were murdered south of Tikrit. In May 2004, two Japanese journalists were killed, along with their translator, near Baghdad. (Sources: [CNN](#), [CNN](#), [Guardian](#), [Jamestown Foundation](#))

The latest source of extremist violence against Japan has come from ISIS in Syria. In August 2014, Haruna Yukawa, a self-proclaimed "half-journalist, half-doctor" was kidnapped on the outskirts of Aleppo. In October 2014, Kenji Goto, a freelance journalist, was kidnapped near Raqqa. Both men were executed by ISIS in January 2015 as the deadline for meeting its demands expired. (Sources: [Guardian](#), [USA Today](#))

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Although Japan has not contended with terrorist attacks in recent years, targeted violence has been a point of concern within the country. On July 8, 2022, a 41-year-old man equipped with a handmade gun fatally shot Shinzo Abe, Japan's then-prime minister, in Nara, Japan. Abe was delivering a speech at a campaign event prior to being fatally shot by Tetsuya Yamagami. Police quickly apprehended Yamagami who confessed he intended to kill Abe. Reportedly, Abe associated with a group of which the assailant held "a grudge" against. Yamagami, who served in Japan's Navy for three years, has been charged with murder. Details of the identity of the group have not yet been reported. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#))

- **July 8, 2022:** A gunman assassinates Shinzo Abe, Japan's then-prime minister, in Nara, Japan. Abe was delivering a speech at a campaign event prior to being fatally shot by Tetsuya Yamagami, a 41-year-old who used a homemade gun. Police quickly apprehend the assailant who confesses he intended to kill Abe. Reportedly, Abe associated with a group of which the assailant held "a grudge" against. Yamagami, who served in Japan's Navy for three years, is charged with murder. Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#)
- **January 1, 2019 - February 3, 2019:** A man deliberately rams his car into a group of New Year's revelers in Harajuku, central Tokyo. At least nine people are injured in the attack. The assailant, Kazuhiro Kusakabe, drove through a road which was closed for traffic as it is close to the Meiji Shrine, a shrine popular with Japanese residents seeking to pray for good fortune every New Year. Police later found large amounts of kerosene in the assailant's car and suspect he sought to spray kerosene on his victims to light them on fire. The suspect claimed to have driven the car down the street to protest Japan's death penalty. Additionally, Kusakabe claimed that the attack was in retaliation for "the

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- execution of Aum cult members” who were executed in July of 2018. On February 3, 2019, it was reported that Kusakabe is undergoing psychiatric evaluation to determine if he is fit to stand trial. Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [CNN](#), [CNBC](#), [Japan Times](#)
- **July 6, 2018:** Seven members of Aum Shinrikyo are executed.
Among those executed are Shoko Asahara, the cult’s leader. The group was found guilty of carrying out Japan’s worst terror attack in 1995, as well as carrying out another chemical agent attack in 1994 and a triple homicide in 1989. Sources: [BBC News](#), [Japan Times](#)
 - **November 13, 2017:** Following leads that Aum successor group, Aleph, has allegedly recruited and collected membership fees illegally from a woman, Japanese police raid the five offices and facilities of the extremist faction in Sapporo.
It is unreported if any members were arrested upon charges of illegal recruiting practices. Source: [Kyodo News](#)
 - **March 25, 2016 - March 29, 2016:** On March 25, security officials in Montenegro carry out raids in Danilovgrad and Podgorica, arresting 58 foreigners—including four Japanese citizens—associated with Aum.
During the raids, the government seizes thousands of euros in cash and electronic devices. On March 29, the government of Montenegro expels the 58 suspects. Source: [New York Times](#)
 - **- :** Haruna Yukawa, a self-proclaimed “half-journalist, half-doctor” is kidnapped on the outskirts of Aleppo, Syria.
In October 2014, Kenji Goto, a freelance journalist, is kidnapped near Raqqa, Syria. On January 20, 2015, ISIS releases a video demanding \$200 million from Japan within 72 hours or have its citizens executed. On January 24, ISIS beheads Yukawa and alters its demands for the release of Sajida al-Rishawi, who is jailed in Jordan for taking part in a series of 2005 hotel bombings in Amman. On January 31, Goto is beheaded as Jordan does not release Rihsawi. Sources: [Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), [Guardian](#), [USA Today](#), [New York Times](#), [NBC News](#), [NBC News](#)
 - **August 2, 2012:** A Japan Airlines plane headed to the United States reroutes back to Narita after the carrier receives an e-mail claiming a bomb was planted inside the plane.
The e-mail demanded the release of Aum leader Asahara. Upon thorough inspection of the plane, no explosive is found. Source: [Japan Today](#)
 - **May 28, 2004:** Gunmen attack a vehicle carrying four people near Baghdad.
Three of the four victims, including two Japanese journalists named Shinsuke Hashida and his nephew Kotaro Ogawa, are killed in the attack. No group claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [Committee to Protect Journalists](#)
 - **April 8, 2004 - April 15, 2004:** On April 8, a militant group known as Saraya al-Mujahidin holds three Japanese civilians hostage in an undisclosed location.
The assailants release a video of the hostages, and read a statement threatening Tokyo to withdraw its Self Defense Forces from Iraq or have its citizens executed. Despite Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi refusing to relent to the captors’ demands, the hostages are released on April 15. Sources: [CNN](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Guardian](#)
 - **February 8, 2004:** After an eight year trial, a Tokyo district court sentences Aum leader, Shoko Asahara, to death.
Asahara was charged with masterminding the 1995 sarin gas attack throughout the Tokyo subway system. Source: [New York Times](#)
 - **November 29, 2003:** Unknown assailants ambush an armed vehicle in Tikrit.
The assailants open fire on two Japanese diplomats, Katsuhiko Oku and Masamori Inoue, and their driver. All three victims are killed at the scene. Source: [CNN](#)
 - Osama bin Laden issues a message threatening all nations participating in “unlawful” military operations in Iraq.
At the time, units from Japan’s “self-defense force” are dispatched to Iraq, but under strict conditions that excluded any combat role. Source: [Jamestown Foundation](#)
 - Russian authorities arrest a group of Russian Aum members.
The suspects were plotting to detonate bombs across Japan in an attempt to free Aum leader Asahara from jail. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
 - **May 15, 1995 - May 16, 1995:** On May 15, Japanese police arrest Yoshihiro Inoue, Aum’s intelligence chief, under suspicion of masterminding the March 1995 sarin gas attacks.
The next day, Aum leader Shoko Asahara is arrested under similar charges. Police arrest 15 other leaders connected to the attack. Source: [Los Angeles Times](#)
 - **March 20, 1995:** The apocalyptic cult group, Aum, launches five coordinated attacks throughout Tokyo’s subway system.
The assailants release the chemical nerve agent sarin, leading to the death of 13 and causing over 6,000 to seek medical treatment. More than 180 people are indicted for the attack. Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Japan Times](#)
 - **June 27, 1994:** Aum release the chemical nerve agent sarin in a residential neighborhood in Matsumoto.
The attack kills seven and injures more than 500. Source: [Japan Times](#)
 - **November 4, 1989:** Six members of Aum break into Tsutsumi Sakamoto’s home.
The members strangle Sakamoto, his wife, and his child to death. Sakamoto, a lawyer, was helping parents seeking to free their children from the group’s control. Source: [Japan Times](#)

Domestic Counter-Extremism

In response to the October 2014 arrest of a Japanese university student allegedly trying to leave the country to join ISIS, the government vowed to take more proactive steps in countering domestic extremism. (Source: [Foreign Ministry of Japan](#), [Wall Street Journal](#))

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After the 9/11 attacks, Osama bin Laden and others named Japan as a potential terrorist target.

Japan began addressing domestic extremism over 60 years ago. The 1952 Subversive Activities Prevention Act created the Public Security Intelligence Agency (PSIA), tasked with monitoring left-wing extremist groups such as the Japanese Red Army. After the domestic terrorist group/cult Aum Shinrikyo's 1995 sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway, Japan expanded the PSIA's mandate with the Act Pertaining to Control of Organizations That Commit Indiscriminate Murder of 1999, also known as the anti-Aum Act. The act allows the PSIA to place the officials and members of an organization under surveillance if any of the suspects taking part in an act of indiscriminate mass murder are members of the organization or there is evidence the organization's members may take part in such an act. "Subversive activities" does not appear to include "hate speech" for, unlike many countries in Europe, Japan does not have specific provisions against it. Japanese authorities do not consider this issue a major domestic problem and suspended the section that criminalizes hate speech in Article 4 of the 1995 U.N. Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, to which it is a signatory. (Sources: [Public Security Intelligence Agency](#), [Public Security Intelligence Agency](#), [United Nations](#))

Japan addressed extremism again following the September 11, 2001, attacks, when statements by Osama bin Laden and others named Japan as a potential terrorist target. The Anti-Terrorism Special Measures law of October 2001 improved immigration control, intelligence, security measures for critical infrastructure, and efforts against terrorist financing. It also authorized the government to use its Self Defense Forces (SDF) to proactively combat the threat of terrorism. (Sources: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), [Heritage Foundation](#))

In December 2004, Japan adopted the Action Plan for Prevention of Terrorism. The plan includes 16 "Urgently Needed Terrorism Prevention Methods," such as increased immigration control, creation of a sky marshal program, thorough identification of foreign guests by the hotel industry, tightening control of materials that could be used in terrorist attacks, and boosting counterterrorism intelligence efforts. (Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#))

The Action Plan led to a 2006 amendment of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, which required the submission of personal identification information of foreign nationals arriving in Japan. It also required reports on crew and passengers entering Japan. As an island nation, "border security means security of the coasts," which is the responsibility of the Japan Coast Guard (JCG). Illegal or undocumented immigrants entering Japan mainly comprise Chinese nationals seeking better economic opportunities, who transfer to Korean cargo vessels via Chinese vessels near Korea. (Sources: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#), [Library of Congress](#), [Japan Coast Guard](#))

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) global watchdog censured Japan in June 2014 for its lack of progress in combating terror financing. The most recent FATF evaluation was published in 2008 and highlighted the low number of prosecutions and a lack of legislative clarity regarding the scope of criminalization of illicit fund-collecting and provision. Japan also continues to have an "incomplete mechanism for the freezing of terrorist assets." (Source: [FATF](#))

As Japan prepares to host the 2021 Olympic Games in Tokyo—which had to be delayed one year due to the onset of and the complications surrounding the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic—police are looking to introduce advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI) techniques to assist in identifying terrorist threats. For example, police may implement sophisticated face-scanning technology for large crowds, detecting certain facial tremors in individuals that correspond with the widely recognized phenomenon of heightened trembling by terrorists prior to committing an act of terrorism. (Sources: [Japan News](#), [New York Times](#))

International Counter-Extremism

Japan has been at the forefront of the global effort to counter extremism, despite the fact that the constitution prohibits the use of military offensive action. In September 2015, however, the Japanese parliament voted to allow Japanese troops to deploy in a combat role overseas. In November 2016, Japanese troops were sent in a limited military capacity abroad for the first time since World War II. Three hundred and fifty personnel from the Ground Self-Defense Forces arrived in Juba, South Sudan, to assist with peacekeeping operations, withdrawing in April 2017. Prior to and following the legislative decision, Japan has continued to provide maritime support to the coalition in Afghanistan and political and financial support to the coalition against ISIS. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Foreign Affairs](#), [Independent](#), [Reuters](#))

Japan has engaged in international conferences to discuss regional and global cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Since 2006, Japan has participated in the annual ASEAN-Japan Counter Terrorism Dialogue (AJCTD), twice hosting the dialogues. In addition, Japan has engaged in bilateral counterterrorism talks with Australia, the European Union, India, Pakistan, Korea, Russia, Turkey and the United States, among others. In April 2018, the United States hosted a workshop in Tokyo which focused on soft targets in a counterterrorism context. The workshop's participants

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included representatives from the U.N.'s Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, as well as representatives from various governments, and the private industry to discuss terrorist threats against public spaces and methods to actively share knowledge and practices in preventing attacks from taking place. Additionally, Japan held a two-day counterterrorism dialogue with the U.K. from December 2-3, 2019. The countries discussed the current situation of international terrorism, domestic measures to counter terrorism, and also current counterterrorism capacity building cooperation programs in third countries. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [United Nations](#), [Japan Center for International Exchange](#), [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#), [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#))

In addition to Japan's counterterrorism efforts, the country has been proactive in addressing the threat of radicalization. In 2013, for example, Japan co-hosted the "Workshop on Countering Radicalization" in Tokyo. (Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#))

Role in International Counter-Extremism Policy

Japan has a multilateral approach to combatting global extremism. According to the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan's international efforts to combat terrorism involve: (1) working to strengthen the international community's political will to fight terrorism, (2) formulating international law to combat terrorism, (3) providing support to international counterterrorism operations, and (4) exchanging information through talks and consultations with other countries.

1. Working to strengthen the international community's political will to fight terrorism

Japan works to bring attention to the threats of terrorism and garner international support to fight it. It has implemented all 13 U.N. Security Council resolutions combatting terrorism, and adopted relevant declarations at international forums including the G8 and APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) and through bilateral talks. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#), [APEC](#), [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#))

1. Formulating international law to combat terrorism

Japan has ratified and implemented all of the U.N.'s counterterrorism conventions and protocols, and is engaged in the ongoing negotiations for the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. Within the G8, Japan has joined efforts to establish standards for immigration control and transport security. Also within the G8, Japan and the United States established the Counter-Terrorism Action Group (CTAG). (Sources: [Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet](#), [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#), [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#))

1. Providing support to international counterterrorism operations

Japan's constitution prohibits Japan from engaging in offensive action. However, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Japan passed the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, authorizing its Self Defense Forces (SDF) to provide defensive assistance to the U.S. fight against terrorism. As a result, Japan was authorized to provide support (including intelligence-sharing, medical services, transportation, fuel and other supplies but excluding weapons and ammunition) to Operation Enduring Freedom. Japan contributed to the operation from December 2001 to January 2010. (Sources: [Library of Congress](#), [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#), [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#))

Japan is officially part of the U.S.-led international coalition to fight ISIS, and provides broad political and financial support to the coalition. In January 2015, the country committed \$200 million in non-military aid to the anti-ISIS coalition. Japan had previously donated \$33 million towards humanitarian relief for Syrian and Iraqi refugees. As noted in the U.S. Department of State's Country Reports on Terrorism published in 2017, Japan identified counterterrorism as a top priority during its hosting of the "Group of Seven" (G-7) summit in May 2016. (Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#), [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#))

Japan contributes SDF personnel and has made a significant financial contribution to U.N. peacekeeping missions. Over the past 20 years, Japan has dispatched about 9,300 SDF and police personnel. As of March 2014, around 400 personnel were engaged in the U.N. peacekeeping mission in South Sudan. (Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#))

Although Japan ranks 49th in military and police personnel contributions to U.N. peacekeeping efforts, it ranks 2nd in financial contributions, having contributed 10.833% of UN Peacekeeping Budget as of March 2014. (Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#))

1. Exchanging information through talks and consultations with other countries

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Japan works to exchange counterterrorism information through talks and consultations with other countries and international organizations. These include bilateral talks with Australia, Belgium, the European Union, India, Pakistan, Korea, Russia, Turkey and the United States, among others. For example, the Japan-Belgium Counter-Terrorism Consultation took place in Brussels on November 23, 2016, between Japan's Ambassador for International Cooperation for Countering Terrorism and International Organized Crime, H.E. Mr. Yuji Kumamaru, and the Belgian Director for the Counter-terrorism Section of the Security Policy Directorate, Mr. Frank Arnauts. (Sources: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#), [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#))

Since launching the ASEAN-Japan Counter Terrorism Dialogue (AJCTD) in March 2006, Japan has met annually with ASEAN member states to discuss increased cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Japan has twice hosted the AJCTD. The February 2017 edition of the AJCTD took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and was chaired by the Japanese Deputy Chief of Mission to ASEAN. (Source: [ASEAN](#))

In February 2013, Japan moved to address extremism born of radicalization. Alongside Malaysia, Japan co-hosted the “Workshop on Countering Radicalization” in Tokyo to “address [the] counter-radicalization issue, which attracts broad attention in connection with counterterrorism efforts.” (Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#))

Response to Hostage Crisis

In response to the January 20, 2015, ISIS hostage video, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe reaffirmed his country's political and financial commitment to the coalition against ISIS. He said, “The international community will not give in to terrorism and we have to make sure that we work together.” Also responding to the hostage crisis, chief government spokesman Yoshihide Suga said, “Our country's stance -- contributing to the fight against terrorism without giving in -- remains unchanged.” (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Al Arabiya](#), [Guardian](#), [New York Times](#))

Public Opinion

According to a report released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2018, over 52 percent of Japanese citizens who were surveyed consider ISIS and other extremist groups to be a top security concern in Japan. However, climate change and cyberattacks from other countries prevailed as the leading international threat for those surveyed—pulling in 75 percent and 81 percent respectively. (Sources: [Pew Research Center](#))

The 2018 results prove to be an improvement from public sentiment in 2015 when the Cabinet Office, at the request of the National Police Agency, polled citizens on the threat of terrorism in Japan. Over 79.2 percent of those surveyed in the government poll were worried about terrorism in Japan, particularly because of incidents abroad which involved Japanese citizens. Given the increased fear of terrorism threats towards Japan as well as Japanese citizens abroad, 61.8 percent of respondents believed that Japan should reinforce measures to not allow terrorists to enter the country and that Japan should increase information-gathering on terrorist groups. To further strengthen anti-terror measures, 93.6 percent of those polled believed that there should be greater security measures in place when monitoring large public events. (Source: [Japan Times](#))