## What Price Security? Japan, Britain and the threat of terrorism

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BY Kanno Yusuke, Sasaki Manabu and Inada Shinji

Although Japan and Britain are both island nations, they are worlds apart--not just geographically, but in their approach to the threat of terrorism.

Both governments became targets of al-Qaida for supporting the

U.S.-led war against terror. The two countries are now tightening

immigration controls in their battle against terrorism.

While the measures being introduced are similar, the intensity of

debate over related legal revisions is like oil and water.

In May, Japan's Diet passed a bill requiring all foreign nationals

aged 16 or over--with the exception of state guests and those with

special permanent resident status--to be fingerprinted and

photographed upon arrival.

Despite the controversial nature of the legislation, debate in the

Diet was low-key. Interest among the general public was lukewarm, at best.

In March, Britain passed legislation requiring

all passports to

contain biometric data such as irises and fingerprints. But that

transpired only after heated debate and repeated revisions and rejections.

British immigration control officers started using iris recognition on an experimental basis that same month.

However, with continuing dissent and a general election slated for

2009, it is possible--if the ruling Labor Party is trounced--that

the new system will be scrapped as it is not due to be in place until 2010.

Japan's system changes have much in common with those in Britain,

including exercising tighter controls on foreign nationals and the use of fingerprinting.

Meanwhile, Japanese and foreign residents of Japan with ID cards

embedded with fingerprint data will be able to use fast-track border

control checks operated by automatic gates.

Anybody found to have ties with terrorist groups will be deported.

During the Diet debate, opposition Minshuto (Democratic Party of

Japan) called for caution and more time for deliberations on the

issue.



Proposed revisions included a clearly worded statement that personal

information such as fingerprints would not be used for purposes

other than immigration control.

Opposition lawmakers also expressed concerns about using the U.S.

firm Accenture to set up the new border control system using

biometric data. They said they feared data recorded in Japan might

become available in the United States.

Last fall, Accenture won a bid for only 100,000 yen to develop an

experimental system that allows holders of IC cards with fingerprint

data to pass through automatically operated immigration gates.

Accenture also developed the fingerprint datamanagement system

For the U.S. government that tracks all foreign nationals entering the country.

The U.S. firm is also involved in the development of systems for tax authorities and public prosecutors in Japan.

The government dismissed concerns of possible data leaks with the

promise that it would "strictly control data in line with the law."

Kono Taro, senior vice minister of justice, stated a pressing need

for the new legislation, saying: "We can't afford to be leisurely

about this. There were terrorist attacks in Bali and in London, and

al-Qaida is said to be targeting Japan, too."

The bill proposed by the government was endorsed on May 17.

The revisions to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition

Law stirred little public interest in part because most Japanese assume  $\,$ 

the changes have nothing to do with themselves, experts said.

Japanese nationals are excluded from the fingerprint requirement.

An estimated 470,000 non-Japanese with special resident status are also exempt.

Most of those with special resident status are Koreans who came to

Japan before and during World War II. Their descendants also fall into this category.

"It was a decision as a matter of policy," a senior Justice Ministry official explained.

The decision to exclude them from the new requirements stemmed

From fears of a severe backlash from the Korean community, sources said.

Mizukami Yoichiro, 64, former director of the Tokyo Immigration

Bureau, said he believes the fingerprinting requirement runs counter

to Japan's national interest in that it will hinder efforts to co-exist

peacefully with others.

With this in mind, he asked an executive official of pro-Seoul

Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan) if he minded receiving preferential treatment.

The executive apparently was bewildered.

In the 1980s, second- and third-generation Korean residents

spearheaded a movement against the



fingerprint requirement for alien registration.

Kim Sang Sa, 34, a third-generation Korean resident, acknowledged

the Korean community was slow to react this time around.

"We started to move in March after we learned the details of the

proposed bill," he said. "But we ran out of time when the bill was approved."

Kang Sang Jung, a professor of political science at the University

of Tokyo, says the revision is a reflection of the "anxiety syndrome" that

he believes is gripping Japan.

"Security attracts attention, and people are increasingly seeing

foreigners as targets for risk management," he says.

Kang, a second-generation Korean resident, had his fingerprints

taken for alien registration at the age of 16. Later, he refused to be fingerprinted.

"In Europe and the United States, moves to tighten control like this

would surely face opposition because of human rights concerns," he

says. "Crime prevention is important, but we need to hammer out a

balance in conflicts between order and our rights."

Yoshinari Katsuo, 55, a former representative of the Asian People's

Friendship Society, voiced sadness that Japanese seem to generally

regard the new legislation as "somebody else's problem."  $\,$ 

Yoshinari noted that foreign nationals residing in Japan were

basically kept in the dark, with the result that most foreigners

assumed the new legislation would only affect new arrivals--which is  $% \left( 1\right) =\left( 1\right) \left( 1\right) +\left( 1\right) \left( 1\right) \left( 1\right) +\left( 1\right) \left( 1\right) \left( 1\right) \left( 1\right) +\left( 1\right) \left( 1\right) \left($ 

far from the case.

"So far, Japan has been a comfortable place for foreigners to live

in," said Pakistani Nusrat Ali, a 44-year-old long-term Japan

resident. "But from now on, you'll be treated like a criminal simply

because you are a foreigner."

In Britain, meantime, the Labor government clashed head-on with

opposition parties over border control revisions and anti-terrorism legislation.

Following last July's terrorist attacks, Prime Minister Tony Blair

declared that the "rules of the game are changing" and went on to

propose steps that would make it easier to expel foreign criminals.

But his administration's plan to introduce ID cards with biometric

data met with strong opposition both from the left-of-center Liberal

Democrats and, on the right, the Conservative Party.

Critics fear police may take advantage of the new ID card as a means

to crack down on illegal immigrants, thereby fueling racial tensions, or

that it may lead to the leak--and abuse--of personal information.

Another factor is cost.

Miyajima Takashi, professor of sociology at Hosei University's

graduate school, attributes the difference in





public perceptions between Japan and Britain to the two countries' experience with immigrants.

Miyajima notes one in 10 British citizens is an immigrant or a descendant of one.

When problems arise with a foreign country, the immigrant population serves as a "bridge," linking the British to other nations.

That, he says, explains the British tendency to believe that

problems facing foreigners also concern them.

"On the other hand, Japan has only a short history of accepting

foreigners," he says. "The Japanese don't share foreigners' opinions

and tend to regard them as 'not directly related to us.'"

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