

ASIA PROGRAMME

THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM "MADE IN CHINA"

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REMARKS

Numerous and variable sources, being French, English, American, Chinese or Israeli, have been used for the development of this project.

Mostly, they come from reviews and expertises from experts on China, but also from blogs and newspaper articles allowing to stay up-to-date with the Chinese news. It must be recognized that some of these sources are more contentious than others when it comes to the reliability of the information. However, you must know that the informations extracted from these types of files have been confirmed, especially by other elements listed in the footnotes.

“**A**s an important member of the international counter-terrorism camp, the Chinese government has always been involved in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism in all its forms. It has taken solid proceedings to fight against terrorism in accordance with the laws to preserve the national security, as well as the security and safety of its goods and its people”, noted Haito Wu¹, the Vice-Ambassador of China at the United Nations. If nowadays China is actively involved in the international battle against terrorism and extremism, it hasn't always been the case. During a long time, the Middle Kingdom opted for the strategy of the “lone rider”, only concerned about annihilating the evil causing the necrosis of the province to the west of its territory: Xinjiang. Oscillating between independence and Chinese domination, this region welcomes nowadays the greatest part of the Turkish Muslim community in China: the Uighurs. Colonized, persecuted and marginalized by the Chinese authorities, this ethno-religious community decided then to stand up against China. Some, radicalized and Islamized, went so far as to use terror to defend their pro-independence claims.

Victim of a national terrorism, and maybe in the years to come, if it's not already happening, victim of an international terrorism, the Chinese situation never comes up in our medias. The Westerners believe themselves to be the only victims of Islamist terrorism, but they're wrong. For many years, China has suffered a lot more attacks, and a lot more human casualties than the ones suffered because of the recent attacks in France. But we only heard about these ones, which made the news and generated reactions from the international community. Despite this, some refuse to consider the

¹ Rufus Polichinelle, « *Chine : Wu Haitao dévoile la recette chinoise contre le terrorisme frontalier* », Afrique-sur-7, 06/10/2016.

evil poisoning China. They deny its existence, and even imply that this « Communist dictator » invented a Uighur terrorism to justify its repression against this minority. In practice, it is indisputable that in its fight against religious extremism, China came to repress some of this minority's freedoms: a ban on the veil², on doing Ramadan³, but also on practicing the Muslim religion in a greater extent, for the officials, the students and the minors⁴.

Despite this, the stigmatized Chinese authorities are still facing a real Islamic terrorism that won't go away on its own. Condemned, just like the West, to live with the growing threat of Islamic terrorism and radical Islam, we can ask ourselves how is the Middle Kingdom organizing the resistance? Is it still playing the card of the « lone rider » by only caring about the national level? Or is China ready to open itself out into the world and fight alongside it against international terrorism?

COUNTER-TERRORISM LED WITHIN THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

Evolution is the key to preservation, and this is why China provides itself with the means necessary to fight against organized terror: experts specifically trained to counter-terrorism and a legislative framework adapted to the new issues posed by the radical Islam threat.

The experts training to the fight against Terrorism

Even though the Xinjiang Province is the principal battlefield, the fight against terrorism and the security personnel must not confine themselves to this one-sixth of the Chinese territory but, according to the Vice-Minister of Public Security, Yang Huanning, “*the entire country like a chessboard*”⁵. It is in this logic that some national, provincial⁶ and local leadership groups active in the fight against terrorism have emerged with specific objectives: improve the application of the central instructions, the coordination of services, the collection of informations, the training of intervening forces, these are the goals pursued. These ambitions are intended to be led successfully by the Chinese authorities, particularly by creating a “State Security Commission”⁷ to consolidate these

² Pierre, « *Chine: le voile islamique interdit dans la capitale du Xinjiang* », Europe Israël, 13/12/2014.

³ Déborah, « *Chine: Les autorités ont restreint les possibilités de suivre le Ramadan* », Europe Israël news, 06/05/2016.

⁴ Pierre, « *Chine: la religion musulmane interdite à l'école et à la maison* », Europe Israël news, 29/10/2014.

⁵ Julia Famularo, « *Comment le Xinjiang a transformé les politiques antiterroristes de la Chine* », The National Interest, 26/08/2015.

⁶ It is Article 5 in the First Antiterrorism Law (27 December 2015) that provides this type of organizations for every prefecture capital in order to mobilize the village and neighborhood committees, but also professional organizations and civil society organizations fighting against terrorism – La lettre de Chine – Information et Stratégie n°61, « *Politique Intérieure – Première loi antiterroriste de RPC* », La lettre de Chine, Janvier 2016.

⁷ Designed to address the insufficiencies of a system facing a clumsy organization of the security and intelligence services. The « State Security Commission » was instituted in 2013, during the 3rd Central Committee Conference, the result of the 18th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party – François-Yves Damon, « *Bulletin de documentation n°10. Les services de renseignement de la République populaire de Chine – Première Partie: La Commission Centrale de Sécurité Nationale* », Centre Français de Recherche sur le Renseignement, Novembre 2014.

prevention and crisis management targets. Where the security and intelligence services once were under the authority of different civil-military hierarchies, making the exchanges of informations and the coordination of the operations quite difficult, the “State Security Commission” rectified that.

Self-questioning is not always easy, and nevertheless China recognized that, in addition to a bad administrative organization, flaws in the training of its intervening forces also were to deplore. It was with the attack at the station of Kunming that the People’s Republic of China ends up understanding that the training of its policemen was still insufficient. The French Embassy was even told about this event that: “*We have known that nothing was ready in this city to counter such an attack: the weapons were locked in a nearby police station and it took more than twenty minutes to find the right key and to use the weapons!*”⁸. Some French diplomats even pointed out to the Chinese authorities that it was a necessary to improve themselves on collecting informations, especially via the Internet, and on their forces’ training. In this context, the Director of the French Gendarmerie went to China (December 2014), preceded by a delegation of the French secret services, to meet the Chinese police commanders and talk about what was done abroad in counter-terrorism⁹. Other countries, such as Israel, Australia and Pakistan¹⁰, were also solicited by Beijing who believes it can benefit from a cooperation that will be useful for learning, and will help China to improve its knowledge in counter-terrorism. When it comes to the monitoring of the practical training of its forces, China also benefits of Russian know-how. Two of the principal Chinese antiterrorism forces¹¹, Falcon and Snow Leopard, have been able to get a two weeks training this summer with the National Guard of Russia. The « Cooperation-2016 »¹², organized in the Smolenskaya and Moscow oblasts, has mostly focused on technical and tactical questions specific to the anti-terrorist operations¹³. The quantitative aspect of the intervention units is not no more underestimated, even though China is in shortage of specialists¹⁴.

⁸ Richard Arzt, « *La Chine prend des cours d’antiterrorisme auprès de la France* », Slate.fr, 03/04/2015.

⁹ Richard Arzt, « *La Chine prend des cours d’antiterrorisme auprès de la France* », Slate.fr, 03/04/2015.

¹⁰ Israel because its services may have relevant information for Beijing, considering this country, like China, is afflicted by an Islamist separatist terrorism, such as the Hamas. Australia is also a country that has face Islamist terrorism and host a large Chinese community; and Pakistan because its military power maintains a strong relationship with Beijing – Richard Arzt, « *La Chine prend des cours d’antiterrorisme auprès de la France* », Slate.fr, 03/04/2015.

¹¹ China has 10 Special Forces units, or these are the ones we know about, each having its own jurisdiction, and are spread out among the seven Chinese military regions. Each one has commando units from the Navy, Army or Air Force units and Chinese police forces, but we still don’t know about the means placed at their disposal: Siberian Tiger (for the Shenyang military region) / Arrow, nicknamed Divine Sword, trained in reconnaissance missions and counter-terrorism interventions (Beijing) / Night Tiger that is the oldest unit when it’s about counter-terrorism (Lanzhou) / Flying Dragon / South Blade, the strictly speaking commando unit (Guangzhou) / Eagle (Jinan) / Jailing for the Chinese military ports / Leishen for the Chinese air bases / Snow Leopard and Falcon for what’s about the Chinese police – Breve, « *La Chine dispose de dix unités de forces spéciales. L’organisation de ces unités spéciales demeure secrète en Chine* », OPS-Soutien Logistique Défense Sécurité, 21/12/2014.

¹² A Sino-Russian cooperation organized in July 2016 and allowing the Chinese troops to train alongside Russian forces, particularly in counter-terrorism. This « Cooperation-2016 » is the third one of this type after the « Cooperation-2007 » and the « Cooperation-2013 ».

¹³ Wang Qingyun, « *La police chinoise prennent une formation contre le terrorisme en Russie* », Chinadaily.com.cn, 07/07/2016.

¹⁴ Infosdany, « *Chine... Une université chinoise forme des spécialistes de la lutte contre le terrorisme* », Infosdany.fr.wordpress.com, 26/03/2016.

In the continuity of a State that encourages and supports innovation and research into counter-terrorism¹⁵, the first university stream dedicated to the fight against terrorism emerged at the Chinese People's Public Security University in Xi'an. Experienced professors and experts recruited in the USA, Israel, Australia and Pakistan¹⁶, train since 2014, for a four-year formation, the 80 students (selected according to academic, physical and psychological criteria) of this special curriculum. According to Mei Jianming¹⁷, the strength of this curriculum resides in a multidisciplinary training focused on: the intelligence collection and the training in investigation, information technology, strategy and tactics, and International Judicial Cooperation¹⁸. These students will also be trained in weapons use, and the best of them could be sent in the West to take part in anti-terrorism training programs and acquire hands-on experience¹⁹.

A legal arsenal as a tool to fight against Terrorism: The First Anti-Terrorism Act

To face of an increasingly virulent terrorism, the Chinese Nation People's Congress voted on December 27, 2015, the very first Anti-Terrorism Act of the country that will complement the Chinese legislative arsenal in the security field. This Act focuses primarily on how to fight "*all the forms of terrorism*"²⁰ and takes into account "*the evolution of terrorism on Chinese soil, but also abroad, and wants to have comprehensive prevention and repression*"²¹.

Even before we began dealing with the terrorists, it is the mobilization of social actors that is the subject of the first articles. Because a proactive citizen collaboration in the fight against terrorism is a necessity but also a duty²², it is essential for the population to be aware through: academic curricula, places of vocational training, but also the medias (radio, television, press, internet)²³. The public actors²⁴, but also the private ones, will also be mobilized: Chinese companies located abroad, for instance, will have to improve the protection of their employees, infrastructure, and their patrimony²⁵. Or even the telecommunication operators and ISP²⁶ that will have the obligation to provide technical

¹⁵ Article 77 of the First Counter-Terrorism Act (27 December 2015).

¹⁶ Le quotidien du peuple, « *Anti-terrorisme: La Chine recrute des experts étrangers* », French.peopledaily, 10/07/2014.

¹⁷ Director of the Centre of researches for Counter-terrorism of the University of People's Public Security of China.

¹⁸ M.C, « *Chine: Une formation « antiterrorisme » à l'université* », 20minutes.fr, 11/07/2014.

¹⁹ In this regard, the Ministry of Public Security considers to reinforce its judicial cooperation with Interpol to obtain internship opportunities for the Chinese students in its Member States – Infodany, « *Chine... Une université chinoise forme des spécialistes de la lutte contre le terrorisme* », Infodany.fr.wordpress.com, 26/03/2016.

²⁰ Article 2 of the First Counter-Terrorism Act (27 December 2015).

²¹ La lettre de Chine – Information et Stratégie n°61, « *Politique Intérieure – Première loi antiterroriste de RPC* », La lettre de Chine, January 2016.

²² Article 9 of the First Counter-Terrorism Act (27 December 2015), followed by Article 10 that provides the reward for every action that will have contributed imminently to the fight against terrorism.

²³ Article 17 of the First Counter-Terrorism Act (27 December 2015).

²⁴ Particularly the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, of Public Security, of State Security and of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), of Commerce (MOFCOM), and the National Development and Reform Commission, that would have to assess the risks for the protection of the citizens and foreign Chinese assets – Article 41 of the First Counter-Terrorism Act (27 December 2015).

²⁵ Article 42 of the First Counter-Terrorism Act (27 December 2015).

²⁶ Internet Service Provider

assistance to the public security and State security organs...²⁷ The entire society might be mobilized to fight against terrorism.

The surveillance and intelligence are also on the agenda. Video surveillance and warning devices should be in place by the local civil and military authorities at neuralgic locations²⁸ to prevent any terrorist attack²⁹. The informations collected would then be sent to the Antiterrorism Intelligence Centre³⁰, created in 2014. From the moment where someone is suspected, he can be forced to submit to some conditions: prohibition to use the public transports, to participate in manifestations, to get in touch with some people, and can be put under house arrest...³¹ All these things are considered as preventive measures, but the legislation also provides the management of a terrorist attack.

For a better coordination of the forces during an attack, the decision-making authority will be handed over, not to several, but to one and only command that will organize the intervention forces as well as the rescue services³². The information as to the mobilized staffs, hostages, and current operations, cannot be made public by the medias non-accredited by the combating terrorism organs³³. This should prevent from some "inconveniences", such as the one that occurred in France during the attack of the Kosher Supermarket (on 9 January 2015) where, while there was an ongoing hostage taking, the information about where the people were hiding had been circulated. Concerning the use of the force itself, this one will only exerted against an armed individual about to commit a violent act. The only exception to this rule will be the case where a summation would have even more dangerous repercussions³⁴.

Attack or preparation of terrorist acts, propaganda and glorification of terrorism, religious indoctrination, wearing clothes or logos linked with religious extremism... all these charges might be used against someone and lead to his provisional³⁵ or permanent detention. In this scenario, the prisons and detention centers will be able to receive terrorist or extremist prisoners, either separated from those guilty of common law offense, or put with them - which could lead to worry about recruitment in the prison environment³⁶. At the end of the jail sentence, the dangerousness level of the individual for the society will need to be evaluated each and every year. In the case of a still current

²⁷ Article 18 of the First Counter-Terrorism Act (27 December 2015).

²⁸ Road intersections, main roads, major public places, boundaries...

²⁹ Articles 29 and 38 of the First Counter-Terrorism Act (27 December 2015). Article 32 provides that the images that have been viewed could be retrievable during at least 90 days.

³⁰ Article 43 of the First Counter-Terrorism Act (27 December 2015).

³¹ From article 50 to article 53 of the First Counter-Terrorism Act (27 December 2015).

³² From article 55 to article 58 of the First Counter-Terrorism Act (27 December 2015).

³³ Article 63 of the First Counter-Terrorism Act (27 December 2015).

³⁴ Article 62 of the First Counter-Terrorism Act (27 December 2015).

³⁵ From 5 to 15 days of custody when there are not sufficient evidences for a criminal charge, especially for: glorification of terrorism, propaganda of terrorism or extremism, and religious indoctrination - Articles 80 and 81 of the First Counter-Terrorism Act (27 December 2015).

³⁶ Article 29 of the First Counter-Terrorism Act (27 December 2015).

threat, the dangerous individual will be redirected towards an education program³⁷ working on deradicalization and reintegration in the society.

All these different Chinese means are not extraordinary in themselves, and are largely based on already existing laws and means to fight Terrorism in many countries. However, those are the evidences of the awareness from China of the sustainability of the Terrorist threat, which is no longer an exceptional situation. Many points of criticism³⁸ had been used against the adoption of the Law that would somehow undermine the individual freedoms: one of them being an elusive definition of what an extremist action exactly is, that would presage a governmental tyranny on political dissidents and religious minorities. However, all these criticisms have been brushed off the table by China in the name of the protection of its citizens against terrorism and extremism. A protection that could be expanded beyond its own borders, in order to act upstream on the different sources of terrorism and international jihad.³⁹

CHINA'S COMMITMENT TO FIGHT INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIST TERRORISM

With these initiatives abroad, especially in Africa or Central Asia with the “New Silk Road”⁴⁰, China is led to invest in the most unstable regions that are badly hit by terrorism. More exposed than ever before through its nationals, China cannot remain impassive when being the victim of international terrorism.

The Chinese cooperation to the peacekeeping in the « Eurasian Balkans »⁴¹

Until very recently, China wasn't involved in the fight against international terrorism, focusing instead on erasing separatism in Xinjiang. However, as the professor Andrey Ostrovsky⁴² so rightly said, “*these are the links of the very same chain*”. China can no longer ignore international terrorism to the extent that the terrorist attacks in Xinjiang are primarily externally organized: “*To effectively fight terrorism in China, we can't just do it on the soil. There is a strong need of coordination and cooperation with others*”

³⁷ Article 30 of the First Counter-Terrorism Act (27 December 2015).

³⁸ With diplomatic protests from the USA and Barack Obama himself regarding the security of informations that may affect foreign companies in China – La lettre de Chine – Information et Stratégie n°52, « *Diplomatie – Loi anti-terroriste et protection de l'information* », La lettre de Chine, February 2015.

³⁹ La lettre de Chine – Information et Stratégie n°61, « *Politique Intérieure – Première loi antiterroriste de RPC* », La lettre de Chine, January 2016.

⁴⁰ Announced in October 2013, the « New Silk Road » or even « One belt, one road » is a megaproject financed by China. This project is part of a new strategy to develop the Chinese economy by developing the transports to Europe: like the project of a key highway linking Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan and China. Thus allowing to buy social peace by creating full employment, this project will allow the construction of new infrastructures: highways, railways, the energy network of Turkestan, hydroelectric dams... This project will also be complemented by a « Silk Road of the Sea » that will spread over the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Southern Pacific Ocean.

⁴¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Le grand échiquier, l'Amérique et le reste du monde*, Bayard Editions, 1997.

⁴² Russian specialist on Sino-Russian relations, deputy director of the East Asian Institute et director of the Chinese Economic and Social Studies Center.

*countries that are currently fighting against the threat of separatism and Muslim terrorism”.*⁴³

Understanding the necessity to stop the strategy of the « lone rider », the Middle Kingdom is now involved in multilateral cooperation mechanisms, such as the Istanbul Process⁴⁴, or the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF)⁴⁵. Ministerial conferences between leaders or discussion forums between experts, all have the same objectives: to encourage the cooperation between the States and to develop tools and strategies to fight the actual terrorist threat.

In line with this, China is also a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization⁴⁶, which grants a priority to the fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism⁴⁷; issues affecting the Middle Kingdom. Interpreted sometimes as the counterbalance to the western presence in Central Asia, the SCO's primary goal is to overcome national and transnational security issues⁴⁸: terrorism, traffic in drugs, weapons, ammunitions, explosives and nuclear or radioactive materials⁴⁹. A Regional Counter-terrorism Structure⁵⁰ has also been established for this purpose, and its anti-terrorism team can boast of allowing in 2015: to have put away 150 terrorists, arrested more than a thousand persons, and confiscated thousands of weapons and explosives⁵¹. In general, the Member Governments also agreed upon common definitions, the harmonization of the legal proceedings, and the exchange of informations between the secret services⁵². All these measures are needed now more than ever to fight against terrorism, particularly the Islamic State. In this fight for peacekeeping, the support of China is especially crucial. This is how China has, according to Yevgeniv Sysoyev⁵³, “*provided funds, supplied the equipment and an organizational support to the countries of Central*

⁴³ Andrey Ostrovsky - Sputnik France, « *Terrorisme : la Chine obligée de faire appel à la coopération internationale* », Sputniknews.com, 14/01/2015.

⁴⁴ Launched in November 2011, it's a discussion platform organized in « ministerial conference ». The objective was to develop the coordination between Afghanistan, its neighbors and regional partners to face common threats: counter-terrorism, fight against the arm trafficking, poverty and extremism.

⁴⁵ Global forum against terrorism that brings together 29 countries and the European Union. It brings together experts and workers so they can share their experience and expertise to develop a long-term strategy in the fight against terrorism and violent extremist ideologies - <https://www.thegctf.org/>

⁴⁶ The SCO is an intergovernmental international organization created on 15 Jun 2001 by Russia / China / Kazakhstan / Kirghizstan / Tajikistan / Uzbekistan. It is composed of permanent members, the 6 founding countries plus India and Pakistan (2016), and some Observer States, all from Central and South-Eastern Asia, except Turkey.

⁴⁷ « Convention de Shanghai pour la lutte contre le terrorisme, le séparatisme et l'extrémisme » (2001).

⁴⁸ Center for Security Studies, « *L'Organisation de coopération de Shanghai: Signification pour l'Occident* », ETH Zurich, December 2009.

⁴⁹ RT News, « *La stratégie de l'OCS: lutte contre le terrorisme et la réforme du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU* », Français.rt.com, 10/07/2015.

⁵⁰ Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure of the SCO. It was founded in 2004, its main site is located in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. In the West, some worry about the creation of a permanent armed force that would impose the OCS's members' interests on the region, even though nothing suggests this possibility.

⁵¹ According to the Director of the structure (Yevgeniy Sysoyev) - Huang Xue, « *Daesh menace majeure pour les Etats membres de l'OCS* », CCTV.com, 23/06/2016.

⁵² Center for Security Studies, « *L'Organisation de coopération de Shanghai : Signification pour l'Occident* », ETH Zurich, Décembre 2009.

⁵³ Leader of the Counter-Terrorism Structure, The Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Asia... We praise the efforts of China"⁵⁴. These efforts don't solely concern the security but also the purchase of the social peace by full employment, in particular through the project of "The New Silk Road", encouraged by the SCO⁵⁵. This should calm the social tensions, and ensure a certain form of stability in Central Asia. A stability that could be strengthened by the desire of the SCO to collaborate with other international organizations, such as the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the UN, OSCE⁵⁶, ASEAN⁵⁷, Interpol and Europol⁵⁸.

The Middle Kingdom also works on the eradication of the terrorist threat apart from the international organizations. Thus, China intends to set up a military coalition against terrorism jointly carried out by three Muslim countries: Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan⁵⁹. This future coalition with the multiple participations of China clearly shows the desire to count, as a key player, in maintaining regional security. The question is to determine how far the Middle Kingdom is willing to go to appear as a regional, or even an international superpower?

International Islamic terrorism threat: A Chinese military intervention outside its borders?

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, the USA have opted for a militarization considered as excessive by the Chinese authorities that defended the principle of non-interference. However, nowadays Beijing is doing the same and invests itself in an increasing militarization of its anti-terrorism strategy abroad⁶⁰, and it is doing so for two main reasons: first, because of the interference of the international terrorism, particularly Daesh, in the conflict in Xinjiang; second, because the Chinese nationals are more and more present overseas⁶¹ which leads them to be more exposed to the risk of terrorist attacks.

Turning first to the threat posed by Daesh on China, it is intrinsically linked to the Uighur problematic because the Islamic State is regarded as the protector of every

⁵⁴ Huang Xue, « *Daesh menace majeure pour les Etats membres de l'OCS* », CCTV.com, 23/06/2016

⁵⁵ IRIS – Analyses – Interview de René Cagnat, « *Une offensive djihadiste déstabiliserait toute l'Asie centrale* », IRIS, 11/08/2016.

⁵⁶ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (founded in 1973 and renamed in 1995): an international organization that aims to promote the dialogue and negotiation between the East and the West of Europe.

⁵⁷ The Association of South East Asian States (1967): founded in Bangkok to counter the communist movements and to ensure the stability in the region. This political, economical and cultural, regional organization has today as a purpose to reinforce the cooperation and mutual assistance between its members, to offer a space to solve the regional conflicts and to carry weight in the international relations.

⁵⁸ Huang Xue, « *Daesh menace majeure pour les Etats membres de l'OCS* », CCTV.com, 23/06/2016.

⁵⁹ Réseau International, « *La chine forme une coalition anti-terroriste avec l'Afghanistan, le Pakistan et le Tadjikistan* », Reseautinternational.net, 12/08/2016.

⁶⁰ Mathieu Duchâtel, « *La Chine et le terrorisme international : vers une rupture majeure* », European Council On Foreign, 27/10/2016.

⁶¹ In 2015, 128 million of Chinese traveled overseas et nearly 2 millions live on the African continent. As to the Chinese companies, there are 4 000 in what the Chinese analysts call « arc of instability », the geographical region that spreads from Afghanistan-Pakistan to Sahel – Mathieu Duchâtel, « *La Chine et le terrorisme international: vers une rupture majeure* », European Council On Foreign, 27/10/2016.

Muslims, including the Uighurs. By saying that China was one of those States violating the Muslims' rights, Abu Bakr Al-Baghadi, declared Caliph of the Islamic State, calls the Caliphate's soldiers to "take revenge"⁶². That being so, China never underwent one single attack on its soil that has been claimed by the Islamic State, at least officially, apart from the hacking of one of the most prestigious Chinese universities which had no consequences⁶³. However, it is quite likely to think that some Uighur attacks on the Chinese soil are linked to Daesh, meaning that the Islamic State has already attacked China on its own territory, no matter what some may say. William Nee, from Amnesty International, confided in an article published in August 26, 2016⁶⁴, that no link could be made between the Uighurs and the Islamic State. These statements have been contradicted by the American think tank, New America Foundation which estimates that almost 114 Uighurs have joined the ranks of Daesh. But the Chinese authorities say that it's more like 300 Uighurs that are currently training with the Islamic State, and then risk to come back on the territory to commit terrorist attacks and radicalize the population⁶⁵. Another worrying fact presented by Al Mayadeen Tv⁶⁶ in a report dating from 3 September 2015⁶⁷: hundreds of Uighur children learning how to fight in the training camps of Daesh in Syria. All of this allows us to understand why Daesh is such a "nearly direct" threat for China; and why China gets closer to the Government of Bachar el-Assad, for a better Sino-Syrian military cooperation, including the sharing of sensitive informations⁶⁸. The death of four of its nationals in 2015⁶⁹ only reinforced the determination of China in the fight against Daesh. Despite these deaths, another and more serious threat hangs over China for the first time; one of the medias of Daesh has broadcast sung messages, not in Arabic, but in Mandarin. The Turkish-speaking populations of Xinjiang aren't anymore the targets of the policy of radicalization of Daesh, the 12 million Huis, the Chinese of Islamic faith, are also part of their project (even though they don't suffer from the same repressions that led to some Uighurs to join the Jihad in Syria and Iraq). Knowing China worries about its interests in Iraq - 50% of the oil production is under its control - the USA try to get its support in their coalition against Daesh, even though it's more than likely that, for the moment, China will instead prefer Vladimir Putin and Bachar el-Assad⁷⁰.

⁶² Mathieu Duchâtel, « *La Chine et le terrorisme international : vers une rupture majeure* », European Council On Foreign, 27/10/2016.

⁶³ A hacker saying that he works on behalf of the Islamist State has entered the computer network of the University of Tsinghua to diffuse Jihadist propaganda (2016) – AFP agence, « *Chine: une prestigieuse université piratée par Daesh* », Etudiant.lefigaro.fr, 18/01/2016.

⁶⁴ Yvan Côté, « *La chine et les Ouïghours, lutte contre le terrorisme ou répression ?* », Radio-Canada.ca, 23/09/2016.

⁶⁵ Stéphane Gérard, « *Chine: quelle place le terrorisme islamiste occupe-t-il ?* », Géopolis, 29/07/2016.

⁶⁶ A Lebanese television network base in Bayreuth.

⁶⁷ In this report, we hear about a Syrian village that was transformed into a community for hundreds of Uighur families fleeing the Chinese government repression. Their children are then recruited by Daesh and Jabhat Al-Nosra – Christian De Lablatinière, « *Syrie: des enfants Ouïghours chinois apprennent à combattre dans les camps d'entraînement de l'Etat islamique* », Europe Israël news, 07/10/2015.

⁶⁸ Michael Clarke, « *China's Terrorist Problem Goes Global* », The Diplomat, 07/09/2016.

⁶⁹ A hostage, Fan Fan Jinghui, was executed by Daesh (November 2015) and 3 Chinese people died during the attack of the Radisson Blu in Bamako (20 November 2015).

⁷⁰ La lettre de Chine – Information et Stratégie n°47, « *Chine et la coalition anti-EI* », La lettre de Chine, Septembre 2014.

As for the other threat which constitutes an inconvenient for the economic interests of the « Dragon », it coexists on the African continent with close to 2 million Chinese nationals⁷¹, pushing China to assume a new military role that wasn't originally devolved to it. The whole problematic being, according to Anthony Ross⁷², to “*protect the Chinese economic interests, without giving up on distinguishing themselves from the USA and Europe by acting this way: “Look at us, see how pacific we are; we’re just doing business!”*”⁷³. With this in mind, the first reaction from China was to hire, no its own army, but private security groups, like the one belonging to the American, Erik Prince - former boss of Blackwater, the most powerful private army in the world - who now works in Africa for Chinese companies⁷⁴.

The African countries calling for China's support in their fight against terrorism⁷⁵, this one now maintains military cooperations with different countries⁷⁶ of the zone and helps them financially for the training and equipment of their armies⁷⁷.

Furthermore, the Chinese army intervenes more and more, through the United-Nations Peacekeepers (500 in Mali and 144 in Southern Sudan), in the peacekeeping missions, deploying for the first time a complete battalion of infantry beyond its own borders⁷⁸. Some stay cynical about the Chinese motivations: peacekeeping, the protection of the Chinese interests, an opportunity for its army to gain field experience, to reinforce its role as a superpower⁷⁹... Be that as it may, this China's commitment to maintain stability in Africa stays an opportunity for Europe. So could China stop being only an economic partner to become a politico-military actor? In theory no, because China always refuses to intervene directly on the military plane, except for the UN interventions. But the doubt is legitimate when we know about the agreement between Beijing and Djibouti (November 2015) to allow China to build a platform⁸⁰ that would be able to host 10 000 men, in addition to logistical military facilities.

This doubt only reinforce with the Chinese First Anti-Terrorism Act. This law provides that the People's Liberation Army and People's Armed Police Forces can send “personnel” in counter-terrorism actions beyond the Chinese borders. A formulation,

⁷¹ Dozens of them have already been abducted by small terrorist groups, like the 10 Chinese people abducted in Mai 2014 by Boko Haram while they were working on the construction site of a hydroelectric dam in Nigeria. This type of events is susceptible to happen more and more often, even more with the presumed presence of the Uighurs among the African terrorists (Mali...).

⁷² A University professor at the Chinese Studies Centre of the University of Stellenbosch, in South Africa.

⁷³ Sébastien Le Belzic, « La Chine s'engage contre le terrorisme en Afrique », [Le Monde.fr, 16/03/2015](#).

⁷⁴ Sébastien Le Belzic, « La Chine s'engage contre le terrorisme en Afrique », [Le Monde.fr, 16/03/2015](#).

⁷⁵ Le quotidien du peuple, « *Quel rôle peut jouer la Chine dans la lutte anti-terroriste en Afrique* », [French.peopledaily, 14/04/2015](#).

⁷⁶ Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Southern Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya.

⁷⁷ Sébastien Le Belzic, « *La Chine s'engage contre le terrorisme en Afrique* », [Le Monde.fr, 16/03/2015](#).

⁷⁸ Sébastien Le Belzic, « *La Chine s'engage contre le terrorisme en Afrique* », [Chinafrica.info, 14/04/2015](#).

⁷⁹ Mathieu Duchâtel & Richar Gowan & Manuel Lafont Rapnouil, « *La Chine en Afrique : un changement de la doctrine de sécurité chinoise* », European Council On Foreign, 15/06/2016.

⁸⁰ Turned toward the Indian Ocean to secure the seas, particularly in the project « Silk Road of the Sea ». This location would also allow China, if were to join the Syrian-Russian coalition, to provide troops and equipments to Syria.

according to Mathieu Duchâtel, “voluntarily vague that leaves to China a large margin for maneuver to use its military power in international counter-terrorism operations”⁸¹.

Even though the actions of the Uighurs have been led with honorable motivations, they nonetheless have gone wrong. As the saying goes, “the road to hell is paved with good intentions” and radicalization of some turn against them, but also against the whole community. Terrorism has infuriated a giant that is today ready to ask itself the rights questions to adapt and fight. Closed in on itself for a long time, China is finally opening itself up on the rest of the world, aware that it’s possible to take advantage of a profitable teaching - new training of its personnel, modernization of its legislative system - and a support more than ever necessary to deal with the internationalization of Uighur terrorism.

However, very few medias talk about this terrorism, whereas if these attacks had touched the USA and made half the victims, the entire world would have stopped breathing. So why such a denial about terrorism in China? Is it a lack of interest for this country? It seems unlikely. So, maybe fear then? The fear that in recognizing China as a victim, we would legitimate its repressions and human rights violations against the Uighur community. Worse, it could give to China a legitimate role to play in the fight against international terrorism: a role in which China could interfere in the affairs of weakened States - particularly in Africa - or prefer Vladimir Putin and Bachar el-Assad to the coalition led by the Americans. The real reason is still uncertain, but whatever it is, the China’s militarization in its fight against terrorism has been already initiated, and is only going to increase as the country undergoes new attacks. For Mathieu Duchâtel, Richard Gowan and Manuel Lafont Rapnouil: “The question is to know where the China’s role will be limited to a strict definition of its national security interests, protecting its nationals and assets abroad, and how far China will be willing to go to strengthen its “image as great power” that contributes to the global stability?”⁸². ■

⁸¹ Mathieu Duchâtel, « La Chine et le terrorisme international : vers une rupture majeure », European Council On Foreign, 27/10/2016.

⁸² Mathieu Duchâtel & Richar Gowan & Manuel Lafont Rapnouil, « INTO AFRICA: CHINA’S GLOBAL SECURITY SHIFT », European Council On Foreign, Juin/2016.

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