Panel 3: The United Nations' implication in the fight against international terrorism
Report of the UN Day on the 21st of octobre 2011 at the Palais des Nations

This year we commemorated the 10th anniversary of 9/11,which makes a lot of sense to discuss the terrorism's question. In order to introduce the conference Dr. Shori Liang, research fellow at the GCSP and specialist of the subject, began with a deep and interesting presentation of international terrorism's organization around the world. Her aim was to familiarize us with this issue, before discussing the real United Nations' implications in this fight.

Firstly, Dr.Shori Liang thought useful to define the exact concept of terrorism before analysing it. She described it as violence against civilians to achieve political or ideological objectives by creating terror. Nowadays, throughout the Internet and satellite phones, terrorist groups have modern equipment at theirs disposal. Moreover, terrorism seems to evolve in new fields. They tend to play a part in organized crime, for instance by kidnapping people in order to negotiate money, that serves to buy new weapons.

Secondly, she approached the controversial topic of Al-Qaeda by identifying it as connexion of different organizations instead of a little group leaded by Bin Laden. Al-Qaeda in Maghreb, in Arabia and in different parts of East and West Africa were added to the one's that we already have in mind, those in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Some local groups help the organization of Al-Qaeda to transport drugs (opium) coming from Afghanistan to Europe. Throughout this example, it is comprehensible that terrorist group have an interrelation with organized crime.

However, the purpose of today was to discuss the United Nations' implication in the fight against terrorism. At First, Dr. Schori Liang exposed the UN's tools and their usefulness. On the 8th of September 2006, the General Assembly enacted the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy. It was the first time that all the member states were able and comfortable with the idea of agreeing with a common strategy. The strategy had many objectives: to prevent and of course to combat terrorism, but in the first place to build state's capacity to counter it. One of the challenges that emerged from the application of the strategy was to defend human rights while fighting terrorism. In order to these very positive objectives to be respected, the UN had to take some measures so that the States will be encouraged to cooperate with the strategy.
The UN also focused on the underlying conditions of terrorism, what proves that they understand fully the whole problem. Solutions have to be found to sort out big issues such as poverty, dehumanization of victims of terrorism and long-run conflicts.

The UN system to fight international terrorism is composed of the Security Council and the General Assembly but also of: The Atomic Energy Agency that counters the threat of nuclear terrorism, The Civil Aviation Organization that tries to improve flights and airports security, The Organization for the Prohibition on Chemical Weapons that watches the trade for chemicals that are likely to be used as weapons.

After having set out the whole theoretical aspect of the subject, Dr. Shori Liang let the discussion with the forty participants begin. Many hands raised and all the questions asked were very relevant, respectful and apolitical. Here is the selection of the three most interesting questions from the conference.

As we know, the major and most appalling attack was 9/11. Promptly after the attack, the UN wrote the 1368 resolution in order to increase pressure on the fight against terrorism and its improvement. The Civil Aviation Organization was urged to take some extraordinary reinforcing measures concerning security. The next relevant and current question concerns security controls done at the airport, which may seem excessive and to invade privacy. As the UN are willing to defend human rights, the participant was wondering if these controls weren't paradoxical with the UN strategy. According to Dr.Schori Liang, privacy doesn't exist anymore. She alluded to the social networks that took an enormous place in today's society life and destroyed privacy. She agreed that those measures can be taken as violations of privacy, but she argued that nothing could defy something that already is inexistent.

After that, the discussion tended to debate about UN's lack of an exact definition of terrorism. Dr.Schori Liang highlighted the fact that there are 193 countries in the UN. To her, that is the most important reason why it's very difficult to find a common and exact definition that they all can agree with. Furthermore, each country has its own interpretations and consideration of terrorism depending on its policy, its values, and its power.

Another part of the discussion was about whether the cooperation between all the member states was entirely optimal or not. Once again Dr. Schori-Liang emphasized the fact that there are too many members in the UN for the cooperation to be at its highest level. Nevertheless the UN is the only international organization powerful enough to fight international terrorism and therefore has to assume its leading role by showing the example. The efficiency of the fight would be improved if the cooperation goes deeper.

To conclude Dr. Schori-Liang call attention to the fact that the only good answer to international terrorism isn't the one that uses guns, but the one that uses intelligence. Intelligence is the key.

The 2011 UN day was, once again, a place of exchange between in one-hand specialists and students, on the other hand between people concerned by the world well being. The debate was successful and attractive, and people were extremely enthusiastic.

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