

Rise of Islamic Radicalism in Asia Its Impact on Japan

The Rise of Islamic Extremism

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The discourse aims to examine:

- *Where does Japan fit on the topic of Islamic Extremism*

- *How fertile is the ground inside Japan to see increase of its own Muslim population?*

- *Is Japan a player or being played in the fight against extremism?*

- *Will Japan join the list of target countries by IS or is it already a counterparty in combat?*



I. Japanese extremism with religious connotations

II. Japan as a target by radicalized Muslims

III. Asian vector and its impact on Japan



Notion of Religion in Japan

- *Continuously poly-theistic society
(Shinto for life, Buddhism for after-life)*
- *Abolishment of State Shinto after 1945*
- *Weak Constitution encompassing all,
protecting none*
- *Distance from the world problems*
- *Religious tolerance based on insufficient
knowledge*

New Religious Groups in Japan

- *Wave of “New Religions” starting in 19th century*
- *Fertile ground for New Religious Movements after 1945*
- *Absolute fiscal freedom for declared religious organizations*
- *Neo-materialism contributing to search of values*
- *Young population in pursuit of purpose in life*

Occult movements – all adherence to Divine, all perceived as “weird”



Moderate

Institute for Research in Human Happiness



On Edge

Unification Church

Radical and outlawed

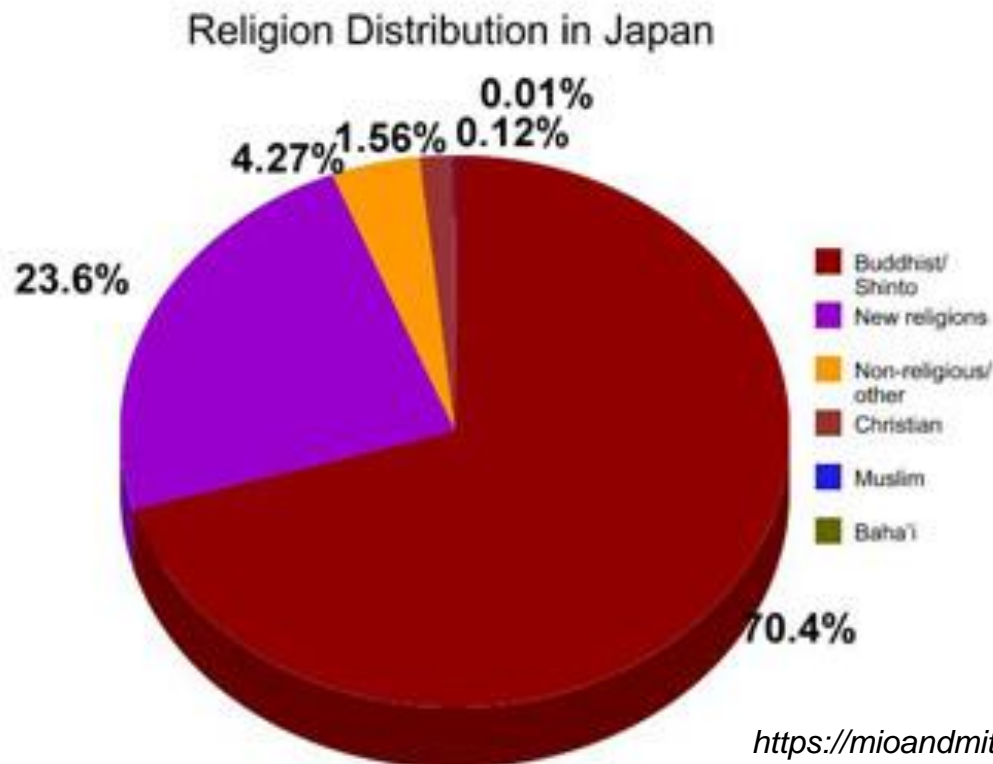
Aum Shinrikyo





Common features

- *Heretics from traditional viewpoints*
- *All focused on financial aspects of running a “religion”*
- *All centered on one living individual and his reverence*





Religious extremism is not new to Japan

What Aum Shinrikyo committed in March 1995:

Use of WMD against civilians

Alternate Government being prepared

Sarin attack being a culmination of previous crimes

And YES, Japan does have an anti-extremism law in form of Subversive Activities

Prevention Act of 1952

(aimed at left-wing, right-wing, Korean diaspora in Japan)





Islam in Japan

- *10,000 Japanese converts*
- *with foreign students and migrant workers up to 130,000 Muslims in Japan (Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Turkey)*
 - *not more than 0.1% of total population*
- *Over 100 years of history*
- *Over 100 mosques in Japan, 100's of halal restaurants*



gifu mosque





Shifts in Demography

On one hand:

- *Tourism potential estimated at USD 5 trillion p.a. (2 billion Muslims worldwide)*
- *Upcoming 2020 Tokyo Olympics*
- *Easing of visa regimes*

On the other:

- *Jemaah Islamiyah active in Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia*
- *All international terrorism perceived as perpetrated by Muslims (e.g. 1995 Oklahoma bombing)*
- *Increased economic and humanitarian engagement in Central Asia and ASEAN*

Important to remember:



- *Japan is strongly secular state, does not record religious affiliation in census*
- *Residencies and citizenships given regardless of religious background*
- *Absolute freedom of religious literature import*
- *Absolute majority of countries with prevalent Muslim population have Japanese diplomatic missions*
- *Almost USD 1 billion allocated for Syrian refugee crisis*
- *In 2015, out of 7,586 applications for refugee status in Japan, only 27 granted (in 2014 granted 11) – AFG, NEP, SYR, ETH, SRI*
- *From Syria after 2011, 65 refugee status applications, 6 granted (others residency status)*



Japan as a target

- *Increased involvement in international conflict, not necessarily its resolution*
- *Perception of giving in to extortion*
- *Nationals unprotected overseas*
- *Strong US ally*
- *Misconceptions regarding religious movements abroad*



Main incidents

- *Tajikistan – Civil War (anti-government)*
- *Egypt Luxor killings 1997 by Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya*
- *Tajikistan 1998 UN Official killing*
- *Kyrgyzstan 1999 kidnappings by Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan*
- *2002 Indonesia Bali bombings by Jemaah Islamiyah*
- *2003 Iraq Baghdad Embassy staff killings*
- *2013 Algeria In Amenas by Al Qaida*
- *2015 Syria kidnappings and killings by ISIS*
- *2015 Bangladesh murder by Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh*



ISIS in Japan

- *2015 ISIS recruitments over bookstore ads*
- *Assistance from university staff*
- *Up to 7 confirmed Japanese ISIS fighters (including old Islam converts, Self Defense Forces adepts, current students)*
- *Constitution without belligerency rights*
- *Disillusion with country's foreign policy*
- *Plain desire "to experience combat" and "to kill"*



Lessons learned:

- *Japan and its overseas interests already facing (but not fighting) interference from Islamic Radicalism*
- *Numerous casualties increasing*
- *Continuation of firm pro-US foreign policy*
- *Increasingly porous borders*
- *Bigger risks from immediate neighbors, not domestic Muslim community*

Thank you.



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