

**Nationalism, and State Integration Strategy – A Case Study
of Uyghur People in Xinjiang, China**

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A THESIS SUBMITTED

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

2005

Acknowledgements

This master thesis is a witness to my two years of hard work in NUS. I devoted a lot of time and efforts in this research for the past two years. However, it is not just my own achievement. Here I want to show my great appreciation for professors, classmates, friends, and my dear parents, for what they have bestowed on me all the time.

First of all, I want to thank my supervisor, Dr. Hussin Mutalib, who has consistently given me encouragement and critical suggestions for my research work. Without his insightful guidance and efficient feedback, I cannot reach today's level.

Secondly, I want to thank Prof. Lee Lai To for giving me this opportunity to study at Political Science Department in NUS. I appreciate your consistent help and support. My appreciation also goes to Dr. Cai Yong Shun and Dr. Yusaku Horiuchi, for knowledge I have learned from their insightful lectures and experience I have obtained from working with them. Besides that, I feel thankful for all the professors, lectures and other administrative staff from Political Science Department and Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Special thanks go to Ms. Teo Mui Woon Stephanie for her always detailed and patient explanation about all the complicated stuff.

Moreover, this thesis cannot be accomplished without friends' encouragement and help. Here I want to thank Ge Juan, my good friend, for sharing my happiness and bitterness all the time. I also feel thankful for Jingru, Li Dan, Heng Fu, Liu Lin, Gu Jing, Shao Feng, Ma Shao Hua, Hong Xia, Jiang Yang, Shibuichi, Guo li, Dicky, Ben, Shin, Guo Jiguang, Wei Jia, and Wang Yaping, my friends in Singapore, from whom I have learned a lot. Gratitude also goes to my old friends, Li Yanli, Huo Nuo, Shi Hong, Tang Min, Wang Gang, Yuan Yuan, for caring about me and encouraging me especially when I met difficulties even I was far away from them. Particularly, I appreciate the great help of Dr. Zheng Yongnian, for his valuable suggestions in research design.

Last but not least, I want to thank my dear parents, Ms. Li Yaohui and Mr. Huang Tongshu, who always stand by me when I encounter difficulties during the two years' research. With their spiritual encouragement and financial assistance, finally I am able to submit this master thesis.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	i
Table of Contents.....	ii
Summary.....	iv
List of Tables.....	v
List of Abbreviations.....	v
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Research Questions	3
1.2 The significance of this study.....	5
1.3 Hypothesis	10
1.4 Literature review	13
1.5 Research Design.....	20
Chapter 2 Ethno-nationalism and the East Turkestan Independence Movement....	24
2.1 The origin of the Ughurs and their independence movement	26
2.2 Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism	28
2.3 The East Turkestan Independence Movement in the P. R. China Since 1949	30
Chapter 3 From Formal to Informal Control--State Rebuilding Since 1978.....	44
3.1 Formal Control in Mao's Era	48
3.1.1 Command economy	49
3.1.2 Highly centralized administrative system in Mao's era.....	54
3.1.3 Social control in Mao's era.....	58
3.2 Informal control in Deng's era	67
3.2.1 Command economy and market economy.....	69
3.2.2 Political relaxation in the Post-Mao era.....	73
3.2.3 Social informal control.....	76
3.3 Conclusion.....	79
Chapter 4 State-rebuilding and the Surge of Ethnic Social Movement.....	84
4.1 .Re-emergence and Escalation—the Consequences of State Rebuilding.....	88
4.2 State Rebuilding and Ethnic Identity.....	91

4.2.1 The Open Political Space—Opportunities for the Alternative Frame	93
4.2.2 Special Treatment and Widening Inequality.....	97
4.2.2.1 Inequality—the unsatisfactory effect of preferential policies	102
4.2.2.2 Competition increasing--the natural result of market economy	106
4.2.3 State rebuilding and mobilization	110
4.2.3.1 Material resources	111
4.2.3.2 Building blocks and allies	113
4.3 Conclusion.....	120
Chapter 5 Conclusion	122
Bibliography.....	139
Books.....	139
Statistical Yearbooks.....	141
Periodicals.....	142
Public Documents.....	143
Newspapers.....	143
Electronic Sources.....	144
Appendices.....	145

Summary

The PRC is a multi-ethnic country comprising the Han majority group and 55 other ethnic minorities. Since many of the minorities are populated in strategically important peripheral areas, how to integrate these ethnic groups and frontier regions into China Proper has been a critical issue in China's state-building process.

Despite the serious efforts made by the CCP in its state-building project, the 1990s has seen a growing ethno-nationalism countrywide. One of the most extreme cases is the Uyghur's East Turkestan movement, which, after remaining silent in the whole decade of the 1970s, resurfaced from 1980, and became active since the 1990s. What accounts for this surge of ethno-nationalism, especially Uyghur activism?

Viewing the state as a part of society, this paper attempts to explore the dynamics between state-building and ethno-nationalism in China. It argues that state-building, which intends to assure and expand its power, provides opportunity for ethno-nationalism to grow, and even more, for ethnic political movements to occur. By tracing the processes and dynamics as to how the shift in the state policy affects the cognitive framework of the minority people, provides sustainable resource to the movement, and offers space for social movement organizations to surface, this paper will then illustrate how state-building produces some unintended results.

List of Tables

Table 2.1 The Political Actions of the Uyghurs from 1950 to 1997	32
Table 3.1 Composition of Xinjiang's population, 1949-1990	64
Table 4.1 Changes in the control system and the East Turkestan Independence Movement	90
Table 4.2 Income Level in Xinjiang by Ethnicity: 1982, 1990, and 2000	103
Table 4.3 Employment Patterns in Xinjiang by Ethnicity, 1982 and 1990 (%)....	103
Table 4.4 Insurgent Groups Relative to the East Turkestan Independence Movement	115

List of Abbreviations

CCP: Chinese Communist Party

ETPRP: East Turkestan People's Revolutionary Party

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

POS: Political Opportunity Structure

PRC: People's Republic of China

SCO: Shanghai Cooperation Organization

SMO: Social Movement Organization

U.S.: United States

XPCC: Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps

XUAR: Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

Chapter 1 Introduction

The issue of ethno-nationalism continues to be given increasing attention in scholarship because of the rise of ethnic political movements in many regions of the world. This is also true of the People's Republic of China (PRC), which claims to be a unitary multi-national state. According to the fifth national census taken in 2000, the Han people made up 91.59% of the country's total population, while the minority groups comprise 8.41%. Although the minority groups constitute slightly over 8% of the population, they inhabit over two thirds of China's territory, and their population is almost 100 million, nearly 40 % that of U.S.¹ Furthermore, many of these ethnic groups are situated in the frontier regions of China.

How to govern the ethnic minorities and the frontier regions has been a vital political issue under the political agenda of state building in China. The fundamental policy adopted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) towards the minorities is the Minority Region Autonomy Policy (*minzu quyu zizhi zhidu*). By establishing minority autonomous governments in the residence of the minority groups, the CCP claims to grant the ethnic minorities the right to deal with their own affairs.

¹ State Statistics Bureau of P. R. China ed., *Statistics Yearbook of China 2003*, (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2003), p.11.

Moreover, the Chinese government has devised quite a number of preferential policies that grant privileges to the minorities in a number of areas ranging from politics to education. To integrate the ethnic minorities into the state, the CCP also tries to create an image of a unified nation since ancient times by selectively manipulating the historical experiences and memories. China is depicted as a ‘melting pot’, in which many ethnic groups live in harmony and the ethnic boundaries naturally disappear. The ‘sinicization scenario’ is predicted by both modernization and Marxist theories of nationalism.

However, the 1990s witnessed a surge of ethno-nationalism in some places of China, especially Xinjiang.² The minority groups employed various means to express their heightened sense of ethnic identity. A good example was the sudden increase in the minority population, which did not result from improving fertility, but from the willingness of a lot of minority people to claim their real ethnic identity.³

The Uyghur ethnic community in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) offers a relevant case of rising ethno-nationalism.⁴ Not confining their nationalism to just claiming their ethnic distinction, the Uyghur people re-initiated

² Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People’s Republic* (Harvard University Press: 1991), p.1.

³ Matthew Hoddie, ‘Ethnic Identity Change in the People’s Republic of China: An Explanation Using Data from the 1982 and 1990 Census Enumerations’, in *Nationalism and Ethnoregional Identities in China*, William Safran ed. (Frank Cass: 1998), pp.119-141.

⁴ Also could be called Uighur or Ugyur.

their East Turkestan independence movement with the aim to establish their own state. From 1980s, social disturbances such as demonstrations, marches and clashes by the Uyghurs occurred in this northwestern region from time to time. The Uyghur activism escalated in the 1990s. Xinjiang has been haunted with quite a number of riots, insurgencies, demonstrations and even terrorist activities. The two most widely known incidents are the uprising in Baren Township, Akto County in Xinjiang and a separatist rioting in Yining, in 1990 and 1997 respectively. The degree of violence was unusually high. The persistence of the Uyghur activism has not only unnerved the Chinese authorities, but also caught the attention of the international community.

1.1 Research Questions

What accounts for the rising ethno-nationalism in China, especially the Uyghur activism? What causes the proliferation of such collective challenges by the Uyghur people? These are the twin research questions I want to address in this study. These ‘social disturbances’ of the modern Chinese world requires a radical reassessment of the former thinking about the assimilation and marginalization of minorities in China. In accounting for the ethno-nationalism, one would want to mention a number of factors covering historical memories as well as realistic reasons. However, the main concern of this paper is to explore the reasons as to why an upsurge of the Uyghur activism occurred in 1980s and 1990s after an apparent quiescence of the group in the 1970s. In other words, the focus of the study is to analyze the factors and conditions

that made Uyghurs more virulent in their protests against the rule by the Chinese government, instead of the formation of the ethno-nationalism.

By tracing the process of state building and the rationale behind it, this study will explore the dynamics between the integration by the state and the re-emergence and development of this social movement. Ethno-nationalism, with its potential centrifugal force, has always been cautioned by the CCP. State building, which aims to maintain and expand the power of the state, has to devise some effective strategies to accommodate these ethno-national feelings. It can be logically deduced that state building would tend to discourage subversive social disturbances rather than encourage ethnic unrest. For a better understanding of the correlation between state building and social movement, it is necessary to address three sub-questions. First is the development of the ethnic social movement, in this case the East Turkestan Independence Movement. Before pursuing the factors influencing the social movement, I will first examine the development pattern of the movement. Second is the process of state building. Since political scientists have differing views on state building, the assumption about the nature of state and state building that I subscribe to, should be discussed first to avoid any theoretical ambiguities that might occur in the later analysis. I prefer a more dynamic perspective on state and state building, which will be illustrated in the corresponding chapter. On one hand, there should be a certain rationale behind every step in state building project although some strategies

might not be rational when viewed afterward. To have a better understanding of state building, we should know the considerations of the state behind each policy shift. On the other hand, during the dynamic process of interaction of various social forces, the state could not completely penetrate the society at its will. The social changes brought by state building might unintentionally arouse some ethnic tensions and render the established political order more vulnerable to challenge. The last sub-question that I hope to pose is the causal mechanism between state building and social movement. Consideration of a time sequence alone is less useful to demonstrate a causal relationship. How state building forms an important factor in triggering and fueling social movement needs more elaborations.

1.2 The significance of this study

This research can be placed within a theoretical framework. Firstly, this study is an effort to explore the issue of ethno-nationalism in China. Ethno-nationalism is a form of political consciousness along lines of nationality. The emergence and rise of national consciousness is of a relatively recent origin. As Ernest Barker noted ‘the self-consciousness of nations is a product of the nineteenth century. This is a matter of the first importance. Nations were already there; they had indeed been there for centuries... What really and finally matters is the thing which is apprehended as an

idea, and, as an idea, is vested with emotion until it becomes a cause and a spring of action.’⁵ Ethno-nationalism, in essence, is a psychological feeling of belonging to a certain group, an awareness of ethnic identity. A central debate in the literature of identity focuses on the degree to which the ethnic identity is malleable. Proponents of the ‘primordialist’ perspective maintain that ethnic identity is fixed and unchangeable. In contrast, ‘instrumentalists’ hold the opinion that ethnic identity can be manipulated by the elites in an effort to mobilize support for their interests. To them, ethno-nationalism could be used as a weapon in the pursuit of collective advantages. The evidence presented in my study strongly favors the latter view. Besides the nature of ethno-nationalism, the process in which the ethno-nationalistic feelings and sentiments convert to action has been far from fully explored. My study, hopefully, can contribute to a fuller understanding of the emergence and development of ethno-nationalism by examining the ebb and flow of the Uyghur’s political movement.

Secondly, my study hopes to enhance our understanding of state building and integration. State building is of great importance for modern countries to assure and expand their power. For multi-ethnic states, one major task of state building is integration: to integrate the various ethnic groups into the state. The term integration is widely used in the study of ethnic groups and its equivalent in Chinese is *Zhenghe*

⁵ Ernest Barker, *National Character and the Factors in its Formation* (London, 1927), p.173.

(literally means ‘to come together as a whole’). As a part of state building, integration per se is a dynamic process. Due to the fluidity and manipulability of ethno-nationalism, the construction of ethno-nationalism becomes a battlefield in which various social forces struggle for domination. In this sense, integration could be regarded as a battle initiated by the state with the aim to construct a unified image of a nation and gain legitimacy. Because of the interaction of various social forces, the process of integration is full of negotiation and conflict, fusion and fission. The result may be unexpected and unanticipated. Though the view of integration as a process becomes more popular in recent scholarly analyses, most of these works have focused heavily on European, American, and African countries. The study on dynamics between state building and ethno-nationalism in China remains a barren soil. This might be due to two tendencies. First, most western political scientists tend to overemphasize the development of China from a large empire to a unified nation, thus neglecting the ethnic dimensions in China. Some political scholars have portrayed a high degree of ethnic homogeneity—such as Eric Hobsbawm’s declaration that ‘China... [is] indeed among the extremely rare examples of historic states composed of a population that is ethnically almost or entirely homogeneous.’⁶ However, the fact that China has accommodated 56 ethnic groups has made it difficult to think of this

⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.66.

country in ethnically monochromatic terms. Second, many scholars have strong belief in the overwhelming power of authoritarian states such as China to penetrate the society. Nonetheless, the Chinese government experienced and is experiencing decentralization transformation.⁷ Local forces are gaining more leverage in bargaining with the central government. The diversity and rigor between various ethnic groups and the central government merit our careful examination. Thus, my study, it is hoped, would help broaden the understanding of state building and integration in China.

Besides attempting to contribute to theoretical study, this article also wants to aid the efforts to achieve a better understanding of the Xinjiang problem in China. First, the importance of Xinjiang should be noted. As the largest province in China, Xinjiang accommodates various minority groups including Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Hui, Dungans, Kirghiz, Mongols, Russians, Manchus, Tajiks and Taranchi. It occupies a critical position in the state's integration spectrum since its ethnic heterogeneity combined with the vast territory poses a potentially destabilizing source for China. The remoteness of its location in the northwest frontier region of China elevates its importance when discussing the issue of national stability and unity. Thus, it is no wonder that the social disturbance, especially of the Uyghur movement, has aroused

⁷ Gerald Segal, 'China's Changing Shape', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 3, May/June 1994, pp.43-58.

serious attention of the Chinese government. In addition, Xinjiang's potentially rich petroleum and mineral assets and its strategic location at the heart of the Eurasian continent have ensured its importance in the international dimension. In the past, Xinjiang's position at the interesting fringes of three great empires made it the prize in the 'Great Game' of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sought after by the Chinese, the Russian, and the British.⁸ At present, its strategic position in Central Asia still makes the Chinese government cautious about the rising influence of the United States on this region, in tandem with Russia.

Second, this article might help to enrich our understanding of the real situation of the Uyghur people. Despite the efforts taken by the central state to contain ethno-nationalism, ethnic conflict began to intensify from the early 1980s.⁹ There is much controversy in present literature about the future scenario of Uyghur activism. Some believe in the power of the central government and its ability to deal with the minority issues. They predict the gradual subsiding and fading away of ethno-nationalism. Others claim that ethno-nationalism has the potential to mobilize the Uyghur people to engage in a 'Holy War' to fight for their independence. This study, hopefully, may shed light on the controversy.

⁸ Calla Wiemer, *the Economy of Xinjiang*, unpublished scripts.

⁹ Herbert S. YEE, 'Ethnic Relations in Xinjiang: a survey of Uygur-Han relations in Urumqi', *Journal of Contemporary China*, 2003, 12, August, p.431.

1.3 Hypothesis

The Uyghur's East Turkestan independence movement is an ethnically based social movement. To analyze the emergence and development of social movement, scholars conventionally use three broad sets of factors: political opportunity, mobilizing structure, and framing process.¹⁰ Each factor puts its emphasis on different level of analysis. Proponents of political opportunity emphasize the influence of the broad political environment and structure. Mobilizing structure explores the capability of formal social movement organizations. Framing process examines how the individual grievance converts to collective awareness and how the mass is mobilized to action.

My study mainly subscribes to the first view, which emphasizes the influence of political opportunity factor and is called 'political process approach.' Michael Lipsky urged political analysts to pay attention to the stages and fluctuations in the American political system that might influence the openness of the system to specific groups. After examining the 'riot behavior' in forty-three American cities, Peter Eisinger found that 'the incidence of protest is ... related to the nature of a city's political opportunity structure', which he defined as 'the degree to which groups are

¹⁰ Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, *Comparative Perspective on Social Movement* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.2.

likely to be able to gain access to power and to manipulate the political system.¹¹ This political process approach to study social movement was further theorized by Charles Tilly, Doug MacAdam, and Sidney Tarrow, who firmly established the link between institutionalized politics and social movement.¹² Seeking to understand the emergence of particular movements, proponents of political process model sought to link the initial development of insurgency to an expansion in political opportunities beneficial to the challenging group.¹³ They share a same underlying conviction: social movements and revolutions are shaped by the broader set of political constraints and opportunities unique to the national context in which they are embedded.¹⁴

These scholars have found that social movements have been associated with state building, which has a great effect on changing the political opportunity structure. Alexis de Tocqueville was the first scholar who provided his observation on the link between the state and collective action.¹⁵ By comparing France and America, he claimed that state centralization of France had provided opportunities for the French Revolution. Though his argument regarding the role of state centralization in fomenting social movement was excessive, his emphasis on state-building as the

¹¹ Ibid, p.23.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., p.29.

¹⁴ Ibid, p.3.

¹⁵ Zheng Yongnian, 'State Rebuilding, Popular Protest and Collective Action in China', *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, (Cambridge University Press 2002, 3 (1)), p.47.

source of movement opportunities was right on target.¹⁶ Charles Tilly, in ‘Social Movements and National Politics’, traces the emergence of ‘national social movements’ in nineteenth-century Europe. In his depiction, the changes in the state policy have brought corresponding changes in the popular protest: ‘Popular uprisings in the early modern period were largely defensive efforts to resist taxes and the loss of local control over food and food prices. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as state structures were nationalized and electoral politics evolved, popular agitation also underwent profound changes.’¹⁷ Donatella Della Porta compares the protest policing between Italy and the Federal Republic of Germany after World War II, and suggests it has an important effect on social movement.¹⁸

Using the political process approach, I will show how changes in the political system create new possibilities for collective action of the Uyghur people. To be more specific, the hypothesis is that the state re-building program from 1978 has provided opportunities to the Uyghur’s collective insurgences. Deng Xiaoping’s re-ascension to power in 1978 and his reform initiated soon after have brought momentous changes to the political landscape of China. I argue that, with the original purpose of assuring the power of the state, the state re-building actually has caused changes

¹⁶ Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, Mayer N. Zald, op.cit, p.49.

¹⁷ Charles Bright, and Susan Harding ed., *Statemaking and Social Movements: Essays in History and Theory* (The University of Michigan Press, 1984), p.11.

¹⁸ Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, Mayer N. Zald, op.cit., p.62.

outside as well as inside the ethnic groups, changes favorable for the formation of ethnic political movement.

The state rebuilding from 1978 reform comprises a transformation from formal control to informal control, from mainly political integration to mainly economic integration. This change might alter the interests of contending groups, cause the growth of the self-awareness of the national identity of the Uyghur, open more space for the social movement organizations, and provide more opportunities for the social activists, leading to the escalation of the Uyghur nationalism and the collective action.

1.4 Literature review

Attracted by worsening ethnic relation between the Uyghur and the Han Chinese from 1980s, scholars have tried to locate the underlying stimulation for the restless protest behavior of the Uyghurs. Among the scholarly analysis of the ethnopolitics of Uyghur people, there are mainly two perspectives.

One perspective delves with the roots of the contemporary ethno-nationalism of Uyghurs. A common approach of this school is the historical approach, which emphasizes the role of historical experience and memories in the formation of ethno-nationalism. June Teufel Dreyer is one of the pioneering western scholars studying ethnopolitics in China. In her famous book *China's Forty Millions*, she has studied the development of PRC minority policy intended to hasten the integration of the

minorities to the China Proper. Dreyer notes that the results of PRC policy have differed widely in different areas: receptivity to efforts at integration has been uneven among minority groups. Together with Tibet and Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang is listed as one of the regions most difficult to integrate.¹⁹ Dreyer suggests six factors that significantly influenced the success of the progress of integration: the degree of assimilation of an ethnic group to Han Chinese society; lack of cohesiveness of the culture of a given ethnic group; the degree of dispersion of ethnic group members among Han Chinese; and so on. Her observation about the variation of ethno-nationalism among different ethnic groups is very instructive; however, she fails to notice the variation of ethno-nationalism within one group along different periods. Following the idea of Dreyer, many scholars have looked at the root of ethno-nationalism from the historical perspective. David Wang claims that the independence experience of the Three Districts (the East Turkestan Republic of 1944-1949) in Xinjiang has been imprinted in the memory of the Uyghur people and it has been a symbol for the East Turkestan movement for several decades.²⁰ Nader Hasan argues that since the Uyghur people are historically isolated with central China, and do not share religion, language, or ethnicity with the country's majority Han Chinese,

¹⁹ June Teufel Dreyer, *China's Forty Millions: Minority Nationalities and National Integration in the People's Republic of China* (Harvard University Press: 1976).

²⁰ David Wang, *The East Turkestan Movement in Xinjiang: a Chinese Potential Source of Instability?* (Singapore: East Asian Institute, NUS, 1998).

the Uyghur are unwilling to submit their loyalty to Chinese authority.²¹ These scholars are right since as a sense of belonging to a certain group, ethno-nationalism has evolved from some historical conditions. However, the re-emergence and development of ethno-nationalism results from a combination of internal as well as external factors. They fail to capture the variation of the manifestation of ethno-nationalism in different episodes. The historical factor alone cannot account for why sometimes the collective challenge activities of Uyghur people appear so furious while in other periods they remain inert.

Some scholars notice the role of the religious factor in the formation of ethno-nationalism of Uyghur and offers cultural explanations for it. Iftikhar H. Malik, in *Issues in Contemporary South and Central Asian Politics: Islam, Ethnicity and the State*, highlights the role of Islam in binding the ethnic minorities. To him, Islam was not only a rallying point for the minority, but also a mechanism to defy the central authority, so it gained the name as ‘secularization-resistant’.²² By tracing the function of religion in the self-identification process, Malik gives a plausible explanation to the restive nature of the Muslim minority. Islam, in no doubt, forms a primary determinant to the assertiveness of the Uyghurs. But, again, the religious factor

²¹ Nader Hasan, ‘China’s Forgotten Dissenters’, *Harvard International Review*, (Fall 2000;22,3), p.38.

²² Iftikhar H. Malik, ‘Issues in Contemporary South and Central Asian Politics: Islam, Ethnicity, and the State’, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 32, Issue 10, Oct., pp.888-901.

cannot wholly explain the question about the pattern of collective actions. The Uyghurs have converted their belief to Islam for centuries. However, the emergence and development of ethno-nationalism is of recent origin. Religion forms a basis for ethno-nationalism, but obviously not a primary determinant.

The first perspective does provide valuable information of the construction of ethno-nationalism. However, there is surprising neglect of the phenomenon that the Uyghurs have different expressions of their ethno-nationalism in different periods. This limitation might result from the lack of concrete information. The CCP views ethno-nationalism as undesirable since it could lead to the disintegration of the state. Thus, study on it became a very sensitive topic in China. Before 1980s, the CCP put such strict restriction on the entry of foreigners to Xinjiang that independent field studies were virtually impossible. Fortunately, the ban on field research has begun to be lifted, if not completely, since the 1990s. Official documents were made more public and field studies to Xinjiang were permitted. Hence, my own field study in April and May of 2004. My present research will examine the relationship between state building and ethno-nationalism of Uyghurs, arguing that the changes brought by state building actually provide opportunities for ethno-nationalism to develop and break out.

The second perspective does notice the variation of the manifestation of Uyghur ethno-nationalism and try to explain the sudden surge of Uyghur activism. Many

studies focus on the international influence on the ethno-nationalism of Uyghur. These foreign analysts have hypothesized that the independence of the Central Asian states had a demonstrative effect on Uyghurs. Sean L Yom argues that the Uyghur proto-separatist intensify their liberation activities when seeing their fellow Turkic Muslims of Central Asia having their own sovereign lands. Witt Raczka also examines the close relationship between Xinjiang and the Central Asia states, claiming that there is remarkable fluidity across what used to be called Central Asian Turkestan and the cross border contacts between Xinjiang and the Central Asia states have reached an unprecedented level.²³ There is no denying the contagious effect of the independence movements of the Central Asia states in the neighborhood. But the seed of the East Turkestan movement has already germinated far before the dissolution of Soviet Union. From the early 1980s, the collective action of defiance of the Uyghurs has begun to resurface and intensify. There should be other factors in activating these activities.

Justin Jon Rudelson, in the book *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China's Silk Road*, offers another explanation to the variation in expressions of Uyghur ethno-nationalism.²⁴ In terms of its physical geography, Xinjiang is normally

²³ Witt Raczka, 'Xinjiang and its Central Asian Borderlands', *Central Asian Survey*, (1998:17,3), p.373.

²⁴ Justin Jon Rudelson, *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China's Silk Road*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

associated with isolated oases in a desert. Rudelson argues that the geographical and social boundaries of the residence of Uyghur people shape the competing ethnic identities at the local oasis and regional level. Thus, this sentimental feeling about the oases of their birth makes the Uyghur's ethno-nationalism fragmented.²⁵ His argument is insightful in explaining the evolution of ethno-nationalism in the long run. But it is not very compatible with the short-term variation that could be drawn from my data about these activities from 1949. According to his conclusion, ethno-nationalism will grow with the modernization process, in which the accelerating communication and contact of the members within this group would sharpen their identity awareness. The picture of the development of ethno-nationalism should be on an upward trend. However, in reality, the intensity of the East Turkestan movement declined from the 1950's peak, calmed down in the following two decades, and resurfaced in 1980s. The geographical factor as propounded by Rudelson cannot account for the undulating nature of the Uyghurs' movement. My study will examine the broad political system in which the ethnic political movement is imbedded, showing how the changes in the state policy produced chances and constraints to the collective challenges.

²⁵ Ibid.

There are scholars who have noticed the influence of state policy on the development of ethno-nationalism. Barry Sautman studies the preferential policies for Xinjiang, which grants minority groups privileges in family planning, school admission, employment opportunities and promotion, business financing and taxation, as well as regional infrastructural support. Barry argues that contrary to the conventional belief that affirmative action everywhere inhibits economic efficiency and creates inter-ethnic tensions, the preferential policy has created greater social equity in Xinjiang.²⁶ By putting most attention on the specific policy treatment of ethnic minorities, Barry has underestimated the changes on the grand political landscape—the state building process, which has more influences on ethno-nationalism, influences that might have reverse effects in contrast with preferential policies. Some scholars notice the link between state building and ethno-nationalism, but they seem to have conflicting opinions on the relations between state's modernization and ethno-nationalism. Collin Mackerras claims that the rising living standards accompanying modernization has at least smoothed the way for the national integration efforts of the central government and alleviated the resentments of the

²⁶ Barry Sautman, 'Preferential Policies for Ethnic Minorities in China: the case of Xinjiang', in *Nationalism and Ethnoregional Identities in China*, William Safran. Ed., (UK and US: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), pp.86-118.

minorities.²⁷ While Scott Fogden, in ‘Writing Insecurity: The PRC’s Push to Modernize China and the Politics of Uighur Identity’, posits that the PRC’s modernization program is in conflict with the interests of the Uyghur nationality, rendering insecure both the people of Xinjiang and the state’s integrity. Examining the material and ideational development brought about by the modernization program, especially in the post-Mao era, Fogden argues that these changes reinforced the Uyghur’s identity awareness, providing a motivating force of Uyghur’s resistance.²⁸ My study, it is hoped, could contribute further to the debate regarding the effectiveness of these program and policies in integration. It will not only explore the relations between state building and ethno-nationalism, but also delve into the rationale behind state building.

1.5 Research Design

This study is a case study of ethnopolitics in China. Using the Uyghur people, one of the most populous ethnic minorities in China, as a case, I will elaborate the dynamics between state building and ethno-nationalism, especially the ethnic contentious movement.

²⁷ Collin Mackerras, *China’s Minorities: Integration and Modernization in the Twentieth Century* (New York : Oxford University Press , 1994).

²⁸ Scott Fogden, ‘Writing Insecurity: The PRC’s Push to Modernize China and the Politics of Uighur Identity’, *Issues & Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 3, Sep. 2003, pp.33-74.

In this study, the emergence of Uyghur East Turkestan movement is the phenomenon I want to explain; in other words, this phenomenon is the dependent variable. State building is the independent variable. The study employs two types of data, namely, published official documents and personal interviews. These data were mainly collected during my fieldwork in Xinjiang in April and May of 2004. The published official documents are used to show the trend and pattern of the development of the Uyghur East Turkestan movement since 1949. The interviews with the local people were conducted to obtain an in-depth understanding of the change of the ethnic identity consciousness. The interviews with the local officials were to get the information about the process of state building.

Since the primary focus of this study is to explain the changing oscillations of the East Turkestan Independence Movement in China, the frequency of the occurrence of the popular protest occupies the main concern. Occurrence and non-occurrence become the major values and features of the dependent variable. However, I should admit the reality is not so simple. First, the 'repertoire' of contention is colorful. The political opposition could take different forms. People could choose to break windows in protest, attack pilloried prisoners, tear down dishonored houses, stage public marches, petition, hold formal meetings, or organize special interest associations. The variation in the form of political contentious action should be categorized along a spectrum of occurrence. Second, the contentious movement

evolves over time. The repertoire is ‘learned cultural creation’ that results from the history of choice. This means that with the development of social movement, a set of routines is learned, shared and acted out by the activists. People learn from past experiences about how to conduct collective action, and what form of political opposition they should adopt. Thus, the political opposition that occurs later is different from the one that happened earlier. My classification of the East Turkestan independent movement might be a bit oversimplified. However, first of all, the perspective of this study is from the macro-level. It chiefly considers the relationship between state building and the up-and-down oscillations in the social movement. The emphasis put on macro-level does not suggest the ignorance or underestimation of the importance of the micro-level analytical framework, which pays more heed to the subtle variation in the forms of collective action. Secondly, forms of contentious collective action are conditioned by the specific political culture and environment. In a certain society, people’s habits and expectations might determine what forms of collective action are likely to occur. The political culture and environment further confine the alternative ways of acting collectively to an observable litmus test of changes. For the East-Turkestan movement in Xinjiang, most opposition actions took the form of violent protests or rebellions due to the always-be repressive attitude of the Chinese state toward any open opponent. The repertoire of the East Turkestan Independence Movement is quite limited. Finally, the practical condition does not

guarantee a systematic study on the micro-level of the ethnic political movement in China. Chinese government always keeps confidential the so-called ‘domestic affairs’. The difficulty of gaining access to data and information constitutes the major obstacle to the study of the micro-level aspects of these collective actions. The study of the repertoire of East Turkestan Independence Movement thus awaits the future information collection.

This study endeavors to apply the political process model to explain the development of Uyghurs social movement in China, with special emphasis on the influence of the state rebuilding since 1978. It attempts to realize a framework for looking at how the state rebuilding has shaped the ethnic social movement.

With this in mind, it will firstly be necessary to offer an overview of the development of East Turkestan Independence Movement, making way for a close examination of the causal mechanism between the state rebuilding and the re-emergence of the Uyghurs’ popular protest.

Chapter 2 Ethno-nationalism and the East Turkestan

Independence Movement

In essence, nationalism is a psychological phenomenon. Nations are ‘groups whose core members share a distinctive and enduring collective identity based on cultural traits and lifeways that matter to them and to others with whom they interact.’²⁹ Loyalty to the ethnic group is called nationalism. However, loyalty to the nation has often been confused with loyalty to the state.³⁰ To avoid terminological confusion, I use ethno-nationalism instead of nationalism in this article to describe this feeling of imagined bond among an ethnic group.

Ethno-nationalism is essentially a claim of nationhood, which, in the eyes of the members of that nation, is unique and distinct from others. The manifestation of ethno-nationalism varies with the types of politicized communal groups. According to Gurr’s classification, the Uyghur people belongs to national people, which ‘are regionally concentrated groups that have lost their autonomy to expansionist states but still preserve some of their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness and want to protect or reestablish some degree of politically separate existence.’³¹ Thus, the

²⁹ Ted Robert Gurr, *Minority at Risk* (US: Institute of Peace Press, 1993), p.3.

³⁰ Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism—the Quest for Understanding* (Princeton University Press, 1994).

³¹ Ted Robert Gurr, *op.cit.*, p.15.

ethno-nationalism of the Uyghur people has especially manifested in their political movement seeking separation or autonomy from the Chinese state. This communally based political movement is East Turkestan independence movement by the Uyghur activists and the western scholars.

The East Turkestan Independence Movement is a kind of social movement. Sidney Tarrow defines social movements as collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities.³² According to the definition, social movements have four empirical properties: collective challenge, common purpose, solidarity and sustained interaction. The East Turkestan Independence Movement comprises of a series of collective challenges largely led by the Uyghur people in Xinjiang, who regard themselves as ethnically and religiously different from Han Chinese. Their unyielding struggles for self-determination have never disappeared since the Manchus invasion.³³ To sketch a more complete picture of this movement, the chapter will begin with a brief introduction about its background, then go to a detailed examination about the pattern of the up and down of this movement since the establishment of P. R. China. What

³² Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.4.

³³ <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1730/buh.html>, (June 7, 2004).

causes the re-appearance of the East Turkestan Independence Movement and what conditions its growth will be discussed in the following chapters.

2.1 The origin of the Ughurs and their independence movement

All social movements are historically rooted and the East Turkestan Independence Movement is no exception. About one thousand and five hundred years ago the Turks³⁴ were nomads living in Central Asia.³⁵ The word ‘Turk’ means ‘strong and powerful’.³⁶ Around 552 AD, in the Mongolian prairie the Turks set up the Turk Khanate Kingdom which later split into two parts: the East Turk Khanate and the West Turk Khanate. In 744 AD during the Tang Dynasty, the East Turk Khanate was conquered by Huihe,³⁷ while the Tang Court eliminated the West Turk Khanate.³⁸

Since then, the Huihe Khanate replaced the Turk Khanate. According to official Chinese documents, the Huihe people were the ancestors of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang.³⁹ The Huihe Khanate largely followed the rule of the Turk Khanate in terms of its political system, culture and language. Thus, the Uyghurs also consider themselves descendents of the Turk. Before the invasion of the Manchus in 1759, the Uyghurs

³⁴ Turks in Chinese is ‘突厥人’.

³⁵ David Wang, op.cit., p.3.

³⁶ Li Sheng, *The History and Present Condition of Xinjiang in China* (Urumqi: Xinjiang People Press, 2003), p.33.

³⁷ Huihe is a minority group in ancient China.

³⁸ David Wang, op.cit., p.3.

³⁹ Li Sheng, op.cit., p.76.

had established several Kingdoms in this northwestern region in history that constituted de facto independence for quite some time.

Living in a place remote from the central China and having enjoyed de facto independence for a long time, the Uyghur people have established their distinct culture and lifestyle. Their ethnic identity awareness was accentuated by the expansion of Manchus in Qing Dynasty, which in their eyes was a foreign invasion.

The Uyghur activists have revolted from time to time with the purpose of regaining their independence. Western scholars often call these collective challenges the ‘East Turkestan Independence Movement’. In the very beginning, the term ‘Turkestan’ referred to the two rivers, the Syr Darya and the Amu Daya, valleys in Central Asia where the ancient Turks lived.⁴⁰ Today, this term has transformed into a geo-political term referring to the vast land from central Asia to Turkey where Turkish speaking people live. The western part of Turkestan was conquered by Tsarist Russian in the 19th century, while the eastern part of Turkestan was incorporated formally into China Proper during Qing Dynasty. It was not until the Qing Dynasty when this region was named Xinjiang, meaning ‘newly-recovered old territory’⁴¹ and was incorporated as a province into China. After the CCP took power,

⁴⁰ David Wang, op.cit., p.3.

⁴¹Ibid, p.4.

the central government established Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in this area in the 1950s. This region is the main battlefield of the Uyghur's political movement.

2.2 Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism

Finding symbols that will be familiar enough to mobilize people around is one of the major tasks of social movement. The social movement entrepreneurs have to find cultural symbols that can elicit resonance and support of the masses. In this case, Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism assume the role of ideological template. They act as the guideline of the movement, providing the meaning for the movement as well as sustaining the movement.

Pan-Turkism began in the late 19th century and its purpose was to unify all the Turkish-speaking peoples and to establish a Pan-Turkish state in the area from Inner Asia to Turkey.⁴² Pan-Islamism also began in the late 19th century. It appealed to all Islamic countries and the Islamic people to establish a universal Islamic state under the leadership of the Turkish Sultan.⁴³

⁴² Ibid, p.3.

⁴³ Yang Faren ed., *Studies on Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism* (Institute of Social Science of Xinjiang, 1994), p.61.

Due to the proximity of emerging time and appealing targets, these two ideologies have been closely interwoven since they spread to Xinjiang.⁴⁴ Being a Turkish nationality as well as a Muslim nation,⁴⁵ the Uyghur soon embraced these two ideologies in their advocacy for independence. In the early 20th century, a Turk from Turkey called Ahment Kamel came to Xinjiang to propagate Pan-Turkism. Some Ughurs, who had been educated in Turkey, also started their Pan-Islamic mission in Xinjiang.⁴⁶ The essential ideas of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism in Xinjiang can be summarized in a concise three-sentence slogan: ‘Our homeland is East Turkestan; our nation is Turkish; our religion is Islam.’⁴⁷

These ideologies had considerable influence on the Uyghurs independence movement. On the one hand, Pan-Turkism provides a cognitive framework in which the Turkish identity is emphasized and demarcated. It effectively appeals to the nationhood sentiment of the Uyghur people by drawing a clear racial line between the Uyghur and the Han Chinese. It gives meaning to the social movement and also offers a justification for the collective actions under the name of a nationalist movement. On the other hand, both Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism are effective tools in advocating and fostering cooperation and trust between the Uyghur people and the other Turkic

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ In the middle of 10 century, the Karahanid Kingdom of the Ughur adopted Islam religion.

⁴⁶ David Wang, op.cit., p.4.

⁴⁷ Yang Faren ed., op.cit., p.139.

and co-religionist ethnic groups in Xinjiang. The Kazakh people is a good example. It has been recorded that in many East Turkestan independence activities there were a quite large number of Kazaks involved either as common participants or even as leaders.

The Uyghurs, who wanted to free themselves from Chinese domination, have never given up their struggles. Before 1949, the Uyghurs had staged several uprisings against the Chinese rule. And twice, in 1933 and 1944, the Uyghurs were successful in setting up an independent Eastern Turkestan Republic. Though these independent republics were overthrown in a short time, these historical facts that the group had once governed its own affairs have inspired the Uyghurs to keep pursuing their independence whenever afforded the opportunity to do so. Their activities of challenge persisted in the era of P. R. China. The pattern of these activities since 1949 is the focus of this study. It is chosen as a case to study the dynamics between state building and ethno-nationalism in China. Based on data from official document, the following part includes a detailed discussion about the ebb and flow of the collective challenges since 1949.

2.3 The East Turkestan Independence Movement in the P. R. China Since 1949

As the cliché goes, ‘one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter’, a man’s freedom fighter could be another man’s terrorist. From this perspective of the

Chinese government, the East Turkestan Independence Movement is a vicious separatist activity which not only causes social turmoil but also endangers national unity and security. The Chinese government has always stressed the famous historical episodes of Tang and Han Dynasty, in which the Chinese state had claimed the occupation of this northwest region. It also insists that Xinjiang has been an integral part of China since then. The point of this argument is not to demonstrate which side holds more justice, nor is it to show more sympathy to one side. The argument here is that since the CCP also holds the same view on this issue, high on its agenda is to integrate this restive region into the China Proper when it assumed power in 1949.

To solve the ‘thorn on its back’, Beijing has adopted various policies and strategies in its state building project. Nonetheless, the state building program has not achieved an apparent success so far. Though the East Turkestan movement seemed to subside in the 1970s, it became more fierce and active again from 1980.

The table below contains the entire officially documented major ‘counter-revolutionary riots’ or ‘politically disturbances’ that have occurred in Xinjiang since 1949.

Table 2.1 The Political Actions of the Uyghurs from 1950 to 1997

Time		Place(S=Southern Xinjiang, N=Northern Xinjiang)	Event	Form of Political Action
1950s	Jan.1946-Sep. 1951	N	Usiman's Rebellion	Rebellion
	July 24 th 1950— Aug. 16 th	N	Rehemanofu's Rebellion	Rebellion
	Aug. 18 th 1950— Dec. 26 th	N	Rebellion of the garrison troops in Zhaosu	Rebellion
	Oct. 28 th , 1951	N	Malikeaji and Talimu's Rebellion	Rebellion
	Dec. 31 st , 1954	S	Abdu.Imit's Riot	Rebellion
	Mar. 9 th , 1956— Mar. 11 th	S	Bahai. Damara's Riot	Rebellion
	May 4 th , 1956	S	Abdu.kadelhari's Riot	Rebellion
	May 24 th , 1956	S	Jelilihari's Riot	Rebellion
	April 15 th , 1957	S	Hailiqihan's Riot	Rebellion
	May, 1958--1959	N	Jamixitihan's Rebellion	Rebellion
	May, 1958— April, 1959	N	Haliman and Jukan's Rebellion	Rebellion
	Oct. 17 th , 1958	N	Ailikurpan's Riot	Rebellion
	Oct. 21 st , 1958— Oct. 23 nd	N	Danzenjamucuo's Riot	Rebellion
	Dec. 9 th , 1958— Dec. 11 th	S	Aisan. Alipu's Riot	Rebellion
1960s	May 29 th , 1962	N	Ili Disturbances and the Kazakh Exodus	Violent Protest

	1968—Mar. 1970	S and N	The Case of East Turkestan Peoples Revolutionary Party	
	Aug. 20 th , 1969	S	Ahunov's Riot	Rebellion
1980s	Apr. 9 th , 1980	S	Riot in Aksu	Violent Protest
	Jan. 13 th , 1981	S	Disturbance in Yecheng	Violent Protest
	May 27 th , 1981	S	Riot in Jiashi County	Rebellion
	Oct. 30 th , 1981	S	Riot in Kashghar	Violent Protest
	Dec. 12 th , 1985	N	Demonstration in Urumqi and other places	Non-violent Protest
	Jun. 15 th , 1988	N	Demonstration in Urumqi	Non-violent Protest
1990s	Apr. 5 th , 1990	S	Riot in Baren County	Rebellion
	1991	S	Robbing Case in Shaya	
	Feb. 5 th , 1992	N	Bombing in Urumqi	
	Jul. 7 th , 1995	S	Demonstration in Hetian	Violent Protest
	Aug. 14 th , 1995	N	March in Ining	Violent Protest
	Feb. 5 th , 1997	N	March in Ining	Violent Protest
	Feb. 25 th , 1997	N	Bombing in Urumqi	

Source: Ma Dazheng, *National Interest is beyond Everything--Observations and Reflections on the Xinjiang Stability* (Institute of Social Science of China, 2002)

Some caveats relating to the reliability and validity of the data should be discussed before further analysis. In the first place, some people may doubt the reliability of the Chinese official data. As we know, China is an authoritarian state whose information and archives are under rigorous control, especially those related to state unity and security. This situation is also applicable to the East Turkestan Movement in Xinjiang. Chinese authorities used to tightly control all information and depict a picture of a firmly stable society. However, things have changed since the event of September 11th, when many regimes of the world have seized on the US Global War against Terrorism to justify their crucial repression of Muslim or some no-Muslim minorities. Beijing adopted similar strategy: it planned to crush the East Turkestan Movement under the name of anti-terrorism and began to provide evidence that points to the movement as a terrorist one. The information about the East Turkestan Movement was then made known to the public. To avoid the possibility that the Chinese government exaggerated the frequency of the social disturbance to justify the state's harsh crackdown, I also checked some interior archives that were published before the event of September 11th and only permitted access to governmental personnel. The two sources only differ slightly in their way of narration.

The second caveat worth highlighting is that it is the government who decides what should be called 'anti-revolutionary movement' or 'separatist activity' and what should be documented, so it is understandable that only major social disturbances can

be found in its published archives because of the premium placed on political and social stability. However, the article here is mainly concerned about the trend and pattern of the frequency of the East Turkestan movement, which would not be affected even if there are some systematic biases in the data. Finally, the information about the number of people involved and those arrested shows a wide divergence between the official data and the data from the Uyghur social movement organization, with the former tending to conceal the abuse of force and the latter trying to exaggerate the degree of suffering. Though this discrepancy might cause some problems in assessing the scale and nature of such disturbances, still, it will not distort the picture of the frequency of the collective challenges.

The table traces the ups-and-downs of the East Turkestan independence movement in the new era since the CCP came to power. Because of the intransigence of the opposition by the CCP to the East Turkestan movement, it is not surprising that most social challenges appeared in violent forms.

From the table, we can see that during the past 50 years since the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, the East Turkestan movement has experienced four major stages of development. The first was the 1950s phase during which the CCP just took control of Xinjiang and faced fierce opposition from the locals. Fourteen major 'counter-revolutionary riots' occurred in this period. The most widely-known one was in Khotan in Dec. 1954 led by Abdu. Imit., a Sufi shaykh. Imit formulated an

‘Islamic Republic Program’ as the guideline for the riot. According to an official source, the riot was plotted by Mohmet Emin Burgra, an influential figure of the TIRET (Turkish-Islamic Republic of East Turkestan) in 1940s. Imit was an apprentice of Emin. This kind of collective challenges was initiated mainly by some influential religious figures. Another considerable resistance was from the former leaders and troops of the TIRET. After ‘the peaceful liberation’ of Xinjiang, the troops of the TIRET⁴⁸ were reorganized and incorporated into the People’s Liberation Army. However, many militants were unwilling to surrender their cherished independence. Led by some elites, they undertook severe action of defiance. The one led by Usman, who is a Kazahk, lasted for nearly five years and inspired the following several resurgences by the militants.⁴⁹

The second phase was the 1960s, during which the CCP had established systematic political and social system and the volatile situation in Xinjiang began to calm down. The most famous event was the case of the East Turkestan People’s Revolutionary Party (ETPRP). It is considered by Chinese authorities to have been the single largest resistance organization in Xinjiang since 1949 and was founded around 1967. Taking advantage of the chaotic phase of the Cultural Revolution, the

⁴⁸ The Chinese authority prefers the other alternative name: the troops of the Three Revolutionary Districts.

⁴⁹ Michael Dillon, *Xinjiang : China's Muslim Far Northwest* (New York : RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p.55.

ETPRP was able to develop rapidly. Chinese researchers estimate that there were over 300 party members ranging from southern Xinjiang to northern Xinjiang.⁵⁰

Despite the large-scale nature of the ETPRP, it did not successfully mount collective challenges except some plans to rob banks, shops, grain stores and warehouses to raise funds. The only one major rebellion documented by the government was the riot led by Ahunov, the secretary of the Southern Xinjiang Branch of the ETPRP. On August 20th 1969, Ahunov led a group of ETPRP members to take two vehicles and a large number of weapons and set out from Kashghar and Meket from the Soviet border to solicit support for their cause and establish a base for their pro-independence activities. The group was surrounded by Chinese troops near Suhkaz in the Atush region the following day. The rising was effectively crushed by the Chinese troops before it even began.⁵¹

The Kazakh exodus, which included some Uyghur people, was another major disturbance in 1960s. Though the Kazakh exodus in 1962 was combined with violent protest and caused disturbances in Ili, it reflected that many people chose to leave their hometown rather than directly oppose the Chinese authorities when they were discontented.

⁵⁰Ma Dazheng, *National Interest is beyond Everything—Observations and Reflections on the Xinjiang Stability* (Institute of Social Science of China, 2002), p.45.

⁵¹ Michael Dillon, op.cit., p.51.

The three events in the 1960s showed the collective challenge activities were on decline.⁵²

The ensuing third phase, the 1970s, was a strikingly peaceful period where no major collective action occurred. However, it did not mean that the resistance disappeared completely or that there was no resistance. Some researchers argued that the opposition activities and organizations persisted underground. But it is safe to say that even though resistance and opposition existed, the opposition forces could not find the opportunity to inspire enough support to form collective challenges.

However, the peace was ephemeral and the following fourth phase was extremely disturbing. The table shows that the collective action re-appeared in 1980s and became more active in 1990s. The re-emergence of the collective defiance began from some spontaneous disturbances. On April 9th 1980 in Aksu County, a Han Chinese police arrested a Uyghur fellow and tortured him to death. This event fuelled a serious outbreak of social disturbance. More than 3000 Uyghur people formed a violent march the next day, which ended with clashes with the Han people and sabotage on public properties. Violence resurfaced after a decade of silence. A series of collective challenges followed.

⁵² In fact, Ahunov's riot is a part of the ETPRP movement. Thus, the number of disturbances could be counted as two.

The Yecheng disturbance on Jan 13th 1980 was a violent response to an accidental fire in a mosque. There were disturbances in Kashghar on October 30th 1981 as a result of a criminal trial in which a young Han man was accused of killing a Uyghur youth during a fight.

The students also came to be involved in opposition activities. In Urumqi, over 2,000 students from seven universities and higher education colleges demonstrated on December 12th 1985 during local elections when the regional governor was replaced by a protégé of the Han CCP secretary Wang Enmao. There were also demonstrations in June 1988 after racist slogan was allegedly found on a toilet door at Xinjiang University in Urumqi.

During the 1990s, political violence gradually spread throughout the region. As the decade progressed, the conflict became more severe and more organized. The crucial event that happened at Baren Village in Akto County in April 1990 was a turning point.⁵³ A group of Uyghur men attending prayers at a mosque on April 5th began criticizing CCP policies towards ethnic minorities. This developed into a mass protest with some activists calling for a jihad⁵⁴ to drive the Han people out of Xinjiang and to establish an East Turkestan State. Upheavals continued on April 6th

⁵³ Michael Dillon, op.cit., p.62.

⁵⁴ Means 'a holy war'.

with rioters firing small arms and throwing bombs at police and officials who surrounded them, and blowing up part of the local government building. Within two days, the riot was bloodily put down. It marked the first time the Chinese authorities blamed an Islamic group-the Islamic Party of East Turkestan-for inspiring and plotting the uprising.⁵⁵ There were conflicting reports of the number of casualties in the insurrection, with the foreign press claiming over sixty people dead and Tomur Dawamant, Chairman of the Autonomous Regional Government, admitting that sixteen ‘ruffians’ had been killed.

On Feb. 5th 1997, hundreds of Uyghur youths took a march to oppose the arbitrary arrest of some Uyghur people by the local government. The March in Ining involved nearly one thousand Muslims and ended up in anti-Han bloodshed and the looting of shops. This march was the most serious political turmoil since 1962. According to Chinese authorities, the Feb. 5th ‘beating, smashing and looting’⁵⁶ incident was not an accident; rather it had been well planned and organized in advance. The Eastern Turkestan Islamic Party of Allah (Dong Tujuesitan Yisilan Zhenzhudang) was allegedly responsible for carrying out this event.

⁵⁵ David Wang, op.cit., p.11.

⁵⁶ This term is a literal translation of the Chinese word ‘*Da-Za-Qiang*’.

Besides several other similar disturbances that happened in 1995, the repertoire of the East Turkestan independence movement in 1990s also incorporated some extremism programs including assassination and bombing. The bombings on bus in 1992 and 1997 resulted in several deaths and many injured. Though the CCP has some justification in labeling these activities as ‘terrorism’, it is also true that these activities resulted from the situation that the CCP ruthlessly repressed the opposition and denied them the institutional channel to express their grievances. It is apparent that the real situation is more serious than that showed by the table because many minor scale activities were not listed. Abdulahat Abdurixit, Xinjiang’s provincial governor, noted that ‘since the start of the 1990s, if you count explosions, assassinations, and other terrorist activities, it comes to a few thousand incidents.’

In all, the social upheavals in 1990s persisted, developed and became more serious. Citing the comment of Ma Dazheng, a Chinese famous specialist on Xinjiang issues, ‘from 1980s, especially in 1990s, the separatist force in Xinjiang has intensified their destructive activities. A distinguished character of their activities in this phase is well-organized.’⁵⁷

The East Turkestan movement is a manifestation of ethno-nationalism. The activists insist that ‘Uyghurs and Han Chinese are not of the same race. Uyghurs is

⁵⁷ Ma Dazheng, *op.cit.*, p.63.

clearly a European race and look primarily like Western Europeans. Uyghuristan is situated beyond the natural boundary of China in a separate geographical site with 96% of its population being Turkic peoples in 1949.⁵⁸ It is this perception that draws a clear racial line between Uyghur and Han Chinese and set the two groups apart. It is the salience of this belief in ethnic identification that inspires that Uyghur people to assert their distinctive identity. Their collective challenges continued to the era of P. R. China.: It declined from the 1950s peak, calmed down in 1960s, remained relatively silent throughout 1970s, and resurfaced again at the beginning of 1980s. It further slid into extremism in 1990s. What can account for the up and down of the Uyghur collective challenges? There are a number of factors. I argue that state building played a major role in fostering the growth of East Turkestan movement. As mentioned earlier, it is not the intention of state building to give life to social movements; on the contrary, it aims to contain those dissenting voices and fractional forces. The shift in the state policy from 1978, with its original purpose of assuring and expanding the power of the state, actually provides opportunity for ethno-nationalism and for the ethnic political movement.

The next chapter will trace the evolving nature of the state building and the rationale behind such changes. Before exploring further the process of state building,

⁵⁸ http://www.uygur.org/enorg/history/uygurlar_kim.htm (May 24, 2004).

I would like to explain why the role of state is so important in this enterprise. First of all, China is an authoritarian regime. The central government commands all vital resources, especially during the Mao era. Though the state experienced and is experiencing decentralization, the power of the state should not be underestimated. Second of all, although the state occupies a very important role, it is not an omnipotent entity. Scholars have come to recognize that state is no longer ‘an internally rationalized bureaucracy immune to popular influences or governed by self-generated rules’; rather, state can be regarded ‘as the arena of routinized political competition in which class, status, and political conflicts, representing both elites and popular interests, are played out.’⁵⁹ Thus, state is essentially a part of society. State building, though it is initiated by the state, would not completely follow the will of the state. During the interaction between state and social forces, state building might spawn unexpected results including the growth of ethno-nationalism and the outbreak of ethnic challenge.

⁵⁹ Bright and Harding, ‘Processes of Statemaking and Popular Protest’, In Bright and Harding eds., *Statemaking and Social Movement*, p.3.

Chapter 3 From Formal to Informal Control---State

Rebuilding Since 1978

Different states or governments employ different means of behavior control according to the orientation of their political ideologies. Broadly, the control takes two forms: formal control and informal control. The former one is explicit and makes strict prescription about what should not be done and what is intolerable. Early states often adopted this kind of control to impose rigid regulations and rules formally on its inhabitants, from without, and with a very heavy hand. People who violated these behavior rules and regulations were subject to draconian punishment. But beyond these clear boundaries it left its subjects largely alone.⁶⁰

The latter, in contrast with the former shifts the locus of control internally. The modern state elevated the status of citizens to the participants in their own governance. The ideology held by the state is no longer imposed by coercive force on the subjects, rather it is naturally indoctrinated in the mind of the people. The citizens govern themselves ‘in terms of their own moral, instinctual and emotionally economy, limiting their actions before the fact and moderating their impulses’.

⁶⁰ T.V. Paul, G. John Ikenberry and John A Hall. ed., *The Nation-State in Question* (Princeton University Press, 2003), p.106.

The state rebuilding that happened in the post-Mao era in China marks a shift from a formal control system to an informal control one. While the term ‘state rebuilding’ can be defined in different ways, its meaning in this study is twofold. It refers to, first, the efforts to transform China’s economic system from a socialist-oriented to a capitalist-oriented one, and, second, the accompanying efforts in the other fields to aid the transformation. Thus, the state rebuilding, to a great extent, overlaps ‘reforms’.

Before elaborating the transformation process, the concept of ‘state rebuilding’ deserves more explanations. First, as a part of state building, this state rebuilding aims to consolidate the power of the state. The reform taken by the Chinese leadership is a necessary reaction and remedy to the plight brought about by the formal rigid control system. In the following narration of the transformation, I will show that while the formal control system has afforded the state overwhelming power over the society, it is highly unsustainable. The problems and evils embedded in the over-centralized system have caused serious crises of legitimacy for the state. It is urgent and necessary to find a suitable system to replace the old one. In the reform, which will be discussed in the following part, the Chinese state adopts the mechanism of marketization to substitute the former coercive system. The advantages of the market mechanism will also be discussed later. Though from appearance, some measures of the reform seem to lead to partial decentralization of political power and live up to the

brand of ‘state building’, in essence, they are indispensable parts of a systematic transformation that would work more effectively to maintain the control of the state on society. These measures, such as the retreat of political power from the economic field, the loosening of social control, etc., are requirements of the market economy. That is to say, as components of the systematic transformation, whose purpose is to maintain and consolidate the governing of the state, these measures could be regarded as ‘state rebuilding’; even though they might have a certain counter state-building function superficially. Second, though state building ‘involves not only state initiatives and the reactions of social groups to them, but also social mobilizations which target the state and trigger responses by its governors’⁶¹, the state re-building, in this section, mainly focuses on the state initiatives, namely, how the Chinese leadership tries to rebuild the state in the post-Mao era. Nevertheless, I also endorse the idea that considers reforms as gradual and evolutionary processes. ‘Reforms were not clearly foreseen or designed in advance, and so the elements of the reform have inescapably been time-dependent. Reforming without a blueprint, neither the process nor the ultimate objective was clearly envisaged beforehand.’⁶² The reform proceeds step-by-step without a prior complete scheme. In Deng’s famous metaphor, the

⁶¹ Charles Bright and Susan Harding ed., op.cit, p.10.

⁶² Barry Naughton, *Growing out of the Plan: Chinese Economic Reform, 1978-1993* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.5.

process is ‘groping for stones to cross the river’. The state initiates and re-initiates its reform plans with amendments in the process of their interaction with the society. Though the state re-building is appreciated as a long and gradual process, it is regrettable that the constraint of length of this article prevents a more detailed narrative of the reform process. This paper would only look at the changes brought about by the reform, while bearing in mind that the reform process has been marked not only by substantial ex post coherence, but also by significant resilience.⁶³

The state re-building from 1978 has brought tremendous changes to the society of China. The Chinese leadership initially put much effort on restructuring the stagnating planned economy system through re-importing the mechanism of market. The rewarding economic reform further provided incentives and necessitated other corresponding changes in the political and social areas. Though the process proceeded gradually and comprised twists and turns, it kept heading in the direction of transformation—from formal control to informal control⁶⁴.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ The change mainly happened in the economic and cultural areas, and the CCP never gave up the formal control in the political area.

This state re-building that happened at the national level has had a far-reaching influence on the East Turkestan independence movement. This momentous change, it can be argued, provides opportunities for social movement.

This subsequent section will provide a selective overview of this state re-building: besides documenting the major changes that happened at the national level, it also records some specific policies adopted in Xinjiang. By examining the difference between formal control and informal control models, it will also explore in depth the rationale of state rebuilding. The reasons supportive of the reform primarily include two parts: the undesirable problems resulting from the former system and the benefits of the latter system.

The analysis begins with the depiction of the formal control system in the Mao's era.

3.1 Formal Control in Mao's Era

Having led the Chinese Communist Party from its arduous Long March to victory over both Japan and the Guomindang, Mao Zedong had established his preeminent leadership position by the time of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. His ideas about governance henceforth profoundly shaped the political system of China. Ambitious to re-construct the whole society of China and achieve substantial development, Mao and his colleagues put serious efforts in setting

up an extraordinary governing system, which featured the model of formal control in virtually all primary aspects of the economy, politics and social life. The entire system centered on a command economic structure with necessary assortative political and social arrangements.

3.1.1 Command economy

The Chinese leaders including Mao traditionally believed that citizens cannot understand what is best for society and therefore do not have the right to demand that the leaders adopt policies the citizens prefer.⁶⁵ In addition, Mao believed that economic growth could be achieved by increasing the amounts of labor, capital goods, and land used in production, by improving the quality of these factors of production, by combining them in more efficient ways and inspiring labor to greater efforts, and more importantly, by taking advantage of economies of scale.⁶⁶ He was also ambitious to transform China quickly from an agricultural country into a major industrial economic power in the world. Such an industrial program requires a national planning system, which, in Mao's view, could more effectively and systematically increase economic growth and allocate resources.

⁶⁵ Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China: from Revolution through Reform* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), p.181.

⁶⁶ John G. Gurley, *China's Economy and the Maoist Strategy* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1976), p.17.

Under the guidance of such idea, the Chinese leadership soon embraced the Soviet-style⁶⁷ planned economy, or command economy system⁶⁸. Command economy system has two fundamental characteristics. First, resource allocation decisions are made in response to commands from planners rather than in response to prices.⁶⁹ The commands from the administrative hierarchy become the most important signals in the economic field, and the prices from the market are largely ignored. Second, command economies require the concentration of a large volume of resources in the hands of planners, allowing them to assume command of the economy as a whole. This attribute demands public ownership of the means of production.

In practice, the command economy is well suited for a certain development strategy using several major control measures. Development strategy refers to the broad patterns in which the state determines the distribution and usage of resources.⁷⁰ The advantage of the command economy system was its ability to funnel state funds, materials and technical personnel into those key engineering projects. Material balance planning is the main technique used to run the economy. Material balance refers to the computation of resources and uses of an individual commodity that a

⁶⁷ Scholars generally agree that the command economy system in China is relatively 'coarse' when compared with that of the Soviet Union. Coarse here means not following the original version to its letter.

⁶⁸ Barry Naughton, *op.cit.*, p.26.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.27.

planner balances in allocating all supplies.⁷¹ It has three primary components: an output plan for individual producers, a supply plan that transfers resources among producers, and a schedule of material usage coefficients or norms that links inputs and outputs for individual producers.⁷² Other types of control were used to reinforce control over materials, such as control over personnel, control over career paths, and control over financial flows and credit. The Communist Party set up a list of jobs and controlled the appointment and the promotion of personnel. A monopolistic banking system was also created to audit compliance with state directives. Monetary flows were passive: they were assigned to facilitate completion of the plan, rather than shaping resource allocation flows themselves.⁷³

China had established a gigantic bureaucratic structure to monitor the economic activities. With the Soviets' assistance, the Chinese set up a State Planning Committee in 1952.⁷⁴ This committee was the forerunner of a series of planning commissions designated for short-term, long-term, as well as special purposes. Below these national commissions was erected a complete network of economic planning agencies, which further extended into the country's two thousand counties and from

⁷¹ Ibid, p.29.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., p.30.

⁷⁴ John G. Gurley, *op.cit.*, p.217.

there into the cities and communes.⁷⁵ These departments helped convey the mandatory instructions of the central government from the top down to the lowest level units regarding what standards should be instituted. Enterprises totally lacked decision-making power and became simply appendages of state administrative agencies at different levels.⁷⁶ Their daily routines were rigidly controlled by the relevant departments: enterprises did not have the right to sell their products on the market, products and materials were allocated by the state, even the labor force and wages were determined by the state.

To smooth the way for planned economy, the state also claimed the public ownership of the means of production. The public ownership allowed the state to maintain direct-authority relations over most resources and products. Having launched several campaigns including Land Reform, Agricultural Cooperativization, and Socialist Transformation of Industry and Commerce, the state had successfully eliminated the private sectors in the economic field. The dominant public sectors took the form of either ‘ownership by the people’ (that is, state ownership) or ‘collective ownership’ (ownership by some group). In the rural areas, different collectivization organizations such as production teams (basic), production brigades (middle) and

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ George Totten and Zhou Shulian ed., *China’s Economic Reform: Administering the Introduction of the Market Mechanism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), p.2.

people's communes (advanced) were set up. In the urban areas, the state-owned enterprises accounted for the greatest proportion of the GDP of the whole country. The concept of private property was either vague or non-existent at that time. No one was permitted to have his or her private property. This public ownership structure guaranteed the rights of the state to issue mandatory instructions on various economic activities, ensuring a command economy system to function without obstacles.

Another notable feature in this command economy was egalitarianism. 'One of the most enduring substantive themes of Mao's political program was the virtue of egalitarianism.'⁷⁷ Maoists believed that while a principal aim of nations is to raise the level of material welfare of the population, this development is not worth much unless everyone rises together: no one should be left behind. At that time, China was a desperately poor country, where there was no practical way to raise most people's standard of living in a short time. Egalitarianism meant leveling average income down to that of the poorer strata. Various administrative measures were also adopted to ensure minimal economic stratification. Thus, though in the vast territory of China, many factors including soil quality, amount of rainfall, access to transport, and so forth could lead to developmental difference in different areas, the living standard and income level witnessed no prominent differentials in one certain region.

⁷⁷ Kenneth Lieberthal, *op.cit.*, p.70.

The command economy and the implementation of egalitarianism principle directly affected the Uyghurs' social movement in two aspects. The first was the equalized living standards among the people. There was no obvious gap in terms of income and living standards between Uyghurs and Hans living in Xinjiang. The state controlled the wages at a relatively stable level and tried to minimize the difference, leading to the absence of apparent stratification between Uyghurs and Hans. This, to a certain degree, alleviated the grievance that the Uyghurs might hold toward the Hans. It might also have diluted the Uyghurs' awareness of being the ruled in their own region.

The second result was the poverty and simplicity of people's life. At that time, almost all people in China lived frugally because of the material shortage and economic backwardness caused by the long-time wars' damage. People were working in publicly-owned units, which were under tight control of the higher level authority. They normally did not possess private property, which they could deal with at their will. The Uyghur activists could not get access to sufficient resources to mobilize supporters even if they wanted to undertake acts of defiance.

3.1.2 Highly centralized administrative system in Mao's era

As stated earlier, the command economy system demands a rigorous administrative system in the political arena. Mao and his colleagues hence established a highly centralized administrative system to coordinate the command economy. It is

necessary to elaborate the political system in order to present a clearer picture of the formal control model.

The Maoist administrative system also borrowed heavily from that of the Soviet Union because of the similar ideological orientation embraced by the two countries. Like the Soviets, the Chinese set up parallel national party and government (or state) administrative apparatuses. At each level of the political system in China—the center (Beijing), the province, the prefecture, the city, the county, and the locale (township or commune)—there was a full array of party and state organs.⁷⁸

Two important features of this administrative system should be noted. First, this system was strictly hierarchical and highly centralized. The basic organizational structure, on both the party and the government sides, was largely duplicated at every level of the national administrative system. The leading party body in the center was the Politburo, in the province the Provincial Party Committee, in the County the County Party Committee, and so forth. The government bodies were simply called governments with their respective level such as provincial government, county government, etc. Every ministry, commission, and Central Committee department headed its own national bureaucratic hierarchy that extended from Beijing down through the provinces, cities, counties, and so forth. In all, this bureaucratic system

⁷⁸ Kenneth Lieberthal, *op.cit.*, p.77.

was highly centralized, with the lower level units made answerable to the higher level units. Thus, the local governments were, to a great extent, only executive organs of the state.

The party system was the other distinguishable feature of the administrative system. The CCP enjoyed a paramount position in this system. The party penetrated the government at every level through a variety of means, including setting up party bodies (committees, branches, cells) in every government organ.⁷⁹ Generally, the party made policies while the state administered them, but the reality was not that neat. The party structures always exercised ultimate authority over their government counterpart. It was greatly involved in, if not completely manipulated, the administrative process of the government. For example, in terms of the control over personnel, the CCP committees at each administrative level actually decided the appointment of personnel of the government at the next lower level.

This complex administrative structure reflected the communists' ambition in the 1950s to control all developments in the country from above. With the various party and government units, the state was trying to take charge of every type of activity imaginable.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

The CCP set up Xinjiang Uyghurs Autonomous Region and other lower level autonomous units in the 1950s to fulfill its promise to grant autonomy to the ethnic minorities residing in this region. XUAR enjoyed the same status as provinces in the political system and its administrative organs were similar to those of the provinces. The difference in this ethnic autonomous organ was that it should incorporate a certain number of minorities in the governmental posts. The chairman of XUAR was often a Uyghur. And Uyghurs also accounted for a considerable proportion in the autonomous government. The percentage of the Uyghurs in the XUAR government was slightly higher than that of the Uyghurs in the entire population of this region.

But the autonomy that the Uyghurs enjoyed was virtually limited. In principle, the local autonomous government possessed some rights of self-government including the right to make some local regulations and laws, some flexible executive rights in the implementation of the policies and orders from the central government, a certain degree of autonomy in administering finances, and the right to organize public security forces. In effect, the omnipotent central government decided almost everything, leaving little discretion to the local government. To a great extent, the local governments were only executive organs of the state. In addition, the party system in China, in which the party set up branches and committees in governmental organizations and always exercised ultimate authority over its government counterpart, further restrained what little autonomy the XUAR enjoyed. In XUAR,

though the Uyghurs occupied quite a few seats in the governmental organizations, their existence in the party organization was only symbolic. The dominant position of Han Chinese in the party branch in Xinjiang never changed. Besides the fact that the Han Chinese constituted the absolute majority, the party's secretary, who occupied the highest position in that area, was always taken by a Han Chinese.

Thus, through this system, the central government was able to exercise firm control on the ethnical heterogeneous region and implement its grand economic plans smoothly.

3.1.3 Social control in Mao's era

Command economy is a coherent system requiring excellent coordination of each department and exact information collection and analysis. However, the actual situation in China forbade the command economy to function in such a precise track. In the early 1950s, China was one of the poorest countries in the world. The share of engineers and technicians in the labor force was very low. These factors in conjunction with the large size and geographic heterogeneity of China constituted impediments for the smooth functioning of the command economy. For instance, the material balance planning required very precise calculations: the supply plans must be drawn up for each individual producer. Given that the producers differ, their material usage norm would differ, causing very complicated problems in the real calculation of the supply.

To ensure the operation of command economy and the control of the central government, the state had to resort to some crude blanket controls over the society.

One was ideological indoctrination. The ideology instillation was often carried out by ideological propaganda through newspapers, radio and journals as well as by various campaigns. Campaigns such as Land Reform, Three Anti Five Anti, Thought Reform of Intellectuals, and so on, were initiated to propagate some broad themes—fighting corruption, promoting agricultural collectivization, ferreting out those with ‘rightist’ thoughts, etc. A notable theme was class and class struggle. Mao’s notion of class had left a deep imprint on the politics of the P. R. China. Mao initially embraced class analysis based on people’s relations to the means of production: in the countryside the basic productive resource was land and the two major confronting classes were the landlord and the peasant; in the urban areas, the two primary antagonistic classes were the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.⁸⁰ From 1950 to 1952, Mao initiated a series of mass political campaigns including Land Reform, Suppression of Counterrevolutionaries, Thought Reform of Intellectuals, and Three Anti Five Anti to determine the class status of each urban and rural inhabitant. These campaigns were also preludes to the collectivization of agriculture and state’s takeover of the urban economy, both of which were completed by 1956. With private

⁸⁰ Mao further divided the bourgeoisie class into the national bourgeoisie, the petit bourgeoisie, and the comprador bourgeoisie.

property eliminated, Mao still remained cautious about the class struggle and addressed the issue of class identity in an un-Marxist fashion. He decided that political attitude could determine class status.⁸¹

Even though ‘class’ almost completely lost its Marxist meaning in the CCP’s usage, the ideas of class and class struggle had been deeply implanted in the minds of people. People got used to using class term to brand themselves and others. The salience of class awareness had definitely eclipsed other forms of identity consciousness. Some old interviewees recalled that ‘people used to talk about their background as worker, peasant or intellectual etc; the ethnic line was not so clear as today.’⁸² This class-based classification of the society was a prominent feature in the Mao’s era.

The emphasis put on ideological indoctrination also led to the repressive policy on the minority cultures, which had significant meanings for the Uyghurs’ collective protest. Mao’s creation of XUAR was merely a tactic without truly respecting the minority’ culture.⁸³ Though initially the authorities decided to introduce some mild

⁸¹ For more information, see ‘*China’s Political Reforms—An Interim Report*’ (Benedict Stavis, Praeger Publishers, 1988).

⁸² Interview on May 1st, 2004 at the international grand bazaar in Urumqi.

⁸³ Mao’s decision to create an autonomous Uyghur region was rooted in Stalin’s nationality policies. He viewed the creation of autonomous regions as the Communist Party’s transitory recognition of local identities that would eventually become obsolete under socialism, and of independent cultural identities that would soon be assimilated in all but a folkloric sense.

strategy to accommodate the minority culture, the radical campaigns that accompanied the ideological indoctrination turned the policy more suppressive. Every publication went through severe censorship. No private or civil cultural organizations were allowed to be established. In the case of the Uyghurs, two specific policies should be noted. First was the language policy. The Uyghur language belongs to the eastern or Altay branch of the Turkic family and is therefore related to Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Turkmen.⁸⁴ This linguistic relationship gave Uyghurs a ready means of communication with their counterparts in Central Asia, which in the eyes of Mao, was a potentially unstable element. In addition, Mao believed that a common language is the base for the long-time unification of the country and the mutual improvement and development for all the peoples.⁸⁵ Then a strategy to change the spelling of the Uyghur word was adopted to alienate the Uyghurs with their co-ethnic and co-linguistic neighbor. The Uyghur language was first written using an Arabic script. A ‘new script’ for Uyghur, based on a modified Latin alphabet was created in June 1958 to replace the old script. Uyghurs were encouraged to learn the Chinese language. Fluency in standard Chinese (mandarin) became a prerequisite for being an official cadre. Second was the tight control over religion. The overwhelmingly dominant religion of Uyghurs is Islam. How to accommodate religion, which stands

⁸⁴ Michael Dillon, *op.cit.*, p.25.

⁸⁵ Kenneth Lieberthal, *op.cit.*, p.80.

opposed to Marxist atheism, has always been a sensitive issue in the CCP's minority policy. Though the CCP had devised the policy of 'freedom in religious belief' according to the Marxism principle, in reality, the launch of radical campaigns and the ensuing chaotic Cultural Revolution laid aside the policy. The stress on ideological indoctrination further limited the freedom of religious belief and activities. The religious reform campaign that accompanied Mao's Great Leap Forward in Xinjiang was a serious effort of the CCP to dismantle the religious structures of the region.⁸⁶ The campaign took on extreme forms in the latter stage, causing harsh punishment of religious personnel and huge damage to the religious temples and relics. The situation became even worse in the Cultural Revolution period.

The detrimental consequence of cultural marginalization and religious persecution on the East Turkestan independent movement was not a provocative one, in which accentuated grievance worked to invoke the collective protest; but a disruptive result: The communication channel with the Central Asian states was effectively severed, making it hard for the Uyghurs to get support from their co-linguistic neighbor countries. Islam, the guideline used for the East Turkestan movement, subjected to extremely strict restrictions and endless political indoctrination was utilized to weaken the influence of Islam in XUAR.

⁸⁶ Michael Dillon, *op.cit.*, p.30.

The second blanket control employed by the state was the control over population mobility. To maintain the state's control over the enterprises, China exerted a very strict control over population mobility. Migration to cities by rural individuals was forbidden. Only a modest intake of rural workers into the urban industry was permitted through tightly restricted recruitment programs. In XUAR, two specific policies were adopted by the government: the massive immigration of Han Chinese, which was unique to Xinjiang, and the Household registration system, which was applied nationwide.

The distinct demographic trait of Xinjiang made the government adopt the special migration policy. Xinjiang has been a residence of many minority groups since ancient time. Estimates of its population before 1949 suggest that it was predominantly non-Han Chinese. 'There was a survey carried out by the Xinjiang provincial police in 1940-1941, which estimated the total population at 3,730,000. Figures from the same period suggest that 3,439,000 of these were Muslim and that 3,338,000 spoke either Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek or Tatar. These figures do not stand up independently to scrutiny in terms of modern surveys and statistical techniques but taken together, they indicate clearly that this was a region with only a

minority Han Chinese community in the early 1940s.⁸⁷ In the eyes of Mao Zedong, this minority-dominant demographic feature of this region was a highly possible source of instability.⁸⁸ In order to ensure Beijing's control and increase the border strength, Mao decided to transfer many Han Chinese into Xinjiang. A programme to encourage the immigration of Han Chinese from the east was announced in 1950.

Table 3.1 Composition of Xinjiang's population, 1949-1990

Ethnic group	1949	1964	1982	1986	1990	2000
Uyghurs (no.)	3,291,145	3,991,577	5,955,947	6,431,015	7,194,675	8,345,622
Uyghurs (%)	76.0	54.9	45.5	46.5	47.5	45.2
Han (no.)	291,021	2,321,216	5,286,532	5,386,312	5,695,626	7,489,919
Han (%)	6.7	31.9	40.4	38.9	37.6	40.6
Kazaks (no.)	443,655	489,261	903,335	1,010,543	1,106,989	1,245,023
Kazaks (%)	10.2	6.7	6.9	7.3	7.3	6.7
Hui (no.)	122,501	264,017	570,789	611,816	681,527	839,837
Hui (%)	2.8	3.6	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.5
Others (no.)	185,078	203,996	365,030	396,713	476,961	539,110
Others (%)	4.3	2.8	2.8	2.9	3.2	2.9
Total (no.)	4,333,400	7,270,067	13,081,633	13,836,399	15,155,778	18,459,511

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.24.

⁸⁸ Kenneth Lieberthal, op.cit., p.80.

Source: Mackerras, *China's Minorities: Integration and Modernization in the Twentieth Century*. (Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 253. National census data of 2000.

From Table 3.1, we can see that the most significant demographic change in Xinjiang since the founding of the PRC has been the stark increase in the Han population. The percentage of Han population surged from 6.7 in 1949 to 40.4 in 1982. Though the figure dropped slightly since 1982, the Han Chinese had become the second largest ethnic group in Xinjiang from then on. This growth was mainly due to the in-migration of Han, rather than natural increase. The immigration of Han Chinese into this area in Mao's era was compulsory. Especially before 1966, the massive transferring of Han Chinese was a mandatory policy of the government.⁸⁹ An organization worth mentioning is the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC)⁹⁰, which was the main reception center for the compulsory immigration.

The household registration policy was the other policy adopted to regulate the population.⁹¹ Household registration policy required every family and its members to have their identity recorded in the government files, which formed the basis for the

⁸⁹ Mao Yongfu, 'The Development Trend of the Ethnic Relationship in Xinjiang and a Probe on the Countermeasures', *Journal of Kashi Normal College*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 1996, p.1.

⁹⁰ Before the early 1950s, the XPCC belonged to the People Liberation Army's production and construction corps that was tasked with taking over and controlling outlying regions of the country. The force was reconstituted in 1954 as a civilian outfit with economic and quasi-military functions. Its primary tasks were land reclamation, agricultural production, infrastructure development of outlying border regions, and the maintenance of stability of these areas.

⁹¹ The household registration policy is known as the 'hukou' policy in Chinese.

government to distribute food tickets to the residents. Only through the food tickets could the residents have access to some basic living goods such as food, sugar, and so forth. Thus, household registration was necessary for a family or a person to obtain basic subsistence. In addition, it was also necessary for access to employment and schooling, and for other economic benefits. Under the strict household registration policy, people were not allowed to move freely. To move to another place, one had to have sufficient reasons and had to go through a series of complex procedures. The rate of population movement at that time was very low. This meant that the Han Chinese that migrated to XUAR could not move elsewhere and had to remain in Xinjiang.

The rigid and tight blanket controls had worked well in coordination with the command economy and largely made up for the limits brought about by the Chinese reality to the planned system.

In all, in this command economy system, the regime had utilized an extraordinary array of controls to assert its dominance over the society. This formal control system did provide the state with unchallenged authority. Even the people's social life was under the supervision and instruction of the state. The formal control system had kept a good record in restraining the East Turkestan independence movement. As depicted in the last chapter, the Uyghurs' social disturbance had

shown a declining trend from 1950s to 1970s and in 1970s the collective protest was nearly invisible.

However, despite significantly empowering the authority, the excessive and rigid control also led to severe problems that necessitated a fundamental transformation.

3.2 Informal control in Deng's era

In 1978, after the collapse of 'the Gang of Four', Deng Xiaoping re-ascended to power in the central government. The problems embedded in the highly centralized control system became apparent and intolerable: low-efficiency, unwieldy bureaucracy, economic stagnation, social disorder and so on. Reform was urgently needed. With his determination to 'seek truth from facts', Deng initiated the reform momentum. 'Surveying the crisis-ridden Chinese system in 1977 and 1978, Deng decided that only major reform would permit the CCP to remain in power.'⁹² The 1980s period saw the transformation of command economy system into the market economy system in China, in which the paramount position of ideology in Mao era began to decline. The unanticipated success of economic reform further provided a boost for more radical reform in the political and social areas. In the following two

⁹² Kenneth Lieberthal, *op.cit.*, p.182.

decades, China underwent a state-rebuilding which was essentially a political transformation, which partly decentralized political power, energized and changed the ways the economy and society functioned. Though the reform followed a sometimes tortuous course⁹³, the change was remarkably successful in some key areas.

I argue that the state rebuilding essentially includes a systematic transition from the command economy to a qualitatively different economic system—market economy, a transition from a formal control model to an informal one. Virtually every aspect of Chinese economic policy was recast. Economic lever replaced the administrative instruction as the guideline in the economic field. The political system and social policies also underwent some corresponding changes. This section will not only provide a review of the major changes that occurred in this transformation, but also examine in depth the reasons why these fundamental changes are necessary. It aims to illustrate why it is necessary to change the old system as well as why it is advisable to convert to the new control system.

⁹³ The process of reform was halted by the 1989 pro-democracy movement and conservative backlash thereafter. It was not until 1992, when Deng Xiaoping's visited the metropolis in the Southern China, was the reform momentum renewed. Though the student movement in 1989 had halted the economic reform process and China's new hardline leadership seemed determined to reverse many of the gains of economic reform, the leadership eventually realized that the economic changes were profound and virtually irreversible.

3.2.1 Command economy and market economy

By the late 1970s, Chinese leaders had been grappling with the chronic economic problems for many years. There were several serious drawbacks associated with the command economy which required an overhaul. Firstly, enterprises lacked decision-making power and became simply appendages of state administrative agencies at different levels. This situation had stifled the creativity and initiative of the enterprises. The daily routines of the enterprises were under rigid control by the state: enterprises did not have the right to sell products, and managers did not have right of decision-making in operation. The labor force was allocated by the state, and even wages were determined by the state. Moreover, the enterprises were required to report everything to the superior authorities, no matter they were large or small, and to await instructions from above. The whole economic sector was compounded by excessive administrative instructions. Secondly, in the traditional centralized system, the management of the economy was carried out through central and regional administrative systems, which might not be able to give practical, consistent and adaptable instructions to the enterprises. Lacking of concrete information and practical experience, the officials were unlikely to devise the most suitable policies for the enterprises within their limited time and finite energy. It was also difficult for the mandatory planning to cope with the complex and frequently changing demands of society. The lack of direct contact between the producers and the consumers

prevented the producers from knowing much about consumer needs.⁹⁴ The prevailing problems such as inefficiency and goods shortage in the planned economic system were contradictory to the original will of setting up the planned system and stood in the way of the development of the country. Finally, in the command economy, there was no relationship between the profit of the enterprise and the quality of its operation, nor between the income of its employees and their efforts expended on the job. This situation was conducive to low efficiency and productivity. Workers and employers got the same wages according to their working age. Worse still, directors or employees were not accountable for the profits and losses of the enterprises. The same situation existed in the system of collective ownership of the rural people's communes. The system of 'eating from the same pot' seriously stifled people's initiatives and activeness.

The poor performance of the command economy needed an overhaul of the whole system. A central characteristic of the Chinese development experience between the late 1950s and the late 1970s was a relatively slow growth of living standards, which was contradictory to the promise of socialism. The 'new' post Cultural Revolution leadership decided to abandon the previous command system, which was beset with deep-seated problems, and re-import the previous discarded

⁹⁴ George Totten and Zhou Shulian ed., *op.cit.*, p.4.

market mechanism to energize the economy⁹⁵. From 1978, China began to undergo a dramatic transition from a planned economy to a market economy.

The party's reform policies were first carried out in the rural areas, and then spread to the cities. They brought four fundamental changes to the economic system. (1) Enterprises were no longer executive branches of the government, rather, they became independent entities. In the Mao era, enterprises were thoroughly controlled by government and lost their initiative and creativity. The first step to change the old system was to end the policy that all enterprise profits went to the government, and the higher levels of the government made all decisions for an enterprise. Then the 'director responsibility system was employed to further reduce interference in management by the party and government. A series of regulations and laws were also enacted and implemented to smooth the process of economic reform such as bankruptcy law and taxation system. 'The enterprises were given the authority to make certain decisions, such as arranging production plans, utilizing retained funds, technological transformation, rewarding and penalizing staff members and workers, selling products in the markets and appointing or removing managers, thus bringing the economic benefits of the employees into a direct relationship with the output of

⁹⁵ Though initially, the China's leaders did try to re-construct the command economy, their efforts were soon driven to recast the whole system by the logic of economic circumstances.

the production and operation of the enterprises.⁹⁶ (2) The second significant change occurred in the ownership system. The public ownership established by Mao and his colleagues began to be dissolved. In rural areas in the early 1980s, farmers were given (or sold or rented) rights to use farmland. Land, as a vital means of production, became collectively owned (rather than State-owned) property, operated and managed mainly by individual farming households. The rural market was opened to facilitate the circulation of farm products and sideline products. Most importantly the agricultural production responsibility system spread widely, which helped to link farmers' income with output. In urban and industrial areas, capital shares were being issued, to dilute the government monopoly of ownership.⁹⁷ Private enterprise was allowed. By the end of 1986 there were thought to be almost 20 million self-employed businessmen in China.⁹⁸ Though the proportion of private enterprises remained small compared to the state-owned enterprises in Xinjiang, its development was on an upward trend. Even though public ownership retained its dominant position, a structure of co-existence of diversified forms of ownership and diversified forms of operation was formed. (3) In the area of production and circulation, the functions of the market and the law of value replaced the state's mandatory instructions. Rural free

⁹⁶ George Totten and Zhou Shulian ed., *op.cit.*, pp.6-7.

⁹⁷ Benedict Stavis, *op.cit.*, p.43.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

markets were opened and various kinds of trade centers were established in the cities as well. (4) The rapid development of international trade was the fourth great change in the economical arena. China's economic relationship with foreign countries changed from the former practice of 'closing the country to international arrangements' to a policy of 'opening to the outside world'.⁹⁹ Policies were made to encourage foreign businesses to invest in China and to establish joint enterprises. More important is that these joint enterprises were substantially outside the realm of direct government control.

The economic reform was unanticipatedly successful. The rapid economic growth brought about by the economic reform further provided incentives for a corresponding transformation in the political as well as social arena.

3.2.2 Political relaxation in the Post-Mao era

The over-concentration of power in the Maoist system was a double-edged sword: while it had afforded the political leadership unchallenged control over the society and economy, it had also produced numerous problems of governance.¹⁰⁰ First was the deterioration of political efficiency. The distinctive highly-centralized political system had developed numerous organizations to ensure strict party

⁹⁹George Totten and Zhou Shulian ed., op.cit., p.7.

¹⁰⁰Kenneth Lieberthal, op.cit., p.82.

discipline and total acceptance of the decision of the state. Thus the bulky and complex bureaucracy made the implementation of policies hardly efficient. More importantly, with the expanding economy and development of the society, demands on government for fast decisions on complex technological and economic issues increased. Secondly, the unclear line in the functions between the party and the government made the political system messy and awkward. In the Maoist system, the party's image was tarnished by too much involvement in day-to-day affairs.¹⁰¹ Many reformers argued that a crucial first step in reform was to change the role of the CCP in the political and economic systems. Finally, mismanagement had further weakened the system and the legitimacy of the state. The decision-making power was firmly held in the hands of the top political leaders, who were not familiar with the local situation. They often made unitary policies and strategies to be implemented in different regions that varied in terms of economic development, environment situation, natural resources, and so on. It was most likely that their decisions were not practically applicable to some areas.

These accumulative and intolerable problems in the political system seriously impeded the development of the market economy. The economic system was compounded by too-much involvement of the administrative force. Although the CCP

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p.45.

has never considered giving up its paramount position, necessary rectification should be made in the political system. This change was mainly a retreat of the political power from the economic field.

The state took steps in three aspects: separation of party and government, decentralization, and restraining the role of government (1) Separation of party and government: According to Deng's word, 'The substance of reform should primarily be separating the party from government administration, finding a solution to how the party should exercise leadership, and how to improve leadership.'¹⁰² The separation of party and government became a main theme in the political reform. It led to the less interference of the party in the governmental affairs and the increasing administration power that the government enjoyed. The power of the party in the economic field was also substantially reduced. In the past, the party branch could actually decide everything for enterprises. The reform restricted the dominant role of the party and gave the director or factory manager complete authority to make decisions for enterprises. (2) Decentralization: It essentially was more delegation of power from higher levels to lower levels to generate more initiatives in the political structure. The central government confined its decision-making power to major affairs and only gave general outline or guidance instruction to the local government.

¹⁰² Benedict Stavis, *op.cit.*, p.43.

Local governments had more autonomy in dealing with local affairs: besides having more discretion in implementing the instruction from the central government, they could make some local policies, administrative laws, and regulations. (3) Restraining the role of government: This refers to granting more autonomy to the enterprises. Administrative means, the former most important factor in guiding the economy, gave ways to economic levers. The law of value and price information became major determinants of the economic activities. Enterprises could adjust their production according to the price information.

However, the change in the political field was not as great as that in the economic field. The modification was modest: the party still held supreme power, and the hierarchical administrative structures were largely unchanged. The main amendment in the political area was the withdrawal of direct intervention of the administrative power in the enterprises' activities. Furthermore, though the political relaxation did occur along with the economy reform, it was substantially curtailed after 1989. From this point, the informal control model of China should better be termed 'selective informal control': the unraveling of political control only happened in some aspects, while it was completely absent in other aspects.

3.2.3 Social informal control

With marketization in the economic arena and the mild relaxation in the political field, the crude social blanket controls became unsustainable. The tight and

rigid social controls were also unsuitable for the market economy. Thus, a similar policy shift toward relaxation also occurred in the social realm.

First, the authority had loosened up the cultural policy. The repressive political indoctrination gradually diminished and eventually was abandoned because some ideas of Maoism conflicted with the market economy. The diversity of cultures was encouraged. The bans on the cultural activities and organizations were reduced. In 1980, new conciliatory policies emphasized the need to respect minority nationality customs and guaranteed freedom of religious belief.

The specific cultural policies in Xinjiang were correspondingly amended. There was greater recognition of the role of religion. Religious activities were allowed, if not promoted. Temples, Islamic buildings and religious clergies mushroomed in the new era. Till 1999 in XUAR, there were more than 23,900 officially authorized places for Islamic activities, and there were over 28,500 religious clergies whose position was equal to or above the rank of Imam.¹⁰³ In terms of the language, the ‘old script’ of the Uyghur language reappeared publicly in 1978 and was formally authorized in 1980 for the printing of books and periodicals.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Wang Shuanqian ed., *Xinjiang Moving toward the 21 Century: Culture Volume* (Xinjiang People’s Press, 1999), p.281.

¹⁰⁴ Michael Dillon, *op.cit*, p.27.

The strategy to manipulate population mobility was also adjusted. As mentioned earlier, besides the requirement of the command economy, the high percentage of the Uyghur population in Xinjiang was viewed as an unstable factor. The compulsory massive migration of Han Chinese, with the ancillary means of household registration policy, was adopted to ensure the control of the state. However, the compulsory migration was difficult to sustain. Xinjiang was viewed as a place for exile in ancient China. The remoteness of this region and the divergent cultural environment added to the reasons for Han people not to want to stay here permanently. 1980 saw many Han Chinese allegedly attempting to return to China Proper, indicating their reluctance to stay in this region.¹⁰⁵ The tight control on population began to unravel in the market economy era. With the marketisation of the commodity, household registration was no longer a necessity to get subsistence food and other economic benefits. The free movement of people became less constrained, if not completely unconstrained. ‘Floating population’ appeared and increased remarkably. Thus, how to maintain the high portion of Han Chinese in Xinjiang re-emerged as a problem. In the informal control model, the state adopted an indirect strategy to guide the population flow—that was, using the economic incentives. This strategy worked in accordance with the logic of market economy. By launching

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p.59.

grandeur projects in Xinjiang and permitting privileges, the government tried to design policy to attract qualified professional and technical staff from other parts of China to move to XUAR. This strategy was quite successful. There were quite a few workers coming to Xinjiang to look for jobs on either a temporary or permanent basis. ‘Migrant farm workers are attracted by the opportunities for cotton picking during the harvesting season by traveling to Xinjiang during the autumn and returning home in early spring, although some stayed on to find permanent jobs as managers of cotton plantations. Some even accumulated enough capital to set up their own businesses as the money earned in a few months’ picking cotton can be the equivalent of several years’ income in their home villages.’¹⁰⁶

3.3 Conclusion

In sum, the reform from a command economy to a market economy was a gradual process. In effect, China’s reform began not only without a blueprint on how to reform, but without even a sense of what the ultimate objective of reform would be. Only gradually, through the process of reforming, did the objective of reform become clear. The Chinese authority eventually chose to embrace the market economy.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p.76.

The state-rebuilding from 1978 witnessed the decline of communist ideology and the rise of an interest-based social order. This transformation was a virtual shift from a repressive formal control system to a persuasive informal one.¹⁰⁷ In society, many people were no longer forced to accept ideological indoctrination and became more interest-oriented.

The advantages of informal control are apparent. Informal control is more effective and less money-consuming than formal control. By appealing to the instinct and the logic of the citizens, informal control allows the people to make their own decision. It educates people about the rationality, informs them of the surrounding circumstances, persuades them of what is the better choice, and discourages their incorrect behavior. It is unnecessary for the state to spend huge amount of money on coercive force and harsh punishment, and people are more willing to cooperate and coordinate with the government. In a command economy, the state has to make virtually every decision for the citizens, assigning tasks to them and forcing them to advance the collectivization process. Personal interest should always give way to the public good and political indoctrination was employed to raise their political consciousness. Most people could not act at their will. The function of this system depends on political suppression and exhaustive regulations. However, in the market

¹⁰⁷ Or a form of 'selective informal control'.

economy, economic levers are employed to guide the development of the economy. The profits provide incentives for the citizens to make their decisions and can be utilized by the state to lead the citizens.

There are also political benefits in an interest-based social order. First, an interest-based social order is more governable than one based on non-interest factors such as belief and passion. It is obvious that the behavior of an individual who is interest oriented is more predictable than the act of a passion-guided person. Hirschman argues, ‘A world where people methodically pursue their private interest was... far more predicable, and hence more governable, than on where the citizens are vying with each other for honor and glory.’¹⁰⁸

Second, in an interest-oriented society, individual behavior is expected to be stable and continuous. Individuals pursue their own material benefits and follow their own rational calculation, so a turbulent change is highly unlikely to occur in their behaviors. Compared with formal control, in which people conform to the state because of fear and force, it is much less economic-consuming in the informal control society. Though in this society, the state makes less regulations and laws to guide

¹⁰⁸ Albert O. Hirschman, *Rival Views of Market Society and Other Recent Essays* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.35

people's behaviors, the behaviors are more predictable (people act according to their interest) and are more governable.

Third, economic expansion can soften the regime's use of coercion, thus it can sidestep several sensitive social problems related to control and help to integrate the minority regions. For example, the changing of the Uyghurs' language script was severely criticized as an intentional means to dilute the ethnic culture and the requirement to learn Chinese was perceived as forced assimilation. Nevertheless, under the informal control, with the expansion of market economy, Uyghurs are willing to learn Chinese if they want to succeed economically. They come to realize that mastering mandarin is a necessity and offers a competitive edge if they want to grasp the economic opportunities and be upwardly mobile.

Fourth, it is also hoped, the expansion of a market economy and the increase of commercial activities can facilitate interactions between the Han and Uyghur, establishing good relationship and enhancing mutual understanding. Furthermore, the individualist, rationalistic base of the market might undermine the religious support.

Nevertheless state building is not an uncontested enterprise. Even though China remains an authoritarian state, the leadership could not rebuild the state at will. It might produce enormous unexpected consequences. The surge of social protests by the Uyghur activists forms a case in point. How state re-building has generated new

factors which lead to the surge of ethnic collective action will be sketched out in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 State-rebuilding and the Surge of Ethnic Social Movement

The state re-building that occurred in the Post-Mao era is a strategic remedy to the old crisis-ridden political system. It aims at assuring the power of the state, maintaining and re-building the legitimacy of the CCP, and constructing a more governable society. However, this reform seems to have given life to an ethnic-based social movement which had laid relatively dormant for some time: the East Turkestan Independence Movement. From the historical records, we can see that after one decade of silence, the Uyghurs' collective protest for autonomy and independence re-emerged just three years after the reform started. Its re-emergence and development matches the trajectory of the reform so snugly¹⁰⁹ that it behooves us to examine the relationship between the two: Is that just coincidental? Or is there some causal relationship between them?

I argue that the resurgence of this ethnic-based social movement in the Post-Mao era in China could be explained in the context of state rebuilding. This does not mean that the state intended to cause a rise in ethnic disturbance. Rather, the state

¹⁰⁹ Normally it takes a certain time for people to realize new opportunities for political action.

rebuilding sought to find a new effective method to strength the dominant power of the state over the society.

Obviously, the State is not ‘an autonomous, irreducible set of institutions,’¹¹⁰ but an ‘arena of routinized political competition in which class, status, and political conflicts, representing both elite and popular interests, are played out’.¹¹¹ To elaborate this dynamic view of the state, it is necessary to quote the canon of Charles Bright and Susan Harding. ‘The state is autonomous in the sense that it is not reducible to economic and social struggles and is not causally dependent upon dominant social classes. The state is not autonomous in the sense of being self-contained or self-directing, since it is continuously penetrated by social and economic struggles.’¹¹² State essentially is a part of society. Though institutions of governance and central agents of social order, states are internally divided and subject to penetration by conflicting and usually contradictory social forces.¹¹³ Endorsement of this dynamic view of the state will inevitably yield a similar dynamic perspective on state building. State building is not an unchallenged arena. It does not end once stately institutions emerge, but is continuous.

¹¹⁰ Bright and Harding ed., op.cit., p.3

¹¹¹ Ibid, pp.3-4.

¹¹² Ibid., p.4.

¹¹³ Ibid.

Even though China has been an authoritarian state with an organized hierarchical political system, the leadership could not rebuild the state at will. The process of state rebuilding might produce enormous unexpected consequences, some of which might be favorable for the social movement. 'Each new policy initiative produced new channels of communication, more organized networks of citizens and more unified cognitive frameworks around which insurgents could mount claims and organize'.¹¹⁴

Before proceeding to explore the relationship between state building and social movement, it is worthwhile to spell out the analytic frameworks of the state building, political opportunity and social movement. The relation between social movements and the state is a crucial theme for understanding collective action.¹¹⁵ This approach is often called 'political process' approach, which focuses on the relationship between the political opportunity structure (POS) and the protest cycle. Within this approach, the POS is the most inclusive concept used to deal with the external, political conditions for protest.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Zheng Yongnian, 'State Rebuilding, Popular Protest and Collective Action in China', *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 2002, 3(1), p.48.

¹¹⁵ Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, *op.cit.*, p.62.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Here, I shall focus on the changing ‘political opportunity’ environment that was brought about by state rebuilding, as a key variable in explaining the re-emergence of the ethnic-based social movement. With the process of state rebuilding, the entire political system underwent dramatic changes which modify the environment of social actors sufficiently to influence the initiation, forms, and outcomes of collective action. In the second chapter, I have reviewed the rise and fall, retreat and revival of the East Turkestan Independence Movement in Xinjiang. In the third chapter, I have discussed the rationale and the primary changes in state rebuilding. In this chapter, I will explore the effect of the new political opportunity milieu on the social movement, especially the re-initiation of the East Turkestan Independence Movement. I will begin with a description of the changing trajectory of the two variables and then elaborate their causal relationship. In spelling out the connecting mechanism, I also attempt to connect the political opportunity, mobilizing structures, and framing processes. Though I will not look into the details of how social movement activists or organizations mobilize the mass and how they conduct the strategic framing, I will show how the political changes accompanying the state rebuilding facilitate the mobilizing and framing processes.

4.1.Re-emergence and Escalation—the Consequences of State Rebuilding

As concluded in the previous chapter, the state rebuilding from 1978 contains a transformation from a formal control system to an informal control one, leading to a more open and liberal political environment. Social scientists have noticed the effects of policy changes on social movements. Scholars have argued that a reduction in repression facilitates the development of social movements.¹¹⁷ Skocpol argued that social revolutions are triggered by political crises, which weaken the political control and the state's capacity for repression. McAdam also pointed out that diminishing repression was a facilitating factor. Donatella Della Porta gave a more subtle hypothesis after comparing the German and Italian cases. He indicated that a more tolerant and softer police behavior favors protest and a more repressive policing tend to discourage the mass and peaceful protest while at the same time fueling the more radical fringe.¹¹⁸

The logic of their argument is also applicable to the case of East Turkestan Independence Movement with some caveats. First, the explanatory variable in my study cannot be reduced to the repression policy. The state rebuilding is a systematic

¹¹⁷ Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, *op.cit.*, p.89.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.90.

transformation. Driven by the demands of the market economy, the state rebuilding has adopted corresponding strategies in the political and social arenas. Many adjustments other than repression policy have affected the East Turkestan movement in Xinjiang. While some scholars tend to focus on the effect of a certain specific policy or event, I will examine the changes in the broad political opportunity environment. Second, the informal control of post-Mao era is better termed ‘selective informal control’. The reduction of authoritarian power in the central government is better described as political relaxation rather than political liberation. It mainly refers to the retreat of direct political involvement in economic affairs. However, governing power is still firmly in the hands of the CCP. Its firmly opposition to any collective protest events remains largely unchanged. Thus, it is no wonder that the repertoire of social movement in China is often violently monochromatic. The persistent illiberal political culture has pushed movements to adopt antagonistic and confrontational positions. The transformation from formal control system to selective informal control did not affect much the forms of protest, but greatly influenced the growth cycles of protest. That is also one primary reason why this study does not delve into the repertoire of the ethnic protest.

Table 4.1 Changes in the control system and the East Turkestan Independence Movement

Phase variables	1949--1978	1979--1997
Control System	Formal control: Command economy; Political control in every aspect of economy; Tight and rigid social policies	Selective informal control: Market economy; Retreat of Political Power from economy; More open social policies
East Turkestan Independence Movement	De-escalation	Re-emergence and escalation

By way of summary, the most salient characteristics of state rebuilding and the development of East Turkestan Independence Movement are shown in the table 4.1. The state rebuilding efforts that aimed at securing the control of the state through taking up a more subtle and persuasive mechanism reversely resulted in the surge of ethnic social movements, which challenged the authority of the state. In general, the social movement shrank with the establishment of repressive and hard control system, whereas it revived and prospered along with the adoption of more open and tolerant policies in state rebuilding.

However, the open and tolerant policies brought by state rebuilding do not necessarily lead to ethnic disturbances. Imagine this scenario: In the changed political environment, the social constraints become loosened and the emphasis was transferred to economic growth. People now enjoy a better living standard with a

much more gentle treatment by the state. Why would they still want to wage social insurgencies? And how can they persuade the masses to join in and sustain their collective action? It is an attempting fallacy of drawing the unwarranted chain of reasoning by simply showing the separate alterations within two variables. Hence, to show the flow of causal relationship between the state rebuilding and social movements, we need look in depth at the people's actual situation: not only the opportunities available to them to act, but also their intentions for waging collective protests, as well as their capabilities in plotting, mobilizing and coordinating. To do so, this study endeavors to connect the political opportunity with the framing process and the mobilization structure. Nonetheless, due to the lack of micro-level information, the study would not explore the intensions and capabilities of any single organizations and key participants, nor would it analyze the structure of the organizations. Rather, it mainly aims to show what favorable conditions the political opportunity—the more open and tolerant political milieu—provided to the framing process and the mobilization.

4.2 State Rebuilding and Ethnic Identity

Framing process is an essential part of social movements to elicit support and consensus. The study would first examine the conductive effects of the state rebuilding on identity framing, one important dimension in the framing process.

The East Turkestan Independence Movement is a nationalist movement, in which the ethnic identity figures prominently. Ethnic identity functions as a unifying bonding for mobilizing people and gaining support for collective action. Once the person perceives himself as a member of the ethnic group, he or she is more willing to make commitment to the collective. But if a personal or political incident arising makes the person aware of a different identity, the loyalty that he or she attaches to the previous group may vanish. The multivalency and fluidity of individual identities is what forces the leaders to try to build loyalty and accumulate followers by constructing narratives of ethnic unfolding that purports common descent and cultural commonality.

The feeling of being a Uyghur forms the emotional barrier to the Han Chinese, reinforces their unwillingness to surrender their autonomy to an alien group, and justifies their collective fight with a foreign nation. Thus, the ethnic identity occupied a vital position in the East Turkestan Independence Movement. Thus, the state rebuilding could contribute to the ethnic collective actions through facilitating identity framing.

In addition the study would also examine the favorable conditions arising from state rebuilding on issue framing, which serves not only to agitate the discontents and substantiate their claim of disparity, but also to reinforce their awareness of their distinct ethnic identity.

In the following analysis, I will show how state rebuilding directly offered some political opportunity for the framing of Uyghur identity as well as indirectly caused some unexpected results favorable to issue framing.

4.2.1 The Open Political Space—Opportunities for the Alternative Frame

In Mao's formal control system, there was little space for other dogmas. The characteristic traits of dominant Communist ideology in the Mao's era were intolerance towards other ideologies, and its obligatory and compulsory character for the population.¹¹⁹ Certain aspects of Communist symbols and clichés were deeply rooted in mass consciousness through constant political indoctrination and various campaigns. The most prominent one was the concept of class and class struggle: the society consists of two primary contradictory classes, and the development of the society depends on the restless class struggle, in which the advanced class defeats the backward class. People at that time got so used to the class-based classification that they tended to brand others according to their class status. Class delineation crossed rather than paralleled the ethnic line. Hence, the feeling of belonging to a certain class collective would inevitably weaken the awareness of ethnic identity. Ethno-nationalism was overshadowed by ideological indoctrination. In addition, Mao was very suspicious about ethno-nationalism, claiming it was detrimental to the unity of

¹¹⁹ That was the common trait in all communist states.

the whole nation. The ideas of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism were especially criticized. Mao and his colleagues were trying to forge an image of united nation called '*Zhonghua Minzu*'¹²⁰, which includes all 56 ethnic groups in China. The common traits among these groups should be emphasized while the distinct characters should be downplayed to preserve unity. Hence, though in principle, the minority cultural and religious activities should be respected, in reality, they were gravely restricted. Even worse, with the radicalization of the campaigns such as Four Clean-ups Movement, religious reform and Cultural Revolution, the Uyghurs' culture and religion was suppressed. Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism, the ideological template of the East Turkestan Independence Movement, was severely curtailed, if not entirely eliminated. The identity framing project hence suffered a great deal. It was no wonder why the ethnic movements shrank so rapidly.

This situation changed following Deng's reform policy. Firstly, the paramount position of communist ideology weakened. In the state rebuilding that happened from 1978, the market economy mechanism was re-employed by the CCP to replace the command economy system. Various ownerships and even a certain degree of exploitation were allowed. These were contradictory to the Mao's imagination of the prototype of communism society or socialism society. At the initial stage of economic

¹²⁰ In English it means 'the Chinese nation'.

reform, there was a heated argument about the nature of the reform. Because of the previous political indoctrination, people were preoccupied with the contradiction between socialism and capitalism. The 'decadent' traits of capitalism including market economy were thought to be incompatible with socialism. This kind of thought was popular among the citizens as well as the cadres, leading them to cast doubts on the possibility of coexistence of market economy and socialism and further on the nature of the reform. Having realized that the continuation of ideological indoctrination would hinder reform, Deng proposed to lay aside the dispute on ideology and concentrate on accelerating economic growth. Later, his famous pragmatic argument that 'Whether black or white, a cat is a good cat so long as it catches mice' signaled both the ultimate triumph of economy over ideology, and the demise of the Maoism political indoctrination. Limited as it is, this relaxation on ideology control connoted the widen space for other thoughts and ideologies. It was the prerequisite and first step for the surge of Uyghurs' ethno-nationalism. Because of the open space for alternative political discourse, Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism, though still banned officially, could capitalize on this opportunity through unofficial propagations. Secondly, the demise of the Maoism instillation freed people from the brand of 'class'. 'Class' is essentially an artificial concept. Though ethno-nationalism is also 'imagined', it helps the members to imagine that they have a common ancestor and have a blood relation. Hence it holds a more natural and stronger bonding power

than class. That ethno-nationalism led to the dissolution of Soviet Union is a good example to demonstrate the appeal of ethno-nationalism over class identity. In the absence of imposing concepts of 'class' and 'class struggle', ethno-nationalism would more easily elicit advocates and supporters. Thirdly, minority culture and religion regained respect after the Cultural Revolution, leading to a blossoming of ethnic cultural works and religious activities. Various cultural associations in XUAR including Authors' Association, Playwrights' Association, Artists' Association, Dancers' Association, Movie Association and Photographers' Association were restored since 1978. Literacy and artistic creations were encouraged. The number of publishing house also increased, while the censorship became less strict. The more open and tolerant attitude toward minority culture and religion caused a proliferation in the cultural works of the minority group. This doubtlessly provided convenience to the circulation of ethno-nationalism, facilitating the identity framing. A notable case was the so-called 'three books'. Around 1990, a celebrated Uyghur writer Turghun Almas published his three academic books: 'the Uyghurs', 'A Brief history of the Xiongnu' and 'Ancient Uyghur Literature'. In these books, the author tried to demonstrate that Xinjiang has not, as official Chinese historiography maintains, been an integral part of China since the Han dynasty, and that the Uyghurs are culturally and ethnically related to other Turkic peoples outside China. Though they were banned and scolded because of the Pan-Turkic sentiments, these books were widely

circulated in Xinjiang and that people seized on them ‘as if they had discovered a treasure’.¹²¹ Young students in particular were desperate to pass them around. Besides, the officials began to encourage the ethnoregional celebrations and give special permissiveness to religious rituals. The tolerance or even encouragement of religion has further increased the centrifugal force as Islam acts as one major ethnic identifier and apparently stands opposite to the atheism believed by most Han Chinese. A Hong Kong newspaper commented in 1995: ‘Some local personalities say that in Mao Zedong’s era, there was tight control over religious belief, so national secessionism was well under control; in recent years, however, because the authorities have adopted a relaxed policy towards religious belief, the instigators have often conducted secessionist activities in the name of religion.’¹²²

4.2.2 Special Treatment and Widening Inequality

Though the awareness of the distinct ethnic identity is crucial for group unification and consensus, it is not sufficient for action mobilization. Other dimensions of framing such as issue framing and strategy framing are needed to further agitate the discontents and ethno-nationalism feelings. To persuade the people to take collective confrontational action toward the government, the activists or social

¹²¹ Xu Yuqi, *History of the Struggle against Ethnic Separatism in Xinjiang* (Xinjiang People’s Press in Urumqi, 1999), p.116.

¹²² *Lien ho pao*, October 11, 1995.

movement organizations have to pick up problems, themes, and symbols that resonate with the potential supporter.

It is true that in pursuit of mass support, the activists or social movement organizations could use intentionally distorted information or apply different meanings to the same events. Nevertheless, they could not revise the history or make fabrication as they please. More importantly, too much fake information would decrease the convincing power of their framing and damage their reputation. Thus, interpreting some widely acknowledged information from a different perspective would be more rewarding than just fabricating. The framing would be more successful with the aid of some favorable factual conditions.

In the following part, I would show that the reform has caused some unintentional results, which could be utilized for framing by the activists or social movement organizations to build up their union.

4.2.2.1 Different treatment--the preferential policies

In the reform area, economic growth has replaced the political struggle to become the top priority in the state agenda. The state also put great emphasis on the development of minority regions. These minority residential regions were mostly located in the peripheral areas of China with difficult access and, due to both natural and historical factors, were markedly poorer than those inhabited by Han. In the case of Xinjiang, it is famous for being the most remote place from the sea. It is also

notable for its oasis agriculture in a vast desert, the chronic shortage of water, and dramatic and dangerous weather conditions. All these factors have led to the economic subordination of Xinjiang.

Chinese leaders do recognize the need to promote the economy of minorities to reinforce the legitimacy of the regime. Article 122 of the PRC Constitution proclaims that: ‘The state gives financial, material and technical assistance to the minority nationalities to accelerate their economic and cultural development.’¹²³ Preferential policies have been made since 1950s. However, in the Mao’s era, the radical campaigns and emphasis on class struggle had laid aside the special treatment policy toward the minorities. It was not until the mid-1980s that preferential policies were seriously touted in practice as a way to close China’s ethnic gap in living standards and education.¹²⁴

The scope of preferences is quite wide. Three major dimensions of affirmative action cover economic subsidies, preferential educational policies, and hiring and promotion of minorities.

¹²³ PRC Constitution.

¹²⁴ Barry Sautman, *op.cit.*, p.87.

Xinjiang has always obtained a substantial state subsidy in its development project. Besides the ‘Ethnic Region Subsidies’¹²⁵, and the ‘Flexible Ethnic Region Fund’¹²⁶, the state has provided a lot of investments to the pillar industries of Xinjiang such as oil, cotton and minerals. The central government has also allocated a huge amount of subsidies on infrastructure construction projects in Xinjiang to bolster economic development.

The preferential educational policies include larger budgets, more lenient standards of admission to universities, and tuition waivers. The Ethnic Minorities Education Aid Special Fund (*shaoshu minzu jiaoyu buzhu zhuankuan*), Project Hope (*xiwang gongcheng*) and the Border Areas Construction Aid Fund (*bianjing diqu jianshe buzhu fei*) are state funds aimed at promoting the education level of minorities in Xinjiang.¹²⁷ The minority enrolment to schools is encouraged. For example, there are hundreds of boarding schools in minority pastoral areas of Xinjiang that give boarders ‘two exemptions’ from payment for tuition and books, or ‘four guarantees’ of free food, clothing, lodging, and study materials. Furthermore, lower admission standards are applicable to the minorities. Minority students with lower entrance examination scores are eligible to enter colleges and universities. When a minority

¹²⁵ It was set up in 1955.

¹²⁶ It was set up in 1964.

¹²⁷ Barry Sautman, op.cit, p.90.

student has grades at the same level as a Han student, the former is to be given first consideration for enrollment.

The policies about hiring and promotion of minorities have not varied much with the Mao's policies. Mao once stated that the solution to the 'nationalities problem' lay in training large numbers of minority cadres.¹²⁸ Minorities are often overrepresented in autonomous areas. The Chairman of XUAR has always been a Uyghur, and the top-ranking Uyghur officials in the government account for a higher percentage than the proportion of Uyghurs in the provincial population. The concept of giving preference to minorities to fill state leadership positions in autonomies was further extended in 1994 below the county level.¹²⁹

State's re-concentration on economy stripped the Uyghur from egalitarianism. The abandonment of egalitarian policies and actual implementation of affirmative action have had a profound influence on the Uyghurs' awareness of ethnic identity. Preferential policy with the connotation of treating differently has provided an instrumental reason for the affirmation of ethnic minority identity. A considerable number of people have re-identified themselves as members of minorities in PRC in

¹²⁸ Ibid., p.94.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

response to a variety of benefits derived from affirmative action.¹³⁰ It has also inspired the Uyghurs to reflect on their ethnic identity. It has not completely achieved the expected result of gaining support, rather, it has made Uyghurs feel that the state has deliberately treated them differently because of their so-called ‘backwardness’. Hence, the preferential policy with its purpose of enhancing the legitimacy of the regime and reducing separatist sentiments has conversely accentuated the awareness of their distinct ethnic identity.

4.2.2.2 Inequality—the unsatisfactory effect of preferential policies

Apparently, to build up legitimacy and maintain social stability, the central government has made serious efforts to achieve equality among groups. Substantial preferential policies have been adopted by the government to change the economic subordination situation in the minority region. Nevertheless, the gap between most minorities and the Han remains substantial. Despite the privileges granted to the Uyghur, the gap between Han and Uyghurs broadened rather than narrowed. The following two tables show the differences in the income and occupational patterns between Han and Uyghurs in XUAR.

¹³⁰ William Safran ed., *op.cit.*, p.3.

Table 4.2 Income Level in Xinjiang by Ethnicity: 1982, 1990, and 2000

Ethnic group	Per capita family income 1982 (Yuan)	Per capita family income 1990 (Yuan)	Per capita family income 2000 (Yuan)
Uyghur	194	398	697
Han	235	516	824

Source: 1982, 1990 and 2000 national census data (National Bureau of Statistics, PRC).

Table 4.3 Employment Patterns in Xinjiang by Ethnicity, 1982, 1990 and 2000 (%)

Ethnic Group	Technicians			Government officials			Office clerks		
	1982	1990	2000	1982	1990	2000	1982	1990	2000
Uyghur	4.2	4.1	5.3	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.9
Han	12.4	12.4	11.1	3.9	4.5	4.0	3.6	4.5	6.1
Ethnic Group	Business persons and workers in service industry			Agriculture, pastoral, farming, and forestry			Factory Workers		
	1982	1990	2000	1982	1990	2000	1982	1990	2000
Uyghur	2.8	3.6	5.4	84.0	84.1	80.5	7.1	6.1	5.8
Han	7.2	9.1	17.2	38.2	38.1	36.8	34.5	31.2	24.7
Ethnic Group	Others								
	1982	1990	2000						
Uyghur	0.0	0.0	0.3						
Han	0.1	0.2	0.1						

Source: quoted from Ma Rong 'Population Distribution and Relations among Ethnic Groups in the Kashgar Region, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region', in 'China's Minorities on the Move: Selected Case Studies', Robyn Iredale, ed. pp.106-122., and China Statistics Yearbook 2003.

Table 4.2 has documented the per capital family income of the Uyghur and Han Chinese in XUAR in the three national censuses. Even though Xinjiang as a whole has a modest record on the rural-urban income disparity, the income gap between Han Chinese and Uyghurs of Xinjiang is large. The absolute difference in the family income between the two ethnic groups has increased. The difference not only exists actually, but also has been keenly felt by the Uyghur. In my field work, when addressing the question 'do you think there is an income difference between the Uyghur and Han or not?', the response has often been a definite positive answer or a decisive nod of head. Though they cited various reasons for the difference such as the historical backwardness, the lazy habit of the Uyghur, and relatively large family population of the Uyghur, they are clearly aware of their perpetual subordinate economic position. Moreover, the existing economy structure strongly favors Han Chinese, who fill approximately four fifths of all jobs in manufacturing, the oil and gas industries, transport, communications, and science and technology, and fully

nine-tenths of jobs in the burgeoning field of construction.¹³¹ This situation makes Uyghurs' future prospects gloomier.

Table 4.3 shows the employment patterns of these two ethnic groups. Most of the Han living in Xinjiang are mainly engaged in commerce, handicrafts, and in more recent years, modern industry, while the Uyghur are overrepresented in agriculture. Whereas Uyghurs' representation has increased slightly in office clerks, business persons and service workers, little change has occurred in other occupational categories. The administrative offices and industrial enterprises are mostly represented by the Han people. This occupational stratification between the two groups, though might not result from a deliberate racial discrimination policy, has in effect formed a 'cultural division of labor' in Michael Hechter's term. 'Cultural division of labor' is 'a system of stratification where objective cultural distinctions are super-imposed upon class line. High status occupations tend to be reserved for those of metropolitan culture; while those of indigenous culture cluster at the bottom of the stratification system.'¹³² This uneven economic development in the region, especially the unequal distribution of the occupation, might lead the minority people to feel 'relatively deprived'. It provides an incentive for these people to become

¹³¹ Graham E. Fuller and S. Frederick Starr, '*The Xinjiang Problem*' (available from website http://www.cornellcaspien.com/pub2/xinjiang_final.pdf, (Oct. 20, 2004), p.18.

¹³² Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: the Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966*, (University of California Press, 1975), p.30.

politically restless. 'Where people think of themselves in ethnic or social-national terms, and inhabit a territory which is differentiated on economic grounds from other such groups, then there is a high probability that nationalism will develop, given favorable political and cultural conditions.'¹³³ The actual existence of the occupational inequality surely contributes to the framing of the opposition image between the subordinate group and the dominant group.

The growing Uyghurs' perceptions of socio-economic inequalities between Han Chinese and the Uyghur in Xinjiang lie at the root of their discontent and grievance. In the view of many Uyghurs, the unequal development would lead to their own ultimate displacement. Their feelings of disparity might be utilized to facilitate the framing process and agitate the disturbance.

4.2.2.3 Competition increasing--the natural result of market economy

In the market economy, the economic leverage is employed as the main measure to guide and coordinate the economic activities, which were mainly manipulated by compulsory administrative orders in the Maoist system. Competition, as a distinct feature of the market economy, has increased dramatically, bringing not only dynamics to the economy but also threats to the traditional Uyghur people.

¹³³ James G Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, (Macmillan Education Ltd, 1991), p.62

Most Uyghurs that I interviewed in my fieldwork have mentioned two key threats. One threat is posed by the floating population. As argued in the last Chapter, the population policy has also changed from the restrictive one to a more tolerable one toward population movement. To maintain the ratio of Han population in XUAR, the government has resorted to economic incentives: by granting privileges to the investors and the technical staffs, and establishing state-subsidized projects of development. Since 1978, spontaneous in-migrants to Xinjiang have increased. It further expanded in the 1980s and grew even more in the 1990s. In the six years from 1985 to 1990, the number of inter-provincial in-migrants was 345,365 and from 1990 to 1995 it was one million.¹³⁴ Nearly all in-migrants were Han, moving mostly from Sichuan, Henan, Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Gansu. Though there was only a low ratio of Han in-migrants who obtained local *hukou* (*household registration*) in Xinjiang, a large number of these in-migrants would remain in Xinjiang for a long time because they migrated with ‘specific goals for living and business’.¹³⁵ Whereas earlier the XPCC concentrated its work in a few relatively isolated locales, the new settlers were entering all of the larger cities and, significantly, the great southern oases that form the Uyghur heartland. Many Uyghur interviewees complained that these floating

¹³⁴ Robyn Iredale, Naran Bilik, and Wang Su ed., *Contemporary Minority Migration, Education, and Ethnicity in China*.(Cheltenham, UK ; Northampton, MA : Edward Elgar, 2001), p.175.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

Hans were displacing them in jobs and brought some serious social problems to XUAR. The in-migration was and is slowly denying to Uyghurs the traditional centers of their civilization. The capital of Xinjiang, Urumqi, now is a Han-dominant town with an absolute majority of 77% Han people.¹³⁶ In addition, the advent of Han in the great oasis cities and especially their penetration into oasis agricultural areas would, in the eyes of Uyghurs, have a cataclysmic impact on the survival of cultures as well as the very existence of the Uyghur.

The other threat lies in shrinking job opportunities. With the marketization of the economy, the state no longer assigned job to graduates. They have to find their job through highly competitive process. Meanwhile, the enterprises and the companies are granted more autonomy in personnel arrangement, and they tend to hire Han rather than Uyghur, all things being equal. Actually, the Uyghur students are at a very disadvantaged position in job-hunting. Šóhrat, one Uyghur academics, ‘once described how the 1993 Forum for Talent Exchange (Rencai Jiaoliuhui) held in Urumqi had been cancelled halfway through after Han company representatives were accused of intending to employ only Han Chinese or Uyghurs whose first language was Chinese. The authorities allegedly shut the forum down after students from

¹³⁶ Population Census Office of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region ed., *Tabulation on the 2000 Population Census of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region* (Xinjiang People’s Press, 2002), p. 100.

Xinjiang University threatened to march in protest.¹³⁷ Some Uyghur students told me that when they were attending some similar forums, they also encountered discrimination. There were few company stalls that had their details advertised in Uyghur script. One interviewee even mentioned an annoying experience: when he approached a medicine firm and offered his resume, the representative of the firm replied: 'We do not consider Uyghurs'.

These competitions have contributed to the framing process. The feeling of being threatened by another group leads to a clear awareness of the demarcation between 'they' and 'we'. Members of the increasingly disadvantaged group normally react with resentment and a sharpened sense of communal identity and common interest.

The impressions of unequal situations between the two ethnic groups could be used by the activists in their pursuit of mass support and action. More and more Uyghurs sense that the new opportunities created by the reform benefit mainly Han, who are increasingly shouldering them to the sidelines. The Uyghurs essentially regard development, especially the economic development of Xinjiang as a zero-sum game, in which they are not only the losers but will, by losing, also forfeit their

¹³⁷ Joanne Smith, 'Four Generations of Uyghurs: The Shift towards Ethno-political Ideologies among Xinjiang's Youth', *Inner Asia*, Vol. 2, No.2, 2000, p.210.

culture and homeland and even their very existence as a distinct people.¹³⁸ Thus, the employment of market economy by the state with the purpose of gaining support through the economic development has instead magnified the tensions.

4.2.3 State rebuilding and mobilization

We should note that neither grievance nor the indignation to which the Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism appeal suffices to set up collective actions. As James Scott rightly remarks, if anger at exploitation and injustice were enough to spark rebellion; the Third world would be in flames.¹³⁹ A key point is whether the group with a grievance possesses a certain capability to act on it. The displaced and disfranchised groups are unlikely to be representatives in the census of popular activism because these people often have meager resources to fight with. To orchestrate discontent and convert it into collective action, the activists must hold adequate resources and possess certain capabilities. Economic basis, organizational networks and political connections are the primary resources that afford them the capability to press their claims in the political area, the capability of mobilization.

State rebuilding, with its influential result of changing the broad political milieu, is central in shaping the available resources of mobilization. In this section, I will

¹³⁸ Graham E. Fuller and S. Frederick Starr, op.cit., p.7.

¹³⁹ James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (Yale University Press, 1976), p.4.

show that the state rebuilding not only provides material resources and potential allies to the social movement but also opens space for the formation of social movement organization. It has a profound influence on the Uyghur activists' capability of mobilization.

4.2.3.1 Material resources

The emphasis put on the economic growth and the employment of market economy inevitably leads to modernization and privatization, which have as a consequence of facilitating and enriching the social movement, in this case, the East Turkestan Independence Movement.

One most significant result arising from the modernization process is the improvement of transportation and communication condition. Xinjiang had been noted for its difficult access. The vast deserts and steep mountains had discouraged external as well as internal contacts and communication. In Justin Jon Rudelson's description, the Uyghur people tended to live in the isolated oases in the desert, oases that had few contacts between each other.¹⁴⁰ The geographical and social boundaries of the residence of Uyghur people shaped the ethnic identities at the local oasis and regional levels. They also constrained the formation of a pan-Uyghur identity because

¹⁴⁰ Justin Jon Rudelson, op.cit.

the Uyghur people tended to be more sentimentally tied to the oases identity.¹⁴¹ Besides, the poor transportation conditions and lack of communication facilities raised the cost of collective action: resources were more difficult to collect and distribute; circulation of information took a long time; outside supporters were inaccessible; large-scale and sustainable actions were extremely hard to plot and coordinate, let alone retreat and evacuate. These constraints greatly reduced the possibility of success of collective action, discouraging potential activists and followers. However, in the reform era, it is a pressing requirement to upgrade the fundamental equipment: highway, railway, airport, telephone, Internet and other infrastructure constructions. In order to create a competitive national economy, the state has put massive investment into infrastructure projects in Xinjiang. Transportation and communication networks have been constructed at a torrent pace to permit an ease of capital transfer within and beyond the PRC.¹⁴² The development of transportation and communication have not only contributed to a formation of Pan-Uyghur identity but also reduced the cost of mobilization: resources became easier to amass and allocate; circulation of information could be done within several minutes; outside supporters could be more easily reached; the plot and coordination of the collective actions were facilitated by the advanced equipments.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Scott Fogden, *op.cit.*, p.36.

Economic growth and privatization have also benefited mobilization. The economic development determines the level of resources generally available to the social movement. The economic system is another influential factor in resource aggregation. In the Maoist system, the economic development was relatively backward because of the exhausting result of the long-time wars. The resources were barely sufficient for subsistence consumption, and were seriously inadequate in some years because of natural calamities and inappropriate administration. There was no extra material resource left to the Uyghur people to wage collective actions. However, with the marketization in the post-Mao era, the rapid economic development in Xinjiang created sufficient wealth to lift the per capita income there as could be seen from the Table 4.2. Although it does not mean that all the Uyghur people would definitely put their spare resources into the social movement, the existence of extra materials is one of the crucial economic preconditions for nurturing a collective action. The privatization further provides more opportunity for the social movement. The re-employment of private ownership has allowed the people more freedom to deal with their personal property.

4.2.3.2 Building blocks and allies

Social movement organizations (SMOs) constitute crucial building blocks of the mobilizing structures of a social movement. Other mobilizing structures including kinship and friendship networks, informal networks among activists, movement

communities, as well as a host of more formal organizations which contribute to the movement's cause without being directly engaged in the process of mobilization for collective action.¹⁴³ In the formal and firm control under Maoist system, the organizations could hardly find space to grow. A notable case is the East Turkestan Peoples' Revolutionary Party, which was alleged to be the most influential SMO at that time. It was soon targeted and eradicated by the state before it could wage a large-scale collective action. In the reform era, the state began to loosen up its tight control and resorted to a more subtle mechanism to control the region, which paradoxically has provided opportunity for these organizations to develop.

The relaxation of formal control has opened space for the formation of SMOs for the East Turkestan Independence Movement. SMOs are those organizations that try to mobilize their constituency for collective action with a clear political goal. In this case, they mobilize people to support and join in their defiance action toward the Chinese authority in pursuit of independence of East Turkestan or true autonomy. Although overt opposition action was never allowed by the CCP, the East Turkestan Independence Movement Organizations could be set up and maintained under the ground in a more open system. These clandestine organizations apparently have made full use of the opportunity of state rebuilding to develop and expand. There are a

¹⁴³ Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, *op.cit.*, p.152.

number of organized groups of Uyghur identified by the state as Uyghur terrorist organizations. The following table summarized a report compiled by the U.S. State Department about the Uyghur insurgent elements.

Table 4.4 Insurgent Groups Relative to the East Turkestan Independence Movement

Insurgent Groups	
<p>United Revolutionary Front of Eastern Turkestan Leader: Yusupbek Mukhlisi (aks Modan Mukhlisi) •Thirty armed units, including expert bomb makers •Mukhlisi boasts of having ‘twenty-two million Uyghurs’ ready to conduct armed struggle against the PRC •Claims to have ties to several groups across the border of Kazakhstan</p>	<p>Xinjiang Liberation Organization and Uyghur Liberation Organization (ULO) Leader: (Not listed) •Reportedly responsible for assassinations of Uyghurs viewed as ‘collaborators’ with the PRC and Central Asian governments. •Dispersed throughout the region: in Tajikistan, China, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and the Russian Republic of Chechnya</p>
<p>Wolves of Lop Nor •Claimed responsibility for a number of train bombings and for several assassinations. •Home city of Lop Nor is the site of one of China’s largest nuclear test sites.</p>	<p>Free Turkistan Movement Leader: Abdul Kasim •Led April 1990 uprising in Baren, Xinjiang. PRC officials report 22 people were killed. •Weapons used in the Baren uprising may have come from Afghan Mujahadeen.</p>
<p>Home of East Turkistan Youth Leader: (Not listed). •Branded as Xinjiang’s Hamas. •Reports 2, 000 members; may have undergone explosives training in camps inside Afghanistan</p>	<p>Organization for the Liberation of Uyghuristan Leader: Ashir Vakhidi •Committed to armed struggle against Chinese ‘occupation’ of the ‘Uyghur homeland’.</p>

Source: Scott Forgdén, ‘Writing Insecurity: The PRC’s Push to Modernize China and the Politics of Uighur Identity’, in *Issues & Studies* 39, No. 3 (September 2003): pp.33-74

Though the list by no means includes all the East Turkestan Independence Movement Organizations, these representative groups show the scale of the SMOs in the reform era. It is arguable that some of these groups might originate from some clandestine organizations that have remained underground in Mao's era, nevertheless, it is safe to say that compared with the formal control system, the informal control system has helped to proliferate the SMOs.

The reform also has affected the social networks and some supportive organizations. In the pre-reform era, people were assigned jobs by the state. People's social networks at that time were largely confined to their working circumstance: that was, in rural, the production teams; in urban, the working units. The dominant ideology about class and class struggle further confined the social contact of people. The ethnic line was not so prominent at that time. The reform not only brought the freedom of personnel system of the companies and enterprises, but also terminated the collectivization program in the rural places. People had more freedom in choosing their career, and more freedom in deciding their social networks. The feeling of belonging to a certain ethnic group certainly plays a great role in the Uyghurs' social contact.¹⁴⁴ It is natural for them to make friends with members of their own group rather than with members of an alien group. With the exception of practical

¹⁴⁴ Some informants born in 1940s and 1950s recalled that during their childhoods, they had some good Han Chinese playmates. It shows that ethnic segregations were not serious in Mao's era.

relationships formed within the work environment, Uyghurs do not willingly mix with Han Chinese. The ethnic segregation in Xinjiang provides favorable conditions for the mobilization of East Turkestan Independence Movement.

The reformist cultural policy has encouraged the growth of supportive organizations. The religion freedom policy was re-emphasized in the reformist era, leading to the relaxation of control over religious activities. The force of religion began to expand rapidly. Temples were constructed, Imams were trained to propagate Koran, and various religious festivals were celebrated. Islamic fanaticism has occurred in many places in Xinjiang and especially prevailed in the southern part of Xinjiang.¹⁴⁵ Private Koran schools proliferated from the beginning of 1980s, though claimed illegal by the government.¹⁴⁶ The Islamic temples, the private Koran schools as well as the increasing publish houses I mentioned before could be so-called supportive organizations in the East Turkestan Independence Movement. These supportive organizations could contribute to the social organization of the constituency of a given movement without directly taking part in the mobilization for collective action.¹⁴⁷ These organizations could also be used by the SMOs to advocate their aspiration and assist the mobilization. The insurgence happened in Baren village

¹⁴⁵ Yang Faren ed., op.cit., p.159.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p.148.

¹⁴⁷ Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, op.cit., p.152.

provides a typical example. According to official documents, ‘The leaders and the core members of the Baren insurgence had gone to private Koran schools in Yecheng, Kashi, or Kujia and accepted the Pan-Islamic ideology. The head of the Baren insurgence had attended the private Koran school in Yecheng and was an imam. There were more than 220 Islamic clergies in Baren village, 80 of whom participated in the insurgence.’¹⁴⁸ The Chinese media also claimed that young men involved were members of an ‘Islamic Holy War Force’ financed by local Muslims.¹⁴⁹

Furthermore, the state rebuilding has encouraged the international trade and granted more autonomy to the international trade companies. The state decided to re-open China’s western border to trade in the post-Mao era.¹⁵⁰ The reform on the international trade system of Xinjiang has experienced three major phases.¹⁵¹ The period from 1978 to 1987 was the probing phase, in which the state began to give

¹⁴⁸ Yang Faren ed., op.cit., p.149.

¹⁴⁹ Joanne Smith, op.cit., p.197.

¹⁵⁰ In 1987, the state defined that places with right conditions in frontier minority areas should be selected to learn the international experiences of setting up inland development zones and frontier free trade zones, to speed up the opening there. To enliven economy in frontier areas, bring prosperity to frontier residents and promote economic and trade cooperation with adjacent countries, the state decided, in 1992, to further open a number of inland border cities with large minority populations, including Manzhouli and Erlianhot of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Hunchun of Jilin Province, Yining, Bole and Tacheng of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, and Pingxiang and Dongxing of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. In 1993, the state selected seven ethnic localities--Hulun Buir League, Wuhai City, Yanbian Korea Autonomous Prefecture, Southeast Guizhou Miao-Dong Autonomous Prefecture, Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Golmud City, and Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture, as areas for pilot projects for reform and opening-up.

¹⁵¹ Wang Shuanqian ed., *Xinjiang Moving toward the 21 Century: Economy Volume* (Xinjiang People’s Press, 1999), p.157.

more autonomy to the international trade companies and gave guiding instructions rather than compulsory plans. Then 1988 to 1990 was the developing phase, in which the system of contracted responsibility was employed in the system of international trade. Finally, 1990 to now was the phase of further perfecting the reform on the system of international trade. Before 1978, there were only several state-owned enterprises that engaged in import and export activities. In 1997, there were more than 160 enterprises that were entitled the right of doing international trade and over 400 enterprises that were allowed to handle small-amount frontier trade.¹⁵² The state's revitalization of the border trade of Xinjiang not only links China to Central Asian oil or mineral industries and European Markets, but also re-establishes cultural ties between Uyghurs and Central Asian, Turkic, and Middle Eastern centers.¹⁵³ Following the opening of Xinjiang's borders, news from the outside world has flooded into the region via domestic and international media and Uyghurs have been increasingly exposed to knowledge of world events.¹⁵⁴ One interviewee admitted that he listened to radio broadcasts in Uyghur coming out of Kazakhstan, which informed him that Xinjiang was receiving money and guns from other Muslim countries to help their independence movement. With the opening up of Xinjiang, foreign forces could

¹⁵² Wang Shuanqian ed., op.cit.(Economic Volume), p.158.

¹⁵³ Scott Fogden, op.cit., p.37.

¹⁵⁴ Joanne Smith, op.cit., p.208.

more easily enter this region. So do the international allies of the East Turkestan Independence Movement. From Table 4.3, we can see that some East Turkestan SMOs have close connection with neighboring Central Asia states. It has also been reported recently that some of these SMOs have links with nebulous groups operating in the Middle East and Central Asia such as al-Qaeda, the Taliban, Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Islamic Revival), and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.¹⁵⁵

4.3 Conclusion

As a process filled with interactions among various social forces, the evolutionary reform paradoxically led to the rise of ethnic collective protests. We must acknowledge the concerted efforts made by the state to achieve equality among groups. However, these efforts have been largely offset by the mechanism of market economy. The interest-oriented people began to reflect on the economic differences and the rising competition. Uyghurs' perceptions of socio-economic inequalities are characterized by anger, bitterness, passion, and a strong sense of injustice.¹⁵⁶ These feelings, combined with the awareness of religio-cultural differences have strengthened Uyghurs' ethnic identity, which serves to heighten their common grievances and seceding intentions. The fast development of economy brought about

¹⁵⁵ Scott Fogden, *op.cit.*, p.61.

¹⁵⁶ Joanne Smith, *op.cit.*, p.201.

by the state rebuilding has further provided sufficient amounts of resources for collective actions, while the change in the system of ownership has granted people the freedom to deal with their private belongings. Besides, social movement organizations have found growth space in the more tolerant environment and outside allies could be reached with the border opening policy. Thus, state rebuilding has led to an unanticipated outcome—rising ethnic insurgencies.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

Xinjiang, being a remote multi-ethnic frontier area, has been increasingly beset by confrontation between two very distinct peoples—the more recently arrived Han Chinese and the indigenous Uyghurs. While the former group claims that Xinjiang has always been a part of China’s national territory, the latter has long engaged in opposition activities, namely the East-Turkestan Independence Movement. This paper has examined the development of the East-Turkestan Independence Movement in XUAR of P.R. China. My analysis demonstrates the value of using a ‘political opportunity’ framework to understand the oscillations in the contentious ethnic movement.

Viewing state building as a continuous process of interactions of various social forces, the paper explores the dynamics between state building and social movement, arguing that the changing political opportunity environment brought about by state rebuilding in the post-Mao’s era has contributed to the emergence and development of the East Turkestan Independence Movement. To outline the causal mechanism between the two factors, the paper has not only explored their respective changes--the development pattern of the East Turkestan Independence Movement and the transformation in state rebuilding from a formal control system to a partial informal one--but also showed the causal flow, namely, how the social changes brought about

by state rebuilding has altered the interests of contending groups, supplying them with common grievances and amplifying their bases of solidarity and tactical power.

The main hypothesis of this study is that state rebuilding has been an important factor in triggering and fueling the re-emergence of East Turkestan social movement. The historical account in Chapter 2 has shown that, in the Mao's era from 1950s to 1970s, the fierce defiance of the Uyghurs mellowed considerably and even disappeared. The active East Turkestan Independence Movement following the founding of the PRC was soon brought under the control of the People's Liberation Army. The insurgencies were heavily repressed, and mass Han Chinese were transferred into Xinjiang to empower the XPCC and strength its control of this region. At the same time, the CCP began to set up the command economy system and its corresponding political and social systems. With the collectivization of rural and urban economy and the establishment of a bulky set of administrative organs, an overwhelming formal control system was created. The command economy system and the coherent institutional arrangement in political and social areas imposed draconian constraints on the behaviors and activities of the people: the government assigned jobs to citizens, stipulated the salary for them, decided food quota, restricted population movement and other social activities, gave instructions to enterprises, determined the output and input of production, and so on. In essence, people did not have their private sphere and personal freedom.

This oppressing and stifling political atmosphere had a detrimental effect on the East Turkestan Independence Movement. Although Mao's era of governing China could be described as a tumultuous period with constant campaigns and "class struggles", it was a relatively peaceful episode in terms of "ethnic unrest". The volatile situation in 1950s was soon replaced by tranquility in the ensuing two decades. In 1960s, there were only three major insurgences documented in the official records. The most influential one, the case of the ETPRP, was an abortive attempt. The Ili disturbance in 1962 was largely caused by the exodus of 60,000 Uyghurs and Kazakhs across the border into the USSR, indicating that these people would rather choose evasion than confrontation. In 1970s, the East Turkestan Independence Movement showed a striking silence.

However, the violent protest re-surfaced and developed rapidly following the reform policy in the later 1970s. When the formal control system encountered enormous problems, Deng's reform began to make great efforts to de-mobilize society through re-employing the market economy mechanism. By using the economy information leverage to adjust the production activities and commercial trade, the state refrained from direct political involvement in the economic sphere. The state tried to utilize economic incentives instead of mandatory instructions to regulate the movement of the people. Though the CCP remained dominant in the political field and the central government retained paramount power, the state did

adopt more open and tolerant social policies toward the citizens, allowing more private space and delegating more decision-making powers to the people.

This changed political milieu had a favorable effect on the East Turkestan movement. As could be seen from the records, the re-surfacing and escalation of the East Turkestan Independence Movement coincided with the loosening-up of the control process. In the early 1980s, some sporadic Uyghur insurgences emerged. These disturbances soon spread throughout XUAR, and the level of violence arising from the conflicts escalated, especially during 1990s. The event of Baren Village was reported to be extremely bloody. In addition, some terrorism means were employed by the activists to demonstrate their solidarity with the burgeoning Islamic fundamentalist movements worldwide.

Arguably, the state rebuilding in the post-Mao era was essentially a transformation from a formal control system to a partial informal one, one in which the authorities try to use economic leverage to integrate the minorities into China Proper. In this transformation, the previous dominant political power began to retreat from the economic sphere; market economy system regained the opportunity to flourish; private properties were allowed; the previous paramount position of Maoist ideology began to decline; the ethnic cultural and religious policies became more tolerable; and so on. In all, an interest-based social order was formed.

This policy shift has its rationale. Informal control, which relies on persuasive means rather than coercive one, is more effective and less money-consuming than formal control. By appealing to the instinct and self-interest of the citizens, the state utilizes a more subtle mechanism to lead and manage people. It is not necessary for the state to spend huge sums of money to deploy coercive forces. Besides, this interest-based social order also contributes to social stability and facilitates governance. The behavior of the interest-oriented citizens becomes more predictable and stable; hence there would be less turbulent changes in the society. Moreover, it has some special advantage in integrating the ethnic groups. The centrifugal force of ethno-nationalism has been demonstrated by many cases. The Chinese government adopted some policies to dilute the ethnic culture and discourage the alien religion in Mao's era such as the changing of Uyghur's language script and the religious reform. But these repressive policies did not achieve their goal. Even worse was that these policies were regarded as 'forced assimilation' by the Uyghurs and aroused much discontent and anger. However, in the market economy system, minorities feel the necessity of learning mandarin and integrating into the entire national economy system. Hence, the "assimilation" takes another subtle form.

However, state building is not an uncontested enterprise. The efforts made by the central government might not always produce the anticipated results, but rather, generate many side-effects that might be completely against the will of the state. The

state rebuilding from 1978 has conversely led to the surge of ethno-nationalism nationwide. Using the Uyghur people as a case, this study has carefully examined the favorable conditions brought about by state rebuilding to the East Turkestan Independence Movement. Along with Deng's reform, the political milieu became more open and tolerant. Ethnic identity became more salient as the paramount position of the class identity declined and the competition accompanying the market economy increased. So did the Uyghurs' feeling of subordination and disparity. Hence, the feeling of belonging to a distinct and disadvantaged ethnic group might reinforce the Uyghurs' unwillingness to be ruled by others and provide justification for their collective dissents. Moreover, with the loosening control in cultural area, Islam, which is one primary identity maker, became more influential in the Uyghurs' self-identification. Furthermore, the availability of abundant resources resulting from the development of a market economy, grants the necessary conditions for raising and sustaining collective actions. In addition, the loosened social control eased the way of forming social movement organizations, and to some extent, facilitated the progress of mounting ethnic insurgences. Hence, the 1980s and 1990s witnessed the rapid development of East Turkestan Independence Movement in Xinjiang.

As a part of state building, the contentious politics also helps to remake the state. The anxiety of the Chinese authorities over this region increased with the level of violence of the Uyghurs. As a result of these increased protests, in April 1996 the

Chinese government launched a series of new crackdowns and a ‘Strike Hard’ (*Yan Da*) campaign to reestablish order in Xinjiang.¹⁵⁷ Hence, after a period of greater tolerant policy during the 1980s and the early 1990s, the state has since the mid-1990s reverted to the strictest controls and outright repression. Many talibs, students of Islam, were arrested and sent out of the region to prison camps in Qinghai.¹⁵⁸ Schools and colleges in Xinjiang were identified as potential hotbeds of separatist and illegal religious activities and became the main target of the Chinese authorities in June 1996. Many illegal mosques and religious schools were closed down and police confiscated reactionary books and publications promoting national separation, as well as some illegal religious publicity materials.¹⁵⁹ Abdulahat Abdurixit, Chairman of the XUAR government made the following speech on August 13th on the struggle against separatism: ‘we sternly cracked down on violent terrorist acts and separatist and sabotaging activities carried out by an extremely small number of ethnic separatists. In light of actual conditions, localities and departments formulated specific implementation measures and plans; provided specific regulation on managing religious venues, clergy personnel, the content of scriptural teaching, and the *talifu*

¹⁵⁷ A systematic crackdown on crime throughout the whole of China was launched at the end of April 1996. In Chinese, it is called ‘Yan Da’, an abbreviation of yanli daji yanzhong xingshi fazui huodong (campaign to strike severely at serious criminal offences). In addition to this crackdown on crime in general, the campaign was also clearly directed against the particular separatist activists in Tibet, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang.

¹⁵⁸ Michael Dillon, *op.cit.*, p. 87.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 88.

(students). They put forward regulatory requirements and improvement suggestions on ethnic customs and habits and religious ceremonies and activities. They investigated illegal religious activities, cleaned up and outlawed underground scriptures schools, scripture-teaching venues and martial arts halls and carried out supervision, monitoring and education of ideologically reactionary talifu. This has dealt a firm blow to illegal religious activities...¹⁶⁰ In all, Beijing's policy turned from accommodation to repression although it did not return to the formal control model in the Mao era. This reciprocal relationship between state policy and social movement forms the impetus of the on-going process of state building. But this relationship cannot be regarded simply as formal control leading to low frequency of collective action, while informal control causes high frequency of collective action. As we can see from the records, although the Chinese authorities re-adopted the repressive policy, the volatile situation in Xinjiang did not come under control immediately. The turbulence in 1997 has well demonstrated this. Far from calming down, the Uyghur activists plotted several collective actions to show their perseverance. The big march that happened on Feb. 5th 1997 involved nearly one thousand Muslims and ended up in anti-Han bloodshed and the looting of shops. It was the most serious political turmoil since 1962.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 92.

The once again stern state policy has significantly influenced the East Turkestan Independence Movement, though it has not completely eliminated the movement. This repressive policy has greatly curtailed the growth space for the East Turkestan Independence Movement and subsequently pushed the activists to resort more to some extremist behaviors such as assassination and bombing. Other than an increase in number, the targets of the assassination attempts has broadened. Previously, the activists' targets of assassination were confined to only Han Chinese cadres, police and military. As a result of the repressive control, activists also turned their anger on Uyghur cadres, who they viewed as 'collaborators' with Han Chinese. According to the official report, in early May 1996, a gang of eleven Uyghur separatists attacked the rural home of a local Uyghur leader in Kucha. They threw grenades through the windows, then cut out the tongues and sliced the throats of the leader, his wife, his younger brother, and his brother's life.'¹⁶¹ Another serious incident was an attack in Kashghar on May 12th on a senior imam of the ID Gah Mosque in the city who was also the Vice-Chairman of the Xinjiang Chinese People's Consultative Committee and a member of the Standing Committee of the state-sponsored China Islamic Association. The attack on Mullah Aronghan Haji left him injured and hospitalized. The imam stood accused of having links with the Chinese

¹⁶¹ Joanne Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

government that were 'too close'.¹⁶² Bombing, the other major extremist means, became more frequent from the mid-1990s. The bombing of buses in Urumqi on February 25th 1997 happened on the sixth and the last day of official mourning for Deng Xiaoping who died on February 19th. The bombs exploded on bus routes 2, 10 and 44 in the city and resulted in seven deaths and over seventy injured,¹⁶³ some of whom are Uyghurs. 'Representatives of Uyghur nationalist and Islamist groups at a press conference in Moscow the previous day had confirmed that some separatist groups had decided that a terror campaign was the only way they would be able to create an Islamic state in the region.'¹⁶⁴ These extremist means have even aroused the discontent of many Uyghur common persons, especially those elderly generation and middle-aged Uyghurs who are grateful for recent improvements in standards of living and regard the peace as the supreme. When speaking of the bombings and assassinations, most of my interviewees showed their disagreement and even disgust. One interviewee said, "I do not think that they are fighting for our nation. Look at the facts. Those who bore the brunt of the radicals' attack were not only Han Chinese but also members of our people. Their brutal actions only convince me that they are

¹⁶² Michael Dillon, *op.cit.*, p. 87.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 99.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

virtually pursuing their own interests without truly caring for our people.”¹⁶⁵ Another interviewee recalled the period after the bombing of 1997 in Urumqi, “For quite a long time, we dare not take buses to school. Since we do not have our own vehicle, I had to walk to school every weekday. Moreover, we cancelled all excursion plans in case we run into some terrorist actions.”¹⁶⁶ Although the extremist means have, to some extent, surprised the Beijing government, they are not powerful enough to force concessions of the state. Even worse, sticking to the terror road, the Uyghur activists might lose these potential supporters.

To forecast the prospect of the East Turkestan Independence Movement, we should take into consideration some other points. First is the changing international environment. On the one place, the Chinese government has actively been seeking international cooperation to keep Xinjiang within China. A major initiative in this regard is the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). In April 1996, the presidents of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan held a meeting in Shanghai to discuss mutual problems and opportunities. Fundamentalist Islamic terrorism inevitably became an important theme in their thinking. Meetings of the presidents of these five countries were held every year and in June 2001, the five

¹⁶⁵ Interviewed on May 9, 2004.

¹⁶⁶ Interviewed on May 8, 2004.

were joined by the president of Uzbekistan to form the SCO.¹⁶⁷ One of the aims of this organization was to counter Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. On the other hand, the fundamental changes in the international environment wrought by the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States have favored China. 'For better or worse, this event transformed the way the international community views many separatist movements, particularly when they involve Muslim populations. Whether in Palestine, Kashmir, the Philippines, Chechnya, or elsewhere, separatist movements have been branded as terrorist. Where formerly the talk may have been of 'decolonization' or, in the old Marxist terminology, 'wars for national liberation', now these struggles are all conveniently subsumed under the rubric of terrorism by the concerned states. The claims of existing states against dissident minorities have been strengthened and are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.' Some analysts have suggested that the U.S., which has been actively engaged in efforts to improve human rights conditions in the world, has changed since the events of September 11, 2001. They point out that China might be seeking concessions from the U.S. regarding Xinjiang in exchange for China's cooperation in the global campaign against terrorism.

¹⁶⁷ Collin Mackerras, 'Ethnicity in China: The Case of Xinjiang', <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~asiactr/haq/200401/0401a001.html> (November 15, 2004).

The other point is the economic development and modernization in Xinjiang. Although the competition within Xinjiang might sharpen and Uyghurs' grievances might deepen with the market economy, it is undeniable that the living standard of the Uyghurs has improved much in comparison with the past. Most Uyghurs do not want to 'rock the boat'. Large numbers of Uyghurs are participating successfully in the burgeoning Chinese economy. Few of these Uyghurs are willing to involve directly in the more radical forms of resistance to Chinese rule. Although the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the establishment of independent states by the former Soviet Central Asian republics, had some negative effect by encouraging some Uyghurs to aspire to reestablish an independent homeland, it is partially offset by the fact that Xinjiang's economy is developing far more rapidly than the economies of the neighboring independent Turkic states, with the exception of Kazakstan. 'Whereas a generation ago the relative prosperity of Soviet Central Asia left most of its inhabitants willing to seek some kind of accommodation with Moscow, a similar dynamic could work to Beijing's benefit today.'¹⁶⁸ An important point worth mentioning is the Great Western Development Strategy¹⁶⁹ (*Xibu Da Kaifa Zhanlüe*)

¹⁶⁸ Graham E. Fuller and S. Frederick Starr, op.cit..

¹⁶⁹ The west includes provinces of Shanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia, Xinjiang, Sichuan, Chongqing, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Guangxi and Inner Mongolia.

launched since January 2000.¹⁷⁰ Although this policy is nothing new in terms of its aim of boosting economic development, the scale is unprecedentedly extensive. The government has invested substantially and set up quite a few mammoth projects covering infrastructure, communications, energy, ecology, and water management. The state is also promoting high-tech industries and attracting foreign direct investment into Xinjiang.

By the time of my fieldwork in 2004, the Great Western Development Strategy has already produced some effects. The capital Urumqi now has modern highways, freeways, supermarket, shopping malls and high-rise apartment. Towns everywhere are being modernized with the rapid construction and renovation of the transportation system. Increasing wealth and rising standard of living are creating the conditions for a burgeoning middle class in Xinjiang. This means that there is an emerging Uyghur middle class whose members have better jobs, are more prosperous than the elder generations, and are accessing better education. They might continue to feel very strongly about their Uyghur identity, but may not be quite as ready to take up arms for a secessionist movement.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Colin Mackerras, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Judging from the present situation, the Uyghur problem will not go away in a short time because of the cultural and historical roots. The East Turkestan Independence Movement is even likely to exacerbate and the conflicts might escalate as political, cultural, economic and international factors intensify the social pressures within Xinjiang. The activists would mount more extremist behaviors when faced with the suppression of the Chinese state.

Given the power of the Chinese state, however, Beijing will be able to contain this region in the foreseeable future, barring unforeseen circumstances. With the increasing immigration of Han Chinese and the development of the regional economy, the Uyghur language, identity, and culture might eventually dissolve in the interests of broader amalgamation into the dominant Han culture.

In contrast to the immense influence that ethno-nationalism has exerted on China, current studies about it are still conspicuously meager. This paper is an attempt to study ethno-nationalism from the perspective of the interaction between the state building and social movement. It has proposed a theory about the effects of the state's control policy on the development of contentious ethnic movement. Whether this theory is applicable to other similar cases such as Tibet and Inner Mongolia requires further research.

Since the ethnic issue remains a sensitive topic in China, most studies on it are qualitative and descriptive. However, if China keeps its informal control strategy and

continues to open up China, quantitative study could come to play a greater role as valuable data would be more accessible. How the state policies influence the social movement and how the social movement helps to re-build the state could be further studied at the micro level. In addition, the availability of quantitative data also will enhance the study on ethno-nationalism through reification. What are the components of ethno-nationalism? Is it universal or diverse in different cases? Could the feeling of belonging to a certain ethnic group be measured? How strong can a particular ethnic identity be? And will the attachment to a certain group change as time goes by? These questions could be explored in the further study.

The study on the Uyghur people could also be subdivided. The resistance group is not a unified entity; on the contrary, it consists of conflicting sectors. According to the means adopted, there are two primary sectors in the resistance group: autonomists and separatists. Autonomists are strongly committed to the preservation of the Uyghur's identity, culture and traditions, yet they believe that these goals can be achieved only if Beijing grants to Xinjiang a meaningful degree of political autonomy.¹⁷² Separatists seek the same ends but deem these can be realistically achieved only through full political separation from the People's Republic of

¹⁷² Graham E. Fuller and S. Frederick Starr, *op.cit* p. 22.

China.¹⁷³ Among the separatists there are sharp division between those dedicated to peaceful means and those advocating political violence. Further study could look inside the Uyghur group: How to draw the line between different sectors? What causes them to choose different means? Do the members of one sector shift to the other sector? If the answer is yes, then under what conditions does the conversion take place? These questions are not only academically meaningful, but also politically significant. Beijing has long believed that outside forces have caused ethnic unrest in Xinjiang¹⁷⁴ and is determined to put down all political and social unrest through coercive and repressive campaigns if necessary. Although no one doubts Beijing's capability to keep Xinjiang within China's border, yet for China's long term stability and security, the central government needs to look into the actual situation and try to avoid ill-devised plans.

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 23.

¹⁷⁴ The Document No. 7, issued on 19 March 1996 by the Party Central Committee in Beijing, explicitly claimed that "the separatist organizations abroad have reinforced their collaboration, reinforcing day after day their efforts to infiltrate and carry out sabotage in Xinjiang".

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Appendix I

Map of Xinjiang



Area: 1.6 million sq. km.

Capital: Urumchi (Urumqi)

Major cities: Kashgar, Khotan, Yarkend, Aksu, Kuchar, Korla, Turpan, Chochek.

Major mountains: Altay (north), Tangri Tagh (centre), Karakorum, Altun, Kunlun (south)

Highest peak: Chogori (8,611 m)

Lowest altitude: Turpan depression (155 m below sea level)

Major lakes: Lopnor, Sayram, Boghda, Baghrash.

Major rivers: Tarim (2,137 km), Ili, Irtish,

Deserts: Taklimakan (Tarim basin), Gurbantunggut (Junggar basin), Gumtay (east)

Source: <http://www.ccs.uky.edu/~rakhim/doc_files/map.html> (November 11, 2004)

Appendix II

Xinjiang's GDP Growth

Year	Xinjiang	China
	GDP per capital (yuan)	GDP per capital (yuan)
1978	313	378
1980	410	461
1985	820	846
1986	924	953
1987	1053	1088
1988	1347	1345
1989	1493	1496
1990	1799	1627
1991	2101	1864
1992	2477	2277
1993	3019	2923
1994	3953	3892
1995	4764	4815
1996	5167	5634

Sources: *China Statistical Yearbook 1997*, (China Statistical Publishing House, Beijing, 1997); *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook 1997*, (China Statistical Publishing House, Beijing, 1997).

Appendix IV

Uyghur Organizations Around the World

Name	President/Chariman	Address	Website
East Turkestan (Uyghuristan) National Congress	Enver Can	Roman street. 36a, 80639 Munich, Germany	http://www.eastturkistan.com
World Uyghur Youth Congress	Mr. Dolqun Isa	P.O.Box 310 312 80103 Munich Germany	
East Turkstan Union in Europe	Mr. Asgar Can	Munich, Germany	
East Turkestan Foundation	Mr. Mehmet Riza Bekin	Istanbul, Turkey	
East Turkestan Solidarity Association	Mr. Seyit Taranci	Istanbul, Turkey	
East Turkestan Culture and Solidarity Association	Abubekir Türksoy	Kayseri, Turkey	
East Turkestan Association	Mr. Faruk Sadikov	Stokholm, Sweden	
Belgium Uyghur Association	Sultan Ehmet	Brussels, Belgium	
Uyghur Youth Union in	Seydullam	Belgium	

Belgium			
Uygur Youth Union UK	Enver Bugda	949'A' Romford Road Monor Park London E12 5JR UK	
Uyghur House	Mr. Shahelil	Holland	
Uyghur Association	Serip Haje	Moscow, Russia	
Uyghur American Association	Mr. Turdi	Washington D.C. USA	http://uyghuramerican.org
Canadian Uyghur Association	Mr. Mehmetjan Tohti	Canada	
Australian Turkestan Association	Mr. Ahmet Igamberdi	Australia	
'Nozugum' Foundation		Almaty, Kazakhstan	
Kazakhstan Regional Uyghur(ittipak) Organization	Mr. Khahriman Gojamberdi	Almaty, Kazakhstan	
Uyghuristan Freedom Association	Mr. Sabit Abdurahman	Almaty, Kanzakhstan	
Kazakhstan Uyghur	Mr. Proffessor Sheripjan Nadirov		

Unity(Ittipak) Association			
Kyrgyzstan Uyghur Unity(Ittipak) Association	Mr. Rozimehmet Abdulnbakiev	Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	
Uyghur Youth Union in Kazakhstan	Abdurexit Turdeyev	Kazakhstan	
Bishkek Human Rights Committee	Mr. Tursun Islam	Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	
East Turkestan Information Center	Mr. Abduljelil Qaraqash	90429 Nürnberg, Germany	http://www.uygur.org

Source: East Turkestan Information Center

<http://www.uygur.org/adres/uygur_organization.htm> (November 11, 2004)