

# ON CHINA'S NEW ERA ANTI-TERRORISM GOVERNANCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

---

Zhao Jun<sup>1</sup>

East China Normal University

Hu Yu

Shanghai International Studies University

*Safeguarding core national interests, building China's image and the effective implementation of the "One Belt and One Road" strategy are the main initiatives in China's recent participation in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East. China has not attached much clear strategic significance to its efforts, but it has been engaged in anti-terrorism management in the Middle East through the use of various tactics, with an advantage in terms of morality, image and flexibility. However, China's efforts are more or less restricted by other factors such as its prestige and determination, its limited influence in the Middle East, and relevant cooperation mechanisms. In its future efforts, China should pass on its experience to other participants of global anti-terrorism governance, while maintaining its strengths. In addition, China needs to pursue creative participation to increase acceptance of governance with Chinese characteristics by the international community.*

Terrorism in the Middle East<sup>2</sup> is one of the toughest issues for countries around the world, and has become increasingly difficult to solve because of the rise and expansion of the Islamic State of Iraq and al Shams (ISIS). China, as a permanent member state of the UN Security Council, has long garnered global attention for its stand and actions taken against terrorism. It is undeniable that China has already actively introduced herself into various anti-terrorism campaigns, including building the Shanghai Cooperation

---

1 Foundation Note: The Chinese Education Ministry Key Research Program (No.14JJD810017).

2 Note: The concept of "the Middle East" in this paper refers to the "Greater Middle East," including 22 Arab countries, Israel, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Cyprus and Afghanistan. See "Greater Middle East" as defined in V. Perthes, "America's 'Greater Middle East' and Europe: Key Issues for Dialogue," *Middle East Policy* XI, no.3 (2014): 85-97.

Organization to counter Sherqiy Türkistan or Chinese Turkistan Separatism. The discussion of *whether* China should take part in global anti-terrorism governance therefore should be one of *how* China should take part in the global anti-terrorism governance.

Anti-terrorism governance as part of global governance mainly includes three aspects: anti-terrorism policy, anti-terrorism mechanism-providing and restraining factors from other actors in the implementation of anti-terrorism policy and mechanism-providing.<sup>3</sup> Due to diverse understandings of China's position in the international community and the policies and actions taken by China, different and even contradictory views on China's current participation in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East are presented in academia. One scholar says China should be more involved in anti-terrorism governance by directly dispatching troops to the Middle East. He listed five advantages for taking such an action, namely, safeguarding the national security, gaining combat experience, extending China's influence in that area, improving its image and enhancing the Sino-US relationship.<sup>4</sup> Another group insists that China should learn from America's lesson in the Middle East by staying away from getting involved with terrorist organizations like ISIS.<sup>5</sup> There also exists a third opinion, in which China may offer spiritual and economic support to global anti-terrorism cooperation, while staying outside of the anti-terrorism military alliance led by America, since China always follows a non-alliance principle.<sup>6</sup>

The divergence of opinions demonstrates a multi-dimensional aspect to the populace's understandings of China's role anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East. Those opinions are shaped both by the current policies and corresponding actions of the Chinese government aside from the influence of the scholars' own career ambitions, preferences and values. Therefore, in order to achieve a clearer view of how China should be part of anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East, we need to conduct a deeper study on the motivations and the actions of the Chinese government in anti-terrorism governance, along with the obstacles it has to face.

3 Chen Guangsheng, *Towards Good Governance* (Hang Zhou: Zhe Jiang University Press, 2007), 124-125.

4 Dingding Chen, "China Should Send Troops to Fight ISIL," *The Diplomat*, September 12, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/09/china-should-send-troops-to-fight-isis/> (accessed November 29, 2015).

5 Kristina Fernandez, "Why China Should Not Get Involved in ISIS Fight?," September 12, 2014, <http://www.chinatopix.com/articles/9932/20140911/why-china-should-not-get-involved-in-isis-fight.htm>; Mei (accessed August 26, 2015); Xinyu, "It is not Benefited for China to Openly Attack IS", *Global Times*, September 10, 2014.

6 "Should China Attack IS OR Not?," <http://v.ifeng.com/mil/arms/201411/0199a79f-d0fd-440e-9329-c70ed3846836.shtml> (accessed August 26, 2015).

## Motivations

First of all, China's core national interests are menaced and impaired by terrorism. This is the ultimate reason and the most direct one pushing China to pursue anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East. It is pointed out in the white paper *On China's Peaceful Development* that the core interests of China include national sovereignty, national security, territorial integrity, national unity, the stability of state institutions stipulated by the national constitution and a stable society which provides a ground for sustainable economic and social development.<sup>7</sup> The threats from terrorism to these core interests can be more or less perceived in the following three aspects.

The spread of Islam fundamentalism defames the Chinese government. Since the 1990s, extreme Islamic thought has been propagated throughout China's Xinjiang region, hampering the implementation of government policies and menacing the political and economic security in the area. At present, that extreme Islamic thought is spreading quickly through Xinjiang via the Internet with videos as the most popular tool, a fact which gravely disturbs the public. In the videos, many speakers are renowned Imams from Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey with wide influence among the Islamists. The Han people and Muslim women without veils are often the targets of street attacks.<sup>8</sup> Such violence has caused hundreds of deaths and prompted investors to flee out of this region. The local economy is deteriorating. Local security thus is greatly threatened and economic development is largely hindered.

Quite a few Islamic extremist groups in the Middle East have openly supported the violent terrorist attacks and events that aim to split the country apart and defame the central government. For example, after the July 5 incident,<sup>9</sup> Abu Yahya al-Libi, a senior leader of Al-Qaeda's North Africa branch, accused China of "cruelly oppressing Muslims"<sup>10</sup> and of "plundering their wealth,"<sup>11</sup> and he even threatened to take revenge by attacking the 50 thousand Chinese working in Algeria, all the Chinese living in Southwest

7 *White Paper on China's Peaceful Development*, China's Information Office of State Council, September 6, 2011, <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1026/15598619.html> (accessed August 26, 2015).

8 Wu Ruru and Gao Wenjun, "Investigation on 'Holy War' Videos on the Internet," *Phoenix Weekly* 15 (2014): 29-35.

9 Note: "The July 5 Incident" refers to the terrorist attack that occurred in Urumqi, Xinjiang, China on July 5, 2009. This attack caused 197 deaths and left 1721 injured.

10 Shirley A. Kan, *U.S.-China Counterterrorism Cooperation: Issues for U.S. Policy*, CRS for Congress, May 7, 2010, <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL33001.pdf> (accessed November 29, 2015).

11 Ishaan Tharoor, "Al-Qaeda Leader: China, Enemy to Muslim World," *Time*, October 9, 2009, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1929388,00.html> 9 (accessed September 1, 2015).

Africa, as well as the projects invested in by Chinese people.<sup>12</sup> Evidence shows that, since 2013, fifteen terrorist attacks in China had close connection with terrorists in the Middle East, including the terrorist attack in Kunming, the train station explosion in Urumqi, the Guangzhou railway-station blood rampage, and more. These attacks were all planned and carried out under the direction of overseas Islamic Jihadist groups.<sup>13</sup> Currently, ISIS and Al-Qaeda have openly expressed their stand against the Chinese government. In July 2014, ISIS declared China as its attack target and announced that the Xinjiang area was part of its territory, while Al-Qaeda has long held that the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is an independent region wrongfully occupied by China. It declared war against China in October 2014.<sup>14</sup>

Terrorism in the Middle East poses a severe threat to China's overseas interests in that area, which negatively affects China's economic and social development. China's overseas interests in the Middle East include personnel security, economic investment and energy supply, among which energy supply in the Middle East is closely tied to China's core national interests, since effective energy supply is the foundation for long-term economic and social development. For the moment, the wide spread of terrorism in Iraq has started to produce a negative effect on China's oil imports and related investments. Although the effect has not yet seriously influenced China's oil imports, there will be a severe impact if the unrest in Iraq spreads to the whole Gulf area.

Secondly, ensuring the implementation of "the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road" initiative ("One Belt and One Road"<sup>15</sup>) is another one of China's motivations for participating in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East. In order to actualize the "One Belt and One Road" initiative raised by Xi Jinping, President of China, a secured environment is one of the prerequisites. However, in China, the East Turkistan separatists have close contact with the terrorists in the Middle East and pose a grave threat to the social stability of West China. If the

---

12 Kan, *U.S.-China Counterterrorism Cooperation: Issues for U.S. Policy*.

13 Jacob Zenn, "Beijing, Kunming, Urumqi, Guangzhou: The Changing Landscape of Anti-Chinese Jihadists," Jameston Foundation, *China Brief* 47 (2014) (accessed July 12, 2015).

14 Zachary Keck, "Al-Qaeda Declares War on China, Too," *The Diplomat*, October 22, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/10/Al-Qaeda-declares-war-on-china-too/> (accessed September 19, 2015).

15 Note: "One Belt and One Road" is a development strategy started by the Chinese government in 2013. It refers to the New Silk Road Economic Belt, which will link China with Europe through Central and Western Asia, and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, which will connect China with Southeast Asian countries, Africa and Europe. Neither the belt nor the road follows any clear line geographically speaking; they serve more as a roadmap for how China wants to further integrate itself into the world economy and strengthen its influence in these regions. For further details: "One Belt and One Road," Xinhua Finance Agency, <http://en.xinhuanet.com/html/OBAOR/> (accessed October 25, 2015).

investment environment were to be destroyed in Xinjiang, the strategic pivot of the blueprint, the trade between China and Central Asian regions, would be hindered and, accordingly, the economic development of West China would be impeded. Meanwhile, outside of China, the terrorist groups in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Kazakhstan have an intimate relationship with the terrorists in the Middle East. Thus, these countries run a high risk of being turned into a second battlefield by ISIS, which, if this were to become reality, would have a gravely negative impact on the implementation of the “One Belt and One Road” initiative.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, China’s participation in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East is essential.

Thirdly, building up China’s image as a country with a sense of international responsibility is one of the driving forces for China to take part in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East. It is stated in the *Report to the Eighteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China* that China will “get more actively involved in international affairs, play its due role of a major responsible country, and work jointly with other countries to meet global challenges.”<sup>17</sup> The whole international community is beset by terrorism in the Middle East, and China is no exception. A defined stance on the terrorism issue is one of the major criteria for a responsible country becoming committed to common issues of humanity. At the moment, China plays an important role in the world arena, but China’s peaceful development, national rejuvenation, and the realization of the Chinese dream needs support and resources both at home and abroad, and a proper image can facilitate access to such resources. Hence, China’s active participation in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East is, on the one hand, an attempt to fulfill its duty as a permanent member state of the UN Security Council and, on the other hand, an opportunity to build a good image.

## Strategy and Tactics

China’s participation in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East is an essential part of China’s foreign policy. Since the end of the Cold War, China has adhered to a foreign policy of safeguarding world peace and security in order to create a sound external environment for its national interests, which also serves as a guideline for China’s anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East. Therefore, the policies and tactics adopted by the Chinese government

---

16 Charles Lister, “Profiling the Islamic State,” Analysis Paper for Brookings Doha Center, no. 13, November 2014, (accessed November 29, 2015)

17 Hu Jintao, *Report to the Eighteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China* (Beijing, People’s Press, 2012), 38.

in its anti-terrorism governance have all represented this strategic stance, despite the lack of a clear strategy statement.

In terms of policy and principle, the Chinese government has held a clear-cut stance and has laid out unambiguous policies, which is quite different from China's neutral standing in the past. The policies and principles can be summarized as follows: 1) China is against terrorism of all forms; 2) China will spare no effort to eradicate terrorism from its roots; 3) China opposes attaching terrorism to any specific ethnic group or religion and is against the "double standards" in the anti-terrorism campaign; 4) China insists that the UN should play a leading role in the international anti-terrorism campaign; and 5) the Chinese government promotes a new conception of security and international cooperation.<sup>18</sup> Under the guidance of the above principles and policies, China has adopted the following set of tactics.

The first tactic is to join the formal international multilateral system in the UN framework. China has mainly taken two paths to the anti-terrorism mechanism with a view to fitting anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East into a global anti-terrorism mechanism. One is to join the UN anti-terrorism convention, abiding by the principle of international laws. Until the end of 2014, China has approved and implemented almost all of the items from the 13 international anti-terrorism conventions issued by the United Nations. At the moment, China is advancing communication on the UN *Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (Draft)*.

The other approach is to demonstrate China's anti-terrorism stance and policy by supporting the UN Security Council's anti-terrorism resolutions. Since 2008, China has voted for every anti-terrorism draft decision proposed by the UN Security Council. Among those decisions, some are repetitions of general principles and their implementation, while others lay down more concrete measures; some may have set clear objects, while others may be a demonstration of attitude and stance. To the UN, these decisions not only enrich the content and connotation of anti-terrorism principles and policies, but enhance the authority and prestige of the UN. Meanwhile, to China, this is a display of its long-held stance and principles that form the legal grounds for its participation in the international anti-terrorism campaign today.

---

18 Zhu Weilie, "Terrorism in the Middle East, Global Governance and China's Anti-terrorism Policy," *Arab World Studies* 28, no. 2 (2011): 4-6.

*Table 1 (by the authors): China's Voting Results on the UN Security Council's Terrorism Resolutions (2008-2015)*

Resolution No.	Target(s) of Resolutions	Resolution Time	Vote
1805	Terrorism	March 20, 2008	Yes
1822	Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Bin Laden	June 30, 2008	Yes
1904	Al-Qaeda, Taliban	December 17, 2009	Yes
1988	International Terrorism, Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Illegitimate Armed Groups	June 17, 2011	Yes
1989	Al-Qaeda, etc.	June 17, 2011	Yes
2083	Al-Qaeda	December 17, 2012	Yes
2129	Terrorism	December 17, 2013	Yes
2133	Al-Qaeda, etc.	January 27, 2014	Yes
2161	Terrorism	June 17, 2014	Yes
2170	ISIS, Al-Qaeda	August 15, 2014	Yes
2178	Terrorism, preventing foreign fighters from entering Iraq and Kuwait to support ISIS	September 24, 2014	Yes
2195	Terrorism	December 19, 2014	Yes
2199	ISIS, Al-Nusra and all those attached to Al-Qaeda and other groups	February 12, 2015	Yes

Source: UN Security Council Documents March 2008 to August 2013, <http://www.un.org/zh/sc/documents/volumes/>; UN Security Council Scripts September 2013 to February 2015, <http://www.un.org/zh/sc/meetings/> (accessed August 10, 2015).

The second tactic is to participate in the process of anti-terrorism governance through the construction of some other bilateral or multilateral formal/informal mechanisms. One approach is to construct formal bilateral or multilateral mechanisms with some Middle Eastern countries with a view to including anti-terrorism governance as an essential part of the effort to

promote cooperation (refer to Table 3). By the end of September 2015, many countries in the region have upgraded their common multilateral or bilateral cooperative relations with China to a strategic cooperative partnership, including the Sino-Arab Strategic Cooperative Partnership, the Sino-Saudi Arabia Strategic Friendly Cooperative Partnership, the Sino-Egypt Strategic Friendly Cooperative Partnership, the Sino-Turkey Strategic Friendly Cooperative Partnership, the Sino-UAE Strategic Cooperative Partnership and the Sino-Pakistan All-weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership. Among all the upgraded or newly built partnerships, China has prescribed the anti-terrorism campaign as an important part of national cooperation, and concrete objects and targets are clearly stated in the Sino-Egyptian and Sino-Pakistan partnerships.

*Table 2 (by the authors): Strategic Cooperation Relations between China and Middle East states*

No.	Title	Time of Establishment	Concepts of Anti-Terrorism and Security Cooperation
1	China-Arab Strategic Partnership	May 14, 2010	Opposes terrorism, separatism and extremism in all its manifestations; opposes linkage of terrorism with specific nations, religions
2	China-Turkey Strategic Partnership	October 8, 2010	Maintain regional security and peace, including opposing terrorism, separatism and extremism in all its manifestations
3	China-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership for Long-term Friendship	January 15, 2012	Firmly oppose terrorism in all its manifestations, which are threatening peace and stability in the world. Suppression should be approached via international cooperation without consideration of its origins
4	China-United Arab Emirates Strategic Partnership	January 17, 2012	Strengthen each other's cooperation & exchange in law enforcement security and anti-terrorism, combating commitment of crimes
5	China-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership of Long-term Friendship	June 8, 2012	Both states firmly oppose terrorism, separatism and extremism in all its manifestations; Combat trans-territory activities, such as terrorism; China firmly supports Afghanistan's efforts to fight against terrorism, while Afghanistan restates its firm support for China in combating terrorism, separatism and extremism
6	China-Pakistan All-weather Strategic Partnership of Cooperation	May 23, 2013	China will assist Pakistan in strengthening its capacity for fighting terrorism and ensuring security, and work with Pakistan to tackle rising non-traditional security risks. Pakistan restates its intention to firmly counter terrorism and promise to continue coordinating with China to suppress The Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement.

7	China-Qatar Strategic Partnership	November 3, 2014	Both sides will strengthen communication and cooperation in the implementation of law security and anti-terrorism, establish a long-term security cooperation mechanism enhance the information communication level, as well as technical cooperation and personnel training. Also, both sides condemn and oppose terrorism in all its manifestations, oppose double standards and the linkage of terrorism with a specific country, nation and religion.
8	China-Egypt Comprehensive Strategic Partnership	December 22, 2014	Both sides firmly oppose and condemn terrorism in all its manifestations, suppress the financing of terrorism, oppose double standards and the linkage of terrorism with a specific country, nation and religion. Also, counter-terrorism should adhere to the Charter of the United Nations and principles of international laws, upholding each other's sovereignty, independence and territory integrity. Both sides will also strengthen cooperation in terrorism, including pursuing and capturing terrorists, cutting the source of their funds, as well as punishing them within a legal framework.
9	China-Sudan Strategic Partnership	September 1, 2015	Both sides firmly oppose and condemn terrorism in all its manifestations, suppress the financing of terrorism, oppose double standards and the linkage of terrorism with a specific country, nation and religion. Under the framework above, both sides oppose the use of economic sanction as a weapon in international relations to undermine the security and stability of other countries, and will work toward strengthening each other's communication and cooperation in the fields of information, security and implementation of laws.

Source: No. 1, <http://www.cascf.org/chn/gylt/zywj/t694800.htm>; No. 2-9, <http://www.xinhuanet.com/> (accessed August 11, 2015)

Another approach within this secondary tactic framework is for China to exchange information and share its experience of anti-terrorism governance with other countries by joining in informal mechanisms, such as anti-terrorism conferences, forums and high-level meetings. China has taken initiatives to participate in or host international anti-terrorism conferences, exchanging information and experiences, and learning about the latest terrorist movements. Besides the UN anti-terrorism conferences, China has made full use of other communication platforms, as well. For example, China attended the Istanbul International Anti-terrorism Conference hosted by the Council of Europe and the Turkish government in October 2013, and in March and December 2014, Chinese deputies were present at the First Baghdad International Anti-terrorism Conference and Syria International Anti-terrorism Conference. Meanwhile, China has hosted two high-level anti-terrorism conferences targeting the new development of ISIS, namely,

“The International High-end Forum for Anti-terrorism Countermeasures and Emergency Management” (organized by the Ministry of Public Security of China) and the “Global Anti-terrorism Forum—Against Internet Terrorism” (organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China) in October and November of 2014, respectively. Besides this, China has attached great significance to high-level communication with the countries standing at the forefront in the battle against terrorism, and to the cultivation of its own anti-terrorism capacities. In November 2014, Meng Jianzhu and Guo Shengkun, members of the Bureau of the Central Committee of China, visited Egypt, Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan, offering economic and other material aid to the Afghan and Iraqi governments, which clearly demonstrated China’s anti-terrorism diplomatic goals.

The third tactic is to thoroughly carry out anti-terrorism cooperation with the countries haunted by terrorism, such as Pakistan and Israel, so as to enhance the effectiveness of joint cooperation. China and Pakistan have kept up comprehensive anti-terrorism cooperation for years, and this can serve as a model for national cooperation. The two countries have conducted quite a few anti-terrorism drills since 2004, including cooperation in the areas of information exchange, economic aid, personnel training, repatriation of Chinese terrorists, and the like. Cooperation between the two countries has yielded impressive results, proving to be particularly effective in preventing terrorists in the Middle East from penetrating China. In May of 2009, the Pakistan military listed the East Turkistan group as a terrorist organization, and the Pakistan government handed over six core members of that group to China in April 2012.<sup>19</sup> Anti-terrorism cooperation between Israel and China has also witnessed substantial progress, as seen in Israel’s aid to China by training anti-terrorism troops, armed police and doctors.

The fourth tactic is to deal with each case using different measures based on its specific characteristics. Confronted with new conditions and problems caused by Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and the Taliban, China has adjusted its policies and adopted various tactics in dealing with different cases. As for the Taliban group, China is striving to solve problems through negotiation and has proposed specific solutions. China made a proposal for a “Peace and Reconciliation Forum” in November 2014, aiming at reconciliation among various Afghanistan forces, including the Taliban. The proposal has received a positive response from the Taliban.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages**

---

19 “China Asks Pakistan to Hand Over Uighur Terrorists,” *TheHindu*, April 6, 2012, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article3287906.ece> (accessed September 24, 2015).

Undoubtedly, China has introduced herself into various anti-terrorism campaigns. China's advantages and disadvantages have fully been revealed in the process.

China's national image has been improved. In most Middle Eastern countries, China has formed a not-so-grand, yet positive image among the governments as well as the public, for China has long maintained friendly relations with the Middle Eastern countries throughout history.<sup>20</sup> In recent years, the Chinese government has won the trust of many parties of different interests by playing a more active role in the participation of political affairs in the Middle East, such as by mediating the reconciliation of the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan, conciliating Palestine and Israel,<sup>21</sup> contacting the Afghan Taliban group, etc. These actions, a historical breakthrough for China in its Middle East affairs, have helped China accumulate very valuable experiences for its future participation in anti-terrorism governance.

China's image has been strengthened by its abidance to certain sets of rules. China participates in anti-terrorism governance mainly by joining UN authorized multilateral mechanisms or bilateral anti-terrorism cooperation mechanisms, which are highly recognized by the participating parties. Hence, in the participation of anti-terrorism governance, China is free from the problems that trouble the US. While to America these mechanisms are fetters, to China these mechanisms represent the grounds for actions and possibilities, and should thus be properly maintained and operated. Therefore, in practice, China sticks to the laws and norms of mechanisms and wins support in operations because of its cooperation with the other members of these mechanisms, while America in following its own pathway has ended up with a mess that lacks proper mechanisms.

Objectively, however, China can only share limited participation in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East since it is greatly restrained by a number of factors.

The first restraining factor is the multiple participants in anti-terrorism governance. The various participants in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East, including state actors and non-state actors, will inevitably lead to divergence in opinions, because of respective interests. It is very hard for China to shake off or transcend such restrictions from other participants.

To begin with, there are the restraints from America. The Western countries led by America are the dominant powers in anti-terrorism governance in the

20 Chen Jie, "China's Image in Arab Media," *Arab World Studies* 5 (2011): 54-58.

21 Sun Degang, "Motivations of China's Mediation Diplomacy in the Middle East," *Global Review* 3 (2013): 14-33.

Middle East, but due to diverse opinions on terrorism, these countries adopt entirely different tactics from China's in the governance of terrorism. America has long complied with double standards in anti-terrorism governance for its own political needs, thus exclusiveness and its political purpose can be clearly traced in its standards, including the definition of terrorism and terrorist groups, the organization of anti-terrorism alliances, etc. There are many different voices that can be heard regarding China's stance on anti-terrorism, but the mainstream disposition in America is condemnatory. In August 2014, Obama denounced China as an irresponsible hitchhiker in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East when meeting with New York Times journalists.<sup>22</sup> And in September 2014, Susan Rice, the US National Security Advisor, visited China and invited China to take part in the campaign against ISIS, but before China made any commitments with the US, the latter disregarded China's interest in a cooperative effort, as revealed later in a list of anti-terrorism alliance participants that excluded China.<sup>23</sup> The double standards held by the US were revealed in this case. Such double standards and suspicion of others will severely hamper the effectiveness of anti-terrorism governance. Besides, when China made an effort to contact the Taliban with a view to restoring peace in Afghanistan, some Western media outlets started to discredit China by claiming that China intended to assume leadership over America in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East. And in order to compete with China and defend its leading position, the White House spokesman even changed America's long-term stance and denied that the Taliban was a terrorist group during a press conference in January 2015.<sup>24</sup> Based on the above examples, it is evident that America is setting barriers to block China's participation in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East.

In addition, the divergence between China and some other countries on how to deal with the "three forces" (separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism) is another restraining factor. The Middle East is the distributing center for these three forces, and many countries in the area, like Turkey, in particular, are glad to offer shelter to forces such as the key members of "The Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement" (ETIM). According to a report from July 2013, there were more than 20 separatist groups overtly supporting

---

22 "Obama Labeling China as 'Free Rider' in Iraq Issue," *China Daily*, September 4, 2014. [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2014-09/04/content\\_18543889.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2014-09/04/content_18543889.htm) (accessed October 22, 2015).

23 "US invites China to join in anti-terrorism, China has no response," *Observer*, September 11, 2014, [http://www.guancha.cn/politics/2014\\_09\\_11\\_265877.shtml](http://www.guancha.cn/politics/2014_09_11_265877.shtml) (accessed October 24, 2015).

24 "Taliban Not a Terrorist Group? White House Official Says It's 'Armed Insurgency,'" January 29, 2015, <https://www.rt.com/usa/227487-white-house-taliban-terrorists/> (accessed October 25, 2015).

Xinjiang's independence in Turkey,<sup>25</sup> and General M. Beghin, a former senior officer of the Turkish government, spared no effort to support the World Uyghur Congress and was even named its honorary chairman. In addition, the Turkish government keeps issuing entry visas to Xinjiang independence activists, while sheltering Chinese citizens who illegally leave the country. The Turkish Embassy in China even offers blank passports to East Turkistan separatists, which allows them to travel freely between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. These divergences will inevitably impose negative effects on China's participation in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East.

What is more, the serious disagreements on terrorism among Middle Eastern countries also prevent China from performing its function in anti-terrorism governance.<sup>26</sup> Due to the complexity of Middle East issues, Arab countries, Iran, Israel, and some other countries are apparently divided on the issue of identifying terrorism, because of respective national, ethnic and religious interests. The phenomenon in which one nation's heroes are terrorists in the eyes of another is common in the Middle East Region, which requires China to keep alert at every moment and act with prudence.

The second restricting factor is China's own international prestige. In the current international situation, a group of newly developed countries have changed the international pattern and China also plays an increasingly important role in the world arena. Nevertheless, China's international influence, in terms of economic force or ideological influence, is far from overwhelming. China's prestige, which has been accumulating since its declaration of participation in the reform of global governance mechanisms, is relatively limited, and China's international prestige and governing capacity ranks fifth, following behind America, France, Russia, and the UK, as per *The States' Participation Index of Global Governance* issued by the East China University of Political Science and Law in November 2014.<sup>27</sup> This limitation, which is also reflected in anti-terrorism governance, indicates that China is not in a leading position in anti-terrorism governance and that there is still much space for improvement for China in its participation of global governance, due to its restricted political, economic, and cultural influence. Although economic growth has stirred China's ambition to take an active part in global governance, the public goods it can offer are still limited, especially

25 Su Weili and Jin Feng, "Why has Turkey Been a Shelter for the Extremists of 'East Turkey,'" July 14, 2013, [http://www.china.com.cn/military/2013-07/24/content\\_29514812\\_2.htm](http://www.china.com.cn/military/2013-07/24/content_29514812_2.htm) (accessed October 25, 2015).

26 Zhao Jun, "The Current Situations and Prospects of Anti-terrorism Governance in the Middle East," *Arab World Studies* 3 (2013): 54-55.

27 Comparative Political Research Institute, "State's Participation Index in Global Governance," <http://psi.ecupl.edu.cn/spigg/> (accessed October 24, 2015).

with regards to its military capacity, in particular. However, China cares more about international common interests rather than its own benefit and supports a non-exclusive principle. In a word, China's international prestige is not high enough, and that is why China insists that the UN should take the leading role in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East.

The third restricting factor is China's limited influence in the Middle East and surrounding area. At the moment, China is not influential enough in these regions. In terms of economy, China is the biggest trade partner and the largest oil importer of the Middle East, and the Middle East is the major oil supplier for China. However, the Middle East has a relatively low reliance on, and sensitivity to, Chinese products, and China's direct investment on the low-technique-content products and economic aid to the Middle East are less than those of America, European countries, and Japan, which explains China's lack of influence in the area. In terms of politics, China's political influence is comparatively higher than its economic impact in the area because of a similar historical development pattern and mutual political support shared between many Middle Eastern countries and China. But "in military affairs, China's influence in the Middle East can be entirely neglected, whether in the aspect of military garrison, military alliance, arm sales, military maneuver, military exchange, or in terms of China's military resources."<sup>28</sup>

The fourth restricting factor lies in the malfunctions of governance mechanisms. If China intends to be more deeply involved in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East, it has to face the failings of mechanisms, for the existing anti-terrorism governance mechanisms in the area are severely lacking in coherence and coordination, making malfunctions unavoidable.<sup>29</sup> For instance, the global anti-terrorism governance mechanism under the UN framework has been out-of-order for a long time period since it was abandoned by America and its allies. There is no effective anti-terrorism mechanism that can cover the whole area, and the sub-area mechanisms available, such as the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council, seldom work effectively. The Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum may bear the possibility of anti-terrorism cooperation, but there is still a long way to go before it can produce effective results. Some bilateral cooperation networks between Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and other Middle East countries have obtained a certain level of effectiveness, but whenever these cooperative

---

28 Niu Xinchun, "On China's National Interests and Influence in the Middle East," *Contemporary International Relations* 10 (2013): 44-52.

29 Zhao Jun, "The Current Situations and Prospects of Anti-terrorism Governance in the Middle East," *Arab World Studies* 3 (2013): 55.

efforts involve the national interests or political ideology of the participants, they fail to overcome such obstacles.

## Reflections

In sum, China's participation in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East is both a positive response to the menace that terrorism poses to its national core interests and a strategic choice to carry out its "One Belt and One Road" strategy, as well as a way to shoulder its international responsibility and build its image. The orientation of China's strategy for participating in anti-terrorism governance, though ambiguous, complies with its foreign policy and can be traced from its various tactics. Despite the advantages to its image, China also faces restricting factors, including various participants of governance, China's own willingness, prestige and influence in the Middle East, and the malfunction of cooperation mechanisms. While these restrictions confine China's participation within a certain scope, they also require that China not only see through the essence of anti-terrorism governance to maintain its advantages, but to think creatively and pass on its specific experience to other participants of global anti-terrorism governance, in order to shape an internationally-acknowledged governing mode that is distinctly Chinese.

It is important to point out that China is not a major target of the global jihad led by Al-Qaeda or ISIS, although these terrorist groups have posed threats to China's national interests. Besides, in terms of public goods supply, China cannot be classified as one of the major members among other global anti-terrorism governance participants. Therefore, China needs to have a clear agenda and make an objective evaluation before choosing a proper tactic of participation. Meanwhile, in the process of participation, China should follow a feasible and visionary policy to ensure a multi-win result that will not only protect itself, but be shared by other participants. The policies adopted are supposed to theoretically elaborate China's world view on handling global problems and practically propose solutions. Hence, the authors of the paper believe that the Chinese government needs to stay alert in the following aspects.

First, two facts need to be clearly recognized by the Chinese government. One is that terrorism in the Middle East will persist for a long time and that foreign forces alone are unable to uproot terrorism in the area. Rome was not built in a day. Terrorism in this region has a long history that somehow justifies its existence. Different root causes will continue to sustain its longevity in the foreseeable future. These root causes for the existence of terrorism in the Middle East explain the extensive support it gains from various forces in the area. Assertively, terrorism will not die out until core

issues such as the Pakistan problem are solved. America's failure in the anti-terrorism campaign is not due to its lack of power or effort, but because of fertile land for terrorism, which serves as evidence that terrorism in the Middle East cannot be defeated singularly by any foreign force.

The other fact the Chinese government should not neglect is that the ultimate purpose of the participating governments is to realize their own political objectives and interests through anti-terrorism governance. America and its allies participate in such governance to pursue global strategic targets. In the process, although they have made an initial success, they have likewise lost the trust of the international community. Therefore, their actions not only encounter fierce resistance from the terrorists, but also from the Muslim public. Therefore, in future participation in anti-terrorism governance, China needs to adhere to moral principles and take action under the UN's authorization. In addition, China should enhance its cooperation with regional groups in the Middle East to thoroughly carry out multi-lateral and bilateral anti-terrorism governance, which means that China needs to establish an anti-terrorism cooperation mechanism with both Middle East countries like Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Israel, etc. and the organizations of neighboring entities, such as the African Union, Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council and Arab Maghreb Union.

Secondly, the Chinese government needs to think and act creatively to fulfill its realistic and moralistic objectives. China needs to change its current thinking pattern and think creatively to draw up a new set of rules of anti-terrorism governance. Since China is lacking in overseas governing experience, it is necessary for China to carry out further theoretical study and learn from Western countries. But as has been pointed out by some scholars, the Chinese government should only learn from the Western experience with a critical mind, in order to form its own ideas, concepts and rules. In the participation of anti-terrorism governance, China should be courageous and strong headed in the learning cycle of "learning - criticizing - establishing." An underlying prerequisite for China to participate in anti-terrorism governance in the Middle East is that it must play its due role in the creation of a mechanism. At the moment, with the growth of Al-Qaeda and the rise of ISIS, it is time to reenact international anti-terrorism rules. To more efficiently and effectively take part in such governance, China has to be ready to play its part. In terms of creative participation, new strategies and tactics in anti-terrorism governance are needed, because the Western pattern<sup>30</sup> practiced under the leadership of America is bogged down in a

---

30 Pang Zhongying and Wang Ruiping, "Global Governance: China's Strategic Response,"

security predicament and stands little chance of success. The new pattern of diplomatic relations established by China has proved that the rise of a big power will not necessarily lead to war, and this pattern will be a great contribution to humanity if it can be applied to deal with terrorism in the Middle East. In fact, China's successful persuasion in getting the Taliban to sit down for a negotiation is a breakthrough, in terms of concept and of action. Though it is too early to declare the success of the method adopted by China, the philosophy behind the solution that translates into admitting and tolerating the existence of the other party, rather than eliminating it as an enemy, is of great value and profound significance.

Thirdly, it is advisable to introduce China's experience to the Middle East and even the whole world and to pass on China's wisdom, which is based on its specific social and political conditions. As is widely known, China has ample experience in dealing with violent non-state actors, such as bandits, roving rebel bands, and underworld gangs who have aimed at toppling down the government. Since the establishment of the PRC, the Chinese government has rooted out, within a short period of time, the major peace-disturbing factors which have existed for thousands of years. To explore the reasons for its success, we have found that although China has adopted similar strategic moves as other countries, such as armed intervention and deterrence, the root of Chinese success lays in its core strategy mobilizing the masses, which also shows a certain degree of success in fighting against terrorists within China. At present, the public in Xinjiang has organized self-protection groups to patrol the streets, besiege terrorists, and provide information to the police, and this has effectively prevented many potential terrorist attacks. Some scholars think that terrorists have spread all over the country, but rather, it is the success of the anti-terrorism campaign in the Xinjiang area that forces terrorists to flee to other provinces, which also proves that the haven of terrorists there is dwindling. Many terrorist groups in the Middle East share a lot in common with those traditional Chinese violent non-state actors. Therefore, at the present moment and into the future, China's task in anti-terrorism governance is to pass its experience on to the Middle Eastern countries suffering from terrorism, instead of sending its troops directly to the area to follow America's steps. If the countries in the Middle East can learn from China's experience by instigating the public to fight against terrorism from the bottom up, the terrorists in this region will lose their foothold and eventually disappear into history. **Y**