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*The PRC's War on Terror: The Impact of Historical
Events on the Uyghurs Today*

An Honors Thesis Presented by
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Introduction

Roughly one million out of eleven million Uyghurs living in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang) in the People's Republic of China (PRC) are currently detained in Chinese internment camps.¹ Though sinologists and the Western media often equate these detainment centers with concentration camps emblematic of Nazi Germany's 'final solution,' Chinese officials insist they are centers where majority-Muslim Uyghurs are reeducated to help them find stable employment.² Despite the Chinese government's characterization of these places as Vocational Education and Training Centers, leaked documents and first hand accounts detail the repressive policies targeting the minority Uyghur population. Reportedly, these internment camps permit torture, food deprivation, forced labor, and sterilization.³ The Chinese government insists that its actions "[ensure] social stability in Xinjiang, ... [conform] to the basic principles of international efforts in countering terrorism and extremism, and [accord] with the fundamental interests and needs of the peoples all around the world".⁴ The Uyghurs do not accept this statist narrative and argue adamantly that they are targeted for their cultural and religious practices. Although other governments have faced accusations of human rights violations for similar uses of torture and forced labor, the Chinese state's role as a permanent member on the UN Security

¹ Busby, Scott. "Testimony of Deputy Assistant Secretary Scott Busby Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific, and International Cybersecurity."

² Asat, Rayhan and Yonah Diamon. "The World's most Technologically Sophisticated Genocide is Happening in Xinjiang."; Brabant, Malcolm. "This Dissident Leaked Explosive Documents Depicting China's Brutal Treatment of Uighurs."; The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. "Vocational Education and Training in Xinjiang." Foreign Policy and PBS make note of the similarities between the Chinese Concentration Camps and Holocaust Concentration Camps in Nazi, Germany. Despite these accusations, The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China published a white paper on Vocational Education and Training in Xinjiang, insisting their methods eradicate preexposed conditions that give way to terrorism and religious extremism.

³ Cuccinelli, Ken and Mark Morgan. "Countering China's Forced Labor Practices."; Wang, Maya. "More Evidence of China's Horrific Abuses in Xinjiang."

⁴ The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. "Vocational Education and Training in Xinjiang."

Council places them in a position to weaken human rights worldwide and avoid penalties for their potential violations.⁵

This thesis investigates these escalating tensions, within the larger context of Xinjiang's contested historical narratives and the numerous voices that have emerged from the region in the recent decades. An understanding and examination of "the various ways fictions of the modern nation's deep historical roots [have] been constructed"⁶ will reveal the present flashpoints of contention regarding the Uyghur-Chinese conflict. Until recently, the dominant account accessible to an international audience has been that of the Chinese state rather than the Uyghurs'. Domestic and international voices in support of the Uyghurs became more audible toward the end of 2019 when social media activists and a variety of other news outlets started to report on the plentiful, yet often unrecognized, human rights violations. Mapping the multiplicity of Uyghur chronicles that have emerged in conversation with the Chinese state will shed light on the multidimensional layers of factors—domestic and global—that have informed contemporary Chinese state policies toward the Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Of particular concern will be the specific factors that have led the Chinese state to label this group as terrorists. This thesis question is approached from a temporal and spatial frame of reference in order to carefully consider the intersection between those factors. The following question will illuminate, and bring to the forefront, the conflicting narratives: What are the historical roots of the Chinese government's view of the Muslim Uyghurs as terrorists? The goal of this thesis is to use historical evidence to develop an understanding of the two viewpoints in contention to unravel the complexities of a crucial, modern-day issue.

⁵ Rizvi, Alina. "Uighur Crisis Highlights Flawed Structure of UN Security Council."

⁶ Maza, Sarah C. *Thinking about History*, Page 52.

Chapter I, “Slow Boil in the New Frontier: Qing History and Historiography of Xinjiang”, maps the New Qing scholarship of the region from the 17th to 19th century. This material is invaluable for understanding the colonial nature of the Qing empire and its impact in Xinjiang.⁷ The chapter will argue that the Qing colonization of the region is best understood as a watershed moment in Xinjiang’s history when considered within the context of the centuries that preceded the establishment of Qing rulership. A watershed moment is thought of as a prominent event or sequence of events that mark a historically relevant or notable change. Elucidating the Qing conquest and the imperial practices that characterized its particular form of colonialism will provide an understanding of the significance of the Qing’s colonial legacy for modern Chinese state policies.

Chapter II, “From Empire to Modern State (1949-2021): Reception and Transformation of the Qing Colonial Legacy” focuses on the Chinese government’s development of the colonial legacy bequeathed by the Qing dynasty. Building on the first chapter’s discussion of the historiography and history of Qing colonialism, Chapter II elaborates on how the present-day Chinese government continued, yet also transformed, the Qing legacy. The chapter examines domestic and global factors in assessing the Chinese state’s justification of its policies from the formation of the PRC in 1949. Of noteworthy interest will be how global factors, including the War on Terror, have shaped these policies.

In contrast to the statist perspectives of the first two chapters, Chapter III, “Domestic and International Responses to the Chinese State”, calls attention to the local and international voices contesting the civilizing and colonizing projects of the modern Chinese state. Despite the limitations placed upon the local Uyghur population in Xinjiang, their voices have not been

⁷ The Qing empire was the last imperial dynasty of the PRC and remained in control from 1844 until 1912. Those in rule were not Han Chinese, who were the majority, but the Manchus.

completely silenced yet. Chapter III will identify and analyze the variety of contemporary voices within the Uyghur community, including intellectuals, who place themselves in a vulnerable position when advocating openly for human rights within the PRC. On the other hand, international voices within the United States have found success given the wide range of frameworks, whether historically or politically based, to redress this population's struggles given that the local community no longer has the autonomy to do so.

A concluding chapter summarizes and evaluates the historical roots, whether domestic or international, that impact the Chinese government's view of the Uyghurs in a modern context. Looking back from the Qing period until the present day provides a sense of what occurred over the course of the previous three centuries and allows for a potential guide to emerge for thinking about Xinjiang and the different possibilities to resolve the tensions embedded within the Uyghur-Chinese state conflict.

Chapter I: Slow Boil in the New Frontier

Introduction

The PRC is the fourth largest country in the world by land mass yet also the most populous with 1.3 billion people. The autonomous province of Xinjiang is the largest of five within the PRC and has extensive societal, cultural, ethnic, and historical roots sprawling across its mountains, basins, and oases. The region was officially established by the Chinese state as an autonomous region, rather than a province, in 1955.⁸ Despite its late incorporation, the history of Xinjiang, literally meaning ‘New Territory’ or ‘New Domain,’ extends back centuries. Its story begins with the conquest and subsequent colonization of the region under the Qing dynasty (1644-1911).⁹ Examining the history and the historiography of the Qing conquest and colonization of Xinjiang allows one to understand why these historical events are best understood as a watershed moment in the centuries-long history of Xinjiang as a crossroads region with multiple and ephemeral forms of rulership. The Qing’s colonial acquisition of vast amounts of land, consolidation of power through varying imperial administrative institutions, and mass migration policies allowed the empire to solidify itself as a permanent form of rulership, something Xinjiang had never before encountered.

Pre-Qing

Before the Qing came to power, Xinjiang was governed by a series of partial rulers through various fragmented alliances. Consequently, the region’s political authority was consistently in a state of contestation with a plurality of entities fighting over administrative and agricultural control. From the 2nd century BC until the Qing conquered and assumed control in

⁸ Municipalities, provinces, autonomous regions, and special administrative regions all belong to the provincial-level of the PRC and are first on the structural hierarchy of administrative divisions within the nation.

⁹ References made to the Qing empire, Qing dynasty, the Great Qing, or the Qing all hold equal meaning in the context of this thesis. See footnote 7 for more information regarding the Qing empire’s history and relevance.

the late 1750s, there was little stable authority over Xinjiang. Throughout the Classical Period (first half of the 2nd century BCE), a Tug-of-War relationship between the Han and Xiongnu forces over the Tarim Basin, the southern half of the province, lasted for over two centuries.¹⁰ This trend continued into the Middle Period (221 CE to the 6th century) with additional ethnic and political entities grappling for control.¹¹ The Turks, Tibetans, Arabs, and Chinese of the Tang dynasty became involved in this fluid and complex situation.¹² By the end of the Middle Period, all of the powers in contention for the region came from outside of Xinjiang's borders. The Mongol Period (13th to 17th century) leading up to the Qing conquest was no different. This vast empire was not one political unit, but four distinct khanates. These khanates were analogous to a kingdom or empire, but delineated as being ruled by the Khan. In this context, a Khan was classified as a ruler or monarch of the Mongol tribes. Due to their close proximity and lengthy history, the four khanates continuously engaged in struggle and often competed with one another for regional domination.¹³ From the 2nd century BC until the Manchus of the Qing dynasty established itself as the sole political power in the 1750s, there was not a single governmental or administrative unit able to solidify profound and long lasting control over the region. This transient state of Xinjiang rulership ceased to exist when the Qing forcefully entered the Chinese borderland with intent to imperialize.

The New Qing Scholarship and The Colonial Nature of the Qing Conquest

Considering Europe has been the dominant epicenter for producing history from their biased perspective over previous centuries, imperialism is often solely associated with Western

¹⁰ Millward, James and Peter Perdue. "Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late 19th Century.," The Tarim Basin and the south of Xinjiang are terms used interchangeably.

¹¹ See *China's Muslim Borderland* by S. Frederick Starr for more information on the Middle Period of the PRC's history as it relates to Xinjiang.

¹² Millward, James and Peter Perdue. "Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late 19th Century."

¹³ Biran, Michal. "The Mongol Empire and Inter-Civilizational Exchange."

nations: Britain's rule over India, Spain in Portugal, and France in Nova Scotia.¹⁴ One example of a Eurocentric text is *European Imperialism: 1830 to 1930* written by Alice Conklin and Ian Fletcher, this book articulates how modern European imperialism, including Britain's imperial control of India, not only transformed global political, economic, social, and cultural relationships, but laid the foundation for the modern world. All of this was accomplished without recognizing or mentioning the impact of East Asian empires. There is a sense of incompleteness due to the omission of Asian experiences with imperialism, giving into the dominant Eurocentric frame of mind that consumes this field.

Due to these omissions, in recent decades, a number of Qing scholars attempted to reverse this Eurocentric trend by incorporating Qing history into the broader discourse. This scholarship disrupted the conventional norms surrounding the Eurocentric view of imperialism. Qing scholars call attention to the ways Qing conquests shared characteristics with its European brethren while also departing from them. For example, the East Asian continental empire did not venture far overseas, but rather integrated adjacent borderlands into their nexus, exemplified by their conquest of Xinjiang.¹⁵ The Qing needs to be consistently identified as an empire and discussed in the context of great European empires in order to make sense of the dynasty's impact on Xinjiang during its era of rule and to the present day.

Chinese history is filled with imperial conquests. A full century after the Qing dynasty was established in 1636, the Qianlong emperor conquered and imperialized Xinjiang in the 1750s. Imperialism is the process by which an expanding state dominates the territory, population, and resources of less powerful states, regions, political entities, or land previously

¹⁴ Maza, Sarah C. *Thinking about History*.

¹⁵ Waley-Cohen, Joanna. "Commemorating War in Eighteenth-Century China." In this article, Waley-Cohen summarizes the Qing's 'Ten Great Campaigns' of military conquest, all of which are now located in Inner, Central, or East Asia.

claimed.¹⁶ The term imperialism captures a wide range of disparate actions and policies which can be classified anywhere between informal and formal. As the new Qing scholars have argued, the Qing empire successfully mastered all forms of imperialism on this spectrum and therefore should be considered as a notable empire.¹⁷ Informal imperialism consists of less overt forms in which indirect economic influence occurs despite the consistent looming threat of military force. Prasenjit Duara points out how indirect or informal imperialism took hold in the PRC, the Ottoman Empire, and Iran, where imperialists dominated not by direct control of state apparatuses, but rather by economic control.¹⁸ The Qing's method of economic control in Xinjiang was cutting off certain trade routes and establishing others. Xinjiang's geographical position on the Silk Road was imperative for commercial success, as it is the case in modern times as well.¹⁹ The Qing wanted to reposition trade toward the center of the empire as a way to establish greater economic control and mutual reliance.²⁰

In contradistinction, colonialism is designated as formal imperialism as it is considered to be a subset of imperialism. Some scholars, including Peter Perdue, note that "the two terms generally describe related aspects of the same phenomena".²¹ However, there is an important distinction to be made to show the gravity and specificity of Qing colonialism in Xinjiang. The Qing's colonizing ambitions in Xinjiang can not consistently be equated with the Qing's imperialism elsewhere.²² Colonialism, as a specific subset of imperialism, is classified as state

¹⁶ Cosmo, Nicola Di. "Qing Colonial Administration in Inner Asia."; Hobson, J. A. *Imperialism: A Study.*; Larsen, Kirk W. *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade: Qing Imperialism and Chosŏn Korea, 1850-1910.*

¹⁷ Qing scholars include: Crossley, Pamela Kyle.; Millward, James A.; Perdue Peter C.

¹⁸ Duara, Prasenjit, Viren Murthy, and Andrew Sartori. *A Companion to Global Historical Thought.*

¹⁹ Gladney, Dru. "Xinjiang: China's Pre- and Post-Modern Crossroad."

²⁰ Millward, James and Nabijan Tursun. "Political History and Strategies of Control." In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, edited by Starr, S. F.

²¹ Perdue, Peter C. "China and Other Colonial Empires."

²² Larsen, Kirk W. *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade: Qing Imperialism and Chosŏn Korea, 1850-1910.* Qing relations with Korea in the middle of the 19th century can be considered informal imperialism, as there was an existing dynasty in which the Qing expanded for diplomatic exchanges. Despite this informal relationship, the Qing's imperial presence in Xinjiang (Inner Asia) and Taiwan can both be designated as formal imperialism (colonialism).

intervention in which military and/or administrative control is put into place for the purpose of establishing direct authority.²³

Nicola Di Cosmo argues that the Qing empire can be classified as a colonialist power due to its conquest and rule of Inner Asia. Colonialism is evident in Xinjiang by the Qing's forceful settlement of new inhabitants in the 18th century despite the established indigenous populations in the region.²⁴ Furthermore, from 1736 to 1820, the Qing maintained military settlements (*Bingtuan*) in Xinjiang.²⁵ The military control, rather than their presence, is what classifies this military involvement as colonialism rather than informal imperialism.²⁶ Correspondingly, the Qing established administrative entities in Beijing and Xinjiang. The administrative structure consisted of native elites who were to monitor the Qing's systems, raise taxes, control foreign relations, reorient Xinjiang toward China proper, and control the migration of people across the frontier.²⁷ Perdue argues the Qing's frontier settlement of immigrants was another distinctive feature of colonial practice.²⁸ Di Cosmo and Perdue's argument exemplifies specific elements of Qing rule that established the empire's colonial nature in the peripheral region of Xinjiang and why it needs to be placed in the same context as their European counterparts.

Having discussed the multitude of ways the Qing empire must be considered as a colonial power, it is now essential to place the dynasty in the same domain as other European empires. East Asian and Chinese scholars attempt to rectify the Eurocentric failure, as demonstrated in Conklin and Fletcher's work, and advocate for the inclusion of the Qing with other empires

²³ Cohen, Warren. *East Asia at the Center: Four Thousand Years of Engagement with the World.*; Ebrey, Patricia Buckley, Anne Walthall, and James B. Palais. *Modern East Asia: From 1600: A Cultural, Social, and Political History.*

²⁴ Cosmo, Nicola Di. "Qing Colonial Administration in Inner Asia."

²⁵ Liu, Ts'ui-Jung and I-Chun Fan. "The Tuntian System in Xinjiang Under the Qing Dynasty: A Perspective from Environmental History."

²⁶ See the Imperial Institutions section of Chapter I for more information on military control.

²⁷ Cosmo, Nicola Di. "Qing Colonial Administration in Inner Asia."

²⁸ Perdue, Peter C. "China and Other Colonial Empires."

through their scholarly works. Perdue focuses on the interaction between empires and argues that although there are differences between the Chinese and European empires, the Qing empire should be closely considered in the context of the other great colonial empires despite being located in the East. He further argues that the Great Qing held similar goals as European expansionists and that its shared ideologies over security and economic concerns for its nations were handled in a similar manner. Kirk Larsen agrees, stating that the rise of the Qing and its expansion “can and should be fruitfully compared with a wide range of imperialist powers across the globe”.²⁹ The Qing distinguished itself as an empire when it built formal state structures through administrative institutions in Xinjiang. Along with these came military entities used for repression or defense.³⁰ These colonizing strategies carried out as part of the Qing dynasty’s grand expansion worked well during its peak of domination. The recognition of institutions illustrates how the field has developed and become less Eurocentric with the development of the new Qing scholarship.

The Watershed Moment

The Qing was not the first imperial power in Xinjiang. As previously mentioned, outside influence penetrated the region for centuries before. An indication of Xinjiang’s turbulent past is the many populations that claimed the land. However, the Qing initiated an unprecedented form of imperial control that ultimately became a historical watershed moment. Outlining the dynasty’s imperial patterns and behaviors illustrates how it established hegemonic superiority over Xinjiang and its people and laid the historical foundation for the contemporary persecution of the Uyghurs. The Qing conquest of the vast Xinjiang region is a watershed moment due to the execution of its imperialist strategy to promote the empire’s local and international needs of the

²⁹ Larsen, Kirk W. “The Qing Empire (China), Imperialism, and the Modern World.”

³⁰ Perdue, Peter C. “China and Other Colonial Empires.”

time, consolidate power through imperial administrative and military institutions, execute forced migration, and other the Xinjiang peoples.

Expansionist Desires

As the Qing rulers became a preeminent power over the decades, they ascertained that in order to continue their prosperity, imperializing Xinjiang would satisfy domestic and international concerns.³¹ The Qing sought to expand its uncontested power and rule throughout Asia. The Ming Dynasty, the last Han Chinese empire before the Qing, at its peak in 1450, had 2.5 million square miles.³² The Qing substantially expanded upon those territories by more than twofold. At its peak in 1790, the Qing built up an empire of 5.7 million square miles.³³ The Qianlong Emperor, the emperor at the time of the Xinjiang conquest, personally wrote and admitted “this territorial expansion was far in excess [of Kangxi’s]”³⁴ as was “the incorporation of distant lands far more complete”.³⁵ The addition of Xinjiang to the empire was not a trifling matter, the region’s land mass is about 642,000 square miles.³⁶

Not only did the Qing desire the vast lands of Xinjiang to expand their empire, Qing rulers also expressed strategic interest in conquering Xinjiang for its geographical location. The Qing understood its geostrategic importance and wanted to establish a strong foothold there, regardless of whether or not it was economically profitable. James Millward argues that Qing rulers did not view Xinjiang as a place for economic profit or wealth growth, but rather as a

³¹ Before the Qing unified the region now known as Xinjiang, the northern region was known as Dzungaria and the southern region was Altishahr or the Tarim Basin. These terms would have been before Xinjiang officially became a province in 1884. In order to not be historically anachronistic, the correct terminology would be to use Dzungaria and Altishahr before 1884. However, to keep language consistent and predictable, the term Xinjiang will be used throughout.

³² Turchin, Peter, Jonathan M. Adams, and Thomas D. Hall. “East-West Orientation of Historical Empires and Modern States.”

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Millward, James A. *New Qing Imperial History: The Making of Inner Asian Empire at Qing Chengde.*; Kangxi is the Qianlong Emperor’s grandfather and the longest reigning emperor of the Qing dynasty.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ This is about three times the size of France or comparable to the state of Alaska.

strategic imperial conquest.³⁷ This conquest was motivated by a desire to create a secure buffer zone and seal off Xinjiang from central Asia.³⁸ The strategic purpose for taking this region was to use it as a buffer between the Qing and Russian empire, who was one of the Qing's neighboring rivals at the time. The Russian empire was seen as the prime threat to Qing domination for its increasing authority and close proximity. Often, colonizers will justify their aims in order to convey their method of reasoning. While the threat was authentic, the Qing unduly framed its conquest as a buffer for security reasons and claimed that the Han and Tang era borders would be reinstated.³⁹ If these borders were to actually be reinstated, the perimeter of the Qing dynasty would have extended farther north past Xinjiang's border and cut off Russian access to the region economically and geographically.

This ideological reasoning, combined with the colonizing mentality, led the Qing empire to conquer the region of Xinjiang despite it belonging to the Dzungars, various Oirat tribes who predominantly lived in the northern region.⁴⁰ The dynasty brutally eliminated the Dzungar people in the mid-18th century when Qianlong sent an army of 50,000 and crushed them in merely 100 days, forcefully taking over the region.⁴¹ Not only did the Qing desire the vast lands of Xinjiang to expand the geographical perimeters of the empire, this conquest was done over international concerns of foreign entities and enemies impeding the Qing's colonial ambitions.

Imperial Institutions

Xinjiang was not new to these imperial conquests. For centuries, foreign entities invaded the region's borders. However, the novel way the Qing controlled and consolidated its rule and created a systematic administration that it would maintain for a century was previously

³⁷ Millward, James A. *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864*.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Newby, Laura. *The Empire and the Khanate: A Political History of Qing Relations with Khoqand C. 1760-1860*.

⁴⁰ Serruys, Henry. *Istoriya Džungarskoko Xanstva (History of the Džungar Empire)*; A group of people who lived in Western Mongolia.

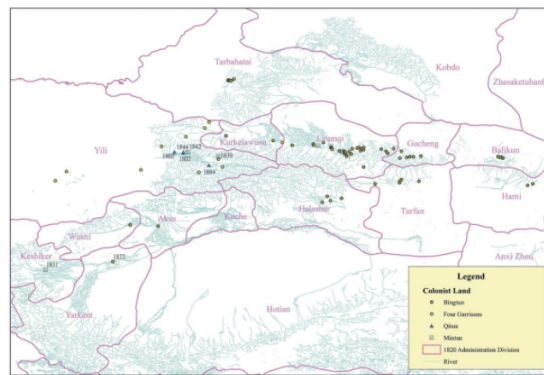
⁴¹ Adle, Chahryar, Irfan Habib, and Karl Baipakov. *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*.

unmatched. By establishing imperial military and civil administrative institutions, the Qing solidified its rule as the dominant power in the region. Thus, not only the persistence of Qing control, but the depth and breadth of military and administrative control, suggests that Qing colonialism constitutes a watershed moment in the history of the region.

In an attempt to secure and maintain control of their newly expanded territory, the Qing implemented military colonies (*Tuntian*) across Xinjiang. Throughout the Qing period, there were 22,200 soldiers of the Green Standard Army and 14,800 soldiers of the Eight Banners.⁴²

The Green Standard Army contained a Han majority while the Eight Banners were Manchu forces stationed to protect the homeland.⁴³ The

number of military colonies greatly surpassed the military presence established by earlier conquerors whose hold on the region was more ephemeral and tenuous. Millward argues that Xinjiang's military colonies early on were established for security reasons rather than



Map 4: The distribution of Tuntian in Xinjiang: The later stage (1802-84).

economic profit.⁴⁴ As depicted in the image, the colonies were concentrated in the northern area of Xinjiang.⁴⁵ During this era, Western imperialist powers were beginning to exhibit more aggressive behavior along the eastern seaboard of the Qing empire. The military colonies were established as a preventative buffer to prevent encroachment of other foreign powers on the north and west boundaries. This is why military colonies were prevalent in the north, along the edges

⁴² Liu, Ts'ui-Jung and I-Chun Fan. "The Tuntian System in Xinjiang Under the Qing Dynasty: A Perspective from Environmental History."

⁴³ McCord, Edward Allen. *The Power of the Gun: The Emergence of Modern Chinese Warlordism.*

⁴⁴ Millward, James and Peter Perdue. "Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late 19th Century."

⁴⁵ Image: Liu, Ts'ui-Jung and I-Chun Fan. "The Tuntian System in Xinjiang Under the Qing Dynasty: A Perspective from Environmental History."

of the Russian empire, and subsided the further south you went. The empire was concerned about what historians now call ‘the Great Game’, the competition among Western and Russian imperialist powers to gain better access and exploit the regions of the Qing empire.⁴⁶ While the Qing was always concerned about the international factors impacting its empire, such as foreign enemies, the dynasty had domestic concerns as well that the military could attempt to mitigate. New civilian settlements were complemented by military ones in order to keep local tensions at ease.⁴⁷ Di Cosmo argues that the implementation of these military colonies sheds light on features of Qing colonialism that are comparable to the new imperialism seen elsewhere across the globe.⁴⁸

Despite the relatively consistent presence of Qing-sanctioned settlements in Xinjiang, they were informed by two distinct administrative ideologies. Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper coin the term ‘repertoires of power’ to differentiate between various types of imperialist conquest. The authors argue there are many variations of imperial authority across diverse regions and that there are “strikingly different ways in which imperial expansion across land—not just seas—produced different configurations of politics and society”.⁴⁹ Namely, there was little interest in assimilation or sinicization in regards to the Qing conquest of the northern province in the beginning but, in regards to the Tarim Basin, this region was “characterized by a [strong] central government presence; more openness to immigrants from China; more active expropriation of land and mineral resources; and measures aimed at assimilating the natives”.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ingram, Edward. *The Beginning of the Great Game in Asia, 1828-1834*.

⁴⁷ Millward, James and Nabijan Tursun. “Political History and Strategies of Control.” In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, edited by Starr, S. F.

⁴⁸ Cosmo, Nicola Di . “Qing Colonial Administration in Inner Asia.”; Queen, Sarah. *Human Rights in China Lecture*, October 2020.

⁴⁹ Burbank, Jane and Frederick Cooper. *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*, Page 6.

⁵⁰ Cosmo, Nicola Di . “Qing Colonial Administration in Inner Asia.”, Page 294.

The first form of Qing rule, before becoming more autocratic, was pluralistic and flexibly accommodated the region's interests.⁵¹ The Qing used native elites to help implement Chinese administrative systems in Xinjiang.⁵² The Manchu rulers of Xinjiang worked with, and relied on, the local elites (*begs*) to run and maintain the development of the region. At the time, this was one way to maintain and control a multi-ethnic political entity. Examined from a modern day perspective, this form was met with greater reception overall. It was successful because the Qing rulership did not entail the forced alteration of local society. However, these lenient policies did not last. As Xinjiang became more important to the dynasty, the Qing rulers, with their imperial mindset, sought to establish their control of Xinjiang more deeply and firmly as part of their empire.

Their administrative institutions reflect this shift in ideology. Chinese-style administration, run by Qing government officials, replaced the local Turkic elites with Manchu officials.⁵³ Instead of a flexible policy in which local customs of rule remained intact, bureaucratic organizations that were imperialist and colonialist in nature were instituted. What was once an integrationist approach now became outwardly assimilationist. In 1884, the Qing unified the Buddhist Mongol area north of the Tianshan (Zungharia) and Turkic Muslim area south of the Tianshan (Tarim Basin) into what we now know as Xinjiang.⁵⁴ After 1884, this administrative period was characterized by central control, provincialization, settlement into the region, militarization, and greater economic connection to the center. The depth and breadth of Qing administrative presence differed from what came before. This form of governance was similar to the new imperialism spreading across the globe in which agricultural and military

⁵¹ Millward, James and Peter Perdue. "Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late 19th Century."

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Millward, James and Nabijan Tursun. "Political History and Strategies of Control." In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, edited by Starr, S. F.

⁵⁴ Liu, Tao and David Faure. *Unity and Diversity: Local Cultures and Identities in China*.

settlements were paired with state supervision. Millward argues that the new Qing control inaugurated a more permanent rulership that set the stage for future colonialist projects in the region.⁵⁵ The local population were now always thought of as colonial subjects. This characterization led to resistance against the Qing state when a Chinese style of administration was implemented and became increasingly assimilationist. The Qing overlords justified the bureaucratic rule by ensuring economic self-sufficiency and stability for the region of Xinjiang.⁵⁶ The lasting legacy of the Qing and this significant turning point stems from their ability to consolidate power in Xinjiang, which sets the stage for the Chinese government today.

The consolidation of power extended to economic relations with foreign entities as well. While Xinjiang was close to the Russian empire and central Asia, there was only a modest trade dynamic between them.⁵⁷ Despite the limited flow of goods, the Qing cut off trade routes with these regions in order for Xinjiang's economy to be rerouted toward Beijing rather than other peripheral empires or regions.⁵⁸ The ultimate rationale behind the Qing's motives was to recenter Xinjiang's economy toward the core of the Qing dynasty. This economic concern was an attempt to keep the empire as unified as possible economically and structurally for profit. Ultimately, the Qing faced similar challenges with the Russian empire in regards to foreign incursion. Russia became greedy and pursued as many privileges as other European powers had attained within the Qing territory.⁵⁹ Despite the attempt to block access, as was the case originally with Western powers on the coast, the Russian empire ultimately prevailed with the Treaty of Ghulja. This treaty transformed the relations between Russia and the Qing, what were once fairly equal

⁵⁵ Millward, James and Peter Perdue. "Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late 19th Century."

⁵⁶ Millward, James and Nabijan Tursun. "Political History and Strategies of Control." In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, edited by Starr, S. F.

⁵⁷ Foust, Clifford M. *Muscovite and Mandarin; Russia's Trade with China and its Setting, 1727-1805*.

⁵⁸ Millward, James and Nabijan Tursun. "Political History and Strategies of Control." In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, edited by Starr, S. F.

⁵⁹ Shioya, Akifumi. "The Treaty of Ghulja Reconsidered: Imperial Russian Diplomacy Toward Qing China in 1851."

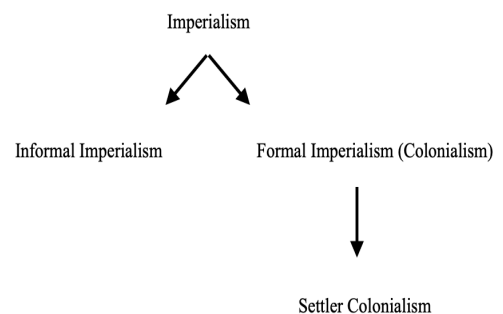
relations now turned highly unequal, as Russian consuls and factories were given the right to increase their commerce in the geographical sphere of Xinjiang.⁶⁰

Although the Qing's attempts to redirect trade did not attain the level of success the dynasty was striving to achieve, its imperial administrative and military institutions penetrated deeply into Xinjiang's society with profound effects. This represented an unparalleled level of societal alteration in the history of the region. The Qing used this system to govern vast, imperial borderland regions, contributing significantly to a watershed moment in Xinjiang's history.

Forced Migration

After the near elimination of the Dzungar population, Xinjiang's northern region was drastically depopulated. Despite Qing records claiming that the dynasty's armies took the lives of more than 1 million Dzungars, scholars estimate this number to be closer to between 480,000 and 800,000, which is still 80% of the Dzungar population.⁶¹ The Qing acted swiftly to reverse the population loss by settling Han Chinese in Xinjiang. This strategy became a top priority and is one of the reasons the Qing dynasty can be classified as a watershed moment: Imperial policy encouraged the migration of Han Chinese into the region, establishing a precedent for settler colonialism in Xinjiang.

Settler colonialism is a distinctive subset of colonialism. Empires will attempt to replace or repopulate a region with invasive techniques through the introduction of new settler colonies of their specific choosing. Peter Charles argues that the specific



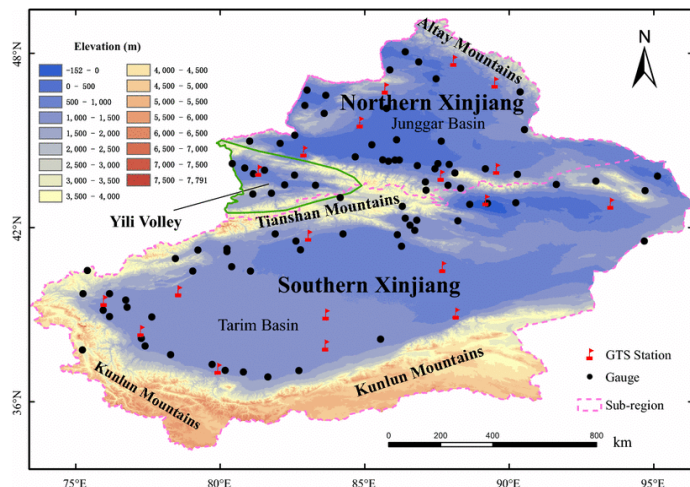
⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Clarke, Michael Edmund. "In the Eye of Power: China and Xinjiang from the Qing Conquest to the 'New Great Game' for Central Asia, 1759-2004," Page 37; Crossley, Pamela Kyle. *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology*, Page 326.

differentiation between colonialism and settler colonialism is that settler colonialism intends to permanently occupy and assert sovereignty over indigenous lands rather than for a limited period of time.⁶² Ultimately, this technique is implemented to expand territory.⁶³ As the catalyst for this practice, the Qing's resettlement actions became standard fare for decades to come.⁶⁴

Throughout the latter half of the 18th century, the Qing repopulated the northern region of Xinjiang with Kazakhs, Han and Hui from Gansu, Uyghur-Turks from the South, and Xibo from Manchuria.⁶⁵ While the data is not

exact, scholars estimate by the early 1800s the Qing shifted the demographics of the region so greatly that the Chinese (Han, Hui), Qing officials, and commoners constituted 38% of the Xinjiang population.⁶⁶ These Chinese



settlers were only permitted to settle north of the Tianshan mountains in order to keep the Chinese separate from the indigenous Uyghur population in the south, a precursor for the modern day ethnic tensions.⁶⁷ Gong Zizhen and Wei Yuan, powerful Chinese officials, supported resettling Chinese in the region to assure a steady supply of labor to staff the imperial military and administrative institutions.⁶⁸

⁶² Charles, Peter. "The 'New Borderlands' and Settler Colonialism in Xinjiang."

⁶³ Tuck, Eve and Julie Gorlewski. "Racist Ordering, Settler Colonialism, and edTPA: A Participatory Policy Analysis", Page 210.

⁶⁴ Image: Lauren Munster.

⁶⁵ Toops, Stanley. "The Population Landscape of Xinjiang/East Turkestan", Page 158.

⁶⁶ Stanley Toops. "The Demography of Xinjiang." In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, edited by Starr, S. F.

⁶⁷ Image: Lu, Xinyu, Ming Wei, Guoqiang Tang, and Yingxin Zhang. "Evaluation and Correction of the TRMM 3B43V7 and GPM 3IMERGM Satellite Precipitation Products by use of Ground-Based Data Over Xinjiang, China.;" This issue will be fleshed out further in future sections.

⁶⁸ Millward, James A. *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864*.

The Qing initiated another important policy meant to guarantee a steady supply of unskilled and skilled labor to the region. Dynasty officials designed a system of banishment intended to combine severe punishment with both the colonization of the frontier and the rehabilitation of offenders.⁶⁹ In total, 9,200 criminals were exiled to the region during Qing control.⁷⁰ One of the more notable political exiles was Lin Zexu, a scholar-official under the Qianlong Emperor. He was banished to the region, in addition to thousands of others, for his outspokenness on the negative impacts of Chinese trade with British opium suppliers since there was “strong proof that [the British] [knew] full well how hurtful [opium] [was] to mankind”.⁷¹ Zexu’s letter to Queen Victoria precipitated the demise of the Qing empire when British military penetrated the Chinese coast.⁷² This invasion showcases how the Qing held both the positions of colonizer and victim. The ultimate downfall of the Qing empire in the late 19th and early 20th century was due to increasing Western encroachment from the Eastern seaboard. Before this could fully occur, the Qing dynasty successfully altered the ethnic ratio of the Xinjiang region in accordance with their strategic aims.

An Instilled Hierarchy

Despite the attempts at sinicization, the Qing could never fully cement their imperial aims in Xinjiang due to fostering a sense of otherness and instilling a societal hierarchy. There were other reasons for their failure to solidify stable imperial control over the region as well, including difficulty with Qing troops supporting themselves and the lack of desire from emperors to pay for more military presence to quell the rising local tensions.⁷³ These challenges meant the

⁶⁹ Waley-Cohen, Joanna. *Exile in Mid-Qing China: Banishment to Xinjiang, 1758-1820*.

⁷⁰ Liu, Ts'ui-Jung and I-Chun Fan. “The Tuntian System in Xinjiang Under the Qing Dynasty: A Perspective from Environmental History.”

⁷¹ Zexu, Lin. “Letter to Queen Victoria”, Page 3.

⁷² Waley-Cohen, Joanna. *Exile in Mid-Qing China: Banishment to Xinjiang, 1758-1820*.

⁷³ Millward, James and Peter Perdue. “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late 19th Century.”

dynasty's hold on the region remained tenuous until it formally incorporated Xinjiang into the empire as a province in 1884. With tensions rising, many Qing scholars saw Xinjiang and its people as uncivilized who were negligible to Qing politics moving forward. The Confucian ideologies of the empire contrasted markedly with those of the Islamic regions in Xinjiang. Chinese intellectuals and scholars thought "Xinjiang's people did not deserve Qing rule and the territory did not deserve defense... Some even considered Xinjiang to be a — useless land",⁷⁴ including Wu-long-a, a famous Manchu official. Those same individuals instilled a sense of the other and justified this ideology with the use of civilizing projects, both of which contribute to the Qing's hierarchical relationship embedded within this watershed moment.

One form of justification for the othering of Xinjiang is through civilizing projects. Civilizing projects establish a perception of "superiority and inferiority that [maintain] the hierarchy by justifying it through ideology and institutions, making it seem both proper and neutral to both the rulers and the ruled".⁷⁵ A hegemonic relationship is created between the center and periphery in which the dominant center has an impulse to interact with and educate the other due to the unquestioned hierarchy that is inherently unequal. The inequality occurring "between the civilizing center and the peripheral peoples has its ideological basis in the center's claim to a superior degree of civilization, along with a commitment to raise the peripheral peoples' civilization to the level of the center".⁷⁶ This behavior exemplified by the Qing directly parallels an Orientalist attitude.

Edward Said, a professor at Columbia, founder of postcolonial studies, and renowned scholar, established the concept of Orientalism. His groundbreaking work on the subject

⁷⁴ Jianfei, Jia. *Whose Xinjiang? The Transition in Chinese Intellectuals' Imagination of the "New Dominion" during the Qing Dynasty*, Page 9-10.

⁷⁵ Harrell, Stevan. *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, Page 8.

⁷⁶ Harrell, Stevan. *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, Page 4.

describes the West's ineradicable, disdainful depiction and portrayal of the socially constructed, inferior East. There is a continuous theme of 'us versus them' in which the superior West colonized the East in order to help the backward region make progress. Said's concept of Orientalism was limited to the West's view of the East. Later scholars, such as Emma Teng, have showcased how the Orientalist attitude was not necessarily an East-West binary as Said's work exemplifies. Teng cites the Qing's Orientalist attitude toward the Taiwanese population it conquered, both of which are in the Eastern hemisphere. This attitude is evident through the implementation of various methods of racialization including "changing mainland perspectives on the capacity of the natives/savages... to a sense that [they] needed to be 'transformed' and later conquered".⁷⁷ Thus, scholars, such as Emma Teng and other historians associated with the new Qing scholarship, have demonstrated the limits of Said's East-West binary by documenting how the Orientalist frame of mind informed Qing colonial expansion in Xinjiang, as well as other regions of the empire including Taiwan, Tibet, and Korea.

Throughout the reign of the Qing, the Chinese center regarded Jiayu Pass, one of the westernmost passes through the Great Wall, as the border between the Chinese center and its borderlands. This "boundary [became] infused with cultural meaning".⁷⁸ With this mentality, Qing leaders and intellectuals viewed anything beyond this marking point as "a wild geographic domain... but also land of exotic culture; it separated two different ethnic groups of different cultures".⁷⁹ This notion became widely accepted and viewed as a geographical, religious, and ethnic border between the civilized and uncivilized, or the inner and outer, regions of the empire.

⁷⁷ Fogel, Joshua A. *Taiwan's Imagined Geography: Chinese Colonial Travel Writing and Pictures, 1683–1895*.

⁷⁸ Jianfei, Jia. *Whose Xinjiang? The Transition in Chinese Intellectuals' Imagination of the "New Dominion" during the Qing Dynasty*, Page 1.

⁷⁹ Jianfei, Jia. *Whose Xinjiang? The Transition in Chinese Intellectuals' Imagination of the "New Dominion" during the Qing Dynasty*, Page 3.

In his book, *Orientalism*, Said quotes a passage attributed to Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer, a British colonial administrator, containing the Latin term *in statu pupillari*. The literal translation is as follows: “In the state of pupillage; meaning subject to the rules of a college or university as they apply to junior members”.⁸⁰ In the context of the passages’ arguments, Lord Cromer uses this to highlight his view that the people in question are bound to be lower on the hierarchical scale due to the notion that Western knowledge and experience always comes out on top. Lord Cromer always thought of the Egyptians as human material he could govern because they were the exact opposite of the European mindset. As Said bluntly summarizes, “the crime was that the Oriental was an Oriental”.⁸¹ This specific mindset of Orientalism is evident in the Qing’s sense of cultural, political, and social superiority over Xinjiang and its inhabitants. Throughout the Qing’s reign of Xinjiang, the dynasty did not view the region, nor the people, as equals, but rather cultivated a hierarchical differentiation between them and the region of Xinjiang, isolating the region from China proper.

Elliot Sperling’s article: “Awe and Submission: A Tibetan Aristocrat at the Court of Qianlong”, supports the theory of Orientalism within this Eastern context because it shows how one dominant power, the Qing empire, created and perpetuated a specific negative view of the people it conquered. Sperling shows that even the dynasty employed Orientalist tactics through its colonial rule by the ways in which it described and mocked the dress and language of other ethnicities. Likewise, L.J. Newby’s article highlights the large number of writings that focus on the cultural differences between the Han Chinese and Uyghur population. What contrasted the most with Han society was “the gown worn by both sexes... the men sporting beards and close-shaven heads, and the young girls with their long hair braided in five or more plaits”.⁸² The

⁸⁰ Oxford English Dictionary.

⁸¹ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*, Page 39.

⁸² Newby, L. J. “The Chinese Literary Conquest of Xinjiang”, Page 456.

description given was not to just describe their attire, but further build a barrier as “the gowns [were] described in terms of atomized alien features”.⁸³ No matter the source of the writings, the Qing control consistently attempted to prey on the people of Xinjiang and show their society as going against the norms of the empire.

Another common source of writings were the exiles, some of whom were intellectuals as well, who were living in the region and detailed their experiences. Newby’s article describes many such accounts. The exile’s works point out Xinjiang’s geographical beauty and natural features such as oases, deserts, and mountains. However, Newby addresses how the exiles’ travel writings “ensured an abnormally high degree of coherence in the images conveyed back to the center and contributed to a static view of the society and culture of the region”.⁸⁴ The homogenous view produced from these writings contributes to the statist narrative because Xinjiang’s frontier was perpetually discriminated against through Orientalist depictions of geography and culture. The narrative describing Xinjiang “as an unalienable part of China”⁸⁵ was produced for Han viewing and helped achieve the Qing’s goal of legitimizing its power over the frontier region.

Throughout the Qing’s reign from the 1750s until the early 20th century, Qing officials did not view Xinjiang as an equal playing partner. Notably, official’s views of the region only got more hostile toward the end of the Qing era.⁸⁶ As the disdainful views progressed, the instilled hierarchy became more apparent. This act of othering the frontier region, its people, culture, and geography, contributes to the Qing’s reign as a watershed moment in Xinjiang’s history and legitimizes these viewpoints for centuries to come.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Newby, L. J. “The Chinese Literary Conquest of Xinjiang”, Page 457.

⁸⁵ Newby, L. J. “The Chinese Literary Conquest of Xinjiang”, Page 468.

⁸⁶ Millward, James A. *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864*, Page 196.

Conclusion

Prior to the Qing conquest, foreign rule within the region was often short-lived and shifted among a variety of powers. Upon their colonial conquest of Xinjiang for security reasons, the Qing vastly expanded its empire and implemented various imperial military and administrative institutions. Lastly, the empire's mass migration policies to the frontier region of Han Chinese and other ethnic groups solidified its drastic control of the region, including the flux of demographics. The examination of Qing history, historiography, and its colonization of Xinjiang allows one to see why the dynasty's rule throughout its conquest can be seen as a watershed moment in the region's history. These efforts have not gone unnoticed, as they paved the way for the Chinese government's rule of Xinjiang starting in the 20th century.

Chapter II: From Empire to Modern State: Reception and Transformation of the Qing Colonial Legacy (1949 to 2021)

Introduction

The legacy of the Qing empire has been ingrained into Chinese society, in terms of tangible impacts as well as within the hearts and minds of the Chinese government. Regardless, the Qing empire laid the foundation to the region for the eras of Chinese rule that followed. The aim of this chapter is to situate contemporary Chinese state policies toward Xinjiang within a historical framework that bridges the imperial and modern eras to identify continuities and discontinuities with the Qing legacy of colonialism. The most advantageous way to explore the parallels between these two periods is to examine the present day relations between the Uyghurs of Xinjiang and the Chinese government of the PRC.⁸⁷ Many historical trends have been institutionalized within the region since the start of the 16th century. From the Qing era to present day, history has often been found to repeat itself, manifesting a real life *Groundhog Day* scenario.⁸⁸ Administrative and civilizing projects, forced migration, an attempt to maintain vast territorial acquisitions, and the concern over local and global events all remain influential to the PRC today despite the Qing's original implementation of these practices four centuries ago. These accepted Qing practices have had lasting impacts one can still see taking shape in the form of modern Chinese policy. In lieu of all of these, there are still a plethora of notable differences as well. The Chinese state is able to penetrate further and deeper down than before since it is now ruled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Similarly, the PRC now maintains that Xinjiang has always been an integral part of the PRC in order to benefit their position as a

⁸⁷ The Chinese center, Chinese core, or China Proper refers only to the inner PRC in order to promote the distinction between the core and frontier regions of the PRC. Throughout this thesis, the term's meaning remains the same regardless of the time period being discussed. The core alludes to the inner PRC while the frontier regions can include: Xinjiang, Mongolia, Manchuria, and Tibet.

⁸⁸ *Groundhog Day* is a 1993 film in which a weatherman finds himself reliving the same day over and over again.

rapidly growing powerhouse in the modern world. Despite labelling some changes as blatant differences, the modern Chinese state would be nowhere near where they are today, especially in terms of colonizing practices in Xinjiang, if it was not for the foundation laid out by the Qing empire. This chapter will demonstrate that the PRC has perpetuated the civilizing mentality of Qing colonial rule while departing from its predecessor given modern technological advances and political norms.

Continuities from the Qing

As seen in Chapter I, administrative and civilizing projects constituted the crux of Qing colonial activities in Xinjiang. Using migration to shift demographics and change ethnic ratios, while also maintaining and expanding territory, set the Qing apart from other previous dynasties. As one of the most strategic dynasties, the Qing passed on this roadmap of territorial expansion to its modern day counterparts. Forced migration, vast territorial acquisition and maintenance, and the consideration of international factors are the three prime areas of focus modern day Chinese policy looks back toward the Qing to adopt.

Administrative and Civilizing Projects: Forced Migration

During the early years of the Qing's rule in Xinjiang, it is reported that there were only a few hundred Han people living in the region.⁸⁹ Despite the degrees of imprecision in regards to the Han population estimate and the unknown Uyghur percentage in Xinjiang during this time, detailed censuses and personnel narratives agree that the Qing forcefully ordered the settlement of thousands of Han to the Xinjiang region throughout the remaining years of the 19th century.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Toops, Stanley. "The Population Landscape of Xinjiang/East Turkestan."; Tianshan. "An Analysis Report on Population Change in Xinjiang."

⁹⁰ Readings from Millward, Toops, and Perdue all acknowledge the Qing's settlement policies in a plethora of their works.

As we have seen through settler colonialism, the Han in Xinjiang increased exponentially to 30% of the total population in the late 19th century in comparison to 60% being Uyghurs.⁹¹

The ethnic ratio in Xinjiang stayed fairly stable until there was a steep decline of Han over the early 1900s which lasted until the middle of the century, unsurprisingly overlapping with the Warlord Era

(1916 to 1928) of Chinese history.⁹² One potential cause for this drastic decline of Han in the Xinjiang region was

Xinjiang Ethnic Comparison	Han Population	Uyghur Population
Before 1831	Only a few hundred	Unknown
19th Century	30%	60%
1941	5%	80%
1953	6%	75%
1982	40%	45%
1990	38%	47%
2000	41%	45%
2018	36%	51%

the consistent revolts, uprisings, and rebellions brought about by the wave of independence movements sparked by Uyghur Turkic pride in 1933 and 1944. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s there were numerous attacks perpetuated by Uyghurs in an attempt to showcase their disapproval with Chinese policies in the region.⁹³ Groups of rebels assaulted small towns and massacred the Han population. These violent acts most likely discouraged migration to the region, gave the Han a valid reason to feel threatened by their surroundings, and flee in fear of being persecuted.

However, once these rebellions were relatively quelled by the Chinese state, this is where one starts to see the parallels between the Qing settlement plan and modern day migration patterns in the PRC. Since the founding of the PRC in 1949, the migration patterns in the region demonstrate the central government’s goal of resettling Han Chinese into the region. There is a

⁹¹ Rounded to the nearest whole percent. The percentage will not add up to 100% given that the emphasis is placed on the Han-Uyghur demographic shifts and does not include the other ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang region.

⁹² See *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*, edited by S. Frederick Starr, for more information regarding the Warlord Period in relation to Xinjiang.; Data in Image: Toops, Stanley. “The Population Landscape of Xinjiang/East Turkestan.”

⁹³ Fuller, Nicholas. “Xinjiang: The History and Context of Modern Issues.”

clear, very sharp upward trend of Han settlement between 1953 and 1982. During this time, the Han population nearly went up by 18 times.⁹⁴

After 1982, the ethnic population ratio and composition minimally fluctuated throughout the years. However, a possible explanation for the slight increase in the Uyghur population in comparison to Han over the 21st century could be attributed to Han Chinese parents being allowed one child less than ethnic minority families in Xinjiang until August of 2017. This policy has since changed to no longer allow ethnic minorities to have more children than Han in order to maintain what the Chinese government calls ‘ethnic equality’.⁹⁵

Regardless of the minute shifts over the decades, the Chinese government’s intensified promotion of Han migration and reclamation of land is justified by their need for stability and economic self-sufficiency of Xinjiang.⁹⁶ Given this parallel, it is evident that Xi Jinping, the current President of the PRC, has modeled the modern era migration patterns after the Qing empire’s efforts due to the similar ratio to the Qing-era demographics we now see in modern times. Professor Stanley W. Toops completed extensive research on the intersection between ethnicity and population in Xinjiang and also suggests that Xinjiang’s demographic situation today is similar to that of the early Qing period.⁹⁷ The settlement initiative of the Qing dynasty sparked modern day application given its relative perceived success by the Chinese central government.

Not only does the modern day ethnic population ratios reflect that of the Qing era, but the civilizing mentality of the center has remained consistent as well. The Chinese government started to promote and encourage Han migration to the Xinjiang region in order to quell the

⁹⁴ Toops, Stanley. “The Population Landscape of Xinjiang/East Turkestan.”

⁹⁵ Hincks, Joseph. “Family Planning Rules Changed in China’s Uighur Region.”

⁹⁶ Dru Gladney, “The Chinese Program of Development and Control 1978-2001.”

⁹⁷ Toops, Stanley. “Demographics and Development in Xinjiang After 1949.”

possibility of another resurgence of extremism as seen in the 1940s. Similarly, the Chinese center aspires to bring millions of Han from the metropolitan to peripheral Xinjiang.⁹⁸ The Chinese government is doing this for the exact same reasons the Qing did: to eliminate the cultural, religious, and historical practices of the Uyghurs while strengthening the ties between Xinjiang and the center. Refocusing Xinjiang toward the Chinese center is done in order to diminish the region's relations with nations west of the PRC, mainly central Asia where Muslim influence is plentiful.

The legacy of the Qing is still apparent in the 21st century CCP given the long-standing civilizing mentality. This mentality is exemplified by the mass migration policies to the region today. However, this is not the only similarity to the Qing era. The Chinese government today, still utilizing the civilizing framework, is equally wedded to maintaining the geographical borders the Qing empire colonized centuries ago.

Administrative and Civilizing Projects: Territorial Acquisition and Maintenance

As Chapter I elucidated, the Qing strategically decided to conquer Xinjiang for its use as a national security buffer. As with their Qing predecessors, the Chinese government continues to perpetuate this view. By upholding its commitment to territorial acquisition and maintenance within the region, the PRC isolated and differentiated Xinjiang from other provinces and territorial claims of the mainland.

Within a modern context, the Chinese government's desire and power to maintain vast territory is something that cannot go unnoticed. Over 200 years ago, the Qing's forceful establishment of Xinjiang as one unified geographic nation rather than the two distinct northern and southern regions paved the way for PRC intrusion and administrative control of the expansive territory it now calls one of its autonomous provinces. The Qing during its reign

⁹⁸ Charles, Peter. "The 'New Borderlands' and Settler Colonialism in Xinjiang."

expanded and attempted to administratively control Xinjiang, Taiwan, Tibet, Central Asia and Mongolia with notable success. This expansionist mindset of the Qing resonates with the Chinese government today. It now claims land and has ongoing territorial disputes with seventeen different countries over land and sea regions.⁹⁹ One of the more notable contemporary disputes in which the Chinese government plays its hand in is the dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Starting in the 1970s, the major point of contention is whether these islands are part of Okinawa or part of Taiwan (which the Chinese government also claims). Strategically, the mainland wants these minor islands for territorial influences, sea lane control, and access to economic resources in the area.¹⁰⁰ Despite the CCP's multifocal strategy in the 21st century, Xinjiang is still an imperative part of the mainland's expansionist tendencies as it has been since the Qing dynasty.

The statist mindset toward Xinjiang has remained relatively consistent since the late imperial era. Mao Zedong summarized the viewpoint of the dichotomy between the center and peripheral nations when he said the PRC "is a country vast in territory, rich in resources and large in populations; as a matter of fact it is the Han nationality whose population is large and the minority nationalities whose territory is vast and whose resources are rich".¹⁰¹ This exploitative and hierarchical relationship is the one constant throughout Han-ethnic minority relations. It is evident that the core exploits the foreign peripheral regions to take advantage of the economic resources and administratively make decisions in order to reverse, or eliminate all together, their perceived backward culture. These nation-building activities are where the "rich resources lying untapped 'wait' for the spiritual impulse of the 'Chinese nation' for their exploitation".¹⁰² Today,

⁹⁹ Krishnankutty, Pia. *Not just US, India — China is Involved in 15 Other Territorial Disputes in Asia*.

¹⁰⁰ Bosack, Michael. "China's Senkaku Islands Ambition."

¹⁰¹ Tyler, Christian. *Wild West China: The Taming of Xinjiang*.

¹⁰² Clarke, Michael. "China's Internal Security Dilemma and the "Great Western Development": The Dynamics of Integration, Ethnic Nationalism and Terrorism in Xinjiang."

the central government invests substantially in Xinjiang's urban and transport infrastructure.¹⁰³ Similarly, the state now uses a form of internal colonialism to use the ethnic minorities in Xinjiang as laborers in Chinese factories for economic benefit.¹⁰⁴ The administrative and civilizing projects informing Qing territorial expansion and maintenance have been adopted by the current communist regime but have been tailored to suit its economic and political goals.

Policy Shaped by Domestic and International Concerns

The PRC today is not only known for its growing domestic and international influence, but persistent strategic maneuvers that make the economic powerhouse a global order threat. In order to accomplish this, Chinese policy today is impacted by both local and international concerns, as it was during the Qing empire. The logic of conquering Xinjiang to be used as a security buffer has continued into the communist era given the range of local and global impacts the CCP takes into consideration. By understanding the global initiative, one can see the way the Chinese government parallels the logic and strategy of the Qing empire in regards to taking not only domestic, but international, concerns into consideration as another continuity.

One of the major global impacts that has paved the way for Chinese policy to be influenced by international concerns is the United State's War on Terror stemming from post-9/11. The infamous War on Terror introduced by former President George Bush in the early 2000s provided the Chinese government an opportunity to adopt and legitimize the global War on Terror and use this rhetoric as their defense and rationalization for the government's actions in Xinjiang. Early on in the 21st century, the Chinese central government solicited the United States and other Westernized nations to add a group of Uyghur militants in Afghanistan to the list of

¹⁰³ Millward, James and Dahlia Peterson. "China's System of Oppression in Xinjiang: How it Developed and how to Curb It."

¹⁰⁴ Buckley, Chris and Austin Ramzy. "Inside China's Push to Turn Muslim Minorities into an Army of Workers.;" This topic will be further explored in Chapter III.

designated terrorist cells.¹⁰⁵ Once successfully completed, this action set a precedent for viewing the Uyghurs based on a global terror framework and justified the crackdown on their religion and cultural norms.¹⁰⁶ Sean Roberts argues that the root cause of this modern day issue stems from the War on Terror and “the international obsession with combatting a vaguely defined ‘terrorist’ enemy that has allowed the Chinese government to implement these measures with impunity and that, at least in part, has inspired their excessively brutal and genocidal nature.”¹⁰⁷ This broad, sweeping narrative output by the United States for an international audience increased in aggression over time and was able to be adapted by the Chinese government despite the varying contexts.

In the spring of 1998, the National People’s Congress of the PRC included “stirring antiethnic sentiment”¹⁰⁸ as a possible punishable offense as a crime against the state. This potentially allows for the persecution of minorities given that any activity could now be considered a crime against the state with this new classification. Due to this, any unrest within the region can be labeled as terrorism and put to rest under the grounds of the CCP’s own War on Terror. Given this broad label, the Chinese government can now perpetuate a cultural genocide within their own frame of mind.

However, if the Chinese state wanted to legitimately handle the growing Uyghur grievances, Beijing would need to address them directly and not through a proxy War on Terror. The Chinese government is fueling their own perceived terrorist threat. As discussed, the local policies of forcing Han migrants to the region and the blatant crackdown on Uyghur culture through educational, economic, or religious reforms pave the way for Uyghurs to feel threatened

¹⁰⁵ Allen-Ebrahimian, Bethany. “The U.S. War on Terror made Life Worse for China's Uighurs.”

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.; Sean Roberts is a cultural anthropologist at George Washington University.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Gladney, Dru C. “Responses to Chinese Rule in Xinjiang: Patterns of Cooperation and Opposition.”

by the state as if their own survival is on the line.¹⁰⁹ As the Qing forced the Uyghurs to the periphery, the Chinese government is impinging on Uyghur freedoms through shifts in policy that are supposed to engender greater unification. Instead, the Uyghurs feel as if they are targeted and marginalized. Currently, the Uyghurs are fighting for the allocation of fair economic programs and being able to openly practice their religion and culture without fear of being persecuted. Deescalating this situation will not likely happen anytime soon unless the leaders of the Chinese government take a step back from the global influences of the War on Terror rhetoric and listen to the real demands of the Uyghurs.

Another factor contributing to the central government’s attempts to tighten their control over the region is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This CCP project seeks to connect Asia with Africa and Europe through land and sea networks in order to increase pan-region integration, trade, economic prosperity, the understanding of other civilizations, and world peace for all involved. This lofty goal has been in the works for almost a decade now and already has an estimated \$575

billion invested in it.¹¹⁰ As the map displays,¹¹¹ Xinjiang is in a critical position regionally for the success of BRI accessing new



¹⁰⁹ Clarke, Michael. “China’s ‘War on Terror’ in Xinjiang: Human Security and the Causes of Violent Uighur Separatism.”

¹¹⁰ The World Bank. *Belt and Road Economics: Opportunities and Risks of Transport Corridors*, 2019.

¹¹¹ Image: Ma, Alexandra. “This Map shows a Trillion-Dollar Reason Why China is Oppressing More than a Million Muslims.”

infrastructure across the world. In addition to the national security concerns discussed earlier in this thesis, the BRI, which seeks to link the PRC with the global community, has also contributed to the regional crackdown on Xinjiang by the Chinese government. Starting with the Silk Road, Xinjiang has long been a cross-border region, now holding the position of the bridge between the PRC and the rest of the world. The current Chinese government is attempting to expand Xinjiang's historical position as an important trading center for economic, political, and social gains, at the expense of the Uyghur population.

Four of the six BRI corridors, including the controversial China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), all run through southern Xinjiang.¹¹² Kashgar, an oasis city in Southern Xinjiang, is planned as being the hub for all of these connecting corridors. The Chinese government views this location as a very strategic point for social connections and invested a lump sum of money in the region, even going so far as to designate it as an Economic Development Zone.¹¹³ These zones are areas with economic and business policies that differ from the rest of the country in order to attract foreign direct investment and boost domestic growth. In 2017 alone, the Chinese government invested around \$66 billion dollars into the infrastructure of Xinjiang.¹¹⁴ Despite this, economic growth was not seen as even amongst the minorities living in the region. This investment is set to benefit those who are already benefiting: the Han. Rather than shrinking the gap, this initiative has made it worse, not soothing the Uyghurs' grievances with the state. Furthering the tensions from the unequal investment, the Uyghurs see Kashgar as the "spiritual heart"¹¹⁵ of their culture, religion, and history. The Chinese

¹¹² Wani, Ayjaz. "COVID-19 in Xinjiang: Uyghurs Pushed to the Frontlines by Beijing."

¹¹³ China Briefing. "Kashgar to Become Economic Development Zone."

¹¹⁴ Shan, Wei. "Xinjiang Casts Uncertainty Over the Belt and Road Initiative."

¹¹⁵ Hayes, Anna. "Interwoven 'Destinies': The Significance of Xinjiang to the China Dream, the Belt and Road Initiative, and the Xi Jinping Legacy."

government interference is seen as a threat to Uyghur culture and identity, only adding to the list of inner-Xinjiang conflict.

The Chinese government worries that the increasing globalized network brought forth by the BRI will encourage Uyghurs to connect more with the Middle East and Central Asia.¹¹⁶ In the government's mind, this would allow the Muslim population to develop a greater sense of connectivity with other predominant Muslim regions and be more exposed to their ideology, increasing the violence toward the Chinese state. However, those same Middle Eastern states are not supporting the Muslims in Xinjiang. The BRI assists in the oppression of the Uyghurs because the Middle East will benefit from the billions of dollars the PRC is investing in this project.¹¹⁷ Given this world climate, Muslim-majority countries in the region have been silent on the oppression in Xinjiang. In July 2019, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria and other Muslim-majority states assisted in blocking a Western led coalition at the United Nations, calling for the PRC to allow independent, international observers into Xinjiang to judge the activity going on there.¹¹⁸ This failure to act has limited the imperative support the Uyghurs need from Muslim communities and other countries across the world.

The PRC has learned to play the international cards to their advantage, signaling the continuation of considering domestic and international factors. Similar to the Qing, the CCP is also adopting administrative strategies to alter demographics and maintain territory. However, given our advanced, globalized, modern society, the Chinese government has needed to adapt to the mounting pressures. Contemporary leaders of the Chinese government are now adopting advanced systems of surveillance to accomplish what the Qing did more than a century ago.

¹¹⁶ Cho, Sungmin and Joshua Turner. "The Economics of Repression: The Belt and Road Initiative, COVID-19, and the Repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang."

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Cohen, Nick. "Why do Muslim States Stay Silent Over China's Abuse of the Uyghurs?"

Discontinuities from the Qing Empire

Despite the similarities, the differences between the Qing and the current Chinese state attest to the modern times and the adaptability of the core, the CCP, to fully exploit its periphery, Xinjiang. The state in the modern era keeps penetrating deeper down given that it is now a communist state with the ability to do so. It has become clear throughout the 20th and 21st century that the traditional empires used different strategies to keep their power in comparison to the ruler of a developed nation state. The Chinese government argues that their increasingly colonizing and discriminatory practices are strategic and imperative to keep order within the borders. The penetration into Xinjiang society via civilizing and colonizing projects, including increased surveillance and societal discrimination within the education and employment sectors, in tandem with maintaining that the region has always been an imperative part of the PRC, are two overarching differences between the modern Chinese state and Qing dynasty.

The Making of a Surveillance State

Genocidal atrocities are not new to the world. The Holocaust, in addition to the Rwandan, Cambodian, and Rohingya genocide, stained the past century. Now, the civilizing and colonizing projects of the modern Chinese state travel down a dangerous path toward all out genocide. Surveillance in the Xinjiang region is a distinguished example of the Chinese government's civilizing and colonizing projects that attempt to not only control, but erase, Uyghur culture, religion, and history. The most important features of Islam in Xinjiang, including mosques, religious education, and religious observance, are being attacked by the Chinese state and governmental policies.

The Uyghur population is essentially living in a “virtual cage”,¹¹⁹ as surveillance systems continue to monitor their voices, actions, and life outcomes. Streets throughout Xinjiang are

¹¹⁹ Buckley, Chris, Paul Mozur, and Austin Ramzy. “How China Turned a City into a Prison.”

bombarded with dozens of security cameras planted on every city block. Regardless of the fact that the PRC is ranked as having the most surveillance in the world, Xinjiang is

disproportionately targeted.¹²⁰ Security cameras of this era have reached a new level.¹²¹ The state uses the information collected on the cameras to match faces to DNA and voice samples.¹²² Additionally, citizens must install a police



app that tracks their movements, vehicles, and ID cards.¹²³ You must always have your ID card on you in order to pass the security checks in the



major cities or when crossing the region.¹²⁴ Furthermore, the invasive app is part of a larger software system called the Integrated Joint Operations Platform.¹²⁵ This software accumulates large amounts of personnel data on Xinjiang citizens from a range of sources and then uses artificial intelligence to cross-list and identify individuals whom the Chinese government deems suspicious.¹²⁶ The application's success became apparent when the China Cables, a collection of

¹²⁰ Chan, Tara F. "How a Chinese Region that Accounts for just 1.5% of the Population Became One of the most Intrusive Police States in the World."

¹²¹ Top Image: Drake, Carolyn. "China. Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Kashgar. 2009. Apartment Complex Built for Uyghurs Displaced from their Homes and Businesses in the Old Town in Kashgar. the Neighborhood is Monitored by Surveillance Cameras.;" Bottom Image: Buckley, Chris, Paul Mozur, and Austin Ramzy. "How China Turned a City into a Prison."

¹²² Wang, Maya. "How Mass Surveillance Works in Xinjiang, China."

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Perper, Rosie. "Chinese Authorities are Reportedly using an App to Monitor Muslims in Xinjiang and See if they Match 36 'Person Types' Deemed as Dangerous."

¹²⁶ Allen-Ebrahimian, Bethany. "Exposed: China's Operating Manuals for Mass Internment and Arrest by Algorithm."

secret Chinese government documents discussing the persecution of the Uyghurs, were leaked. More specifically, this unnamed police app provides the government access to the Uyghur population's personal information, political views, use of birth control, and electricity use at their private homes.¹²⁷ Not only are there virtual eyes, but real-life police presence patrolling the streets and checking phones constantly. This makes obtaining a modern day Uyghur perspective fairly difficult as they live in fear, knowing they are always being watched. Often, what they tell domestic or foreign reporters is a memorized script or long monologue, officially making the Uyghurs a part of the CCP's propaganda.¹²⁸

Looking at the quantitative data, there was a 92.8% increase in domestic security spending in Xinjiang, increasing to 57.95 billion RMB (\$8,845,842,654) in 2017 from 30.05 billion RMB (\$4,640,000,000) in 2016.¹²⁹ The surveillance and collection of data through state-installed software contributed to the rising level of arrests in Xinjiang between 2016 and 2017 because of the perceived threats and suspicions from personal data. In 2016, there were 27,404 arrests in Xinjiang and then, one year later, 227,882 arrests were made.¹³⁰ In 2017, Xinjiang accounted for 21% of the PRC's total arrests despite Xinjiang having 1.5% of the PRC's total population.¹³¹ These numbers not only demonstrate the CCP's modern ability to secure control over Xinjiang through deeper penetration, but also not include or count those located in the Vocational Education and Training Centers.¹³²

¹²⁷ Ma, Alexandra. "China used a File-Sharing App to Round Up 40,000 Uighur Muslims for Prison Camps, a Startling Insight into how it Oppresses People Via Technology."

¹²⁸ Schiavenza, Matt. "Why it's so Difficult for Journalists to Report from Xinjiang."

¹²⁹ Zenz, Adrian. "China's Domestic Security Spending: An Analysis of Available Data."

¹³⁰ Xia, Renee, Victor Clemens, and Frances Eve. *China's Counter-Terror Campaign Indiscriminately Targets Ethnic & Religious Minorities in Xinjiang* Chinese Human Rights Defenders.

¹³¹ Greitens, Sheena Chestnut, Myunghee Lee, and Emir Yazici. "Counterterrorism and Preventive Repression: China's Changing Strategy in Xinjiang."

¹³² Chan, Tara F. "How a Chinese Region that Accounts for just 1.5% of the Population Became One of the most Intrusive Police States in the World."

Internment Camps

It is estimated that one million Uyghurs, out of the eleven million in Xinjiang, are currently detained in Chinese internment camps and are no longer members of society.¹³³ These

internment camps were recently built, as there is less than a three year gap between the top and bottom photo, the latter being taken in 2019.¹³⁴ The quick



construction demonstrates the vast uptick in Chinese hard policy and oppressive tactics targeting the Muslim Uyghurs. These internment camps, from first hand accounts, are not for educational purposes, but



rather used as torture camps in which one woman reports that, “for the first time in [her] life... wished [she] was dead”.¹³⁵ These internment camps permit violent torture, food deprivation, forced labor, and sterilization.¹³⁶ Other personal accounts corroborate these suspicions with their descriptions of how CCP guards beat up Uyghur men using electric batons, make the ‘prisoners’

¹³³ Busby, Scott. “Testimony of Deputy Assistant Secretary Scott Busby Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific, and International Cybersecurity.”

¹³⁴ Images: Buckley, Chris, Paul Mozur, and Austin Ramzy. “How China Turned a City into a Prison.”

¹³⁵ Radio Free Asia. “Uyghur Detention - Interview 2.”

¹³⁶ Cuccinelli, Ken and Mark Morgan. “Countering China's Forced Labor Practices.”; Wang, Maya. “More Evidence of China’s Horrific Abuses in Xinjiang.”

take turns sleeping or standing because the rooms are too crowded, and some women would bleed for months on end due to the treatment they were receiving from the Chinese internment guards.¹³⁷

The centers were implemented by the Chinese government, citing them as a method to combat the religious extremism seen in the terrorist attacks carried out by the Uyghurs. The Chinese government's crackdown on the Uyghur population is considered a counterterrorism and deradicalization mission in which the goal is to reduce ethnic unrest and domestic instability. These policies are used to clamp down on elements believed to be fostering dissent, advocating independence, or carrying out terrorist strikes.¹³⁸ The Chinese government states that these centers:

“offer systematic education and training in response to a set of urgent needs: to curb frequent terrorist incidents, to eradicate the breeding ground for religious extremism, to help trainees acquire a better education and vocational skills, find employment, and increase their incomes, and most of all, to safeguard social stability and long-term peace in Xinjiang”.¹³⁹

These centers are considered beneficial for individuals predisposed to extremist ideology to steer them down a path toward reentering society as a changed individual. Vadim Pisarevich, deputy permanent representative of Belarus to the UN Office at Geneva, said he was impressed by “all [of the] modern facilities and skillful teachers that [help] students acquire new knowledge and professional skills.”¹⁴⁰ He further argues that these centers are meant as places of rehabilitation rather than places to be held as a prisoner.¹⁴¹ Despite accusations of poor conditions and brutal oppression as the Western media suggests, internal Chinese documents state the conditions are

¹³⁷ Radio Free Asia. “Uyghur Detention - Interview 2.”; Watson, Ivan and Ben Westcott. “Uyghur Refugee Tells of Death and Fear Inside China's Xinjiang Camps.”

¹³⁸ Starr, S. F. *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*.

¹³⁹ The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. “Vocational Education and Training in Xinjiang.”

¹⁴⁰ Yi, Yang. “Interview: Vocational Education and Training Centers in Xinjiang Impact Positively on Youth: Belarusian Diplomat.”

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

often “better than the living standards that some students have back home”.¹⁴² From the statist perspective, the Vocational Education and Training Centers provided by the government allow the Uyghurs, who are currently a threat to security and stability, to have a second chance at life.

Children's Education

Despite the direct human rights violations in the previous cases, the CCP's educational policies and strategies in Xinjiang, starting with the Mao period in 1949, further control and foster a sense of national identity through a variety of reforms and control mechanisms. The strategies the CCP implemented revolve around education in order to “integrate all ethnic groups into a single and unified socialist state”¹⁴³ from a bottom-up approach, starting with the youth of Xinjiang.

The state's sponsored educational policies subdue the culture, religious, and historical traditions of the Uyghur population. Elementary schools only have state sponsored curriculum. The CCP's bilingual education policy appears on the surface to be the best of both worlds. However, “a key component of this effort is to eliminate literary, academic, and professional use of the [Uyghur] language”.¹⁴⁴ Mandarin Chinese as the primary language throughout the education system “is a precision attack, a cruise missile, if you will, against the [Uyghur] culture”.¹⁴⁵ The use of Mandarin has become so dominant that the younger Uyghur generations speak better Mandarin than they do Uyghur.¹⁴⁶ Now that religious classes are illegal, educational policies through “the younger generation is the final frontier in China's war against Uyghur

¹⁴² Ramzy, Austin and Chris Buckley. “‘Absolutely no Mercy’: Leaked Files Expose how China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslims.”

¹⁴³ Benson, Linda. “Education and Social Mobility among Minority Populations in Xinjiang.”

¹⁴⁴ Turkel, Nury. Foreign Affairs. *The Uighurs: A History of Persecution*. First sess., June 10, 2009.; Drake, Carolyn. “A Han School Teacher Teaches the Chinese Language to Uighur Girls. Uighur Culture is being further Diluted by China's Bilingual Education Policy.”

¹⁴⁵ Turkel, Nury. Foreign Affairs. *The Uighurs: A History of Persecution*. First sess., June 10, 2009.

¹⁴⁶ Topol, Sarah. ‘Her Uighur Parents were Model Chinese Citizens. it Didn't Matter.’

identity”.¹⁴⁷ Children in Xinjiang will therefore pass down their Mandarin-dominated education and lack of Uyghur cultural awareness that the Chinese government has purposefully instilled in society.

It is important to note the success the Chinese government found in mandating compulsory primary education for all.¹⁴⁸ However, there was noticeably slower success in the mandation for minority dominated areas. Similarly, growing gaps between the Han and minorities across Xinjiang is exemplified in aggregate data from six local Xinjiang high schools.¹⁴⁹ As kids get older and move beyond elementary school, the rates of retainment are actually very low for both the Han and minority populations. Only 132,907 Han students were enrolled in middle school within the six examined districts in addition to the 181,530 minority students.¹⁵⁰ On the surface, it

appears that educational access is equally granted

	Total Population	Middle School	High School
Han	2,311,088	132,907	6,974
Minority	4,964,093	181,530	9,809

given that there are more minority students in both middle and high school. However, when examining the total population of these districts and considering the ratio, Han children, on average, are 1.54 times more likely to attend middle or high school than their minority counterparts living in the same districts. Despite the data being from 1991, these trends have not only continued into the modern era, but have gotten perpetually worse. This leaves the Muslim minority population in Xinjiang with a reason to believe the CCP has ulterior motives given the suspicious validity and success of policy masked as education reform. This outcome is not what the Chinese government had originally hoped for. Rather than the goal of further integration

¹⁴⁷ Pippis, John. “‘If I Speak Out, they Will Torture My Family’: Voices of Uyghurs in Exile.”

¹⁴⁸ Benson, Linda. “Education and Social Mobility among Minority Populations in Xinjiang.”

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Data from Image: Ibid

between the core and the periphery, the Uyghurs and other ethnic minority groups in the PRC recognize the shrinking ethnic autonomy within the education sector, and resist the statist agenda that has been put into place.

Employment and Forced Labor

Education is not the only societal institution seeing further state control, employment opportunities are dwindling for the Uyghur population given that they are systematically disadvantaged with mounting prejudices against them.¹⁵¹ Given this combination, the Han majority perceives the Uyghurs as being uneducated and backwards due to their culture and practice of Islam.¹⁵² This allows Han employers to justify why they don't hire more of the Uyghur population despite the fact that the state implemented educational system is a direct cause for minorities' lack of higher education. Posted job requirements for civil servant posts, state-owned enterprises, and private-sector jobs are often reserved positions exclusively for Han Chinese, even when posted on government websites.¹⁵³ For example, announcements in 2011 for teaching positions at a middle school in the Hoten district, a locality where 96.3 percent of the population is Uyghur and 3.5 percent Han, advertised all twenty positions for Han only.¹⁵⁴

On the surface it appears as if this discrimination should be a similarity to the Qing era. However, the difference in this case is that the instilled hierarchy has transformed itself into a plethora of societal institutions given the deeper penetration rather than just being in the hearts and minds of the controlling power. This prejudiced social structure has now manifested itself in state-forced factory labor. Ironically, these statist discriminatory actions are what brought the Uyghur population to the forefront of international media. State sponsored Uyghur labor

¹⁵¹ Fuller, Graham and Jonathan Lipman. "Islam in Xinjiang." (2008).

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Merkley, Jeff and James McGovern. "Job Discrimination Against Ethnic Minorities Continues in Xinjiang."

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

benefited hundreds of name brand companies across the world. End Uyghur Forced Labor is a coalition of civil society organisations and trade unions whose goal is to end the state’s human rights abuses specifically targeting the Uyghur population. They call for all companies to remove themselves from Xinjiang within every level of the supply chain. Despite Xinjiang being around 15% of the PRC’s total territory, 85% of PRC cotton production comes from the Uyghur region.¹⁵⁵ This labor contributes to the \$15 billion dollar cotton industry profiting the PRC, none of which the Uyghurs ever see themselves as benefiting from this profit or from the external investment, enhanced domestic spending, or development programs that the central government initiated.¹⁵⁶ As previously noted with the impact of educational policies, employment and forced labor practices within Xinjiang have further fueled the fire between the Uyghurs and the Chinese state as well.

Religious Discriminations and Limitations

The final realm in which the Chinese state targets the Uyghurs directly is for their religion and its common practices. In the same leaked statist Chinese documents of classified government information, the China Cables, it is detailed how “freedom is only possible when this ‘virus’ in [the Uyghur and other Muslim minorities] thinking is eradicated and they are in good health.”¹⁵⁷ The virus is not a legitimate health concern, but rather a characterization that the religious practice of Islam is a disease. In a separate

时间的科学“治疗”，才能彻底摆脱病毒的危害。目前，只有主动接受教育培训，才能彻底清除思想上的“毒瘤”，只有健康的思想，才会有幸福的家庭，我想你会支持他们，这是为了他们好，也是为了你好。只要他们思想上的“病毒”清除了，身体健康了，就可以自由了。

六、我家人什么时候能毕业离校？

答：了解中医的人都知道，治疗是有周期的。这次培训是集中封闭式教育培训，主要学习国家通用语言、法律法规和技术技能。依据学校的“双向”考核标准，除了他们必须认真学习，遵守学校各项纪律，在早操、内务、用餐、学习等各个方面都表现优秀外，他们的家属包括你也要遵守国家各项法律法规，不信谣、不传谣，积极参加集体活动，这样才能为你家人加分，经过一段时间的评估，符合结业标准后才能出校，就像你在学校名门课程都及格以后才能毕业的道理是一样的。

七、我家人是不是就成坏人了？以后出来了，会不会被社会歧视和区别对待？

答：如果不在学校参加学习，不让你的家人彻底醒悟，他们极有可能变成坏人（罪犯）。让他们参加学习的目的，就是不仅要把这种可能性消除或降到最低，而且要让他们学会一两项技能，等结业了就能像你大学毕业一样，成为懂汉语、学法守法、对社会有用的人。如果你的家人没有工作、且愿意就业，他们还可以在我们引进或兴办的企业中找到一

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¹⁵⁵ End Uyghur Forced Labor. “Coalition to End Forced Labour in the Uyghur Region.”

¹⁵⁶ Fuller, Graham and Jonathan Lipman. “Islam in Xinjiang.” (2008).; Interactive Biodiversity Information System. *Cotton Growing Industry in China - Market Research Report*, 2020.

¹⁵⁷ Ramzy, Austin and Chris Buckley. “‘Absolutely no Mercy’: Leaked Files Expose how China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslims.”; Image: Ramzy, Austin and Chris Buckley.

leaked speech given by President Xi Jinping to state chosen Xinjiang officials in April of 2014, he stated that “the psychological impact of extremist religious thought on people must never be underestimated. People who are captured by religious extremism... have their consciences destroyed, lose their humanity, and murder without blinking an eye”.¹⁵⁸ Regardless of whether one agrees with President Xi Jinping’s statement on the characteristics associated with religious extremism, it is still evident the President’s ultimate goal is to repress the practice of Islam in Xinjiang despite the majority of Uyghurs in the region moderately practicing the religion and not being considered religious extremists.

In order to be able to target religious practices, the Chinese government categorizes illegal religious activities as criminal offenses defined by:

“criminal offences defined as any religious activities and activities in the name of religion that contravene national laws, regulations, policies at the state level, and the religious laws, regulations, rules at the level of autonomous regions, according to Opinions on Defining Illegal Religion jointly issued by the United Front Department of the Party Committee of East Turkestan Uyghur Autonomous Region [Xinjiang], State Administration for Religious Affairs, and the Ministry of Public Security in 2011”.¹⁵⁹

Former U.S. House Representative Dana Rohrabacher argued in a hearing that this definition contributes to the classification of Uyghurs as extremists given “that can mean anything outside of the tightly controlled, narrow space for Chinese Government state approved religious activity, including... holding an unauthorized religious class for children”.¹⁶⁰ This legal positioning allows activities, similar to the one described by Representative Rohrabacher, to be classified as extremist and build up that repertoire using Chinese propaganda despite their relative benign nature.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Zhang, Chi. ““Illegal Religious Activities” and Counter-Terrorism in China.”

¹⁶⁰ Abramson, Kara Miriam. Foreign Affairs. *The Uighurs: A History of Persecution*. First sess., June 10, 2009.

Even before the actual religious practice takes place, the classification of Uyghurs already places them in a discriminatory state. All of the Five Pillars of Islam are limited in some form by the Chinese government under their laws despite being traditional, normative practices of Islam. The Five Pillars of Islam include: the declaration of faith, daily prayers, fasting during the month of Ramadan, alms, and the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime. Uyghurs are limited in their participation from each of the pillars given they are forbidden from engaging in the five daily prayers (unless over the age of sixty-five); Uyghurs under eighteen are prohibited from entering a mosque; Civil servants, students, and teachers are prevented from fasting as well as restaurants being forced to stay open in an attempt to fully ban fasting; and private Hajj trips are banned.¹⁶¹ In order to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, one must go through an education process and be accompanied by state officials.¹⁶² Similarly, “hyping up religious fanaticism through growing beards or choosing names in an abnormal way”¹⁶³ is a part of governmental legislation in Xinjiang since March of 2017. These actions are vindicated given the fact that some Uyghur practices fall under the illegal religious activities law in the PRC. Given this, the Chinese government “will always keep up the intensity of its crackdown on ethnic separatist forces and deal them devastating blows without showing any mercy”¹⁶⁴ as stated by Xinjiang Party Secretary Wang Lequan in January 2003. The root of the problem is the religious discrimination occurring on a legal level that manifests as specific targeting of Uyghur Muslims.

In addition to discriminatory religious classification, another method to eliminate Uyghur culture and religion is through the destruction of religious sites. Bellingcat, an investigative journalism website, and the *Guardian* used satellite imagery to confirm the partial or full

¹⁶¹ Radio Free Asia. “Uyghurs Under 65 Now Banned from Daily Prayers Required by their Faith.”; Aljazeera. “China Bans Muslims from Fasting Ramadan in Xinjiang.”

¹⁶² International Observatory of Human Rights. *China Bans Private Hajj Pilgrimages in Latest Move to Suppress its Muslim Population.*

¹⁶³ Hunt, Katie, Chieu Luu and Steven Jiang. “Why China is Banning Beards and Veils in Xinjiang.”

¹⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch. “Devastating Blows.”

destruction of two dozen Islamic religious sites in Xinjiang since 2016. Three examples are depicted on the right.¹⁶⁵ These are culturally and religiously important buildings that contribute to the Chinese government’s systemic oppression. The official policy of the Chinese state is targeting the Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang for their religious and cultural background, rather than for being terrorists. It is evident that “there is a significant price to pay... for thinking outside of ‘the nation’ and ‘modernity’”.¹⁶⁶ The Uyghurs let go of the familiar and normative narrative produced by the statist entity and now face repercussions from the state for writing their own history.



The Chinese government refutes its activities constitute targeted oppression, but rather the removal of these mosques is done for economic benefits for Xinjiang. Despite this argument, there is evidence otherwise. The Chinese government destroyed mosques, mazars, and Uyghur historical holy places that bring history, community resources, healing, or the promise of fertility.¹⁶⁷ Their destruction is not for economic land value because the land the religious sites lie on is left desert and barren post destruction.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, mazars, one of the only things left that “[maintain] a community tie to history and the land”¹⁶⁹ are often desecrated “by denuding

¹⁶⁵ Image: Kuo, Lily. “Revealed: New Evidence of China's Mission to Raze the Mosques of Xinjiang.” Row 1: Imam Asim Shrine , Row 2: Jafari Sadiq Shrine, Row 3: Kargilik Mosque

¹⁶⁶ Maza, Sarah C. *Thinking about History*, Page 82.

¹⁶⁷ Thum, Rian. *The Spatial Cleansing of Xinjiang: Mazar Desecration in Context*.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

[them] of [their] external display of community veneration”¹⁷⁰ but not demolished, rendering the land completely useless for no economic benefit.¹⁷¹

Thum also takes the stance that the structures which remain physically intact have become museumified destinations

for Han Chinese tourists.¹⁷² Denton

elaborates and details how “in the

postsocialist consumerist society...

ethnic cultures have become

commodities in the tourism

economy, and their display and

performance feed and fuel Han



[Left] Pilgrims praying at the Imam Asim mazar, near Khotan. May 2010. Photo by the author. [Right] Imam Asim mazar after desecration. Posted to Tripadvisor in 2018 by user MarcelTraveller.

romantic desires to experience the cultures of exotic ‘others’”.¹⁷³ These highly inauthentic tourist

attractions attempt to monopolize on cultural differences in order to make a profit on Han

tourism while ignoring the distinct ethnic cultures. A false sense of tourism has been established

in Xinjiang where Uyghur culture is recreationalized so that the multiethnic nation is further

imaginized inaccurately. Likewise, this tourism strategy allows the Chinese government to

showcase its tokenist support for Islam while also limiting Islamic religious practices Uyghurs

partake in.¹⁷⁴ Discrimination policies and deliberate acts of destruction exemplify why the

Chinese government seeks to suppress the Uyghur Islamic culture and religious practice. These

acts and policies are done to erode away at religious practices that root Uyghurs in the identity,

culture, and practice of Islam.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Image: Ibid.

¹⁷³ Denton, Kirk A. *Exhibiting the Past: Historical Memory and the Politics of Museums in Postsocialist China*.

¹⁷⁴ Harris, Rachel and Rahile Dawut. "Mazar Festivals of the Uyghurs: Music, Islam and the Chinese State."

Statist Uyghur Classification

Something many fail to realize is how the PRC built the social construction of the term Uyghur, along with many aspects of Uyghur identity, in the modern era. Despite the umbrella term, the Uyghurs are a fairly diverse population. While the population has unified political minority status in the PRC, there is diversity amongst its classification. The formation of the commonly known Uyghur identity stems from a statist narrative rather than legitimate Uyghur history. The reshaping of the Altishahri Turki identity was done in order to form what is now known as the Uyghur nation.¹⁷⁵ Thum's article gives insight on the nature of an identity system that came before the nationalist Chinese state. Before the 1930s, there was a contrast between the understanding of what constituted Uyghur identity in comparison to Altishahris. Upon discovering this buried narrative, one can see the definitive contrast between the identity promoted by the PRC's multinational state ideology rather than the authentic history of the identity politics within Xinjiang.¹⁷⁶ Due to the inherent nature that there is not one, unified Uyghur voice, it is crucial to represent a plethora of their viewpoints. By not essentializing their voice, one is able to engage with their voices, ultimately mapping their diversity within this unified struggle of resistance.¹⁷⁷

The state also alters the narrative to falsely accuse the Uyghur population of terrorist attacks in order to oppress them based on their religious, ethnic, and cultural differences. Three specific incidents are pointed out by the state as justification for their reading of the Uyghurs and other Muslim minority groups in the country as terrorists: The 2009 Riots, Kunming Station Attacks, and the 2013 Tiananmen Square Attack.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Thum, Rian. "Beyond Resistance and Nationalism: Local History and the Case of Afaq Khoja."

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ See Chapter III for more detail.

¹⁷⁸ Gracie, Carrie. "The Knife Attack that Changed Kunming."; Kaiman, Jonathan. "Islamist Group Claims Responsibility for Attack on China's Tiananmen Square."; Wong, Edward. "Riots in Western China Amid Ethnic Tension."

In July of 2009, in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, riots broke out in the streets when the Chinese police force confronted ethnic separatists and Muslim extremists who were advocating for the Chinese government to investigate a brawl between Han and Uyghur workers that occurred earlier in the week. Xinhua News Agency, the official state-run press agency of the PRC, argued that the Uyghur population in Xinjiang committed “premeditated and organized”¹⁷⁹ crime against the state. The Chinese government blames the Uyghurs for instigating the reoccurring unrest in the Xinjiang region over erroneous claims of governmental oppression.

Four years later, in 2013, a terrorist suicide attack carried out and claimed by the Turkistan Islamic Party left two tourists dead and thirty-eight others injured. This Islamic extremist organization was founded by Uyghur jihadists and is classified as a terrorist organization by the Chinese state’s official policy.¹⁸⁰ The Chinese government announced that a Uyghur family drove their car into Tiananmen Square with an attempt to kill innocent civilians in Beijing.

Lastly, in 2014, “a terrorist attack carried out by Xinjiang separatist forces”¹⁸¹ occurred at Kunming Station, the main railway system serving the southern Chinese city. At least ten attackers carrying knives stormed the station, killing five and wounding over one hundred others.¹⁸² Often called ‘China’s 9/11’, this premeditated terrorist attack was the final straw for Chinese authorities, citing that the Uyghurs’ perpetuation of ethnic conflict must be stopped.¹⁸³

The Chinese government believes the Uyghurs are to blame for this terrorist activity and need to be reeducated in order to preserve the harmonious Chinese multiethnic state. President Xi Jinping urged security officials to “severely punish in accordance with the law the violent

¹⁷⁹ “Scores Dead in Xinjiang Riot.” *Aljazeera*.

¹⁸⁰ Tanner, Murray and James Bellacqua. “China’s Response to Terrorism.”

¹⁸¹ “China Mass Stabbing: Deadly Knife Attack in Kunming.” *BBC News*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Beech, Hannah. “Deadly Terrorist Attack in Southwestern China Blamed on Separatist Muslim Uighurs.”

terrorists”.¹⁸⁴ The President also wants the international community to "understand the serious and complex nature of combating terrorism"¹⁸⁵ and how it is necessary to “go all out to maintain social stability”¹⁸⁶ in the Chinese state.

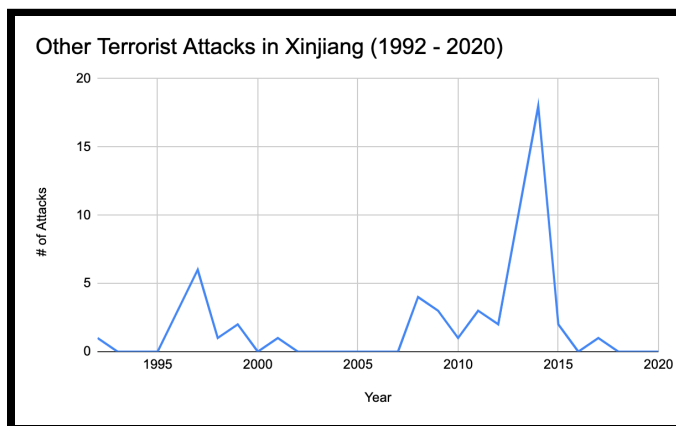
However, data from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism’s Global Terrorism Database (START), suggests that the majority of the Uyghur

terrorist attacks actually occurred in the mid to late-1990s rather than in the 21st century as the staist narrative argues.¹⁸⁷

However, the peak for other terrorist attacks in Xinjiang comes just before 2015.¹⁸⁸ This allows the Chinese state to

prescribe historical events onto modern times without recognizing the different contexts or perpetrators.

Since 2017, there have been no Uyghur Separatist Terrorist Attacks according to START. In fact, since 1990, very few acts of civil unrest,



assassinations, and bombings in the PRC can be definitely traced back to Uyghur separatists groups.¹⁸⁹ This data illustrates that Uyghurs are not the dominant forces in Xinjiang perpetuating

¹⁸⁴ “China Mass Stabbing: Deadly Knife Attack in Kunming.” *BBC News*.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁷ The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. *Global Terrorism Database*.

¹⁸⁸ Other is Classified As: Suspected Uyghur Seperatists/Unknown/Muslim Separatists/East Turkestan Islamic Movement/Tehrik-i-Taliban/Turkistan Islamic Party

¹⁸⁹ Gladney, Dru C. “Responses to Chinese Rule in Xinjiang: Patterns of Cooperation and Opposition.”

terrorist attacks in recent years.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, it is evident that nowhere else in the world is a whole ethnic population systemically punished and assumed responsible by their own nation state for terrorist activity they have recently not committed nor condoned.

Xinjiang's Role in Relation to the PRC

As the Chinese state further penetrated Xinjiang's society, it also now maintains that the region has always been an integral part of the PRC in order to benefit themselves in the modern world and maintain that the nation is still a harmonious, unified multiethnic state. This is yet another contrast from the Qing empire. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, it was apparent that Xinjiang and its people were subordinate in the socially constructed hierarchy via discriminatory practices of the Qing.

As explored in Chapter I, there was an attempt to other the people of Xinjiang throughout the reign of the dynasty and depict the minorities' society as going against the norms of the dominant majority. The main way of doing so was through Orientalist tactics within their colonial rule by the ways in which they described and mocked the cultural differences, language, and social norms of other ethnicities. The Qing promoted a different kind of coexistence than the CCP in part due to their own status and desire to be classified as a conquest dynasty. Currently, the multiethnic Chinese state does not pursue this tactic given their goal of showing the international community their progress, modernization, and acceptance of a variety of cultures. Whether these actions are a form of tokenism is up for debate.

Interestingly enough, the Chinese government now claims the Xinjiang region has always been an integral part of the Chinese state, even during the Qing era, and is on an equal playing field with the core of the PRC rather than as a periphery region. The State Council Information

¹⁹⁰ Images: Data analyzed by Lauren Munster from The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism

Office of the PRC believes that the early dynasties consistently “integrated with neighboring clans, tribes, and tribal alliances”¹⁹¹ despite the Qing’s notable history of forceful conquest and colonization of the Xinjiang region. Similarly, the convenient message put out is that “many ethnic groups worked together to develop [the PRC’s] vast territories and build the diverse Chinese nation”¹⁹² in order to paint an untroubled, rather than tumultuous, history. Given this rhetoric, the Chinese government attempts to establish the importance of Xinjiang in a historical context in order to find success in creating a narrative that portrays Xinjiang as a welcomed region in the PRC’s multiethnic state, despite the blatant tokenism.

The modern CCP differs from the Qing through their attempt to promote the idea of a unified, multiethnic nation rather than it being a facade as in the Qing era. The PRC is home to fifty-six different ethnic groups, fifty-five of them being in the minority.¹⁹³ The Han population makes up 92% of the entire Chinese population, leaving the fifty-five minority groups to make up the remaining 8% of the population.¹⁹⁴ Given the disproportionate distribution of population, Chinese law seeks to achieve ethnic unity and limit the discontent between ethnic groups. Since the formation of the PRC in 1949, article 50 in the Common Program of the Chinese National Political Consultative Conference states:

All nationalities within the boundaries of the People’s Republic of China are equal. They shall establish unity and mutual aid among themselves, and shall oppose imperialism and their own public enemies, so that the People’s Republic of China will become a big fraternal and co-operative family composed of all its nationalities. Greater Nationalism and chauvinism shall be opposed. Acts involving discrimination, oppression and splitting of the unity of the various nationalities shall be prohibited.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China. “Historical Matters Concerning Xinjiang.”

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Bolick, Hsi C. “Chinese Ethnic Groups: Overview Statistics.”

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ “The Common Program and Other Documents of the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference.”

From the start of the modern era, Chinese development has focused on the promotion of ethnic unity and growing together as one unit rather than fragmenting. The Chinese Constitution and the laws within it stipulate that all ethnic minorities are equal not only to each other, but in regards to the Han population.¹⁹⁶ This government sanctioned document includes the protection of ethnic rights and interests as well.¹⁹⁷

With this framework and ideology came its implementation through policy practice. This top-down approach of inter-ethnic unity is exemplified through the Chinese government's establishment of four delegation branches starting in the summer of 1950.¹⁹⁸ These government representatives visited regions where ethnic minorities were the majority, or close to, including Xinjiang.¹⁹⁹ Their purpose was to establish a mutually beneficial relationship through research, economic aid, trade, cultural exchanges, health care, and labeling these regions as Autonomous regions for the benefit of the ethnic minority.²⁰⁰ The strategic top-down approach to taking action in the unification of the multiethnic state strengthened the relations between the center and periphery and institutionalized the norm of creating economic or social programs in various regions to ensure inequality and segregation diminished overtime and into the 21st century.

Despite Chinese law written in a way to unite ethnicities across the PRC, many view the government's actions as insecure attempts, disguised propaganda, and the Hanification of Xinjiang. There is reoccurring evidence that Xinjiang and its people are important to the PRC for exploitation rather than a mutually beneficial relationship between a core and periphery or ethnic

¹⁹⁶ The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China. "Constitution of the People's Republic of China."

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Sui, Qing, Zhongxie Li, Shiqiang Li, and Danhong Chen. "Chinese Practices of the Initiative on Promoting Inter-Ethnic Unity and Common Progress."

They came from institutions including the Central Ethnic Affairs Commission, the Committee on Culture and Education, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Trade and the Central Committee of the Youth League.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

diversity. In 1999, the Chinese government instituted a project called the Great Leap West in which Xinjiang's infrastructure was revamped and economic investments were spent in the region by the central government. Beijing claims that these economic initiatives have benefited the region as a whole, which is factually accurate.²⁰¹ However, what is left out of the dialogue is the fact that “the more homogeneous regions are also those more likely to enjoy said benefits”²⁰², contributing to the Uyghur belief that the economic benefits are not equally gained across the region of Xinjiang. Overall, The Great Leap West is not as innocent as the Chinese government makes it out to be and further perpetuates the pre-existing economic inequalities. These cleavages are what cause a majority of the issues today. The CCP created a system in which the Uyghurs are disproportionately disadvantaged despite the economic investments as a lackadaisical cover up. These cleavages are occurring in the social sector as well, including regulations within education and limitations based on the dominant norms of the practice of Islam. New policies being introduced are simplified by the Chinese government as a way “to promote national unity”²⁰³ in Xinjiang. Similarly, the state is putting out White Papers that state “Chinese culture... has always been the emotional attachment and spiritual home for all ethnic groups in Xinjiang”.²⁰⁴ It is evident that the core is attempting to argue Chinese culture and the sinicization of others is what keeps the country bonded, rather than the celebration of the many ethnicities in the PRC. If anyone is to then question the PRC's policies, which Western nations often do, they are then quickly labeled by the Chinese government as neo-colonialists.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ Sui, Qing, Zhongxie Li, Shiqiang Li, and Danhong Chen. “Chinese Practices of the Initiative on Promoting Inter-Ethnic Unity and Common Progress.”

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Vanderklippe, Nathann. “China's New Demands for ‘National Unity’ Take the State Deeper into Xinjiang Homes.”

²⁰⁴ The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. “Historical Matters Concerning Xinjiang.”

²⁰⁵ Kashgariann, Asim. “Activists, Experts Call on UN to Recognize China's Uighur 'Genocide'.”

Conclusion

The legacy of the Qing conquest of Xinjiang is a watershed moment in which the Chinese government perpetuates that colonial legacy with modifications based on technological advances and the shift in political norms. Due to this extremely consequential period of time, the PRC strategically chose to maintain some similarities, including being wedded to maintain the geographical borders of the Qing empire while also upholding the civilizing mentality and forcing migration. Although there are structural similarities, the PRC used modern day modifications and played to their strengths, differentiating from some policies of the Qing by adapting to advancements in society. These modern adaptations of the communist state for further penetration, technological use of surveillance, and internment camps for the Uyghur population set the 21st century PRC apart from the Qing era. The CCP's modern ability to seize control over political, economic, and social decisions with greater ease and implementation in Xinjiang has also allowed for the core to dominate the narrative surrounding the unbalanced relationship with the periphery. The dominant theme seen throughout the different statist rule is that the civilizing themes and missions remained constant, no matter the time period.

Chapter III: Domestic and International Responses to Chinese State Policies

Introduction

In contrast to the dominant statist perspective, Chapter III calls attention to the domestic and international reactions to the civilizing and colonizing projects of the modern Chinese state.²⁰⁶ PRC policies targeting the Uyghurs are galvanizing oppositional groups within their own borders and communities, but also across the globe in the United States, despite the Western country's unintentional role of fueling the fire with their War on Terror rhetoric. The range of diverse viewpoints characterize the variety of responses to Chinese state policies in the region of Xinjiang. To account for this diversity, this chapter will identify and analyze a variety of contemporary voices within the domestic Uyghur community, but also activists and politicians in the United States, who have sought to redress this population's struggles. Regardless of the geographical location, these voices collectively contest the claims of the Chinese central government discussed in the previous chapter.

Story of Contested History

Chapter III maps the alternative accounts of Chinese governmental policies and their impact on Xinjiang to elucidate the larger context of this contested historical narrative in which numerous voices have emerged to exemplify the escalating tensions. Until recently, the dominant account accessible to an international audience has been that of the Chinese state rather than the Uyghurs. A broader understanding of the Uyghur struggle became more audible toward the end of 2019 when social media activists and other news outlets started to report on the plentiful, yet

²⁰⁶ Given that Chapter III brings the Uyghur narrative to the forefront, it would be inappropriate to fail to mention that a majority of the Uyghur population, as well as those who support them, refer to Xinjiang as East Turkestan. East Turkestan is the same geographical region as Xinjiang. Those who refer to it as such are often Uyghurs who view themselves as Turks of Central Asia rather than a part of the PRC. I believe this is an important note to make, but to establish consistency, the region will continue to be referred to as Xinjiang for the remainder of this thesis.

often unrecognized, human rights violations. An understanding and examination of the PRC's historically constructed roots reveal flashpoints of contention regarding Xinjiang rather than the controversial PRC point of view. This realm of history is one of the hottest zones of contention because there are two dominant competing narratives: the CCP, a diverse Uyghur population, and those supporting the latter. Generally, the history produced by these two groups is incompatible because they are motivated by polar opposite purposes, narratives, and sources. However, both sides hope that their story becomes adopted as the authentic regional history. While Uyghurs use their version of history to resist Chinese rule, the CCP uses their version to justify its political and military control over Xinjiang and vindicate their internment of the Uyghur population.²⁰⁷

This contested history is best exemplified by a famous woman that appears in both Chinese and Uyghur historical narratives. Known to the Chinese as the Fragrant Concubine and to the Uyghurs as Iparxan, the disparate readings of this historical figure exemplify key areas of contestation between these two groups. Iparxan was a young Muslim woman who ended up in the imperial Qianlong court.²⁰⁸ These facts are the only consistencies between the Han and Uyghur versions of the story. The Han depiction of Iparxan's story is fairly romanticized and filled with Oriental tropes. As they tell it, Iparxan was sought after by the Qianlong emperor for her beauty and exotic features, living a luxurious life as the emperor attempted to fill her every desire. In contrast to the Chinese who wrote Iparxan as a powerful symbol of unity, the Uyghurs have written her as a symbol of resistance in modern times. Uyghurs insist that Iparxan never wanted to be taken to the palace of Qianlong as she found his lust for her undesirable. As such,

²⁰⁷ There has been a recent shift toward scholarship that seeks to reframe "Japanese-American internment" as "Japanese-American incarceration" because it refers to the forced relocation of imprisonment of a country's own citizens rather than foreign enemy combatants. Despite knowing this, I continue to use the word internment due to the fact that it is widely recognized but find it important to note that in this case the Uyghurs are Chinese citizens and not foreign combatants.

²⁰⁸ There was a conscious choice to use Iparxan as her name in order to showcase the Uyghur point of view, as the rest of Chapter III follows suit.

she carried tiny daggers in the sleeves of her robes to enact revenge for her involuntary capture.²⁰⁹ Reaffirming the Uyghur narrative, Millward argues that Iparxan's story can be seen as a Chinese parallel to Western Orientalism, in which sexual tropes often confirm colonialist power.²¹⁰ He uses Han writers' interpretations of Iparxan to prove their willingness to depict the unfamiliar Uyghur population as exotic.²¹¹

Millward exemplifies the different ways in which she has come to symbolize the conflicting aspirations of the Chinese and the Uyghurs. The varying representations of this story have had modern day impacts due to its popularity. Millward argues that the Uyghur voices emphasizing their side of the narrative can be interpreted as emphasizing Uyghur resistance to the Qing and succeeding Chinese states.²¹² The story of Iparxan can then be seen as a metaphor for the ethnic and separatist protests in Xinjiang today which complicates the local history of Xinjiang as the facts of the story remain contested.

As Millward does in his analysis of the contested story, the following discussion is multifaceted in order to incorporate the plethora of voices also supporting the Uyghur population. Two broad focus categories are: domestic and international responses. The former will be further broken down into Uyghur voices who are still located within the PRC today. These include three intellectual perspectives and selected local stories from Xinjiang. The latter include a wide range of international organizations and individuals who use their expertise in history or politics to advocate and inform America and other western nations on the true dichotomy between the state and the Uyghurs inside Xinjiang.

²⁰⁹ Queen, Sarah. *Human Rights in China Lecture*, December 2020.

²¹⁰ Millward, James A. "A Uyghur Muslim in Qianlong's Court: The Meaning of the Fragrant Concubine."

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*

Domestic Responses

The domestic responses within the PRC are plentiful. However, such voices are often oppressed. The local Uyghur population is not only silenced, but largely silenced and educated by the PRC on what to say to international visitors and media, most of whom are followed by local authorities. These local voices are rarely authentic but have become puppets for a forced Chinese state narrative. Xinjiang locals have become “members of the propaganda department”²¹³ because they fear being taken to the camps more than being controlled by the state. Not only are the indigeneous populations silenced, but those who come to speak on their behalf are as well. Journalists have been followed by unmarked cars at high speed, forced to leave towns, or not served at restaurants under CCP policy.²¹⁴ This oppression leaves little room for domestic voices to emerge, but those who have authority and power are the ones willing and able enough to showcase Uyghur history and the local narrative, despite risking their lives to promote their ideology and cause. In the 21st century, even the champions of Uyghur rights are now being forcefully silenced across the region.

Intellectuals

The champions of Uyghur rights, who are predominantly intellectual advocates, live in the PRC and abroad. An exploration of Uyghur intellectuals is imperative because they are primarily targeted for their knowledge of Uyghur history, ethnic past, and their ability to produce and disseminate narratives on topics the Chinese government is attempting to permanently erase. These happenstances contribute to the broad Uyghur perspective that this minority group is being assaulted for their religion and culture given their implementation and tools of passive resistance.

²¹³ Schiavenza, Matt. “Why it's so Difficult for Journalists to Report from Xinjiang.”

²¹⁴ Sudworth, John. “China’s Pressure and Propaganda - the Reality of Reporting Xinjiang.”

Since April of 2017, the Chinese government has interned, imprisoned, or disappeared at least 338 intellectuals.²¹⁵

Ilham Tohti

One prominent intellectual who has been detained on separatism charges since 2014 is Ilham Tohti, a Uyghur economics professor at Minzu University, a prestigious university in Beijing. He is a fierce and proud advocate for Uyghur rights and embedded these viewpoints in lectures at his place of work.²¹⁶ Tohti's aspiration was to further Uyghur freedom of expression. The use of his role as an educator to address the destruction of Uyghur culture and religion in many interviews and publications eventually led him to be flagged as a separatist under Chinese law.²¹⁷ One of the projects the Chinese government cited as having separatist tendencies was Tohti's creation of 'Uyghur Online'. This website, solely in Chinese, allowed a dialogue to exist between Han and Uyghurs in a way the 21st century could adapt to due to its online format.²¹⁸ He used this platform as a vehicle for change in order for Han to have an opportunity to read about Uyghur sentiment in a forum-based dialogue rather than violently on the streets.²¹⁹

Similarly viewed by the Chinese government as problematic, Tohti also wrote: "Present-Day Ethnic Problems in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region: Overview and Recommendations" in response to a 2011 request from high-level officials in the Chinese government.²²⁰ In it, Tohti examines, critiques, and makes suggestions on different areas of social, political, economic and religious life in Xinjiang. By analyzing the root causes of present

²¹⁵ Tanner, Murray and James Bellacqua. "China's Response to Terrorism."

²¹⁶ Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission. "Ilham Tohti."

²¹⁷ Ibid.; Other interviews include: PEN America, European Parliament, China Change, and Financial Times.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Tohti, Ilham. "Present-Day Ethnic Problems in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region: Overview and Recommendations."

day ethnic tensions, Tohti discusses, as does this thesis, why unemployment, forced bilingual education, and religious persecution generate the current Uyghur-Chinese state ethnic tensions.

It is evident through Tohti's projects and personal narrative that he attempted to fill the gap in the history of Uyghur society for the Han Chinese population in an attempt to reduce ethnic-based tensions. His goal was for all citizens to better understand the diversity of a multi-ethnic society, something Tohti argues is imperative for the PRC to function smoothly.²²¹ Despite the picture the Chinese government painted of him, Tohti's work is grounded in surprisingly moderate ideology in which he emphasizes the importance of dialogue and respectful reconciliation. Unlike individuals who the CCP would easily identify as extremists, Tohti's goal was to "[implement] regional ethnic autonomy while also safeguarding national unity".²²² The concept that there would be any connection between Xinjiang and the PRC is fairly moderate considering there are citizens of Xinjiang who do not consider themselves part of Chinese society at all to display a sense of unity for their own culture and history.

Tohti's willingness to work with the CCP stems from his moderate, yet effective, ideology. Using his impressive education and economic expertise, Tohti attempted to benefit the Chinese government monetarily while also improving Uyghur relations. He advised that "simply pouring money from central government coffers into Xinjiang to create a slew of make-work jobs [was] not the right approach.... [it would] prove an undue fiscal burden for the government".²²³ As previously stated in Chapter II, the CCP's financial planning of Xinjiang was fueling greater tensions between the Uyghurs and government. Tohti's publications and speeches often proposed mutually beneficial options instead of a one-sided argument and arrangement. He

²²¹ Tohti, Ilham. "My Ideals and the Career Path I have Chosen."

²²² Tohti, Ilham. "Present-Day Ethnic Problems in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region: Overview and Recommendations."

²²³ Ibid.

also suggested that “by taking an active role in organizing and guiding population shifts within Xinjiang, the government can alleviate unemployment in the south, while also reducing ethnic segregation.”²²⁴ Working with all parties involved to “[seek] equilibrium between national unity and regional ethnic autonomy in Xinjiang”²²⁵ would increase the sense of unity for all. Tohti’s aspirations were not about splitting the nation up further, or fostering hostile relations, but emphasizing the willingness and need to strengthen the ties between Xinjiang and the Chinese core in order for the PRC to succeed.

This approach to finding a balance and communication was not only seen throughout his published works, but in his website: ‘Uyghur Online’.²²⁶ The goal of this media page was to establish a gateway of regular communication between the Han and Uyghur populations in an attempt to lessen the ethnic tension across the PRC. Tohti even acknowledged in his own personal writings that after creating and being inspired by the website, he also increased his “effort to interact with Han intellectuals in order to bring Xinjiang issues to their attention, thus allowing them to contribute their valuable perspectives and experiences to the discussion, and to introduce them to [Uyghur] culture and society.”²²⁷ Tohti believed that silence and non-acceptance would contribute to the social, political, and cultural tensions already boiling over in the region. These methods were employed to increase that communication and lessen the distrust between the Han, the CCP, and the Uyghur population. Tohti’s tolerant, reasonable, and patient approach within his published and online works not only placed him in a position to appeal to the masses and not just the intellectual community, but granted him leeway with the government for many years. Furthermore, this allowed Tohti to have the time to advance his

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ This website has publicly been restored by the German-based Ilham Tohti Institute in late 2020 with thousands of articles and can be accessed here: <http://uyghurbiz.org/>.

²²⁷ Tohti, Ilham. “My Ideals and the Career Path I have Chosen.”

main goal of championing Uyghur rights across the globe. Unfortunately, this relationship did not last forever. Eventually the Chinese government classified his actions as separatist in nature.

Tohti was arrested in 2014 for assisting in the creation and publishing the Uyghur based content website. He was charged with separatism, for which he could be imprisoned for life according to Article 103 and 105 of the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China.²²⁸ Given that he was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison, the Chinese government believed that Tohti was “among those who organize, plot or carry out the scheme of subverting the State power or overthrowing the socialist system”²²⁹ instead of his true intention of promoting justice. However, what is most concerning is that “whoever commits any of the crimes of endangering national security, . . . if the crime causes particularly grave harm to the State and the people or if the circumstances are especially serious, may be sentenced to death”.²³⁰ This precedent is incredibly dangerous to free speech within the PRC’s borders.

Despite these harsh rulings, the constitution within the PRC articulates that Chinese citizens, which ironically also constitutes Uyghurs, under Article 35 and 41 of the PRC Constitution, are guaranteed freedom of speech and the right to criticize their government.²³¹ Therefore, even if Tohti’s actions were perceived as critical of the socialist state, that is legal under the Chinese Constitution. However, since the Chinese government does not really think of the Uyghur population as real citizens that need to be silenced, the rules are prescribed to them more harshly and with greater force.

Furthermore, as one of the five permanent members on the United Nations Security Council, one would expect the PRC to follow the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That

²²⁸ Congressional-Executive Commission on China. “Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China.”

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China. “Constitution of the People's Republic of China.”

is not the case, as the PRC is in violation of Article 19 which grants everyone “the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”.²³² As the years go on, it is starting to become evident, as exemplified by Tohti’s case, that the Chinese government is willing to sacrifice human rights in order to protect and advance their Communist State in order to become a great power within the international sphere.

Rahile Dawut

Ilham Tohti is not the only individual to be blocked by Xinjiang officials in regards to freedom of speech. Another Uyghur intellectual, Rahile Dawut, disappeared in 2017 under the same pretenses as Tohti. Dawut was a professor at Xinjiang University and worked as a folklorist and ethnographer.²³³ She created and directed the University’s Minorities Folklore Research Center and is a well known author of dozens of articles and a number of books within her repertoire.²³⁴ Dawut’s work mainly centered around intellectual pieces given her background in local folklore. Her impressive research on Uyghur-Chinese ethnography was funded by the Chinese government before her disappearance.²³⁵ However, her image has drastically changed, where she is now commonly called two-faced, a blanket category used by Xinjiang state officials to describe “intellectuals who have lost their old role as mediators between the Communist Party and the community”.²³⁶ Originally, the Chinese government viewed Dawut as someone who could be a liaison between the ethnic community of Uyghurs and the state but now see her as someone who still has their loyalties to their respective ethnic minority.

²³² United Nations. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948.

²³³ Bard College. “Uyghur Scholar Rahile Dawut Named Honorary Professor in the Humanities by the Open Society University Network.”

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Buckley, Chris and Austin Ramzy. “Star Scholar Disappears as Crackdown Engulfs Western China.”

²³⁶ Jacinto, Leela. “Breaking the Silence on China’s ‘two-Faced’ Campaign Against Uighurs.”

In the CCP's eyes, Dawut's intellectual work exemplifies the reasoning behind their uncalled-for crackdown. Her work fills in and allows the international community to understand the missing narrative on the historical and cultural significance behind Uyghur religious customs. Dawut greatly contributed to the discussion and understanding of the mazars, the Uyghur historical and holy places, as discussed in Chapter II. Her published work "Mazar Festivals of the Uyghurs: Music, Islam and the Chinese State" is now purview to the international academic community. Despite the overarching notion that mazar festivals simply focus on prayer and personal grief, Dawut has drawn attention to the "redrawing of the line between 'illegal religious activities' and the folk customs' of the Uyghur".²³⁷ Shifting position in CCP policy has become less lenient and more hard-lined, including the persecution of mazars. In this case, Dawut's understanding allows for the dissemination of the authentic meaning behind a traditional Uyghur custom. Contributing to her persecution, Dawut's voice disadvantages the Chinese government's cultural and religious crackdown on the mazars based on erroneous claims of political threat while also going against CCP propaganda.

Another scholarly article published by Dawut educates the reader on the Uyghur Meshrep. This is a traditional male gathering that normally includes poetry, dance, and music but also possesses unique characteristics depending on the social groups' age.²³⁸ Dawut argues that knowledge of this specific element of Uyghur culture is a beneficial aspect of understanding the unique Uyghur culture in its entirety.²³⁹ This area of Uyghur Islamic expertise is where Dawut specializes, bringing to light specific elements of traditional Uyghur belief systems within the context of the 21st century. She examines areas of Uyghur culture and social life, specifically complex religious activities, sites, and the pilgrimage to the shrine that are under-researched as a

²³⁷ Harris, Rachel and Rahile Dawut. "Mazar Festivals of the Uyghurs: Music, Islam and the Chinese State."

²³⁸ Pawan, Sawut, Rahile Dawut, and Saadet Kurban. "Uyghur Meshrep Culture and its Social Function."

²³⁹ Ibid.

way to fill the gap of knowledge.²⁴⁰ By suggesting that these practices associated with the mazars are passed down from generation to generation exemplify her commitment to keeping tradition alive. This advocacy and promotion of local Uyghur history through the lens as an ethnographic researcher increased local stories in the field of academia on an international level, but also placed her in a dangerous position for government persecution.

These horrific stories belong to just two of the 338 intellectuals who have disappeared over the years. Artists, poets, musicians, and media professionals are also targeted for their professional knowledge and promotion of Uyghur culture within the context of their societal institution.²⁴¹ While intellectuals are part of the Uyghur population, this elite group is a privileged class and their collective experience is not representative of the vast majority. This, in tandem with the Chinese state being the puppeteer of the common Uyghur population, leaves very few authentic stories from Xinjiang. There is little to no access to the local Uyghur understandings given that the state has instilled a hush-hush policy to control the locals and keep events under the radar. In fact, the Chinese government has kept the internment camps “so secret that people from the community don’t even know what’s in there... People know there is such a place, but no one [knows] where”.²⁴² Therefore, not only is the local population silenced, but they are not informed on the whereabouts of their neighbors, friends, or families.

International Responses

Despite the state sanctioned silence, one of the biggest barriers of entry hindering the local population is that they do not have direct support from the international community within the region’s border. However, this international support has been on the rise, especially within

²⁴⁰ Bellér-Hann, Ildikó, Birgit N Schlyter, and Jun Sugawara. *Kashgar Revisited*. Leiden: BRILL, 2016.

²⁴¹ Tanner, Murray and James Bellacqua. “China’s Response to Terrorism.”

²⁴² Radio Free Asia. “Uyghur Detention - Interview 2.”; See footnote 203 for more information on the use of the word ‘internment’.

the United States, throughout the 21st century based on involvement from the political and historical sectors. Given the issues with local reporting from Xinjiang, more and more are relying on international individuals, scholars, and organizations with legitimate resources to accurately investigate and detail what is happening within Xinjiang and the internment camps. For years now, there has been a growing international concern and focus on the CCP's reported abuses of their own ethnic population.

Expat Uyghur Organizations

On a macro level, there are two Uyghur-based international organizations that must be included within this discussion: Uyghur Human Rights Project and World Uyghur Congress. Both of these groups have found their own niche within the pool of international organizations. Uyghur Human Rights Project specifically promotes the rights of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim peoples in Xinjiang. This organization has an ethnic focus on the Uyghurs, but also a geographical focus on Xinjiang. Their research based advocacy from intellectuals worldwide allows them to report in English and Chinese on defending the Uyghurs' civil, political, social, cultural, and economic rights within the Xinjiang borders. Their research is completed in order to produce reports that will benefit the Uyghur population directly. Similarly, the World Uyghur Congress also promotes a variety of Uyghur rights through peaceful and non-violent methods. This group is slightly more political than the Uyghur Human Rights Project, as they work directly with the United States Congress and European member states to enact change. Their work is tailored to governmental bodies in an attempt to create legal or political change that can then be specifically applied to the conflict in Xinjiang or directly target the PRC for their harmful actions against their own citizens. The former President of World Uyghur Congress, Erkin Alptekin, argued that "the Chinese want to replace us with their own people as colonists, and

assimilate those of us who remain, *wiping out our culture*”.²⁴³ This standpoint is rooted in scholarly historical work in which the former President attempts to use his platform to take back what the Uyghurs have wrongfully lost via exploitation.

Regardless of the similarities and differences in their methods, both of these organizations are heavily funded by grants from the United States government. The National Endowment for Democracy is one of the leading private nonprofit funds dedicated to growing and strengthening a variety of democratic institutions across the globe. More than 1,600 grants are given each year for organizations to achieve democratic goals in more than ninety countries around the globe.²⁴⁴ National Endowment for Democracy funding largely comes from the United States government. In 2013, the House Appropriations Committee provided \$122 million while the Senate Appropriations Committee provided \$236 million.²⁴⁵ At the end of the 2020, The House of Representatives approved funding for the National Endowment for Democracy to be raised to \$300 million, this increment is proportionally similar to the Senate as well.²⁴⁶

This funding has become extremely important for both the Uyghur Human Rights Project and World Uyghur Congress. These organizations thrive off of this funding that is indirectly coming from the United States government. In 2019, the Uyghur Human Rights Project was awarded a \$315,000 grant, for a total of \$1,239,698 between 2016 and 2019.²⁴⁷ World Uyghur Congress is now becoming another prominent human rights organization to raise awareness about the Uyghur conflict and bring awareness to it on a global scale. This rise in popularity matches their increase in funding over the years. On the other hand, World Uyghur Congress was

²⁴³ Clarke, Michael. “China’s ‘War on Terror’ in Xinjiang: Human Security and the Causes of Violent Uighur Separatism.”

²⁴⁴ Lowe, David. “History of the National Endowment for Democracy.”

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Gershman, Carl. “National Endowment for Democracy (NED), NDI, IRI, CIPE and Solidarity Center Welcome Increased Funding from Congress.”

²⁴⁷ National Endowment for Democracy. “Awarded Grants Search.”

allotted \$246,000 in 2017. Then, just one year later, saw a significant increase when they obtained \$354,000. Funding for other projects earned the organization an additional \$380,000 as well.²⁴⁸ With this increased funding, World Uyghur Congress can now work toward leadership and advocacy training seminars for Uyghur youth and the advocacy for Uyghur issues at the United Nations and the European Parliament.

Another international organization that attempts to use their position of power to mitigate tensions in the Xinjiang region is Human Rights Watch. Human Rights Watch investigates human rights abuses or violations and exposes facts in order to place pressure on those who have the power to instigate change. In one report published in 2018, Human Rights Watch describes the mass abuses the official policy of the Chinese state allows and promotes within their borders: mass arbitrary detention, torture, and mistreatment of Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang.²⁴⁹ This report details the systemic and increasingly pervasive controls on daily life. Despite being a highly reputable international organization, Human Rights Watch is concerned with hundreds of other human rights abuses around the world, losing its tailored focus on the Uyghur struggle. There have only been eight articles written on the Uyghur struggle on the Human Rights Watch website since October 1, 2020.²⁵⁰ This is not to diminish the impeccable work the Human Rights Watch organization does for the globe, but demonstrate how the Uyghur struggle might get lost in the midst of other violations and how imperative the Uyghur-specific international organizations are. Human Rights Watch is often macro-focused when it comes to Uyghur rights and what is occurring in the borders of the PRC, one being: “The Chinese government stands out for the reach and influence of its anti-rights efforts.”²⁵¹ This broad statement could be found on any

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch. “Eradicating Ideological Viruses.”

²⁵⁰ These results come from searching ‘Uyghur’ in the HRW article and video search bar.

²⁵¹ Human Rights Watch. “World Report 2020: Rights Trends in China’s Global Threat to Human Rights.”

other news platform. The choice to bring in the Human Rights Watch into the conversation was not to showcase their lack of effort, but recognize and understand why Uyghur Human Rights Project and World Uyghur Congress are imperative to positive progress.

Rebiya Kadeer

There are many individuals who live in the United States having grown up in Xinjiang fighting for Uyghur rights through a variety of education or political methods. The historical and political approaches these individuals take are two of the most prominent and advantageous ways for the international community to produce tangible results in terms of bringing awareness to the ethnic genocide occurring in Xinjiang and directly make an impact on the local Uyghur community.

Another former President of the World Uyghur Congress, Rebiya Kadeer, is one of many Uyghur activists not located inside the PRC but exemplifies the Uyghur diaspora within the United States. As an individual born in Xinjiang, she is an advocate for Uyghur rights and self-determination. Growing up, she established her own laundry business and invested her earnings to open up department stores, eventually becoming the PRC's wealthiest woman by 1993.²⁵² The Chinese government used her story as tokenism for Uyghur success and appointed her to positions on the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and the National People's Congress.²⁵³ During her tenure, she used her position to speak on the poor education, living standards, and quality of life for Uyghurs in Xinjiang.²⁵⁴ Due to this double-cross, the Chinese government eventually imprisoned her for five years until she was released and fled to the United States to continue her international advocacy.

²⁵² Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Rebiya Kadeer."

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

By moving to the United States, she now uses her position as a political dissident to detail first hand Uyghur accounts and personal stories on a variety of media platforms. Kadeer advocates for the United States' grand strategy including caring for and assisting the Uyghur population nationally and in Xinjiang. Unlike previous intellectuals, she does not take a historical or academic approach to her speeches or writings. Regardless, this method is greatly advantageous to her appeal because she represents the Uyghur masses through personal accounts. By discussing how Chinese officials "forcibly [take] Uyghur women from their homes and [subject] them to forced abortions and forced sterilizations",²⁵⁵ Kadeer injects pathos within her presentations and interviews to invoke sympathy from communities who are able to safely use their voice, which many Uyghurs do not have the privilege to do so. Kadeer's experience in prison changed her because she realized what it was like "to be a human being without freedom".²⁵⁶ After this experience, Kadeer decided to use her voice to represent those who are oppressed. She advocates for the CCP to change their policies targeting the Uyghurs based on her six years in prison before being exiled to the United States, where she is still targeted despite the threats against her family in Xinjiang. Kadeer's passion, determination, and persistence allow her to deliver a persuasive story to an international audience on the real world human rights violations Uyghurs are still enduring at this very moment.

James Millward

One of the greatest resources available for those living outside Xinjiang is Doctor James Millward of Georgetown University. He is one of the most profound scholars of the subjects concerning this thesis: The Qing empire and historical and contemporary Xinjiang. In the modern-day realm, Millward provides an accessible counter narrative to the Chinese state. He

²⁵⁵ World Uyghur Congress. *Uyghur Women and Human Rights: A Speech by Rebiya Kadeer during the 4th Session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues*.

²⁵⁶ Human Rights House Foundation. *Rebiya Kadeer – Five Years of Freedom* 2010.

works to bring to light the other side, the local vision, and perspective of the Uyghur-Chinese state relations. Through Uyghur history, Millward has revealed the ethno-political past of the Xinjiang region that presents a different narrative from the perspective of the Chinese state.

Despite the statist perspective, it is evident that “the C.C.P. is actively working to erase the cultural and political diversity”²⁵⁷ in which the Qing established by conquering vast and disparate regions. Millward expertly uses historical evidence and understandings to demonstrate the current ethnic and political tensions between Xinjiang and the Chinese core. Within a modern context, the CCP is attempting to establish a pan-Chinese identity masked by the tokenism of ethnic variation. Millward argues that this attempt by Xi Jinping for a homogenous society via “assimilationism also incites the very instability the C.C.P. has long hoped to avoid”.²⁵⁸ By using his intellectual perspective to showcase whether the current situation in Xinjiang is reflective of the historical past or not, Millward’s voice provides us with a comprehensive understanding of the implications from the Qing dynasty in the 21st century.

Due to the fact that Millward contributed to the growing narrative of the Uyghur struggle, it has become evident that history is changing “all the time because it is driven by the concerns of the present”.²⁵⁹ With that framework in mind, Millward has expanded the range of what constitutes Chinese history to include that of the Uyghurs, an ethnic minority, as well as incorporating borderland history and the notion of Xinjiang as a crossroads region. He examines the political developments in the region over an extensive period of time in which there was no unit that has the current geographic, political, or ethnic shape of the present day Xinjiang.²⁶⁰ By doing so, the subject matter of the Uyghurs is now framed in a new light by Millward, who now

²⁵⁷ Millward, James. “What Xi Jinping Hasn’t Learned from China’s Emperors.”

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Maza, Sarah C. *Thinking about History*, Page 6.

²⁶⁰ Millward, James and Peter Perdue. “Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late 19th Century.”

is able to implement different levels of analysis and establish a dichotomy between the history of the PRC in relation to the Xinjiang region.

Rian Thum

In addition to Millward, there has been an overwhelming response among writers of history, Rian Thum being another individual leading the pack of international sinologists building upon the Qing dynasty and Uyghur discussion. Combined, Thum and Millward are two American public intellectuals who are scholars on the subject and advocate for Uyghur rights. However, Thum focuses more on the roots of Uyghur history and argues there is more to the picture than the modern conflict. By looking beyond the shadow of the Chinese state, Thum uncovered the ways in which the identity of the Turkic Muslims of Altishahr, now commonly recognized as the Uyghurs, was maintained before the construction of the Uyghur identity by the state.²⁶¹

Thum's book, *The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History*, reveals the Uyghur story from within Xinjiang, a drastic differentiation from the statist narrative. This study explores the ways in which Altishahri identity has been maintained over time. In particular, the article examines how the Altishahri approach to history acted as an expression and mechanism of group identity maintenance.²⁶² His argument focuses on one aspect of this identity system, the popular historical tradition, suggesting that its deployment through both manuscript technology and regional shrine pilgrimage contributed to the maintenance of Xinjiang's settled Turkic identity group before the construction of the Uyghur identity was forced upon the community by the Chinese state.²⁶³

Given Thum and Millward's location in the United States, they are able to promote their

²⁶¹ Thum, Rian. "Modular History: Identity Maintenance before Uyghur Nationalism."

²⁶² Thum, Rian. *The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History*.

²⁶³ Ibid.

messages within a historical framework in the same way Uyghur intellectuals are, but with little fear of consequences or persecution from the Chinese government.

Social Media

Social media has become another tool to spread the Uyghur story within the realm of contested history. As internet platforms became more prominent throughout the 21st century, social media has proven to be a new vehicle for change for Uyghurs within the PRC, a way for the local and global Uyghur communities to connect, and increasing awareness for the dire situation.

Regardless of the fact that the Uyghur population's voices are censored by the state, online platforms have become a way for Uyghur activism to persist within the PRC. Uyghurs have been utilizing social media, blogs, and comment posts for indirectly voicing their disapproval of the state. The only reason these posts are not flagged or taken down is because there is a use of veiled language within metaphors, sarcasm, humor, and traditional Uyghur sayings, all of which are being used as a means of "expressing subversive political communication".²⁶⁴ This form of communication does not end here. The Uyghur diaspora internationally uses social media, especially Facebook, for daily communication and interaction across transnational borders.²⁶⁵ The Uyghur identity is continuing to be constructed through online dialogue between the diaspora and the homeland of Xinjiang.²⁶⁶ This is exemplified by the sharing of common experiences, causes for concerns, and longing for their homeland across international spheres.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ Clothey, Rebecca A., Emmanuel F. Koku, Erfan Erkin, and Husenjan Emat. "A Voice for the Voiceless: Online Social Activism in Uyghur Language Blogs and State Control of the Internet in China."

²⁶⁵ NurMuhammad, Rizwangul, Heather A. Horst, Evangelia Papoutsaki, and Giles Dodson. "Uyghur Transnational Identity on Facebook: On the Development of a Young Diaspora."

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

Online communication has started to emerge as an important feature of Uyghur identity, but also a way for the local Uyghur voice to be disseminated all around the world. On Instagram alone, #Uyghur has over 231 thousand posts. Other trending hashtags include #uyghurlivesmatter and #prisoncamps.²⁶⁸ The increase in prominence started at the beginning of 2020 when it was reported that common brands including, but not limited to: Nike, Adidas, H&M, Gap, NorthFace, Apple, Amazon, and Samsung profit off of forced Uyghur labor.²⁶⁹ Upon discovering this, many posts were made and shared across social media platforms to raise awareness for the Uyghurs and their on-going struggle and persecution by the Chinese state. This growing international resistance highlights the lived experiences of Uyghurs in Xinjiang for a broader audience and demonstrates how social media has a contrasting narrative to that of the Chinese government. Social media rhetoric has led many politicians within the American political system to use their position of power to initiate legal change advantageous for the Uyghur community in Xinjiang and abroad.



Politicians

Congresspeople and senators are starting to pass bills and laws that condemn the Chinese government for their ongoing abuses. Given that there is forced labor on the other side of the supply chain, politicians have used this as a way to ban United States businesses from using Uyghur labor and social media has condemned companies who continue to do so. The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, a bill in the United States Congress, attempts to mitigate this concern. If it were to become a law, it would change American policy on Xinjiang with the

²⁶⁸ Image: Instagram account @freeuyghurnow.

²⁶⁹ Business & Human Rights Resource Centre. “China: 83 Major Brands Implicated in Report on Forced Labour of Ethnic Minorities from Xinjiang Assigned to Factories Across Provinces; Includes Company Responses.”

goal of ensuring that American entities, including businesses, organizations, and governments, are not permitting or funding forced labor among minorities in the region. This bill has led to former President Trump signing the Human Rights Policy Act in 2020. This is a United States federal law that requires a plethora of federal government entities to publish and publicize reports on human rights abuses by the CCP against Uyghurs, including internment in the re-education camps.²⁷⁰

Despite the success in terms of governmental practices, another way Uyghur recognition is making its way into politics was throughout the 2020 Presidential election. Candidates, ranging from President Biden to Bernie Sanders and Kirsten Gillibrand, made it a priority to discuss this ongoing conflict throughout their campaign. Within three months of President Biden being elected into office, the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, a United States annual report on all countries receiving assistance and all United Nations member states, firmly formalizes the labeling of the PRC's actions as genocide. With the United States going against the statist narrative in a legal setting, the Western nation's prestige and duty to uphold democracy across the world can be seen as a rally call for other allies to follow suit.²⁷¹ The growing sense of public awareness will be imperative to penetrate all aspects of international society in order to tackle this mounting issue holistically.

Despite it being a step in the right direction that President Trump signed the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020, and more than the United States did at the beginning of Khmer Rouge rule in Cambodia, it may not be enough. Since the PRC poses a significant threat to United States hegemony, the nation may be inclined to act quicker and carry a bigger stick.

²⁷⁰ See footnote 203 for more information on the use of the word 'internment'.

²⁷¹ While the United States is upholding democracy in this case, it is important to note that this country's actions and call-outs with human rights are inconsistent.

While lofty, the way to address the shifting global order is to implement a multilateral and multidimensional approach that deter these atrocities.

The United States is uniquely capable of campaigning for multilateral partnerships across the world to increase international pressure on Beijing. Economic sanctions, solely distributed by the United States, would hurt the Western nation more than the PRC and are relatively ineffective considering the PRC is a top exporting country. However, the Chinese government cannot maintain its economic dominance if ties across portions of the world are severed. Ideally, the United States would partner with Japan, South Korea, or Australia to implement economic penalties or forge military partnerships. This unprecedented global pressure would expedite economic hardship and successfully disrupt PRC supply chains.

Conclusion

The modern day genocide occurring in Xinjiang is a story of contested narratives, pitting the Chinese state against the Uyghurs. Even then, one must dig deeper to get the full perspective because the Uyghur voice, and their support, is not one unified voice, but highly diverse and international. After reviewing the Uyghur voices and those who advocate for them, there appear to be some trends. Uyghurs located in the PRC, no matter their status or type of advocacy, are at risk. Those who directly voice opposition to official policy of the Chinese state, as Tohti did, and those who don't, such as Dawut, are imprisoned just for existing as Uyghur intellectuals. Political activism, or just being a Uyghur in a position of power, makes one vulnerable to persecution by the Chinese government. As Uyghur voices inside the PRC are silenced, advocacy needs to come from international sources. Millward and Thum, as Western scholars, might be too historical and theoretical for the common population to comprehend the severity of the situation in Xinjiang. However, paired with Kadeer, an expat in the United States, these international voices are in a

position to use history, in tandem with personal experiences, to reach the hearts and minds of populations across the globe.

International organizations are needed to reach new levels of awareness on a global scale. In normal circumstances, the UN could be a potential mitigator. However, the PRC vetoes all matters detrimental to them, including what constitutes a genocide. The PRC previously used its veto power in regards to human rights violations in Syria and Myanmar, showcasing their efforts to neglect human rights standards. Therefore, it is imperative to look at the Uyghur Human Rights Project and World Uyghur Congress. The gradual progression of international awareness can be accelerated by advocacy from these organizations and other grassroots movements that will force governments worldwide to unite and take action.

As demonstrated, an intersection of tools must be used when advocating for Uyghur rights. While it is unfortunate and counterintuitive, those who are not a part of the Uyghur community, nor located in the PRC, need to use their position to promote the variety of Uyghur narratives that exist in order to have the most success in spreading awareness. Global awareness and advocacy will be crucial moving forward to provide the Uyghurs with the justice they deserve.

Holistically, the range of Uyghur voices characterize their resistance and response to the statist policies blatantly targeting their cultural and religious practices. The variety of sources used allows one to see the plurality of Uyghur voices under one umbrella goal: Free the Uyghurs from state persecution, internment, and persistent colonial projects. The ultimate goal is to map those diverse voices within this unified struggle of resistance to find ways to end the wrongful internment of Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang and abroad.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have illustrated the ways in which the local and global factors, spanning hundreds of years, have weaved a way into 21st century Chinese state policies that impact the Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang. I have articulated the multidimensional layers of historical factors which the Chinese state has manipulated to its benefit, viewing this minority group as terrorists threatening the national security of the PRC. Chapter I illuminated how the new Qing scholarship of the modern era has played an important role in shaping and highlighting the Qing dynasty in the context of other great European empires. The Qing need to be consistently identified as an empire in order to make sense of their colonial and imperial conquests within Xinjiang. The level of imperial control executed within Xinjiang was unprecedented before the Qing conquest. I argued that the empire's vast territorial acquisition, consolidation of power through imperial administrative and military institutions, forced migration, and the othering of Xinjiang peoples allows them to be classified as a watershed moment in Xinjiang history.

Chapter I paved the way for Chapter II by articulating the details of Qing rule in order to make a fruitful comparison between that era and CCP rule since 1949 in Xinjiang. I suggested that while there is a pattern of repetition between the modern Chinese state and the Qing empire, there are also discontinuities that are necessary to take into account. I argued that in order to establish patterns and or explore variations in statist policies, the best path to do so is through an in-depth examination of the relationship between the Muslim Uyghurs of Xinjiang and the Chinese core. The Chinese government took a part out of the Qing playbook with their acquisition and replication of administrative and civilizing projects that include forced migration and the maintenance of vast territorial acquisitions. Despite these, I also showed that the Chinese government, being communist with the ability to penetrate deeper into society while having

access to advanced technology, has needed to adapt to modern times and establish greater mechanisms of control in order to exploit to the fullest potential the Uyghur population. However, the Chinese government's deeper involvement into society via colonizing projects while maintaining that Xinjiang has always been an imperative part of the PRC are two overarching differences between the modern Chinese state and Qing dynasty.

Given this, Chapter III shifted narratives to the domestic and international responses to the modern statist policies. These responses have become more pronounced over the years given the rise of globalized media. Domestic responses within Xinjiang and the PRC are far from copious. Intellectuals and the indigenous population alike have been physically or mentally silenced by a variety of propaganda tools implemented by the CCP. This control of the local people limits the number of stories emerging from the region. This relative silence has paved the way for international voices to rise to the occasion and become more pronounced. Voices within the United States have found greater success, including international individuals, scholars, and organizations with the legitimate resources to accurately investigate and report on the crimes being committed with the Xinjiang region and across the PRC as a whole.

I made it apparent throughout Chapter III how imperative it is to explore this modern day genocide in a context that explores the history of the modern contesting narratives at play today. I proved how this is not simply a local, modern day issue but one that has historical and global impacts intrinsically tied to the region. The deteriorating conditions of human rights in the PRC are concerning given that this same country is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Even if the PRC was not a permanent member, their actions would still be in violation of international human rights laws. The strategic targeting of the Uyghur population on an ethnic and religious basis is unethical, immoral, and has to be stopped by the international

community before these behaviors become a new international norm. The Uyghur population is a prime example of how there is potential for the international community to come together and prevent future xenophobic tendencies across the world. It will take more than one nation to come together and solve these issues moving forward. In a post-COVID world, one can only hope that nations will be seeking out opportunities for transnational connections in order to come together for the common good of human rights everywhere.

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