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China's strategy to fight jihad's global threat

Chinese government officials have complained about a double standard in the international community regarding terrorist attacks. They indicate that Western countries are slow to recognize and condemn terrorist acts that have occurred in China. Specifically, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei expressed this concern during the first regular press conference after the Paris attacks. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi spoke out against “double standards” on terrorism on the sidelines of the G20 summit.

The Chinese Foreign Minister was referring to the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) a separatist and terrorist organization which includes a small number of Uyghur, an ethnic Muslim minority in the region of Xinjiang. The group was held responsible for: a deadly intentional car crash in Tiananmen Square in Beijing; a bloody attack by knife – wielding assailants at the Kunming railway station; two separate bomb attacks at the Urumqi railway station and a popular market in Urumqi. In addition, there is a growing concern in the Chinese government that some Chinese citizens are joining the Islamic State. At the beginning of the year, the Chinese authorities, stepped up security in Xinjiang

because they feared the return of terrorists trained by the Islamic State. We should recall that ISIS leader al-Baghdadi placed China on the short list of countries who limit the rights of Muslims. According to an analysis of the Jerusalem Center of Public Affairs, there are about one thousand jihadists with Chinese passports who are being trained in camps in North Waziristan, Pakistan. Malaysian Home Secretary Ahamad Zahid Hamidi affirmed on the 21st January 2015, that he had been given information by the Chinese Deputy Minister for Public Safety that approximately 300 Chinese citizens travelled through Malaysia to fight with ISIS. These estimates have not been officially recognised by Beijing.

At the G20 Summit, Chinese President Xi Jinping stated that China is determined to defeat terrorism and that it is necessary to confront the causes and symptoms of the Isis threat.

However, according to the Global Times and People's Daily, China is not prepared, at the moment, to commit military assets in a distant conflict because it will not have the full support of its people and because militaries have limited experience in foreign conflicts.

Interestingly, China proposes a different strategy or option to face the risk of terrorism.. While countries in the West have decided to degrade the financial and weapons flow to suspect countries, China proposes to invest in the development in certain countries to improve economic and social conditions which could stymie the spread of radical Islam. This is at the core of the strategy named "One belt one road" that aims to go from Central Asia to Europe. The Chinese strategy seems sound, provided it identifies viable countries and socio-political conditions where it can be implemented.