SHIGA UNIVERSITY

CRR WORKING PAPER SERIES　A

Working Paper No. A-11

How the concept of 'risk' in the social sciences can be used in the analysis of contemporary Japanese government policy and individual decision-making : a survey of four case studies

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January 2009

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Introduction

Up to now risk research in the social sciences has been confined mostly to post-industrial western society. What are the implications of applying this kind of theory to a major post-industrial society like Japan, which does not share the same European Judeo-Christian cultural roots? One of the purposes of this paper is to investigate this important question. Japan would seem to be a prime candidate for scholars interested in risk since the government and media are constantly warning the population about a whole variety of hazards both home grown and foreign in origin. At the same time Japan's traditionally group-oriented society is clearly going through a painful process of individualization – a related concept for those interested in 'risk society' - with a break-down of traditional marriage patterns, and an on-going debate about how to cater for the needs of the elderly. This paper will concern itself with how theories of risk and 'risk society' can help us understand the decision-making of individuals and government agencies in Japan when faced with a range of different challenges.

Risk in Japan: Four Case Studies Involving Government Policy

A leading sociologist and one of the founders of inquiry into 'risk society' is Anthony Giddens who writes that "[a] good deal of political decision-making is now about managing risks – risks which do not originate in the political sphere, yet have to be politically managed" (Giddens 1998: 29). He was writing about British politics in the 1990s but his words also apply to the contemporary Japanese political situation. Ulrich Beck, another founder of the 'risk society' paradigm, has argued that while national

* I would like to thank the Center for Risk Research, Faculty of Economics, Shiga University for the generous financial support that enabled this working paper to be written. I would also like to thank Professor William Bradley of Ryukoku University for the help he provided with regard to 'risk society' theory.

governments try to cope with the various risks around them they are hamstrung by the twin processes of globalization on the one hand and the ever-growing complexity of scientific and technological advances on the other. How well is Japan coping with these challenges? We will now survey four different case studies where the Japanese government has recently been involved in formulating policy to deal with risk. The four areas are: (I) risks facing Japanese citizens travelling abroad; (II) risks related to food consumption; (III) risks relating to energy policy and climate change; and (IV) the risks of terrorist attacks. In each case the work of political scientists and sociologists concerned with applying risk theory to studies of Japan will be surveyed. This will followed by a discussion of the common threads that hold these different kind of analysis together.

I. Risk and Responsibility: who looks after you when you go abroad?

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) is trying to encourage Japanese citizens to look after themselves when they go abroad. It wants them to become risk-managers. This fits in with calls by some political leaders (for example see Ozawa 1994) who want Japanese people to accept more self-responsibility. Hook and Takeda analyse this phenomenon in the following way.

> The discourse on self-responsibility and risk has emerged in the context of the dual pressures of globalization: on the one hand, the pressure to expand the international role of the state and to make a more robust military contribution as a “normal state”; and, on the other, the pressure to shrink the domestic role of the state and to off-load state risks to the market and citizen. (Hook and Takeda 2007: 94)

When Japanese citizens venture beyond the safe confines of Japan they are potentially subject to both of the “dual pressures” referred to by Hook and Takeda: i.e. they are in greater danger than before of being deliberately harmed by groups opposed to Japan’s new, more aggressive foreign policy; and also they are expected to rely more on their own resources if they find themselves in trouble since they can not rely on the state to help them out.

Hook and Takeda illustrate this development with reference to the abduction in April 2004 of three young Japanese citizens in Iraq. All three had gone to Iraq on their own volition and were opposed to the Japanese government's policy of support for the American-led invasion of the previous year. In spite of the distance they had placed between themselves and the government, the three abductees could have expected more sympathetic treatment from Japanese officials than they actually achieved. In previous kidnapping cases the government had given in to demands in order to avoid bloodshed. In 1977, Fukuda Takeo, the prime minister at that time, drew international criticism when he caved in to the demands of a group of Japan Red Army terrorists who hijacked a passenger jet saying "*Jinmei wa chikyû yori omoi* (The value of a human life outweighs the earth)." By contrast, in 2004 the official Japanese government line was not to give in to the demands of the abductors (who wanted all Japanese troops removed from Iraq). This hard-line attitude made sense in light of the Japanese government's efforts to be more like a "normal nation" in the eyes of the world. By coincidence Fukuda Takeo's son, Yasuo, was Koizumi's Chief Cabinet Secretary in 2004 and was asked by the press whether he agreed with his father's famous quote about the value of human life. In reply, the younger Fukuda said that "times have changed." He would have been more accurate in saying that the stance of the Japanese government had changed.

In spite of the official refusal to negotiate with terrorists a dialogue with them was established through the offices of a go-between. Although some kind of secret deal may have been reached, the release of the three hostages was eventually secured without any Japanese troops being withdrawn. Rather than celebrating the news of the safe return of the hostages, however, Japan's media launched a campaign of sometimes bitter criticism against them (Hook and Takeda 2007: 112-3). They were accused of failing to exercise "self responsibility" by ignoring the government warnings about the dangers of travel to Iraq. The press expressed what seemed to be the overwhelming public opinion that they were guilty of causing trouble (*meiwaku wo kakeru*), a crime that carries greater negative connotations in Japan that in Western societies. The three young hostages were shocked by their reception back home, and in at least one case there were reports of severe mental distress caused by the public criticism. Some outside Japan thought that this treatment was unjust. The U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell made the following comment.

> If nobody was willing to take a risk, then we would never move forward . . . And I am so pleased that these Japanese citizens were willing to put themselves at risk for a greater good, for a better purpose. And the Japanese people should be

> very proud that they have citizens like this willing to do that (Quoted in Hook and Takeda 2007: 120).

Clearly the Japanese government and media did not agree with Colin Powell about the desirability of taking risks – unless those risks are government sanctioned. Hook and Takeda contrast the case of the three volunteer hostages with the murder of two diplomats, also in Iraq, in November 2003. The two men had died in the service of the state and were honored with posthumous promotions. In Japan, risks that are taken on behalf of the state are valued more highly than the same risks taken by individual initiative.

II Risks relating to food consumption

This section deals with three different food crises affecting Japanese consumers. The first topic to be examined is a series of domestic scandals in Japan's food industry in 2007 that undermined public trust in the veracity of what was written on food product labels. The second sub-section deals with Japan's response to the global BSE crisis in the beef industry. The final sub-section looks at a case in 2008 that involved the deliberate poisoning of food imported from China, a scandal that undermined improving Sino-Japanese relations.

1. Food-related scandals of 2007

At the end of 2007, *nise* (fake) was named as the kanji of the year by the Kanji Aptitude Testing Foundation. This represented the most popular suggestion sent in by thousands of ordinary people. The second most popular choice was *shoku* (eating) and third was *uso* (lie). (*Japan Times* December 13th, 2007) Although, as usual, the mendacity of politicians and bureaucrats was also on the minds of people it seems clear that the main reason for the popularity of this kanji as a symbol for Japan in 2007 was the wave of food-industry scandals that shocked the nation. The first company to be disgraced was the well-known company Fujiya that specialized in sweets and cakes. In January it was revealed that it had been using milk that had gone past its consumption date as an ingredient for the cream in its famous cream puffs. The production of all Fujiya factories was halted until March and the share value of the company collapsed. It was later estimated that the scandal cost the company about 14 billion yen.

The Fujiya scandal posed a threat to public health. Other food industry scandals of 2007 did not endanger customers physically but did undermine their trust in what they were eating. For example, the company Meat Hope tried to pass off various cost-cutting meat blends as 100% beef. Also, Osaka-based high-class restaurant chain Senba Kitcho K.K. took basic supermarket standard chickens and advertised them as exclusive poultry dishes. Meanwhile in Hokkaido the famous maker of Shiroi Koibito chocolate cookies was found to have unlawfully extended real sell-by dates by up to two months. Other companies from all parts of Japan were found to be involved in false-labeling scams of one kind or another. Japanese consumers found they could no longer trust what was written on food package labels or restaurant menus.

What help can the risk society paradigm be in analyzing the place of these scandals in contemporary Japanese society? Political scientist Takeda Hiroko argues that the government's response to these kinds of scandal show that the locus of responsibility over food related risks is being shifted from the state to individuals. She argues that the government's *shokuiku* policy since 2005 (responding to previous food scandals) has aimed to create "autonomously-organized healthy eating lifestyles," and that in order to achieve this, individuals must be taught "risk literacy" so that they can independently understand, analyze and avoid food-related risks (Takeda's Presentation 2007).

The fact that individuals are increasingly on their own when facing up to the various risks life throws in their way is one of the themes of the risk society paradigm. Beck has coined the term "individualization" to refer to this process (see Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001). For Beck individualization means "the disintegration of the certainties of industrial society as well as the compulsion to find and invent new certainties for oneself and others without them." (quoted in Lupton 1999: p.70) Changed patterns of food consumption in a modern society like Japan illustrate this process. Whereas a century ago families would buy food and eat it together (usually with women doing most of the food preparation) in today's society the growth of industrially made convenience foods has enabled individuals to feed themselves without relying on the family unit. If the state is unwilling (or unable because of the ever more globalized nature of food production) to protect people and if the family unit is no longer the usual provider of meals, then each person is on their own to deal with the various risks presented by modern food products. The function of the family as a risk-absorber has been eroded. Also the welfare state is being scaled back. In this context the message from the government is clear: you are on your own. They want people to be more proactive and less reactive in facing up to the risks of food consumption.

Takeda also notes that it is no coincidence that this ideal proactive person is also the kind of individual required for Japan's economic revitalization. Proponents of "structural reform" aim to remove the "dependency culture" of the postwar Japanese system. Politicians who champion such reform aim to encourage behaviour that will build "human power" which can contribute to growth in a changed global economy (Takeda's Presentation 2007).

2. The BSE debate in Japan

The BSE crisis is a classic example of the new kind of crisis one finds in "risk society". People eating BSE-infected beef have no way of knowing that their food is contaminated. Furthermore, the disease that BSE can give rise to in humans, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD), for which there is no known cure, takes time to develop. There is no scientific agreement over the likelihood that such a person will contract the disease or the length of time between initial contamination and the development of symptoms. This confusion can lead to an understandable decline in the confidence people feel towards the "scientific" advice they receive. Beck writes that these sorts of hazard are not directly perceptible and so "require the 'sensory organs' of science."(Beck 1992: 27) However, if people cannot trust scientists then it is not surprising that incidents like the BSE scare can lead to panic. This is part of a pattern that Beck has observed that involves the loss of authority that scientists have with the public. The sellers of beef also lost the confidence of the public of course. One method of re-building it in the British case was by the use of advertising campaigns that promoted beef from nearby farms (Caplan 2000: 197-198). This 'localisation' of beef products marked a retreat from the globalization of the food industry. Serious scares, like the BSE crisis, therefore could be a threat to the trend towards globalization that usually marks the economies of late-modern societies.

Sociologist, William Bradley argues that in the Japanese case the government seems to have been slow in recognizing the danger posed by BSE. He argues that the government consistently promoted risk management in advance of risk evaluation. He goes on to say that the political reasons for this are that "the interests of the free and open marketplace, importers and producers of meat and bone meal (MBM) products, beef retailers and restauranteurs and even the U.S. government have been promoted at the expense of safety standards that would address the multiple levels of risk to ordinary citizens."

However public outrage over the crisis has forced the government to pay more concern to beef safety (Bradley's Presentation 2007).

Bradley argues that the Japanese government failed to learn the lessons of the British experience. Because BSE is usually found in the brain and spinal column of a cow, the British and other European governments banned MBM products in the 1980s. However the Japanese government continued to allow the import of MBM from Italy throughout the 1990s even though the Europeans had warned the Ministry of Agriculture explicitly of the lack of proper sterilization equipment in the case of at least one producer. (Bradley's Presentation 2007, see also Kingston 2004: 201)

The Japanese government set up the Food Safety Commission in 2003, but it soon ran into problems when it was accused of being incompetent and non-transparent in its deliberations. It is mostly made up of *amakudari* appointees and some of them were accused of having too close ties to the government.

3. The poisoned gyoza scare

In January 2008 a different kind of "dangerous food" scandal emerged on the scene. Ten Japanese people were taken ill after eating imported Chinese dumplings or *gyoza*. The subsequent media frenzy resulted in thousands of others reporting that they too felt sick after eating similar *gyoza* (although subsequent checks by health officials showed that *none* of these alleged cases of poisoning – beyond the original ten people - were genuine). As a result the consumption of food imported from China plummeted and a news agency survey found that 75 percent of respondents said that they "will not use Chinese food from now on."(*Japan Times* 17 March 2008). This kind of consumer panic in the wake of sensational media reporting of a food-poisoning incident will be unsurprising to students of risk perception in modern consumer societies especially as it is mediated by the press (Gardner 2008). However, an extra dimension was added to this particular scandal by the problematic diplomatic relations between China and Japan. A diplomatic furor was caused by the contradictory nature of the early conclusions drawn by Chinese and Japanese police investigating the incident. The Japanese side claimed that the nature of the poison – an organo-phosphate insecticide called methamidophos – proved that it was highly unlikely that the contamination took place in Japan, since that particular insecticide is currently a banned substance in Japan and almost impossible to get hold of. Contradicting this, Chinese investigators cleared the *gyoza* manufacturers – Tianyang Food of Hebei province – and went on to conclude that there was little chance of the dumplings being contaminated in China. The timing of this row was unfortunate because bilateral relations between Japan and China had been improving since October 2006 when prime minister Shinzo Abe made it clear that he would avoid the kind of provocations committed by his predecesor Koizumi. If the intention of the individual or group who poisoned the *gyoza* (both sides agreed that there was no possibility of the poisoning being accidental) had been to also poison relations between Japan and China, then they succeeded.

The poisoned *gyoza* scare involved risks to far more than the health of those who might eat the contaminated food. The economic stakes for companies in Japan and China were extremely high. China is Japan's second-largest source of food imports after the United States and accounts for over half its imported frozen products. On a more global scale Chinese companies were concerned over yet another blow to their safety reputation, following scandals involving exports of tainted pet food and dangerous toys to the United States and other countries. Media-led panics about incidents like the poisoned *gyoza* scare could therefore pose serious threats to China's giant export economy.

The poisoned *gyoza* scare brought about a complex inter-connection between economic issues, political/diplomatic issues and issues of food safety and consumer confidence. The nature of the crisis meant that traditional methods for smoothing over relations between China and Japan, i.e. both sides maintaining a deliberate vagueness in their public statements about potentially controversial issues, were difficult to pursue in this case. An editorial in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* of 1st March 2008 got to the heart of the dilemma.

> An attempt to settle the issue politically by keeping the facts ambiguous will only serve to leave emotional ill will on both sides. It may also lead to growing distrust among consumers.

The *Yomiuri Shimbun*'s conclusion here points to a weakness inherent in this kind of 'face saving' approach to conflict resolution in East Asia. Consumers will not be satisfied if their government resorts to vagueness or ambiguity in the face of serious risks that they, and their children eat. Governments that adopt this tactic therefore will face further erosions of the trust the people place in them.

Concluding points about food-related risks

The Fujiya scandal and similar cases show the willingness of the government to encourage people to manage their own risks concerning food consumption. The BSE crisis, however, is perceived to be so serious that the government must appear to do *something* or else seem incompetent or weak in the face of public criticism. In general, people demand that their government shield them from invisible risks – like those associated with BSE and vCJD – although, at the same time they are sceptical about what the government (or scientists) can actually do. This is as true in Japan as it is in other developed countries.

III Energy risks, climate change and negative externalities

Another way of conceptualizing risk, which is different from the approach of sociologists like Beck, Giddens and others, is to consider it in the form of ‘negative externality’. In political economy terms an externality can be said to exist whenever the utility of one or more actors (meaning an individual, a firm, a country) is significantly affected by the activity of one or more other actors. Positive externalities arise when what actors do brings unintended benefits to others. Negative externalities arise when these unintended consequences are detrimental. Climate change involves negative externalities because it is global and generational: the damage done by one nation-state can have severe negative consequences for other nations and for future generations not yet born. Policies designed to reverse, or at least slow-down climate change also present a serious ‘free-rider’ problem, since countries that do nothing will still benefit from those that take action and make sacrifices to address the situation.

Two important – and related - questions of interest to the application of risk theory to this area of Japanese government policy are the following: why has Japan done so little to address its dependence on oil; and why has it done so little to deal with the threat of climate change? Risk management at the national level is about anticipating crises and problems before they occur, and therefore having contingency plans in place to deal with them. It should also be involved with avoiding unnecessary problems wherever possible. It would therefore be rational for the Japanese government to have policies or planning in place that anticipate both the short-term chances of a cut in its supply of oil (almost all of which comes from the Middle East), as well as the long term dangers of climate change. Political scientist, Andrew DeWit has concluded that in both areas, the Japanese government is lacking in its response to these twin challenges (DeWit’s presentation 2007). The “oil shocks” of the 1970s are well-known for bringing to a halt the rapid growth of Japan’s GDP. The conventional wisdom was that Japan had learned its lesson from this and adopted a more diverse energy policy. DeWit argues, however that any lessons that were learned were forgotten in the 1990s as Japan struggled with the problems of a prolonged recession. The need for immediate cheap energy outweighed the risks of becoming over-dependent, once again, on Middle East oil, and by the early 1990s the real price of oil had gone down considerably. (Oil has many positive externalities in economic terms, being very cheap to extract and transport compared to other sources of energy.) An increase in oil prices in the 2000s came to an end when most of the world went into recession in 2008. The combined effects of cheap oil and a faltering economy are currently forcing Japan’s policy-makers to de-prioritize plans to wean Japan off oil as its primary energy source.

There are many risks connected with Japan’s dependence on oil. All of this oil is imported and currently 89 percent comes from the Middle East, defined as the OPEC Gulf oil exporters plus Oman and Yemen (*Japan Times* 9th January 2009). Furthermore, among the major OECD countries Japan is second only to Italy in its 48 percent dependence on oil in its primary energy mix (DeWit 2008: 3). Sharp rises in the price of oil will have immediate negative effects on Japan’s economy. Wars or other conflicts in the Middle East can affect the supply. Even piracy is a potential threat. Former prime minister Abe Shinzô in his book *utukushii kuni e* (“towards a beautiful country”) said that one of the reasons for sending Japanese troops to the help the American occupation of Iraq was precisely because of Japan’s dependence on oil from the region.

DeWit discusses the above short-term risks and dangers, but also points out that by far the largest risk or negative externality of dependence on oil is the longer-term threat of climate change. Japan’s exposure to the fallout from climate change is ranked among the highest in the world, but in spite of this it is lagging far behind those countries that are the leaders in implementing policies to address the coming crisis. Even though the Kyoto treaty was signed in a Japanese city, Japan has not been able to live up to the commitments that it made at that conference. Also, Japan is below the OECD average in its use of environmental taxes, and is performing poorly in energy consumption trends. DeWit argues that more attention is not paid to these failings because “of the huge shadow cast by America’s profligacy with energy and the Bush regime’s efforts to deny climate change and perpetuate the oil age.”(DeWit 2008: 8). Thus if the new U.S. administration under Barak Obama from 2009 onwards begins to take a more pro-active approach to energy efficiency and conservation, Japan's poor record in these areas will no longer be hidden from view.

How can we explain the lack of leadership from Japan in the area of climate change counter-measures? It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the various explanations put forward by political scientists to explain the overall phenomenon of weak executive leadership in Japan. (For one of the best accounts of this problem see Van Wolferen 1993.) What is certain is that over the last decade the one strong prime minister (Koizumi) followed the same line as the weaker ones. The consensus in the governing elite is to leave market actors to determine their own responses to the environmental challenge. There seems to be a faith that Japanese technological excellence will allow Japan's industry to profit from the growth of new environmentally friendly "green tech" technology which is set to become a huge industry worldwide. This hope seems to have some substance behind it when one looks at the success of certain products like, for example, Toyota's hybrid cars. However it is difficult to see how this policy alone will be sufficient to meet the challenges of oil dependence and global warming. It is no surprise to find that opinion polls show a high degree of dissatisfaction among the Japanese public with their government's environmental performance (Schreurs 2005: 149).

If the Japanese state is not rising to the twin challenges of oil dependence and global warming as much as it should, can the slack be taken up by the individual citizen? In some respects Japanese people are exemplary global citizens compared to people in other developed countries: they use public transport far more, for example, and are usually conscientious about sorting household garbage. However, on there are items on the debit side too, for example the poor quality of much of Japanese housing means they lag behind in areas like home insulation. The education system and the media certainly help to raise awareness of environmental issues, and the high price of energy in Japan encourages conservation wherever possible. However in a grim economic climate many ordinary Japanese citizens probably share their government's concerns that the short-term challenges of preserving jobs and preventing a decline in living standards are of more pressing concern than the more-difficult-to-imagine scenarios of a new Middle Eastern oil shock or environmental disaster brought about by climate change.

IV Heightened international risks of terrorist attacks and domestic security policy

How does the state respond to perceived increases in the risk of terrorist attack? One strategy might be to try to avoid provoking any groups or nations into launching an attack in the first place. Another strategy might be to try to pursue internationalist and pacifist policies world-wide that are aimed at defusing the conflicts and tensions that bring about the conditions that nurture terrorism. With its pacifist constitution and non-activist foreign policy it could be argued that Japan has adopted such strategies for much of its postwar history. This has been in spite of calls, both domestic and foreign, for Japan to become a more "normal" country, i.e. one with a normal army, navy and air-force, and a more assertive foreign policy. To what extent is Japan currently moving towards becoming a more assertive "normal" country, and what effect is this having on perceptions of terror related risks?

During the 1990s, critics of Japan's non-activist policy on security argued that the Japanese government was failing in its duty to properly protect the Japanese people. In 1995 the Aum Shinrikyo poison gas attacks showed the danger from domestic terrorism and then in 1999 the Japanese Coast Guard fired warning shots at a *fushinsen* (suspicious boat) in Japanese waters, drawing attention to dangers emerging from foreign sources. In the 1999 case the *fushinsen* (that was probably North Korean) was able to escape. This was not the first time an incident of this kind had occurred and some politicians argued that Japan needed to change its laws to allow the Coast Guard and the Maritime Self-Defense Force more freedom of maneuver when challenging suspicious vessels.

Those wanting Japan to adopt a more muscular security policy were frustrated until the September 11 terror attacks in the USA. The government led by Prime Minister Koizumi immediately announced they would step up measures to prevent terrorist attacks against Japan (including against US bases in Japan). Koizumi, who personally was one of those who wanted to make Japan a more "normal" country, was happy to promise President Bush that Japan would dispatch Maritime Self Defence Force ships to aid the US in the newly declared "war on terror." In practice there was little that the MSDF could do except help to re-fuel American ships that were aiding US military activities against the Taliban in Afghanistan. The dispatch was much more important in symbolic terms. As Leheny argues in his analysis of this event:

> In Tokyo, the dispatch of Japanese troops meant more chipping away at the

> shackles on the use of force to deal with international security: a hopeful moment for Japan's hawks, and a terribly worrisome sign for the doves (Leheny 2006: 156).

Japan later committed Land Self Defence Force troops to the American occupation of Iraq, but these soldiers were confined to non-fighting roles like infrastructure reconstruction and clean water supply, and had to rely on the soldiers of other nations nearby to protect them in case of attack. Once again the contribution was more symbolic than practical. This does not mean the importance of the contribution should be downplayed. On the contrary, the symbolism of Japan involving itself in the international "war on terror" allowed politicians to push through changes in Japan's domestic laws that suited a right-wing, more hawkish agenda. In this way the rules of engagement were changed to allow Japan's Coast Guard to use lethal force in engaging *fushinsen.* On December 22nd 2001, only six weeks after the rules had been changed, four Coast Guard vessels began to pursue another *fushinsen* near Japan which tried to escape by going into China's territorial waters. The Chinese allowed the Japanese vessels to engage in hot pursuit and shots were exchanged with the runaway boat. Twenty hours after the chase started the *fushinsen* exploded and sank – probably scuttled by its own crew all of whom perished.

Later the Chinese gave permission for the Japanese to salvage the sunken boat and take it home for further study. The bodies of fifteen North Korean men were found along with automatic weapons, a rocket launcher and other equipment. In 2003 the boat was put on display at the Japanese Museum of Maritime Science in Chiba prefecture. In six months the boat received over one million curious visitors. (Unfortunately the museum is not anywhere near so popular in normal times!) The government by now had stopped referring to the North Korean boat as a *fushinnsen* and instead called it a *kosakusen* or "operations boat", using a phrase that is usually used for covert or spying operations. Leheny argues that this name change is important for two reasons (Leheny's presentation 2006). Firstly it identifies the boat as a terrorist boat rather than a criminal boat, in spite of the fact that police believed that the boat (along with the majority of *fushinsen*) was almost certainly involved in drug smuggling operations – a criminal activity rather than a political or military activity. Secondly it links the incursion of the boat into Japanese waters with kidnapping incidents that took place in the period 1977 to 1983. These involved the abduction of innocent Japanese people by agents operating from small boats who took them to North Korea. This outrage was very much on the