PREFACE

The fight against terrorism tends to follow the politics of the latest outrage both at the international and domestic politics. A country’s domestic laws and regulations and its involvement in various international conventions are mostly discussed and eventually agreed upon after major events. This pattern can be observed from the era of League of Nations debate on the assassination of the Yugoslav King Alexander and the French foreign minister in between 1934 to 1937. After the formation of United Nations (UN), the same pattern was also seen with the terrorist attack at the Munich Olympics village in 1972. Eventually with this incident, the issue of terrorism became an international concern in UN agenda and also made it a debatable one in the years to come.

Though the debate of 1972 was a failure and did not arrive at any conclusion; this debate in UN left the issue of terrorism more complicated and open over its definitions and nature. Till the writing of this thesis, no final agreement has been reached on the legal project of a comprehensive anti-terrorist convention or on the definitional aspect of the term. However, the problem is not merely one of definition per se but also one of who defines it and in what manner? Much therefore depends on the position and the approach that is taken by various major powers and countries in dealing with it.

Since 9/11, countering terrorism has become a major issue confronting most of the states and governments in the world today. The need of the hour is to look into the actual practice of various states in generally accepted cases involving terrorism. The purpose of this study is to try and understand what the Chinese approach to terrorism is and what are the various ways and means they endorse in dealing with it. One must further add that the practice of Asian states and also the potential victims of terrorism, such as China, would also be very important in this context.

Since the collapse of the bipolar pattern in the early 1990s, in the context of international terrorism (guoji kongbu zhuyi), the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center is clearly a major watershed. The plethora of writings that have come up in response to the incident appear to suggest that 9/11 constitutes a defining moment in international relations, in that terrorism has now become the foremost threat confronting the world today. Thus the crucial question here is, whether terrorism should be perceived
as a differentiated or an undifferentiated threat and whether 9/11 can be seen as marking a major discontinuity in post-Cold war international politics and/or in the world order. However, it is clear that the 9/11 incident has radically altered the international and regional strategic environment and has made the Asian region so tense that its ramifications have affected major powers in the region like India and Pakistan. It would not be wrong to say that China is also one among those who have been considerably affected. It appears that China’s position on the issue of terrorism is marked by uncertainty and at times apparent indecisiveness and changeability. The developments that have raised questions in China have largely to do with the US’ military presence in Asia and the US-led international coalition on war against international terrorism.

9/11 demonstrates that terrorism in today’s world tends to be multi-faceted. What is relevant here is that 9/11 has definitely helped the big powers arrive at a confluence of their common interests on the issue of fighting terrorism and China, being one of the P-5 nations, shares some of these interests. China’s position on international terrorism does suggest that it is not only very complex but also debatable. Whereas, the Chinese efforts to fight terrorism in response to the 9/11 incident has been praiseworthy from the US’ point of view, its stand on the India-Pakistan cross border terrorism issue and the ramifications of her own domestic problems like Xinjiang adjoining the Central Asian region, raises questions about its position on international terrorism. In the light of the above discussion, the purpose of this study is to try and understand what the Chinese approach and response to international terrorism is and what are the various ways and means they endorse in dealing with it.