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CHINA—EU COOPERATION ON COUNTER-TERRORISM: CHALLENGES, RESULTS AND FUTURE PATH

Abstract: Both China and Europe are facing the challenges of terrorism. China-Europe cooperation in anti-Terrorism can not only add to international anti-terrorism campaigns but also enhance the status of China and Europe in global governance. In addition, such cooperation can enrich the connotation of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Europe and improve mutual trust by implementing the proposals specified in the China—EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation as well. Both China's and Europe's anti-terrorism strategies pay attention to prevention, protection, tracking, and responses. China and Europe can enhance their cooperation in six fields: eliminating cognitive gaps in anti-terrorism, adopting measures at EU level and country-level, reinforcing border control and information exchanges, mutual support in arms trade, enhancing the anti-terrorism cooperation in nuclear safety, and discussing the cooperation of military and police affairs between two sides.

Key words: *China—EU Cooperation; Counter-terrorism*

1. INTRODUCTION

Security governance is viewed as a "hard case" of global governance.[1] In particular, following the 9.11 attacks, how to combat terrorism has increasingly become a major problem in the security area. Some European scholars proposed five major threats addressed to European security, one of which

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[1] Charlotte Wagnsson, James Sperling and Jan Hallenberg (eds.), *European Security Governance: The European Union in a Westphalian World*, Routledge, 2011, p. 82.

is terrorism.[2] Strengthening China—EU cooperation in the field of counter-terrorism will not only contribute to the international counter-terrorism campaign and enhance the status of China—EU in global governance, but also enrich the connotation of China—EU comprehensive strategic partnership, enhance strategic mutual trust and better implement the initiatives identified in the *China—EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation*.

2. BOTH CHINA AND THE EU ARE UNDER SERIOUS THREAT OF TERRORISM

Both China and the EU have suffered serious terrorist attacks since the 9.11 attacks. In spite of various sources and specific manifestations, these terrorist threats have caused major damage to the interests of China and the EU.

In China, terrorists represented by those in the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) launched terrorist attacks in such places as Xinjiang, Beijing and Kunming, causing serious losses of life and property to the Chinese people, which has become one of China's primary security issues. According to a white paper titled "The Fight Against Terrorism and Extremism and Human Rights Protection in Xinjiang" issued by China's State Council Information Office on March 18,2019, terrorist and extremist forces in Xinjiang, driven by the goal of separatism, engaged in wildly sabotaging activities. For example, on July 5, 2009, the "East Turkistan" forces inside and outside China engineered a riot in Urumqi which shocked the whole world. Thousands of terrorists attacked civilians, government organs, public security and police officers, residential houses, stores and public transportation facilities, causing 197 deaths and injuries to over 1,700, smashing and burning down 331 stores and 1,325 vehicles, and damaging many public facilities. On May 22, 2014, five terrorists drove two SUVs through the fence of the morning fair of North Park Road of Saybagh District, Urumqi, into the crowd, and then detonated a bomb, claiming the life of 39 and leaving 94 injured. On July 28, 2014, terrorists with knives and axes attacked the government building and police station of Ailixihu Town, Shache County, Kashgar Prefecture. Some then moved on to Huangdi Town where they attacked civilians and smashed and burned passing vehicles, causing 37 deaths and 13 injuries and destroying 31 vehicles. On September 18, 2015, terrorists attacked a coal mine in Baicheng County, Aksu Prefecture, causing 16

[2] The other four threats are proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure, and organized crime, Refer to Jean-Yves Haine, "The European Security Strategy Coping with Threats: Is Europe Secure?", in Sven Biscop and Jan Joel Anderson (eds.), *The EU and the European Security Strategy: Forging a Global Europe*, Routledge, 2007, p. 21.

deaths and 18 injuries. ETIM jihadists even went beyond Xinjiang and carried out terrorist activities in Beijing, Kunming and other places. On October 28, 2013, three Xinjiang terrorists drove a jeep carrying 31 barrels of gasoline, 20 ignitors, 5 knives, and several iron bars onto the sidewalk on the east of Tiananmen Square in central Beijing and accelerated it towards tourists and policemen on duty, until it crashed into the barrier of the Golden Water Bridge. They then ignited the gasoline to set the jeep on fire, resulting in deaths of 2 people including 1 foreigner and injuries to over 40. On March 1, 2014, eight knife-wielding Xinjiang terrorists attacked passengers at the Kunming Railway Station Square and the ticket lobby, leaving 31 dead and 141 injured.[3] In the past two years, China has taken powerful de-extremism measures and no major terrorist attacks have taken place, but the potential threat of the "three East Turkistan forces (religious extremism, national separation, and violent terrorists)" still lingers on.

In particular, after the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) was severely hit, the East Turkistan forces have gradually shifted to Afghanistan, Central Asia and even Southeast Asia, waiting for opportunities. Many East Turkistan terrorists have joined the network of terrorist organizations in Southeast Asian countries. According to media coverage from some Southeast Asian countries, in the counter-terrorism operation in Malawi, the Philippine police found that some ETIM jihadists participated in the fighting. Indonesia and Malaysia have repeatedly found evidence of collusion between ETIM jihadists and ISIL and Jemaah Islamiyah in recent years. These extremist organizations are actively infiltrating overseas Uighur communities to recruit and train them.

In Europe, after the 9.11 attacks, such cities as London, Madrid, Paris were also subjected to large-scale terrorist attacks by al-Qaeda. With the rise of the ISIL, since 2014, European extremists, including the Lone Wolf and other small terrorist groups affected by Islamic extremism, launched attacks in such places as Paris, Brussels and London, resulting in major casualties.

This shows that despite the cooperative combat of the international community, the global terrorist forces have not been completely eliminated, but been active in new forms. Global terrorism following the 9.11 attacks has shown the following stages and manifestations. The first stage is from the 9.11 attacks to the rise of ISIL, mainly manifested by the input terrorist attacks organized by al-Qaeda. Through cross-country cooperative combat, it was restrained around 2010. The second stage is from the rise of ISIL in

[3] The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *The Fight Against Terrorism and Extremism and Human Rights Protection in Xinjiang,* March 18,2019.

2014 to the New Zealand Shooting in March 2019, mainly manifested by the Lone Wolf and small-group attacks launched by a group of extremists who have participated in the ISIL and locals affected by extremist thoughts. The third stage is from the New Zealand Shooting in March 2019, which may herald a new manifestation, that is, extreme thoughts, not only Islamic extremism, but also those of other religious thoughts and various anti-globalization trends, such as white supremacy which leads to hatred terrorist attacks against various hostile groups. For example, in the past weeks, a series of terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka, a blow up in a Munich church and the shooting at a synagogue in Poway, California in the US are all obvious.

In the context of globalization, terrorism, driven by "hatred" such as extreme racism, ultra-nationalism and religious extremism, is spreading rapidly across the globe, far beyond the traditional boundaries of sovereign states. For example, the ISIL consists of tens of thousands of militants from European countries and hundreds of ETIM extremists from China, who have set up the ETIM Camp in Idlib, Syria to launch Jihad activities with local jihadists. For another example, in addition to launching terrorist attacks in China and Central Asia, the ETIM terrorists also participated in planning of terrorist attacks in Norway. On July 8, 2010, the Norwegian police arrested three men, suspected of linking to al-Qaeda and planning bomb attacks, one of whom was a Uighur from China called Mikael Davud.[4]

Nowadays, as a "quasi-state" terrorist cell, the ISIL has been stricken down with the joint efforts of the international community, its remnants have not been completely eliminated. Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, pointed out in his Report on the threat posed by ISIL submitted to the UN Security Council in February 2019 that ISIL remains a threat as a global organization with centralized leadership with the intent and ability to launch international terrorist attacks. This threat is increased by returning, relocating or released foreign terrorist fighters. According to estimates, in the Middle East, there are thousands of "foreign terror fighters", mainly from the EU countries. The report also notes that so-called "frustrated travelers", namely those who have failed to reach the core conflict zone or have been redirected elsewhere either by ISIL or at their own initiative, may contribute to increasing the threat, which has already been observed in Europe and

[4] https://web.archive.org/web/20160205140256/http://www.nrk.no/norge/funnet-skyldige-i-lagmannsretten-1.8329792

South-East Asia.[5] These people will bring major security challenges to China, the EU and the international community, so there is an urgent need for cooperation between China and Europe to prevent and combat terrorism.

3. MAJOR RESULTS AND SHORTCOMINGS IN CHINA—EU COOPERATION ON COUNTER-TERRORISM

China and the EU have strengthened communication and cooperation on counter-terrorism and reached certain consensus. On March 18, 2019, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at the ninth round of the China—EU High-Level Strategic Dialogue and a joint press conference with Federica Mogherini, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, that under the China—EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, there is consensus in ten aspects, including supporting the campaign against all forms of terrorism, and taking holistic measures to contain the spread of extremism. Mogherini agreed with Wang, and expressed her belief that the consensus will be even expanded when the cooperation between the two sides is deepened further.[6]

The results of China—EU cooperation on counter-terrorism are mainly manifested in the following aspects:

First, China—EU cooperation on counter-terrorism is stepping towards institutionalization. The *China—EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation* formulated in 2013 is of great significance to bilateral cooperation on counter-terrorism. The Agenda proposes to collaborate on projects combating transnational crime, illegal migration, and cyber-crime, and hold special consultations on issues of counter-terrorism at an appropriate time under the framework of the *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* and the *United Nations Convention against Corruption*.[7] China and the EU have established a dialogue mechanism strategically guided by the annual Summit and based on three pillars of the annual High-Level Strategic Dialogue, the annual High-Level Economic and Trade Dialogue, and the bi-annual High-Level People-to-People

[5] Statement by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. Eighth "Report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat". p. 2.

[6] China, EU share consensus in 10 aspects: WANG Yi, see http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/europe/2019–03/18/c_137905323.htm.

[7] EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation [In Chinese], see https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gjhdqzz_681964/1206_679930/1207_679942/t1101803.shtml.

Dialogue. Counter-terrorism dialogue is an important part of it. China and the EU also communicate on counter-terrorism issues through such multilateral platforms as ASEM.

Second, the China—EU cooperation on counter-terrorism has initiated specific actions. For example, the second China's policy document on the EU *Deepen the China—EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation* issued in April 2014 pointed out that, "we will advance China—EU cooperation on police law enforcement, implement the five-year police training cooperation project, expand exchanges on policing administration, public security management, law enforcement regulation, criminal investigation technologies and the fight against organized crimes by organizing training courses, visits and seminars, increase the mutual trust between the two sides, and lay a solid foundation for jointly combating terrorism, economic, cyber and drug-related crimes, organized illegal immigration and other serious organized transnational crimes.[8] The five-year police training cooperation project began in China in 2012. For another example, in January 2019, EU officials visited Xinjiang, which enhanced their objective understanding of the situation in Xinjiang, especially its practice in preventive counter-terrorism and de-extremism. The EU have also exchanged with the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure(RATS) on the possible threats from the return of transnational terrorists.

Third, China has entered into cooperation on counter-terrorism with such EU member states as Britain, France, Germany and Italy. The China-UK High-Level Security Dialogue launched in 2016 agreed to recognize each other's concerns about major security interests in their counter-terrorism cooperation and would develop pragmatic cooperation to tackle terrorist threats faced in common and individually. The two sides would also strengthen cooperation in aviation security and combat against cyber terrorism. The two sides expanded counter-terrorism cooperation to protecting the institutional personnel of the two countries in the third countries at the second China-UK High-Level Security Dialogue in 2017. On March 17, 2019, China and France issued a joint statement on jointly safeguarding multilateralism and improving global governance. They underlined that terrorist threats have no borders. They reiterated their support for the key coordination role played by the UN in international cooperation. They would continue to uphold international initiatives which, under

[8] China's Policy Paper on the EU: Deepen the China—EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation [In Chinese], see https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gjhdqzz_681964/1206_679930/1207_679942/t1143397.shtml.

UN leadership, seek to mobilize stakeholders to fight all forms of terrorism. They also emphasized the importance of fighting terrorist financing and committed to implementing the ten measures listed in the *Paris Agenda*, which was adopted at the international No Money for Terror conference on April 26, 2018. China and Germany started counter-terrorism consultations as early in 2003. In June 2017, China and Germany held their first high-level security dialogue. Peacekeeping forces in both countries also conducted joint counter-terrorism military exercises. In order to increase the protection of Chinese overseas citizens, in May 2016, four Chinese police officers and the Italian police worked together on a two-week joint patrol at the major attractions of Rome and Milan to deal with matters involving Chinese citizens.

However, owing to different historical cultures, social systems, and stages of development, there are still some different views and differences between China and the EU on counter-terrorism issues. First of all, on how to define terrorism, we believe that the EU has insufficient understanding of the close collusion among separatism, extremism and terrorism in China, merely regarding separatism as one aspect of the nationality issue.

Second, there are differences between China and the EU in terms of specific counter-terrorism measures. We argue that counter-terrorism needs to address both the symptoms and root causes of corruption, which requires eradicating the effects of terrorism and extremist ideas through social and economic development. External military interventions will intensify regional and domestic conflicts, and even radicalize extremists, so military operations against terrorism cannot go against the principle of infringement on state sovereignty. Of course, we are not completely opposed to military means, but we cannot rely solely on military strikes, which will often bring counterproductive consequences.

Finally, we also hold some different views on the relationship between human rights protection and counter-terrorism operations. The past two years saw fruitful de-extremism practices in Xinjiang. Some people affected by extremist ideas have been lifted out of extremism and returned to society by learning legal knowledge, official languages, and vocational skills in workshops. Practice has proved that this is an effective path to de-extremism and de-radicalism. In recent years, the society in Xinjiang has remained stable, without major terrorist cases. In 2018, visitor arrivals in Xinjiang exceeded 150 million, which is the first time in history. Xinjiang's social economy continues to grow, with 6.6% in 2018. The per capita disposable income of urban and rural residents has increased by about 7%. The employment growth rate has also risen sharply. Under domestic economic slowdown in

2018, Xinjiang has made a great achievement. Unfortunately, some people are still lack of understanding of the situation in Xinjiang. We recommend that people visit Xinjiang and strengthen future exchanges in this regard.

Obviously, these differences in the root causes and coping styles of terrorism will have a direct impact on bilateral efforts to further strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation.

These differences also mirror different positions and understandings in deepening counter-terrorism cooperation, which require more communication and exchanges in future cooperation on counter-terrorism.

4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ADVANCING CHINA—EU COOPERATION ON COUNTER-TERRORISM

Although China—EU cooperation on counter-terrorism has achieved certain results, there is still much room for improvement under the current threats from international terrorism and the potential of China—EU cooperation. I would like to propose the following suggestions, hoping to help push forward China—EU counter-terrorism cooperation.

First of all, the multilateral path of international terrorism governance should be maintained within the UN framework. China and the EU should continue to maintain the leading role of the UN in international anti-terrorism governance and strengthen cooperation. Both sides should also consult with other countries and international organizations to form a consensus on the criteria for defining international terrorism.

Second, a special counter-terrorism dialogue mechanism should be established while leveraging the China—EU high-level strategic dialogue platform. The China—EU high-level strategic dialogue platform is of great significance to strengthening strategic mutual trust and building a community of shared future, and strengthening counter-terrorism cooperation between China and EU. Through the strategic dialogue platform, the cognitive gap in counter-terrorism can be eliminated by steps. However, the existing high-level strategic dialogue between China and the EU covers a wide range of topics, including economy and trade, humanities, and security, while counter-terrorism is only attached to security under the China—EU high-level strategic dialogue framework. China and the EU promised to hold special consultations on issues of counter-terrorism at an appropriate time in the *China—EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation*. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a dedicated China—EU counter-terrorism dialogue mechanism to turn this concept into reality, so as to realize the normalize and institutionalize the dialogue.

Third, pragmatic cooperation between Europol and China's relevant counter-terrorism departments should be strengthened. Europol is an important agency assisting member states in terrorism combat and external cooperation, but it has not yet entered into formal counter-terrorism partnership with the National Counter-Terrorism Office and the Ministry of Public Security of China. In the future, we should strengthen cooperation between these counter-terrorism agencies, especially increase the work-level business exchanges between the counter-terrorism commissioner of the Ministry of Public Security of China and the EU counter-terrorism general coordinator. The two sides can get active involved in experience-oriented cooperation on counter-terrorism, such as increasing intelligence exchanges, cooperation on counter-terrorism law enforcement and judicial administration, and monitoring the financial operations of terrorist cells. For the time being, the two sides can cooperate in preventing the return of combatants from the ISLM in Syria. The Counter-terrorism Bureau and the Border Control Administration of the Ministry of Public Security of China, together with the European Counter-terrorism Center (ECTC) affiliated to Europol and the European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) can conduct joint training as well as exchange and share useful working experience in such areas as exit and entry review mechanisms, counter-terrorism information exchanges and risk assessment, combat against illegal arms smuggling, prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing, and counter-terrorism cooperation in the field of nuclear security.

Fourth, China—EU counter-terrorism consultations and cooperation in terrorist hotspot areas such as Afghanistan and the areas along the Belt and Road should be strengthened. China and the EU have common interests on the Afghan issue. Through regular meetings, the special envoys of the EU and China to Afghanistan should strengthen coordination on issues such as the peace process and counter-terrorism. China and the EU should also strengthen cooperation to protect the interests of overseas citizens of the EU member states and China. Greece, a member of the EU, provided strong support to China's Libya evacuation operation. China and the EU and its member states can extend counter-terrorism cooperation projects with consensus and effects to third-party cooperation. At present, China—EU counter-terrorism cooperation can focus on the areas where the interests of both sides meet in regions along the Belt and Road. For example, cooperation on counter-terrorism financing and illegal arms smuggling combat between China, the EU and the Middle East countries or the League of Arab States can be carried out.

Fifth, counter-terrorism cooperation on several areas should be done to early harvest. The international cooperation in the fight against terrorist capital chain within the framework of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is one of the counter-terrorism highlights of European countries. As a member of the FATF, China has begun to establish the regulatory systems of combating money laundering, financing of terrorism, and tax evasion and issued anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing management measures for Internet financial institutions. China can explore cooperative means with Britain, German, and French in this highly professional and technical field which is less subject to cognitive differences, such as establishing a joint expert working group to develop a counter-terrorism financing cooperation mechanism for bilateral financial institutions.

Finally, track II dialogues, including the China—EU think-tank dialogue should be actively carried out. Compared with intergovernmental exchanges, a major advantage of track II dialogues such as think tanks is that they can maximally reflect the problems, deepen communication, and propose policy recommendations. In terms of specific operations, bilateral security dialogues can be down to the expert group level to clarify the cognition of terrorism as well as the consensus and disagreements in counter-terrorism practices between China and European countries by such means as organizing seminars. In this way, pragmatic functional cooperation could be carrying out in the areas where there is consensus, and then through this to reach new consensus. For example, China can learn from the EU's counter-terrorism intelligence gathering experience, as well as early warning and grading mechanisms for anti-terrorism, while the EU countries can explore the path and method of de-extremism with China.