

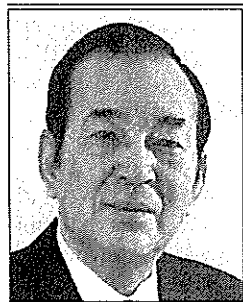
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Take every measure to deter terrorism

“Move like a chameleon, look in front, and watch behind!” There are few epigrams other than this Malagasy proverb (cited by Al Jazeera opinion writer Harry Hagopian on March 30) that tell us so succinctly how we should brace ourselves to fight terrorism.

U.S. President Barack Obama, hosting the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington on March 31 and April 1, stated in a closing speech that “we will prevail and destroy this vile organization” after referring to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) several times.

Since the start of 2015, European countries often have been targeted by terrorist groups, beginning with an assault



INSIGHTS
into the
WORLD

By Masayuki Yamauchi

on the French weekly newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris and most recently in the simultaneous bombings in Brussels on March 22. When multiple targets in Paris came under terrorist attack on Nov. 13, French President Francois Hollande declared, “We are at war.” In the wake of the Brussels suicide bombings, leaders of the 28 member states of the European Union issued a rare joint statement denouncing them as “an attack on our open democratic society.”

However, while nuclear weapons and state-of-the-art weaponry obviously remain effective as a deterrent to war between nation-states, the world has no quick and flawless remedy to prevent terrorists from stealing small amounts of nuclear materials, for instance, to be used in their attacks or to end the postmodern “war” between ISIL, which adheres to a series of premodern doctrines, and modern nation-states. In short, it is intolerable that there exists no absolute deterrent to inhibit terrorism.

People in Japan and the rest of the world need to recognize that the new global crisis we face is deepening because the multiple Middle East crises exacerbated by the civil war in Syria has been compounded by homegrown terrorism in Europe.

It is true that those responsible for frequent terrorist attacks in Turkey or Egypt have been Arabs and Turks as well as Kurds affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which is hostile to the Turkish government. But the terrorists who staged the horrific attacks in Paris and Brussels were born and raised in Europe, although their families are Muslims of

North African or Middle Eastern descent.

Moreover, “European terrorists,” who are said to account for one-third of ISIL’s foreign fighters, have killed a far larger number of people in Syria and Iraq in terrorist attacks on ethnic communities or fighting government troops or other militias than in Paris and Brussels.

When the flood of bereaved relatives of Syrians and Iraqis who have been killed by ISIL foreign fighters or refugees reach Europe to escape terrorist attacks at home say they are “victims of European terrorism,” who in Europe can dismiss such a claim? Having said that, however, I have to add that European countries must prepare for a situation in which some of those refugees who have arrived in Europe may take part in terrorist attacks. ISIL is reportedly pressing ahead with its strategy of exporting its hybrid “war” in the Middle East to Europe where ISIL members, posing as refugees, are believed to have been dispatched.

Posing as Muslims

Irrespective of their nationalities and places of birth — Europe, the Middle East or elsewhere — those who are involved in terrorism in the Middle East and Europe have one common characteristic. They are called “ta’aslum” (pretending to be Muslims) by Amir Taheri (Asharq al-Awsat on March 25). They are gravely responsible not only for indiscriminately killing coreligionists but also for degrading Islam, a divinely revealed religion, to such a level that it is used to justify extremist ideologies and cling to the cult of violence in their quest for power.

The perpetrators of terrorist attacks in Europe include those who drink alcohol or seek pleasure in violation of Islamic teachings. Against this backdrop, social problems such as relative poverty and discrimination in Europe are unlikely to have turned antisocial outlaws into Islamic terrorists. Rather, I think the democratic freedoms they experienced since birth are the underlying factor that eventually impelled them to change their inner selves from nihilists to terrorists.

In Europe, various thinkers — from the ancient Greek philosopher Plato to British philosophers John Stuart Mill and Isaiah Berlin of the 19th and 20th centuries, respectively — developed an elaborate series of theories of complementary relationships between “freedoms and rights” and “obligations and responsibility.” Those theories, which were adopted by the political theater, were incorporated in postcolonialism thinking and multiculturalism to expedite vehement criticism of the odious legacies and traditions of colonialism. Inheriting such trends, European democracy grew by upholding cultural and ideological diversity and pluralism and eventually abolishing

border controls within the European Union. However, underlying the development of democracy, the EU has made itself extremely vulnerable to the infiltration of terrorism into its member states.

There is nothing wrong with Europe’s cultural relativism as the region maintains its tolerance toward the belief that affirms Allah is the one and only god. Such an attitude, however, made European society lenient to political extremists, such as ISIL, that deludes young people into regarding themselves as the only persons to embody the truth, then forces them to submit to a dogmatic and biased interpretation of Islam. This means that Europe’s “virtue” of encouraging respect for cultural and religious diversity was confronted, from the very beginning, with the “vice” of spawning terrorism that took advantage of Europe’s liberalism and cultural relativism.

What then can be done to deter terrorism? Dialogue, as defined in general terms, cannot eradicate this scourge. The people victimized by terrorism and conflict triggered by ISIL are mostly Muslims.

In the early 2000s, I headed the Japanese government’s Cultural and Dialogue Mission to the Middle East on three occasions. I visited various countries in the region, while also serving as a member of the Japan-Arab Dialogue Forum — which was formed by the Japanese government in cooperation with Egypt and Saudi Arabia — and took an active part in

dialogues and exchanges with the Islamic world in Tokyo, Riyadh, Cairo and Alexandria, Egypt. We were able to hold useful discussions because our counterparts were pacifists, like us, of reason and intellect, and had nothing to do with terrorism. Utopian pacifism that maintains terrorism can be eradicated if we strengthen dialogue with Muslims and make further efforts to reduce poverty can never be a deterrent to terrorism.

‘Enemies of all humankind’

It should be noted that both ISIL members and “European terrorists” are the kind of people characteristically defined in Roman law as “hostis humani generis,” or “enemies of all humankind,” as Roman philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero defined pirates more than 2,000 years ago. Later on, the Latin term for maritime crime was also used as a definition for slavers and, in the 20th century, for those responsible for atrocities. Indeed, ISIL members and “European terrorists” deserve to be defined as “enemies of all humankind,” including Muslims and all other people irrespective of their racial and religious backgrounds. The Islamic world uses “mufsid fil-ard,” an Arabic phrase that means “corrupter on Earth.”

From the perspective of Japan, which will host the Group

of Seven summit meeting, popularly known as the Ise-Shima Summit, next month, and the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo, it is important to take every possible measure to deter terrorism in the short and medium term.

There are three immediate measures Japan should take. First, the government should ensure that strong border controls are in place to block terrorists from entering the country by bolstering its security and intelligence networks to prevent a repeat of the fiascos in France and Belgium to share information about terrorists internationally. Second, the government should prevail on the Japanese public to understand the gravity of the battle to prevent ruthless terrorists from spreading their aims to civil society. In this connection, there should be a consensus that ISIL terrorism is a new form of asymmetric and hybrid warfare between a nonstate organization and nation-states. Third, Japanese citizens should be asked to be patient and willing to endure the inconvenience of walking through metal detectors or cooperating in the search of personal belongings at public facilities and hotels. These steps should be carried out to ensure the safety of individuals and that of our free society.

The lesson Japan should learn from the crises in the Middle East and Europe is to shift the emphasis of its anti-terrorism policy from response to prevention to safeguard the freedom and order of Japanese society. But, in democracies such as Japan and the United States, even when people understand the extent of the threat and menace of terrorism, it is difficult to gain their acceptance of relevant authorities legally intercepting telephone conversations and collecting such data. It is worrisome that once a major terrorist attack takes place, society as a whole may feel so panic-stricken that people could rally behind malicious demagogues aimed at ostracizing refugees and foreign residents.

If the multiple crises spread beyond the Middle East and Europe to become a global threat, we may see the emergence of totalitarian regimes adhering to fascism or Stalin-era communism. It is time for Japan to widely and thoroughly discuss an approach to safeguard democracy and the need to strengthen the deterrent to terrorism as a way of ensuring that Japanese society will neither disregard the lessons of history we learned from the two world wars and the Cold War, nor turn its back on the victims of past wars.

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