XINJIANG AND CHINA'S RISE IN CENTRAL ASIA – A HISTORY

Michael E. Clarke

ROUTLEDGE

Xinjiang and China's Rise in Central Asia – A History

The recent conflict between the indigenous Uyghur and Han Chinese demonstrates that Xinjiang is a major trouble spot for China, with Uyghur demands for increased autonomy, and where Beijing's policy is to more firmly integrate the province within China. This book provides an account of how China's evolving integrationist policies in Xinjiang have influenced its foreign policy in Central Asia since the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, and how the policy of integration is related to China's concern for security and its pursuit of increased power and influence in Central Asia.

The book traces the development of Xinjiang – from the collapse of the Qing Empire in the early twentieth century to the present – and argues that there is a largely complementary relationship between China's Xinjiang, Central Asia and grand strategy-derived interests. This pattern of interests informs and shapes China's diplomacy in Central Asia and its approach to the governance of Xinjiang. Michael E. Clarke shows how China's concerns and policies, although pursued with vigour in recent decades, are of long standing, and how domestic problems and policies in Xinjiang have for a long time been closely bound up with wider international relations issues.

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For Edmund Clarke, and Augie and Marisa Agostinelli

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Preface

This book has had a very long period of gestation. The focus and core arguments of the book were sketched out nearly a decade ago when I was beginning to tentatively write the research proposal for my doctoral thesis. My interest in China's ethnic minorities was sparked by an undergraduate course at Griffith University on the subject, taught by Professor Colin Mackerras. Initially my attention was drawn not to the Xinjiang and Uyghur issues but rather the Tibetan issue. This was, in part, the result of the heightened profile of the issue in the late 1990s due to the efforts of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government-in-exile to 'internationalise' their cause. After completing an honours year thesis on the impact of the Tibet issue on Sino–US relations, I was uncertain about whether to attempt a doctoral thesis on the Tibet issue or turn my attention to another vast ethnic minority region of the People's Republic of which I was then only dimly aware – Xinjiang.

The reading of three books: Owen Lattimore's *Pivot of Asia*; Andrew D. W. Forbes' *Warlords and Muslims*; and Donald H. McMillen's *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang* proved to be a decisive factor in my ruminations. Lattimore's broad geopolitical overview of Xinjiang's importance throughout history generated a desire to explore Xinjiang's contemporary role in China's foreign policy. Forbes' account of the region's history during the first half of the twentieth century was also something of a revelation as its detailed analysis brought to life an extremely turbulent and often confusing period in Xinjiang's history. Finally, McMillen's book, with its detailed exploration of the Chinese Communist Party's implementation of 'revolutionary integration' in Xinjiang during the Maoist era, highlighted many of the enduring problems that Beijing has confronted in its attempt to bind the region ever closer to the rest of the People's Republic.

In hindsight, this book's attempt to provide both a history of Xinjiang under the People's Republic and an account of how its incorporation into it has influenced Chinese foreign policy, which owes a great deal to these three works. While there has been much scholarship on distinct aspects of Xinjiang since the 1980s exploring such issues as ethnic identity, religious practice, economic development and sources of ethnic conflict, this book is my own modest attempt to provide an account of how Beijing's evolving integrationist policies in Xinjiang have influenced its foreign policy in Central Asia.

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Abbreviations

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
ETR	East Turkestan Republic
ETIM	East Turkestan Islamic Movement
GMD	Guomindang
GWD	Great Western Development
HT	Hizb-ut-Tahrir
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
MPR	Mongolian People's Republic
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
RATS	Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure
S-5	the 'Shanghai Five'
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO	World Trade Organization
WUC	World Uyghur Congress
XUAR	Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region
XPCC	Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps

1 China and the integration of Xinjiang

A history of a permanent provocation

On 5 and 6 July 2009 a wave of violent unrest rocked Ürümqi, the capital of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), causing the deaths of one hundred and eighty-four people and injuring over one thousand. The immediate cause of this event was an incident occurring over a week before at a toy factory far to the east in Shaoguan, Guangdong Province, where Han Chinese workers beat to death two Uyghur migrant workers on the basis of a rumour that some Uyghurs had raped Han girls. Reports and images of this violence spread to Xinjiang via the internet, including the posting of a video of the incident on You Tube (Radio Free Asia 2009). Subsequently, a large demonstration of Uyghurs on 5 July, demanding justice for the incident in Shaoguan, deteriorated into a violent riot in which Uyghurs reportedly attacked Han Chinese businesses and individual Han Chinese on the streets. Significant numbers of Ürümqi's Han population then took to the streets on 6 July, many of them crudely armed, and reportedly vandalised Uyghur businesses and attacked Uyghurs before being dispersed by the security forces (Wong 2009a; Economist 2009). Simmering ethnic tension continued throughout the final months of 2009. For instance, large protests by Han Chinese took place in Ürümqi on 3 and 4 September demanding action against alleged attacks on Han by Uyghurs armed with hypodermic syringes. These protests were forcibly broken up by police and resulted in the deaths of up to five people (Wong 2009b). The ongoing unrest prompted unprecedented calls for the resignations of senior officials including Xinjiang's long-serving Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Chairman Wang Lequan (Reuters 2009; Hille 2009). These events also prompted Western governments, particularly the United States, to call on Beijing to exercise 'restraint' in its response (White House 2009).

The Ürümqi violence and its aftermath led to five government responses. First, the security forces arrested close to 1,500 Uyghur men in connection to the riots (nine of whom were subsequently sentenced to death) and deployed a major police and army presence in the city. Second, in what is now a customary refrain regarding any unrest in Xinjiang, officials blamed 'hostile external forces' for the events in Ürümqi. In particular, Chinese officials excoriated US-based exiled Uyghur activist Rebiya Kadeer and the Munich-based World Uyghur Congress (WUC) for orchestrating it. Third, Beijing forcefully reiterated that Xinjiang

is an 'integral' part of the 'motherland' (China Daily 2009a). Fourth, Beijing sacked the Ürümqi CCP secretary, Li Zhi, Ürümqi's police chief, Liu Yaohua, and eventually replaced long standing regional Party secretary, Wang Lequan, late in 2009. Finally, the authorities paid up to 200,000 yuan (US$29,282) in compensation to the families of Han victims of the Ürümqi violence (Xinhua 2009; Associated Press 2009). This response to the unrest was somewhat incongruous given the current status of Chinese power in Xinjiang. In 2009 China's position in Xinjiang appeared more secure than at any previous time in the sixty-year history of the PRC. China's sovereignty over Xinjiang is not challenged by any other state, territorial disputes with its Central Asian neighbours have largely been settled, Xinjiang–Central Asian trade is blossoming and Xinjiang has experienced substantial economic development. However, Beijing as its response to the July 2009 events, demonstrates remains as sensitive as ever regarding its position in Xinjiang.

Why should this be the case? According the PRC's 2003 White Paper, '*The History and Development of Xinjiang*', the region has been an 'inseparable part of the unitary multi-ethnic Chinese nation' since the Han Dynasty (206BCE–220CE) (Information Office of the State Council of the PRC 2003). Regardless of the historical accuracy or otherwise of this claim, it is one that is recognised by the majority of states in the contemporary international system. The contemporary Chinese government's regular statements that Xinjiang is an 'integral' province of the PRC is not as banal and innocuous as it would first appear – it in fact contains a number of key questions or problems that form the core foci of this book. Indeed, these questions concern the '*what*', '*who*' and '*how*' of the process of Xinjiang's enmeshment into the contemporary Chinese state: *what* was defined and claimed as constituting 'China's Xinjiang', *who* was deemed to constitute the population of the region, and thus became Chinese citizens, and finally, *how,* through what strategies, techniques or policies, has the Chinese state sought to make good on these claims?

In this book, I present three main arguments stemming from these questions. First, I argue that the history of Xinjiang from the nineteenth century onward can be seen as an integral yet uncompleted part of the territorialisation, in the Westphalian sense, of modern China. Indeed, the recognition of China's claim to exclusive Westphalian sovereignty over Xinjiang by other states in the international system in the middle of the twentieth century has proven to be but the first, albeit extremely important, step in the Chinese state's quest to make the region an 'integral' part of China. Since 1949, the task of the PRC has been to determine who constituted Xinjiang's population and how best to manage their relationship to the state. Second, it is in the realm of these '*who*' and '*how*' questions that the theme of a 'permanent provocation' is situated. In particular, the manner in which the Chinese state has attempted to resolve these questions has reflected that development in the 'order of power' which Michel Foucault termed 'government rationality' or 'governmentality' (Foucault 1991). This primarily concerns the various processes, means and strategies that the PRC has employed to integrate Xinjiang with China. Third, the manner in which the PRC has sought the integration of the

region, has also shaped its foreign policy in Central Asia in fundamental ways by transforming how Beijing conceives of the relationship between Xinjiang and China. Specifically, the progress of integration has meant that Beijing, no longer simply conceives of Xinjiang as a strategic buffer region in the traditional sense, but as a potential strategic and economic asset that can actively contribute to the power of the nation-state.

Territoriality, governmentality and Xinjiang

Charles Maier has argued that the conventional, morality-laden narrative of twentieth-century history, 'obscures one of the most encompassing or fundamental socio-political trends of modern world development, namely the emergence, ascendancy, and subsequent crisis of what is best labelled "territoriality" ' (Maier 2000: 807). Maier subsequently defines territoriality as, 'simply the properties, including power, provided by the control of bordered political space, which until recently at least created the framework for national and often ethnic identity' (Maier 2000: 808). Of course the dominant form or model of territoriality that shaped 'modern world development', in Maier's phrase, has been one that can be broadly characterised as Westphalian – defined by notions of exclusive sovereignty within clearly delimited geographic boundaries. The conventional definition of Westphalian sovereignty in contemporary international relations implies a complementary relationship between authority and territory. For example, one scholar asserts that sovereignty can be understood simply as, 'supreme authority within a territory', while Krasner highlights the external implication that, 'the Westphalian state is a system of political authority based on territory and *autonomy*' (Philpott 1999: 570; Krasner 1995/96: 115). Philpott also identifies the crucial role of territoriality in the conception of Westphalian sovereignty: 'The collection of people over whom the holder of sovereignty rules is defined by virtue of its location within borders, not by some other principle such as family kinship or religious belief their location within boundaries requires their allegiance to their sovereign' (Philpott 1999: 570).

Therefore, Westphalian sovereignty implies the exclusive exercise of political authority within a defined territory and that this political authority is independent of all other political authorities within these bounds (Philpott 1999: 570; El Ouali 2006: 637). Thus, the real innovation of Westphalian sovereignty is the pairing of the notion of exclusive political authority within a defined territory with independence – the lack of subordination to other political authorities – in their mutual relations, which leads to the oft noted idea that sovereign states have an equality of rights in the international system (El Ouali 2006: 637). The consensus in the contemporary international relations literature, across realist, liberal and indeed constructivist approaches, thus regards Westphalian sovereignty as the central organising concept of international society (Waltz 1979; Bull 1977; Wendt 1999).

What, then, is the connection between Westphalian sovereignty and the history of Xinjiang's incorporation into modern China? There are two key linkages.

First, there is a consensus amongst China scholars that Chinese history since the mid- to late-nineteenth century onward can be seen as an attempt to enter the 'modern' international system. This system that was (and is) comprised of Westphalian nation-states required China to reorder or restructure the relationship between political authority and territory. Of particular importance for the Qing in the late imperial period and even more so for its Republican heirs, was to assume the trappings of nation-statehood in order to have their claims to exclusive authority over the territory of the empire recognised as legitimate by other states in the system. This task, it can be suggested, took place at the diplomatic and foreign relations level and was not completed until the middle of the twentieth century. Indeed, William Kirby, has remarked of Republican China (1911–49) that, 'everything important had an international dimension', pointing to the fact that much of post-Qing China's transformation, from the nationalist revolution itself to that of the communist revolution, were inextricably linked not only to the role of external powers in China but also China's self-image (Kirby 1997: 433). Essentially, this diplomacy concerned the '*what*' of China, whether 'defending' the Chinese-ness of Xinjiang, Mongolia or reclaiming the treaty ports as 'Chinese territory' from Western imperialism.

Second, although this claim had been made and recognised by the 'international community' by the mid-twentieth century, it did not necessarily follow, particularly in the case of such frontier regions as Xinjiang, that political authority directed from Beijing filled out those territorial boundaries. This concerns the realm of the '*who*' and '*how*' dilemmas noted above – *who* was deemed to constitute the population of the region, and thus became Chinese citizens and *how*, through what strategies, techniques or policies, has the Chinese state sought to make good on these claims? Therefore, the second element in the consolidation of China's territoriality, and one that is incomplete, concerns the internal imbrication of Westphalian sovereignty. That is to say, it concerns not only the challenge of extending Beijing's exclusive political authority within the PRC's defined territorial boundaries but to make such authority 'legitimate' in the eyes of the population over which it is exercised. This task has been made all the more difficult for the state in the context of Xinjiang (and other regions such as Tibet for example) by the region's multi-ethnic population and their various ethnic, linguistic and religious connections to other political entities in Central Asia. I will suggest that the existence of alternative sources of political authority and alternative modes of legitimacy in Xinjiang can be termed, to use Foucault's characterisation of a 'power relationship', as constituting a 'permanent provocation':

> At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. Rather than speaking of an essential antagonism, it would be better to speak of an 'agonism' – of a relationship that is at the same time mutual incitement and struggle; less a face-to-face confrontation that paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation.
>
> (Foucault 2002: 342)

In the context of the relation between Xinjiang and China, the Chinese state has often attempted to utilise this 'permanent provocation' to reinforce both its perceptions of Xinjiang and the complex of strategies and tactics aimed at integration. The rationale of the Chinese state since the nineteenth century in this regard has been clear and is evident in the contemporary government's claim to the 'integral' nature of Xinjiang's attachment to the PRC. The intent to integrate is simultaneously reinforced and legitimated in the state's perception by the very existence of potential alternative political realities both within and external to Xinjiang. Thus, the themes of integration and confrontation have at certain points worked simultaneously to strengthen the state's perception of the necessity of integration and developed its ability to implement this vision.

Arguably, the state's attempt to resolve these '*who*' and '*how*' dilemmas has been reflective of a form of power described by Foucault as 'governmentality' Foucault's characterisation of 'government' as the 'conduct of conduct' is essential to the analytical and descriptive power of the notion of governmentality. This definition relies on a number of meanings or senses of the word 'conduct' In the first sense 'to conduct' means to lead or direct. In a second, and perhaps more important sense, the moral or ethical dimension is emphasised, such as 'to conduct oneself' (Foucault 2002: 341; Dean 1999: 10). This second sense, which implies a self-guidance, refers ultimately to the realm of our behaviours and actions. Moreover, the 'conduct of oneself' is generally evaluative, in that one's conduct is measured against a set of norms, thereby facilitating a 'rational' judgement of actual behaviour (Dean 1999: 10). The exercise of power through this 'conduct of conduct' thus essentially constitutes a 'management of possibilities'. For Foucault, 'government' not only refers to political structures or the management of states:

> but also modes of action, more or less considered or calculated, that were destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people. To govern, in this sense, is to *structure the possible field of action of others.*
>
> (Foucault 2002: 341)

This 'management' of the possible field of action of 'others' has been central to the Chinese state's integrationist project in Xinjiang, particularly so since 1949. This has been reflected in such variegated realms or fields as cartography, ethnography and the management of religion across the eighteenth to twenty-first centuries within the state's discourse and actions in Xinjiang. Importantly, the Chinese state's long-term endeavour to integrate the region has also had at its core a concern to establish the legitimacy of Chinese sovereignty in the eyes of the region's non-Han population. Legitimacy has been sought through the application of two broad instruments across two major historical periods. First, as we shall see in Chapter 3, from 1949 to 1976 the CCP sought to establish its legitimacy in Xinjiang initially through the application of its interpretation of the Leninist model of 'national self-determination', and then through the application of the revolutionary Maoist model of political and economic organisation. Second, as will emerge from Chapters 4, 5 and 6, the Party increasingly moved away from the Maoist model from the

late 1970s onward. In the decades since the death of Mao, the Party's legitimacy has increasingly relied on its capacity to deliver continued economic growth and development to the region and its peoples.

Yet the variegated instruments that Beijing has deployed in the region in the furtherance of this goal has arguably contributed to growing insecurity amongst the non-Han population of Xinjiang, a dynamic that suggests a failure to resolve the '*who*' and '*how*' questions of Chinese governance of the region. Despite this, however, it is clear that the PRC has achieved a level of control and power in Xinjiang that its Qing predecessors would have envied. The basis for this lies in the connections between processes of territoriality and governmentality. Indeed, the history of Chinese policy in Xinjiang since 1949 suggests that Beijing has gradually recognised that to simply conquer and hold a particular territory will not necessarily make it an 'integral' part of the whole nation-state. Rather, as Maier notes, it must be made to work, to be 'productive':

> The area within will no longer be construed as a passive enclosure to be policed and kept orderly; it will be a source of resources, livelihood, output, and energy. Territory is envisaged not just as an acquisition or as a security buffer but as a decisive means of power and rule.
>
> (Maier 2000: 818)

As such, there has been a significant shift in the Chinese state's perception of Xinjiang since 1949. Under the PRC Xinjiang is no longer simply conceived of as a strategic buffer region in the traditional sense but as a potential strategic and economic asset that can actively contribute to the power of the nation-state. The book is thus focused simultaneously on two 'tracks' or themes: the evolution of the state's integrationist strategies and their impact on the PRC's foreign policy in Central Asia.

The integration of Xinjiang and the shape of Chinese foreign policy in Central Asia

Despite the turning of the international spotlight on the region courtesy of the events of 11 September 2001, the question as to what drives China's power and imperatives in Central Asia remain a matter of debate. This book suggests that there is a largely complementary relationship between what may be termed China's Xinjiang, Central Asia and grand strategy-derived interests. This three-tiered pattern of interests informs and shapes not only China's diplomacy in Central Asia but also its approach to the governance of Xinjiang. Beijing's apparent post-1991 synthesis of two enduring aspects of its Xinjiang 'problem' is the key to the balancing these three tiers. The first aspect concerns the great goal that lends continuity to Xinjiang's history under the People's Republic – that of integration, understood in its two predominant senses. Integration can refer to the relationship between the majority and minority populations of a given state and to 'the patterns by which the different parts of a nation-state cohere' (Mackerras 1994: 7).

Meanwhile, integration also concerns, 'the manner and degree to which parts of a social system (its individuals, groups and organs) interact and complement each other' (Seymour 1976: 6). The first understanding of integration can be seen as a means by which a large, multi-ethnic state can ensure and maintain sovereignty over its territory, while the second concerns the operation of society once the territorial integrity of the state has been ensured. Thus, the goal of integration in the context of Xinjiang encompasses both senses – the mechanisms by which the state has attempted to incorporate the territory of the region and the deeper endeavour to incorporate the non-Han peoples of the region into what the PRC has defined as the 'unitary, multi-ethnic' Chinese state.

The second aspect, and one that has for much of Chinese history prevented the achievement of the goal of integration, concerns the geopolitical position of the province itself – its 'centrality and intermediate position in Eurasia' between the great 'sedentary homelands' of Europe, Iran, India and China (Millward 2007: 1; Adshead 1993: 53). As we shall see, for much of the history of the PRC the goal of integration was understood to require the isolation of Xinjiang from external influences through the neutralisation of the region's historical ethnic, cultural, religious and economic linkages to Central Asia. This was coupled with the extension of the Chinese state's mechanisms and instruments of political, economic and social control and initiation of modern infrastructure links to China proper (McMillen 1979). Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, China has attempted to utilise Xinjiang's geopolitical position in order to simultaneously achieve the security and integration of Xinjiang and, as this project has progressed, China's rise as a Central Asian power.

The integration of Xinjiang not only serves core internal functions but is also increasingly seen to contribute to China's strategic position in international affairs. The book therefore casts China's integration of Xinjiang with Central Asia in geopolitical terms. In particular, it suggests that the integration of Xinjiang with Central Asia grants China significant security, economic and strategic benefits that serve two purposes – the consolidation of China's control of Xinjiang and the expansion of Chinese power in Central Asia – which contribute to Beijing's quest for a 'peaceful rise' to great power status.

The themes of confrontation or opposition of predominantly pastoral-nomadic societies of Inner Asia to that of the sedentary-agricultural China have also been inherent to the famous construct through which the region has been viewed as the 'geopolitical pivot' or 'periphery' of the Eurasian continent (Lattimore 1950a). From this geopolitical perspective, Xinjiang and Central Asia form an important transition zone that links the great civilisations of China, India, Iran and the Mediterranean. Moreover, Adshead also ascribed to the region particular functions throughout world history, emphasising its role as a 'transmission' belt for political, economic, ecological, and cultural flows and developments (Adshead 1993). Significantly, for the subject of this book, the importance of Xinjiang's linkage to the dynamic historical opposition of the pastoral-nomadic core of Central Asia to the largely sedentary-agricultural civilisations of the Eurasian periphery was largely due to the fact that it constituted both a 'setting where that

dynamic was played out, and, more broadly, as an inevitable side-show in any conflict between nomadic states based in Mongolia, and agrarian states based in North China' (Millward 2009: 55–6).

Indeed, from antiquity to the eighteenth-century Xinjiang's importance for Chinese-based states was based on its geography and ecology which intimately connected it to the enduring opposition of the pastoral-nomadic core of Central Asia to the largely sedentary-agricultural civilisations of the Eurasian periphery. Indeed, a glance at a topographical map of Eurasia hints at Xinjiang's role in this historical process. The region consists of three roughly elliptical basins, the Tarim Basin to the south, the Turfan Basin to the south-east and the Zungharian Basin to the north. The Tarim Basin is enclosed by mountain chains: to the north the Tien Shan, to the west the Pamirs and to south the Kunlun Shan. The Turfan Basin is in turn separated from the Tarim by the south-eastern spur of the Tien Shan, the Quruq Tagh. The melting snows of these mountains resulted in the development of oases on the fringes of the basins permitting settled agriculture. It was around these oases that the major cities of the region, such as Kasghar in the south-west and Turfan in the south-east, were established. Finally, while the Zungharian Basin is separated from Mongolia by the Altai range which arises in the north-east of Xinjiang, it is in part an extension of the steppe-lands of the Mongolian plateau. Thus, throughout history the Zungharian basin tended to be dominated by pastoral-nomadic peoples and polities, such as the Mongols and Kazakhs, while the Tarim and Turfan basins were the domain of the settled agriculturalist (Taafe 1990: 27–34; Millward 2007: 3–5)

In essence, Xinjiang's importance for China-based states throughout history has been of a strategic nature. When strategic rivalries arose between Mongolia- and China-based states, the value of Xinjiang (part steppe/part oasis agriculture) to the nomadic power consequently rose. It was during such periods of rivalry that Chinese power was extended into Xinjiang as the China-based states attempted to cut-off the nomadic power's access to grain and revenue from trade (Christian 2000: 16–17; Barfield 1981). This is borne out by the historical record, not only of the Han-Xiongnu rivalry between 100BC and AD100, but also the subsequent Tang–Turk rivalry of the sixth to eighth centuries through to the Qing and the Zunghars in the mid-eighteenth century (Lattimore 1940: 306; Christian 2000: 5; Perdue 2005). Thus, the history of Xinjiang from this perspective is tied to this 'eternal' face-off between China-based states and the various nomadic peoples on the other side of what Lattimore termed the 'Great Wall Frontier'

What is important about this albeit brief and somewhat schematic account of the historical and geopolitical relationship between Xinjiang, Central Asia and China in the context of this book is that at no stage in this particular story did Chinese-based states succeed in holding positions/territory gained in these struggles for any extended period. Even the Qing, regarded as the most successful and expansionist of China-based dynasties in Inner Asia (bar only the Mongols), only held Xinjiang for barely sixty years after its conquest in 1759 before the first wave of Turkic–Muslim unrest and rebellion occurred. As has often been

quoted in numerous accounts of Xinjiang's history, it was estimated by Lattimore in *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* that of over two millennia of relations between China and the region, China-based states had managed to maintain control for 'only about' 425 years (Lattimore 1940: 171). Lattimore suggested that this relatively tenuous historical 'control' over Xinjiang was in large measure due to geographic and ecological factors and the proximity of the sedentary oasis cities of southern Xinjiang to that of the pastoral-nomadic steppe environment of northern Xinjiang:

> They [i.e. China] could dominate them [the oases] but they could never fully integrate them with the main expanse of China proper, because the 'cellular' structure of contiguous regions which was characteristic of China was here distorted by special problems of distance and communication and above all by intervals of arid, 'un-Chinese' terrain, which made it impossible ever to draw the oasis-like 'cells' into complete contiguity either with each other or with the main bulk of China...The mere fact that these regions could be dominated and assimilated but not fully integrated gave a certain instability to this flank of the Chinese Empire.
>
> (Lattimore 1940: 170)

Due to this 'instability' Xinjiang had a 'tendency to gravitate toward the tribal power of the steppe', which according to Lattimore provided the impetus for China-based empires to seek and maintain 'still more distant outposts, whenever possible' to combat this gravitational pull of the steppe lands of Inner Asia (Lattimore 1940: 174). As Peter C. Perdue has demonstrated, however, one of the remarkable achievements of the Qing was to negate, at least for a period, these geographic and ecological factors (Perdue 2005: 574). However, the continuity of 'instability' along China's western frontier after the Qing Dynasty's fall in 1911, provided the conditions in which a Han–Chinese elite could rule the region without allegiance to the Republic of China. In the 1911–49 period it can be said that the 'gravitational pull' of the steppe was substituted for the pull of Russia and then the Soviet Union (Forbes 1986; Millward and Tursun 2004).

Through the agency of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), however, the PRC established its control over Xinjiang late in October 1949. In a broad and historically significant sense the absorption of Xinjiang, and indeed Inner Mongolia and Tibet, into the new communist Chinese state ushered in a new phase in the history of Inner Asia. No longer was there to be a significant and autonomous 'frontier zone' lying between the 'margins of expansion' of Russia and China, the history of which has been briefly recounted above. Arguably the course of Chinese policy in such regions as Xinjiang from 1949 onward has been aimed at the nullification or at least neutralisation of the dynamic within these 'frontier zones' that had historically resulted in the 'equivocal loyalty' of frontier peoples to the expansionary state (Lattimore 1962b). Chinese policy from 1949, conceived in Lattimore's terms, could be seen as an attempt to secure the maximal limits of Chinese expansion and to move beyond what he termed the historically-bound

'zone of diminishing returns' of Chinese-based power (Lattimore 1940: 507). Yet, primarily due to the various political and economic crises of the Maoist era, including the degeneration of relations with the then overlord of the western Central Asian lands (i.e. what are now the Central Asian republics), the Soviet Union, the People's Republic struggled to maintain and consolidate its hold upon this important zone of China's 'classical line of maximum expansion'.

China between 1949 and 1991 was thus largely focused upon achieving the integration of Xinjiang and overcoming the obstacles of distance and communication that had been at the root of the Communists predecessors' ultimate failures to hold Xinjiang. It can be said that China succeeded in overcoming the obstacles of distance and communication by 1990–1 through the development of a long-term strategy of extending modern, industrialised infrastructure (i.e. railroads, highways, radio, telecommunications, etc.) into the region (Raczka 1998). Yet the state's success in physically integrating the territory of the region was not necessarily matched by parallel success in integrating or assimilating the non-Han ethnic population. In this context, the imperatives of security overcame those of assimilation in the sense that China sought to negate the gravitational pull – in political, economic, and cultural terms – of the Central Asian lands to the west under Soviet rule. The CCP's policies in Xinjiang over the 1949–91 period were thus framed by the twin imperatives of internally consolidating and accelerating the region's integration with China and isolating it from Soviet influence (McMillen 1979; Becquelin 2000). In this regard Justin Rudelson has argued that since the re-establishment of Chinese rule under the PRC, although Chinese policy has attempted to re-orient Xinjiang 'inward' toward China proper, the 'geographic template' of Xinjiang 'produced axes of outside cultural influence that penetrated the region' which determined that the major oases of the region were in fact oriented 'outward' toward the proximate external civilisations be they Indian, Central Asian or Chinese (Rudelson 1997: 39–41). As will be detailed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, however, China's post-1991 strategy in Xinjiang and Central Asia has attempted to utilise this 'geographic template' in order to simultaneously achieve the security and integration of Xinjiang and China's rise as a Central Asian power.

The PRC's incorporation of Xinjiang in 1949 placed it in control of a geopolitical nexus between five great cultural and geographic regions of Eurasia – China, the sub-continent, Iran, Russia and Europe. Indeed, this led Lattimore to assert, somewhat peremptorily, that:

> Sinkiang, in its pivotal position in the heart of Asia, will most rapidly transmit to India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran the news that passes from mouth to mouth where few people read or hear radio – news of the meaning in their lives of great political changes in China. Once more, as in the days of the rise of the Han empire, more than two thousand years ago, Sinkiang has become in fact a pivot around which revolve politics, and power, and the fates of men.
>
> (Lattimore 1950b: 45)

Throughout the 1949–91 period, however, China was unable to take advantage of this strategic position due to a number of internal and external factors such as the various political and economic crises of the Maoist era and the deterioration of Sino–Soviet relations. The collapse of the Soviet Union, however, presented China with an unprecedented opportunity, through its ongoing integration of Xinjiang, to make Lattimore's premonition a reality.

Overview of chapters

While this book is focused primarily on the post-1949 period of Chinese history, the historical legacy of both the Qing and the Republic of China are vitally important to its narrative. The Qing conquest of Xinjiang (literally 'New Dominion' or 'New Territory') in 1759, proved to be a defining moment in the development in the often ambiguous relation between China and the amorphous *Xiyu* or 'Western Regions' that lay 'beyond the pale' of Chinese civilisation since the Han (206BCE–220CE) and Tang (618CE–907CE) dynasties. The Qing destruction of the Mongol Zunghar state in the middle of the eighteenth century brought to a close the era of the dominance of the steppe nomadic-pastoralist world of Inner Asia over sedentary and agricultural China, and in the process established Qing control over not only Mongolia but also Xinjiang and ensured a predominant influence in Tibet. This 'closure of the steppe', in Perdue's phrase, was a historical watershed that lay the foundation for the territorial boundaries of the China we know today (Perdue 2005).

Yet, as scholars such as Perdue, Millward, Elliott and Crossley, have amply demonstrated the incorporation of modern China's key frontier regions – Xinjiang, Mongolia, Manchuria, and Tibet – was the culmination of a distinctly Manchu vision of empire (Perdue 2005; Millward 1998; Elliott 2001; Crossley 1999). Indeed, the Qing emperors did not seek to re-make these regions and the peoples that inhabited them in the image of the imperial centre but rather sought, 'to legtimise their own specifically Manchu rule through the preservation of local tradition and recognition of cultural differences' (Newby 1998: 278). Significantly, this resulted in the administration of Xinjiang (and Mongolia) as distinct appendages of the Aisin Gioro ruling house, rather than as 'provinces' For the early Qing emperors, regions such as Xinjiang were to be politically and culturally distinguished from the Han-Chinese core of the empire.

However, as we shall see in Chapter 2, a series of crises in Qing power in Xinjiang during the nineteenth century, generated by both internal rebellions and the intervention of external powers, resulted in a gradual transformation of this approach toward the beginnings of a strategy of integration. The concrete steps toward integration begun in the 1880s were, however, undone with the collapse not only of the Qing but the dynastic order itself in 1911. The duality of weak political authority at the centre and along the frontiers facilitated the development of a dynamic that permitted a Han elite that retained its position in Xinjiang to have almost total autonomy from the Republic, albeit in the face of strong Russian and Soviet challenges. As the second half of Chapter 2 shall demonstrate, this Han

elite was compelled to increasingly turn to the Soviet Union for political, economic and military support in the face of ongoing Turkic–Muslim rebellions from 1930 onward. Despite this the Republic, especially after the consolidation of Chiang Kai-shek's GMD regime after 1928, was nonetheless able to successfully defend Chinese claims to the region in the international arena. This was largely achieved through the Republic's diplomacy and foreign policy toward the Soviet Union. Although the Republic was able to finally establish a presence in Xinjiang in late 1944 with the forced 'retirement' of Xinjiang's last warlord, Sheng Shicai, its success was fleeting with the simultaneous proclamation of an 'East Turkestan Republic' (ETR) centred on the Ili valley in the far north-west of the region. This rebellion led by a coalition of ethnic groups, supported by the Soviet Union, resulted in the division of the Xinjiang into ETR and GMD controlled regions until the arrival of the PLA in October 1949 (Forbes 1986: 168–70; Wang 1999: 60–65).

The arrival of the PLA signalled the end of Xinjiang's brief period of 'semi-autonomy' from China and the systematic implementation of policies aimed at integration. Chapter 3 examines the contours of this process during the Maoist era (1949–76). It demonstrates that the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) policies in Xinjiang over this period were framed by the twin imperatives of internally consolidating and accelerating the region's integration with China and isolating it from Soviet influence. The constants of Chinese policy in Xinjiang over this period were the establishment of military-agricultural colonies, encouragement of Han colonisation, control and management of religion, and cooptation of ethnic minority elites within the administrative apparatus and assimilation of the region's non-Han populations. However, the intensity with which individual components of this strategy were pursued varied with the ideological fluctuations of the era, but the overall intent of Chinese rule did not. In the realm of foreign policy, the key factor for Beijing throughout the Maoist era in Xinjiang was the Soviet Union and its potential to threaten the integration of the region.

Chapter 4 argues that the re-evaluation of the CCP's socioeconomic priorities after Mao Zedong's death, and the ideological innovations that followed thereafter, produced contradictory dynamics in Xinjiang. In particular, the policies of the 'reform' era heightened the potential for the convergence of internal unrest and external interference, laying the foundation for the intensification of ethnic minority opposition during the 1990s. Most importantly, it was during this 1978–91 period that Beijing began to construct a strategy toward Xinjiang that sought to utilise the strategic and 'frontier' nature of the region to strengthen the endeavor of integration in contrast to the approaches of the Maoist era that sought the region's isolation.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7, encompassing the 1991–2009 period, detail how Beijing dealt with the effects, first of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and second, of the events of 11 September 2001, on its position in Xinjiang and its wider foreign policy. As these chapters demonstrate, there have been three major phases in the development of China's foreign policy in Central Asia and in its approach to Xinjiang since 1991. Chapter 5, focused on the 1991–95 period,

demonstrates that China struggled to develop a coherent and consistent approach to the emerging regional and international order. As such, this phase can be characterised as a consolidatory and pragmatic one, in which China gradually established a prioritised set of political, economic and strategic interests that were deemed to be central to securing China's national security. In the context of its relations with Central Asia, China strove to first ensure the security of Xinjiang then to turn the region's potential linkages, which had been viewed negatively since 1949, with neighbouring Central Asian states toward its advantage.

The second period, 1996–2001, which will be the subject of chapter 6, was characterised by the full emergence and expression of China's strategy of 'peaceful rise' in Central Asia and the subsequent heightening of China's influence in the region. In particular, this period not only saw the further development of China's bilateral relations with the states of Central Asia but also Chinese agency in the evolution of the Shanghai Five multilateral mechanism to address the challenges emanating from the region. China's re-evaluated strategy to develop and integrate Xinjiang was reinforced by these external dynamics as it underlined for the authorities that to secure their control, China's foreign policy calculus had to be aligned with the state's overall goals in Xinjiang.

The third period, 2002–09, that is the subject of Chapter 7, has been defined by the events of 11 September 2001 and China's response to the changes in international and regional affairs wrought by them. This chapter argues that Chinese policy both within Xinjiang and in Central Asia has been defined by a large measure of continuity with Beijing's pre-9/11 approach. This is demonstrated through an examination of China's bilateral relations with Central Asia, its relations with the US and Russia, and the development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Additionally, this chapter argues that 9/11 provided a further stimulus for the intensification of the major facets of Beijing's integrationist project in Xinjiang – Han in-migration, economic and infrastructure development and rigorous suppression of ethnic minority discontent or opposition. In this latter respect, the 'war on terror' permitted China to re-frame its struggle against Uyghur separatism in a global context.

A note on geographic nomenclature

The region now known officially as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region encompasses an area of 1.664 million square kilometres and comprises one-sixth of the total land area of the PRC. While politically Xinjiang is currently an 'integral' province of China, historically, ethnically and culturally the region has been an important constituent part of Central Asia. 'Central Asia' in its widest possible sense can be defined as the vast belt of territory on the Eurasian continent that extends along a west-east axis from the Carpathian Mountains to Korea and a north-south axis from the Arctic Ocean to the Himalayas. This vast region is given unity through its distance from the sea, continentality of climate and shortage of rainfall. Although there is great diversity within this wide expanse of territory, three distinct features mark Central Asia: a belt of steppes and deserts which extend in latitudinal

direction; several latitudinal mountain chains that separate the steppe and desert region from South Asia; and the interior drainage of several rivers that terminate in lakes or 'seas' (such as the Caspian and Aral Seas) or evaporate in the deserts (Soucek 2000: 1–2; Taafe 1990: 19–20). The steppe zone is bordered on the north by Eurasian forest zone (the taiga of Siberia) and in the south by the latitudinal mountain chains and deserts. The variables of topography, orography and climate resulted in the evolution of three major ecological systems or 'natural zones' within this conception of 'Central Asia' that crucially impacted upon the forms of human habitation practiced within them (Taafe 1990: 27). The steppe zones are characterised by extensive grasslands or prairies. Within the steppe zones there is a distinction between the northern wooded or forested steppe and the generally more southern grasslands. This latter region, encompassing a broad belt from the lands north of the Black Sea in the west to the plains of Manchuria in the east, constitutes a distinct ecological system distinguished by the almost continuous coverage of grasses. In the west the steppe zone includes Ukraine, the northern Caucasus and southern Urals, and the Kazakh steppe. This latter region flows into the pre-eminent eastern steppe zones of Zungharia (northern Xinjiang), Mongolia and Manchuria (Taafe 1990: 34–35).

The southern portion of 'Central Asia' meanwhile is dominated by large desert regions from the Caspian Sea to the eastern marches of the Gobi and Ordos deserts in Mongolia. From west to east, this southern portion is geographically dominated by the Karakum, Kizilkum, Taklamakan, Gobi and Ordos deserts. These regions, in contrast to the steppes, are characterised by separate but inter-related oases. In the west, major oases developed, most importantly in the Ferghana, Tashkent and Samarkand valleys, between the Syr Dayra and Amu Dayra which ultimately terminate in the Aral Sea. This belt of fertile oases is interrupted by the western spurs of the Tien Shan Mountains and the Pamirs. The Taklamakan Desert of Xinjiang, occupying the Tarim Basin, is enclosed to the north by the Tien Shan, to the west by the Pamirs and to the south the Kunlun Shan. On the fringes of this elliptical area oases were formed, watered by the melting snows of the surrounding mountain chains forming such rivers as the Khotan, Yarkand, Aksu and Tarim (Millward and Perdue 2004: 29–30). It is these latter two 'natural zones' – the steppe and the desert – that historically have been the geographical regions of concentrated human habitation which form the core of 'Central Asia' as understood in this book. This, thus encompasses the contemporary states of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, the Republic of Mongolia and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China.

As noted above, 'Xinjiang' (literally 'New Dominion') is itself a late Qing neologism that highlights the relatively recent provenance of Chinese dominance in the region. The Qing period is also significant as it was only with the Qing conquest that all the sub-regions that comprise contemporary Xinjiang were administered as one political and territorial unit. Prior to the Qing conquest the major sub-regions of Xinjiang had often either been dominated by different external polities or remained relatively autonomous from each other. This was largely due to the fact that each major sub-region's geography and ecology

naturally oriented them away from each other. Thus, the Zungharian Basin, as an extension of the Mongolian steppe, was intimately connected to the world of the nomadic-pastoral peoples. The oases of the Tarim and Turfan Basins in contrast were geographically and ecologically oriented towards different external influences, with the Tarim Basin oriented westward and southward toward Central and South Asia and the Turfan Basin oriented eastward toward China. Each sub-region was thus often identified with geographic terms that linked them to their predominant external influence with, for example, the oases of the Tarim Basin referred to in some sources (particularly Russian ones) as 'Little Bukharia' in direct reference to the Emirate of Bukhara to the west in present-day Uzbekistan. After the administrative unity of the region was well established after the 1870s many western sources began to identify the region as Chinese Turkestan (in contrast to Russian Turkestan to the west) or even East Turkestan. However, to avoid such confusion, this book will use the more purely geographic terminology of the Zungharian, Tarim and Turfan Basins to identify the three core sub-regions that comprise what is now known as Xinjiang.

2 Xinjiang from the Qing conquest to the Republic of China, 1750–1949

The recorded history of China's relations with Central Asia, of which Xinjiang formed an integral part, extends to the Han Dynasty (206BCE–220CE) during which Chinese military power extended into the region (Fletcher 1968: 207). Chinese power and influence were not to be reasserted in Central Asia until the Tang Dynasty (618–907). Tang military and economic power dominated Xinjiang from the middle of the seventh to the mid-eighth century. Tang domination of Xinjiang was such that an imperial governor resided in Kucha, a predominant oasis in the Tarim Basin, and the Chinese began to extend their influence to the west, particularly in the direction of the Ferghana Valley and Tashkent, in present-day Uzbekistan. Tang imperial ambitions in Central Asia brought them into conflict with the expanding Arab Abassid caliphate and the Tang met with a disastrous defeat at the Battle of Talas, in present-day north-western Kyrgyzstan, in 751 (Soucek 2000: 67–8). The impact of this particular defeat was that Chinese dynasties never again attempted to extend their influence beyond the territories of Xinjiang. The next period of significant contact and relations between China and Central Asia came under the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1234–1368) whereby many Central Asians were employed in service of Mongol rule in China. After the expulsion of the alien Mongols in 1368 the Ming sent numerous missions to Central Asia namely to Samarkand, Tashkent, Bukhara, Herat and even Persia (Fletcher 1968: 207). The Ming however, had neither the political will nor the military might to emulate the Yuan or Tang Dynasties' achievements in Central Asia and the region remained outside of the Ming sphere. Ming relations with Central Asia largely remained of the 'tributary' variety, that is, the Ming allowed Central Asian merchants or envoys to come to China (Fletcher 1968: 216–7).

Central Asia and Xinjiang, by the time of the Manchu conquest of China and the founding of the Qing in 1644, was no longer the realm of the Timurid and Moghul empires but a collection of small kingdoms and principalities (Fletcher 1968: 216–7). Politically divided and geographically removed from China, Central Asia and Xinjiang posed no immediate threat to the Qing. While the Manchus had conquered northern China and established the Qing dynasty in 1644, they took another forty years to finally subdue the last vestiges of the Ming loyalist movement in 1683. During this period the Qing also became engaged in a struggle with Muscovite Russia and the Zunghar Mongols for predominance in Central

Eurasia which would ultimately see the Qing establish themselves as the rulers of Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet.

The near contemporaneous expansion of the imperial states of the Qing and Muscovite Russia into the heart of Central Asia ultimately resulted in the 'closure of the steppe', a development of world historical importance. Prior to the eighteenth century, Central Asia, broadly defined, had been characterised by fluidity or 'conductivity', whereby the dynamic relationship between the steppe and the agrarian regions encouraged or permitted the relatively free transmission of ideas, commodities, and technologies (Adshead 1993; Di Cosmo 1999; Christian 2000). The factors behind the expansion of both of these states into Central Asia were multifaceted and encompassed historically generated strategic, political and economic concerns. Qing and Russian expansion were also aided by the division, from the seventeenth century onward, of the major nomadic pastoral peoples they encountered, in particular the Mongols and the Kazakhs. Significantly, the exertion of Qing and Russian pressure on their respective Central Asian frontiers did not induce the forging of 'supra-tribal' polities amongst these nomadic pastoral peoples as had often occurred in the past (Barfield 1981; Christian 1998: 55; Di Cosmo 1999: 12–15). Rather, the conflict and competition between Mongol and Kazakh tribes resulted in the weaker or more threatened groups seeking the aid or protection of the pressing external sedentary power.

The linkage between these processes at either end of the steppe belt was the rise and expansion of the last great nomadic pastoral polity of the Zunghar Mongols, which from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century dominated Xinjiang, parts of Kazakhstan, and western Mongolia (Perdue 2005; Hambly 1969). The pressures placed by the Zunghar expansion on other Mongolian tribes to their east in the present-day Republic of Mongolia and upon the Kazakh Hordes to the west resulted in these nomadic pastoralists seeking the succour of external powers – the Qing and the Russians. In the case of the Qing expansion into Mongolia and Xinjiang, it can be said that this coincided with the contemporaneous initiation of a military, diplomatic and cultural strategy to persuade the remaining Mongol tribes of the benefits of voluntarily submitting to an imperial state that shared their 'Inner Asian' heritage (Endicott 2005: 473; Chia 1993). This strategy only succeeded in the face of a continued Zunghar threat to the lands of the other Mongolian tribes, with the Zunghar invasion of Mongolia in 1690 prompting a prolonged military struggle over the subsequent five decades between the Qing and the Zunghars that resulted not only in Qing dominion over Mongolia and Xinjiang but also the almost total physical extermination of the Zunghar people (Perdue 2005: 270–89; Crossley 1999: 326). For the Qing the Zunghars not only constituted a strategic threat on their north-western flank but also an ideological threat as they challenged Qing claims to be the rightful heirs of the Genghissid legacy. Thus, as Crossley notes, for the Qianlong emperor:

> ... the military suppression of the Dzunghars, who since Galdan had a century of military strife (which meant glory, whether winning or losing) behind them, was insufficient; their name had to be literally destroyed, their peoples

> dispersed, and any possibility of a new leader finding legitimation for himself obliterated. The current name (but not the historical reference) Dzunghar was banned absolutely; only "Oyirod" or "Oyirod Mongol" was permitted.
>
> (Crossley 1999: 320)

The final destruction of the Zunghars in 1756 brought the Qing control over northern Xinjiang, and facilitated their absorption of the Tarim Basin oases with the expulsion of the ruling elites of these cities – the Makhdumzada Khojas – from the Tarim Basin (Fletcher 1978a: 58–60). The Khojas, a Naqshbandi Sufi lineage that claimed descent from the Prophet Muhammad, had, from the mid-1500s onward, often exercised power and influence in the major oasis cities of the Tarim Basin. However, with the ascendancy of the Zunghars north of the Tien Shan from the late seventeenth century onward, the oases of the Tarim Basin increasingly came under their sway (Millward 2007: 90–3). Indeed, when the Qing captured the Zunghar capital, Kulja, in 1755 they freed two khoja brothers held hostage by the Zunghars. The Qing dispatched one of these brothers, Burhan ad-Din, to the cities of the Tarim Basin with military support in the hope of establishing a client regime south of the Tien Shan. Once in the south Burhan ad-Din promptly proclaimed himself ruler of the Tarim Basin and rejected his allegiance to the Qing. This, however, prompted the Qing to send a military expedition south of the Tien Shan which swiftly conquered the major oases such as Kashgar and Yarkand and compelled the khojas to flee westward. The ruler of Badakshan (in present-day Afghanistan) subsequently captured and executed Burhan ad-Din and dispatched his head to the Qing authorities in Xinjiang (Millward 2007: 96; Newby 2005: 22–6). Thus, the Qing in their struggle with the Zunghars had come to absorb not only the Zungharian but also the Tarim Basin.

The first phase of Qing rule in Xinjiang, 1760–1820: segregation and control

The goal of integration was not the initial imperative of Qing rule in Xinjiang following the destruction of the Zunghars and exile of the Makhdumzada Khojas in Xinjiang circa 1759–60. The pre-eminent goal of Qing rule over the 1759–1820 period was in fact to segregate and isolate the region from China. The rationality that underpinned Qing administration flowed from the prevailing imperial ideology of the Qianlong era (1735–96) that some scholars have termed 'universalist' (Crossley 1999: 10–55; Di Cosmo 1998; Millward 1998: 197–203). For the Qing, China was considered to be a subjugated polity and classified as the 'interior empire'. Its Inner Asian territories (Manchuria, Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet), however, by consequence of the Qing usurpation/adoption of legitimating ideologies of key Inner Asian peoples, such as the Mongols, were viewed as allied 'constituencies' The Qianlong emperor's vision of the imperial order thus did not necessarily conform to the Sinocentric paradigm outlined by such influential Sinologists as John K. Fairbank (Fairbank 1968). According to Fairbank's conception of the 'Chinese world order', 'Chinese' dynasties structured their

relations with 'non-Chinese' peoples and states through a hierarchical ordering of culturally 'superior' to 'inferior', focused on a Sinic cultural and geographic centre. Such a model would suggest that upon the conquest of Xinjiang the imperial state would necessarily perceive these alien territories and peoples as barbaric and uncivilised.

Yet upon the evidence of official memorials to the emperor and officially sponsored cartographic and ethnographic projects, there was a distinct imperative to avoid reference to the new subject peoples of Xinjiang in pejorative terms (Millward 1999; Newby 1996). As Millward has persuasively argued this lack of 'Sinocentrism' stemmed from the Qianlong emperor's conception of imperial order as 'five nations, under heaven' (Millward 1998: 197). The representation of this may be seen in the emperor's order to re-carve polygot steles in Manchu (*Qing*), Chinese (*Han*), Mongol (*Menggu*), Tibetan (*Xifan*) and Arabic/Turki (*Huizi*) upon the successful incorporation of Xinjiang. For Qianlong, the 'five nations' of the *Da Qing* (Great Qing) – Manchu, Chinese, Mongol, Tibetan and Muslim – occupied positions of cultural equivalence under a universal emperorship rather than positions of superiority and inferiority. Furthermore, it was the instrument of the Qianlong emperor himself that established and maintained a 'great unity' (*da tong*) between his subjects (Millward 1998: 197–98). Thus, although Qianlong's vision of imperial order was centripetal, it was the emperorship, in the form of the Aisin Gioro house, rather than 'Chinese culture' or a Confucian 'son of heaven', that lay at its centre. Yet the maintenance of cultural and ethnic distinction was central to the functioning of imperial power:

> Though the empire's cultural blocs were in theory juxtaposed on an impartial basis, the boundaries between them were nonetheless to be strictly maintained lest excessive, uncontrolled contact lead to trouble. Walled cities, or cantonments within cities, often served this purpose materially. Where Fairbank's map implies assimilation, a gravitational pull toward the Sinic center, the domains in the Qianlong emperor's eyes were to remain culturally discrete, their boundaries vigilantly maintained by the state through administrative structures, laws, the pass system and so forth.
>
> (Millward 1998: 202)

These imperial imperatives to represent the cultural equivalence of the different peoples of the region in relation to the empire, and simultaneously maintain cultural boundaries amongst them, was therefore reflected in the administrative structure and modes of imperial rule in the three major geographic regions of Xinjiang.

The new dominion was divided into three administrative 'circuits' that corresponded to the three major geographic regions of Xinjiang noted in the Chapter 1 – the Zungharian, Turfan and Tarim Basins. These regions experienced different levels and modes of Qing domination. Zungharia, historically the domain of various nomadic peoples, was ruled through a permanent military garrison of 15,000 troops. This garrison force established military agricultural colonies

(*tutian*) to support the occupation and revive the economy with the imperial authorities also encouraging Han and Hui migration to Zungharia (Fletcher 1978a: 58–60; Kim 2004: 15–16; Hsu 1965: 19). In the Turfan Basin, however, the major cities of Hami and Turfan were ruled indirectly through vassal hereditary princes or *jasaks* under the supervision of a lieutenant-governor at Ürümqi (Millward and Perdue 2004: 57). This official commanded a force of 3,000 to 5,000 troops. The Qing thus stationed between 18,000 and 20,000 troops north of the Tien Shan. Moreover, the garrisons of the Zungharian and Turfan Basins were stationed permanently and were primarily composed of Manchu, Xibo, Solon and Chahar bannermen and augmented with Han 'Green Standard' troops (Di Cosmo 1998: 298; Fletcher 1978a: 60).

South of the Tien Shan in the cities of the Tarim Basin, however, Qing rule was based upon the co-option of the existing Turkic-Muslim elites (*begs*) in the major oases of the region. The Qing construed the usage of the title *beg* to erode the prestige and leadership of the traditional aristocracy and religious establishment of the major oases of the Tarim Basin, and establish the Qing as the sole legitimate source of secular political authority (Fletcher 1978a: 78; Kim 2004: 11). The Qing selected local begs on the basis of perceived competence, loyalty and specific local authority but selected the highest ranking, the hakim begs, from segments of the local elites that had submitted to the Qing during the Zunghar campaigns (Perdue 2005; Di Cosmo 1998: 304–05; Borei 2002: 276–8). This indirect system of rule was also underpinned by military occupation, with a Qing garrison of 6,000 troops stationed throughout the Tarim Basin, mainly in the major south-western oases of Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan. These troops, however, were maintained on a rotational basis with the mainly Manchu, Xibo, Solon and Mongol soldiers serving five-year 'tours of duty' in the region (Fletcher 1978a: 59–60; Borei 2002: 278–80).

The court initially focused on establishing military agricultural colonies to provide the necessary supplies for the Qing occupation of the region, and it was only after Qing military control had been consolidated did the court consider employing Turki peasants to reclaim and till the land. The Qing thus established agricultural colonies in the Tarim oases of Aksu, Ush and Karashahr, manned by Han 'Green Standard' troops on a rotating basis, and in 1761 permitted local Muslims to reclaim land in Khotan, Yarkand, Kashgar, Ush, Aksu, Kucha and Karashahr. Yet, it is significant that at no point did the Qing consider the recruitment of Han peasants from Shaanxi and Gansu to undertake these tasks in southern Xinjiang (Borei 2002: 281–2). The prescription against the migration of Han and Hui peasants to the oases of the Tarim Basin was not however extended to Han and Hui classified as 'merchants'. Han and Hui merchants were actively encouraged by the state to trade not only in Zungharian and Turfan Basins, but also in the Tarim Basin although they were not permitted to settle or marry and their activities were monitored by the *lupiao* or 'road pass' system. (Millward 1998: 115–17).

Thus, the practice of Qing policy in Xinjiang generally reflected the contours of Qianlong's conception of empire. While Xinjiang was incorporated into the

Qing realm, both the territory and the peoples of Xinjiang remained distinct from the eighteen provinces of China proper. Within Xinjiang, as demonstrated by the segregation of the Tarim Basin oases from Han colonisation and the *lupiao* system, the imperial authorities evidently endeavoured to maintain cultural boundaries between the different ethnic 'blocs' of Xinjiang's population. Moreover, the cultural diversity of Xinjiang, as well as the Qing's other Inner Asian territories (Tibet, Mongolia and Manchuria), was also expressed and mediated through such institutions as the Lifan Yuan. Although the Lifan Yuan or 'court for the administration of the outer provinces' was initially formed to deal with the Manchus relations with the Mongols, it came to not only manage relations between the Qing and the subject peoples of Inner Asia (i.e. Mongols, Tibetans, Kazakhs, Uyghurs, etc.) but also relations between China and Inner Asia (Chia 1993).

The Lifan Yuan was thus not only an administrative tool but an ideological one as well that sought to manage the traditional divide between sedentary/agricultural China from nomadic/pastoral Inner Asia. This function was primarily achieved through the Lifan Yuan's management of three rituals – the pilgrimage to the emperor (chaojin), the imperial hunt (weilie) and the tribute (chaogong) – by which the Qing court rederined the political, cultural and economic connections between China and Inner Asia. These Inner Asian rituals, distinct from the Chinese rituals practiced at court, facilitated the Qing court's ability to achieve political legitimacy throughout its Inner Asian territories:

> The Lifanyuan rituals invented the image of the ruling Manchus as providing both agricultural and nomadic leadership, while they convinced the Inner Asians of their prominent and legitimate place, and of the court's privileged recognition of Inner Asian culture, in an empire culturally dominated by Chinese. All of these efforts fostered Inner Asians' recognition of Qing political authority and, therefore, facilitated the direct imperial administration of Inner Asia.
>
> (Chia 1993: 63)

Thus, the administration of the Qing's Inner Asian territories, including Xinjiang, was based on the Lifan Yuan at the imperial centre and the imperial governors and native elites at the periphery. It can therefore be argued that Qing policy and goals toward Xinjiang immediately after its conquest was not 'integrationist' Yet by the opening decades of the nineteenth century Qing policy and goals began to exhibit tendencies that portended a rupture with the imperatives of the Qianlong era (1735–96) and a trend toward the entrenchment of integration as the pre-eminent goal of imperial policy.

The second phase of Qing rule in Xinjiang, 1820–1911: from dependency to 'province'

From 1759 to the early years of the nineteenth century, Qing rule of Xinjiang was relatively successful, with imperial authority seemingly consolidated through the

methods of direct and indirect rule and the re-invigoration of the region's economy. This situation was, however, to prove illusory with the almost constant generation of internal and external challenges to Qing rule throughout the nineteenth century. These challenges combined to produce a gradual, but nonetheless profound, transformation in the rationality that had underpinned Qing rule of Xinjiang. Externally, the challenges that confronted Qing dominion in Xinjiang stemmed from the Khanate of Koqand – an Islamic state based on the Ferghana Valley in present-day Uzbekistan. These challenges encompassed the continued exile of the Makhdumzada Khojas in Koqand and Koqandi pressure for trading privileges in Xinjiang, particularly in the Tarim Basin oasis of Kashgar. Koqand, theoretically in 'tributary' relations with the Qing, received an annual stipend of silver and the privilege of sending tribute missions to Beijing (Fletcher 1978a: 88; Kim 2004: 20). These privileges had been granted by the Qing so as to persuade Koqand to keep the exiled Makhdumzada Khojas on a tight leash, yet they also furnished Koqand with a valuable bargaining chip with which to draw further concessions from the Qing authorities in Xinjiang.

It will be recalled that the leader of the Makhdumzadas, Khoja Burhan ad-Din had been driven into Badakshan by the Qing in 1756 and with his death soon after, the leadership passed to his son Muhammad Amin, also known as Samsaq. Samsaq had eventually taken refuge in Koqand where he was kept on a tight leash due to Koqand's favourable relationship with the Qing in Xinjiang. Upon Samsaq's death in 1798 his three sons Muhammad Yusuf, Jahangir and Baha' ad-Din inherited the Makhdumzada cause (Toru 1978: 74). The eldest, Muhammad Yusuf reinitiated the attempt to regain influence in the Tarim Basin with a raid on Qing positions along the frontier in 1798–9 that was seen off by Qing troops. With this unsuccessful foray the leadership passed to Jahangir who resolved to lead a jihad against the Qing (Fletcher 1995: 36). Jahangir was, however, restrained by Koqand, which did not wish to unsettle its beneficial relationship with the Qing. Jahangir's quest for jihad was further undermined by the alignment of Koqand and many of the begs in the Tarim oases, who did not wish to see it come to fruition as it would be damaging to Koqand–Tarim Basin trade (Fletcher 1978a: 89; Borei 2002: 279–82). This alignment apparently encouraged the Khan of Koqand, Muhammad Umar Khan in 1813, to request permission to station an official Koqandi political agent at Kashgar who would also assume the role of the *hakim beg* and tax Koqandi merchants. The Khan's blatant attempt to gain extraterritoriality and the right to levy taxation on Qing soil predictably provoked a sharp rebuke from the Qing military-governor (Fletcher 1978a: 89). This turn of events prompted the Khan to leverage the Khoja factor. In 1814–15 the Khan directly threatened the Qing authorities that he had been restraining the Makhdumzadas and should be rewarded with a reduction in customs duties for Koqandi merchants. The Qing responded by revoking the Khan's annual silver stipend and privilege of sending tribute missions to Beijing. Despite the dispatch of a number of Koqandi ambassadors to Kashgar no compromise was reached and the Khan made good on his threat to release the Khojas (Fletcher 1978b: 361).

The ensuing 'Jahangir jihad' between 1820 and 1828 demonstrated that the Khojas still held enough prestige and support to significantly question Qing legitimacy in the oases of the Tarim Basin. More importantly the jihad induced the genesis of a review of official policy regarding Xinjiang and the Qing approach to external affairs (Fletcher 1978b: 363–9; Borei 2002: 282–3). These traumas for Qing rule in Xinjiang therefore initiated an, albeit gradual, re-evaluation of the rationality that underpinned the key structures of Qing power in Xinjiang. The results of this re-evaluation were felt with varying intensity across the constituent elements of Qing rule in Xinjiang from the mid-1830s onward. The first manifestation of a transformation of Qing techniques/tactics flowed from the 'unequal' treaty that was concluded with Koqand in the aftermath of the 'Jahangir jihad'. Although the treaty itself was an extension of a long standing pragmatic practice of Qing 'diplomacy' in Inner Asia, it provided the motivation and opportunity for the Qing to begin the implementation of a series of reforms regarding the structure and content of 'internal' administration. These reforms, most notably those concerning the encouragement of Han Chinese colonisation of the Tarim Basin, reflected the transformation of the guiding principle of Qing administration of Xinjiang until that time – segregation.

Although Jahangir's efforts between 1820 and 1825 resulted in little more than a series of raids on frontier posts that were easily repulsed, his invasion of 1826 was not so easily dealt with. The Khan of Koqand, who obviously deemed it the most effective way of re-establishing its predominant trading position in the Tarim Basin, supported Jahangir's invasion financially and militarily. Jahangir's military success near Kashgar induced the population to rise in his support, a success which precipitated popular revolts in Yarkand and Khotan (Fletcher 1995: 36; Kim 2004: 25). Upon these successes the Khan of Koqand entered southern Xinjiang at the head of a 10,000-man strong army (Fletcher 1978b: 363). The Qing, however, mounted a reconquest of the regions under Jahangir's control in 1827 and successfully expelled his forces from the Tarim Basin. A Qing expedition also succeeded in capturing the fugitive Khoja in 1828, who was subsequently sent to Beijing and executed by 'a thousand cuts' (Fletcher 1978b: 366; Toru 1978: 75).

A new governor-general, Nayanceng, was dispatched to Xinjiang by the court and made responsible for a review of Qing policy. The governor-general made a number of wide-reaching recommendations regarding administrative reforms and the Qing approach to the linked issues of the Khojas and Koqand. Regarding the internal administrative reforms the governor-general recommended the confiscation of the land and property of those guilty of rebellion (both foreign merchants and Qing subjects) and the establishment of government monopolies that reserved the right to trade with foreigners first. Furthermore, he recommended two proposals that foreshadowed the transformation of the Qing policy of segregation of Inner Asia – the establishment of military farms in the Tarim Basin and the encouragement of agricultural colonists from China proper to settle the region. His proposals for external affairs were to place an embargo on Koqand's

trade with the Tarim Basin oases until Koqand delivered the surviving khojas – Jahangir's brothers, Muhammad Yusuf and Baha' ad-Din – and the deportation of all Koqandis from the Tarim Basin oases (Fletcher 1978b: 367–9). The court accepted all of his proposals except those regarding the establishment of military farms and agricultural colonisation. Therefore, the court balked at the suggestion of radical changes to the structure and techniques of rule established after the conquest. Yet the court did accept the suggested changes to the management of external affairs, which suggests that the court viewed, not unreasonably, Jahangir's invasion as stemming entirely from external causes.

The attempt to nullify the threat of the Khojas and Koqand by cutting all avenues of interaction proved to be counter-productive. The Qing embargo struck at the source of Khoqand's power and strength – control of the trade with the Tarim Basin oases. Koqand subsequently sought to re-establish its position of dominance and invaded the westernmost oases of the Tarim Basin once more in 1830 with Jahangir's elder brother, Muhammad Yusuf Khoja, at the head of the army. Yet, the Khoja–Koqandi force failed to capture any of the major oases and Muhammad Yusuf retreated back to Koqand before an oncoming Qing relief force. The Qing, in light of a decade of conflict with Khoqand (either indirectly during Jahangir's jihad or directly in 1830), lifted the trade embargo in 1831. Following the resumption of trade a further understanding was reached whereby the Qing authorities allowed the free movement of Koqandi merchants and religious 'medicants' to the Tarim Basin oases. Additionally the Qing authorities compensated Koqandi merchants for the property confiscated after Jahangir's jihad and exempted them from customs duties (Fletcher 1978b: 369–73; Toru 1978: 75–6).

Such measures represented an over-turning of the uncompromising policies implemented between 1828 and 1830 and effectively demonstrated that Koqand had a geographic and strategic advantage over the Qing in the Tarim Basin. These years of conflict with Koqand prompted a high-level debate amongst imperial officials concerning the future direction of Qing policy in Xinjiang. The subjects of debate focused on three aspects of Qing policy in Xinjiang – the defence of westernmost oases of the Tarim (i.e. Kasghar, Khotan and Yarkand), the administrative structure of the region and the expansion of agricultural colonies (Borei 2002: 283–4; Millward 1998: 226–30). The debate bifurcated between those officials advocating retrenchment of Qing power from western segment of the Tarim Basin to realise fiscal savings and frontier security, and those advocating effective colonisation of the region. The Daoguang emperor tentatively acceded to the agenda of the colonisation advocates, and approved the migration of Han civilians to, and the establishment of civilian agricultural colonies between 1831 and 1835, while Qing troop strength in the Tarim Basin was boosted to 15,000 men (Borei 2002: 289–90).

Part of this re-evaluation of policy also concerned the handling of the Koqand issue. Between 1832 and 1835 a treaty between the Qing and Koqand, which Joseph Fletcher regarded as the empire's first 'unequal' treaty, was concluded (Fletcher 1978b: 379–84). The treaty came about due to the continuation of Koqand's efforts to force the Qing authorities in Xinjiang to not only re-establish

its preeminent commercial position but to establish a trade monopoly over the Tarim Basin–Central Asia trade. This revolved around a Koqandi request to station official political and commercial agents in the major oases of the Tarim Basin, especially Kashgar and Yarkand, who would be permitted to levy customs duties on all foreign traders. The Qing permitted the reestablishment of the commercial agents but refused the notion of political agents. Koqand, by a series of military manoeuvres along the still ill-defined Pamir frontier in the southwest in 1832 forced the Qing to adopt a more compromising attitude. The treaty of 1835 saw the Qing cede full extraterritoriality to Koqand allowing:

> (1) that Kokand should have the right to station a resident political representative (or asakal) at Kashgar and to station commercial agents (also called asakals) at Ush Turfan, Aksu, Yangi Hissar, Yarkand and Khotan under the Kashgar resident's authority; (2) that these asakals should have consular powers and judicial and police jurisdiction over the foreigners who came to Altishahr; (3) that these asakals should have the right to levy customs duties (*baj*) on all goods imported into Altishahr by foreigners.
>
> (Fletcher 1978b: 377)

It should be noted, however, that the Koqand demanded no principle of equality be included in the treaty. Furthermore, the Qing emperor's claims to universal legitimacy and political primacy meant that the ceding of extraterritoriality was not officially perceived as compromising the sovereignty of the empire. The notion of the treaty as 'unequal' may be accurate in terms of the concessions granted by the Qing to Koqand but the actual effects of it were arguably beneficial to the Qing in the short term. The court now reasoned that it was Nayanceng's uncompromising policies after 1828 that were the cause of Koqand's continued intransigence. Koqand, in return for the concessions wrung out of the Qing authorities, was supposed to respect the peace and restrain the Khojas. The Qing, by acceding to Khoqand's demands, seemingly bought peace and order along its Central Asian frontier for the next decade (Fletcher 1968: 222–3).

By the 1840s, Qing rule in the Tarim Basin had been partially consolidated through the expansion of Han colonisation, military agricultural colonies and land reclamation projects undertaken in the wake of the Jahangir jihad and Koqandi incursions (Fletcher 1978b: 385–7). This proved to be a brief period of respite for the imperial authorities with external challenges, in the form once more of Koqand and the Khojas and expanding Russian and British interests, calling into question Qing dominion over Xinjiang from the late 1840s onward. The Khojas mounted another series of invasions of the western Tarim Basin oases in 1847, 1852, 1855, 1857 and 1861, that, although ultimately unsuccessful, placed significant stress on the region's economy and political administration (Fletcher 1995: 35–7; Toru 1978: 76–7; Kim 2004: 29–36).

Qing rule of Xinjiang was also significantly weakened by the outbreak of Muslim rebellions in Shensi and Gansu provinces in 1862. These pressures culminated in 1864 with the outbreak of a series of internal rebellions, which

resulted in the collapse of Qing rule in Xinjiang, and external intervention by Koqand and Russia. The ethnic complexity of these revolts ultimately contributed to the intervention of these external forces, with the leaders of the rebellion in Kashgar appealing to the Khan of Koqand to dispatch a Khoja to lead the jihad (Fletcher, 1995: 40–1). Koqand in 1865 duly dispatched Jahangir's son, Buzurg Khan, with a small Koqandi force under the command of Yaqub Beg to Kashgar. Yaqub Beg, however, soon out-manoeuvred the leaders of the Kashgar rebellion and the Khoja. Upon assuming leadership of the Kashgar rebellion Yaqub Beg succeeded in conquering the major oases of the Tarim Basin (1868), Ürümqi in the Zungharian Basin and the eastern oasis of Turfan (1870) (Kim, 2004: 140).

Russia, wary of the possible influence of Yaqub Beg's regime on its recently acquired territories in Central Asia, occupied the Ili valley (in north-west Xinjiang) in 1871 (Hsu 1980: 92–5; Fretchling 1939: 479). The Russians, however, also concluded a treaty with Yaqub Beg in June 1872 in which they effectively acknowledge the *de facto* legitimacy of his rule of Xinjiang (Kim 2004: 141–3). Britain, in contrast to Russia, viewed the establishment of an independent Islamic state between its Indian possessions and an expansionist Russia in a favourable light, and established some commercial and political relations with Yaqub Beg's regime in 1872 (Kim 2004: 144–6; Fretchling, 1939). Yaqub Beg thus displayed a pragmatic grasp of the external geo-political environment that confronted his state by seeking the recognition of Central Asia's pre-eminent powers. Yet Yaqub also simultaneously cultivated relations with the geographically distant Ottoman sultan dispatching a number of envoys to Istanbul between 1872 and 1876. These missions were primarily concerned with procuring Ottoman military assistance, as Yaqub was unable to obtain sufficient armaments through his relations with British India. These entreaties for aid resulted in the Ottoman sultan's dispatch of four military advisers, six cannon, and 1,200 rifles, and the bestowal of the title of *amir al-mu'minin* (Commander of the Faithful) upon Yaqub Beg in 1873–4. Despite these efforts to establish a geo-political 'balance of power' around his state and acquire the recognition of Russia and Britain, Yaqub's regime collapsed in 1876–7 under the weight of a determined Qing reconquest of the region under General Zuo Zongtang (Kim 2004: 150–78).

Yaqub Beg's 'rebellion', much like the Koqandi invasion of western oases of the Tarim Basin in 1830, reignited court debate regarding the desirability of retaining Xinjiang. The Qing court's decision to attempt the re-conquest of Xinjiang was not a unanimous one, as some argued for the abandonment of Xinjiang in order to focus on blocking foreign penetration from the coastal regions. The Court was swayed however, by General Zuo Zongtang, Imperial Commissioner in Charge of Xinjiang Military Affairs, who argued that if Xinjiang was abandoned it would leave Mongolia vulnerable to Russian expansion and this in turn would leave Beijing vulnerable to external threats. General Zuo Zongtang therefore argued that Xinjiang must be retained in order to protect China Proper (Liu and Smith 1980: 237–38). Moreover, Zuo Zongtang was influenced by the so-called 'statecraft' scholars of the early nineteenth century who viewed Xinjiang as China's 'manifest destiny' These scholars maintained that Qing policy in

Xinjiang must be overhauled in order to secure the frontier. Gong Zizhong, the most famous of these scholars advocated agricultural reclamation, Han settlement, and restructuring of the region's administration on the basis of regular provincial administration. In essence these were advocates of the sinicisation of Xinjiang (Millward 1999: 82–3).

Thus, the cornerstone of the new rationality of Qing administration following Zuo Zongtang's re-conquest was ultimately integration. The policies that flowed from this new goal were concerned with the extension of a web of political, economic, cultural and ideological linkages between Xinjiang and the interior. As such the goals of the post-Yaqub Beg administration were political integration, establishment of a predominantly Han officialdom, promotion of Han migration, and cultural assimilation of Xinjiang's non-Han populations through the introduction of Confucian education. On this latter front, General Zuo Zongtang, asserted that:

> If we wish to change their peculiar customs and assimilate them to our Chinese ways (*huafeng*), we must found free schools (*yishu*) and make the Muslim children read books, recognize characters and understand spoken language.
> (Cited in Millward 2007, p. 142)

Such measures were important not only in terms of securing the integration of the new province but of negating or minimising the long standing political, economic, cultural, ethnic and ideological linkages between Xinjiang and Central Asia (Millward and Tursun 2004: 63–7). Thus the imperial administration of Xinjiang pursued an explicitly sinicising policy.

This transformation of the structure and content of Qing administration was mirrored by a new approach to external affairs. The initial manifestation of this was the Qing stance regarding the Russian occupation of Ili. Although the Treaty of St. Petersburg of 1881, that returned Ili to the Qing, occurred before Xinjiang became a province it demonstrated that the Qing were no longer prepared to 'buy off' external powers in Xinjiang with various concessions as had occurred regarding Koqand in the 1830s (Hsu 1965). Similar concessions were no longer conceivable given the re-evaluation of the structure and goal of the administration of Xinjiang that had begun immediately after Yaqub Beg's defeat. The focus on integration ultimately flowed through to the conception of how to manage elements of external affairs related to Xinjiang. The major issues confronted by the Qing in Xinjiang regarding external affairs after Yaqub Beg's defeat were similar in content to those confronted during the 1830s but the form had changed dramatically. The independent states of Central Asia – the Khanates of Khiva and Koqand and the Emirate of Bukhara – had ceased to exist, incorporated by Russia during the 1870s thus eliminating the troublesome Koqandi factor.

The extinguishing of Koqand as a factor did not prevent the continuation of the political, economic, religious and cultural links that existed between Xinjiang and Central Asia. The continued existence of these linkages remained a threat to the Qing project in Xinjiang, particularly in light of the transformation of imperial

perceptions and goals in Xinjiang. Qing policy in Xinjiang from 1759 to 1911 could be considered a success as it effectively implanted the notion of Xinjiang as being an integral part of the 'Chinese' state into an emerging national consciousness in the early twentieth century. The processes initiated directly or indirectly by the Qing over the course of their one hundred and fifty-year presence in Xinjiang, such as the Qianlong-era geographic and ethnographic projects, established an expanded geographic and political conception of what constituted China. This was demonstrably not the goal of the Qianlong emperor, but the series of challenges confronted by the Qing in Xinjiang throughout the nineteenth century precipitated the reorientation of techniques and tactics of rule.

The pawn and pivot of Asia: Xinjiang during the republican era, 1911–49

The end of the Qing-era ushered in a period fragmentation in China that resulted in the 'semi-independence' of Xinjiang from the Chinese state from 1911 to 1949. Throughout this period Xinjiang experienced the continuation of many of the themes and dynamics that characterised the region in the Qing era. Xinjiang between 1911 and 1949 was characterised by the continued tension between and interaction of forces/dynamics emanating from outside of Xinjiang and from within. The collapse of the Qing resulted in increased external or foreign pressure on the defunct empire's frontiers – Mongolia, Tibet, Manchuria and Xinjiang – while political authority and power in China proper was fragmented, particularly during the 1911–28 period. The duality of weak political authority at the centre and along the frontiers facilitated the development of a dynamic that permitted Han elites, such as that in Xinjiang, to have almost total autonomy from the Republic, albeit in the face of strong external challenges. Such a situation pertained in Xinjiang under 'warlord' rule. This situation determined Xinjiang's position between 1911 and 1949 as both the 'pawn' and 'pivot' of Asia, whereby it formed the point of intersection of the geo-political imperatives of Russia/Soviet Union, China, Japan, and towards the end of this period the US (Lattimore 1950a; Whiting 1958). The administrations of the successive 'warlord' administrations of Yang Zengxin, Jin Shuren and Sheng Shicai exhibited large measures of continuity with the Qing period regarding the strategies and methods of rule employed, while they all experienced the vicissitudes of Xinjiang's ambiguous position between China and the Soviet Union.

Yang Zengxin's period of rule in fact exhibited continuity with both major phases of Qing rule in Xinjiang. The structure of Yang's administration within Xinjiang was based on the Qing model established after the region became a province in 1884. Thus, the system of *taoyin* or military governors within the major administrative 'circuits' in Xinjiang were paralleled by the continuation of the *beg* system at the district level (Nyman 1977: 25–6). Yang, however, in the spirit of the Qing segregation-era (1759–1820) strove to maintain the geographic and ethnic divisions within Xinjiang by a number of measures, such as perpetuating the administrative division between Zungharian and Tarim Basins, restricting

intra and inter-provincial travel and pitting the sedentary population against the nomads/pastoralists (Millward and Tursun 2004: 69–70; Fui-Hsiang 1973: 16).

As such it shared the same logic or rationale as the first phase of Qing rule – segregation and division enhanced Yang's ability to maintain control. Yet the theme of integration was also evident in other facets of Yang's rule, most notably with respect to his perception of, and response to, 'external' threats to 'Chinese' rule. Throughout his tenure Yang sought to isolate Xinjiang from not only China but from Russian and then Soviet Central Asia. The potential threat to Xinjiang emanating from Central Asia was primarily an ideological one. As during the Qing, where the Makhdumzada Khojas (supported by Koqand) questioned the legitimacy of Qing rule, the emerging reformist currents of Jadidism and then secular nationalism (circa World War I) provided alternative models of political development for Xinjiang's predominantly non-Han and Islamic population. Thus, Yang prevented the circulation of Turkic language newspapers, restricted Islamic education and prevented the employ of foreign teachers or Islamic clerics (Millward and Tursun 2004: 69; Rudelson 1992: 91–2). Moreover, Yang's handling of major external developments, most notably Tsarist Russian pressures on Kashgar (1912) and the regional fallout of the Russian and Bolshevik Revolutions (1917–22) that threatened the continued primacy of the Han elite in Xinjiang, exhibited an inclination to protect Xinjiang's 'Chinese-ness' against potential external threats (Skrine and Nightingale 1973: 173–225; Gilbert 1969: 230–1; Clubb 1977: 190–5). Yang Zengxin's rule ended, however, with his assassination by his Commissioner of Foreign Affairs, Fan Yaonan, on 7 July 1928 (Anonymous 1929: 87).

Although Yang succeeded in isolating Xinjiang from China and limited the expansion of Soviet influence, his successors found it exceedingly difficult to balance the competing imperatives of the Soviet Union and China. The tenures of both Jin Shuren (1928–32) and Sheng Shicai (1933–43) witnessed the apex of external influence in Xinjiang's affairs, particularly that of the Soviet Union (Wang 1999; Forbes 1986). Jin Shuren's reign was both brief and turbulent. Jin, a native of Gansu Province, attempted to continue his predecessor's approach to governing Xinjiang. Under Jin, the administration of the region became dominated by a 'family hierarchy' of his relatives and associates from Gansu, while his attempts to monopolise taxes on Xinjiang–Soviet trade and reliance on a network of informants to maintain control raised the ire of his non-Han subjects (Norins 1944: 40; Gilbert 1969: 225; Benson 1989: 26).

A seemingly innocuous event, however, precipitated the demise of the new governor. Following the Qing collapse Yang Zengxin had continued the Qing practice of permitting the parallel administration of a 'native state' ruled by a hereditary prince in the oasis of Hami in the Turfan Basin that had been created following the Qing conquest in 1759. Upon the death of Hami's ruling prince in March 1930, Jin abolished the 'native state' and made preparations for its absorption into the provincial administration (Gilbert 1969: 234). Furthermore, Jin transferred the prince's heir to Ürümqi, where he was subsequently executed. The population's ire was further intensified when the new Chinese administrators

attempted to tax the locals for the previous year and forced Uyghur farmers off the land in favour of Han colonisers from the governor's province of Gansu (Gilbert 1969: 234; Anonymous 1934: 82; Rudelson 1992: 97).

Soon thereafter a rebellion erupted against the Chinese in Hami under the leadership of Yulbars Khan, a former adviser to the Hami princes, and Khoja Niyaz Haiji. The governor dispatched a military force to suppress the rebellion but was repulsed and the rebels appealed to Ma Zhongying, the young Hui warlord of Gansu, for assistance (Gilbert 1969: 235). Following the Hami rebellion and Ma's intervention, Jin Shuren mobilised a White Russian force, based on Russian émigrés that had fled to northern Xinjiang during the Russian civil war, to retrieve the situation. This force of White Russians did not manage to retake Hami, with Ma Zhongying temporarily retreating to Gansu, until August 1931. By this time, however, the spirit of rebellion had spread throughout Xinjiang with 'risings' and 'disturbances' flaring at Turfan in the Turfan Basin, and Aksu, Khotan and Kashgar in the Tarim Basin, and Ili in the north-west (Nyman 1977: 106).

The governor hard-pressed on all sides thus turned to the only external power capable of lending assistance, the Soviet Union. On 1 October 1931 Jin Shuren signed a new agreement with the Soviets that in return for Soviet military aid established the Soviet–Xinjiang Trade Company or *Sovsintorg* to further Soviet commercial interests and reduced customs duties on Soviet goods (Gilbert 1969: 236–7; Norins 1944: 68). Significantly the Chinese government in Nanjing was not informed of this agreement and its contents. The terms of the establishment of the *Sovsintorg* permitted the Soviets to set up trading agencies in Ürümqi, Chuguchak, Kashgar, Aksu, Yarkand and Khotan, significantly expanding Soviet influence south of the Tien Shan into the oases of the Tarim Basin where British interests had generally been favoured (Norins 1944: 68). The agreement thus upset the relative balance established by Yang Zengxin and can be seen as the first 'offensive' move in the Soviet Union's drive to reclaim the lost Tsarist privileges in Xinjiang.

Shortly after the conclusion of this agreement with the Soviets, Jin Shuren appointed Sheng Shicai, a Manchurian military cadet, as commander-in-chief (Gilbert 1969: 237). The following year saw little respite for the besieged provincial authorities with Hui forces under the command of one of Ma Zhongying's lieutenants, Ma Shiming, laying siege to Ürümqi in December 1932 (Forbes 1986: 103). The White Russians and Sheng Shicai's troops successfully defended Ürümqi and in March 1933 they were bolstered by the arrival of the so-called 'Manchurian Salvation Army' from the across the Xinjiang–Soviet frontier (Forbes 1986: 103; Teichman 1936: 565). This 'army' was in fact a Manchurian division of the GMD army that had retreated into the Soviet Union following the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. Their arrival at this juncture via Soviet territory suggests that Moscow was increasingly wary of the Islamic nature of the anti-Chinese rebellion in Xinjiang. Following these events Sheng Shicai's prestige grew while that of his superior, Jin Shuren, correspondingly declined. The denouement came with a mutiny of the White Russian troops on 12 April 1933 that overthrew Jin, and two days later elevated Sheng Shicai to

governor (Gilbert 1969: 240; Whiting 1958: 12–13; Forbes 1986: 106; Wang 1999: 202–05).

Sheng Shicai, confronted by Ma Zhongying's army outside of Ürümqi in mid-1933, dispatched a delegation in October to Soviet Central Asia to request assistance. Sheng Shicai claimed later that the delegation was merely following up requests made by Jin Shuren for the delivery of military equipment but evidently a much more comprehensive agreement had been reached when it returned in December 1933. Sheng's delegation returned accompanied by Garegin Apresoff, who would become the Soviet Consul-General at Ürümqi (Nyman 1977: 118; Wang 1999: 52–4; Gilbert 1969: 247). Sheng received substantial military aid from the Soviets under this agreement and in return Sheng granted the Soviets wide-reaching political, economic and military concessions. Sheng's secret agreement in December 1933 in many respects represented the attainment of the Tsars' goal in Xinjiang. In this regard it should be noted that in 1912 the Russian Consul-General informed Sir George Macartney, the British Consul-General at Kasghar, that while it was not to Russia's advantage to annex Xinjiang it was in her interests to see it become a pliable buffer state, essentially autonomous of China but too weak to resist Russian exploitation (Skrine and Nightingale 1973: 202–03). Sheng's agreement with the Soviets achieved this goal, to all intents and purposes, for the Tsar's Soviet heirs.

Ma Zhongying's alleged sources of external support were also arguably a contributing factor in Moscow's decision to back Sheng Shicai. Several scholars, and Sheng Shicai himself, asserted that Ma had clear Japanese connections. According to this view Japanese support for Ma Zhongying was part of Tokyo's broader attempt to create an 'Asian Co-prosperity Sphere' and combat the influence of the Soviet Union (Lattimore 1950; Whiting 1958; Clubb 1977). The basis of this argument, although plausible with Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931, is largely based upon Sheng Shicai's provincial forces capturing a Japanese agent, Onishi Tadashi, during fighting with Ma's forces. Ma was also alleged to have a number of 'Turkish advisers', including a mysterious 'Colonel K' who was variously described as a Japanese agent or Soviet *agent provocateur* (Anonymous 1935b: 106; Clubb 1977: 281).

The Japanese, in contrast to both Britain and the Soviet Union, who both ruled large Muslim populations, looked favourably on the creation of an independent Muslim state between China and the Soviet Union. Tokyo's efforts in this regard extended to providing sanctuary for the grandson of the last Ottoman Sultan, Abdul Hamid II, at Tokyo as a possible figurehead for a Japanese-sponsored independent Islamic 'Greater Turkestan' (Nyman 1977: 118). Yet, Japan's ability to practically aid such a figure as Ma Zhongying was severely hampered by the enormous geographic distance between Xinjiang and Japan's furthest point of expansion in Manchuria. Indeed, Tokyo relied on its ambassador in Kabul for intelligence on events in Xinjiang. However, for the Soviet Union, the only external power actually capable of intervening in Xinjiang, such reports of Japanese influence simply provided another justification for action (Nyman 1977: 118–19).

Simultaneous with these events north of the Tien Shan in the Zungharian Basin the major oases south of the Tien Shan in the Tarim Basin were convulsed by a series of rebellions by the largely Uyghur population which ultimately resulted in the proclamation of an 'East Turkestan Republic' (ETR) in Kashgar in May 1933. The ETR was in fact the result of a tentative alliance between the separate Uyghur rebellions in Kashgar and the oasis of Khotan, the latter of which revolved around the leadership of the so-called 'Khotan Amirs'. The political orientation of this movement has been a matter of some debate with some, such as Andrew D. W. Forbes, stressing its pan-Islamic and anti-Chinese flavour, while others, such as James Millward, have noted the amalgam of influences – from secular nationalism to radical Islamism – apparent in the ETR's official declarations (Forbes 1986: 111–16; Millward 2007: 201–06). Nonetheless, the ETR was predominantly anti-Chinese and anti-Soviet and had as its core goal the establishment of an independent Muslim state based on the Tarim Basin. This orientation thus opposed the ETR to the other dominant actors in Xinjiang at the time, the Soviet Union and the Han Chinese elite in Ürümqi one hand and the Hui forces of Ma Zhongying on the other, and ultimately ensured its defeat.

In January 1934 Ma's Hui forces once more laid siege to Ürümqi. This time, however, Sheng Shicai's agreement with the Soviet Union came to the fore as Soviet air support and two brigades of OGPU troops helped his forces rout Ma's army (Gilbert 1969: 248; Dallin 1971: 98; Clubb 1977: 282–83). Ma Zhongying subsequently retreated south of the Tien Shan into the region held by the ETR and extinguished the Turki republic upon his arrival in Kashgar in March 1934 (Clubb 1977: 285; Teichman 1936: 565–6). Khoja Niyaz, the titular head of the ETR, in the face of Ma Zhongying's approach retreated to the Xinjiang–Soviet border, where at the frontier town of Irkeshtam, he signed an agreement that dissolved the ETR and committed him to support of Sheng Shicai's regime (Forbes 1986: 122–3). With the ETR threat averted Soviet forces withdrew from Zungharia and Sheng's strengthened military forces compelled Ma Zhongying's forces to retreat from Kashgar in June–July 1934 to the southeast toward Khotan and Yarkand, where they would remain until 1937 (Teichman 1936: 566; Clubb 1977: 285; Dallin 1971: 98).

Ma's Hui warriors did so, however, without their commander. In a confounding turn of events Ma Zhongying, the would-be anti-Soviet Islamic ruler of Xinjiang, retreated into Soviet Central Asia via Irkeshtam accompanied by several trusted officers and a Soviet official (Clubb 1977: 285; Wang 1999: 53; Anonymous 1935a: 102). His motives for undertaking such a manoeuvre remain a mystery, but the Soviet Union's do not. The Soviets, by removing Ma from the picture, would further entrench Sheng Shicai in power and could hope to receive favourable treatment and concessions from the grateful new ruler of Xinjiang. Furthermore, the Soviets, by holding Ma Zhongying somewhere in Soviet Central Asia retained a significant card to play if future political developments in Xinjiang did not conform to their strategic interests. That is to say the Soviets could possibly use Ma Zhongying against Sheng Shicai if he attempted to reassert his independence

from Moscow or to combat possible Japanese expansion into Xinjiang (Forbes 1986: 125–7). Thus, Sheng Shicai secured his position of governor of Xinjiang. Throughout the following decade Sheng Shicai, much like his predecessors, would attempt to maintain Xinjiang's autonomy from China. In contrast to Yang Zengxin and Jin Shuren, Sheng would find it increasingly difficult to balance, manage or exclude the strategic, political, economic and military imperatives of the Soviet Union and the Republic of China.

Soviet support for Sheng Shicai after the crushing of the Turkic and Hui rebellions and fall of Jin Shuren in 1933 created a Xinjiang that was essentially a Soviet satellite. There were four key elements to the Soviet Union's influence in Xinjiang under Sheng Shicai: direct military intervention, economic exploitation, direct involvement of Soviet personnel in the administration and ideological domination of the region (Garver 1988: 154–5). After the direct Soviet military intervention of 1933–4, Sheng's position was bolstered further by the stationing of the Red Army '8th Regiment' at Hami in 1937 (Forbes 1986: 140–41). The Soviets' support of Sheng was rewarded through the signing of a number of exploitative economic and commercial agreements regarding Xinjiang's mineral resources, especially its oil and non-ferrous metals (Forbes 1986: 150–65; Clubb 1977: 286–89). As a result of a further Xinjiang–Soviet agreement in 1935, Soviet 'advisers' headed provincial government departments, economic enterprises and health services, while Stalin's brother-in-law A. S. Svanidze supervised the formulation of a three-year economic development plan (Wang 1999: 54; Garver 1988: 155). Xinjiang's satellite status under Sheng was highlighted by his enunciation of 'Six Great Policies' in December 1934 that was to guide the region. These policies were to be 'anti-imperialism, friendship with the Soviet Union, racial and national equality, clean government, peace and reconstruction' and demonstrated the encompassing Soviet influence over the region (Lattimore 1950: 72–3).

A major manifestation of Sheng Shicai's turn to the Soviet Union was clearly his 'reform' of the provincial authorities approach to the non-Han populations of Xinjiang. This ultimately entailed the adoption of a Soviet-inspired 'nationalities policy' The guiding principles of this approach were the granting of limited cultural autonomy for the non-Han population of Xinjiang and the cooptation of certain non-Han leaders into Sheng's government. In practice the greater cultural autonomy permitted by Sheng resulted in the establishment of secular Turki-language schools, the revival of madrassas (Islamic schools), the creation of Turki language newspapers and the formation of the Uyghur Progress Union (Rudelson 1992: 98). To further appease the Turki population Sheng appointed the erstwhile president of the TIRET, Khoja Niyaz, and the leader of the Hami rebellion of 1931, Yulbars Khan, to prominent positions within his government. The handmaiden of these reformist and 'progressive' policies was the institution of a Soviet-style secularisation campaign aimed at undermining the influence of religion in Xinjiang. Moreover, many Uyghurs and other non-Hans were sent abroad to study, most notably to Tashkent in Soviet Uzbekistan to the Central Asia University and Central Asia Military Academy. Upon their return to Xinjiang these students found

positions as teachers and administrators within Sheng's government (Rudelson 1992: 99).

These policies were accompanied by a process similar to that which took place in Soviet Central Asia during the Soviets' 'national delimitation' of the 1920s. Sheng, undoubtedly under Soviet guidance, convened the Second Provincial People's Congress in Ürümqi in 1935 to determine the official names of the population of the province (Bovingdon 2000: 103). Some scholars claim that the major purpose of this process was to exacerbate and officially sanction the divisions amongst Xinjiang's population in true *divide et impera* fashion. Yet much like the Soviet process in the 1920s it produced somewhat contradictory dynamics. Bovingdon, for example, rightly notes that the process in Xinjiang (and Soviet Central Asia for that matter) did not simply identify existing nationalities or *minzu* but 'called them into being' (Bovingdon 2000: 127). Thus, this process recognised and constituted fourteen *minzu* out of a heterogeneous population, which prior to this were not so rigorously divided or grouped. The effects of such a process, although serving the ruling elite's purpose by dividing the subject population, ultimately served to provide the ideological and political basis upon which a nationalist program could be built.

It should be noted that the ethnonym, Uyghur, was resurrected (or perhaps more accurately resuscitated) in Soviet Central Asia at a Turkic-Muslim conference in Tashkent in 1921 and that the connection of this term to those currently defined as 'Uyghur' is not without controversy (Rudelson 1992: 75; Gladney 2004a: 205–25; Roberts 2009). The definition of what and who constituted an Uyghur proved to be difficult, with the Soviet definition (largely linguistically determined) eventually based on a 'Taranqi' dialect of the Semireche (Rudelson 1992: 75; Gladney 2004: 210). In 1935, Sheng Shicai's government adopted this particular definition. This, combined with Sheng's policies of limited cultural autonomy, outlined above, resulted in the emergence of a national intelligentsia, particularly amongst those defined as Uyghur (i.e. 80 per cent of the population) (Rudelson 1992: 97–9). The categorisation of Xinjiang's population into fourteen distinct *minzu* thus strengthened the provincial authorities' ability to know, control and manipulate the non-Han majority and simultaneously strengthened the collective identity of those so categorised. Sheng, much like his Soviet patrons, closely supervised and managed this limited cultural autonomy and undertook a number of purges against prominent Turkic-Muslim leaders in the late 1930s (Millward and Tursun 2004: 79–81).

The implications of this for Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang (GMD) government over the 1928–42 period, given its inability to project military, political or economic power into Xinjiang, were that Chinese claims to the region had to be promoted through purely strategic measures within the context of the Republic's diplomacy and foreign policy. Hence, Chiang's manoeuvres regarding the Hui warlord Ma Zhongying during the Turkic–Muslim rebellion between 1931 and 1933 whereby he sought to make Ma the nominal 'commander-in-chief' of the 36th Division of the National Army in order to establish some sort of GMD presence in Xinjiang (Wang 1999: 52; Gilbert 1969: 238–39).

Although this endeavour ultimately failed due to direct Soviet military assistance to Jin Shuren and his successor Sheng Shicai, it displayed an ongoing concern with the precarious position of Xinjiang in the Republic of China. Moreover, the Soviet presence in Xinjiang aided Chiang's government after the beginning of the Sino–Japanese War in 1937, as the region became a key corridor for the delivery of Soviet military and economic aid to China under the terms of the Sino–Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 1937 (Garver 1988: 19–23). This position of Chinese weakness in the face of Soviet power in Xinjiang did not, however, undermine the state's intent to re-establish Chinese power in the region. The intensification of non-Chinese power in Xinjiang from the late 1920s to the mid-1940s played a crucial role in re-affirming the integrationist logic of the late Qing era in the Chinese state's perception of the correct nature of the relationship between itself and Xinjiang. This was borne out by the rapidity of the GMD government's projection of its military, political and economic power into Xinjiang following the nadir of Soviet fortunes along the Eastern front in 1942.

Sheng's Soviet patrons began to lose interest in Xinjiang in 1941 due to the conclusion of a non-aggression pact with Japan, and ultimately lost the capability to intervene in the region following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. A key goal of Soviet intervention in Xinjiang in the early 1930s, which ultimately resulted in Sheng's pre-eminence in the region, was to create a bulwark against Japanese expansion along the Soviet Union's eastern frontiers. The collapse of the Red Army in the face of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941–2, however, terminated the Moscow's capability to actively undergird Sheng's regime militarily or economically. Moreover, when the US joined the war following Pearl Harbour in December 1941 and began funnelling aid to Chiang's GMD government, Sheng decided to throw in his lot with Chongqing.

Meanwhile, in July 1942 Chiang Kai-shek convened a top-level meeting in Chongqing to consider the government's approach to Xinjiang. The Minister of War, He Yingqin, presented Chiang with a strategy for the 'recovery' of Xinjiang. According to He, China must take advantage of the current Sino–Soviet alliance to recover Xinjiang but do so cautiously. He proposed a two-stage strategy by which to recover Xinjiang. This strategy illustrated not only the political will of the Chinese government to re-establish control over Xinjiang but also the perceived importance of Xinjiang as part of China. The first phase was to remove Soviet influence in Xinjiang through 'stratagem' rather than force, as Chongqing could neither afford to divert the necessary manpower nor alienate the Soviet Union entirely. The second phase was, once Soviet influence had been removed from Xinjiang, to begin the institution of GMD political and military control 'on the ground' (Garver 1988: 168–9). The first phase required the GMD to work through Sheng Shicai to create pressure on the Soviets in Xinjiang that would create tensions in Xinjiang–Soviet relations. Chongqing would then intercede to resolve these tensions thus redirecting Soviet concerns regarding Xinjiang to the central government and demonstrating the reorientation of the province.

Thus, through a number of secret contacts between Ürümqi and Chongqing over the March to August period Sheng agreed to begin a purge of Soviet political influence and place a series of demands on the Soviet government regarding the 'Tin Mines Agreement' and the Red Army '8th Regiment' at Hami (Garver 1988: 165–6; Forbes 1986: 158–62; Wang 1999: 56–7). Sheng's actions and his hard bargaining in the negotiations concerning Soviet military and commercial interests produced a series of protests from Moscow to Chongqing regarding the 'anti-Soviet' activities in Xinjiang (Garver 1988: 166–9). The response of the Chinese government was that although the timing of these activities was unfortunate, the problems were between Xinjiang and the Soviet Union and should not be allowed to disrupt the Sino–Soviet relationship. Chiang Kai-shek also stressed to Soviet representatives that in order to resolve the problems concerning Xinjiang the Soviets in future should direct their efforts through the central government not through Sheng Shicai (Garver 1988: 190–6).

Sheng Shicai's about-face was completed on 5 October 1942 when Xinjiang was officially 'reincorporated' into the Chinese state. Simultaneously, Sheng demanded through the Soviet Consul-General in Ürümqi that the Soviet Union withdraw all personnel within three months (Forbes 1986: 159). The Soviets, hard pressed by the German invasion prevaricated, and opened negotiations (as Chiang had hoped for) with Chongqing (Garver 1988: 172–3). Despite Sheng's three-month ultimatum, the Soviet Union notified Sheng and Chongqing in March–April 1943 that it would withdraw all Soviet personnel connected to the Ürümqi aeroplane plant, 'Tin Mines Agreement' installations and the '8th Regiment' at Hami and that the Soviet trading agency (Sovsintorg) would scale back its activities (Garver 1988: 172–3; Forbes 1986: 159–60).

Sheng's turn toward Chiang's government would not only have a negative effect on his personal political fortunes but also on the region's economy. In November 1942, for example, Sheng agreed to an arrangement for the linking of Xinjiang's currency to that of the GMD government at an exchange rate that overvalued the KMT currency. As a result the inflation ridden KMT currency flooded into Xinjiang and Xinjiang's valuable commodities flowed out in exchange. The region's economic problems were also exacerbated due to the fact that the Xinjiang–Soviet border had effectively been closed to trade since mid-1942, a factor that particular hurt the north of the region as much of its trade had been with Soviet Central Asia (Benson 1989: 36; Clubb 1977: 327).

As Soviet influence was gradually removed, GMD representatives and personnel followed. In June 1943, four divisions of the GMD's New 2nd Army under General Zhu Shaoliang were transferred to Xinjiang from Gansu. Therefore, the GMD, between April 1942 and October 1943, effectively removed Soviet influence in Xinjiang and initiated the institution of GMD political and military authority in the province for the first time. After the German failure at Stalingrad late in 1943, however, Sheng attempted to return to his original pro-Soviet alignment. He thus had all the GMD representatives in Xinjiang arrested, informing Stalin that they were Japanese spies and telling Chiang they were communist agents. Stalin, however, refused to intervene and left Sheng to the

mercy of Chiang's government, which subsequently engineered his removal from Xinjiang in September 1944 (Millward and Tursun 2004: 81).

'A victory without arms': Xinjiang's 'return' to China and the East Turkestan Republic, 1944–1949

Contemporaneously *Time* Chongqing correspondent, Theodore White, journeyed to the region to report on China's 'victory without arms' in Xinjiang. He asserted that the reorientation of Xinjiang back toward China was 'a diplomatic feat as great as any in Chinese history' (White 1943). Yet, the GMD's position in Xinjiang was never consolidated, however, as a widespread and pan-ethnic rebellion erupted in the Ili region in the north-west barely twelve months after White's visit in October–November 1944. This rebellion led to the proclamation of the second 'East Turkestan Republic' (ETR) and the expulsion of the GMD presence from the three north-western regions of Ili, Altai and Tarbagatai. By September 1945, ETR and GMD troops faced each other across the Manas River outside the provincial capital Ürümqi. The ETR's rapid success was in part due to the Soviet Union's covert support of the rebels and the GMD's tenuous position in the northern regions of Xinjiang (Forbes 1986: 168–70; Wang 1999: 60–1; Benson, 1989).[8] The rebels, on the verge of capturing the provincial capital and seemingly in control of the conflict, informed the GMD representative in Xinjiang, General Zhang Zhizhong, on 15 September 1945, via the Soviet consulate in Ürümqi, of their wish for a cease-fire and mediation of the conflict (Forbes 1986: 190). Once more geopolitics and great power rivalry had intervened at a crucial juncture to alter Xinjiang's future.

The issue of the ETR and the future of Xinjiang were of pivotal importance during the Sino–Soviet negotiations for their 'Treaty of Friendship and Alliance' of 14 August 1945. In essence these negotiations concerned China's acceptance of the terms of the Yalta Agreement and the Soviet interests in East Asia affirmed therein. In return for forgoing China's claims to Outer Mongolia/Mongolian People's Republic, Soviet leasing of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) and the Manchurian ports of Lushan and Dalian, Chiang Kai-shek's government obtained two major undertakings from the Soviet Union. First, the Soviet Union would 'safeguard' China's sovereignty in Manchuria and second, cease to support the CCP and the ETR in Xinjiang. Thus, Chiang forfeited the Republic's long-held claims to the MPR (which it had not recognised despite its declaration of independence in 1921), and granted concessions to a foreign power in Manchuria in order to secure Chinese sovereignty over Manchuria and Xinjiang (Wang 1999: 60–65). Xinjiang, as a result of these external developments, was to remain divided between ETR and GMD controlled areas until the arrival of the PLA late in 1949 resolved the issue of the region's future (Wang 1999: 65).

Xinjiang over the 1911–49 period was clearly and intimately linked to both the foreign policy of the Republic of China (especially the Sino–Soviet relationship) and the geopolitical environment of Central Asia. The actions of Chinese warlords, such as Yang Zengxin, although often responding to external pressure in a purely

pragmatic fashion ultimately illustrated their belief or assumption that Xinjiang was part of China. As we have seen, however, each Chinese warlord had to balance the great autonomy bestowed upon Xinjiang due to weak central power with a corresponding strengthening and intensification of external influence. The implications of this for the central government, particular from 1928 to 1942, were that Chinese claims to Xinjiang had to be furthered through purely strategic measures within the context of the Republic's overall foreign policy. Hence Chiang's manoeuvres regarding Ma Zhongying in the early 1930s and his government's acceptance of Soviet power in Xinjiang during the critical Sino–Soviet alliance of 1937–39.

Whilst the GMD government over the 1928–42 period was operating from a position of weakness in terms of Sino–Soviet and Sino–Xinjiang relations, this weakness did not essentially erode Chinese claims to Xinjiang or the maintenance of the political will to do so. The efficaciousness with which the opportunity to re-assert Chinese control of the region was seized in 1942 suggests the continuity of the notion in elite circles that Xinjiang was Chinese. Moreover, the importance of the re-assertion of Chinese control did not simply derive from the perception that it had been 'lost' after the collapse of the Qing. It also derived from the related perception that Xinjiang *had* to be part of a unified China in order to safeguard the security of the Republic. This was a calculus that evidently bore the mark of Zuo Zongtang and the 'statecraft' scholars' view of Xinjiang's importance to China. Therefore, although the clear erosion of Soviet strength drove Chiang's actions in Xinjiang in 1942–3, the decision was justified beyond pure *realpolitik*. The urgency and determination with which Soviet weakness was seized upon by Chiang and high-level advisors such as He Yingqin illustrates the entrenchment of the notion that Xinjiang not only *was* Chinese but also *should* be Chinese. Chiang Kai-shek's perception of both Xinjiang's importance and relation to China was quite clearly stated:

> Sinkiang is part of China's territory. *It has long been one of the Chinese provinces.* As a strategic base in the heartland of Asia, it can contribute toward peace and security in Asia and elsewhere in the world *only when it remains under the complete jurisdiction of the Republic of China.*
>
> (Chiang 1957: 100)

The notion that Xinjiang had long been a *Chinese* province is quite clearly a spurious historical claim, in light of the material examined earlier, where it was demonstrated that what became Xinjiang in the late nineteenth century had been very much a Qing *Inner Asian* dependency. Furthermore, Xinjiang officially became a province of the empire in 1884, a mere sixty years before Chiang's claims to the historicity of the Chinese-ness of Xinjiang. While Chiang's claims to Xinjiang, in his role of leader of the Republic of China, can be understood as attempting to defend the Republic's claims to the region in the international arena, the belief that territories such as Xinjiang were in fact Chinese was widespread.

Indeed, writing in 1922, the prominent late Qing and early Republican intellectual, Liang Qichao, asserted that:

> Sinkiang was established as a province in 1884, and hence the 36 states of the *Xiyu* [Western regions], whose relations with us since the two Han dynasties had been sometimes rather close and sometimes attenuated, may be considered *completely incorporated* into Chinese territory and *made the same as the interior*. [Emphasis added]
>
> (Liang 1922: 269)

The assuredness and finality of Liang's remarks are striking given that, as we have seen, Xinjiang in 1922 was under the control of a warlord who paid only minimal lip-service to the idea of loyalty to the Republic of China. Liang's assertion that Xinjiang had been 'made the same as the interior' through its establishment as a province of the Qing empire in 1884 can perhaps be seen as an early attempt at 'remembering territories that had been dismembered' in order to 'imagine' and 'manage' China's geobody (Callahan 2008: 145).

The political and ideological implications of these claims are clear and impacted heavily on both the policies pursued in Xinjiang under the GMD and the perception of the region's importance. These imperatives, as we have seen, played a significant role in determining both Chiang's approach to Sino–Soviet relations and to the administration of Xinjiang from 1942 to 1949. Importantly, the Chinese claim that Xinjiang both was and should be part of the Chinese state required, in fact determined, a series of policies both externally and internally. Thus, upon the GMD's establishment of control and ultimate removal of Sheng Shicai in 1944 there was implemented a series of policies that echoed those of the late Qing period.

The policies that flowed from this goal were to introduce a major GMD military force (or perhaps garrison would be more descriptively accurate), encourage Han Chinese settlement and reorient the region's economy toward China proper. General Zhu Shaoliang's GMD troops that entered Xinjiang in June 1943 were but the beginning of an enormous deployment of Chinese troops across the province. By 1944–5 the GMD were maintaining an estimated 100,000 troops in Xinjiang, the bulk of which were Han Chinese and Hui, that became perceived as an army of occupation by the Turkic-Muslim population. The official encouragement of Han Chinese settlement was initiated soon after Chiang Kai-shek's announcement of a 'North-West Development Movement' and the finalisation of Sheng's agreements with Chongqing in late 1942. The 'North-West Development Movement' amounted to the transfer of 10,000 GMD officials and their families to Xinjiang and the beginning of a campaign to encourage Han peasant farmers into the north-west (Lattimore 1950: 178–9; Forbes 1986: 168). The political growth of GMD influence after 1943 was also coupled with a corresponding increase in GMD economic and commercial interests. Much as during the Qing era, the regulation of trade highly favoured merchants from China

proper, encouraged trade with China proper and actively discriminated against Turkic-Muslim Xinjiang-based trading companies (Forbes 1986: 167). Thus, there was, an albeit partial, return to the sinicising and integrating rationality that had characterised and underpinned Qing rule after the 1830s.

The continuity of this theme of state centralisation and the related assimilationist approach to non-Han groups between the late Qing and Republican periods is evident in Chiang Kai-shek's approach to Xinjiang. The overall goal of integrating Xinjiang with China remained ingrained in the ruling elite's consciousness regardless of the vicissitudes of the state's power and capabilities to actually achieve it throughout the Republican period. The conduct of GMD administration in Xinjiang and the handling of the 'East Turkestan Republic' from 1944 to 1949 is illustrative of the continuity of both goals and strategies across the Qing and Republican periods. As demonstrated above, the policies pursued in Xinjiang on the establishment of central control in 1944 were largely based upon Qing precedents. This was due to no lack of originality on behalf of the GMD administration but rather due to the overall goal of the state in Xinjiang – to make it part of China. The perception that Xinjiang was and should be part of China, coupled with the GMD's assertion that only the restoration of all China's 'lost' territories could ensure the security of the Chinese state prescribed a series of techniques and tactics of rule within Xinjiang and a specific foreign policy approach.

Nonetheless, as Gardner Bovingdon has rightly argued, until the establishment of the PRC 'there had been a discourse of long standing that questioned "China's" relationship with the contentious region, even contemplating the possibility of its eventual independence' (Bovingdon 2000: 97). Right until the final years of the GMD regime this internal, elite debate continued. For example, the GMD official General Zhang Zhizhong, in his capacity as Chairman of the coalition government in Xinjiang in May 1947, addressing a conference of delegates from the ETR and GMD controlled regions explicitly compared China's relationship to Xinjiang with that of the US to the Philippines or Britain to India (Bovingdon 2000: 97; Zhang 1947: 425). The implications were that China too was an imperial power and moreover, given that the granting of independence to the Philippines and India was being contemplated in London and Washington, China should also consider the granting of independence to Xinjiang. Yet, in a statement that signalled the continuity in Chinese perceptions regarding the value of Xinjiang as a strategic buffer, General Zhang also stressed that the central government would only grant the region independence on the condition that it would not be detrimental to the state:

> The Central government is willing to surrender all political power to the people of Sinkiang on the condition that the territory and sovereignty of the nation suffer no impairment thereby. The Central government will not tolerate anything possibly detrimental to the territorial integrity or sovereignty of the state – even at the cost of war.
>
> (Zhang 1947: 426)

General Zhang went on to weigh the costs and benefits to China of maintaining or relinquishing Xinjiang. He came to the conclusion that if Xinjiang could become truly independent it would relieve the central government fiscally and provide a buffer between China and the Soviet Union. This, of course, required Xinjiang to be free of external influences, a reality that in the contemporary circumstance was highly unlikely with the ETR heavily influenced by Moscow. This was a line of strategic thinking that echoed Zuo Zongtang's 'domino' theory – Xinjiang protected Mongolia, Mongolia protected Beijing and so forth. Therefore, Xinjiang must not and could not become independent (Zhang 1947).

While this was therefore clearly informed by *realpolitik* concerns, it nonetheless entailed that a series of actions be taken in order to secure Chinese dominance in Xinjiang. Herein lay the germ of the goal of integration that was equally informed by the historical precedent of the late Qing 'provincialisation' of Xinjiang and geopolitical considerations. Thus throughout the Republican period the GMD government intensely and regularly claimed Xinjiang as a Chinese province within the context of the Sino-Soviet relationship. Moreover, upon the establishment of GMD authority in Xinjiang in 1943–4 a series of techniques and tactics of rule aimed at the integration of the province with the state were implemented immediately, albeit with limited effect.

Despite Chiang's GMD regime's success in having Chinese sovereignty in Xinjiang recognised by the Soviet Union after the Ili rebellion, the question as to how the region was to be more tightly bound to the rest of China has not been resolved. Theodore White ended his 1943 article for *Time* by posing the central question in this respect:

> Are the Turks, who form 60% of the population, to be steamrolled into the Chinese pattern or inundated and absorbed by tidal waves of Chinese immigration? Or will China try to preserve the minority languages, schools, and courts and let the natives participate in their own government?
>
> (White 1943)

As will be seen in the following chapters, the rulers of the 'New China' after 1949 would struggle to strike a balance between the twin imperatives of control and legitimacy that were implicit in White's question.

3 Completing the forbears behest

The resurgence of the state's integrationist project under the PRC, 1949–1976

> At present, several million troops of the field armies of the People's Liberation Army are already striking at areas close to Taiwan, Guangxi, Guizhou, Sichuan, and Xinjiang, and the majority of the Chinese people have already been liberated ... For over a century our forbears have never stopped waging tenacious struggles against domestic and foreign oppressors, including the revolution of 1911 led by Mr. Sun Yat-sen, the great forerunner of the Chinese revolution. *Our forbears have instructed us to fulfill their behest, and we have now done so accordingly.* We have united and have overthrown both domestic and foreign oppressors through the People's War of Liberation and the people's great revolution, and now proclaim the establishment of the People's Republic of China.
>
> (Mao 1986a: 3–5)

A mere five days after Mao Zedong uttered these remarks, the commander of the KMT's Xinjiang garrison and civilian governor, General Tao Zhiyue and Burhan Shahidi respectively, severed all connections to the KMT government (now in Guangzhou) and declared their allegiance to the PRC (Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949: 1062). By mid-October 1949, the PLA 1st Field Army (FA) under the command of Peng Dehuai, began to enter the region, reaching Ürümqi on 20 October (McMillen 1979: 23–5; Wang 1999: 383). The extension of CCP power into Xinjiang through the agency of the PLA brought to a close an era of great autonomy for the region. As we saw in the previous chapter, Xinjiang largely remained autonomous from the Republic of China for the majority of the 1911–49 period and during this time witnessed the rule of a series of successively Soviet-influenced Han warlords and two attempts (in 1933 and 1944) to establish an independent East Turkestan Republic. Indeed, Xinjiang at the time of its 'peaceful liberation' in 1949 was, 'an underdeveloped, divided, Muslim and ethnically and attitudinally non-Han "province" of China' (McMillen 1981: 67).

The CCP faced a series of complex dilemmas as it attempted to extend the authority of the Chinese central government into the region for the first time in decades. Key to understanding how the CCP attempted to address these challenges is to recognise that it reflected historical and ideological precedents. The CCP inherited a series of perceptions regarding Xinjiang from their imperial

and republican predecessors, chief among which was the belief not only that Xinjiang *was* 'Chinese', but that it *should* be so. As highlighted by Mao's assertion cited above, the CCP perceived itself as fulfilling the promise of the nationalist revolution of Sun Yatsen. The 'behest' of Mao and the CCP's forebears was in fact the maintenance of the unitary state of China as it had come to be understood in both its political and geographic sense since the late Qing period.

Between 1949 and 1976 there were two major phases of Chinese policy in relation to the internal administration of Xinjiang and the PRC's foreign relations that reflect an entrenched goal of integration. In the first period, 1949–55, government policy was characterised by strategies and techniques primarily aimed at consolidating and establishing Communist rule in Xinjiang. Parallel to this, the PRC's foreign relations were, in the context of Xinjiang, structured around a similarly cautious and tentative approach to relations with the Soviet Union. This period will be dealt with in substantial detail, as the dynamics that developed both within Chinese administrative policy and the PRC's foreign policy regarding Xinjiang illuminate the continuity of major techniques and strategies of rule established in the Qing and Republican eras.

As opposed to the cautious approach of the immediate post-liberation years, the second period 1956–76 was characterised by a concerted effort to accelerate the political, economic, and social integration of Xinjiang with the rest of the country. A series of policies were implemented that aimed to assimilate the ethnic nationalities with the Han and establish the total orientation of the region toward China. The foreign relations of the PRC in this period witnessed a related assertion of Chinese control as the authorities sought to nullify the influence of the Soviet Union in Xinjiang's affairs. This tendency reached its zenith during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) when Beijing attempted to reassert central control over the region's political and military authorities whom it accused of creating 'an independent kingdom' This process was clearly linked to Beijing's perceptions of the strategic importance of Xinjiang. Beijing intervened at key moments to restrain the Cultural Revolution in Xinjiang when it perceived it to be on the brink of jeopardising 'national security'. Moreover, the Cultural Revolution coincided with the height of the PRC's ideological split and overt military conflict with the Soviet Union, the impact of which was acutely felt in Xinjiang. Although one scholar has argued that Chinese policy in Xinjiang should be seen as a function of the state-wide political and ideological campaigns initiated from Beijing in this period, I argue that these processes were but manifestations of an embedded complex of perceptions regarding Xinjiang (Connor 1984: 408).

The consolidation and entrenchment of Chinese rule, 1949–55

The CCP, much like the Qing before them, faced three major problems in the consolidation of their power in Xinjiang – how to establish ideological/political legitimacy, structure their administration and handle external influences. The CCP's responses to these problems were also suggestive of Qing precedents, particularly of the structure, techniques and tactics of rule constructed by the

Qing in the first decades after the conquest of Xinjiang in 1759. The PLA 1st FA was the key instrument of CCP rule in Xinjiang during this consolidatory period (1949–55), for three major reasons. First, between 1936 and 1942 the CCP had had an embryonic presence in Xinjiang under the auspices of Sheng Shicai, whose anti-Soviet purges of the early 1940s effectively destroyed it. Consequently, the CCP had no existing regional organisation or presence upon which to base its political legitimacy. Second, the CCP faced a number of political opponents in the region. The remaining KMT officials and troops, regardless of their surrender in October 1949, were an unknown quantity in terms of their political loyalties as amongst them were significant ethnic minority leaders who remained committed to opposing the communist takeover of Xinjiang, such as Masud Sabri and Yulbars Khan. Third, the CCP had to deal with a less overt threat to Chinese power in Xinjiang in the form of the ETR and its armed forces, the INA. Nonetheless, there existed a significant ethnic minority elite that had served in either the ETR or the KMT administrations that the CCP could potentially woo into the communist 'new order'

The resolution of these problems was achieved through a combination of force and persuasion, in which the PLA played a crucial role. Connected to this process of consolidation was the Party's drive to establish itself as the sole source of political authority in Xinjiang – a task that had eluded the communists' GMD predecessors. The CCP, through the PLA 1st FA, attempted to encompass the existing ethnic minority leaders and ex-GMD authorities within the political and ideological milieu of the communist new order. However, recalcitrant ex-GMD, ETR and ethnic minority elements were ruthlessly suppressed by the PLA (Domes 1985: 59). The co-option of ethnic minority leaders and elites into the embryonic party organs, much like the Qing restructuring of the *beg* system, sought to persuade these elites of their stake in the new order.

The political leadership of Xinjiang in this period was primarily drawn from amongst the PLA 1st FA's leadership and political commissars. While the commander of the 1st FA, Peng Dehuai, assumed the titles of commander and political commissar of the Xinjiang Military District (XJMD) his other commitments meant that his authority was mostly delegated to the vice-commander of the XJMD, Wang Zhen (McMillen 1979: 29; Whitson and Huang 1973: 114). The other major figure to assume major authority during this period was Wang Enmao, the political commissar of the 1st FA. Late in 1949, Wang Enmao became the chairman of the Kashgar Military Control Commission thereby becoming the highest-ranking PLA-CCP official south of the Tien Shan. In this role, between November 1950 and May 1951, he carried out the suppression of some 7500 former GMD and ethnic minority 'counter-revolutionaries' and 'bandits', including the Uyghur leader Masud Sabri (McMillen 1979: 30–2; Domes 1985: 59).

Under their leadership the PLA 1st FA, directly administered the region through military control committees and began the building of Party organisation and local autonomous units for the ethnic minorities. A major facet of this was the integration of acceptable pre-liberation Xinjiang leaders into the emerging power structure (McMillen 1979: 31–2; Wang 1999: 381–83; Whitson and Huang 1973: 113–14).

Two key figures in this regard were the Tatar Burhan Shahidi, who had been provincial chairman under the KMT, and the Uyghur Saifudin (Seypidin Aziz), who had been Minister for Education under the ETR. Significantly, Saifudin's entry into the Chinese Party facilitated the absorption of the ETR's armed forces, the INA, into the PLA. A substantial part of the INA became the PLA 5th Corps and retained its previous leadership with Saifudin as its political commissar, while some elements were regrouped into units with Han troops (McMillen 1981: 68; Whitson and Huang 1973: 114; Dreyer 1994: 42). Meanwhile, General Tao Zhiyue was appointed commander of the former KMT garrison, which were incorporated into the PLA 1st FA as the 22nd Corps. Burhan Shahidi, on the other hand was retained by the party as provincial chairman, but significantly in a power structure where political power derived from the PLA, did not hold any concurrent position within the provincial party or military hierarchy. This was symptomatic of the structure and nature of the CCP's attempts to integrate ethnic minorities at all levels of provincial military and civil authority (McMillen 1979: 33–9; Dreyer 1994: 42).

It was, however, significant that ethnic minority leaders (both former GMD and ETR) were integrated, albeit with limited power, into the new provincial power structure during this period as it coincided with the era of the closest 'fraternal' Sino–Soviet relations. The correlation was no coincidence. The CCP displayed a keen awareness of the necessity for caution with respect to the Soviet Union's former protégés in the 'Three Districts' as evidenced by a number of developments in this period: first, the integration almost en masse of the INA into the PLA and Saifudin's CCP membership in 1949–50; second, the fact that Saifudin led a Xinjiang delegation to Moscow for the Sino–Soviet negotiations of February–March 1950; and finally, the retention, with limited reorganisation, of the structure and personnel of the pro-Soviet ETR authorities in the Ili, Tacheng and Altai districts into the mid-1950s (Fedyshyn 1957: 128; McMillen 1979: 39).

The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps

A key element of the CCP's ability to consolidate its control of the region was the creation of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC). The XPCC was, as the name suggests, a utilisation of military manpower for economic and infrastructural development. In this respect it was highly suggestive of the military agricultural colonies (*tuntian*) established by the Qing in Zungharia following their conquest of Xinjiang. As we saw in Chapter 2, while the Qing limited the establishment of their military agricultural colonies to Zungharia until the mid-nineteenth century the CCP would utilise their variant of the military agricultural colony to far greater effect and establish them throughout the entire province. Although the economic and politico-military functions of the Qing-era military-agricultural colonies were at the core of the XPCC, the communist organisation assumed another function that their imperial predecessors never fully established in their administration of Xinjiang – institutionalising the in-migration

of Han settlers. Although the emphasis officially placed upon this specific function of the XPCC fluctuated according to the phases of ideological debate within the CCP from the 1950s onward, it would nonetheless remain central to the corps' role in Xinjiang.

The forerunner of the XPCC, the 'Xinjiang Wilderness Reclamation Army', was established in early 1952 under the direction of Wang Zhen. This organisation also established the first collective farms, initiated limited land reform and developed a number of state farms. The reorganisation of the PRC's administrative units in 1954 was also coupled in Xinjiang with the expansion and redesignation of the 'reclamation army' as the XPCC. By late 1954, the XPCC had eight agricultural construction divisions, two industrial construction divisions and one irrigation division dispersed throughout Xinjiang. Significantly, it was the former INA and GMD garrison troops that were first demobilised and assigned to production work, with Xinjiang's former KMT garrison commander, General Tao Zhiyue, becoming the titular head of the XPCC. Despite absorbing the primarily non-Han former INA personnel of the 5th Corps, the XPCC was primarily a Han institution. The XPCC became a central conduit for the transfer of Han settlers into Xinjiang with the organisation also absorbing significant numbers of demobilised PLA veterans of the Korean War from 1953 onward. The XPCC thus had a dual function whereby it was to simultaneously facilitate the economic development of the region and ensure its integration with the state via the establishment of Han settlement. The XPCC also retained some of its former military functions and served as a significant reservoir of manpower for the PLA in Xinjiang (McMillen: 1981: 71–5; White III 1979: 488–9; Dreyer 1986: 722–3; Chao 1969: 57).

The composition and distribution of XPCC units in Xinjiang also reflected the new regime's primary goals of control and integration. When formed in 1954, the XPCC was distributed throughout Xinjiang at strategic points south and north of the Tien Shan, notably in the districts around Kashgar in the south-west, and Ili, Tacheng and the Altai in the north-west. The concentration of the XPCC at these sites was not coincidental, with these distinct regions posing inter-related problems and challenges for the establishment of Chinese power in Xinjiang. The three districts of Ili, Tacheng and Altai comprised the former lands of the ETR where anti-Han and pro-Soviet sentiment was well established. The regions surrounding Kashgar on the other hand, although sharing the north-west's anti-Han sentiment, had a long established record as the most Islamic and conservative region of Xinjiang. However, the colonising element of this strategy ultimately served to increase tension between the Turkic-Muslim population and the in-migrating Han Chinese. Indeed, by the end of 1954 the XPCC was composed of approximately 200,000 predominantly Han members. As a result of this approach the PLA, Han in-migrants (often in the XPCC) and the ethnic minorities themselves rapidly became the major political actors in Xinjiang. Furthermore, the political, economic and social situation of Xinjiang was generally determined by how each of these groups responded to policies formulated by the central government (McMillen 1979: 61; McMillen 1981: 64–75; Dreyer 1986: 723).

Waiting for conditions to 'ripen'

The central government attempted not to exacerbate the inherent tensions between these three principal groups of actors by pursuing a relatively cautious and 'moderate' approach until the mid-1950s. This cautious approach was reflected, as we have previously noted, in the appointment of two ethnic minority leaders, the former KMT governor Burhan Shahidi and former ETR leader Saifudin, as heads of the regional government. While the real power holders were the Wang Zhen and Wang Enmao, the appointment of non-Han figures demonstrated the Party's desire to establish itself as the sole legitimate source of political authority in the region. The policies pursued to this end were framed by the party's 'united front' strategy that sought to initiate gradual and generally non-coercive political, economic and social 'reform' amongst the ethnic minorities. Mao explicitly elucidated this approach in June 1950 arguing that, 'social reform in the regions occupied by the minority nationalities is a very important thing ... Under no circumstances should we be impatient, because impatience will lead to mistakes. Where conditions are not ripe, we cannot carry out reform'. In the same breath, however, the Chairman asserted that 'this does not mean that we mustn't have any reform ... the customs and habits of the areas inhabited by the minority nationalities can be reformed' (Mao 1986c: 105–06).

The co-option of 'acceptable' ethnic minority leaders such as Burhan and Saifudin was but one aspect of this process. Mao's directive clearly demonstrated that the CCP's goal remained the 'reform' of ethnic minority regions, regardless of the 'moderate' approach deemed politically expedient. On a broader level the CCP strove to not only cultivate a dependent and compromised ethnic minority elite but also to weaken and dilute the institutions and personages from which political authority traditionally/historically flowed. Therefore, the variegated Islamic institutions that prior to 1949 had been a major source of political and ideological authority, became key targets of 'reform'. On extending control over the region in late 1951 the CCP began to infiltrate into societal organisations and attempted to bring them under party guidance and control. Moreover, the position of the Islamic clergy was gradually co-opted and controlled by the CCP through the China Islamic Association. The gradual undermining of key Islamic institutions began with a limited program of land reform, including the confiscation and redistribution of *waqf* lands (property of mosques), and the 'People's Courts' began to assume the judicial functions of the *qadi* or Islamic courts (Dillon 1996: 2–3; McMillen 1979: 114).

The subversion of traditional sources of politico-ideological authority was coupled with a concerted CCP effort to eliminate 'Great Han chauvinism' or the continuation of a Han cultural superiority complex in its rule of Xinjiang. The key tenets of this 'anti-Great Hanism' were that Han cadres needed to respect the cultural peculiarities of the ethnic minorities and avoid 'commandism' or the dogmatic application of party policy without due reference to local conditions (McMillen 1979: 115). The party leadership's concern with 'Han chauvinism' in ethnic minority regions remained constant throughout the 1949–55 period.

On a number of occasions Mao exhorted his comrades to earnestly combat all manifestations of Han chauvinism and to avoid implementing party policy without proper investigation of local conditions, or as he put it 'looking at the flowers while riding on horseback' (Mao 1986d: 333–4; Mao 1986e: 665–6).

However, this emphasis on moderation within the confines of religious, cultural and even economic parameters did not translate into a tolerance of divergent political attitudes amongst the minorities. The PLA's ongoing suppression of 'counter-revolutionaries' and 'bandits' well into 1954 demonstrates that the CCP would brook no political activity amongst the minorities that occurred outside of Party-controlled and sanctioned parameters. That Chinese rule had not been thoroughly entrenched was further underlined with the outbreak of major unrest in the vicinity of the major southern oasis of Khotan in December 1954. According to a Chinese source the unrest was a 'premeditated act' orchestrated by a group of 'Pan-Turkist' Uyghurs from the counties of Khotan, Karakash and Lop led by a certain Abdimit, who was identified as being linked to Muhammad Emin Bughra. Further unrest across southern Xinjiang and in Turfan and Kulja (Yining) between 1954 and 1956 was also blamed on this group. Significantly, this source identified the Party's approach toward 'religious freedom' and the Party's 'severe control of the small businesses' as the cause of 'tension in the village bazaars' and 'public dissatisfaction' (Zhang 1994).

Establishing 'autonomy' in Xinjiang

In contrast to the Soviet Union which established a system based on federal republics with a theoretical right to secession for its national minorities in order to secure the boundaries of the Tsarist empire, the PRC instituted a system of limited territorial autonomy to manage ethno-national difference. Like the Qing, the PRC faced the task of attempting to establish legitimacy and control over culturally and linguistically distinct peoples that inhabited its far-flung frontier regions. While the Party's approach to managing ethno-cultural difference was informed by ideological and conceptual borrowing from the Soviet Union, over the course of its struggle for power it nonetheless departed in significant ways from the Soviet model. Indeed, the two main purposes of the Party's 'nationalities' policy were informed by the specific circumstances in which the communists found themselves. Specifically, Party policy on this issue was framed by the exigencies of its struggle with Chiang Kai-shek's GMD and the Party's broadly 'nationalist' concern that its 'nationalities' policy not encourage 'separatism' in China's frontier regions. The Party's ultimate institution of the system of 'national regional autonomy' – in which the language and culture of non-Han groups would be both respected and encouraged – was a direct attempt to counter-pose communist policy to the overtly assimilationist intent of GMD policy.

The cornerstones of the PRC's system of regional autonomy, and the true signifiers of its purpose, were stated in the 'General Program of the PRC for the Implementation of Regional Autonomy for Nationalities' that was promulgated

in August 1952. According to this document any autonomous regions established were to be considered integral parts of the territory of the PRC and regional organs of government established therein were to be 'under the *unified* leadership of the Central People's Government' Three levels of 'autonomous government' were established throughout the PRC between 1952 and 1955: the autonomous region (equivalent to provincial status), autonomous districts and autonomous counties/prefectures. Autonomous government could be established in a particular locality: (i) when inhabited by one national minority; (ii) when inhabited by one large national minority including certain areas inhabited by other smaller nationalities; and (iii) when jointly established by two or more areas each inhabited by a different national minority (Schwarz 1962: 630; Information Office of the State Council of the PRC 1999).

Therefore, a key task during the early years of the PRC was the classification of its varied population into clearly defined ethnic groups. This was achieved through the deployment of ethnographic teams throughout the country armed with Stalin's definition of a nation as, 'a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture', to determine who would qualify as a 'minority nationality' (Stalin 1953: 307). In Xinjiang, this process resulted in the official recognition of thirteen ethnic groups – Uyghur, Han, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Hui, Mongol, Sibe, Russian, Tajik, Uzbek, Tatar, Manchu and Daur. Significantly, this did not diverge from the categories that had enjoyed official status under the Soviet influenced regime of Sheng Shicai and the ETR (McMillen 1979: 10; Benson and Svanberg 1998: 99–100).

The second designation regarding the establishment of 'autonomous government' was applied to Xinjiang, given that the region's population was made up of thirteen ethnic groups. The population of Xinjiang in 1955 (the year 'regional autonomy' was implemented) was estimated to stand at four and a half to five million, of which 70–75 per cent were Uyghur, while the Han accounted for five per cent. Power and representation within the proposed autonomous government was divided amongst the thirteen constituent ethnic minorities even though the Uyghur were evidently in the majority (McMillen 1981: 66–70; Bovingdon 2004: 118). As Gardner Bovingdon has remarked, 'national regional autonomy' in Xinjiang achieved two major goals, 'to reinforce the idea that Xinjiang belonged to thirteen different *minzu* and to counterbalance the overwhelming political and demographic weight of the Uygurs' (Bovingdon 2004: 118).

Upon the establishment of the XUAR on 1 October 1955, the region was divided into fourteen administrative units reflecting the dominant ethnic profile of each locality. The exception to this was the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Zhou which encompassed two sub-ordinate special districts, Altai and Tacheng. These three regions were, it will be recalled, the basis of the separatist ETR regime over the 1944–49 period, and this special handling of these regions suggests that the CCP remained wary of the former connections between these regions and the Soviet Union. The ethnicity of officials and the structure of political authority within each

autonomous area were also instructive regarding the actual function and scope of 'national regional autonomy' In accordance with the 1952 'general program' for implementing 'national regional autonomy' the chairman of an autonomous region, prefect of an autonomous prefecture or the governor of an autonomous district were members of the 'ethnic minority exercising autonomy' – that is a member of the dominant ethnic group in each locality (Information Office of the State Council of the PRC 2003). Yet such ethnic minority officials were invariably shadowed by a directly subordinate Han CCP member (McMillen 1979: 44).

The ethnic minority cadres proportion of the total number of cadres in Xinjiang between 1949 and 1955 is also illustrative of the relative political legitimacy of the Party and the progress of Han in-migration. In March 1951, ethnic minorities constituted approximately 74 per cent of all cadres in the region. However, when 'regional autonomy' was implemented in 1955 around 55 per cent of all cadres were non-Han (Information Office of the State Council of the PRC 2003; McMillen 1979: 43; Schwarz 1962: 249). This decline in the proportion of ethnic minority cadres would appear to be in contradiction with CCP policy given its early emphasis on training and developing a large core of ethnic minority cadres throughout this period (Mao 1986b: 33–4; Mao 1977: 48). A number of developments after 1950, however, explain this incongruity between stated policy and practice. First, the Common Program of 1949 had called for the governments of ethnic minority regions to be composed of 'principally' ethnic minorities themselves. In contrast, the 1954 constitution stated that governments of ethnic minority regions were to be composed of an *'appropriate'* number of ethnic minority representatives (Benson and Svanberg 1998: 93). This was arguably the result of a less than successful recruitment of ethnic minorities into the Party which resulted in the import of sufficiently trained Han cadres.

Yet the near total absence of CCP presence in Xinjiang at the time of 'liberation' undoubtedly also prompted the Party to focus on the quantity rather than the quality of ethnic minority recruits in the early post-liberation years. This sense of urgency can perhaps account for the high proportion of ethnic minority cadres in 1951. Significantly, a number of former ETR political activists also accounted for a proportion of this ethnic minority 'intake' (McMillen 1979: 43; Schwarz 1962: 248–9). The ideological quality and political loyalty of these recruits was undoubtedly dubious, given the ETR's overwhelmingly anti-Han and pro-Soviet stance. This precipitated a 'rectification' campaign in Xinjiang late in 1951 that 'screened' and 'dismissed' a large segment of those cadres recruited immediately following 'liberation', who were excoriated as 'opportunists and saboteurs' that had infiltrated the Party (McMillen 1979: 87; Schwarz 1962: 180). One source states that significant members of the ETR's military command were executed during this campaign, while in the Aksu and Ürümqi areas alone some 3,245 'counter-revolutionaries' were 'victimised' (Sadri 1984: 313). Those retained after the campaign were subject to significant ideological 'remoulding' and indoctrination, with a particular emphasis on propagation of 'nationalities unity' that further suggests the presence of 'local nationalist' sentiment amongst the minority cadres (McMillen 1979: 86–7).

Even though the CCP's stated emphasis during this period was upon the eradication of Han chauvinism and the development of greater equality between nationalities, the actual practice of CCP rule was contradictory. Over the 1949–55 period the CCP had instituted a series of policies that attempted to bring the region's non-Han population into the socialist new order by a combination of outright suppression, coercion and politico-ideological persuasion. Much like the Qing before them the CCP's consolidation of power in Xinjiang was focused on undermining or destroying the existing structures of politico-ideological legitimacy and authority, and its replacement with a politico-ideological framework constructed and ultimately controlled by itself. For such a strategy to succeed, the party had to allow for the representation and expression of the non-Han population within that framework. Through the recruitment of cadres and the system of 'national regional autonomy' implemented in Xinjiang between 1949 and 1955 the party could be said to have partially succeeded. It had created a compromised ethnic minority elite, represented by figures such as Burhan and Saifudin, and lower level ethnic cadres that now had a stake in the new political order. Within the limited parameters of the autonomous local governments it had also, in theory, created an arena through which ethnic minority grievances could be aired without explicitly challenging the established order. However, even this limited avenue of expression would be deemed to be pandering to 'local nationalism' before the decade's end.

Keeping the Soviet 'Big Brother' at bay

The closest 'fraternal relations' between the PRC and the Soviet Union accompanied these consolidatory policies within Xinjiang. In the context of Xinjiang, Sino–Soviet cooperation was largely limited to economic and cultural affairs. As noted previously, a Xinjiang delegation headed by Saifudin accompanied Mao Zedong to Moscow in January 1950 and concluded two Soviet–Xinjiang economic agreements in concert with the Sino–Soviet 'Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance' The agreements established two Sino–Soviet 'joint-stock' companies concerning oil and 'rare and non-ferrous metals' The latter of these agreements allegedly had a secret provision for Soviet exploration and exploitation of uranium in Xinjiang – a motivation that the KMT had charged was partially behind Soviet support for the ETR rebellion. Both agreements were, however, far from 'fraternal' with the Soviets demanding one half of Xinjiang's oil and rare and non-ferrous metals in return for their economic and technical assistance (Lahiri 1950: 142–3; Fedyshyn 1957: 128–9; Schwarz 1962: 630–1). The angst that the unequal nature of these agreements generated in Beijing would come to the surface by the close of the 1950s as Sino–Soviet relations began to deteriorate. Indeed, in July 1958 when Soviet leader Nikita Khruschev asked Mao if the Chinese 'really consider us as red imperialists', the Chairman sarcastically replied that, 'there was a man by the name of Stalin, who took Port Arthur and turned Xinjiang and Manchuria into semi-colonies, and he also created four joint-stock companies. These were all his good deeds' (Zubok 2001: 254).

The Soviets also exported up to 250,000 books, journals and magazines in the Uyghur language to Xinjiang in the same period via a branch of the Sino–Soviet Friendship Association (Silde-Karklins 1975: 353–4). Evidently the Xinjiang authorities and central government found the terms of the oil and mineral agreements less than favourable for accelerating Xinjiang's development. The joint-stock companies were terminated on 12 October 1954 in a joint statement wherein the Chinese declared that they had acquired sufficient technical knowledge to assume managerial responsibility themselves. An important corollary of the initial phase of Sino–Soviet economic 'cooperation' in Xinjiang was the development of a number of important infrastructural projects. The first, and most straightforward was the establishment of an Alma–Ata–Ürümqi–Beijing air link, although significantly the Alma–Ata–Ürümqi section was operated by the Soviets and 'served almost exclusively the Soviet technical experts coming into the province' (Fedyshyn 1957: 128). The construction of the Lanzhou– Ürümqi–Alma–Ata Railway was, in contrast, a much more difficult and important project. Construction began on the proposed 2,800 km long line (2,500 km of which was on the Chinese side) in October 1952 with only limited Soviet technical aid and advice, and the first 303 km section was completed in February 1955 (Fedyshyn 1957: 136–7).

Therefore, over the 1949–55 period the CCP rule was characterised by a focus on establishing the Party as the sole source of political authority, weakening of pre-liberation ethnic minority elites, initiation of the region's integration and ensuring the region's territorial security. These goals were in part achieved by the application of the 'united front' strategy of gradual reform of the existing political, economic and social order. The lodestars of CCP policy in Xinjiang during this period were 'anti-Great Hanism' and 'anti-local nationalism' that in practice translated to the outright suppression of anti-CCP activities and an effort to accommodate the cultural diversity of the ethnic minorities. The most instrumental factors in the consolidation of CCP power in Xinjiang were, however, the activities of the PLA 1st FA and the Xinjiang XPCC. The rapid absorption of the former KMT garrison and pro-Soviet INA into the PLA, and later into the XPCC, removed the most overt and potentially dangerous obstacles to the establishment of CCP rule. The (re)introduction of the Qing-era military-agricultural colonies, albeit on a much greater scale, also demonstrated the CCP's intention to not only physically control Xinjiang but to firmly establish it as an 'integral' province of the PRC. The Xinjiang XPCC, unlike the Qing colonies, were established simultaneously north and south of the Tien Shan and, significantly, acted as a conduit and receptacle for Han colonisation.

The influence of the Soviet Union throughout this period remained considerable. The CCP's handling of its neighbour's political and economic imperatives in Xinjiang clearly demonstrated the Chinese determination to make Xinjiang not only an 'integral' province of the PRC but to do so to the exclusion of any other external influences. Soon after the institution of 'national regional autonomy' for Xinjiang in October 1955, the CCP's strategies, tactics and techniques of rule underwent a significant re-evaluation largely due to ongoing ideological and

political confrontations within the central leadership. The vicissitudes of internal political and ideological debates within the CCP had important ramifications for Chinese policy in Xinjiang and its foreign relations. The essence of the CCP's debates beginning in 1956, as they pertained to ethnic minorities and the conceptualisation of 'national regional autonomy', was the question as to the required speed and intensity of assimilation and integration of ethnic minorities. As will emerge in the following section, the debate was entirely focused on the means by which the state's goals in Xinjiang could be best achieved rather than on the veracity of the goals themselves.

Resolving contradictions amongst the people: from 'blooming and contending' to cultural revolution in Xinjiang, 1956–76

In essence the approach of the CCP towards Xinjiang's ethnic minorities between 1949–55 was to encourage assimilation without undue coercion. The Common Program of the CPPCC of September 1949, as noted above, outlined the five basic principles that would govern the CCP's policies toward ethnic minority regions. The most central of these principles was that any ethnic minority claims to secession would not be tolerated. The other four defined the conditions by which the Party intended to administer and govern non-Han populated regions of the PRC. These five principles were clearly evident in the CCP's administration of Xinjiang over the 1949–55 period. Yet within this same period there were a number of contradictory statements that presaged a re-evaluation and reorientation of the Party's priorities concerning the ethnic minorities. First, an official review into the Party's nationalities policy in June 1953, although maintaining the familiar mantra of anti-Han chauvinism, contained a number of statements that pointed to a turn in the party's 'line'. For example, the report advocated the authorities should provide active assistance to those ethnic minorities wishing to learn Chinese rather than their own language. It also pointedly warned those that thought the implementation of 'national regional autonomy' would result in the cessation of the in-migration of Han cadres and settlers into ethnic minority regions to think again. Second, the 1954 constitution did not identify 'Han chauvinism' as the principal threat to the Party's nationality policy but highlighted that the party would oppose both 'Han chauvinism' *and* 'local nationalism' (Connor 1984: 409–10). Significantly, this went against the CCP's position in Xinjiang with Wang Enmao stating in 1954 that the biggest threat to the consolidation of Chinese power in the region remained 'Han chauvinism' (McMillen 1979: 114–5).

However, simultaneous with such assurances the authorities expanded and intensified the application of certain strategies that ultimately undermined such moderation, such as the establishment of the XPCC. This was perhaps a sign that the Party had moved to a position whereby it would encourage assimilation but not enforce assimilation (Connor 1984: 409). This change in policy was slightly revised by Mao in his 25 April 1956 address 'On the Ten Great Relationships', one of which he identified as 'the relationship between the Han nationality and the minority nationalities' (Mao 1986g: 43–61). Mao maintained that 'our policy

regarding this issue is sound' and, in contrast to the 1954 constitution, asserted that while 'there is of course local nationalism, but its is not where our emphasis lies. Our emphasis lies in opposing Han chauvinism' (Mao 1986g: 55). Another section of this address called for greater decision-making at the local level but explicitly warned that such decentralisation must not be allowed to encourage separatism or the development of 'an independent kingdom' (Mao 1986g: 53). Although reaffirming the Party's 'moderate' approach to ethnic minorities and ethnic minority regions, the Chairman in the same breath warned that this autonomy was only acceptable as long as it was deemed to be, 'necessary for the interest of the whole and for the strengthening of national unity' (Mao 1986g: 53).

The one hundred flowers and anti-rightist campaigns

Contemporaneously, Mao expounded his famous slogan 'to let a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend' that invited the masses to engage in criticism of the Party (Mao 1986f: 70). This unprecedented call to disavow party discipline and ideological conformity provoked widespread scepticism. The 'blooming and contending' did not eventuate until Mao reiterated his encouragement first at a conference of provincial and autonomous region party secretaries in January 1957 and in his more famous speech to the Supreme State Conference on 27 February 1957 entitled 'On Correctly Handling Contradictions Among the People' (Mao 1986h; Mao 1986i). Mao began this landmark speech by stating that there were 'two types of social contradictions, namely those between the enemy and ourselves, and those among the people' (Mao 1986i: 311). The contradictions amongst the people were deemed to be non-antagonistic, in contrast to those 'between the enemy and ourselves'. Mao argued acknowledging contradictions among people would in fact be beneficial to the construction of the new China. Specifically, Mao asserted that both Han chauvinism and local nationalism were types of contradictions, thereby explicitly including them amongst the issues open to criticism (Connor 1984: 411–2).

Mao's call resulted in a torrent of criticism directed towards both the party and Mao himself, and the criticism was no more vociferous than from China's ethnic minorities. However, as will be seen in the specific context of Xinjiang, the 'Hundred Flowers Movement' and its fallout precipitated a reorientation of the CCP's 'nationality policy'. Such exhortations to discuss the 'contradictions among the people', however, contained an explicit threat that many should have taken greater heed of with the Chairman noting that while 'poisonous weeds' might also 'bloom', 'there will always be ways of dealing with them' (Mao 1986h: 255). Thus, Mao himself explicitly presaged the 'rectification' campaign that followed on the heels of the 'Hundred Flowers' movement which, in ethnic minority regions, took the form of an 'anti-local nationalist' campaign.

The movement provoked sharp criticism of the party in Xinjiang. The regional Party committee called a conference of 'democratic personalities of minorities' to discuss the 'relationship between the Han nationality and the minority nationalities' on 31 May, 1957. Both Saifudin and Wang Enmao, the two top

leaders of the Xinjiang CCP and government attended, and encouraged the delegates to criticise the Party. This precipitated a torrent of criticism that largely focused on three major issues: the lack of real autonomy; the dominance of Han cadres; and the in-migration of Han. Perhaps most galling to the party was the unfavourable comparison made by the minorities between the situation in Xinjiang and that in the Soviet Central Asian Republics. In direct reference to the Soviet system, some ethnic minority cadres called for the creation of separate communist parties for each nationality and the replacement of 'national regional autonomy' with a federal system based on national 'soviet republics' (Dreyer 1976: 150; Schwarz 1962: 197; Benson and Svanberg 1998: 102–03). In an even more overt threat to the Party, there were also renewed calls from members of the government for the separation of Xinjiang from the PRC and the establishment of an independent 'East Turkestan Republic' Indeed, the head of the Xinjiang Culture Department and chairman of the Literary Union, Zia Samit, was reported to have asserted that, 'when considering Xinjiang's fate, the best solution would be independence' (Millward 2007: 258).

In May 1957 an intra-party directive was circulated by Mao to party cadres that was the first sign of a critical change in his thought regarding the course of the revolution and the 'Hundred Flowers' movement (Mao 1986j). In it he elucidated that 'revisionism' was now viewed as the primary danger to the Party and the revolution, explicitly linking the 'rightist' criticism of the Party during the 'Hundred Flowers' to 'revisionism'. At this initial stage, Mao was clearly focused on the manifestations of 'revisionism' within the Party and was determined to struggle against such phenomena. The directive also revealed that Mao was on the verge of repudiating the concept of the 'united front'. Indeed, he now argued that the 'rightists', through their criticisms of the Party, had demonstrated not only that they were no longer participating in the 'united front' but had 'broken their promise that they are ready to accept the leadership of the Communist Party'. Finally, the Chairman also ominously suggested that in the course of the 'Hundred Flowers' campaign the 'rightists and revisionists' would 'dig their own graves.'

This critical change in Mao's direction was felt almost immediately with the addition of six criteria by which to measure whether criticism was 'right or wrong' when 'On Correctly Handling Contradictions among the People' was formally published on 19 June 1957. That the level of ethnic minority discontent expressed during the 'Hundred Flowers' campaign was significant is indicated by the fact that the criteria to top this list concerned whether criticism helped 'to unite, not split, the people of all nationalities' (Mao 1957i: 333; Connor 1984: 412). The direct reference to the 'splitting' of nationalities also highlighted the level of threat felt by the state in frontier and non-Han regions like Xinjiang. This episode served to sharpen the perceptions of a segment of the Party's leadership regarding the necessity for the intensification of the state's integrationist project in Xinjiang. The party's response to this vituperative outburst was swift, and in the context of Xinjiang clearly illustrated the connection between internal and external policy.

The CCP's changing policy direction from 1955 onwards is generally regarded as the result of an emergent divide within the party largely focused on the question of the rapidity and intensity of the implementation of socialism. It is also conceived of as being bound up with Mao's dissatisfaction with Soviet aid, the Soviet 'model' of socialist development, and the Soviet interpretation of the international system. There has been a tendency to view the CCP's fluctuating approach to ethnic minorities through the prism of state-wide political and socio-economic campaigns and transformations with Walker Connor suggesting that:

> ... the two most radical shifts in Chinese national policy are better understood as the application of the country-wide Great Leap Forward (1958–59) and the Cultural Revolution (ca. 1966–71) to the national minorities *than they are as responses to developments in the national problem itself.* [Emphasis added] (Connor 1984: 408)

Yet the dynamics of the 'Hundred Flowers' movement and the 'anti-local nationalist' campaign that followed it in Xinjiang suggest that the CCP was in fact responding to developments within the 'national problem' As noted above, the ethnic minorities' criticisms of the party evidently illustrated the tenuous political legitimacy of the Chinese state. The explicit references to the situation in the Soviet Central Asian Republics also highlighted the continuity of the politico-ideological threat or challenge to the Chinese state in Xinjiang. In turn, the nature of the Party's response to the criticism from the ethnic minorities demonstrated a keen perception of the failure of its moderate 'united front' policies to adequately confront this challenge. Meanwhile, ethnic minority calls for the institution of a Soviet style federation of national soviet republics or secession from the PRC directly challenged and questioned the political legitimacy of not only the Party but the Chinese state itself. Such a challenge could not but provoke a rapid and uncompromising response from a Party and state that had been bent on the total integration of Xinjiang since the founding of the PRC.

Prior to the 'Hundred Flowers' movement there had been subtle signs of a rupture in Party's policy towards the non-Han peoples of Xinjiang. Indeed, the Party's 'reform' of the ethnic minorities' alphabetic script in 1956 was indicative of the Party's drive to achieve the integration of the region's non-Han peoples into the cultural milieu of the 'New China'. In August 1956, under Soviet advice, the Party had adopted a Cyrillic script for the minority languages. It was argued that this would enable the ethnic minorities to learn 'modern' science more effectively and, perhaps more importantly, to erode the influence of traditional Islamic teachings which were written in Arabic. However, before this could be implemented the Party announced in 1957 that the planned adoption of Cyrillic script for the ethnic minorities' languages would be abandoned in favour of Latinised scripts. The Party's about-face was based on two inter-related factors – Soviet language policy and the imperative to eradicate the remaining vestiges of the ETR. Some 95,000 Uyghur were estimated to be then residing in the Soviet Republics of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and since 1946 Soviet Uyghur had been written

in Cyrillic. This shift in Soviet Uyghur was also paralleled to a degree in the 'Three Districts' controlled by the ETR, while Uyghur throughout the rest of Xinjiang continued to use the Arabic script. Despite the change in the script for Soviet Uyghurs, the Soviet's continued to publish Uyghur and Kazakh literature in Arabic script into the late 1950s, suggesting that there ultimate destination was Xinjiang, the only other region of concentrated Uyghur population. Therefore, the adoption of a Cyrillic script for Xinjiang's Uyghurs by would have facilitated increased communication across the Sino–Soviet frontier and strengthened Soviet influence in Xinjiang (Silde-Karklins 1975: 356; Schwarz 1962: 393; McMillen 1979: 116–7).

The Party also received substantial criticism from Han cadres and settlers with the Part's initial post-'Hundred Flowers' 'rectification' campaign focusing on the criticism from Han cadres, party members, and functionaries. This resulted in the 'sending down' (*xiafang*) of 2,700 cadres to rural areas while the XPCC 'sent down' up to 80 per cent of its officials to work at the 'lowest levels' (McMillen 1979: 90; White III 1979: 500). Simultaneously, the focus of the party's 'anti-rightist' campaign switched to the manifestations of 'local nationalism' that had been implicit in ethnic minority criticism of the party. An Enlarged Conference of the XUAR CCP Committee was convened at Ürümqi to deal with the 'anti-Rightist' campaign, wherein Saifudin disclosed that 'local nationalism' had re-emerged amongst the region's ethnic minorities and declared that it was the most dangerous ideological trend. Saifudin's speech further echoed the spirit of Mao's 15 May intra-party directive and the six criteria attached to Mao's 'On Correctly Handling Contradictions Among the People'. First, he reiterated that Xinjiang was an 'integral' part of the PRC and that any calls for secession and independence were reactionary. Second, those who opposed the socialist development of Xinjiang with the aid of the Han people were pursuing a nationalistic and therefore counter-revolutionary line. Third, those who charged that the Party was not taking adequate account of Xinjiang's and the ethnic minorities characteristics, were reminded that although the party was indeed cognisant of these particularities they would not be allowed to obstruct the course of socialist development and construction. Therefore, Saifudin had clearly outlined the party's change of tack with respect to ethnic minorities and pre-empted the further radicalisation of CCP techniques and tactics of rule (McMillen 1979: 92–94).

Subsequently, a significant number of prominent ethnic minority cadres were charged with 'local nationalism' and either expelled from the Party or rigorously criticised in late June and May 1958 (McMillen 1979: 94; Dreyer 1976: 152). In Xinjiang the 'anti-rightist/anti-local nationalist' campaign had targeted and eliminated the residual elements of the pro-Soviet ETR regime and those ethnic minority leaders who had not been sufficiently 'persuaded' by the 1949–55 'united front' policies of the CCP. It would appear, given Mao's various statements during the 'Hundred Flowers' and the subsequent 'anti-rightist' campaign, that the CCP (or at least a powerful faction of it) had indeed lost patience with the strategem of gradual reform. This 'clearing of the decks' arguably made way for the intensification of the state's integrationist project in Xinjiang, that in the

following 1958–60 period came in the form of the state-wide 'Great Leap Forward' (GLF) movement.

Xinjiang's 'Leap Forward'

The GLF was a state wide socio-economic intervention into Chinese society aiming to address a number of problems that had emerged in the 1949–57 period. The GLF is viewed as Mao's attempt to create an alternative path toward communism to that of the Soviet model of development. Specifically, the Soviet model's emphasis on the development of, and state-investment in, the urban-industrial sector at the expense of the rural-agricultural sector clearly posed problems for a country where the population was overwhelmingly rural. The Stalinist model of economic development required that two fundamental conditions be met. First, that a planning mechanism channel resources into the development of heavy industry and second, that the rural-agricultural sector be starved of state investment and exploited to provide the resources necessary for the growth of the urban-industrial sector (Lieberthal 1987: 299). This had been achieved in the Soviet case by the violent extraction of surplus products from the rural-agricultural sector, particularly in the 1930s (Conquest 1986). These two conditions had been central to the PRC's 1st Five-Year Plan (1953–57), whereby the Chinese devoted around 48 per cent of their public capital investment to industrial development. The Soviet model assumed, however, that there was in fact a rural-agricultural surplus to be procured. Yet in China the rural-agricultural situation was far from conforming to such conditions. Therefore, the Chinese had to first develop a means by which to create and enhance a rural-agricultural surplus, and then to establish control over its distribution (Lieberthal 1987: 299–300).

This fundamental problem was one major factor behind Mao's questioning of the Soviet model. Another factor was the Soviet model's emphasis on the establishment of planning mechanisms to channel resources into industrial development had resulted in the expansion of government bureaucracy and an emphasis on technical expertise/competence. This also included the adoption of the Soviet system of material and status differentials across the spectrum of government sectors. In Mao's view, such emphasis on technical quality rather than political commitment weakened the Party's control, while the implementation of a system of differential material incentives encouraged the development of a privileged 'managerial' class. These developments were of course anathema to Mao's revolutionary vision post-1949 wherein he had increasingly identified 'revisionism' within the PRC and in the international system as the greatest threat to socialism. The critique of the Soviet model along these general lines gradually emerged over the course of the GLF and culminated in Mao's open attacks on the Soviets in 1960 (Lieberthal 1987: 303; Whiting 1987).

The 'Hundred Flowers' and 'anti-rightist' campaigns in Xinjiang had effectively removed the ethnic minority elite 'inherited' from the ETR and weakened the ethnic minority leaders assiduously cultivated by the CCP during the 'united front' policies of the early 1950s. Moreover, the CCP by mid-1958 had executed an

about-face regarding its approach to the PRC's ethnic minorities. Toward the end of 1957, the Nationalities Affairs Commission determined that the contradictions between 'local nationalists' and the people were contradictions between 'the enemy and ourselves' 'Fusion' of the ethnic minorities with the Han was now explicitly deemed desirable and would receive the party's encouragement (Connor 1984: 413). Thus, the Party would no longer permit the ethnic minorities to progress along the 'road of socialist development' as their 'special characteristics' determined.

The Party proceeded to reverse the gradualist and moderate policies pursued in regions such as Xinjiang since 'liberation' in 1949. Economically, the party had pursued a limited program of land reform and rent reduction in the agricultural areas – primarily concentrated around the oases of the Tarim Basin – and encouraged the peasants to form 'Mutual Aid Teams' (MATs) in which labour was pooled but individual peasants retained ownership rights and control over other productive factors, such as farm implements (McMillen 1979: 131–2; Dreyer 1976: 128). This was to be the first step in what was to be a three-step process towards cooperativisation. After this Agricultural Producers Cooperatives (APCs) were to be established where productive property was now controlled by the collective and individual peasants received a dividend according to their contribution of land, tools and animals. Finally, the 'higher stage' APCs were to be established where the dividend to individuals was to be abolished and payment based solely upon labour (Tiewes 1987: 110–1).

The first stage of this process in Xinjiang had begun in 1951 yet the pace of cooperativisation lagged behind the rest of the PRC with around 63 per cent of the peasantry organised into MATs by the end of 1955. The following year Wang Enmao called for the 'steady advance and consolidation' of the cooperativisation process to achieve the higher stage APCs by 1957. Yet simultaneously, the 'special problems and unique conditions' of Xinjiang were to be taken into account. Within the pastoral regions of Xinjiang very little by way of land reform or cooperativisation occurred prior to 1955 due to the difficulty in establishing party authority amongst the nomadic peoples. The Party's policy in these regions was one of 'no struggle, no division, no classification of classes' and largely remained in effect until 1956 when only 30 per cent of pastoralists had formed MATs. Thus on the eve of the GLF the cooperativisation movement had not been completed, largely due to the provincial authorities cognisance of the region's 'special characteristics' (McMillen 1979: 133–55; Benson and Svanberg 1998: 134).

In the GLF emphasis was to be placed on mass participation, ideological incentives and self-reliance (Lardy 1987: 360–5). In March 1958 the Central Committee endorsed the mergers of APCs into much larger 'Peoples Communes' that were to have an average 5,500 households per commune (Lardy 1987: 365). The establishment of such 'Peoples Communes' in Xinjiang was preceded by a renewed attack on religion, 'conservative' thinking and the attitude that Xinjiang was 'special' The establishment of communes in Xinjiang met with considerable ethnic minority opposition that the party blamed on 'recalcitrant' landlords and 'local nationalist capitalists'.This prompted the Party to emphasise the need for

class struggle amongst the ethnic minorities which, as we have seen, was in accord with the Party's post-Hundred Flowers 'line' that the 'nationalities question' was primarily a class issue. Therefore, if the exploiting classes within each nationality were eradicated the 'national question' would be resolved (McMillen 1979: 139; Dreyer 1976: 163; Connor 1984: 415). This logic had, as noted above, been a major justification behind the removal of the traditional ethnic minority leaders coopted by the party during the 'anti-rightist/anti-local nationalist' campaign. Thus in Xinjiang the party targeted those remaining manifestations of 'national bourgeois' sentiment – that notably resulted in the closure of the bazaars in the oases of the Tarim Basin and further attacks on religion and mosques (McMillen 1984: 570).

In tandem with the expansion of the commune movement and the renewed emphasis on 'class struggle' in ethnic minority regions Han in-migration was intensified. The party maintained that the only means by which the ethnic minority regions could 'catch up' with the more developed Han areas was through the aid of the Han 'Big Brother' Therefore, the *xiafang* or 'send down' movement was expanded in late 1958, with large numbers of urban Han youth mobilised to aid in the progress of the GLF in ethnic minority regions such as Xinjiang, Qinghai, Ningxia, Gansu and Inner Mongolia. The numbers of *xiafang* youth to reach Xinjiang over the September 1958 to October 1959 period are unclear but various estimates place the figure around the 100,000 mark, a development aided by the completion of the Lanzhou–Ürümqi railway in 1959 (Dreyer 1976: 163–4; Benson and Svanberg 1998: 138). The effect of this was to intensify the resentment of the ethnic minority population, especially in urban areas such as Kashgar where the local population referred to the newcomers, in a striking similarity to non-Han responses to Han migrants in the 1940s, as 'locusts' (Schwarz 1963: 73).

The regional Party resolved to further implement the policies of the GLF and the Party's new approach to the 'nationality question' by the formation of multi-ethnic communes. The purpose behind the establishment of multi-ethnic communes was threefold – to dilute the concentration of ethnic minority sentiment, absorb the influx of *xiafang* Han and eliminate the idea that Xinjiang was distinct from the rest of China. The communes with their communal mess halls, for example, forced different ethnic groups to eat identical food regardless of customary or religiously prescribed dietary requirements (Dreyer 1968: 99). By the end of 1958 there were 451 communes in Xinjiang containing 93 per cent of the peasants in the rural areas and 70 per cent of the herdsmen in the pastoral areas (McMillen 1979: 140). The communes established in Xinjiang were modelled on the XPCC farms that had been established since 1954 and were expected to carry out similar functions - such as large-scale land reclamation, water conservancy and irrigation construction, transportation construction and animal husbandry (McMillen 1979: 143–4; Lardy 1987: 363–4).

Such undertakings were generally beyond the technological capabilities of the communes, and combined with the ethnic minorities continued opposition to communisation resulted in the failure to achieve the goals of increased production

set by the GLF policies. The emerging failure of the GLF and the commune system became apparent, as in the rest of the PRC, in 1960. The authorities' response was a limited retrenchment of the 'all-out' communisation policies. This saw the decentralisation of the organisation of the communes, whereby the production brigades and production teams were made the basic units of accounting. This retrenchment was expanded in 1961 with the Central Committee promulgating new regulations regarding the communes that banned the use of coercion, discouraged 'mass line' industrial projects in the communes (such as the infamous 'backyard furnaces'), permitted the suspension of communal mess halls, officially sanctioned private plots and removed restrictions on private household subsidiary production (Lardy 1987: 388–9; McMillen 1979: 143).

These concessions did not, however, mollify ethnic minority resentment and opposition in Xinjiang. The result of the implementation of these 'fusionist' policies was increasing ethnic minority opposition and unrest, which culminated in the exodus of approximately 60,000 Kazaks and Uyghurs from the Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture to Soviet Kazakhstan in 1962 (Wheeler 1963: 59; McMillen 1984: 57–71; Whiting 1987: 520–1). The PRC later claimed that these people had, with Soviet instigation, crossed the frontier after a series of anti-government protests in Yili and Tacheng between April and May 1962. A number of sources claim that the bulk of the refugees were from a production and construction unit led by Zunin Taipov, who had been a major-general in the PLA 5th Corps and a prominent member of the ETR (Silde-Karklins 1975: 362). According to Beijing, the Soviet authorities had encouraged the exodus by issuing Soviet passports at the Soviet Consulate in Kulja (Yining) and by validating antedated Soviet passports held by Xinjiang residents since the 1930s (Benson and Svanberg 1998: 138).

In the context of Xinjiang, this convergence of domestic and external factors posed a serious challenge to the Chinese position. That the major impetus for this movement of people derived from the adverse results of the GLF in Xinjiang was not publicly acknowledge by the Chinese authorities. Rather, Soviet subversion and interference was excoriated at the highest levels as the major source of unrest in Xinjiang. On 24 September 1962 Mao reiterated the CCP's opposition to 'revisionism' and the Soviet Union's history of antagonistic actions since the foundation of the PRC, while charging the 'modern revisionists' with fomenting dissension amongst the ethnic minorities and attempting to 'detach' Xinjiang from the PRC (Mao 1974: 190–91). This continued a theme long evident in Chinese perceptions of Xinjiang, whereby internal disorders were blamed almost exclusively on external influences. Yet the veracity of such an argument was belied by the Chinese response. In concert with the closure of all Soviet consulates in Xinjiang and the creation of a *cordon sanitaire* along the Sino–Soviet frontier, the GLF policies and the associated 'fusionist' approach to ethnic minorities were partially retrenched in Xinjiang (Dreyer 1976: 192; Whiting 1987: 520–1; Benson and Svanberg 1998: 137). Indeed, a 2005 article by Li Danhui, a professor at the Institute of International Relations at Beijing University, admits that the

Soviet Union took advantage of 'several shortcomings and mistakes in the work of the party and government bodies in Xinjiang' to engage in 'provocative, separatist propaganda' that encouraged residents of the Ili region to emigrate to the Soviet Union. Li also confirms that the Party carried out 'universal purging' thereafter to 'root out' Soviet influence (Li 2005: 77–80).

Once more, a contradictory dynamic was created between the stance taken by the central authorities toward ethnic minority regions and the actual practice of the regime's representatives along the frontiers. Given Mao's emphasis on the primary importance of 'class struggle', one would have expected an intensification of the assimilative policies of the GLF period. In Xinjiang, however, the authorities now asserted that although 'fusion' and assimilation of ethnic minorities remained the ultimate goal, it was to be achieved gradually over a long period of time (McMillen 1979: 124–25; Dreyer 1976: 189–90). This may have been symptomatic, as Connor notes, of the sharpening of the dispute within the party's top leadership regarding the form, direction and intensity of the party's policies in the wake of the GLF (Connor 1984: 417–19). Indeed, leaders such as Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping lent their support to a gradualist approach to the 'national question', while Mao remained notably silent on the issue (Connor 1984: 417–9; Dreyer 1976: 190–1). Undoubtedly the perceptions of these leaders and the provincial authorities had been greatly influenced by the disorders in Xinjiang and the potential for 'revisionist' meddling.

The contradictory imperatives flowing from the central authorities were further illustrated in 1963 when the Xinjiang CCP simultaneously attempted to reassure the ethnic minorities that their 'special characteristics' would be taken into account while exhorting them to heighten their 'political consciousness' As such the authorities were to permit the usage of ethnic minorities' spoken and written languages and respect their 'customs and habits' Illustrative of this renewed tolerance was the resumption of the celebration of Muslim festivals that had been curtailed since 1958. Simultaneously, the ethnic minorities were urged to adopt a resolute position of 'class struggle' to combat internal enemies and external 'modern revisionists' (McMillen 1979: 124; Benson and Svanberg 1998: 138–9). These contradictory imperatives were a function of Chinese threat perceptions regarding the Soviet Union, and the need to combat Soviet propaganda. The exodus of tens of thousands of Kazaks and Uyghurs the previous year prompted the Soviets to intensify their anti-Chinese propaganda in Xinjiang from 1963 onward. This was mainly achieved through the operation of Uyghur language radio broadcasts emanating from Tashkent and Alma-Ata in Soviet Central Asia. Soviet broadcasts were often made in the name of well known Uyghur or Kazak émigrés, such as Zunin Taipov, while their content was focused on contrasting conditions in Xinjiang with those of the ethnic minorities' 'brothers' in Soviet Central Asia (Silde-Karklins 1975: 358–59; Dreyer 1994: 43; McMillen 1982: 710). Due to the exigencies of the situation the Chinese were compelled to reconcile two conflicting imperatives that impacted upon their ability to control Xinjiang. At this time of intensified Soviet threat (at least in Chinese perceptions) to their position in Xinjiang, the Chinese had to implement policies within

Xinjiang that had the potential to reinforce the detrimental effects of Soviet influence.

The lessening of the party's radical and 'fusionist' approach toward the ethnic minorities proved to be but a brief respite. That there was division within the party's leadership concerning the 'national question', amongst other things, was a contributing factor to the somewhat indecisive handling of this issue in Xinjiang from 1962–64. We have also seen, however, that the questions of external influence and national security played no small part in complicating the imperatives of the CCP in Xinjiang. The central leadership developed a more wide-reaching response to the issues of Soviet 'subversion' and ethnic minority unrest in Xinjiang in 1963 that reflected the conflicting imperatives generated by the Xinjiang incident. In September 1963, Mao put before the Politburo a 'directive on opposing revisionism in Sinkiang [Xinjiang]' although reflecting the preference of leaders such as Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping for continued moderation in 'nationalities' policy, it nonetheless also placed heavy emphasis on Mao's national struggle-as-class struggle formulation (Schram 1987: 66). Mao's decision to resuscitate this approach it at this juncture is illustrative of his perception of the major dilemmas posed by Chinese rule of Xinjiang. That Mao deemed the implementation of the 'class line' as the major stratagem required to secure Xinjiang suggests that he desired to intensify and accelerate the integration of not only the region, but also its people into the politico-ideological and socio-economic milieu of China proper.

That this was indeed the case was confirmed by the course of Chinese policy in Xinjiang throughout the remainder of the Maoist period. According to the directive of 27 September 1963, the party needed to address the economic situation in Xinjiang in order to combat Soviet propaganda. The economic situation was to be stabilised by lessening grain requisitioning and ensuring greater access to basic commodities. The rest of Mao's directive was, however, focused on the 'correct' handling of the national question. Although within this exposition on the handling of the national question Mao noted that it was necessary to educate Han cadres in minority languages and respect of minority customs, his major point was for cadres to 'uphold a class viewpoint, and to implement a class line' The final points of his directive exhorted the regional party and PLA to remain vigilant against Soviet subversion and intensify the 'anti-revisionist struggle at the border' (Schram 1987: 66).

In this context the authorities' decision to reinvigorate the *xiafang* movement to Xinjiang a month before this directive could be seen as a counter-weight to the limited moderation of the party's economic, social and cultural policies toward the ethnic minorities. In fact, over the course of the 1963–6 period resettlement of Han youths, the majority of whom came from Shanghai, to Xinjiang was 'sharply increased'. As noted previously, the *xiafang* movement in the context of Xinjiang was primarily concerned with three major goals that could be termed 'ethical', 'developmental' and 'demographic' The reinvigorated *xiafang* or 'rustication' movement to Xinjiang, in contrast to the movement in the 1950s that focused on settling demobilised KMT or PLA soldiers and technical personnel, was focused

on the 'sending down' of educated urban youth. The 'ethical' goal of rustication now appeared to be ascendant, as little by way of material incentives was offered to potential *xiafang* youth. Rather, the emphasis was placed on the ideological virtues of aiding in the 'development' of Xinjiang (White III 1979: 501–06; McMillen 1981: 76–8).

Upon their arrival in Xinjiang rusticates were generally absorbed into the XPCC, in order to be ideologically 'tempered' by the corps experienced quasi-military cadres. By 1966 some 100,000 *xiafang* youth were reported to be serving in the XPCC. That the bulk of rusticated youths in Xinjiang should be absorbed by the military-controlled XPCC at this time was no coincidence given that the PLA, under the direction of Marshal Lin Biao, had begun to assume a role and function beyond those purely concerned with national defence. The PLA under Lin Biao expanded its organisational responsibilities, often obfuscating the division between the party and 'the gun', while its control over the civilian population was enhanced via the formation of civilian militias under military leadership in 1962 (Lieberthal 1987: 337). The importance of the PLA's revolutionary elan as a model for civilian sectors of society began to be heavily emphasised from late 1963 onward, with Mao, in December, calling on the people to 'learn from the PLA'. The PLA, in Mao's perception, was the only organisation capable of successfully integrating politics and expertise – that is to be both 'red' and 'expert' (Harding 1991: 336–8). In Xinjiang, the influx of urban Han youth into the XPCC had the effect of diluting the veteran element of the corps – a development that would take on great significance with the onset of the Cultural Revolution. The overall impact of the *xiafang* movement up to 1966 was such that the XPCC's membership swelled to 600,000, approximately double that of its size in 1957 (McMillen 1981: 78).

The CCP's approach toward Xinjiang and its ethnic minorities were therefore delicately balanced between the imperatives of national security and the state's integrationist project, and those of the 'national question'. The former required the authorities to expand those key instruments of security and integration that had been instituted in the region since 1949. Therefore, the function and scope of the PLA and the XPCC were expanded, while the corps' role as conduit for Han settlement in Xinjiang was also reinvigorated. A corollary of this approach was the great emphasis placed on the need for the extension of state-wide politico-ideological and socio-economic movements to Xinjiang. The latter, however, in light of the 1961–62 disturbances required the at least tactical retreat from the blanket application of just such state-wide policies as represented by the GLF. This delicate balance was soon to be disturbed in Xinjiang, however, with the development of a renewed attempt to forcibly accelerate the integration of the region that took place under the rubric of the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' The following 1966–76 period once more witnessed the convergence of external pressures, specifically within the parameters of the Sino–Soviet relationship, with the domestic integrationist techniques and tactics of rule.

Xinjiang's two cultural revolutions

The origins of the Cultural Revolution were of course not derived from the problematic question of the party's approach to the 'national question', yet the major themes of the movement nonetheless heavily impacted upon this specific segment of Party rule (Harding 1991; Schram 1973). Its course in Xinjiang was essentially determined by the factional conflict between the entrenched regional PLA and Party officials such as Wang Enmao, and the new appointees in the Regional Revolutionary Committees, PLA elements connected to Lin Biao's 4th Field Army and the Red Guards (McMillen 1979: 181; Dreyer 1994: 44). The conflict between the authorities, Beijing appointees and radical Red Guards generated unintended consequences in the context of the state's ultimate goal of integration. Although all these factions were primarily Han in composition, the consequences and policies that resulted from the factional conflict ultimately impacted heavily upon Xinjiang's ethnic minorities. In essence, there were two Cultural Revolutions in Xinjiang, one operating within the Han-dominated institutions of the Party, XPCC and PLA and one that related to the movement's impact on the region's non-Han population. Additionally, the dislocation generated by the movement in Xinjiang also once again provided the opportunity for the Soviet Union to place pressure on the PRC. The nature and scope of the Soviet threat to Xinjiang, although an expression of the wider Sino–Soviet split in international affairs, was enhanced due to the historical legacy of Russian–Soviet influence in the region and by the existence of cross-border ethnic affinities. Thus, the nature of the threat was not simply perceived as exclusively emanating from the actions of the Soviet state itself but also as potentially inherent to the non-Han peoples of Xinjiang.

Central to the invocation of Cultural Revolution on 8 August 1966, were Mao's perceptions regarding the existence and influence of 'revisionism' within the Party that had preoccupied him since the late 1950s. The Chairman had increasingly determined that the only means by which to purify the Party, state and society of such tendencies was to return in part to the mass mobilisation strategy of the GLF period but with a far greater emphasis on 'class struggle'. Mao not only now perceived certain individuals or segments of society as principally expressing 'revisionist' or 'bourgeois' tendencies but the Party as a whole degenerating into a 'bureaucratism' that tolerated the re-emergence of 'traditional' or 'bourgeois' thought and practices. The areas of concern for Mao were therefore multi-faceted and encompassed the spectrum of economic, social and cultural policies of the Party (Harding 1991: 113–5; Schram 1987: 73–82). When the Cultural Revolution was officially initiated at the Eleventh Plenum of the Central Committee on 8 August 1966 it adopted a 'Sixteen Point Decision' that laid out Mao's vision for the movement. The purpose of Mao's 'last revolution' was to 'struggle against and overthrow those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road' and to transform 'all other parts of the superstructure not in correspondence with the socialist economic base' (Decision of the Central Committee of the CCP, 1966).

Ethnic minority regions and peoples by virtue of their 'special' treatment since 1949 naturally expressed practices that were not 'in correspondence with the socialist economic base' and therefore became key targets of the movement. For example, the Cultural Revolution's call to attack the 'Four Olds' of old customs, ideas, culture and habits was ultimately more portentous for the ethnic minorities than it was for the Han. As during the GLF, the concept of national regional autonomy, the tolerance of national distinctions, cooperation with traditional elites and differing tempos for achieving socialism for ethnic minorities were again excoriated (Connor 1984: 421–2; Dreyer 1994: 44; McMillen 1979: 186). As such the Party now determined that ethnic minorities no longer required 'special' treatment, while the policy of 'national regional autonomy' was condemned as creating independent regions and encouraging separatism (Heberer 1989: 25–27). Indeed, the tenor of the attack on ethnic minorities during the Cultural Revolution can be gauged from the reported remarks of Jiang Qing regarding minorities. Mao's wife reportedly considered the minorities to be 'foreign invaders and aliens', while she was quoted as saying, 'what is so special about your tiny Xinjiang? I despise you'. Such hostile rhetoric was paralleled on the ground in Xinjiang by burnings of Qurans, persecution of imams, desecration of mosques and other religious sites, humiliation of ethnic minority intellectuals, and prohibitions on traditional dress. Millward also notes that in at least one case around 1970 a mosque was even converted into piggery, an act of desecration signifying the revolutionaries' utter contempt for ethnic minority practices given Islam's strict prohibitions regarding pigs (Millward 2007: 275–6; Sadri 1984).

Yet the force of such radical and 'fusionist' prescriptions for ethnic minorities was not immediately felt in Xinjiang due to the actions of the entrenched political and military leadership. The movement began officially in the region with the broadcast of Zhou Enlai over Radio Ürümqi calling for the support of the people of Xinjiang for the Cultural Revolution on 3 August 1966. Mao's famous 18 August 1966 review Red Guards in Tiananman Square was also celebrated with a mass rally in Ürümqi attended by Wang Enmao and other Party and military leaders in Xinjiang (Benson and Svanberg 1998: 106; McMillen 1979: 187; Dreyer 1976: 206). Beijing's calls to identify and attack 'those in the party taking the capitalist road' was implemented selectively by Wang Enmao, with those individuals purged apparently 'sacrificial lambs' to convince the radicals of the region's conformity with the rest of the country. Wang Enmao's association with the more 'moderate' interpretation of the Party's minority policies undoubtedly played an instrumental role in determining his cautious response to the Cultural Revolution, as perhaps did the lessons drawn from the consequences of similarly radical policies during the GLF (McMillen 1979: 188; McMillen 1981: 79–80).

Thus, when the first batch of some 400 Red Guards arrived in Ürümqi in late August and early September, the authorities closely monitored their activities. The extension of the Cultural Revolution, in the form of the young Han Red Guards had introduced another political actor into the volatile border region. Over the course of the following month another 5,000 Red Guards arrived in Ürümqi from Beijing and began to attack the established political authorities. In the process

they accused Wang of being a 'native emperor' presiding over an 'independent kingdom' and attacked the head of the XPCC, Tao Zhiyue, as a 'reactionary' Wang responded, however, by utilising the key components of his power base in Xinjiang – units of the XPCC, PLA and the Xinjiang CCP organisation – to combat the radicals (McMillen 1979: 189–92; Benson and Svanberg 1998: 106; White III 1979: 507; Dreyer 1976: 241).

However, the influence of the Red Guards impacted most heavily on the rusticated youth recently absorbed into the XPPC. Indeed, by 1966 the total number of Han rusticates in Xinjiang was in the order of some 70,000 (Dreyer 1976: 253; White III 1979: 505–06). Some three quarters of these youths were absorbed into units of the XPCC where they were to experience ideological and practical 'tempering' at the hands of XPCC veterans. Upon the initiation of the Cultural Revolution, however, the Maoist injunctions to struggle against the entrenched political leadership, encapsulated in the dictum 'bombard the headquarters', questioned such subordination to established authorities. As a result factions were formed within XPCC units that generally pitted rusticates against the pro-Wang Enmao veterans. This process culminated in a series of violent clashes in such cities as Shihezi, Dushanzi and Ürümqi between the Red Guard factions and the pro-Wang elements between December 1966 and January 1967 (White III 1979: 507; McMillen 1981: 80).

The fortune of these rusticates and the XPCC into which they were absorbed over the 1966–76 period is illustrative of the unintended consequences generated by the Cultural Revolution in Xinjiang. Within its most militant phase, between 1966–69, the Maoist call to 'exchange revolutionary experiences' actually worked against a major instrument of the state's integrationist project – the settlement of Han in Xinjiang. The turmoil within Xinjiang and the XPCC compelled many rusticates from 1967 onward to return to their places of origin in intramural China (McMillen 1981: 81). The numbers of Han youth returning must have been significant, with Shanghai authorities urging them to 'fight their way back' to Xinjiang in 1967 (White III 1979: 508). Further confirmation that the disorder within Xinjiang was primarily responsible for the return of rusticates can be discerned in the fact that the *xiafang* movement was conspicuously scaled back by 1968. Toward the end of that year, however, Mao reasserted the Leninist 'vanguard' role of the Party in order to bring the mass movement under control, thus the Red Guard movement gradually lost its utility in the chairman's visions (Dreyer 1976: 232; Harding 1991: 187–9).

The consequence of Mao's effort to re-establish some form of Party control over the Cultural Revolution was the disbanding of many mass youth organisations. This was accompanied by an effort through 1968–9 to reinvigorate the *xiafang* movement to frontier regions such as Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and Tibet. To this effect Mao made a number of statements to the effect that many urban youths should be sent down to the countryside to be 'educated by the peasants'. By 1970, up to 5.4 million youths had been transferred to rural areas, often to frontier regions such as Xinjiang. Hence, the integrationist instrument of population transfer to frontier regions was eventually reinforced after the initial phase of the

Cultural Revolution had produced contradictory effects. This is but one example that suggests that despite the questioning and dismantling of entrenched state policy and institutions brought on by the Cultural Revolution, the state's goal of integration in Xinjiang was in effect beyond question.

The turmoil created by the factional conflicts within the PLA and CCP in Xinjiang was such that Wang Enmao reportedly threatened the central authorities that his faction would take over China's nuclear test site at Lop Nor if it did not stop encouraging radical efforts to topple him. This threat apparently jolted the central leadership into the realisation that the Cultural Revolution had to be bridled in Xinjiang, with the central committee's Military Affairs Commission issuing a directive on 28 January 1968 calling for the its suspension in regions that constituted the 'first line' of defence against 'modern revisionism' (i.e. the Soviet Union) (McMillen 1981; McMillen 1984). The suspension in Xinjiang did not, however, prevent further violence on the ground nor prevent the erosion of Wang Enmao's position. Wang was in fact demoted in 1968 to Vice-Chairman of the new 'Revolutionary Committee' and removed from the region the following year.

Those associated with his tenure in Xinjiang, such as Tao Zhiyue, were also replaced by radical sympathisers or by individuals from Lin Biao's 4th FA. Between 1969 and 1971 the new regional leadership under Long Shujin attempted to reinvigorate the radical ideological agenda of the initial stages of the Cultural Revolution that reiterated the necessity for 'class struggle'. Long Shujin's radicalisation of the party's economic agenda in the region, based on the logic of the GLF policies, ultimately produced few results other than a general stagnation of the economy. Following the 'Lin Biao Affair' in 1972, however, the regional leadership was once again overhauled by the central authorities to remove those connected with the disgraced former Minister of Defence. Saifudin replaced Long Shujin as revolutionary committee chairman and first party secretary intimating a possible relaxation of radical policies (McMillen 1979: 254–69; McMillen 1981: 81–2; Dreyer 1976: 239). Such an eventuality, however, was not to take place until the death of Mao and the subsequent fall of his most radical supporters, the 'Gang of Four', in 1976.

The issues of Soviet pressure and the development of unrest and opposition amongst Xinjiang's ethnic minorities were in many respects complimentary. As the exodus of Kazakhs and Uyghurs in 1962 demonstrated, the cross-border ethnic affinities and historical influence of the Soviet Union in Xinjiang could very rapidly converge with internal unrest to pose significant challenges to Chinese rule. Such a dynamic continued during the period of the Cultural Revolution. As during the GLF, the history of Soviet influence in Xinjiang was used against prominent ethnic minority leaders. In particular, those with links to the pro-Soviet ETR of 1944–9, such as Burhan Shahidi, were labelled 'lackeys' of 'modern revisionism' and systematically purged (Dreyer 1976: 216). Indeed, one source reports that a number of prominent members of the 'Eastern Turkestan revolution' were in fact tortured and secretly executed during this time (Sadri 1984: 317). While such Chinese accusations of linkages between the Soviet Union and Xinjiang's

ethnic minorities were undoubtedly exaggerated, it was not entirely without basis. Indeed, the apex in the convergence of internal unrest and external pressures took place over the years 1968–72, and more so than in the GLF involved the wider scope of the Sino–Soviet conflict. The 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, accompanied by the 'Brezhnev Doctrine' reserving Moscow's right to intervene anywhere in the socialist world in order to preserve communist rule, had clear implications for the PRC, given Moscow's public statements that it no longer considered the PRC to a Marxist–Leninist state (Robinson 1991: 254–77; Benson and Svanberg 1998: 107; McMillen 1982: 710; Dreyer 1994: 44–5).

Chinese threat perceptions were therefore substantially sharpened by the Soviets' actions and posturing, and this certainly contributed to the gradual escalation of the Sino–Soviet confrontation which had significant implications in Xinjiang. During this time, according to a Chinese report of the early 1990s, the 'biggest counter-revolutionary organisation' since the 'liberation' of Xinjiang, the 'East Turkestan People's Party' (ETTP), was formed in February 1968 (Zhang 1994). For the next two years this organisation reportedly spread from Kulja (Yining) to other major cities such as Aksu and Ürümqi and issued numerous pro-independence publications while its membership was comprised of students and government employees and officials. The ETPP advocated the creation of an independent, Marxist and pro-Soviet East Turkestan, and to this end allegedly dispatched members to both the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic to request military assistance (Zhang 1994). Additionally, there were clashes between PLA and Soviet troops in the vicinity of Tacheng close to the border with the Kazakh SSR in December 1968 and further serious clashes between Soviet and Chinese troops along the Ussuri River in March 1969. Reports of the formation of a 'Free Turkestan Movement' in the Kazakh SSR complete with a Soviet-equipped 50,000 man-strong army were also circulated, while Soviet radio broadcasts into Xinjiang claimed that this army was led by none other than Zunin Taipov, the ex-PLA major-general (McMillen 1981: 82–3).

Thus, the perennial fear of a foreign power utilising internal opposition as its cat's paw in Xinjiang once more returned to the forefront of Chinese perceptions. The response of Beijing to these events in Xinjiang was indicative of the entrenchment of the goal of integration. Although there was a partial relaxation in at least the 'fusionist' rhetoric regarding ethnic minorities, it was paralleled by a strengthening of the major instruments of integration in Xinjiang – Han settlement, the XPCC and the PLA. As we have seen, the disbanding of many mass youth organisations in 1968–9 resulted in the re-invigoration of the *xiafang* movement to Xinjiang. During the height of Sino–Soviet tensions along the Soviet-Xinjiang frontier these *xiafang* youths were organised into ad hoc XPCC units, while the PLA's politico-economic tasks were scaled back in order to devote more attention to national defence functions (Robinson 1991: 296). Furthermore, under the regional leadership of Long Shujin an extended purge of ethnic minority cadres and officials took place over 1970–1, with the focus on those that had maintained 'illicit relations' with the revisionists or had exhibited 'national splittist tendencies' (McMillen 1979: 268).

The direction of CCP policy remained the same in Xinjiang following the 'Lin Biao Affair' and removal of provincial personnel connected with him in 1972. As previously noted, Long Shujin's removal and replacement by Saifudin signalled a relative moderation, with Saifudin in 1972 calling for the Cultural Revolution in Xinjiang to be linked to the 'realities' of the region (McMillen 1979: 274). The re-emergence in official pronouncements of such themes evidently presaged a retrenchment of the more radical policies of the Cultural Revolution, echoing as they did the 'united front' slogans of the 1950s. That the central authorities remained concerned regarding the security of the region at this juncture was demonstrated by the appointment of Gen. Yang Yong as second secretary of the Xinjiang CCP and Commander of the XJMR in 1973 (Dreyer 1986: 727). These measures did not immediately remedy the tense internal and security situation with further incidents of Soviet 'provocations' along the frontier and ethnic minority unrest punctuating the remaining years of the Cultural Revolution. This period was characterised by the continued deterioration of Xinjiang's economic and security situation (Dreyer 1994: 45–6; McMillen 1984: 579–80). The deterioration of the region's security situation was highlighted by a potentially dangerous border incident in 1973 when the PLA seized a Soviet helicopter that had strayed into Xinjiang and the region's troops were placed on alert.

Xinjiang 1949–76: integration inviolate?

The CCP's policies in Xinjiang over the 1949–76 period were essentially focused upon the integration of the region into the PRC's political and economic system and the assimilation of the ethnic minorities. The methods by which these objectives were pursued varied according to the two distinct phases of minority policy in Xinjiang. The first phase, 1949–56, was characterised by the 'united front' strategy of gradual reform of the existing political, economic and cultural order via the co-optation of ethnic elites. A key element in the Party's consolidation of its position was the activities of XPCC which, as we have seen, served a dual function as it not only assisted in securing Xinjiang militarily but also absorbed large numbers of Han immigrants. This latter function was important as the Turkic Muslim population's loyalty to the new regime was highly suspect, as they were neither pro-Chinese nor pro-Communist. The second phase, from 1957 to 1976, encompassed the radicalisation of Party policy. The GLF policies of 1957–62, for example, attempted to accelerate the process of assimilation or 'fusion' of Xinjiang's ethnic minorities with the Han via the implementation of the political and economic programs underway in non-minority regions. The GLF policies were generally implemented without regard for local conditions and were characterised by a campaign against the influence of Islam, the systematic elimination of pro-Soviet cadres and Soviet influence throughout the region.

The Cultural Revolution in Xinjiang can be seen as an attempt to achieve the total integration of the region with the rest of the PRC. The primary targets of the Maoists in the context of Xinjiang were the manifestations of 'otherness' or 'separateness' inherent to the ethnic minorities and those within the regional party

and military apparatus that had perpetuated them since 1949. Furthermore, the periods of the most dramatic weakening of the series of techniques and tactics of rule implemented by the party since 1949 coincided with the most serious manifestations of Sino–Soviet conflict. Perhaps not coincidental, was the almost simultaneous development of ethnic minority unrest and opposition to the Chinese authorities. The Cultural Revolution's questioning and erosion of the party's legitimacy and authority clearly played a significant role in stimulating adverse ethnic minority responses.

It seems, with the benefit of historical hindsight, that such a dynamic could only have generated or invited Soviet interference. The central authorities, although thoroughly absorbed in the political struggle of the Cultural Revolution, were not unaware of its potential detrimental effects in strategic frontier regions. As we have seen, no matter the intensity, its internal dynamics both the central and provincial authorities were extremely cognisant of the potential harm to the ultimate goal of integration if the convergence of external and internal 'threats' were left unchecked. During each particular phase of minority policy in Xinjiang the CCP's objectives of integrating the region into the PRC, isolating the region from Soviet influence and the assimilation of the ethnic minorities remained constant. The central problem for the Chinese authorities in Xinjiang throughout the 1949–76 period was how to reconcile the contradiction created by the policy directives from Beijing and what was actually practicable in Xinjiang's conditions.

4 'Crossing the river by feeling for the stones'

Xinjiang in the 'reform' era, 1976–1990

Upon the resurrection of Deng Xiaoping within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1978, Chinese rule in Xinjiang exhibited numerous contradictory dynamics. The maelstrom unleashed during the Cultural Revolution in Xinjiang had undermined the legitimacy and authority of the CCP, stimulated overt ethnic minority resistance to the 'fusionist' policies pursued, and proved catalytic in the stimulation of external pressure along the frontiers. The response of the CCP over the 1976–8 Hua Guofeng 'interregnum' was to couple the strengthening of its key instruments of integration and control – the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and Han in-migration – with a partial return to the rhetoric of the 'gradualist' immediate post-liberation era (1949–55) of Party policy concerning ethnic minorities. The potential Soviet threat to Xinjiang during this period once more contributed to the coupling of 'moderation' and strengthened integration. Although the Chinese state's ultimate goal of achieving the integration of Xinjiang remained intact, it was nonetheless placed in significant jeopardy by the legacy of the turbulent vicissitudes of the Mao Zedong era. As Chapter 3 showed, the key contradiction within the CCP leadership both during and after the Maoist period did not concern the goal of integration but rather the strategies, in order to reach this end. The emerging Dengist era would prove to be no different. This period did, however, see the state attempt to utilise the strategic and 'frontier' nature of Xinjiang to strengthen the endeavor of integration in contrast to the approaches of the Maoist era that sought the region's isolation. In retrospect, the 1976–90 period also exhibited the beginnings of a number of dynamics both within Xinjiang and the wider Central Asian region that would challenge Chinese and Russian dominance over the heart of the Eurasian continent.

This chapter argues that the re-evaluation of the CCP's socioeconomic priorities after Mao Zedong's death, and the ideological innovations that followed thereafter, produced contradictory dynamics in Xinjiang. In particular, the policies of the 'reform' era heightened the potential for the convergence of internal unrest and external interference, laying the foundation for the intensification of ethnic minority opposition during the 1990s. Deng's gradual 'reformist' agenda had a significant impact on the CCP's approach to ethnic minorities, as the general questioning of the Maoist legacy ultimately led to a reappraisal of the Party's record in relation to the 'nationalities question'. The progress of the reform of ethnic

minority policy, however, was not unidirectional but experienced a number of fluctuations. These fluctuations in policy were the product of a complex interaction between the differing tempos of reform deemed necessary by the central and regional authorities, and the perceived impact of specific policies on the security of this strategic region.

The convergence of internal unrest and external interference remained, in Chinese perceptions, the single greatest possible threat to the state's integrationist goal in Xinjiang throughout the 1978–91 period. Significantly, Deng Xiaoping's ascendancy within the CCP also produced a reassessment and reorientation of the PRC's foreign policy that had a significant impact on the potential for the convergence of these dynamics. In this period the PRC's foreign policy became characterised by the interaction of domestic imperatives and the dynamics generated by the Soviet–US–PRC 'strategic triangle' initiated by Mao's limited rapprochement with the US in 1972. Within the context of Xinjiang, China's relations with the Soviet Union remained of primary importance.

Integration in the balance: the restoration of 'gradualism' and the renewed Soviet threat, 1978–81

The resolution of the Party's post-Mao succession struggle in favour of Deng Xiaoping at the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978 had an enormous impact on the direction of CCP policy toward China's ethnic minorities. The Third Plenum, among other things, repudiated the 'two whatevers' espoused by Hua Guofeng and determined that the 'four modernisations' (the modernisation of agriculture, industry, defense, science and technology) were to take precedence, thus marking a decisive turn away from the policies of the late Mao era. Important elements of the Third Plenum's departures with the Maoist legacy/model were the initiation of the 'household responsibility system' in agriculture that effectively began the de-collectivisation of China's agricultural sector, the elimination of the commune system, and an undertaking to 'open' the PRC's economy to the outside world (MacFarquhar 1997: 320; Dittmer 1993: 9–14). Most significantly for China's ethnic minorities, the Third Plenum also determined that 'class struggle' was no longer the 'key link' in the development of Party's nationalities policy (Ch'i 1991: 15; MacFarquhar 1997: 320). Throughout 1979, Party leaders made a number of important statements regarding the ethnic minority issue, building upon the initial relaxation proposed after the Third Plenum. On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the PRC in late September 1979, Party leaders stated that Mao's 1956 speech 'On the Ten Major Relationships', the program of the 1956 Party Congress, and Mao's 1957 'On Correctly Handling Contradictions Among the People' provided the guiding principles for the socialist revolution (Connor 1984: 427). These all stressed that opposition to 'Han chauvinism' was the 'cornerstone' of nationalities policy and generally upheld a 'gradualist' approach to the integration and assimilation of the ethnic minorities. Subsequently the Nationalities Commission of the National People's Congress (NPC), abolished during the Cultural Revolution,

was reconvened the following month. At this meeting Ulanhu, a Mongol leader of long standing within the CCP, criticised the policies of the Cultural Revolution as 'coercive assimilation,' and called for the strengthening of autonomy and greater government expenditure on ethnic minority regions (Connor 1984: 427; Mackerras 2003: 25). Therefore, by the close of 1979 the return to a more 'gradualist' approach to ethnic minorities appeared to be assured.

The dynamics created by the emergence of Deng Xiaoping's reformist agenda in Xinjiang over this period illustrate the continuity of the contradiction between the prerogatives of the central leadership and the imperatives of the regional authorities. As we have seen, this contradiction was a function of the responses or reactions of the major political actors in the region – the PLA, the XPCC, Han immigrants, and the ethnic minorities – to the directives of the central government. There was often a great deal of difference between what the central government wanted to do and what the regional government could actually implement. This particular theme became evident over the 1979–81 period as Beijing's directives to implement the reformist agenda in Xinjiang met with varying degrees of opposition from the major political actors in the region.

Attempts to 'rectify' the Xinjiang CCP by reorienting cadres toward the new reformist line and the rehabilitation of cadres purged during the Cultural Revolution resulted in the development of intense inner-Party struggle (McMillen 1984: 572). During 1979 and 1980, the provincial CCP Chairman, Wang Feng, implemented an eight-point plan for agricultural policy and initiated a review of the officially disbanded XPCC. The agricultural policy instituted the new 'household responsibility' system, permitted the restoration of private plots, and permitted commune members to raise livestock for their own use. De-collectivisation was not, however, equivalent to privatisation as land was not returned to private ownership. Rather, the collective retained land ownership which the villagers leased as household units, thus creating peasants as *de facto* tenants with the state acting as landlord (Masden 1991: 669; Lardy 1993: 105). This 'de-centralisation' to the household unit 'signaled the state's decision to change the terms of the struggle over the harvest' The peasant households now had the first claim, as it were, to their individual harvest and could define the surplus after it had turned over a set amount to the state in taxes and sales (i.e., procurements) (Oi 1989: 155–6). Significantly, although the peasant could now define and dispose of their surplus as they saw fit, the state still remained a 'claimant' for the peasant's harvest. The 'responsibility system' thus contained economic 'channels' through which the state could exert and extend its power over villages. This aspect of the reform of agriculture would assume significance in the coming decade in Xinjiang, particularly in the mid-1980s, as the state attempted to re-assert its control over rural areas (Beller-Hann 1997: 90–1).

The review of the XPCC focused on the rehabilitation of cadres purged during the Cultural Revolution and the restoration of differential material incentives (Dreyer 1986: 732). Importantly, under Wang's leadership, the Xinjiang CCP also attempted to encourage and promote more ethnic minority cadres to positions of authority. Yet the imperative to dismantle the key instruments of the Maoist model

in Xinjiang embodied in Wang's agenda provoked residual opposition among both Han and ethnic minority cadres. This reservation undoubtedly came from a sense of self-preservation, as many were cognisant that today's 'correct' ideological line could rapidly become tomorrow's 'deviationism' or worse. Moreover, a total denunciation of Maoist policies that had ostensibly underpinned Chinese rule in Xinjiang since 1949 could also pose serious problems for the Party's legitimacy (McMillen 1984: 572–3).

The PRC's foreign policy was largely determined by the new leadership's renewed attempts to build on the limited Sino–US rapprochement achieved under Mao with the visit of President Nixon in 1972. In particular, Beijing was focused on using improved relations with the US to counter the perceived Soviet 'encirclement' of the PRC. Particularly worrisome for Beijing, were the Soviet Union's manoeuvres and overtures to two of China's neighbours, Vietnam and Afghanistan, in 1978. The escalation of Soviet activities and interests in both these states, if successful, would achieve the Kremlin's objective of strategically encircling the PRC with pro-Soviet states from China's Inner Asian frontiers in the west to Indochina in the east. Moreover, two key external events in 1979 served to reinforce China's anti-Soviet imperatives and complicate its rule of Xinjiang. First, the Islamic Revolution in Iran of February 1979, threatened the PRC as it constituted a dynamic revival of Islam as a political force (Lufti 2001: 172). The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, however, posed a far more proximate threat to China's Central Asian frontiers.

These events compounded the sense of urgency of the provincial and central authorities to stabilise and improve the situation in Xinjiang. In particular, the PLA's 'defensive counterattack' against Vietnam on 17 February 1979 following months of Sino–Vietnamese tensions regarding Cambodia had significant security and strategic implications that were felt almost immediately in distant Xinjiang (Hinton 1993: 385–6; Pollack 1993: 358–62). The Chinese anticipated that this would precipitate a Soviet manoeuvre in Xinjiang and placed Tacheng prefecture, near the border with the Kazakh SSR, under direct PLA control in the final months of 1978. The level of threat felt by Chinese authorities in Xinjiang was further illustrated on the eve of the attack on Vietnam, with the evacuation of the civilian population of the three districts of Tacheng, Altai, and Ili (Dreyer 1994: 46). Although the foreseen Soviet retaliation did not occur, the heightened state of alert in Xinjiang remained. In light of the renewed Sino–Soviet tensions, the East Xinjiang Military District was created to strengthen the defense of the PRC's nuclear installation at Lop Nor and a defensive perimeter around Ürümqi was established. This episode illustrated that, in Chinese perceptions, the Soviet threat was not unidirectional but also emanated from the possibility that the Soviets could appeal to the ethnic, cultural and religious linkages between the non-Han population of Xinjiang and the peoples of Soviet Central Asia. The evacuation was coupled with renewed attempts to strengthen 'nationalities unity' and combat 'bad elements' within Xinjiang. Tensions along the Sino–Soviet frontier nonetheless continued with Soviet and Chinese troops clashing in the vicinity of Tacheng in July 1979 (Dreyer 1986: 733–4; McMillen 1982: 717–8; McMillen 1984: 579).

The Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 reinforced China's rapprochement with the United States and significantly increased the strategic importance of Xinjiang. Soviet involvement in Afghanistan reignited, at least in Chinese perceptions, the Soviet's expansionist agenda and added further weight to the thesis that the Kremlin was intent on making Afghanistan part of its inchoate system of anti-China alliances in Asia (Su 1983: 576). More importantly, Soviet activities in Afghanistan since the mid-1970s had attracted the attention of Washington, and regional powers Pakistan and Iran who determined to combat any Soviet attempt to develop a client regime in Kabul. The most immediate concern, however, for the PRC following the Soviet invasion was the unresolved border dispute in the Pamir Mountains in the far southwest corner of Xinjiang. The Chinese reiterated claims initially made at the height of the Sino–Soviet conflict in 1969 that the Soviets had occupied 20,000 square kilometres of Chinese territory at the intersection of the Afghan, Soviet, and Chinese borders in the Pamirs (Garver 1981: 107). Soviet control of this region threatened China's overland linkage via the Kashgar–Gilgit highway to Pakistan, with whom China had been developing a substantial strategic and military relationship since the late 1960s. The Soviets' offensives in early 1980 targeted the Wakhan corridor that separated the Soviet Union and Pakistan, and whose 'finger' or the eastern end creates an 80 km Sino–Afghan border. The Soviet annexation of this territory thus limited the utility of the overland route from China to Pakistan as a conduit for arms (Garver 1981: 118; McMillen 1982: 717; Cooley 2002: 57).

As the Soviet entanglement in Afghanistan developed, China's involvement became greater than merely as a source of military hardware, which precipitated a greater alignment with Washington (Cooley 2002: 58). The visit to Beijing of US Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown, in January 1980 initiated a series of high-profile visits by US and Chinese military or defense officials to the respective capitals between January and September 1980. These contacts resulted in increased arms sales and technology transfers to China, and the development of joint intelligence operations and intelligence sharing. A visit to Beijing by the then CIA director, Stansfield Turner, late in 1980, resulted in the adoption of a plan to construct two secret US monitoring installations in Xinjiang at Qitai and Korla. In addition to such closer Sino–US contacts, one source asserts that the Chinese also agreed to recruit prospective *mujahideen* from amongst Xinjiang's ethnic minorities and establish training camps on Chinese soil near Kashgar and Khotan (Su 1983: 566; Cooley 2002: 55–9).

Contemporaneous with these external developments, Wang Feng continued to encounter difficulties in implementing Beijing's reformist program. This was particularly centered on the progress of reforms of the state farms and XPCC units, while increased liberalisation of regulations governing agriculture and animal husbandry did not produce immediate results (Dreyer 1986: 733–4). The implementation of the new Party leadership's program in both economic and political spheres produced contradictory dynamics in Xinjiang as the various grievances of Han immigrants, the ethnic minorities, and XPCC personnel converged in 1980. Particularly instrumental in this were the responses of the

ethnic minorities and the large number of *xiafang* Han youth in Xinjiang to the pace and scope of 'reform' Yet subsequent developments were to show that this dynamic was also paralleled by ongoing ethnic minority resentment toward both the Chinese state and the Han population of the region.

For the ethnic minorities, the limited liberalisation implemented by the Party since 1976 promised much but in practice delivered little, mostly due to Wang Feng's limited success in purging the Xinjiang CCP of residual Maoist cadres and influence. Importantly, Deng Xiaoping had also halted the *xiafang* movement and had permitted significant numbers of Han youths rusticated during the Cultural Revolution to return to their home provinces, prompting those rusticates in Xinjiang to expect similar treatment. In April 1980 this frustration boiled over in Aksu, where the beating of an Uyghur youth by two Han set off an inter-ethnic riot that lasted for two days. This outbreak prompted senior Xinjiang CCP leaders to embark on 'inspection tours' to Aksu and other major centers south of the Tien Shan (Dillon 1996: 18; Dreyer 1994: 47; McMillen 1984: 575).

Hu Yaobang's May 1980 tour of Tibet and the six-point program he outlined to redress the situation there, also further raised expectations among the ethnic minorities that a similar program would soon be extended to Xinjiang. Hu's program proposed the institution of genuine autonomy for Tibet, economic policies consistent with local conditions, investment in agriculture and animal husbandry, the revival of culture and education, and the phased transfer of Han officials out of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). Within Xinjiang the two key points that resonated with the ethnic minorities and the Han immigrants were those referring to the question of substantive autonomy and the transfer of Han officials. Hu's proposition to withdraw Han from Tibet, together with Deng's cessation and criticism of the *xiafang* or 'sending down' of Han youth, combined to provoke demonstrations by both ethnic minorities and Han immigrants in Xinjiang over the subsequent months (Harris 1993: 117; Dillon 1996: 4; Mackerras 1994: 28).

Significantly, the centres of ethnic minority unrest were south of the Tian Shan in Aksu, Yarkand and Kashgar. Ethnic minority demonstrators in these cities not only demanded greater autonomy for Xinjiang and the removal of Han immigrants but also, as Millward has noted, shouted anti-Chinese and pro-separatist sentiments such as, 'Drive out the Khitays' and 'Down with the scum of the nationalities' Additionally, in Yarkand, where a suspicious fire in a mosque precipitated a riot, ethnic minority protest was framed by religious slogans such as, 'To burn a mosque is to burn Islam', 'Defend to the death the independent banner of Islam' and 'Down with the infidels' (Millward 2004: 9). These disturbances prompted Beijing to dispatch Politburo member, Wang Zhen to Xinjiang in October to assess the situation and exhort the Xinjiang authorities to maintain 'nationalities unity' (Mackerras 2003: 25). Barely a month after Wang Zhen's visit significant numbers of Han youth petitioned local authorities for permission to return to intra-mural China, generally to Shanghai, but to little effect. Demonstrations subsequently broke out in Aksu, Kashgar, and Korla, and the local authorities relented and transferred the protestors' residence permits. Shanghai authorities, however, with Beijing's backing refused to recognise this unilateral

measure further exacerbating the tensions between the Xinjiang authorities and Han immigrants (Dreyer 1986: 737–8; Dreyer 1994: 47).

The transfer of *xiafang* Han out of Xinjiang was further complicated by the latent support of local CCP cadres and PLA units for their cause, as both realised that the *xiafang's* continued presence would make it exceedingly difficult to stabilise the situation. Beijing obviously viewed such tendencies with alarm and dispatched PLA units from Lanzhou to disperse demonstrations and prevent the unauthorised return of Han to China proper. This situation once more prompted a visit from Wang Zhen in November/December, who ordered that 'strict measures' were to be implemented to deal with the unrest. Regional authorities also reminded the *xiafang* youth of their role in defending the region from Soviet 'revisionism' (McMillen 1984: 574; Dreyer 1994: 47). In light of the recent events in China's foreign relations, detailed above, Wang Zhen's warning could be taken as more than mere rhetoric and illustrative of the Chinese perception that such regions south of the Tien Shan were susceptible to emergent Islamic revival initiated by Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

The response of Xinjiang's authorities to such unrest was to address the socioeconomic conditions of the region and permit the revival of ethnic minority cultural and religious practices. In effect, the Chinese perceived that the ability of external forces or dynamics to infiltrate and encourage ethnic minority unrest was a function of internal political and socioeconomic conditions. A number of symbolic compromises to ethnic minority sentiment were implemented in the latter half of 1980. First, the authorities reinstated the Xinjiang Islamic Association in June. The association was charged with the organisation and conduct of Islamic education, enhancing 'unity' between Muslim and non-Muslim, and establishing contacts with Muslims abroad (McMillen 1984: 576; Christoffersen 1993: 136). Simultaneously, the association was warned to be patriotic and not to use religion to foment the undermining of 'nationalities unity.' Second, the use of the Arabic script for the Uyghur and Kazakh languages was also reinstated in place of the Latinised script introduced in 1958. These two measures could be seen as finalising the Party's turn away from the policies of the Cultural Revolution in Xinjiang and a means of reassurance to the ethnic minorities as to the longevity of the Party's new reformist agenda. Third, the Xinjiang CCP endeavored to expedite the rehabilitation of ethnic minority cadres purged during the CR and accelerate the training of new ethnic cadres. Fourth, the Party determined to alleviate the economic malaise of southern Xinjiang via the allocation of a US$4.3 million state aid package. Moreover, agricultural and pastoral taxes were also reduced and the availability of commodities targeted at minorities was increased. As a corollary of this effort to alleviate the economic situation in the south, major infrastructure projects were undertaken to facilitate the linkage of the south with the rest of Xinjiang. These included the upgrading of the main highway linking Ürümqi and the Tarim Basin, and the resumption in the construction of the southern spur of the Lanzhou–Xinjiang railway from Turfan to Korla (McMillen 1984: 576–68). Of course these infrastructure developments not only facilitated the transport of produce and commodities, and hence the economic development of the south,

but also the higher goal of integration through facilitating the movement of Han in-migrants and PLA troops throughout the region.

The overall strategy encapsulated in these developments was the coupling of a limited and controlled revival of ethnic minority religious and cultural practices with renewed emphasis on instruments of integration. In a sense it was a return to the major themes of the 1949–55 period. That the CCP in Xinjiang had to 'retreat' to such a position is indicative of the similarity between the challenges confronting Chinese rule in the early 1980s and those immediately following 'liberation' in 1949. After the dislocations of the Cultural Revolution in Xinjiang, Chinese authority and legitimacy had to be re-established. This imperative was clearly evident, for example, in the authorities' attempts to rehabilitate ethnic minority victims of the Cultural Revolution and revive the toleration of ethnic minority religious and cultural practices. Moreover, the emphasis placed upon the de-collectivisation of agriculture and the regeneration of private ownership and local markets echoed the general contours of the Party's economic policies during the consolidation of Chinese power in the early 1950s (McMillen 1979: 25–30).

The key divergence between the strategy of the post-liberation and early post-Mao period, however, was the decreased importance of ideology in terms of both determining and justifying Party policy. The development of this tendency throughout the remainder of the decade, as in the rest of China, increasingly determined that the Party's legitimacy rested primarily on its ability to ensure and promote economic development. Within the context of Xinjiang, however, the inherent tensions created by the two key imperatives of Chinese policy—economic reform/growth and political control—combined with China's foreign policy in Central Asia to facilitate challenges to Chinese rule which these same policies were implemented to prevent.

Xinjiang 1981–5: the return of Wang Enmao and the management of emergent problems

The progress of the reformist program in Xinjiang had provoked some significant opposition from Han immigrants, the XPCC, PLA and the ethnic minorities over the 1979–80 period. The uneasy situation created by the episodes of unrest throughout 1980, despite the efforts of the provincial government, contributed to the poor performance of the region's economy. Problems continued throughout 1981, including residual factionalism and Han-ethnic minority conflict. The ongoing inability of Wang Feng to deal with the situation in Xinjiang prompted a visit by Deng Xiaoping in August 1981. Deng's visit prompted a reorganisation of the Xinjiang CCP, with Wang Feng removed as head of the XUAR the following month. The man who replaced him as first secretary of the Xinjiang Uyghur Regional Party Committee and first political commissar of the Ürümqi Military Region suggested that the central leadership in Beijing wanted to press on with the reform agenda in Xinjiang while simultaneously maintaining tight Party control. Thus, October 1981 saw the return Wang Enmao (Dillon 1996: 27). During his previous tenure in Xinjiang between 1955 and 1969, Wang Enmao had often

selectively implemented central policy directives when he perceived them to be potentially counter-productive to the major goals of control and integration. That is to say he was aware of and receptive to the complex internal conditions of the region, and in effect attempted to reconcile the imperatives flowing from the ethnic minorities, Han immigrants, and the PLA with those of Beijing – a skill that would be called upon during the remainder of the 1980s.

The need for such skills in Xinjiang was underlined by the outbreak of further inter-ethnic tension and unrest in Kashgar in October 1981 (Dillon 1996: 27; Dreyer 1994: 47; Millward 2004a: 9). Not surprisingly, the major tasks identified as requiring Wang's immediate attention reflected the major dilemmas confronted by his predecessor – Han-ethnic minority relations, economic stagnation, factionalism within the CCP, and the continued Soviet threat. Thus Wang's focus at the beginning of his second period as top Party and PLA man in Xinjiang were fourfold: to strengthen 'unity,' economic stabilisation and construction, rectification of the Xinjiang CCP's organisation and 'work style,' and the consolidation of border defense (McMillen 1984: 582).

In April 1982, Wang oversaw the reorganisation and consolidation of CCP control at all levels throughout Xinjiang. The focus of this effort was to entrench the Dengist line in the regional Party and root out any remaining 'ultra-leftist' tendencies. As a corollary of this process, 1982 also saw the return to positions of authority of senior cadres purged during the Cultural Revolution. In rhetoric reminiscent of the 1950s, Wang asserted that the key to strengthening 'unity' (i.e., Han-ethnic minority relations) was respect for the ethnic minorities and to rigorously apply the Party's 'nationalities policy' (McMillen 1984: 582). This was of course in line with the entrenchment of the gradualist approach since the return of Deng Xiaoping. In 1980–1 the CCP had, in the context of 'nationalities policy', returned to the major themes outlined by Mao in 1956–7 that maintained that Han chauvinism was more dangerous than local nationalism. Overall it returned to the theme of affirming the 'correctness' of the notion of differential tempos to achieve socialism for China's ethnic minorities (Connor 1984: 427; McMillen 1979: 131–2; Dreyer 1976: 128). A major component of this approach was the toleration and encouragement of ethnic minority cultural and religious practices which, as we saw earlier, Wang Feng had implemented in Xinjiang. Although under Wang Enmao's leadership these measures were affirmed, it was emphasised that there was a clear delineation in the Party's view between 'legal' and 'illegal' religious activities (McMillen 1984: 582–3). Thus the Party effectively warned Xinjiang's ethnic minorities that the 'revival' of cultural and religious practices, and the content therein, would occur within Party-defined parameters.

Yet it should be noted that this delineation between 'legal' and 'illegal' religious activities was not especially clear. Indeed, some recent scholarship has suggested that religious observance, at least in Kashgar, underwent a process of 'domestication' from the late 1950s to the late 1970s. 'Domestication' in this sense meant that households became the site of religious conduct and individuals undertook the tasks that were previously the responsibility of specialists with the effect that, 'the household became the primary locus of religious activity carried

out in secret' (Waite 2006: 254). If this particular example was representative of the region as a whole, it could be suggested that the documented revival of public religious practice and expression in the early 1980s – evidenced through the rebuilding of mosques destroyed or vandalised during the Cultural Revolution for example – was paralleled by the continuation of private, household-based religious observance and practice beyond the view of the authorities (Waite 2006: 256–9; Millward 2007: 277–9; Rudelson 1997: 45–55). This distinction between 'legal' and 'illegal' religious activities would come to be increasingly proffered in official pronouncements regarding developments in Xinjiang well into the present period.

Therefore the major problems confronted by Wang Feng on his appointment to Xinjiang – Han-ethnic minority tensions, factionalism within the Xinjiang CCP, economic stagnation, and a renewed Soviet threat – largely remained undiminished upon Wang Enmao's return to Xinjiang. Wang Enmao's leadership, however, did not witness any major alteration in the general contours of Chinese policy. As noted above, Wang Enmao pursued the continued 'rectification' of the regional Party organisation, extended the liberalisation of agricultural policy and maintained the moderation of the Party's approach to religious and cultural practices.

The one major departure from his predecessor's policies, and one that had important consequences for the future of the region, was the reconstitution of the XPCC on 1 June 1982. The decision to reconstitute the XPCC, which had been disbanded 1975, was determined by a number of considerations that primarily concerned the efficaciousness of integration. The decision to reconstitute the corps derived from Deng Xiaoping's August 1981 tour of the region and was finalised by the CCP Central Committee and Military Affairs Commission. Wang Enmao's elucidation of the XPCC's tasks upon its reconstitution suggests that Deng and other senior leaders perceived that the state's integrationist project in Xinjiang was in the balance. According to Wang, the XPCC's tasks circa 1982 were fourfold: to implement the Party's nationality policy and strengthen unity, manage socialist economic enterprises, defend the frontiers, and reinforce Party leadership (McMillen 1984: 585–7; Dillon 1996: 27).

These functions were essentially identical to those assumed by the XPCC upon its institution in Xinjiang following liberation in 1949 (McMillen 1981). Importantly another central function of the XPCC, that the authorities neglected to note, was as a conduit and instrument for the absorption of Han in-migration. That Wang failed to note this particular function did not imply that it was no longer considered central to the organisation. In fact from its reconstitution the authorities determined that this function was once more of major importance. Yet Wang's sanguine assertion that a revival of the XPCC and its attendant functions would contribute to 'unity' amongst the region's ethnic groups ignored the recent incidents of unrest. As noted above, a key element in generating unrest in the region in 1980–1 had revolved around the long standing tensions surrounding the issue of Han settlement of the region, with ethnic minorities clearly expressing their wish to 'Drive out the Khitay!' while dissatisfaction of Han in-migrants that had been rusticated during the Cultural Revolution was also evident.

The necessity to re-establish the XPCC's Han-absorbing function was due to a number of considerations. The authorities had attempted to prevent the return of such rusticates to intra-mural China where problems of surplus labour and overcrowding were already established problems. Despite this, significant numbers of Han rusticates managed to return to their home regions, such as Shanghai (Liu 1991: 406–07; McMillen 1984: 586). Upon the re-emergence of the XPCC the Xinjiang authorities actually sought to attract not only new Han settlers but persuade those who had already left to return. Moreover, Beijing saw the corps, with its administrative organisation and quasi-military discipline, as the ideal institution to absorb new Han in-migrants and substantial numbers of Han rusticates who remained in Xinjiang. The XPCC's economic functions were also expanded so that by 1983 the regional government claimed that the corps had reclaimed 937,500 hectares of land, constructed 691 factories and managed 170 state farms. Moreover, a year later the XPCC accounted for a quarter of the value of the region's total production (McMillen 1984: 586; Dreyer 1994: 48; Rudelson 1997: 37).

The remaining three-year period of Wang Enmao's second tenure witnessed the recovery of the regional economy and the stabilisation of Chinese control. The government's reform of agricultural and pastoral policies had a positive effect with a substantial increase in grain production and livestock by 1985. Progress in the industrial sector was not as successful with many state enterprises characterised as inefficient, unprofitable, and plagued by industrial accidents (Dreyer 1986: 741–2). A major contributing factor in Xinjiang's modest economic performance between 1981 and 1985 was the place of the region in Beijing's state-wide economic strategy. The 6th Five-Year Plan (1981–5), generally associated with Zhao Ziyang, channeled government investment into China's eastern coastal provinces that were proximate to the successful economies of East Asia (Christoffersen 1993: 132–3; Zhao 2001: 200). This strategy began the process, which was accelerated by the 7th Five-Year Plan (1986–90), whereby the Chinese economy became spatially differentiated between the eastern, central, and western regions with a respective differentiation of economic 'specialisation'. Thus Xinjiang received minimal government investment and the region's role in this coastal strategy was to be as a source of primary resources. This strategy was bluntly pointed out to the region's authorities by CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang and Premier Zhao Ziyang upon their respective tours of Xinjiang in May and August 1983. A major consequence of this strategy was a growing economic disparity between the eastern and western regions of the country which produced a 'disintegrative effect' on the national economy that prompted the regions that were left 'out of the loop,' such as Xinjiang, to consider and develop their own economic strategies (Zhao 2001: 200–01; Loughlin and Pannell 2001: 476–7; Christoffersen 1993: 132–3).

Contemporaneous with the visits of Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang noted above, cross-border trade was resumed with the Soviet Union and facilitated between southern Xinjiang and Pakistan and Afghanistan via the opening of the Karakhorum Highway. The following year Wang Enmao appealed for foreign

investment in Xinjiang, noting China's historical relations with the Muslim lands to the west, and China's first Muslim stock company was also founded in Ürümqi (Dreyer 1994: 48; Christoffersen 1993: 142). According to Christofferson, this was the beginning of the development in Xinjiang of 'Great International Circles' that were initially planned within the context of the coastal development strategy. An 'economic circle' was defined as 'a regional bloc linking a border region with contiguous states for the purpose of trade and economic development,' and Beijing's coastal strategy prompted the 'defensive' development of a regional economic circle involving Xinjiang (Christoffersen 1993: 133).

The development of the 'Great Islamic Circle,' as this was dubbed was aided by two-way trade between Xinjiang and the Soviet Union, which by 1985 was worth in the vicinity of US$1,800 million (Christoffersen 1993: 136–7). The coastal-oriented strategy of economic development central to the 6th and 7th Five-Year Plans thus played a major role in generating Xinjiang's fledgling turn toward Central Asia. This development was also critical in the emergence of the 'double-opening' economic strategy that evolved over the remaining years of the decade that sought to simultaneously integrate Xinjiang with the domestic and Central Asian economies. More importantly, the 'Great Islamic Circle' also opened the region, especially the major southern oases of Kashgar and Khotan, to the cultural and religious influence of Pakistan which would assume major importance in the coming decade. In particular Roberts asserts that, 'given the fairly limited nature of the shuttle trade with Pakistan' the most significant Pakistani influence on Xinjiang was through 'the education of Xinjiang's mullahs and imams' in Pakistani *madrassahs* (Dreyer 1994; Christoffersen 1993: 136–7; Roberts 2004: 226–7).

The dynamics of reform and the ethnic minority response to Dengist integration, 1985–91

In October 1985, when Song Hanliang replaced Wang Enmao, the region's economic, inter-ethnic relations and security situation had effectively been stabilised. Yet this stabilisation, underpinned by the implementation of Deng Xiaoping's 'reform' agenda, held potentially contradictory dynamics for the state's ultimate goal of integrating region. China's involvement in the US-sponsored covert war against the Soviets in Afghanistan held the potential to develop what the government had long feared – cross-border linkages between Xinjiang's ethnic minorities and ethnically akin peoples in Central Asia. In concert with this foreign policy entanglement, Deng Xiaoping's economic reform agenda had also prompted the development of a dynamic seemingly at odds with the goal of integration. The implementation of the coastal-oriented economic development strategy, that required Xinjiang's economy be subordinated to the exigencies of the eastern provinces, had led to the initiation of an outward-oriented economic strategy. The development of cross-border trade and economic links also entailed contradictory implications for the state; contributing to the economic development of the region but also bringing Xinjiang's ethnic minorities into closer contacts with the largely Muslim societies of Soviet Central Asia.

Although these contradictions were not fully developed by 1985 they nonetheless contained latent threats to not only the region's security (as perceived from Beijing) but also to the progress of Xinjiang's political and economic integration. Yet it must be stated that the state's instruments of integration in Xinjiang – primarily the PCC and Han in-migration – had been strengthened and reinforced in the same period. It would appear that the Party had embarked upon a mixed strategy characterised by the granting of certain socioeconomic privileges to Xinjiang's population underpinned by an unrelenting determination to integrate. The inherent contradiction between the state's goal of integration and the manifestations of socioeconomic externality resulting from the state's new economic development strategy would play an instrumental role in the development of ethnic minority opposition over the coming 1985–91 period.

The new provincial administration continued to implement the reform-oriented socioeconomic policies that had enabled Wang Enmao to stabilise the region between 1981 and 1985. However, there still existed threats to the integrationist project stemming from the impact of the reforms on the orientation of both specific localities and the region as a whole. As Rudelson, for example, has rightly pointed out, the establishment of Chinese rule, particularly in the communist era had focused upon isolating Xinjiang from external influences and orienting the region 'inward' toward China proper (Rudelson 1997: 39–41). Moreover, he argues 'Xinjiang's geographic template produced axes of outside cultural influence that penetrated the region' that determined that the major oases of Xinjiang were not oriented 'inward' toward each other but 'outward' toward the proximate external civilisations, be they Indian, Central Asian or Chinese (Rudelson 1997: 41).

Indeed, the post-1949 history of Xinjiang has arguably been defined by the Chinese state's struggle to overcome these external orientations. Yet, as we shall see, the policies pursued either under the initiative of Beijing or the provincial authorities during the 1981–5 period clearly had the consequence of re-orienting the region 'outward' to the neighboring regions of Soviet Central Asia and South Asia. Although the intent of these policies was undoubtedly to confine such external orientations to economic and trade relations, the 'spin-off' of increased contact carried the possibility of an increase in the political and cultural orientation of Xinjiang towards external influences. Such an outcome had many precedents in Xinjiang's history—from the political and religious influence of the Khanate of Khoqand during the Qing to the Soviet domination of the Ili region in the 1940s. As the remainder of the decade and the 1990s would demonstrate, these precedents would be reaffirmed in Xinjiang to generate dynamics that would compromise the state's ascendant imperatives of economic development and security in the region.

The retirement of Wang Enmao in 1985 was also coupled with further significant personnel changes in the regional administration and a restructuring of the XJMR. As previously noted, Song Hanliang assumed Wang's posts and the Uyghur governor, Ismail Amat, was transferred to Beijing to head the Nationalities Affairs Commission and replaced by Tomur Dawamat (Dreyer 1986: 740). The XJMR was also downgraded to a 'military district' within the Lanzhou Military Region

in a move in equal parts influenced by the stabilisation of security within Xinjiang (and along the Sino–Soviet frontier) and Deng Xiaoping's ongoing efforts to reform the PLA (Dreyer 1986: 740; Baum 1997: 376–7). Song Hanliang, however, continued the policy direction of the early 1980s, expanding border trade and respecting and encouraging the religious and cultural practices of the ethnic minorities. The Karakoram Highway that opened in 1982 had, for example, by 1985 developed as an important conduit for trade between southern Xinjiang and Pakistan. Additionally, the provincial authorities attempted to encourage foreign investment and cross-border trade links through the activities of the Xinjiang Islamic Association and also began to permit Xinjiang residents to travel more freely to Soviet Central Asia (mostly for trade purposes) and in order to perform the *hajj* to Mecca (Rudelson 1997: 41; Chang 1997: 408).

Toward the close of 1985 China experienced a wave of reform-related stresses that were manifested in the form of two major trends. First, since the removal of the conservative Deng Liqun as Party propaganda chief in July 1985 there had been a resurgence in intellectual philosophical debate concerning such issues as 'socialist alienation' and the relevance of Marxist economic theory. A corollary of this was the proliferation of new academic and professional societies, a revival in literary and artistic works and the development of 'liberal' newspapers. The second trend to develop during 1985 was an increase in social mobilisation among a variety of generally urban social groups. The most prominent of these were Chinese students, who began a series of protests in Beijing between September and December. The protests of September to November largely aired student grievances regarding what they perceived as the negative aspects of reform, such as rising living costs, profiteering, and corruption (Baum 1997: 381–3). In December, however, a group of Uyghur students at the Central Nationalities University in Beijing protested against the use of Xinjiang as the base and testing ground for China's nuclear program. Students demonstrating in Ürümqi meanwhile demanded the replacement of Han officials with elected ethnic minority candidates, greater autonomy for Xinjiang, an end to coercive family planning, an end to the sending of criminals to Xinjiang's 'reform-through-labour' camps, and the replacement of Governor Tomor Dawamat by Ismail Aymat. The Xinjiang authorities did not make any concessions to these demands, but simply reiterated that the international situation required the continued nuclear tests at Lop Nor. Moreover, the Party had appropriately relaxed family planning for ethnic minorities and pointed out that it had trained numerous minority cadres (Dreyer 1994: 49; Dillon 1996: 19).

The unrest of late 1986 did, however, play a key role in the strengthening the conservative elements of the central leadership in Beijing against the reformist General Secretary of the CCP, Hu Yaobang, who was relieved of all his posts in January 1987 and had his alleged 'misdeeds' publicised. In essence these criticisms charged him with an ideological laxity that had fostered 'bourgeois liberalisation,' thus precipitating the student 'turmoil' of September–December 1986 (Baum 1997: 399–401). The reaction of the central leadership thus served to re-illustrate the delicate balance between the contradictory elements of Deng's reform strategy that predicated continued economic reform and development on

the continued political preeminence of the CCP. Early the following year the Xinjiang authorities, however, made an ostensibly trivial but highly symbolic compromise regarding regional sentiments. Since the founding of the PRC in 1949, the CCP had determined that the country should constitute one Beijing-indexed time zone. The authorities decreed that from February 1986, however, Xinjiang would observe Ürümqi time – two hours behind Beijing. Although the importance of such a compromise should not be underestimated, Smith also notes that it was primarily Uyghurs that observed 'Xinjiang time', while official workplaces continued to observe 'Beijing time' The compromise was thus a limited one, although it nonetheless served to underpin for Uyghurs a symbolic boundary between Xinjiang, as a region, and the rest of China (Smith 2002: 161).

Although the incidence of social unrest/protest in Xinjiang took place within a period of state-wide social ferment, the protests in Xinjiang had purely regional grievances and implications. The demands of protestors focused upon some major elements of the state's integrationist program in Xinjiang. The demand to replace Han officials with ethnic minority cadres, for example, echoed the expectations of the ethnic minorities in the early 1980s that the government would transfer significant numbers of Han out of the region. Moreover, the questioning of Tomur Dawamat's governorship reflected a challenge to the co-opted ethnic minority elites that the Party relied upon to help legitimise its rule in the region. The government's response to these challenges was to basically ignore those demands focused on the state's pre-eminent strategic and security prerogatives (for example, the Lop Nor nuclear site), and the political domination of the provincial administration by Han. Yet certain degrees of compromise were considered to be permissible with respect to demands that were deemed not to directly threaten these security and political imperatives, such as manifestations of cultural identity or representation. For example, the authorities permitted the development and expansion of Uyghur language journals and newspapers (Smith 2002: 160–1).

Economically, 1985–6 saw the re-assertion of state control over the economic activities of the region's agricultural population. The implementation of the 'household responsibility' system in Xinjiang, as elsewhere in China, produced major increases in agricultural production but by 1985–6 it had also regenerated some problems that socialism had partially alleviated (Masden 1991: 670). Between 1978 and 1984, for example, the value of farm output grew at three times the rate achieved over the 1957–78 period. The success of the reform of agricultural policy could also be seen in Xinjiang where the average per capita peasant income by 1984 was 363 *yuan* as compared to the 1978 figure of 198 *yuan* (Lardy 1993: 106; Nolan 1988: 164–5).

Yet along with this spectacular response to the reform policies came emergent problems. Throughout China a growing economic disparity between peasants, with references to 'new rich peasants' with incomes of 10,000 *yuan* a year, held the possibility of a return to the pre-1949 stratification of China's agricultural population. The 'new rich peasants', however, unlike the pre-1949 landlords did not generate income through land rents but from side-line commercial

activities (Nolan 1988: 164–5). The situation in Xinjiang was congruent with this general trend, with peasants not generating additional income through agricultural activities but through handicrafts and other 'household specialisation' encouraged by the government. In fact Beller-Hann argues peasants in southern Xinjiang did not view agriculture as an income generating activity (Beller-Hann 1997: 90–1). Moreover, by 1985–6 agricultural production began to plateau, suggesting that the state-wide gains in agricultural productivity over the 1978–84 period were 'one-off' gains and not harbingers of a transition to a higher trend of growth. The combination of a plateau in agricultural growth and the emergent issue of greater economic disparities amongst the peasantry played a role in what has been termed the agrarian 'backlash' of 1985 (Lardy 1993: 107; Perkins 1991: 529; Kelliher 1992: 132–3). Although the state had theoretically 'freed' peasant households from collective and state control with the reforms initiated under Deng Xiaoping's leadership, the 'responsibility system' by the mid-1980s entailed a number of significant obligations owed to the state by the peasants (Selden 1993: 26–38; Oi 1989: 155–7). Nolan, for example, notes that the Party at the local level was far from separated from the management of economy by the mid-1980s. The Party still possessed a number of important economic channels through which it could exercise power at the village level – the allocation of grain purchase quotas, administration of family planning policies, allocation of business licenses, and provision of technological inputs such as fertilisers and petroleum (Nolan 1988: 85).

In the context of Xinjiang, Beller-Hann identified a number of peasant obligations to the state that reflected the general reassertion of Party influence and control over the peasantry such as the obligation to grow an industrial crop (generally cotton), compulsory grain procurement by the state, and imposition of family planning policies (Beller-Hann 1997: 92–3). Therefore, although the reforms had aided economic development in Xinjiang and initially relaxed the state's control over the economic activities of the peasantry, the years 1985–7 saw a reassertion of the state's prerogatives in the rural sector. The political ferment of the same period, both across China and in Xinjiang, undoubtedly contributed to the state's imperative to narrow the opportunities for independent economic decision-making and political mobilisation.

This period also witnessed further development in Xinjiang's industrial sector and an increase in foreign trade and investment. An important part of this was the exploration and development of Xinjiang's hydrocarbon resources that, prior to the reform period, had been under-utilised. These efforts focused on the Tarim Basin that yielded results with the discovery of the Yakela oil field in October 1984, and an oil and gas field 100 km south of Korla in September 1987 (Chang 2001: 220). These discoveries took on greater significance with the State Planning Commission's admission late in 1986 that China would no longer be self-sufficient in oil. The focus of China's energy policy was now to be on the simultaneous development of domestic reserves and diversification of foreign sources. Sino–Soviet trade was facilitated by negotiations between the Xinjiang Import–Export Trading Company and Vostok Xinjiangintor, which resulted in annual trade fairs

alternating between Ürümqi and Soviet Central Asia (Christoffersen 1993: 143; Christoffersen 1998: 6).

Improved relations with the Soviet Union were also evident with the re-opening of Soviet consulates in Xinjiang and the establishment of Chinese consulates in the contiguous Soviet Central Asian republics (Dreyer 1994: 49). Tensions along the Sino–Soviet frontier, however, continued with an isolated incident between Soviet and PLA troops in 'a remote Xinjiang border area' in 1986. Yet such incidents were not permitted to derail the further development of closer Sino–Soviet economic relations. The Kazak foreign minister, on a visit to Xinjiang in August 1987, proposed a further expansion of economic cooperation between Xinjiang and Central Asia. Moreover, in October 1987 Soviet and Xinjiang authorities began negotiations regarding the joint development of twenty-nine agricultural and industrial projects in Xinjiang. By 1987 the growth in Xinjiang's foreign trade, mainly with Soviet Central Asia, had grown to around US$250 million from a figure of US$17.1 million in 1980 (Martin 1994; Christoffersen 1993: 143; Beijing Guoji Shangbao 1990: 92).

The subsequent 1988–90 period in Xinjiang was characterised by economic crisis and growing social and political unrest, the product of the convergence of the contradictory dynamics inherent in the government's strategies. This period also saw the increasing impact of external influence and developments in Xinjiang, mainly emanating from Soviet Central Asia. The 6th and 7th Five-Year Plans, it will be recalled, essentially relegated Xinjiang to providing primary resources for the coastal regions and this in turn had played an instrumental role in prompting the regional authorities to re-orient Xinjiang's economy 'outward' to a certain degree. By 1988 this trend, manifested across a number of peripheral provinces such as Xinjiang, had resulted in the 'regionalisation' of the national economy. This prompted the central government to implore regional authorities to have the 'nation's interests in mind' when implementing the government's macroeconomic policies (Lardy 1993: 113). Compounding this problem, and particularly detrimental given the focus on advanced industries in the coastal provinces, was the gap between energy demand and production. China's industrial growth between 1980 and 1988 averaged between 12–14 per cent, while the expansion of energy supply averaged just 4 per cent thus precipitating an energy crisis (Bramall 2000: 29–33; Christoffersen 1993: 144). In the latter half of 1988 numerous state enterprises had to operate with only a two-day supply of energy, illustrating the extent of this problem. Moreover, the Chinese economy had become plagued by wage-price inflation, surging consumer demand, and official corruption and overinvestment in capital construction. Therefore, in September 1988 the central government initiated retrenchment policies recentralising economic authority to reign in demand, stabilise growth and inflation, and re-establish the center's regulatory imperatives (Baum 1997: 415–7; Christoffersen 1993: 144–5).

In line with the central government's imperative to reassert macroeconomic control it also granted other provinces, beside those contiguous with the Soviet

border, to trade with the Soviet Union thereby creating three levels of trade – government-to-government, border trade and regional trade. The opening of Soviet trade to all provinces can be seen as an attempt to extend China's 'opening-up' policy to the economy as a whole. The importance of this measure for the central government's integrationist imperatives is clear when it is recalled that Xinjiang, for example, had begun to integrate with the Soviet Union to become part of the 'Great Islamic Circle' without generating similar integration toward the domestic economy (Christoffersen 1993: 144–5). The central government's emphasis on reasserting control of macroeconomic policy was furthered in 1989 through the formulation of the 8th Five-Year Plan (1990–4), whereby the economic development of Xinjiang was given priority. The central government subsequently announced that it would construct a US$600 million petrochemical plant in Xinjiang's Dushanze oil field, intimating that Xinjiang's role in the economic development strategy had been 'upgraded' from a supplier of primary resources. This undoubtedly had a lot to do with the further discoveries of oil in the Tarim Basin some 400 km south of Korla in mid-1989. Soon thereafter the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) had some 10,000 workers dispatched to Xinjiang to develop the Tarim's potential energy reserves (Chang 2001: 220–1; Beijing Xinhua 1989). The following year also saw an increase in state investment and aid to Xinjiang. Notable projects included the construction of a power plant at Manas, the development of a polyester production capability at the Ürümqi petrochemical plant, and the 'Dushanze Ethyl Project' with a total investment of 2.575 billion *yuan* (Beijing Xinhua 1990: 53).

Xinjiang experienced renewed social and political unrest over the 1988–90 period that reflected the growing nationalist sentiment of the region's ethnic minorities. Uyghurs and Kazaks demonstrated in Ürümqi in June 1988 against the publication of a book, *The White House in the Distance*, which they argued contained racial slurs against them and after racist graffiti had been found in the toilets at Xinjiang University (Dillon 1997: 137). The region's largest incident of ethnic minority unrest of the 1980s took place between May and June 1989 that occurred simultaneously with the student protests in Beijing. The incident began when approximately 3,000 students from Xinjiang University marched to Party headquarters in Ürümqi on 17–18 May to demonstrate their support of the Beijing protestors. 'Fundamentalists' from the Ürümqi Koranic Studies Institute and 'several thousand' of their supporters apparently joined these demonstrators the following day. This group's agenda differed from that of the university students, to protest the publication of a book, *Sexual Customs* which allegedly asserted, among other things, that Muslims perform the *hajj* to Mecca for sexual indulgence (Dreyer 1994: 50; Gladney 2004a: 231–2).

The situation degenerated into a riot as public security personnel attempted to disperse the demonstrators. The official account asserts that 'the very small number of plotters of the 19 May incident took advantage of the confusion to incite people who did not know the truth to storm the Party and government organs, and beat, smash, and loot in a big way' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Regional Service 1989a: 61–2).

This, and the subsequent arrest of several of the Uyghur protestors, not only stood in contrast to the state's lenient response to simultaneous Hui protests in other parts of China, such as Xi'an, Xining and Kunming, but also reinforced the impression that the authorities remained on edge regarding unrest and political mobilisation in Xinjiang (Gladney 2004a: 232). According to this official account, more than 150 soldiers, police, and cadres were injured and over 40 vehicles destroyed in what was termed 'political rioting' (Hong Kong AFP 1989: 79). That the authorities viewed this incident as an outburst of ethnic nationalist 'splittism' and the product of heightened religious fervor is apparent from official statements and responses in the following months. At a regional Party committee meeting on June 16, Song Hanliang, for example, demanded that the Party at 'all levels' crack down on 'illegal organisations' and deal with those spreading rumors 'designed to damage nationality solidarity and advocate separatism (Ürümqi Xinjiang Regional Service 1989b: 61–2).

The remainder of 1989 in Xinjiang was, according to XUAR chairman, Tomor Dawamat, characterised by 'an extremely difficult political fight' against those advocating 'separatism (Hong Kong AFP 1990a: 50). The authorities increasingly linked calls for greater political or cultural autonomy with what they defined as 'illegal' religious activities; that is, activities that took place beyond state-constructed and legitimated parameters. Thus in March 1990 the deputy secretary of the regional Party committee, Hamudun Niyaz, exhorted 'religious personages' to 'correctly implement' the Party's religious policy. Moreover, he reminded his audience that 'no one is allowed' to use religion to disrupt the social order, obstruct administrative and judicial functions of the state, undermine the unity of the nationalities or encourage separatism or place religion above the state (Ürümqi Xinjiang Regional Service 1990: 50–1).

The general tenor of the regional authorities had substantial changed from that of the mid-1980s with the Party now emphasising the need to 'deal strongly' with manifestations of 'disunity.' Such an orientation did not bode well for further progress toward the moderation of 'nationality' policy in Xinjiang in the coming years. Perhaps just as significant in this regard was the authorities' perception of the impact of external influences on Xinjiang's internal situation. By 1990 ethnic nationalist movements were under way in various parts of the Soviet Union, including the neighboring Central Asian republics, and the victory of the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan posed the possibility of the infiltration of similar politico-ideological dynamics into Xinjiang. Indeed, it would appear that this consideration played an instrumental role in prompting the authorities' crack down on 'illegal' religious and political activities in Xinjiang. Tomur Dawamat, in an interview with Chinese and foreign journalists on March 25, 1990, made a number of explicit references to 'some antagonistic forces from abroad' in answering questions concerning the separatist threat in the region. Moreover, after noting the potential threat from Central Asia the chairman also explicitly accused Isa Yusuf Alpetikin, the exiled former secretary-general of the KMT Xinjiang government between 1946 and 1948, of rallying 'social scum' to the separatist cause from his base in Turkey (Hong Kong Ta Kung Pao 1990: 49–50).

The convergence of internal and external instability thus prompted the regional authorities to not only tighten Chinese control in Xinjiang but to increasingly perceive the external challenge to this control as deriving from hitherto dormant sources. Therefore, the threat was no longer perceived as emanating from the Soviet state but rather from the revival of Islam as a political force in Central Asia. Yet it is interesting to note Tomur Dawamat's reference to Uyghur exiles in Turkey as it suggests the Chinese authorities' acknowledgment that the ethnic nationalist challenge need not derive from religious imperatives alone, but from also political and cultural ones as well. The possibility of a pan-Turkist renewal in Central Asia and Xinjiang had begun to be perceived by the Chinese as a comparable threat to its position in Xinjiang as an overtly Islamic-inspired movement.

The Baren incident

The new decade did not begin propitiously for Xinjiang's provincial government. As we have seen the regional authorities increasingly linked internal unrest with external influences after the unrest of 1989. The government's March 1990 crackdown on 'illegal' religious and political activities, however, combined with the instability in the neighbouring regions of Soviet Central Asia to precipitate the largest outbreak of ethnic minority and anti-Han unrest in Xinjiang since the Cultural Revolution. Once gain the epicenter of unrest was south of the Tien Shan, around the major oases of Kashgar, Khotan, Artush, and Aksu, although it was to spread north to Ürümqi (MacPherson 1990a: 47–8; Dreyer 1994: 50). The largest incident, and apparent catalyst for the wave of unrest, occurred in the town of Baren in the Kizilsu Kyrgyz Autonomous Region near Kashgar (Becquelin 2000: 69; South China Morning Post 1990: 48). A group of Uyghur and Kyrgyz men allegedly led a mass protest on 5–6 April 1990 that called for the removal of the Chinese from Xinjiang and the formation of an independent East Turkestan state (MacPherson 1990b: 49; Dillon 1997: 137).

According to the official account of this incident, 'a very small number of reactionary elements' had formed an 'Islamic Party of East Turkistan' that then assembled 200 people before the township government building and recited 'sacred war oaths and made deliberate efforts to create trouble' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Television Network 1990b: 62–5). Apparently, the authorities then dispatched two Han cadres to the township to negotiate with the demonstrators, but when negotiations broke down the two Han cadres were killed (Tokyo Kyodo 1990; Chen 1990). Thereafter armed police and public security personnel were dispatched to the township, where they fared little better than the unfortunate negotiators, and were besieged in the environs of the government building by the insurgents. The following morning of 6 April, the police and public security personnel came under fire from automatic weapons and grenades, causing serious damage to the government building and injuring a number of police. The besieged security personnel 'counter-attacked in a restrained manner' and were reinforced by up to one thousand PLA troops that afternoon. The counter-attack was successful and the authorities reported that they killed 10 insurgents, including the

'commander' of the rebels, Zahideen Yusuf (Ürümqi Xinjiang Television Network 1990b: 63; Winchester 1997). Foreign press reports, however, placed the number of casualties in the vicinity of 60 'civilian' and 8 police deaths (MacPherson 1990c; Chen 1990). Nonetheless ethnic minority unrest quickly spread from here to the nearby oases of Kashgar and Khotan, and in the subsequent week to the regional capital Ürümqi where ethnic minorities protested in front of the city's mosque against the reports of violence in the major southern centers (Hong Kong AFP 1990b: 47). Following the suppression of the Baren unrest it was reported that the authorities airlifted up to 100,000 PLA troops from Lanzhou to the effected areas south of the Tian Shan, especially Kashgar and Khotan (Chen 1990).

The reasons behind this widespread, and often violent, unrest appear from available sources to have been based upon two major factors: the government crackdown on religion since March 1990 and the penetration of external influences from Central Asia. Among the various press sources cited above, the government's continued attempts to shut down or prevent the construction of 'illegal' mosques and Islamic schools in early 1990 are often cited as a major source of ethnic minority grievances (MacPherson 1990b and 1990c). In fact, the authorities had stepped up their attempts to reassert Party control over both religious institutions and practices in the major oases below the Tian Shan early in March 1990. In Khotan County, for example, the authorities launched a campaign to 'encourage people to become patriotic religious figures', 'oppose separatism', and 'accept the supervision of the masses' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Television Network 1990a: 50). The major targets of this, and analogous campaigns throughout the region, were imams that established Islamic schools without state approval and imams involved in political mobilisation of ethnic minorities. The fact that the leader of the rebellion at Baren, Zahideen Yusuf is reported to have declared a *jihad* or holy war against the Chinese state with the express purpose of establishing an independent 'East Turkestan Republic' (ETR) suggests that the incident was at least partially influenced by the Islamic revival in Soviet Central Asia and Afghanistan (Ürümqi Xinjiang Television Network 1990a: 50; Haghayeghi 1995: 62–70).

That ethnic minorities were calling for an ETR should not have been any surprise given the precedent of two such self-styled republics in the region's twentieth-century history. Moreover, nor should have the call for a jihad against the Chinese state been cause for surprise given that both the East Turkestan Republic of 1933 and that of 1944–9 are generally regarded as exhibiting both a significant Islamic and pan-Turkist or nationalist component (Forbes 1986; Wang 1999; Millward 2007: 215–30). What perhaps gave this incident such great weight in the perception of the authorities was the apparent confluence of internally-generated dynamics (Uyghur dissatisfaction with policy toward religion) and externally-generated dynamics (the Islamic revival in Central Asia and Afghanistan). Clearly the unrest initiated in Baren raised the specter of a religiously inspired political and ideological challenge to the Chinese state. The Chinese reported that they had captured a dossier of documents written in Uyghur during the Baren unrest that allegedly detailed the purpose of the 'Islamic Party of East Tukistan's' jihad. According to this report this document stated: 'The purpose of the sacred war is to

kill the heathens, oppose the heathens, and use our hands and language to rebuff them. For the sake of struggling against your enemy, we should use weapons and horses to deal with Allah's and your enemy' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Television Network 1990b: 62–5). Millward, citing Chinese sources, states that the weapons confiscated from the Baren insurgents consisted of sixteen firearms (fifteen of which were taken from police during the unrest), 470 bullets, 243 homemade grenades, 53 kilograms of 'blasting powder', 180 knives, three motorcycles and five horses. He thus concludes that Zahideen Yusuf's organisation, 'apparently launched its attack with few if any firearms', somewhat belying Chinese claims as to the scale and seriousness of the 'uprising' (Millward 2007: 327).

The Chinese government's greatest fear in Xinjiang, the convergence of internal unrest and external influences had, at least in its perception, come to pass with the events of April 1990. That the regional authorities perceived the unrest as emanating from political and ideological influence from abroad was borne out in a number of official statements made in the weeks following the 5–6 April incident. Song Hanliang, while reiterating that the insurgents had called for a jihad to 'wipe out Chinese rule,' stressed the 'political nature' of the struggle against separatists, and asserted that this struggle was 'not a problem of nationalism or region' (Hong Kong AFP 1990c: 67). This rather oblique statement raises an important question that if it was not a question of 'nationalism or region' what then, in the authorities' view, was behind these events? Ismail Aymat, chairman of the Nationalities Affairs Commission, provided the answer in an interview with Turkish journalists, in which he asserted, 'Certain elements are using religion as an instrument to create regional discord. Meanwhile, a number of foreigners are engaged in provocative activities' (Istanbul Milliyet 1990: 69–70).

Moreover, a Uyghur official addressing 70,000 people at the Idkah Mosque in Kashgar during Friday prayers called on his audience to ignore the separatist movement and claimed that trouble had been stirred up by the infiltration of armed groups into Xinjiang from Pakistan and Kyrgyz SSR (Hong Kong AFP 1990d: 88). Further reports also suggested that the insurgents around Baren had been supplied with weapons by *mujahideen* units in neighboring Afghanistan (Pin 1991). It should be recalled in this context that the Chinese government had in fact recruited and trained an unspecified number of Uyghurs to fight with the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan. The possibility therefore existed that some elements of this group had returned to Xinjiang to extend the jihad against Soviet 'Marxism–Leninism' to its Chinese variant (Winchester 1997: 31). Therefore, in the authorities' perception, the 'separatists' had in effect hijacked the Party's moderate stance regarding the ethnic minorities' cultural and religious practices to politically mobilise dissent, aided and abetted by the infiltration of hostile elements from Central Asia.

The government's response following these events suggests that this indeed was the conclusion reached by the Chinese. Immediately following the unrest the authorities implemented a 'three no's' policy toward 'national splittists'—no concessions, no compromises, and no mercy (Chang 1990: 50). The PLA presence in the region was also significantly stepped up, with the PRC Vice-President Wang Zhen rumored to have been dispatched to Xinjiang to oversee the suppression of

rebellion and tightening of the region's borders (Chang 1990: 50). In relation to the Party's approach to the ethnic minorities' cultural and religious practices, the Party's preeminent position was reinforced by the initiation of a thorough 'rectification and screening' of religious institutions. By December 1990 it was clear that the Party had instituted a hard-line stance against possible manifestations of ethnic minority unrest with Song Hanliang declaring that the PLA was a 'great wall of steel and iron safeguarding the motherland'. Furthermore, according to Song the greatest contemporary threat to Xinjiang was 'national splittism' and this would remain the case for the foreseeable future (Xinjiang Ribao 1990b: 55). At the same time, the authorities maintained their efforts to reassert state control over the practice of religion in the region. For example, *Xinjiang Ribao* reported that in Akto County the authorities had halted the construction of 153 mosques, shut down 50 'religious facilities', and undertaken a 'full-scale rectification and screening of religious facilities' (Xinjiang Ribao 1990a: 56).

The unrest of April 1990 had therefore served to reinforce the state's basic perceptions of the major threats to continued Chinese rule of the region – the politicisation of Islam within Xinjiang and the penetration of external influences. The overall strategy implemented to combat these developments was in effect a variation of the policies pursued in the immediate post-liberation period, albeit with a greater emphasis on the state supervision of religion. The greater emphasis on state control, however, was coupled with further undertakings to facilitate the economic development of the region. Yet this in turn created further dilemmas for the regional authorities in the management of the delicate relations between the ethnic minorities and Han in Xinjiang. The months following the Baren uprising also saw an increase in Han in-migration to Xinjiang with the government's increased investment in various developmental projects in the region attracting an influx of Han, both officially sanctioned and illegal (Dreyer 1994: 51; Liu 1991: 406–07). According to the 1990 census figures there were 5,695,626 Han compared to 7,194,675 Uyghur representing 37.5 per cent and 47 per cent respectively of the region's total population (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1990b: 52–5). Once these figures are broken down by prefecture, however, it is clear that Han dominated the population of key industrial centers such as Ürümqi, Hami, and the oil towns of Karamay and Shihezi (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1990b: 55). This trend would continue in the subsequent decade prompting charges from the ethnic minorities that the government's economic strategy only benefited the Han. However, this would be generated more by virtue of the economic opportunities created by increased government investment in Xinjiang than by state ideological campaigns, as during the Maoist era. By the beginning of the 1990s the state's integrationist project had been reinforced by the challenges precipitated from the Soviet Union in the 1980s and the emergence of greater ethnic minority unrest. Yet the task was incomplete and fraught with contradictions as the authorities attempted to balance the economic imperatives of the reform era with the security implications that flowed from greater openness to Central Asia. Moreover, as we have seen, the state's attempts to placate ethnic minority sentiment throughout the 1980s by allowing greater freedom in the sphere of religious and cultural

expression, had, in the state's perception, 'backfired' in April 1990. Those events intensified Chinese perceptions of the level of threat to ongoing control of the region by the congruence of internal instability and external influences. Although the origin of these external influences remained the same as during the Maoist period (i.e., from across the western frontier), the form had changed dramatically. The Soviet state was no longer a threat to Xinjiang but the rising tide of ethnic nationalism within its constituent republics, including the Central Asian republics, posed an emergent threat to the region. In fact, 1990 saw the emergence and proliferation of pan-Turkic and Islamic political parties and organizations in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan (Haghayeghi 1995: 85–95). With the disintegration of the Soviet Union between August and October 1991, and the subsequent independence of the Central Asian Republics, these dynamics gathered momentum that threatened to spill over into Xinjiang.

Xinjiang 1978–91: the problematic progress of integration

Chinese rule of Xinjiang over the 1978–91 period thus exhibited a number of key elements or themes of continuity and transformation regarding the strategies, techniques, and tactics of rule employed by the state to achieve its central goal of integration. The central dilemma for the CCP since the 'peaceful liberation' of Xinjiang in 1949 had been how best to facilitate the integration of the region into the Chinese state. This question, as we have seen, had not been resolved by the close of the Maoist era. In fact, the various fluctuations and turbulence that characterised Chinese policy in Xinjiang during that time, by the dawn of Deng Xiaoping's ascendancy, resulted in a questioning of the rationality that had underpinned Chinese rule. The state's goal of integration, however, regardless of the turbulence of the Maoist era remained firmly entrenched within the perceptions of the post-Mao leadership as not only the correct normative course of action but the only possible direction of Chinese rule in Xinjiang. Although the CCP leadership following the death of Mao ultimately re-evaluated the central tenets of the Maoist political, economic and social order, it in practice reaffirmed the state's imperative to integrate Xinjiang.

Thus, as this chapter has highlighted, the Dengist program of reform in Xinjiang, especially during the 1978–82 period, generated social unrest as the major political actors in the region – the ethnic minorities, Han settlers, the PCC, and PLA – responded to the new dynamics emanating from Beijing. This period of unrest in Xinjiang was an explicit challenge to the new central leadership in Beijing in many respects, not least as the key pillars of Chinese rule in the region – the Xinjiang CCP and the PLA – responded adversely to the quest to negate Maoist influence. Moreover, by explicitly criticising the policies pursued during the late Maoist period the authorities ultimately raised questions regarding the legitimacy of Chinese rule in Xinjiang in the perception of the ethnic minorities. The policies implemented during the 1978–82 period questioned the rationality that had underpinned Chinese rule, that is, explicitly questioned and undermined the Maoist techniques and tactics of rule upon which Chinese political power had

been based since the PLA 'liberated' the region in October 1949. This dynamic must have been evident to the central authorities, as the policies implemented after the unrest of 1981–2 under the regional leadership of Wang Enmao returned to the general themes and contours of the consolidatory policies implemented during the early 1950s. As noted earlier, this return to the basic techniques and tactics of rule of the 1950s was no coincidence but was determined by the nature of the challenges posed to the continuation of Chinese rule in Xinjiang in the immediate post-Mao period.

The task confronting the CCP in the 1980s was to re-establish their political legitimacy. The CCP re-established techniques and tactics based on providing political space for the region's ethnic minorities, allowing the representation and expression of ethnic minority political, social, socioeconomic and cultural diversity. Under Wang Enmao's leadership the CCP in Xinjiang implemented policies reminiscent of the 'united front' era, whereby emphasis was placed upon training and development of ethnic minority cadres and the toleration and encouragement of ethnic minority religious and cultural practices. Renewed emphasis was also placed upon reviving the region's economy through the implementation of de-collectivisation in agriculture and increased regional government investment. The place of Xinjiang within the Chinese economy was transformed due to the priorities of the central government in this period. Under the rubric of the 6th Five-Year Plan (1981–5), central government investment was channeled toward China's eastern coastal provinces, thus accelerating the spatial differentiation of China's economy between eastern, central and western regions. This economic development strategy prompted neglected regions such as Xinjiang to develop their own economic development strategy. By 1985, Xinjiang had embarked on a tentative opening to the economies of Soviet Central Asia that was somewhat at odds with the state's integrationist imperatives.

This divergence from the themes of the Maoist era was, however, coupled with a re-invigoration of two key instruments of Chinese rule in Xinjiang – the Xinjiang PCC, and Han in-migration – that had been emblematic of the Maoist period. Thus the reevaluation of the techniques and tactics of rule, and the subsequent 'moderation' of policy that flowed from this, was paralleled by a renewed emphasis on the major instruments of integration. During the 1985–91 period however, the coupling of this strategic retreat from the Maoist model with reinforced instruments of integration produced a number of contradictory dynamics in the region that ultimately came to a head at the beginning of the 1990s. The development of greater contacts between Xinjiang and the contiguous regions of Soviet Central Asia, that were the consequence of the authorities' outward oriented economic strategy and relaxation of religious and cultural restraints, held the potential to counteract the state's integrationist imperatives. This process threatened to reinvigorate the historical linkages between Xinjiang and Central Asia that had in the past seen specific regions of Xinjiang become oriented 'outward' toward the proximate external civilisations. The Party's moderation of its restrictions on ethnic minority religious and cultural practices combined with the greater contacts across the Sino–Soviet frontier to generate a revival of religious practices which often took

place outside of state-prescribed parameters. As the latter sections of this chapter have demonstrated, these dynamics converged from 1986 onward and resulted in the more forceful expression of ethnic minority identity than had been seen in Xinjiang since 1949. The major dilemma for the Chinese authorities from 1986 onward was to maintain the delicate balance between the greater religious and cultural freedoms, which they perceived as contributing to social stability, and the major instruments of integration – Han in-migration, the PCC, and economic development – that underpinned continued Han dominance of Xinjiang.

The social unrest of the late 1980s and the explosion of violent ethnic minority opposition to Chinese rule in April 1990 suggested that the authorities had not foreseen the inherent contradictions between the two major aspects of their strategy in the region. Moreover, the unrest of April 1990 also highlighted the re-emergence of cross-border linkages that had been dormant or negated during the Maoist period. Chinese rule of Xinjiang at the beginning of the new decade was thus precariously balanced. This situation was to be further complicated late in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet state that was to have wide-reaching implications for Chinese rule of Xinjiang. Thus the integrationist imperatives of the state would in the coming decade continue to be buffeted by external and internal dynamics that, as in the past, often converged to form an encompassing politico-ideological challenge to the legitimacy of Chinese rule in Xinjiang.

5 Reaffirming Chinese control in the wake of Central Asia's transformation, 1991–1995

The rapid disintegration of the Soviet Union over the course of 1990–1 and the growing ethnic and religious revival that it strengthened in Central Asia had significant consequences for Xinjiang. The preceding two chapters have dealt at length with a forty-two-year period (1949–91) in which Chinese policy in Xinjiang underwent a series of transformations simultaneous with the entrenchment of the goal of integration. Significantly, the various fluctuations in the content of Chinese policy were largely the consequence of internal political and economic developments that then interacted with specific imperatives within the context of Sino–Soviet relations. The PLA's successful 'peaceful liberation' of Xinjiang in 1949 and subsequent effective extension of state power into the region by the mid-1950s enabled the Chinese to negate or exclude incumbent external influences. As Chapter 3 demonstrated, while the PRC was closely aligned with the Soviet Union during this period, Moscow's influence was far from benign and this was highlighted upon the divergence of Chinese and Soviet imperatives by the late 1950s. Thereafter, from Beijing's perspective, the primary external threat to Xinjiang was the Soviet Union. Significantly, although the Soviets did encourage or support Uyghur exile groups in Central Asia, it was for the express advancement of Soviet political and strategic imperatives.

The events in Xinjiang of April 1990 presaged in many respects the multiple challenges that would be confronted by the Chinese state in the region as a consequence of the disintegration of the Soviet state. The convergence of internal political and social instability with external influences at this juncture served to highlight, in the authorities' perception, the continuity of the threat posed to the maintenance of Chinese rule in the region. Yet the events in Baren also augured a transformation in terms of the nature and scope of that threat to Chinese rule. The radical Islamic ideology expressed during the uprising suggested that the external threat to Xinjiang had changed from that of the Soviet state to that of movements within the territories of the Soviet Union itself. Contemporary reports abounded with references to or assertions of connections between Uyghur militants and *mujahideen* in Afghanistan or sympathisers in the Soviet Central Asian states. The veracity of such claims, however, remains unclear but, at the least, they demonstrated to the authorities the exemplary force of the anti-Soviet *jihad* in Afghanistan.

More significantly, the retreat of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan in 1989 and the rapid disintegration of the Soviet state in 1991 resulted in the independence of Central Asia from Russia for the first time in approximately 150 years. This returned Central Asia in a geo-political sense to a situation comparable to that experienced by the region up to the Russian conquests of the late nineteenth century. Indeed, Central Asia under the Soviet Union had been isolated and 'sealed off' from the contiguous regions of South Asia (such as Iran and the subcontinent) and East Asia (Mongolia and Xinjiang) to which it had had geographical, historical and cultural linkages. Such a process, as we have seen, had also been undertaken in Xinjiang since the founding of the PRC in 1949.

China was therefore confronted with a 'back to the future' scenario in the respect that the source of threat to Chinese rule in Xinjiang had changed from that of state to non-state movements or organisations. What the independence of Central Asia portended for China was that such ethnically based opponents of Xinjiang's status as an 'integral' province of the PRC were now free to work entirely toward their own political goals. This was a situation that had no precedent in the PRC era.

Making an advantage of misfortune: Xinjiang, China's Central Asian diplomacy and China's grand strategy

The difficulty of the fray

Lies in making
The crooked
Straight
And in making
An advantage
Of misfortune.

(Sun Tzu 2003: 39)

The removal of Soviet power from the region at an instant made possible the extension or revival of long suppressed political, economic and cultural linkages across the region. The PRC's place in this so-called 'New Great Game' for Central Asia has been determined by the historical process of its goal of integration in Xinjiang. Indeed, the entrenchment of the goal of integration since the late nineteenth century compelled the Chinese state to become an important 'player' in this geo-political competition for influence in Central Asia. Yet the PRC's perceptions of the importance of post-Soviet central Asia were seen through the prism of Xinjiang – i.e. with the pre-eminent concern focused upon the maintenance and strengthening of the state's control over the region. The conduct of its relations with the various Central Asian republics exhibited China's pre-eminent concern with the stability and development of Xinjiang. The internal parallel of this goal of China's foreign policy has been the reinforcement of the complex of integrationist techniques and tactics of rule over the corresponding period. An important over-arching theme here has been the state's attempts to

reconcile the perceived need for strengthened integration and security of the province with the recognition of the economic and political opportunities presented by the retreat of Russian power from Central Asia. As this, and the subsequent two chapters, will demonstrate, China's initial response to the systemic jolt in the context of Central Asia caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union was based not upon strength, but upon a sober recognition of China's relative weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Yet, from this base China rapidly exhibited an ability to 'make the crooked straight' in Sun Tzu's phrase – to turn to its advantage the problems posed by its ongoing rule of Xinjiang in its relations with the Central Asian states.

Chinese foreign policy in the 1990s was shaped by two events – the internal unrest which culminated in the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989, then the collapse of the Soviet Union (and the East European communist bloc) in 1991 and the end of the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union was a contradictory development for the PRC for it simultaneously removed the long-feared Soviet threat to China's continental frontiers but also removed a central plank of its strategic calculus – balancing between the two superpowers (Tow 1994: 120–1). These two crises in Chinese power and policy, one internal and the other external, profoundly impacted upon China's perception of the emergent 'New World Order' as a hostile US-led one – a perception reinforced by the political and economic sanctions and pressures placed upon China after the Tiananmen incident and the rapid success of the US during the 1991 Gulf War (Robinson 1994: 588). These events contributed to a substantial transformation of how China perceived the international environment and determined its pre-eminent foreign policy goals, in effect framing the evolution of China's foreign policy for the next decade (Goldstein 2001: 837). Thus, although the CCP managed to maintain its position after the events of June 1989, the domestic challenges that it represented combined with the collapse of the Soviet-bloc to bring the imperative of domestic stability to the forefront of the government's security concerns. Finally, the advent of the US unipolar 'moment' in international affairs required China to develop an approach that would be able to cope with potential US challenges to its position (Goldstein 2001: 838; Deng 1989; Deng 1990).

Three guiding themes for China's evolving post-Cold War foreign policy were established soon after the internal events of 1989 and the transformation of the international environment in 1991 – 'preservation, prosperity and power' (Wang 2005). Key to securing this trilogy of national goals has been the development of a foreign policy 'line' of 'peaceful rise' (*heping jueqi*). This concept evolved from China's early 1990s strategy of building its 'comprehensive national power' (CNP), which was based on ensuring China's continued economic growth and development (Kim 1996: 268–70; Zheng 1999: 114–16). From the early 1990s onward China demonstrated an intent to safely enter and engage with the existing international order to garner the benefits of the contemporary international political and economic system. This process has seen China develop a preference for 'cooperation', 'multilateralism', 'integration' and 'regionalism' in its diplomatic endeavours, particularly with neighbouring states (Wang 2005). Significantly, an

area in which these watchwords have been especially prevalent in China's foreign policy have been within its relations with the post-Soviet Central Asian Republics (Chung 2004). This dynamic illustrates a further imbrication of China's strategic and foreign policy – the development of multiple regional and global relationships in order to mitigate against the perceived threat of monopolar US power in the international system (Hsiung 1995; Burles 1999; Foot 2005). Therefore, the development of China's post-1991 'grand strategy' can be understood to consist of the evolution and development of a series of broad foreign policy objectives since 1991 that have framed the practice of Chinese power in international affairs – that is, in Avery Goldstein's terms, a 'distinctive combination of military, political and economic means by which a state seeks to ensure its national security' (Goldstein 2001: 835). Although talk of a 'grand strategy' may risk assigning more coherence to Chinese foreign policy and diplomacy than actually exists, it is nonetheless clear that as a result of the constraints placed upon China in the immediate post-Cold War period a broad consensus has developed amongst China's leaders regarding the most important foreign policy issues (Heer 2000). Broadly speaking this consensus can be characterised as 'one that seeks to maintain the conditions conducive to China's continued growth and to reduce the likelihood others would unite to oppose China' (Goldstein 2001: 838).

How does Central Asia figure in the practice of this strategy? According to one observer Central Asia looms large for China due to the fact that, 'Beijing is not seeking a place in the sun, but rather a protected place in the shade' (Xiang 2004: 109). In essence, China has sought to orient its foreign policy strategy toward regions where there were fewer obstacles, both in terms of competing powers and strategic concerns, for the expansion of China's political, economic, strategic and military influence. An over-arching theme of 'engaging the periphery' in China's post-1991 foreign policy, whereby China has sought to construct conducive relations with its immediate neighbours on the basis of shared economic and security concerns/interests, can be discerned (Zhao 1999; Shambaugh 2004/05). This has been most evident in China's foreign policy and diplomacy in Central Asia. Within the broader context it can be suggested that Central Asia emerged after 1991 to be a path of least resistance. Overall, a Eurasian orientation was perceived, particularly prior to 11 September 2001, as offering China a strategically 'safe' axis for the expansion of Chinese power, primarily because it offered China relatively favourable conditions for the expansion of its influence due to the desire of the newly independent Central Asian states to diversify their foreign relations in the wake of the Soviet collapse and the absence of a significant US presence (Xiang 2004: 109).

In this regard, it is useful to note David Kang's arguments regarding the development of the post-Cold War international environment in Asia (Kang 2003). Kang took issue with the pessimistic predictions of largely realist IR scholars such as Friedberg and Betts regarding the future shape of international order in Asia, which they regarded, in Friedberg's phrase, to be 'ripe for rivalry' (Friedberg 1993/94; Betts 1993/94; Christensen 2006). In particular, Kang suggested that post-Cold War Asia did not descend into a period of heightened arms racing

and power politics due in large measure to the re-emergence of hierarchy in regional relationships. In particular, for Kang, China's continued development has resulted not in other Asian states balancing against it, as predicted by realist IR scholars, but rather a subtle band-wagoning with China that tacitly accepts its position atop a regional Asian hierarchy (Kang 2003: 70–1). Kang, and others, have pointed out that China's foreign policy, particularly toward states with which it shares borders has in the main been characterised by a conciliatory and pragmatic approach – a dynamic illustrated in China's resolution of outstanding territorial disputes with such neighbours as Afghanistan, Burma, Kazakhstan, Kygyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan and Russia throughout the 1990s (Kang 2003: 69; Fravel 2005; Zhao 1999). Perhaps more importantly in the context of this and subsequent chapters, is Kang's contention that a strong China is in the interests of Asian regional stability and security, 'China in 2003 appears to be re-emerging as the gravitational centre of East Asia. From a historical perspective, a rich and strong China could again cement regional stability' (Kang 2003: 67).

As subsequent chapters will show China, particularly through its efforts in the SCO, is increasingly perceived as a force for regional stability in Central Asia. There have been three major phases in the development of China's foreign policy in the Central Asian context and in its approach to Xinjiang since 1991 that will be the focus of this and the two subsequent chapters. The first period, 1991–5, saw China struggle to develop a coherent and consistent approach to the emerging regional and international order. As such it can be characterised as a consolidatory and pragmatic one, in which China gradually established a prioritised set of political, economic and strategic interests that were deemed to be central to securing China's national security. In the context of its relations with Central Asia, China strove to first ensure the security of Xinjiang then to turn the region's potential linkages, which had been viewed negatively since 1949, with neighbouring Central Asian states toward its advantage. This has arguably been the most significant innovation in Chinese policy in the region since it was incorporated into the PRC in 1949. This re-evaluation of policy toward Xinjiang not only proved to be a decisive factor in generating China's greater engagement with the states of Central Asia but also produced dynamics that worked against Beijing's strategy of integration in Xinjiang by providing the conditions for the re-establishment of social, economic and cultural linkages between the region and Central Asia.

The second period, 1996–2001, which will be the subject of Chapter 6, was characterised by the full emergence and expression of China's strategy of 'peaceful rise' in Central Asia and the subsequent heightening of China's influence in the region. In particular, this period not only saw the further development of China's bilateral relations with the states of Central Asia but also Chinese agency in the evolution of the Shanghai Five multilateral mechanism to address the challenges emanating from the region. China's re-evaluated strategy to develop and integrate Xinjiang was reinforced by these external dynamics as it underlined for the authorities that to secure their control, China's foreign policy calculus had to be aligned with the state's overall goals in Xinjiang. The assumption that underpinned much Chinese policy in Xinjiang during this period was that increased economic

development and prosperity for the various ethnic minorities would diminish ethnic separatism. This assumption, however, would prove to be flawed.

The third period, 2002–09, that is the subject of Chapter 7 meanwhile, has been defined by the events of 11 September 2001 and China's response to the changes in international and regional affairs wrought by them. In particular, this period has seen China reinforce its strategy of 'peaceful rise', which can be seen through the continuity of its approach to Central Asia, and its relations with the US and Russia in the region, and in the further development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Within Xinjiang, the events of 11 September 2001 provided a further stimulus for the intensification of the major facets of Beijing's integrationist project – Han in-migration, economic and infrastructure development and rigorous suppression of ethnic minority discontent or opposition. In this latter respect, the 'war on terror' permitted China to re-frame its struggle against Uyghur separatism in a global context. No longer would Beijing be simply combating 'pan-Turkists', 'national splittists' or 'local bourgeois nationalists', as Uyghur separatists were referred to in the past, but 'extremists', 'Islamists' and 'terrorists' This rhetorical shift by Beijing was deployed within its diplomacy in order to achieve the tacit approval, or at least acquiescence of key Western states (especially the US) for its ongoing suppression of ethnic minority dissent in Xinjiang. While, as Chapter 7 will demonstrate, this strategy proved to be successful initially, by 2010 China's decision to attempt to demonise all Uyghur opposition as 'terrorism' had back-fired by raising the Xinjiang and Uyghur issues to an unprecedented level of international prominence.

Xinjiang circa 1991: reasserting control and 'opening' to Central Asia

The events at Baren in April 1990, as detailed in the previous chapter, had combined with reports of external connections between the insurgents and elements in Afghanistan or Central Asia to heighten Chinese perceptions that the causes of unrest in Xinjiang were external in origin. Significantly, a connection was made between the state's relatively moderate approach to manifestations of ethnic minority religious and cultural identity and the relaxation of major methods of integration throughout the 1980s and this external threat. Important in this regard was the impact of the state's economic development strategy that focused on state-investment in China's eastern coastal provinces. Over the course of the 6th and 7th Five-Year Plans (1981–90) this strategy generated a 'disintegrative effect' on the national economy, with growing economic disparities between the coastal, central and western provinces (Zhao 2001: 200–1). As a result, regional/provincial authorities in the central and western regions gradually formulated their own economic development strategy to make up for the lack of central government attention and/or investment. In the case of Xinjiang, by the mid-1980s the authorities had begun to re-orient Xinjiang's economy toward Central Asia. This was ultimately contrary to the integrationist aims of Chinese policy in Xinjiang.

Therefore, 1991 saw a reassertion of state control over ethnic minority religious and cultural practices. Over the course of December 1990 to January 1991 the authorities implemented regulations on the 'management of religious activities and regulations on management of clergymen' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1990a: 57). Notably the regions where these regulations were assiduously emphasised were those that had been the centres of unrest in April 1990, such as the Kizilsu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture, Kashgar and Khotan. The role of these 'two regulations' was to provide guidelines for the management of religious affairs and to strengthen the 'means to exercise administrative control over religion'. Specifically, these regulations aimed to prevent religious interference in administrative and judicial matters, such as marriage, education and family planning, which according to an official of the Religious Affairs Bureau had been 'out of control' in some parts of the region. These 'acute problems', however, were resolved by the authorities through the prevention of the 'indiscriminate' building of mosques and the implementation of a ban on 'unauthorised' private schools, classes and sites of religious education (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1990a: 57).

This was also coupled with the penetration of Party cadres more fully into rural and pastoral areas of the region to combat the twin evils of 'national splittism' and 'illegal religious activities'. At the 'XUAR Mobilization Meeting for 1991 Rural Work' Song Hanliang announced that the provincial Party and government had decided to organise 18,000 cadres into 'rural working groups' to 'stabilise' the situation, develop 'grass roots Party organisation', promote 'socialist education' and 'deepen' rural reform (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1990c: 78–9). Revealingly, Song stressed that cadres must uphold the Party's 'ideological and cultural' position in the countryside that had been recently 'recaptured and fortified' after the events of April 1990. In particular, they were to educate the masses on the Party's 'basic lines' concerning patriotism, socialism, maintenance of 'motherland unification', opposing national splittism and national unity (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1990c: 80). Finally, Song acknowledged that the Party and government had neglected 'educational work', particularly in rural areas, and that 'religion had seized the opportunity' to 'affect and corrupt students' ideology' The significance of this admission cannot be overemphasised, as it was noted that over 70 per cent of XUAR's 9,250 elementary and middle schools were in rural or pastoral areas. The authorities now not only linked the issue of a resurgence of ethnic minority identity and 'separatist' tendencies with the influence of Islam but also acknowledged that it was competing with Islam for the future of Xinjiang:

> In Xinjiang, it is necessary to pay special attention to strengthening education on national unity and on the need to safeguard national unification. Unity and love among various nationalities should be taught at an early age. *It is necessary to strictly ban religion from interfering in education and prevent it from competing with us in winning over young people.* [Emphasis added]
>
> (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1990c: 81)

In concert with these efforts to contain the influence of religion in Xinjiang, the authorities also made it abundantly clear as to where the impetus for this religious resurgence originated. Throughout January and February 1991 there were constant references to the 'infiltration' of hostile external forces and their collusion with 'nationalist splittists' in Xinjiang, with Song Hanliang going so far as to say that this had 'always' been and would continue to be the 'principal threat' to Xinjiang (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1991a: 1991b; 1991c: 1991d).

The reinforcement of the Party's control over the practice and influence of religion in Xinjiang occurred simultaneous with the re-orientation of economic development strategy. The state's active toleration of the uneven economic development of the provinces throughout the 1980s was re-evaluated following the outbreak of unrest throughout the country in 1989–90. Key to this re-evaluation was the central government's recognition of adverse consequences of the spatially differentiated rates of economic development fostered by the coastal-oriented economic strategy. In the case of Xinjiang the development of economic disparities was doubly dangerous to the state's control of the region. The failure of the state to deliver increased economic prosperity to Xinjiang and the regionalisation of economic strategies that led to the outward orientation of Xinjiang's economy facilitated the development of currents at variance with the integrationist imperatives of the state. Therefore, the state needed to address what was perceived as the elements of the economic strategy that had contributed to such currents over the previous decade. Thus, the 8th Five-Year Plan sought to alleviate the disintegrative effects of the government's economic development strategy that had been embodied in the 6th and 7th Five-Year Plans. Song Hanliang, for example, at the 16th Plenum of the XUAR Party Committee in January 1991 noted that the central government had decided on a policy of 'actively helping nationality regions promote economic development' as part of a drive to coordinate economic development throughout the country (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1991c: 59).

The changed priorities of the central government and their implications for Xinjiang was further outlined by Wang Enmao, at this time chairman of the 'Advisory Committee of the XUAR CCP Committee', at the 16th Plenum of the XUAR Central Committee on 22 February 1991 Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1991e: 55–63). Significantly, in his address, Wang admitted that for 'historical reasons there is a wide gap between the level of Xinjiang's economic development and that of the nation'. Thus a major goal of the 8th Five-Year Plan for 'National Economic and Social Development' was to redress this imbalance. Wang stated that annual growth of GNP was targeted at 6 per cent for the 8th Five-Year Plan, yet he suggested that Xinjiang should strive for 7–8 per cent growth in the same period to narrow the gap between the national and provincial economy. The keys to achieving this, according to Wang, were the role of the XPCC, the opening and operation of the 'Eurasian Continental Bridge' connecting Xinjiang's economy with those of Central Asia, increased central government investment in the prospecting for and development of Xinjiang's hydrocarbon resources, and emphasis on the development of infrastructure.

Ultimately, the aim was the development of 'pillar industries' in Xinjiang that would elevate the region's economy from one based on primary industries to one based on tertiary industries. Wang Enmao identified five such 'pillar industries' – basic agricultural and pastoral commodity industries based on cotton, sugar beets and livestock, and petrochemical and mineral industries to exploit the region's natural resources (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1991e: 58–9). The central government was in fact attempting to extend the strategy employed in the eastern coastal provinces during the 1980s that was based on regional specialisation and division of labour. This 'growth pole' strategy results in an initial increase in regional economic inequality and gradual regional convergence. During the 1980s the government focused on creating 'growth poles' in the eastern coastal provinces through the establishment of the 'Special Economic Zones' (SEZs) that were designed to produce export goods and import foreign investment. The SEZs were characterised by the implementation of preferential policies to facilitate foreign investment, such as tax exemptions and favourable foreign exchange rates (Zhao 2001: 200).

The elucidation by Wang Enmao of the effective extension of this strategy to Xinjiang can be seen as an admission that economic factors may have contributed to ethnic minority opposition to the state. The prerequisites for realising this economic strategy, however, rested on maintaining 'stability and unity'. Furthermore, the guarantor of 'stability and unity' was the strengthening of the 'people's democratic dictatorship' – that is the continued rule of the CCP. Simultaneous with exhortations for the authorities to remain vigilant against external 'infiltration' and maintain the Party's monopoly on power, Wang also highlighted the necessity of the continued opening of Xinjiang to the 'outside world' economically. Yet he also emphasised the need for the state to continue to provide overall guidance in the development of Xinjiang-foreign trade (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1991e: 60–1).

Therefore, the central government had undertaken to utilise the 'outward' oriented economic development strategy advocated by the regional authorities since the mid-1980s in tandem with the channelling of increased state-investment to Xinjiang. This approach developed over the course of the 1991–95 period into a fully-fledged 'double-opening' strategy whereby the authorities attempted to simultaneously integrate Xinjiang economically with Central Asia and China proper. The key to this strategy was to complement Xinjiang's role as a supplier of raw materials for China's coastal regions with efforts to develop the region as a transhipment zone along the nexus of a 'Silk Road' economy (Christoffersen 1993: 136). As noted above, this entailed a greater emphasis on state-investment in infrastructure development and the identification and development of 'pillar' industries, such as the petrochemical industry. This strategy also entailed the facilitation and management of increased cross-border linkages with Central Asia – a task that in the wake of the Baren Uprising in 1990 and the developing instability in the Soviet Union was not without potentially detrimental consequences for the maintenance of Chinese rule. Such considerations, as we have seen from Song Hanliang's comments, were at the

forefront of the authorities perceptions of the situation in Xinjiang entering the 1990s.

As illustrated in the previous chapter, the gradual thaw in Sino–Soviet relations was manifested in reduced tensions along the Xinjiang-Soviet frontier and the gradual re-invigoration of economic linkages. Xinjiang–Central Asia trade was tentatively re-established at state-level in 1983, was significantly expanded in 1986 to include local border trade, and given further impetus with the conclusion of agreements in 1988–9 regarding technological and economic cooperation between the five Central Asian republics and Xinjiang. This base was built upon in July 1991 with the visit of Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) President, Nursultan Nazarbayev to Ürümqi to explore the potential for an expansion in trade relations. This resulted in the conclusion of a five-year trade agreement between China and Kazakhstan in December 1991, whereby each state granted 'most-favoured-nation' status to the other that involved a reduction in customs duties and a favourable import/export taxation framework. Moreover, there was also a joint Sino–Kazakh undertaking to improve the road transport and border crossing procedures, particularly in the Druzhba–Alatau-Shankou 'corridor' (often referred to as the 'Zhungarian Gate') that links the Ili region of Xinjiang to Kazakhstan (Pannell and Ma 1997: 223–4; Christoffersen 1998: 24). Also in December 1991, Foreign Trade Minister Li Lanqing led a government delegation to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to explore the potential for the development of trade relations (Harris 1993: 123).

The first half of 1992 saw the high–profile visits to Beijing of Uzbek President Islam Karimov in March and Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev in May which focused on the possibilities for trade and the necessity to enhance the infrastructure networks linking Xinjiang and Central Asia. These efforts paid off quickly for China, especially regarding its relationship with Kazakhstan, with Sino–Kazakh trade worth US$433 million making China Kazakhstan's leading non-CIS trading partner (Martin 1994; Pannel and Ma 1997: 224). Instrumental in generating growth in Xinjiang's trade with Central Asia was the central government's decision in June 1992 to extend preferential policies, similar to those implemented in the SEZs to areas of Xinjiang, such 'tax-sharing' between the central and regional government. The infrastructure linking Xinjiang and Central Asia was also expanded in 1992, the most significant being the completion of the Ürümqi–Almaty rail line (Burles 1999: 15; Becquelin 2000: 71).

The impact of Deng Xiaoping's famous 'Southern Tour' early in 1992, where he forcefully advocated continued economic reform and 'opening' to the outside world, was also felt in Xinjiang (Weimer 2004: 172). It will be recalled that in 1991, such figures in Xinjiang's government as Song Hanliang and Wang Enmao had called for 'stability' and vigilance against external 'infiltration' in the region. Such a cautious handling of the issue of greater economic links with Central Asia was made untenable in the aftermath of Deng's tour. In August 1992, an article in *Xinhua* reproached leaders in Xinjiang for permitting their emphasis on 'stability' and 'fear and chaos' to block the implementation of more aggressive and 'outward' oriented economic and trade policies (Shen and Song 1992: 37). The implications

of the paramount leader's ongoing commitment to continued economic reform and 'opening', and the central government's undertaking to increase investment in Xinjiang had, it would appear, the desired effect. By the end of 1992, the central government had extended to major cities in Xinjiang, such as Ürümqi, Shihezi, and Bole the same privileges as those enjoyed by 'open' cities on the east coast (Loughlin and Pannell 2001: 480; Zhao 2001: 200–02). As noted previously, the state was extending the economic strategy employed in the eastern coastal provinces, whereby 'growth poles' were created in proximity to border regions to facilitate the linkage of local economies to transnational trade flows. An example of this strategy was the formation of a Sino–Kazakh Joint Development Zone focused on the delta of Xinjiang's Ili River valley and Kazakhstan's Lake Balkash–Lake Alakol basin in 1993 (Li and Cui 1993: 5). By the end of 1993 the extension of this strategy to Xinjiang was in full swing, with the formation of economic zones along the border with Central Asia (Pannell and Ma 1997: 223).

Another major element in the central government's developmental plans, as noted above, for Xinjiang concerned the exploitation of the region's oil and gas resources. This particular aspect of Xinjiang's economic development would have significant implications not only for China's internal economic development but also for its foreign policy and foreign relations. China's increasing energy consumption, which domestic production was not able to keep pace with by 1993–4, made China dependent upon the Middle East sources for crude oil imports, thus making China's energy supply strategically vulnerable (Christoffersen 1998: 9–10). Subsequently, China's domestic oil production and state oil corporations were restructured with an emphasis on the diversification of oil supply and achievement of international competitiveness (Jaffe and Lewis 2002: 115; Troush 1999: 10–12). Therefore a key step to reduce this strategic vulnerability was to reorient China's oil strategy towards Central Asia and Russia.

The first indications of Xinjiang's role in China's quest to diversify oil production and supply came in 1991, when China offered Japan National Oil Corporation (JNOC) geophysical prospecting rights for the Tarim Basin (Paik 1996: 89). China's energy strategy, however, was soon reoriented toward Central Asia, primarily as an attempt to make Xinjiang's petrochemical industry a 'pillar' industry within the government's 'double-opening' strategy for Xinjiang. The major goal was to transform Xinjiang into a transit route, and possible refinery zone, for eastward flowing Central Asian oil and gas. This reorientation of China's energy policy was yet another factor that began to enmesh it in the wider geo-political competition for not only access to Central Asia's oil and gas, but for greater political and economic influence in the region. The government's reorientation of its energy strategy toward Russia and Central Asia in the early 1990s was very much a strategic manoeuvre rather than a 'market' approach to energy security (Andrews-Speed, Liao and Dannruther 2002: 42–3). In particular, it illustrated the strategic logic of China's policy in Xinjiang and Central Asia, in that it was clearly designed to strengthen the state's grip on the region by facilitating not only its economic development but also integration with the rest of China.

That the 'double opening' strategy was ascendant in Xinjiang by 1993 was underlined by the tenor of major statements from the regional leadership. Late in December 1992, Song Hanliang exhorted the XPCC to 'make new and greater contributions toward accelerating Xinjiang's development' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1992a: 54). The XPCC, according to Song, needed to 'emancipate their minds and renew their concepts' in order to contribute to the region's economic development. The key to this change in mentality was to 'cherish the guiding ideology that stresses economic work' and the XPCC was reminded that 'all preferential state policies for Xinjiang are applicable to the Production and Construction Corps' To this end, Song announced that the central and regional authorities had granted 240 XPCC-related units the right to engage in border trade and encouraged them 'to open wider to the outside world' in order to 'make inroads into domestic and foreign markets' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1992a: 55).

Thus the strategy to simultaneously integrate Xinjiang economically with Central Asia and China proper was deemed by the Secretary of the Xinjiang CCP to be central to the function of the XPCC. As we saw in previous chapters, the XPCC had been used throughout the CCP's rule of Xinjiang as an instrument of integration, but integration in the direction of China proper. Song Hanliang's statement that the XPCC should make 'inroads' into domestic *and* foreign markets can be seen as a significant turning point in both the function of the XPCC, until this point a strictly 'internal' instrument, and in the ascendancy of the 'double opening' strategy. The leaderships' emphasis on and commitment to the continued economic development was further underlined by the secretary's comments to the Xinjiang Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). Song Hanliang, addressing the Standing Committee of the Xinjiang CPPCC, commended its members for dedicating themselves 'to serving the central task, namely economic construction' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Television Network 1992: 46). Moreover, Song highlighted that economic construction could only be strengthened by continued 'opening up' which required these comrades to 'emancipate your minds, change your mindsets' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Television Network 1992: 46). One can postulate from such comments that there was perhaps residual cautiousness amongst certain sections of the regional leadership regarding the efficaciousness of continued economic reform and 'opening' for the stability of the region. Yet such 'opening up' to the economies of Central Asia was not undertaken without due consideration of the development of relations with the governments of the region.

Forging a 'new era' in Sino–Central Asian relations

The economic sphere was but one, albeit important, aspect of China's relations with the states of Central Asia. China's concerns regarding the integrity and security of its Central Asian frontiers after the collapse of the Soviet Union were also a pre-eminent spur to its engagement with the successor states of the Soviet territories in the region. Symptomatic of this overriding concern was China's role in initiating joint meetings between the foreign ministries of the states with

which it shared borders in Central Asia – Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – in December 1992 to discuss border demarcation, border security and troop reductions (Dillon 1997: 136). In many respects China's economic and security concerns regarding its frontiers with the new states of Central Asia were complementary. The development of bilateral relations, spurred on by the burgeoning economic linkages of 1991–3 outlined above, was further strengthened by the identification of common interests in the security sphere. Further joint meetings between China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan took place in Moscow in March 1993, where the issue of border arms reduction was highlighted (Beijing Xinhua 1993b: 9).

In the context of its relations with individual states in Central Asia, China from the outset explicitly highlighted its concern that these governments not support activities of a third country or tolerate activities within their territories that were aimed at 'splitting China' This was manifested in high-level meetings between Chinese representatives and the Presidents of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in 1992 (Martin 1994: 30–31). In March 1993, for example, Chinese President Yang Shangkun and Tajik President Imamali Raikhmanov issued a joint statement regarding the basic principles for 'mutual relations', following the Tajik leader's visit to Beijing. A central principle elucidated in this statement was that 'the two sides should not engage in any hostile actions against the opposite side, and neither side should allow a third country to use its territory to impinge upon the sovereignty and security of the other' (Beijing Xinhua 1993a: 10).

The existence of significant Uyghur minorities in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and the presence of Kazak and Kyrgyz minorities in Xinjiang, however, complicated China's relations with these states. The relaxation of control and eventual collapse of the Soviet state witnessed a proliferation of Uyghur political organisations in Central Asia, particularly in Kazakhstan. In April 1991, the 'Uyghur Liberation Organisation' was formed as a legal political Party in Kazakhstan to represent the estimated 150,000 Uyghurs residing there. This was followed in June 1992 with the formation of a political Party, 'For a Free Uygurstan', by Uyghurs in Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, an 'International Uyghur Union' was inaugurated at a meeting attended by Uyghur delegates from the five Central Asian republics in the Kazak capital, Almaty in January 1992 (Dillon 1997: 140). Significantly for China, these groups stated that they were working for democracy, human rights and self-determination for Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Thus the activities of Uyghurs residing in Central Asia, particularly Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, have been of interest to the Chinese government.

This was not a new development in terms of the nature of the external threat to Chinese rule of Xinjiang. It will be recalled that throughout the 1949–76 period, the Soviet Union had at various stages attempted to manipulate the existence of cross-border ethnic linkages to serve its own strategic purposes, especially during the 1960s. These linkages, in the context of the new situation in Central Asia and in a Xinjiang characterised by greater openness to Central Asia, had the potential to once again challenge Chinese rule. Events in 1992 appeared, in the Chinese government's perception at least, to conform to this. On 5 February 1992

six people were killed and twenty injured in a bus bombing in Ürümqi, while bombings were also reported the same month in Yining (Kulja), and in Khotan, Kashgar, Kucha, Korla and Bortala in March (Kohut 1992: 67; Dillon 1997: 141). Although no group claimed responsibility for these attacks, the authorities blamed separatist and 'splittist' forces within and outside Xinjiang for them. Later in 1992 a 'Front for the Liberation of Uyghurstan' based in Kazakhstan declared that it would carry out guerrilla warfare operations in Xinjiang. Government buildings in Kashgar were also the targets of bombings in June 1993 and émigré sources reported that there were other bomb attacks throughout southern Xinjiang during 1993 (Kohut 1992: 67; Dillon 1997: 141). An émigré source also reported that the Chinese nuclear facility at Lop Nor was attacked in mid-March 1993. The PLA's subsequent quelling of the incident resulted in 'several casualties' and the 'arrests of hundreds' (East Turkistan Information Bulletin 1993a).

These internal manifestations of unrest in 1992–3 were also accompanied by complications in Sino–Central Asian relations, due in part to the issue of Uyghur émigré communities and their political activities. Prior to Premier Li Peng's proposed visits to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan in April–May 1993 this situation generated problems for China's efforts in Central Asia. On 28 April five thousand Uyghurs protested outside of the Chinese embassy in the Kazak capital, Almaty, apparently without an adverse response from the Kazak authorities (East Turkistan Information Bulletin 1993b). However, Li's tour of Central Asia was postponed soon after for unknown reasons. At a conference regarding Kyrgyz foreign policy in Bishkek, Nurmuhammed Kenjiev, chairman of Ittifak (Unity of Uyghur Society in Kyrgyzstan) warned the Kyrgyz government about China's intentions in Central Asia and criticised the continued nuclear tests at Lop Nor in Xinjiang (East Turkistan Information Bulletin 1993c). Regarding this latter issue, the Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, had in August 1993 called on the Chinese government to cease nuclear testing in Xinjiang. The Kazakh government's concerns were brushed aside by the Chinese, however, as they claimed that they had observed a test moratorium longer than any other country, implying that this justified resumption of nuclear testing (East Turkistan Information Bulletin 1993c; Martin 1994: 30).

These potentially troublesome developments were not, however, permitted by China or the Central Asian states concerned to obstruct the development of greater political and economic links. The domestic political benefits for the leaders of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan of tolerating or supporting Uyghur groups in their countries was clearly outweighed by the political and economic benefits to be gained from strengthening relations with China. In August 1993 Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ednan Karabaev met his Chinese counterpart, Qian Qichen in Beijing, to discuss the progress of bilateral relations. At this meeting Karabaev and Qian expressed the two countries' opposition to 'national splittism in all its forms' and Kyrgyzstan affirmed its position that it would not tolerate any activities within its territory detrimental to China. Moreover, Karabaev stated that Kyrgyzstan and China held common views on opposing 'splittism' and 'religious fanaticism' (Beijing Xinhua 1993c: 6). Perhaps not coincidentally the meeting also

focused on 'deepening and broadening' bilateral economic and trade relations, with the Kyrgyz officials conferring with officials from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (Beijing Xinhua 1993c: 7). The resultant extension of US$5 million in commodity credits to Kyrgyzstan and the opening of Aksu in Xinjiang to foreign trade (primarily with Kyrgyzstan) led Uyghur émigré sources to accuse Kyrgyzstan of accepting a Chinese 'bribe' to muzzle Uyghur activities in the region (East Turkistan Information Bulletin 1993c).

The following April, Premier Li Peng made his previously postponed tour of Central Asia, visiting Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. A major theme of Li's engagements in these states concerned the dawning of a 'new era' in Sino–Central Asian relations characterised by stable political relationships, economic cooperation and non-interference in the domestic affairs of each state (Dillon 1997: 142; Martin 1994: 30–1). Trade and economic issues were high on Li's agenda and he was notably accompanied by a large group of Chinese entrepreneurs on his twelve-day tour of Central Asia (Burles 1999: 15–16). In his meeting with Uzbek President Islam Karimov and speech before the Uzbek parliament, Li focused on the theme of developing a 'New Silk Road' between China and Central Asia based on modern infrastructure and stated that China's primary goal in Central Asia was to improve economic cooperation (Li 1994: 18). The Chinese and Uzbek government also signed a series of specific agreements regarding economic cooperation, aviation and air traffic control and technical aid (Dillon 1997: 142). The most significant outcome of Li's visit to Turkmenistan was a Chinese undertaking to investigate the feasibility of constructing a gas pipeline to connect Turkmen gas fields with China (Andrews-Speed, Liao and Dannruther 2002: 58). Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov had apparently promoted such a pipeline in his earlier visits to Beijing in 1992 and 1993. The implications of the project, if undertaken, for China's position in Central Asia were significant. Niyazov's motivations for promoting such a project derived from Turkmenistan's inability to export its enormous reserves of natural gas due to geopolitical considerations and lack of infrastructure (Fairbanks, Starr, Nelson and Weisbrode 2001: 47). Geopolitically, Turkmenistan found itself captive of the strategic agendas of both Russia and the US. Both Russia and the US had distinct preferences regarding the possible pipeline routes that would enable Turkmenistan to export its major resource. Turkmenistan's existing oil/gas infrastructure, as a result of its history in the Soviet Union, was linked to and controlled by Russia and consequently Russia did not wish to relinquish the political and economic influence that this generated by permitting the development of alternative export routes. For Turkmenistan the most efficient route by which to transport Turkmen gas to international markets was via Iran. During the mid-1990s, however, Turkmen and Iranian efforts to construct such a pipeline were consistently blocked by the US 'dual containment' policy towards Iran and Iraq (Menon 1998; Freitag-Wirminghaus 1997). Thus, China's assent in the development of a potential Turkmen–China pipeline placed it at odds with the preferences of both Russia and the US (Fairbanks, Starr, Nelson and Weisbrode 2001: 47).

Li's visit to Kyrgyzstan was, however, largely focused on issues of regional stability. Of primary importance to China in this regard was the Kyrgyz position regarding the activities of pro-independence Uyghur political organisations in Kyrgyzstan. Bishkek, however, reaffirmed its undertaking not to tolerate 'splittist' activities of Uyghur émigré organisations. Another important focus of Li's visit to Kyrgyzstan concerned the demarcation of the Sino–Kyrgyz border. The two sides reported substantial progress on this issue and Li and Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev stated that a treaty would be signed in the near future. Trade and economic relations were also addressed, with China seeking to purchase Kyrgyz electricity for Xinjiang and providing Kyrgyzstan with a US$6.2 million credit in order to stimulate bilateral trade. The premier's final port-of-call on his Central Asian tour – Kazakhstan – was also perhaps the most important. The issues discussed in Li's meetings with President Nazarbayev covered not only bilateral economic cooperation but border demarcation, border security, China's nuclear facility at Lop Nor, the Kazakh minority in Xinjiang and the Uyghur minority in Kazkhstan. The two sides signed an agreement settling the border dispute, whereby both parties acknowledged the existing boundaries as permanent and undertook to continue confidence-building measures along their common 1700km frontier, including troop reductions. Nazarbayev also reiterated his government's concerns about the detrimental effects of China's nuclear tests at Lop Nor for not only Kazakhstan's environment but also Xinjiang's. Kazakhstani opposition parties and newspapers also called on China to halt nuclear tests and respect the human rights of Kazaks, Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. Li Peng, however, maintained China's position that these tests posed no threat to Kazakhstan or Xinjiang (Martin 1994: 31–2; East Turkistan Information Bulletin 1994a).

Determining Kazakhstan's position regarding the issue of the political activities of the estimated 200,000 Uyghurs residing there was also high on Li Peng's agenda. Significantly, Li Peng stated that China was appreciative of Kazakhstan's 'general opposition' to national separatism and efforts to prevent the development of organisations engaging in 'subversive, anti-China activities' on Kazak territory. President Nazarbayev, however, failed to mention this issue at the joint press conference on 27 April, suggesting that he was perhaps attempting to use the Uyghur issue as a bargaining chip in relations with China. It should not be discounted that the Kazak president was also attempting to placate the significant and politically active Uyghur minority (Gladney 1993; Martin 1994: 33). China's concerns regarding the activities of the Uyghur population in Kazakhstan was, on the eve of Li Peng's visit, heightened with another Uyghur group based in Kazakhstan, the 'East Turkestan Liberation Front' (ETLF) calling for 'democracy and self determination' for East Turkestan. Moreover, the ETLF, claiming a membership of 50,000, stated that although they wished to achieve their goals through 'peaceful means' it may 'become necessary to resort to arms to resist cultural genocide' (East Turkistan Information Bulletin 1994b). The outcome of Li's visit to Kazakhtsan regarding this issue was somewhat indecisive with Nazarbayev's government making no statement on the issue or taking direct action against active Uyghur political organisations. Overall, Li's tour demonstrated that

China's primary interests in Central Asia were focused on facilitating greater economic and trade opportunities, border demarcation and enhancing border security. This in turn was reflected China's major goals in Xinjiang – security, integration and economic development.

Reining in Xinjiang: political, economic and ethnic dimensions

The granting of preferential policies to Xinjiang by the central government and decentralisation of aspects of economic decision-making, outlined above, were coupled with a number of important measures that strengthened the state's control over the direction of policy in the region. In 1994 the central government initiated a process of national fiscal reform that was presented as a strategy which would aid in the redistribution of revenue among the provinces to address regional economic disparities. The central element of this fiscal reform was focused on the rate of tax placed upon various products, whereby taxes on manufactured goods were reduced and those on raw materials increased. This placed Xinjiang at an immediate disadvantage given that the major 'pillar' industries of the region were based upon the extraction and supply of raw materials – for example oil and gas, animal husbandry and agriculture. The national fiscal reform also reaffirmed central government control over provincial revenue and the destiny of subsidies and state investment (Becquelin 2000: 72–3).

This was a significant step, as it will be recalled that in 1992 the central government (by virtue of the application of preferential policies to Xinjiang) had implemented 'tax sharing' arrangements between itself and the provincial government. Although provincial revenue was increasing, so too was its expenditure, with Xinjiang's budgeted financial revenue in 1994 standing at 7.604 billion yuan while its expenditure was 9.09 billion yuan, resulting in a deficit of 1.5 billion yuan (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1995a: 88). This report also candidly stated that, although according to the 'Budget Law' of 1994 local governments were no longer permitted to compile deficit budgets, Xinjiang would in fact do so and would 'ask the central government to make up the difference' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1995a: 90). The cause of this gap between revenue and expenditure was a combination of the region's economic growth and the central government's fiscal and tax reform of 1993–4. The central government was able to extract more revenue from Xinjiang by virtue of the increased taxes on the region's pre-eminent commodities – raw materials and agricultural products. Such measures suggested that Beijing had determined to reassert central control over key aspects of the 'double opening' strategy, notably by making the provincial authorities financially dependent on Beijing.

During the 8th Five-Year Plan (1991–95) the central government also vigorously promoted measures that were to strengthen the economic linkages between the region and the national economy. Under the 8th Five-Year Plan the central government invested over 33 billion yuan in 78 major projects aimed at creating 'growth poles' within the regional economy and facilitating greater

integration with the national economy (Zhao 2001: 210). Many of these projects were concerned with the development of modern infrastructure and industrial capacity – such as the double-track construction of the Lanzhou–Ürümqi railroad, the Xi'an-Lanzhou–Ürümqi–Ili optical fibre cable, the Taklamakan Highway, and the development of power plants (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1995b: 50). The government also divided Xinjiang into development zones designed to attract foreign investment and develop linkages between 'growth poles' within Xinjiang. The first of these was the Ürümqi Economic and Technological Development Zone, initiated in 1994, that encompassed the cluster of major cities north of the Tian Shan – Ürümqi, Changji, Shihezi, Kuitun, Dushanzi, Bole, Yining and Karamay (Zhao 2001: 216). The central government's attempts to ensure the integration of the region with the domestic economy was also reinforced with the opening in October 1995 of the Taklamakan Highway, a 522 kilometre north–south transportation axis and the beginning of the extension of the rail link between Korla and Kashgar (Beijing Xinhua 1995a: 57; Beijing Xinhua 1995b: 87; Becquelin 2000: 74). These two projects, although increasing the economic integration of the Tarim and Zunghar basins, also reinforced the authorities' ability to control, politically and militarily the non-Han dominated region. The opening to Central Asia was thus not undertaken to the detriment of establishing greater linkages between both discrete regions of Xinjiang and China proper.

Despite the authorities' efforts to strengthen the state's hold on the region over the preceding four years – which we have seen encompassed combined internal and external strategies – unrest broke out once again in early 1995. A China-watching Hong Kong magazine *Dongxiang* reported that on 15 June 1995 an 'armed rebellion' and demonstrations involving large numbers of Uyghurs and Kazaks had taken place between 22 and 26 April in the Ili Prefecture near the Sino–Kazakh border (Shan 1995: 92–3; Hong Kong AFP 1995a: 88; Dillon 1997: 138–9). According to this report around 50,000 Uyghurs and Kazaks had staged anti-government rallies and handed petitions to local government officials on 22 April. Two days later the unrest expanded with strikes of workers, teachers and shopkeepers raising the number of people involved to 100,000. Significantly, the demonstrators called for the end of Chinese rule in Xinjiang and the establishment of a Kazak and Uyghur state while others demanded the 'merging' of the Ili Prefecture with Kazakhstan. Open armed rebellion against the authorities was reported to have broken out on 24 April and lasted until 26 April throughout the six cities in the Ili Prefecture. In the cities of Zhaosu and Gongliu a battle broke out, resulting in the killing or wounding of 220 people, when public security personnel used armoured cars to disperse demonstrators surrounding government buildings. On 25 April around '500 armed residents' fought locally stationed PLA units in Tekes city causing over one hundred and sixty casualties including thirty-two soldiers. Meanwhile the cities of Nilka and Qapqal witnessed the most serious unrest:

> On the morning of 25 April, the masses surrounded the urban government buildings and in the afternoon broke into and occupied them. Around evening

> time, they broke into local public security and Armed Police offices. The police opened fire to dispel them. About 3,000 people surrounded local barracks, demanding that 'the Han people' quit Xinjiang and that a Uygurstan state be established.
>
> (Shan 1995: 93)

The situation was apparently so grave that the Lanzhou and Xinjiang Military Regions dispatched the 20,000-strong 33rd and 41st divisions of the PLA by rail and air to Ili Prefecture 'as speedily as war were imminent' (Shan 1995: 93). Significantly, the authorities once more connected internal unrest with hostile external forces. The report stated that the CCP State Council and Central Military Commission had issued emergency directives to the XUAR CCP, and the Lanzhou and Xinjiang Military regions 'too resolutely, thoroughly, and rapidly put down armed rebellion organised by splittists' and 'to resolutely crack down upon those organisations attempting dismemberment and those organisations masterminded and supported by foreign forces' (Shan 1995: 93). Two senior figures from Beijing, Luo Gang, Secretary General of the State Council and Li Jing, Deputy Chief of Staff, were also said to have been dispatched to Xinjiang to command the quelling of the unrest. Although the Chinese government subsequently denied these events, the detail of the report and the similar contours of the unrest with previous episodes of anti-Chinese disturbances in Xinjiang make it nonetheless plausible (Hong Kong AFP 1995b: 88–9; Dillon 1997: 139).

The presence of such figures in Xinjiang suggested that the authorities regarded the events as of far greater import for the stability of Chinese control in Xinjiang than mere demonstrations or 'riots' The demands of the Uyghurs and Kazaks during this unrest – that the Han 'quit Xinjiang', that Ili 'merge' with Kazakhstan and that Xinjiang become an independent state – presented the Chinese with a complex dilemma. The ethnic specificity of the first demand, for example, illustrated that ethnic minority demands for independence were generated by the perceived dominance of the Han over all ethnic groups in Xinjiang. The second demand, that Ili be 'merged' with Kazakhstan, was perhaps the most troublesome for the Chinese authorities as it demonstrated that many Kazaks in the 'Ili Autonomous Zhou' had clearly identified the independent state of Kazakhstan as the legitimate focus of their loyalty rather than the PRC. What this episode of unrest illustrated was that regardless of the state's efforts to generate ethnic minority support through economic development, many minorities remained unreconciled to continued Chinese rule. Another important factor in this regard was the exemplary force of the recently independent states of Central Asia, with whom the major ethnic groups of Xinjiang shared Turkic cultural roots. Moreover, it had become apparent by 1995 that a historically important instrument of integration in Xinjiang, Han in-migration, had been reinvigorated by a combination of government encouragement and economic opportunity. This process generated charges from Uyghur émigrés that the Chinese government was intent on 'swamping' the minority populations of Xinjiang with a tide of Han in order to dilute the ethnic minority proportion of the population

and thus control the region. As we have seen in previous chapters this was hardly a new development, but rather an extension of historical precedent. Moreover, many Uyghurs and external observers also charge that the economic development strategy in Xinjiang disproportionately benefited the Han (East Turkistan Information Bulletin 1995; Becquelin 2000: Gladney 1997).

The violent outburst of ethnic minority opposition to Chinese rule in Ili did not, however, result in any alteration in the broad contours of state action in Xinjiang. In fact the state's response was to strengthen and intensify the major elements of its strategy in Xinjiang. Notably, provincial officials stressed the need for continued economic development and integration with the national and Central Asian economies (Ürümqi Xinjiang Television Network 1995: 72; Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1995d: 59–60). Simultaneously, however, Tomur Dawamat argued that 'a stable social environment is the foundation for all tasks. Nothing can be achieved without stability'. He also reiterated the authorities' determination to 'resolutely strike at a handful of scoundrels who sabotage the motherland's reunification and national unity' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Television Network 1995: 72). Thus, once more the authorities connected ethnic minority unrest to the influence of Islam and external 'anti-China forces'

It will be recalled from the previous chapter that the government had begun by the mid-1980s to demonstrate an increasingly tolerant approach to ethnic minority religious and cultural expression and practices. With respect to Islam the state relaxed its controls over worshippers wishing to perform the hajj to Mecca, permitted the construction of new mosques and provided funds to repair existing mosques, and encouraged Muslims to develop connections with their co-religionists in Central Asia. Yet by the early 1990s the state had become far more wary of the potential threat to its position in Xinjiang that could arise from such policies. By 1994–5 the state had begun to implement policies aimed at undermining the influence and perceived authority of religion in Xinjiang including curtailing mosque construction or renovation, banning the public broadcast of sermons, proscribing religious education, and tightly controlling the number and age of ethnic minorities permitted to go on the Haj pilgrimage (George 1997).

Ethnic minority unrest also erupted later in July 1995, this time in the southern oasis of Khotan that was arguably the result of the authorities' return to a more heavy-handed approach to religion (Rudelson and Jankowiak 2004: 317). The cause of the disturbance in Khotan was apparently centred on the authorities' replacement of *imams* at the city's Baytulla mosque. According to Millward, prior to this event the authorities had removed two imams for preaching about current events and had replaced them with a young *imam*, a certain Abdul Kayum. Thereafter, Kayum also began to discuss topical issues in his sermons, in this case improved rights for women, before the authorities arrested him. On 7 July a crowd confronted local Party and government officials demanding information on the *imam's* whereabouts. Subsequently, the demonstration turned violent and the authorities deployed significant numbers of riot police to disperse the crowd with tear gas (Millward 2004: 15; Amnesty International 2002: 13–17).

Another contributing factor in the resurgence of ethnic minority opposition concerned the issue of Han in-migration to Xinjiang. The extension of the economic reform program to Xinjiang under the 7th Five-Year Plan (1986–1990), as noted in the previous chapter, had resulted in the beginning of a non-state sponsored influx of Han into Xinjiang (Dreyer 1994: 51; Liu 1991: 406–07). Much of this influx consisted of temporary migrants from China proper or 'self-drifter' population travelling to the region simply to find employment. In fact one scholar asserted that from 1987 onwards up to 250,000 Han 'poured into Xinjiang each year to look for work' (Ben-Adam 1999: 206). Uyghur émigré sources also maintained in the mid-1990s that 250,000 to 300,000 Han were settling in Xinjiang each year (East Turkistan Information Bulletin 1995). As we have seen in previous chapters, this process had been encouraged throughout the Maoist era via a combination of ideological appeals and coercion with many of these Han in-migrants absorbed into the XPCC. By the close of the Maoist era the Han population of Xinjiang stood at 5.13 million out of a total of 12.33 million people or 41.6 per cent of the total with the XPCC accounting for some 2 million of these (Mackerras 2001: 293). Over the course of the 1980s the Han population steadily increased from 5.32 million in 1982 to 5.7 million in 1990, representing an annual rate of increase of 0.89 per cent. Meanwhile the Uyghur population had grown from 5.99 million in 1982 to 7.19 million in 1990 with an annual rate of increase of 2.5 per cent (Mackerras 2001: 93; Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1990b: 52–55). By 1997, however, the Han population stood at 6.6 million, an increase of just under 1 million in seven years representing an average growth of 2.12 per cent between 1990 and 1997 (Mackerras 2001: 292–3). The Uyghur population in the same year was 8.02 million, representing an average growth of 1.53 per cent over the same period. The Han proportion of Xinjiang's total population, although having declined between 1982 and 1990, subsequently increased between 1990 and 1997. The Han constituted 40.45 per cent and 37.58 per cent of the population in 1982 and 1990 respectively, while by 1997 the Han proportion had increased to 38.42 per cent of Xinjiang's population.

On the basis of official figures for the 1990–97 period the average number of Han to in-migrate to Xinjiang each year stood at approximately 129,381 (Mackerras 2001: 292–3). Such a figure was thus substantially lower than that given by Uyghur and other observers. However, it must be taken into account that the Chinese census figures did not include the substantial 'floating' Han population in Xinjiang. The existence of this problem in Xinjiang is well attested not just through foreign accounts but occasionally in the Chinese media. An article in 1995, for example, highlighted that Korla had seen the arrival of a 100,000-strong floating population (Liaowang 1995: 87). The state's 'double opening' strategy had created many economic opportunities in Xinjiang and increased labour demand, attracting large numbers of Han from China's poor central provinces. The difficulty in determining the scope of this problem in Xinjiang, as elsewhere in China, derives from the fact that many of these Han do not remain in Xinjiang for extended periods – often just long enough to earn some money (Mackerras 2004: 9). Such a dynamic produced a fluctuating or 'tidal' flow of Han in and out of the region that impacted significantly

on inter-ethnic relations in Xinjiang. Although this portion of in-migrating Han were not necessarily permanent settlers was of little consequence to the ethnic minority population in terms of their perceptions of the ethnic and power balance in the region. Indeed, we have seen that this phenomena of fluctuating rates of Han in-migration was a major grievance expressed by Uyghur and Kazakh protestors in the unrest of April 1995.

This voluntary movement of Han to Xinjiang in the 1990s has also been bolstered by state-sponsored or promoted in-migration. Becquelin, for example, cites a State Council policy report of 1996 focused on the settlement of desert regions that explicitly advocated a new resettlement strategy aimed at attracting a young rural workforce from the impoverished central provinces (Becquelin 2000: 75). This document asserted that to accelerate the development of the 'arid and poverty stricken western region' the government needed to implement 'a new channelling system, designed to establish migrant settlements, to manage and open the desert and build China's desert agriculture'. Another important facet and spin-off of the government's economic development strategy was the increasing urbanisation of Xinjiang that it promoted. The urban population of Xinjiang in 1990 had been 3.6 million people out of a total population of 15.16 million, yet by 1997 the urban population stood at 5.12 million out of a total population of 17.18 million. Therefore, the region experienced a net increase in its urban population of 1.52 million in seven years, changing the rural–urban balance of the population from 76.26 per cent and 23.74 per cent in 1990 to 70.2 per cent and 29.8 per cent in 1997. Thus in 1997 the proportion of Xinjiang's population living in urban areas was greater than the national average of 28 per cent (Becquelin 2000: 75). This process of urbanisation had implications for the ability of the state to strengthen its control over the region. The urbanisation of Xinjiang's cities and towns served to enhance Chinese control of the region, as continued urban growth entailed the development of greater administrative and commercial functions for the cities themselves and greater authority over surrounding areas (Pannell and Ma 1997: 214–19).

The major instrument of state-sponsored Han in-migration during the Maoist era, as we saw in previous chapters, was the XPCC. In the 1990s, as Han in-migration was reinvigorated, so too, not coincidentally, was the XPCC. The promotion of Han in-migration, however, was but one aspect of the XPCC's functions in Xinjiang. As noted earlier in the chapter, the government by the close of 1992 granted 240 units of the XPCC preferential economic policies and the right to engage in border trade (ÜrümqiXinjiang Ribao 1992a: 54–55). Therefore, it had been determined that the XPCC was to be a significant instrument through which the government would attempt to simultaneously integrate the region with the national economy and that of Central Asia. Simultaneously, the XPCC's function as a conduit for Han settlement was also reinvigorated and this was reflected by a reversal, beginning in 1991, of a post-1982 decline in its membership (Becquelin 2000: 77). In the past the XPCC had played a key role in the development of agriculture in Xinjiang through the reclamation of wasteland and establishment of agricultural colonies. The XPCC's economic activities also

encompassed processing of agricultural commodities, steel production, mining, and scientific research and development (McMillen 1981; Weimer 2004: 169).

This role continued in the 1990s with the XPCC having jurisdiction over 740,000 hectares of land in Xinjiang by the mid-1990s, representing 48 per cent of the area of the province and 30 per cent of all arable land, while it produced 24.67 per cent of the regions; grain output (Becquelin 2000: 78; Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1995c: 83). The XPCC also played a role in attracting Han migrants to rural and pastoral regions of Xinjiang by contracting land to in-migrating Han. In a *Xinjiang Ribao* article of early 1996, for example, it was admitted that 'more than 20,000' migrant peasants had begun farming land contracted from the 'Xinjiang Tianshan Nanbei Military Corps' over the previous twelve months (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996h: 76). The article went on to report that most of the in-migrating Han came from Henan, Gansu and Sichuan and were attracted to the agricultural sector in Xinjiang 'where the land is vast and underpopulated'. Significantly, the article also noted that successful Han peasants acted as 'magnets' for further in-migrants generally in the form of relatives and friends (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996h: 76–77). The implications of such a process for inter-ethnic relations in Xinjiang were far from benign. The growing Han in-migration, already dwelt upon above, was not simply a demographic threat to the region's ethnic minorities but also an economic one. The influx of Han peasants from the central provinces placed further pressure on the scarce arable land available for cultivation and served to be another source of anti-Han sentiment amongst Xinjiang's ethnic minorities. Yet the XPCC was financially unprofitable and was underpinned by financial subsidies from the central government. In 1994, 81 per cent of the XPCC's 1.19 billion yuan budget was supplied by the central government, while in 1995 the central government supplied 89 per cent of its 1.146 billion yuan budget (Becquelin 2000: 76–80). Therefore, the central government was prepared to shoulder the financial costs of the XPCC's activities in order to continue the primary function of absorbing and facilitating Han in-migration.

Conclusion

The state's approach to Xinjiang over the 1991–1995 period was framed by the extension of the 'reform and opening' policies to the region. This entailed the vigorous implementation of the 'double opening' strategy that aimed to simultaneously integrate Xinjiang with China proper and Central Asia. We have seen, however, that the central elements of this strategy – 'opening' to Central Asia, central government investment in Xinjiang, increased Han in-migration, and limited toleration of ethnic minority religious and cultural practices – in many respects produced dynamics at variance to the state's integrationist goal. The 'opening' to Central Asia was conceived of by the state during this phase as focusing on primarily the economic sphere. This was amply illustrated by the Chinese government's application of the 'growth pole' strategy in Xinjiang and the related emphasis on establishing 'open' border cities to facilitate cross-border trade and the expansion of infrastructure.

China's diplomacy in Central Asia during this period exhibited a strong concern with the development of trade and economic relationships with the Central Asian states, particularly Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Contemporaneously, a number of developments in China's energy sector prompted a re-orientation of its energy strategy and helped to reinforce or underscore the importance of consolidating relations with Central Asia. As noted earlier, the government's stress on the creation of 'pillar industries' in Xinjiang – notably agriculture and petrochemical – spurred greater investment in the region's existing oil/gas resources and further exploration. Moreover, as China became a net oil importer in 1993, the maximisation of domestic production and the diversification of foreign sources assumed great importance. The state's strategic considerations in relation to both Xinjiang and the nation's energy needs thus coalesced.

China's emerging relations with the states of Central Asia also had important political implications for its position in Xinjiang. The pre-eminent concern of both the central and provincial governments following the collapse of the Soviet Union and independence of the Central Asian states was to minimise the political and economic impact of these events on Xinjiang. The revival of Islam as a political force in both Central Asia and Afghanistan and the wider Turkic cultural renewal in Central Asia that was central to these events represented potential threats to the Chinese state's integrationist program in Xinjiang. A major element of China's overtures to the newly independent states of Central Asia, as highlighted above, was thus concerned with the prevention of Uyghur émigré 'anti-China' activities in Central Asia. China's attempts in this respect had been relatively successful, in that by 1994 China had obtained undertakings from the Central Asian states (particularly Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) that anti-Chinese activities would not be permitted. But it must be noted that throughout the 1991–95 period, no Central Asian state implemented legal sanctions against or surveillance of Uyghur émigré organisations.

Nevertheless, throughout China's diplomacy in Central Asia the issue of Uyghur separatism remained a pre-eminent issue, as demonstrated during Li Peng's tour of Central Asia in 1994. This theme in China's diplomacy was once again manifested during a number of important bi-lateral meetings late in 1995. On 23–24 October 1995, Premier Li Peng met with visiting Kyrgyz Prime Minister Apas Dzhumagulov in Beijing to discuss the resolution of the Sino–Kyrgyz border issue and bi-lateral economic cooperation. Central to discussions was the methods by which the dispute over the 1000km Sino–Kyrgyz border could be settled, with both parties expressing the hope that once resolved the Sino–Kyrgyz border could become a 'boundary of peace and friendly co-operation' The issue of separatism in Xinjiang, however, was also raised with Li Peng stating that China appreciated Kyrgyzstan's 'stand on opposing national splittism' while his Kyrgyz counterpart reiterated Kyrgyzstan's commitment to oppose 'any form of national splittism' (Beijing Xinhua 1995c: 20–21). A few days later Hu Jintao, then member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo, made short visits to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Beijing Xinhua 1995d: 3). Much like Li Peng's talks in Beijing these visits focused on consolidating bi-lateral

economic cooperation. The Uzbek President, Islam Karimov, in his meeting with Hu stated that Uzbekistan adhered to a policy of opposing 'any form of national separatism' against China (Beijing Xinhua 1995e: 4). China's efforts in Central Asia were also aided by the continuation of the inter-governmental discussions between China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, begun in 1992, concerning the resolution and demarcation of borders and military confidence building measures along the Sino–Central Asian frontier. This would in fact serve as the basis for the development of a multilateral organisation in April 1996 – the Shanghai Five – that would expand its remit to encompass regional security and economic issues, of which there would be no shortage in the region in the coming years.

6 Biding time and building capabilities

Xinjiang and Chinese foreign policy in Central Asia, 1996–2001

China's strategy in Xinjiang and in its relations with the states of Central Asia had been only a partial success over the 1991–5 period. Due to the government's extension of 'reform and opening' the region had experienced economic growth and development that had begun to facilitate Xinjiang's integration with the national and Central Asian economies. As noted in the previous chapter, the government undertook numerous large-scale infrastructure projects to link Xinjiang more effectively with China proper and Central Asia. The relative economic success of Xinjiang, however, was underpinned to a significant extent by the central government's provision of substantial financial support. The combination of increased central government investment in Xinjiang and the extension of greater economic freedoms to the province attracted increased Han in-migration. To a significant degree this strategy was reaffirmed over the 1996–2001 period. However, the increased cross-border linkages generated by the state's 'double opening' strategy and the inter-ethnic tension created by greater Han in-migration played a major role in stimulating ethnic minority opposition. Moreover, the state's connection of internal unrest with the influence of Islam and external forces resulted in the implementation of a more hard-line approach toward religion in the region.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 presented China with an unprecedented opportunity to capitalise on Xinjiang's historical linkages to Central Asia in order to extend its influence into the now independent region. Yet although this removed the long-feared Soviet threat to Xinjiang, it simultaneously diversified the potential sources of external threat to the region. Over the course of the 1991–5 period, the Chinese government had attempted to balance these two elements of the changed external geo-political environment with the internal imperatives of economic development, integration and control. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, this balancing act had only been partially successful. The level of China's concern regarding these perceived external threats was manifested in its relations with the states of Central Asia, whereby the issue of possible external support for ethnic separatism in Xinjiang became a major element of China's bilateral relations.

That China's endeavours in this respect had not been as successful as desired was reflected in the central role China played in the creation of a multilateral regional forum – the 'Shanghai Five' (S-5) – in April 1996. This diplomatic

initiative was coupled with an intensification of the core elements of the state's integrationist techniques and tactics of rule within Xinjiang – notably increased government investment, Han in-migration, and continued supervision of ethnic minority religious and cultural practices. The state's approach to both its strategy in Xinjiang and Central Asia was also influenced by the intensification of the 'New Great Game' for Central Asia. The geo-political competition and cooperation amongst the states of Central Asia, Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan and the US for the region's oil and gas developed simultaneously with the emergence of cross-border phenomena of weapons and drugs trafficking and trans-national Islamic movements. The state's strategy in Xinjiang thus opened the region to the possible infiltration of external dynamics directly opposed to China's integrationist project.

'New problems, new situations and new contradictions': balancing development and security in Xinjiang

The direction of the state's strategy in Xinjiang can be discerned from an important address by the XUAR CCP Chairman Wang Lequan to the 4th Session of the 7th XUAR Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) on 27 March 1996. Wang's address outlined the central government's commitment to the continued implementation of the 'double opening' strategy in Xinjiang and reaffirmed the core goals of the state's strategy in the region – integration and control. With respect to this latter goal, it appeared that the state perceived that a major element in securing the region depended on demonstrating to the ethnic minorities the economic benefits of remaining citizens of the PRC. In this respect Wang asserted that the 9th Five Year Plan (1996–2000), 'embodied the strategic guiding principles of the party and state for narrowing the gaps between regions in economic development' and prioritised the development of Xinjiang (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996b: 80–85). Specifically, the authorities would continue to stress the development of 'pillar industries' in Xinjiang with the goal of making the region 'a most strategically important petroleum and comprehensive modern chemical industry base' and 'the largest competitive textile-industry base in the northwest' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996b).

Thus, the thrust to develop these 'pillar industries' to facilitate economic linkages with Central Asia that was evident in the early 1990s remained central to the 9th Five-Year Plan. Indeed, Wang noted that Xinjiang had 'obvious favourable geographical conditions' to achieve this and 'accelerate the transformation of the traditional landlocked economy into an export-oriented economy' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996c). This more ambitious goal regarding the region's 'pillar industry' export capabilities would be complemented by further state investment in developing major infrastructure projects in Xinjiang in such areas as water conservancy, telecommunications, transportation, and energy. Infrastructure projects given priority by the central government in Xinjiang during the 9th Five-Year Plan were identified as the extension of the Lanzhou-Ürümqi railway to southern Xinjiang, extension and upgrading of national highways,

extension of optical fibre communication networks, expansion of chemical-industry bases and airports. However, Wang simultaneously made a number of frank statements regarding the challenges faced by the state in implementing this strategy in Xinjiang that echoed in some respects the rhetoric of the late 1950s. Although a familiar link between the resurgence of ethnic minority opposition and 'hostile' external forces was made, Wang also noted that:

> ... Xinjiang lags behind in economic development, and some new situations, new contradictions, and new problems have occurred with the intensified efforts to carry out reforms and with continued adjustments of interests. As a result, contradictions among the people have become salient.
>
> (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996b: 83)

Thus, there was a clear acknowledgment that the state's policies in Xinjiang played a role, albeit a complimentary one in their perceptions, in generating ethnic minority opposition. Two salient points should be noted here. First, Wang explicitly defined the increasing occurrence of ethnic minority opposition as a 'contradiction amongst the people'. It will be recalled from earlier chapters that such a pejorative description of ethnic minority dissent had not been used in Xinjiang since the Maoist era. Second, not only did he acknowledge the economic gap between regions but noted that this had been exacerbated by the state's development strategy in Xinjiang and contributed to the development of 'contradictions amongst the people' Thus, the authorities had appeared to recognise the problems that could arise from a reliance on economic development as a curative for political and social instability. The state held an essentially contradictory perception regarding the relationship between economic development and social stability. Indeed, XUAR Chairman Abdulahat Abdurixit asserted that while the authorities 'must use economic development to maintain stability', they simultaneously had to 'use political stability to guarantee economic development' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996c: 57).

According to this circular argument, economic development could facilitate the maintenance of social stability, but simultaneously only the maintenance of this condition (i.e. stability) could guarantee economic development. The central and provincial governments' economic agenda, as we have seen, was focused on the creation of 'pillar industries', encouragement of Han in-migration, and developing greater links with Central Asia. The focus on the creation of Xinjiang as a petrochemical and cotton 'base' within the national economy certainly produced effects that exacerbated existing economic, political and social tensions in the region.

The state's response to the twin threats of 'ethnic separatism' within Xinjiang and 'hostile' external influences was twofold. First, in the context of the 9th Five-Year Plan, the state would increase its investment in major infrastructure projects, continue the opening to Central Asia, and seek to expand the petrochemical and cotton industries. Second, the state would endeavour to increase its to efforts both persuade and coerce the ethnic minorities into acquiescence (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996b: 83). However, Wang also noted that 'the more we deepen reform,

the wider we open the country to the outside world', suggesting the authorities awareness as to the potential detrimental effects of its strategy in Xinjiang (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996b: 83). For Wang, the key to ensuring that this continued 'opening' to the world would not come at the expense of state control over Xinjiang lay in the 'correct' management of external influences and religion within Xinjiang. In order to achieve this he exhorted all Party organisations to 'support and assist the government in strengthening the administration of religious affairs', 'conscientiously resist erroneous ideas, statements, and acts regarding the questions of nationalities and religion', 'maintain sharp vigilance against the Western hostile forces', 'attempt to use issues of nationality or religion to divide or undermine our country' and 'oppose illegal religious activities and take a clear-cut stand in waging a resolute struggle against the splitting and sabotage activities by ethnic separatist forces at home and abroad'(Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996b: 84) This was therefore a clear indication that the authorities were about to reassert state control over what was perceived as the core internal threat to the state – 'illegal religious activities' – and simultaneously intensify efforts to negate the threat of 'ethnic separatists at home and abroad'.

These themes were not new in relation to the state's perceptions of the key threats to its integrationist project in Xinjiang. However, 1996 proved to be a turning point in relation to the strategies by which China would attempt to secure the region from internal and external threats. Almost simultaneously with Wang's address in Xinjiang, preparations were already well advanced for the summit of the presidents of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan in Shanghai on 26 April (Hong Kong Wen Wei Po 1996a). This meeting would inaugurate a regional forum, known as the 'Shanghai Five' (S-5), that would come to play a major role in China's foreign policy in Central Asia over the course of the next eight years. As we have seen, a major element of China's bilateral relations with the states of Central Asia, particularly Kazakhstan and Kyrgystan, concerned the issue of émigré Uyghur activities and possible support for ethnic separatists in Xinjiang. This would become a key factor in China's activities within the context of the multilateral S-5.

The economic strategy to rely on the two 'pillars' of petrochemicals and cotton that had been highlighted in the 8th Five-Year Plan (1991–5) and reinforced in the 9th Five-Year Plan (1996–2000) to drive Xinjiang's economic development did indeed result in the creation of 'new situations, new contradictions, and new problems' The state's investment in the petrochemical industry alone would not achieve the goal of persuading the ethnic minorities of the economic benefits of remaining citizens of the PRC given that the majority were employed in the agricultural sector. Hence, the emphasis on the development of a cotton industry that in theory would be of direct benefit to the region's non-Han agriculturalist population (Becquelin 2000: 80–81).

Significantly, the cotton strategy actually contributed to the further deterioration in Han-minority relations and further weakened the state's legitimacy in the eyes of many of the ethnic minorities. A number of observers have highlighted that as cotton cultivation has high costs of production and is only profitable if undertaken

on a large scale, the implementation of this strategy in Xinjiang served the broader integrationist goals of the state. In fact it was XPCC units that took the lead in cotton cultivation, with the corps accounting for around 40 per cent of the region's total cotton production by 1997. This was logical in the sense that the XPCC not only controlled up to 30 per cent of Xinjiang's arable land but was also capable of managing the large labour force required in cotton cultivation. Corps-operated farms also attracted an influx of Han as seasonal workers to pick the cotton. The XPCC also led land reclamation efforts with the corps reclaiming 2 million mu (approximately 1.33 million hectares) of land between 1991 and 1996. Meanwhile, the state required Uyghur peasants to plant cotton instead of grain via the imposition of quotas for cotton production, which peasants could only then sell to state owned cooperatives at fixed prices. Uyghur peasants thus perceived the cotton strategy as means by which the state could squeeze tax revenue from the agricultural sector of Xinjiang's economy. The promotion of cotton cultivation also has well known effects, such as desertification, on the environment in such fragile ecosystems as Xinjiang due to its dependence on intensive irrigation. Thus, the cotton strategy was arguably aimed at increasing key aspects of integration – such as Han in-migration – rather than ensuring prosperity for the non-Han population (Becquelin 2000; Beller-Hann 1997: 94–5; Fogden 2003: 56–7; Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996a).

Multi-lateralising Chinese foreign policy in Central Asia

A complementary development to the intensification of the state's internal integrationist strategies was the transformation of China's relations with the states of Central Asia. As noted earlier, China's relations with these states since the fall of the Soviet Union had largely taken place within the confines of bilateral relationships. The exception to this had been the formation of a 'group of five' regional forum with the limited aim of enhancing military confidence building measures along shared borders. The initial inter-governmental discussions began in 1992 with a joint delegation from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia meeting with their Chinese counterparts (Dillon 1997: 136). This dialogue continued for the next four years and culminated in the signing of a five-nation 'Agreement on Confidence-Building in the Military Sphere in the Border Areas' on 26 April 1996 in Shanghai (Beijing Xinhua 1996b: 22). The agreement emphasised the need to maintain the multilateral nature of inter-state military and security dialogue, ruled out conducting military exercises aimed against each other, specified the scale, scope and number of military exercises, and stipulated that the concerned sides would invite each other to observe their military exercises (Beijing Xinhua 1996: 22).

The transformation of these talks into a regional multilateral forum with this agreement represented a significant milestone in China's efforts to establish itself as a power in Central Asia. Although the content of the agreement primarily concerned military confidence-building measures, the statements made during and after the conclusion of the summit suggested that the five states viewed it as

an important stepping-stone toward greater regional cooperation (Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service 1996b; Hong Kong Wen Wei Po 1996b). This was especially true of China and Russia, who had by the mid-1990s come to hold a similar perception of the contemporary international system as being dominated by the US (Burles 1999: 27–37). A day prior to the Shanghai meeting Presidents Jiang Zemin and Boris Yeltsin had issued a joint Sino–Russian statement announcing the two parties' intention to establish a 'strategic partnership' (Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service 1996a). The text of this joint statement bore the imprint of this shared Sino–Russian perception of the threats posed to their national interests by continued US hegemonism. Indeed, the statement illustrated the Sino–Russian preference for the development of a multipolar international system, criticising 'hegemonism' and 'bloc politics' Additionally, the text also included a call for inter-state relations to be based on 'the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each others internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence' (Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service 1996a). This, of course, was almost identical to former Premier Zhou Enlai's '*Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence*' Significantly, these principles would come to be repeatedly invoked by Beijing as the foundation of its diplomacy in Central Asia over the coming years.

This aspect of China's foreign policy has been described as 'an attempt to operationalise the idea of a "collegial sharing of power among nations" to counter the threat of a unipolar world' (Hsiung 1995: 577). The rationale underpinning such a strategy was clear. The development of this 'network' of regional and global relationships, although not necessarily capable of neutralising US economic, political and military power, would provide China with alternative sources of trade, investment, technology and international political support in the event of a deterioration in Sino–US relations (Hsiung 1995: 577; Burles 1999: 34). China's development of a 'strategic relationship' with Russia and the consolidation of its relations with the states of Central Asia during the mid-1990s can thus be seen as an integral part of this overall foreign policy strategy. Although the Sino–Russian and S-5 agreements explicitly maintained that they were not 'directed against any third country', they were congruent with China's goal to develop broad regional and global relationships to counter the US-dominated order (Beijing Central Television 1996; Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service 1996a).

Simultaneously, however, the development of relations with Central Asia was also central to China's strategy in Xinjiang. The construction of China's 'double opening' strategy compelled it to seek the development of relations with the Central Asian republics. As such, China's bilateral relations with the states of Central Asia exhibited an overwhelming concern with three major issues – facilitation of trade and economic cooperation, border demarcation and military CBMs, and potential external aid to Uyghur 'separatists' These issues were also evident during the summit in Shanghai and the subsequent statements of the heads-of-state. The presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, for example, in separate meetings with President Jiang Zemin maintained that their countries

were 'opposed to any form of splittist activities' (Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service 1996b: 15–16). This clearly referred to their guarantees to China that they would not permit 'splittist' activities by Uyghur émigré organisations within their countries or allow such Uyghur 'splittists' to traverse their common borders with China. Such undertakings were not a new development but a reaffirmation of positions elucidated within their bilateral relations with China. Their reiteration within the context of the multilateral S-5, however, suggested that Chinese concerns were pre-eminent.

Perhaps not inconsequentially the Sino–Russian agreement concluded the day prior to the Shanghai meeting also contained a number of statements that highlighted the convergence of the two states' interests in the region, particularly regarding the issues of state sovereignty and ethnic minorities. First, the agreement stated that China supported 'the measures and actions adopted by the Russian Federation in safeguarding its national unity and holds that the question of Chechnya is a domestic affair of Russia', while 'Russia always recognizes Tibet as an inseparable part of China' (Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service 1996a: 14). Second, both parties maintained that they would 'strike resolutely against acts of terror or organised transnational crimes of any description' and would 'exchange experience and strengthen co-operation regularly on bilateral and multilateral basis' (Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service 1996a: 16). China's support of Russia's position regarding Chechnya was largely reflective of its threat perceptions regarding Xinjiang. Therefore, both the Sino–Russian and S-5 agreements bore the imprint of China's Xinjiang-centric strategic interests and concerns.

Striking hard: the renewed struggle against 'national splittists'

The relationship between China's strategy in Xinjiang and its foreign policy in Central Asia was further underlined the following month, with provincial authorities establishing a 'Strike Hard' campaign on 1 May 1996 in the region (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996d: 58–9). The institution of such a campaign, that was explicitly targeted at 'national splittist forces', barely one month after Wang Lequan's admission of the existence of 'contradictions among the people' and four days after the conclusion of the Shanghai Five agreement could not have been a coincidence (Rudelson and Jankowiak 2004: 317). In fact the central government's perception of the scope of the threat to China's position in Xinjiang was highlighted in a confidential document received by the Xinjiang CCP in March 1996. This document, referred to as 'Document No.7', outlined the CCP Central Committee's concerns regarding the prevalence of 'illegal religious activities' and the activities of external 'hostile' forces in Xinjiang:

> The separatist organizations abroad have reinforced their collaboration, reinforcing day after day their efforts to infiltrate and carry out sabotage in Xinjiang. Within Xinjiang, illegal religious movements are rampant.

> Groups are fomenting trouble, assaulting Party and government structures, bombing and committing terrorist attacks. Some organizations have already turned from underground to semi-public, to the point of openly confronting the government There is also a possibility that this as yet limited chaos and turmoil may influence Xinjiang's and the whole country's stability.
>
> (Becquelin 2000: 87–8)

The 'Strike Hard' campaign that followed in Xinjiang certainly reflected the core concerns emphasised in 'Document No. 7' As such, the campaign highlighted the confluence of a number of themes in the authorities' perceptions of the threat posed to Xinjiang and their relation to the state's strategy in the region. In particular, it once more highlighted the contradictory conception of the relationship between economic development and social stability adhered to by the authorities (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996c: 57). The rhetoric of the 'Strike Hard' campaign also demonstrated the continuity of the authorities' characterisation of 'national splittists' as being 'beyond the pale' of societal norms and as being inherently opposed to society as a whole, with Wang Lequan, for example, stridently asserting that 'all signs indicate that national splittists collude with violent criminal elements' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996d: 58–59).

From 3–6 May the XUAR CCP Committee held a 'work conference' to discuss and implement the central government's 'important instructions on preserving Xinjiang's stability' – clearly a reference to the confidential document cited above (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996e: 72–4). As well as reiterating the central government's assessment that the major threat to Xinjiang's stability derived from 'national separatism and illegal religious activities', the conference also outlined a number of concrete measures to be implemented to combat these twin evils. The conference identified 'political power' as a 'key link' in ensuring Xinjiang's stability. Therefore, the immediate focus was to be on the rectification of party organisations at the lowest levels in order to negate the influence of religious forces that had infiltrated the party. As such 'Cadres with serious political, economic, and ideological problems' were to be replaced '*without tolerance* to ensure that all levels of leadership will always remain in the hands of people who love the Communist Party and the socialist motherland' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996e: 72–73).

Such lax party discipline was also held responsible for the failure to correctly manage religious affairs. 'Religious forces' had thus been able to exercise influence over the implementation of state policies in such areas as judicial affairs, education and family planning. This had also resulted in state regulations and policies on religion being 'openly violated' and the 'hoodwinking' some of the ethnic minorities 'into engaging in splittist and sabotage activities' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996e: 73). Significantly, the conference also resolved to 'make religion adapt to socialist society', 'resolutely put a stop to illegal religious activities' and ensure that CCP members refrained from participating in religious activities. In order to achieve these goals the conference decided on the implementation of three measures – the strengthening of 'propaganda

and education' amongst the ethnic minorities, elimination of religious influence in education and increased censorship of the 'cultural and publication market' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996e: 73). A subsequent commentary on 'ethnic separatism' published a day after the conference in *Xinjiang Ribao* went so far as to assert that even religious activities not defined by the state as 'illegal' were in fact 'allied forces of ethnic separatist forces' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996f: 74–5). Furthermore, ethnic separatism was characterised as 'a reactionary political stand' and the state's struggle against it was 'a life-and-death class struggle' in which there could be 'no compromise or concession whatsoever' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996f: 74–5).

Such a vehement denunciation of ethnic minority opposition and religious practices harked back to policies pursued during the 'Anti-Rightist' campaign in 1957–8 and even the Cultural Revolution whereby the 'nationality issue' had been defined by Mao as being in the final analysis a 'class issue' The adoption of this hard-line stance did not bode well for the region's ethnic minorities and it further illustrated the raised threat perceptions of the provincial and central governments. The initial phase of the 'Strike Hard' campaign resulted in the arrest of 1700 'criminals and pro-independence activists' The authorities also reported that they seized over 1.1 tonnes of explosives, 92 guns, 696 grams of heroin, more than 60 kilograms of marijuana and more than 7.7 million yuan (approximately US $927,000) of 'illicit money' One report also claimed that 'several thousand separatist militants' took refuge across the Sino–Central Asian border (Hong Kong AFP 1996a; Hong Kong AFP 1996b; Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996g).

Although most government statements during this period asserted that the 'splittists' constituted a tiny minority of the population, a Uyghur émigré source in Kazakhstan was reported to have claimed that there were up to twenty-seven secret pro-independence organisations with up to one million supporters in Xinjiang (Hong Kong AFP 1996a: 59). However, were there any violent incidents of an 'ethnic separatist' nature during the first half of 1996 and was there any evidence of external support for the separatists? On 29 April it was reported that police killed nine people 'armed with guns and home-made bombs' during a violent clash in Kuqa district (Hong Kong AFP 1996d). Sometime between 12 and 21 May Mullah Urup Khaji, vice-chairman of the XUAR CPPCC committee and imam of Kashgar's famous Idkah mosque, was assassinated. The leader of an Uyghur émigré organisation, the 'United National Revolutionary Front' (UNRF) based in Kazakhstan, Yusupbek Mukhlissi, claimed that the imam had been assassinated by 'radical Uyghur nationalists' due to his pro-Chinese stance. The UNRF leader also claimed two other incidents occurred in July – a group of Uyghur militants had attacked Chinese border guards, killing twenty in the Kundjerab Pass, on the Sino–Pakistani border and the arrest of 'several' Uyghur activists in Kuqa on 6–7 July. According to this report the UNRF claimed that although it did not receive aid from abroad, it acknowledged that 'at least 100' Uyghurs were fighting for the Taliban in Afghanistan. Mukhlissi also claimed that 10,000 people had been arrested in Aqsu and a further 8,000 in Ürümqi, charges that the Chinese subsequently authorities denied. The incident on the Sino–Pakistani border perhaps lends greater

weight to contemporaneous Chinese claims about the infiltration of 'weapons, splittists and reactionary pamphlets' into Xinjiang from across its western frontier (Hong Kong AFP 1996e; Ürümqi Xinjiang Television Network 1996; OMRI Daily Digest 1996).

Just as important to the Chinese authorities as neutralising such linkages between 'separatists' within Xinjiang and external support was to eradicate 'splittist' tendencies within its own structure of authority in the region. This had been identified by the provincial authorities as a major facet of the 'Strike Hard' campaign, with the region's CCP disciplinary committee calling for the dispensation of harsh punishments for those officials found guilty of actions 'detrimental to the stability of Xinjiang' (Hong Kong AFP 1996c: 73–4). In a case that could be seen as symptomatic of the state's dilemma in Xinjiang regarding this issue, a 'local parliamentary deputy' was arrested for 'engaging in illegal religious activities' The deputy, Aisha Awazi, had appointed himself imam in Aksu in 1992 and subsequently organised a group of '120 Moslem activists who criticised Communist Party policies and denounced party officials as "pagans" ' According to this report Awazi, although formally rebuked at the beginning of the 'Strike Hard' campaign in May, continued to mobilise Muslim ire against the authorities until he was arrested in June (Hong Kong AFP 1996e).

It is pertinent here to recall that by the end of the 1980s the Chinese had begun to perceive that the relatively 'liberal' policies toward ethnic minority cultural and religious practices had ultimately worked against the state's integrationist project. This was particularly the case after the unrest throughout Xinjiang in May and June 1989, and was reinforced with the eruption of the Baren incident of April 1990 in which the insurgents made an explicit call for a *jihad* against the Chinese state. After the unrest of May–June 1989 the authorities in Xinjiang began to refer in official statements to the connection between 'illegal religious activities' and 'separatism'. Moreover, the opening months of 1990 saw the implementation of a campaign to bring religion 'to heel' in Xinjiang. The focus of this campaign was upon the closure of 'illegal' mosques (i.e. mosques built without official approval), halting the construction of new mosques, greater supervision of *madrassahs* (Islamic schools), and the re-education and reform of imams (Lufti 2001: 192–3; MacPherson 1990b; Chen 1990).

In a sense there was a cycle of 'repression and reform' regarding the authorities' conception and implementation of policy toward religious and cultural practices. In the state's perception each occasion it permitted greater freedoms and expansion of limits in this sphere, it led to a resurgence in Islam's influence in the region but produced little of positive value to the state in terms of generating greater support amongst the ethnic minorities for Chinese rule. However, when the state veered toward greater restriction and outright repression of such practices it ultimately generated widespread discontent and opposition to the state. Such a process has been noted by a number of scholars and suggests that the state's policy toward religious and cultural practices, regardless of the extreme, place it in a no-win situation (Mackerras 2001: 295–297; Rudelson and Jankowiak 2004: 301).

Indeed, such cycles of policy produced effects that worked against the state's goal of integration:

> Government religious reforms were intended to quell Uyghur disaffection with Chinese rule and cause Uyghurs to develop more harmonious sentiments for the Han Chinese. However, the Chinese are caught in a dilemma: when they suppress Islam, most Uyghurs feel oppressed and oppose the government; when they allow or encourage it, Uyghurs become more content with the government but their strengthened Islamic practice leads them to feel more separate from and apathetic towards Chinese society.
>
> (Rudelson 1997: 47–8)

Yet there was now a major, and significant, difference between the state's perception of the challenge or threat posed to the region's integration by the re-emergence of 'illegal religious activities' from 1989–90 and 1996. Although the Chinese authorities had often charged that ethnic minority unrest in Xinjiang was influenced or actively supported by 'hostile external forces', the rhetoric of the 'Strike Hard' campaign was especially strident in this regard. The limited evidence regarding external support for ethnic separatists in Xinjiang was not the sole contributor to the state's heightened threat perceptions. A number of external developments in Russia, Afghanistan and Central Asia between 1993 and 1996 reinforced the state's fear of ethnic separatism and 'Islamic fundamentalism' in Xinjiang.

The fall of Kabul to the Taliban in September 1996 compounded the fears of Russia, the Central Asian republics and China regarding the possible spread of extremism and 'Islamic fundamentalism' into Central Asia. China's response to such perceived external threats was, as we have seen, based on efforts to reassert state control over ethnic minority cultural and religious practices under the rubric of the 'Strike Hard' campaign. From the initiation of the 'Strike Hard' campaign in March 1996 to the beginning of 1997 the authorities arrested 2,773 'terrorist' suspects and seized 6,000 pounds of explosives and 31,000 rounds of ammunition (Gladney 2004c: 379). Émigré Uyghur groups, however, claimed that this phase of the 'Strike Hard' campaign resulted in the arrest of 57,000 Uyghurs (East Turkistan Information Center 1997a). This zero-tolerance approach was allied to a further emphasis on state's economic development strategies for Xinjiang. Just months after the initiation of the 'Strike Hard' campaign, for example, the provincial government announced that the state would invest RMB 37.4 billion in various infrastructure and construction projects in the region over the course of the 9th Five-Year Plan (1996–2000). These projects included the completion of the Ürümqi Petrochemical Plant, the Turpan–Ürümqi–Dahuangshan highway, the extension of the railway from Kuqa to Kasghar, further land reclamation and irrigation projects (Beijing Zhongguo Xinwen She 1996).

Be that as it may, much of the ethnic minority population continued to perceive these projects, and the state's economic development strategy more

generally, as inequitably benefiting the Han population of the region. For example, the state's 'cotton strategy' was primarily a political rather than an economic project, designed to promote further Han in-migration and integration with China proper. Ethnic minority sentiment toward the state was hardly improved by the implementation of a series of measures to limit the influence of Islam on ethnic minority society that followed in the wake of the 'Strike Hard' campaign. These included the 'rectification' of 'religious personages' in the major urban mosques who were state employees, an increased emphasis on 'nationalities unity and socialist education', closure of unapproved *madrassahs* and restriction of religious observance to those 18 years of age and over. The extent of the state's efforts in this respect was illustrated by its clampdown on Uyghur *māshrāp* or traditional cultural meetings which often took the form of 'community youth advocacy groups' that were an informal mechanism through which local communities discussed contemporary societal problems such as alcohol or drug abuse (Mackerras 2004: 9; Rudelson and Jankowiak 2004: 317; Fogden 2003: 60).

These policies played a central role in contributing to a further outbreak of unrest amongst Xinjiang's ethnic minorities in 1997. February 1997 witnessed the largest incidence of unrest since the Baren incident in April 1990. On this occasion, however, the centre of unrest was in the north-west of Xinjiang, particularly in the city of Kulja (Yining) (Mackerras 2001: 291). The unrest in Kulja occurred 2–12 February and saw a number of days of rioting, the deaths of up to 120 people and the arrest of over 2,000 people (Gladney 2004: 379; Fogden 2003: 60). The authorities had apparently stepped up police presence in the city for the holy month of Ramadan in order to maintain a watchful eye on 'illegal religious activities'. According to a number of reports the unrest was sparked by a police raid on a *māshrāp* meeting at a Kulja mosque on 5 February, where a number of 'talibs'(religious students) were arrested (Gladney 2004: 379; Fogden 2003: 60; East Turkistan Information Center 1997a). A confrontation then took place between police and demonstrators seeking the release of the arrested students that deteriorated into a riot that lasted for a number of days. According to Amnesty International protestors attacked police, Han residents and businesses before the security forces opened fire on the protestors (Amnesty International 1999). Émigré Uyghur sources, however, claimed that in the two days of rioting 400 Uyghurs were killed and soon thereafter a 30,000 strong PLA combat unit was dispatched to Kulja to enforce a strict curfew (East Turkistan Information Center 1997b).

Although this unrest in Kulja was suppressed by the authorities further violent incidents took place in its wake, including a report that a train had been bombed and derailed on 12 February that the government claimed was the work of the UNRF based in Kazakhstan. On 25 February, as memorial services were being held for Deng Xiaoping across the PRC, three buses in Ürümqi were bombed killing nine and injuring seventy-four people. This was followed by the bombing of two buses in Beijing on 7 March and the explosion of a further bomb in a Beijing park on 13 May that were blamed on Uyghur separatists. Subsequently, three Uyghurs were executed in April, eight on 29 May and a further nine on 27 July, all for alleged involvement in this series of bombings in Xinjiang and Beijing. Finally, in

June it was reported that five Uyghurs were executed after hanging the banned flag of the 'East Turkestan Republic' from the statue of Mao Zedong in Kashgar's main square (Gladney 1997: 287; Mackerras 2001: 291; Rudelson and Jankowiak 2004: 317; Khan 1997).

Although the authorities blamed this spate of separatist activity on collusion between internal and external 'splittist' forces no Uyghur organisation, within or outside of China, took responsibility for these actions. This did not necessarily imply, however, that no linkages existed between such internal manifestations of ethnic minority opposition and external influences or forces in neighbouring regions of Central Asia. The lack of an organised centre of resistance perhaps reflected the multiplicity of external influences bearing on Xinjiang and the divergent goals of the various Uyghur organisations. The aforementioned UNRF, for example, had advocated 'peaceful resistance' to Chinese rule but disavowed this policy in March 1997 and issued a declaration stating that they would be 'taking up arms' against 'Chinese oppression' (McNeal 2001). The Chinese perhaps, feared more the infiltration of Islamic political movements from Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan that have been variously characterised as 'jihadist' Of particular concern to the Chinese were the Pakistan-based groups such as *Jamaat-e-Islami* and *Tableeghi Jamaat* that had developed an influence in the neighbouring Central Asian states of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Both of these organisations were explicitly militant and missionary in terms of their political agendas, encouraging the observance of Islamic 'orthodoxy' and advocating that Muslim's undertake *jihad*, especially if ruled by a non-Muslim state (Ahrari 2000: 666–8; Ahrari 2001; McNeal 2002: 10).

The threat implicit in this agenda for such a secular-oriented regime as China was clear and made even more salient by the existence of linkages between Xinjiang and Pakistan. The opening of the Karakoram Highway to trade between Xinjiang and Pakistan in the late 1980s had facilitated the generation of cultural flows that worked against the state's integrationist project in the region. Pakistani traders played a role in generating an Islamic revival in Xinjiang by providing a link for Xinjiang's Muslims to the wider Islamic world, with one observer noting that 'Pakistani traders in Xinjiang often saw it as their duty to provide information about Islam to the local Muslims' and often brought such items as 'womens' veils, jewellery with Muslim symbols, posters of Muslim holy sites, copies of the Qur'an', into Xinjiang (Roberts 2004: 226). The impact of such a development was felt mainly in the major oases of southern Xinjiang such as Kashgar and Khotan, where 'women began wearing veils in areas of southern Xinjiang where nineteenth-century travellers had once remarked on the absence of veils', while many madrassahs were established and young imams travelled to Pakistan for study (Roberts 2004: 226–7).

Many of those who travelled to Pakistan for either trade or education often returned with a greater knowledge of the political trends or dynamics developing in the wider Islamic world. These linkages were to a large degree the result of the state's relatively more tolerant approach to religion in the late 1980s and early 1990s and the extension of the 'reform and opening' economic policies

to Xinjiang. In fact, as noted in the previous chapter, the state had encouraged Xinjiang Muslims to develop links and relations with Muslims in Central Asia and Pakistan in order to facilitate greater trade benefits for the region. This was encouraged by the relaxation of travel restrictions and controls over religion in Xinjiang, which included state approval for the education of Xinjiang mullahs and imams in foreign *madrassahs*. Due to Pakistan's geographic proximity, many of these religious students went to Pakistani madrassahs, some of which were run by such 'jihadist' organisations as *Jamaat-i-Islami* and *Tableegh Jamaat* (Roberts 2004: 226–7; Ahrari 2000). According to Indian intelligence gathered from captured Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) personnel in Kashmir, the Pakistani military had trained Uyghurs in camps near Mirpur across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) from India. Pakistani jihadi groups were also reportedly involved in training Uyghurs in camps in Baluchistan Province and actively supported Uyghur militants in southern Xinjiang from the Al-Badr camp at Ooji on the Afghan-Pakistani border (Shichor 2004: 144–5).

The measures implemented by the authorities in Xinjiang following the various incidents of ethnic minority opposition between February and June 1997 clearly reflected the state's desire to negate such transnational linkages and firmly re-establish state control over religion in Xinjiang. It was reported, for example, that in August 1997 the Chinese erected a fence along its 750-kilometre border with Pakistan in order to reduce the possibility of external assistance to Uyghur militants in Xinjiang (Burles 1999: 18; Shicor 2004: 145). Furthermore, China aired its concerns with the Pakistani government regarding what it perceived as linkages between Uyghur separatists and Pakistani based 'jihadist' organisations. The authorities also began from mid-1997 onward to place greater restrictions on travel, particularly to Pakistan and Central Asia, with a focus on halting the education of Xinjiang Muslims in foreign *madrassahs*. Chinese authorities also suspected that some of the Chinese-made weapons and explosives used by separatists in Xinjiang had arrived via a circuitous China–Pakistan–Afghanistan–Xinjiang route (Roberts 2004: 227; Shichor 2004: 144; Faruqui 2001).

Within Xinjiang the authorities once more focused on a clampdown on 'illegal religious activities' and the 'rectification and re-education' of cadres and Muslim clergy. This process involved the closure of mosques and religious schools, the disciplining of religious leaders perceived to be too 'independent' or 'subversive' and a general discrimination against the practice of religion. An example of the general policy to discourage ethnic minorities from observance of religious practices is the occurrence of Muslim state employees being offered meals during the days of Ramadan, when observant Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. Significantly, according to Amnesty International many state officials and employees were either arrested, demoted or sacked due to participation in, or connection to, 'illegal religious activities' including nineteen village mayors and thirty-five CCP village and township leaders (Amnesty International 1999: 10–11; Fogden 2003: 66; Fuller and Lipman 2004: 337–78). Another reason for the emphasis upon the 'rectification' or party and state officials in Xinjiang may have stemmed from the central government's renewed fears of growing regionalism within the provincial government. According to one report the March 1997

National People's Congress (NPC) session was dominated by issues concerning the relationship between the centre and the regions. Representatives from Xinjiang reportedly made proposals demanding more autonomy for Xinjiang, citing the example of Beijing's plans for Hong Kong, claiming that only greater autonomy could achieve the central government's cherished goal of 'stability' in Xinjiang. Moreover, regional cadres demanded that ethnic minorities be appointed heads of CCP committees – a major demand given that heads of Party committees and regional secretaries had with few exceptions been Han since the establishment of the XUAR (Lam 1997).

Such demands, coming hot on the heels of the major unrest just a month previously, could not have been received well in Beijing. The central government's response to this resurgence in ethnic minority opposition and the regionalist rumblings from within the provincial government was based upon two central principals that reflected the state's contradictory conception of the relationship between economic development and social stability. The first response of the state to ethnic minority opposition was simply to implement a program of explicitly coercive tactics under the guise of the 'Strike Hard' campaigns. The second, however, focused on intensifying the region's economic development through further state investment in construction and infrastructure projects, and subsidies for key industries (such as petrochemicals and cotton). The rationale behind this course of action had been elucidated a number of times by both the central and provincial governments – only continued social 'stability' would guarantee Xinjiang's economic development and economic development in turn would guarantee 'stability' The authorities, it would seem, were blind to (or unwilling to see) the fact that its emphasis on maintaining social stability was often a major factor in contributing to ethnic minority opposition, thus jeopardising the goal of economic development. Furthermore, as demonstrated earlier, the major facets of the state's economic development strategy produced effects that were at odds with the stated goal of ensuring increased living standards for the region's population, the purpose of which was to generate ethnic minority support for the state's integrationist project.

Carrots and sticks: the twin strategies of economic development and repression

Although the unrest of early 1997 inevitably resulted in an oscillation toward the state's coercive capabilities, a slight re-orientation of strategy could be discerned after the initial onslaught of the 'Strike Hard' campaign. The authorities, having reflexively fallen back upon the full repertoire of coercive measures available, also simultaneously pressed on with the basic elements of its economic development strategy. The central government's willingness to underwrite the economic development of Xinjiang can be seen in the amount of state investment poured into the region between 1992 and 1997. Over this five-year period the central government injected approximately 170.8 billion yuan into major construction and infrastructure projects in the region alone (O'Neill 1998). Moreover, between 1990 and 1998 the provincial government's revenue tripled to 6.54 billion yuan

while its expenditures over the corresponding period amounted to 14.6 billion yuan (Becquelin 2000: 71–2). The central government, perhaps prompted by the unrest and the demands of regional leaders, also apparently began to recognise that its economic development strategy had exacerbated regional and ethnic disparities in Xinjiang. Of the 1.43 million people living in impoverished conditions in Xinjiang in 1997 the majority resided in the predominantly ethnic minority populated south. It thus stepped up poverty alleviation programs in the region, with the 9th Five-Year Plan (1996–2000) having set aside 3.5 billion yuan for the provincial government's efforts in this field (Zhao 2001: 217).

Similarly, the strategy to economically integrate Xinjiang with Central Asia was also reaffirmed, despite the perception that the establishment of linkages with Central Asia had facilitated politico-cultural flows that reinforced the ethnic minorities' notions of 'separateness' from the Han-dominated state (Gladney 2004: 114). Thus, Beijing, despite ongoing unrest continued to place great stead in economic development as something of a cure-all for its problems in Xinjiang, with the continued 'opening' to Central Asia seen as a vital element of this strategy. The state's efforts in this respect were somewhat mixed due to a combination of internal and external factors. The total value of Sino–Central Asia trade was US$772 million in 1997 representing only 3.4 per cent of Central Asia's total trade, with SinoKazakh trade, standing at US$489 million, accounting for over half (Loughlin and Pannell 2001: 482). This was below the full potential of Sino–Central Asia trade due to the lack of coherent and stable customs policies, particularly in Kazakhstan, rather than a lack of political will. The reorientation of the five Central Asian republics toward China was also counteracted by the fact that these states remained closely tied to Russia and to a lesser degree the competing economic opportunities present to the south and west of the region (Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and Afghanistan) (Loughlin and Pannell 2001: 485–6; Weimer 2004: 181–8).

The dominant position of Sino–Kazakh trade within the overall Sino–Central Asian trade relationship was determined by a long shared border, more developed infrastructural links with Xinjiang's more developed Zhungar Basin, and Kazakhstan's rich oil and gas resources. Xinjiang's open cities and border ports in the north-western corner close to the Sino–Kazakh border, such as Kulja, Bole, and Tacheng were served by good quality transport corridors. China's linkages with the other two Central Asian states with which it shared common borders – Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – were in contrast far less developed. Sino–Kyrgyz trade in 1997, for example, stood at US$64 million and was generally inhibited by poor infrastructural links to Xinjiang's less developed southern Tarim Basin. Thus a major goal of the central government's investment in Xinjiang was to extend existing infrastructure to facilitate the flow of Sino–Central Asian trade. Sino–Central Asian trade had also suffered over the 1992–7 period due to internal crises within a number of the Central Asian republics including the protracted civil war in Tajikistan and recurring financial crises in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (Loughlin and Pannell 2001: 472–87; Pannell and Ma 1997: 222–4; Zhao 2001: 216).

The establishment of Chinese political and economic influence in Central Asia was also seen to be conducive to the strengthening of China's position in Xinjiang and its wider strategic interests. One of the key strategic imperatives behind China's drive to integrate Xinjiang with Central Asia stemmed from its growing energy needs. As noted previously, China had re-oriented its energy strategy toward Russia and Central Asia in order to diminish its dependency on Middle East sources. The pre-eminent focus of this attention concerned ensuring access to Kazakh oil and gas due to its geographic proximity and potential flow on benefits for Xinjiang's economy. In 1996, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) together with Exxon and Mitsubishi completed a feasibility study regarding the construction of a pipeline to connect Turkmenistan's gas fields with China. The projected US$12 billion construction cost and security risks entailed, however, resulted in little progress. China's enthusiasm for this ultimately unfeasible project, simultaneous with growing US interest in the energy resources of the Caspian, demonstrated that political and strategic imperatives overrode purely economic concerns in driving China's energy strategy. This political calculus was further demonstrated in 1997 when CNPC won the right to develop two oil fields in Aqtöbe and an oil field in Uzen (both in Kazakhstan), outbidding such competitors as Amoco and Texaco by pledging to invest US$4.3 billion over twenty years (Andrews-Speed, Liao, Dannruther 2002: 58–9; Olcott 1999; Cohen 2003). Moreover, this was part of a broader US$9.5 billion Sino–Kazakh investment package which included a Chinese commitment to construct a 3,000 km pipeline between Kazakhstan and eastern China (Levinsson and Svanberg 2000). China's strategy in Central Asia was also further bolstered in 1997 by the conclusion of a second S-5 agreement on 'Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in Border Areas' and undertakings to establish annual forum meetings (Cutler 2001).

The intensification of China's internal and external strategies to secure Xinjiang did not however reduce the incidence of ethnic minority opposition in the following years. Throughout late 1997 and 1998 violence was reported to be widespread in the region including assassinations of government officials, bomb blasts in some cities of the Tarim Basin and an attack in August 1998 on a military base by the 'East Turkestan People's Liberation Front' (Gladney 2004: 380; Fogden 2003: 60). In the same year it was also reported that in two separate incidents in Kulja (Yining) up to four police and paramilitary personnel were killed attempting to arrest 'terrorists' (Lawrence 2000). Indeed, in May 1998, the vice-chairman of the XUAR, Zhang Zhou, admitted that the region had been plagued by violence and explicitly placed the blame on 'separatists' and external forces:

> They have killed Han, they have killed their own people, they have killed the highest clergy, because they supported the Communist Party. The terrorists use weapons that they make themselves or are smuggled from abroad We cannot say that we have solved the problem. They are using real guns and bullets and threaten social stability.
>
> (O'Neill 1998)

The vice-chairman's comment that the authorities had not solved the problem appeared to be an accurate assessment with more violent incidents occurring throughout the remainder of 1998 and into 1999. According to a government report on 'East Turkistan Terrorists' released in 2002, there were eight major violent 'separatist' related incidents between January 1998 and October 1999. These included the assassination of an imam, Abliz Haji in Yecheng County, six explosions in Yecheng County (in the Kashgar Prefecture) between 22 February and 30 March, attacks on the home of the director of the Yecheng Public Security Bureau in April 1998, and an attack on a police station in Saili township (China Daily 2002).

The authorities responded to these incidents by implementing further 'Strike Hard' campaigns between 1997 and 1999 which resulted in the execution of approximately 210 Uyghurs but did little to stem ethnic minority opposition to Chinese rule (Rudelson and Jankowiak 2004: 317; Lawrence 2000; Blua 2004a). As with the preceding 1996 'Strike Hard' campaign a crackdown on 'illegal religious activities' was a key focus of the authorities' efforts throughout this period. The focus on religion as a *source* of opposition arguably strengthened Uyghur identification of Islamic practice as an intrinsic marker of Uyghur identity and 'separateness' from China (Rudelson 2000; Fuller and Lipman 2004: 338–9; Smith 2002). Thus a major factor in the strengthening of Uyghur identity (of which Islam is assumed to be a key component) throughout the 1990s stemmed from the integrationist techniques and tactics of rule employed by the state. Of particular import in this respect was the state's indirect encouragement of Han in-migration to Xinjiang. It is perhaps not incoincidental that ethnic minority unrest increased in the 1990s as the Han population rose from 5.7 million in 1990 to 6.6 million in 1997 (Mackerras 2001: 293). Thus Smith argues that the traditional regional/oasis identities and rivalries in Xinjiang have been neutralised by an encompassing 'religio-cultural and socio-economic threat: Xinjiang's Han Chinese immigrant population' (Smith 2002: 156). The state's policies in Xinjiang can in part be seen as generating the very thing that it feared – the strengthening of ethnic minority feelings of 'separateness' from the Chinese state and society. Thus, the mid to late 1990s witnessed an increasing emphasis amongst the Uyghur on 'those ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious characteristics that distinguish them from the Han Chinese' such as regular mosque attendance (Fuller and Lipman 2004: 339). Simultaneously, however, external dynamics in Central Asia and Afghanistan reinforced the state's negative perception of Islam's influence on society.

Central Asia's 'long, hot summers' and the consolidation of the Shanghai Five, 1998–2001

The geopolitical competition and cooperation amongst the Central Asian states, Russia, China, Iran and the US for Central Asia's oil and gas, as previously noted, developed simultaneously with the emergence of cross-border phenomena of weapons and drugs trafficking, and Islamic insurgency. The epicentre of these phenomena was Afghanistan which had, since the Taliban's capture of

Kabul in 1996 and subsequent offensive against the Northern Alliance the following year, become a haven for political opponents of the regions' secular (and often authoritarian) regimes (Rashid 2001a). By 1997, the ruling regimes of the Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan had systematically silenced secular and moderate political opposition (Dawisha and Parrott 1997). The generally parlous socio-economic conditions in the region combined with this political climate to create conditions conducive to the spread of radical or 'fundamentalist' Islamic movements. By the late 1990s, living standards throughout the region remained below pre-1991 levels, with the majority of the population living in relative poverty. This socio-economic situation was exacerbated by endemic governmental corruption, lack of economic and political reform (Cornell and Spector 2002: 195–200). This was particularly the case in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan who shared the strategic Ferghana valley, the historic 'heartland' of Central Asia (Rashid 2001d). These states were also affected by the fall-out from the recently concluded civil war in Tajikistan. Two organisations emerged in this period, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), to make the nightmare scenario of the region's leaders of trans-national Islamic movements a reality over the 1998–2001 period.

The IMU emerged in 1998, primarily composed of Uzbeks who had fought with the Islamic Revival Party (IRP) in the Tajik civil war and was led militarily by an ex-Soviet paratrooper and ex-IRP commander, Juma Namangani, and politically by Tahir Yuldashev, both Uzbeks from the Ferghana valley. The IMU's stated goal was the overthrow of Uzbek President Islam Karimov and the establishment of an Islamic state in Uzbekistan. In contrast, the goal of HT was, at least initially, more ambitious with the organisation committed to the implementation of strict Shari'a (Islamic law) and the establishment of a supranational Islamic caliphate in Central Asia. Namangani, Yuldashev and other Islamist Uzbeks had fled from Uzbekistan to Tajikistan after Karimov launched a crackdown on Islamic political organisations in 1992–3 where they subsequently fought with the Islamic opposition in the Tajik civil war between 1992 and 1997 (Rashid 2002: 137–52; Kimmage 2004; Spector 2002: 8–9).

Significantly, the future IMU leader's involvement in the Tajik civil war facilitated the linkages that would see it become a pan-Central Asian threat. This permitted the IMU to use Tajik territory as a base for incursions into Uzbek, and later Kyrgyz, portions of the Ferghana valley. In the summer of 1999, the IMU launched its first offensive in the Ferghana valley from a base in Tajikistan's Tavildera valley. Although there were also reports that the IMU had bases in Mazar-e-Sharif and Konduz in northern Afghanistan, which were used as training camps. This foray alarmed both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, whose territory the IMU traversed to reach Uzbekistan, and provided a major irritant to these states' relations with Uzbekistan. The IMU's activities were not limited to raids in the Ferghana valley, with the group apparently carrying out an assassination attempt against Karimov in Tashkent in February 1999. The activities of the IMU were also unsettling for the major powers in the region, Russia and China, with reports abounding regarding the IMU's recruitment of all the major ethnic groups of

Central Asia, including Uyghurs, and connections with Chechenya (Rashid 1999; Ahrari 2000: 668; Weisbrode 2001: 48–9).

These developments were thus a major factor in the development of a broader agenda for the S-5 forum which, as of its 1998 meeting, undertook to meet annually. This move toward greater regional cooperation in military and security terms was the result of a convergence of interests of the organisations members. China's motivation for greater regional action on the issue of trans-national Islamic movements was both obvious and pressing in light of the ongoing incidents of ethnic minority unrest in Xinjiang. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were jolted into action after the IMU's offensive in 1999 and the assassination attempt on Uzbek President Islam Karimov. Meanwhile, Russia, although alarmed by reports of connections between the IMU, secessionist Chechnya and the Taliban, saw the spectre of 'Islamic fundamentalism' as an opportunity to draw the Central Asian governments back into its orbit (Cummings 2001: 146–7; Weisbrode 2001: 58–9).

The agenda of the August 1999 meeting of the S-5 in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek thus dramatically shifted focus from issues of border demarcation and economic cooperation to establishing a regional response to the inter-connected issues of trans-national Islamic movements, drugs and weapons trafficking and border security. The need for a common regional response to these issues was undoubtedly further impressed upon the meeting's attendants by the simultaneous incursion of 1,000 IMU fighters into south-west Kyrgyzstan (Davis 1999; Weisbrode 2001: 49; Liu 2000). These IMU fighters seized a number of villages in the Bakten region, taking a number of Japanese geologists hostage in the process. The militants then demanded the release of 5,000 prisoners from Uzbek jails and declared their intent to launch a jihad against Karimov's regime in Uzbekistan from the Tajik-populated enclave of Sokh in the Kyrgyz portion of the Ferghana valley (Weisbrode 2001: 49–50). The crisis was resolved in October 1999 when the Japanese government provided the estimated US$50,000 ransom for the release of the Japanese geologists to the Kyrgyz government. Thereafter the militants returned to Tajikistan and thence to a base near Konduz in Taliban-controlled northern Afghanistan (Rashid 2001a; Weisbrode 2001: 49–50). Despite the rhetoric of the Bishkek meeting, this latest incursion by the IMU resulted in little cooperation, particularly between the three most effected states, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikitsan. The 'Batken Incident', as it has since been referred to, in fact brought to the fore regional rivalries. Following the incident Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov was particularly vociferous in condemning the Tajik and Kyrgyz governments for not doing enough to combat the IMU threat. Moreover, Karimov accused Tajikistan of tolerating the presence of the IMU and excoriated Kyrgyzstan's weak response to the incident. Uzbekistan's air force also bombed Tajik and Kyrgyz territory in its attempts to destroy retreating IMU militants in the wake of the incident (Weisbrode 2001: 49–50).

In the wake of these events in Central Asia and ongoing low-level violence in Xinjiang, the two major external powers in the region, Russia and China, stepped up their efforts to facilitate a common response to perceived common problems.

With the ascent of Vladimir Putin to the Russian presidency in December 1999, Russia's foreign policy in Central Asia shifted. Putin renewed Russian interest in Central Asia almost immediately by personally visiting Turkmenistan (May 2000) and most significantly Uzbekistan (December 1999 and May 2000). The Russo–Uzbek relationship had been strained under President Yeltsin, as Uzbekistan sought to assert strategic independence from Moscow and remain aloof from CIS related economic and security structures. Under Putin's leadership, however, Russia recognised the opportunity to improve its relations with Uzbekistan, particularly in the security sphere, in the aftermath of the Bakten incident. Putin's efforts paid dividends with Uzbekistan ratifying a treaty on defence cooperation with Russia in February 2000. Putin's re-orientation of Russian policy in Central Asia also extended to its relations with Tajikistan, which became more dependent on Russia than ever. At the CIS summit in June 2000 it was announced that while the CIS peace-keeping force would be withdrawn from Tajikistan, Russian military bases would be established there instead (Cummings 2001: 147; Fairbanks, Starr, Nelson and Weisbrode 2001: 51–2).

Russia also played a key role in coaxing Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov to attend the newly christened 'Shanghai Forum' meeting in the Tajik capital Dushanbe where Russia and China attempted to forge a practical response to the perceived threat of Islamic insurgency. At the meeting leaders of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan signed a joint declaration condemning the Taliban for supporting terrorism, agreed to the establishment of an anti-terrorist security centre in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek, and declared a commitment to increase collective efforts to counter the 'three evils' of 'separatism, terrorism and extremism' (Cummings 2001: 147; Rashid 2001b; Cutler 2001). This declaration was also significant as it demonstrated the convergence of Chinese and Russian foreign policy and strategic interests beyond the specific Central Asian context. As such the declaration endorsed China and Russia's call for the development of a 'multipolar' world order, stressed the need to respect national sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs of other states, affirmed the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM), and endorsed China and Russia's opposition to national missile defense (NMD) systems. Internal considerations were nonetheless also to the fore with the statement's section dealing with respect for national sovereignty explicitly referring to the S-5's support for Russian policy in Chechnya and China's stance on Taiwan, Xinjiang and Tibet (People's Daily 2000).

Yet even after such efforts to secure greater cooperation between the Central Asian states, regional tensions continued to come to the fore. A month after the Dushanbe meeting, the IMU launched another series of forays into the Ferghana valley with attacks reported in southern Uzbekistan close to the Kyrgyz border (Weisbrode 2001: 50; Fairbanks, Starr, Nelson and Weisbrode 2002: 56). This provoked a new round of Uzbek unilateralist action to combat the IMU, with Uzbekistan increasing border patrols and mining its borders with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (Mamadshoyev 2000; Babakhanov 2002). This latest incursion also prompted the US to pay greater attention to the region, with the US State Department officially listing the IMU as a terrorist organisation in September.

Moreover, in January 2001 Karimov's government engaged in more attempted arm-twisting in order to compel Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to clamp down on the IMU by cutting off Uzbek gas supplies to its neighbours (Rashid 2001c).

The overall impact of the IMU's activities and Uzbekistan's subsequent unilateral actions were to drive Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan toward closer relations with the major external powers, Russia and China. As we have seen, the major determinants of China's foreign policy in Central Asia stemmed from its strategy in Xinjiang. Hence, China's pre-eminent concerns within its relations with the Central Asian states, particularly Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, had revolved around access to energy resources, facilitation of trade and infrastructural links, border control and demarcation and the issue of Uyghur separatism. After the emergence of the IMU in Central Asia in 1998 and China's intensification of its 'Strike Hard' campaign in Xinjiang in 1997, China's interests in Central Asia converged with those of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In the wake of the IMU's incursions in 1998, 1999 and 2000, these states became more receptive to Chinese requests for greater cooperation regarding what Beijing defined as Uyghur 'separatist' organisations in Central Asia. Russia, as noted previously, also increased its efforts to strengthen its presence, particular in a security or military sense, in the region. These efforts appeared to be rewarded with all the Central Asian states, for example, participating in the 'Southern Shield' CIS military exercises in April 2000 (Blank 2000).

Over this period the Kazakh and Kyrgyz governments concluded a number of border and extradition agreements with China. In 1998, after five years of negotiations the Chinese and Kazakh presidents signed an agreement demarcating their common 1,700 km border, thus settling a border dispute that had begun in the Tsarist and Qing eras (Levinsson and Svanberg 2000). After the signing of this agreement Kazakh Foreign Minister Tokayev stated that the agreement was favourable to Kazakhstan, with the agreement assigning 57 per cent of the 944 square kilometres of disputed territory to Kazakhstan and 43 per cent to China. The Kazakh government also gave a commitment that it would not shelter Uyghur separatists (Shichor 2004: 155; Levinsson and Svanberg 2000). The effect of these agreements became apparent quickly with Kazakhstan deporting four Uyghur 'guerrillas' that had fled Xinjiang to Kazakhstan back to China in the same year. The following year it was also reported that three more Uyghurs refugees were deported from Kazakhstan to China (Blua 2004; Roberts 2004: 234; South China Moring Post 1999). In May 1999, CNPC also began to push forward with the construction of the 4,300 km Kazakh-China oil pipeline, announcing that it had completed the 482 km Korla–Shanshan section within Xinjiang (Asia Times 1999).

Similar arrangements were also made with the Kyrgyz government. In April 1998 Kyrgyzstan secured a US$8 million Chinese investment package. Meanwhile, President Askar Akayev also enlisted Chinese support and finance for the development of a Kyrgyz–Xinjiang rail link through the Torugart Pass in 1998, while the Kyrgyz government gave assurances that it would increase its efforts to control Uyghur 'separatists' in their country (Weisbrode 2001: 56; Ibraimov 2004).

China and Kyrgyzstan also apparently settled their border dispute in August 1999, with the conclusion of an agreement that assigned 30 per cent of the disputed territory to China (Shichor 2004: 156). Prior to the June 2000 S-5 meeting in Dushanbe, President Jiang Zemin travelled to Tajikistan to drum up similar Tajik assurances regarding cooperation with China to limit Uyghur 'separatism' (Rashid 2000b). During this visit China and Tajikistan agreed to speed up their negotiations regarding the resolution of their border dispute in the Pamir Mountains, while China agreed to supply Tajikistan with military aid to the value of 5 million yuan (Shichor 2004: 155).

These efforts to involve its Central Asian neighbours in its crackdown on Uyghur 'separatists' appeared to generate unwanted domestic consequences for these states. Kyrgyzstan experienced a wave of Uyghur and China related violence in 1999 and the opening months of 2,000. On 31 May 1999 an explosion on bus in Osh (Kyrgyzstan) killed three people and another bomb was detonated on 1 June killing one person. Kyrgyz police subsequently arrested five foreign citizens in connection with the blasts – three Uyghurs, one Turk and a Russian. Kyrgyz officials claimed that the Uyghurs were members of the 'Free Turkestan' organisation and had illegally crossed the Sino–Kyrgyz border using falsified documents. In March the following year, Nigmat Bazakov, a leader of Uyghur émigrés in Kyrgyzstan, was assassinated. According to Kyrgyz police Bazakov was killed because he had refused to cooperate with the 'Uyghur Liberation Organisation' and advocated non-interference in China's domestic affairs (Soltobaev 2000a and 2000b). On 29 June Wang Jianping, Chinese ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, and his Uyghur driver were shot dead in Bishkek. Kyrgyz investigators arrested two Uyghurs in connection with the incident and claimed that they were members of the aforementioned 'Uyghur Liberation Organisation' (Alibekov 2002).

The perceived growth of the threat of 'radical' Islamic movements to the states of Central Asia, Russia and China over the 1997–2000 period resulted in the expansion and reorientation of the S-5 in June 2001 to become the 'Shanghai Cooperation Organisation' (SCO). The meeting in Shanghai on 14 June transformed the organisation into a fully-fledged international institution complete with secretariat and inter-ministerial committees, while increasing its membership by one with the formal ascension of Uzbekistan to the organisation (Cutler 2004; Eurasianet 2001). Two major documents were adopted at the meeting, 'Declaration of the Establishment of the 'Shanghai Cooperation Organization' and most significantly, the 'Shanghai Covenant on the Suppression of Terrorism, Separatism and Religious Extremism' (SCO Secretariat 2001; Aris 2001). The latter document clearly demonstrated that establishing a regional response to the perceived threat of radical Islam to member states was a central concern of the new organisation (Eurasianet 2001). The former document, however, was also significant as it explicitly outlined the principles of the SCO and demonstrated the influence of Chinese interests. Thus, the document asserted that the principles of the group, or the 'Shanghai spirit' as Chinese commentary referred to it, comprised of 'mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for multi-civilisations

and common development'(SCO Secretariat 2001). Therefore, while the SCO's agenda was the result of a gradual convergence in the interests of Russia, China and the Central Asian states, the guiding principles of the group also strongly reflected China's wider foreign policy interests:

> These principles ostensibly establish a set of regional norms which move beyond power differentials amongst the organization's members and toward a consensus-based approach to resolve regional problems. It is also important to note that this "spirit" is not seen as solely a set of regional norms, but is openly promoted as universally applicable and as a basis for global politics.
> (Ambrosio 2008: 1,327)

As the course of events in Central Asia over the next few years would demonstrate, this normative aspect of the SCO was not mere window dressing but became a key facet of its appeal to not only its members but prospective members such as Pakistan and Iran (Roberts 2004: 236; Eurasianet 2001).

Conclusion

The development of the SCO's agenda, as we have seen, was the result of a gradual convergence in the interests of Russia, China and the Central Asian states in the face of what was perceived to be a transnational radical Islamic threat to the region (Yom 2002). It should be noted, however, that the nature of these threats was far from uniform across the member states of the SCO. Although all the member states attempted to portray their own Islamist 'problem' as a constituent part of a broader transnational Islamic conspiracy against secular and 'modernising' governments, each had equally plausible internal causes or conditions that facilitated the growth of violent opposition that were largely the consequence of government policy. The situation in the Ferghana Valley, although undoubtedly connected to events in Afghanistan, was not an outgrowth of that conflict but a consequence of the Tajik civil war and Uzbekistan's authoritarianism.

Despite the Chinese government's claims, for instance, regarding the external 'causes' of violent ethnic minority opposition in Xinjiang, China's integrationist project in the region clearly contributed to it. This is not to say that there were no connections between Uyghur separatists and radical Islamic groups such as the IMU and the Taliban. Indeed, this chapter has cited numerous reports regarding the involvement of Uyghurs in events in Central Asia and Afghanistan. Further reports in 2000, for example, suggested that Uyghurs had been fighting with the Taliban in northern Afghanistan, as well as being actively recruited by the IMU (Rashid and Lawrence 2000; Rashid 2000a). Moreover, it was also reported that in June 2001 the IMU had changed its name to the 'Islamic Party of Turkestan', perhaps reflecting the organisations intent to become a pan-Central Asian movement and its alleged connections to Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Spector 2002: 20). Such a development would thus impact on China's position in Xinjiang or Eastern Turkestan. Yet it must be noted that these involved very small numbers of people which belied

China's assertion of a widespread network of violent 'separatists and terrorists' operating in Xinjiang (Millward 2004; Clarke 2008b).

At the dawn of the new millennium China's strategy in Xinjiang and Central Asia had arguably been relatively successful. Despite ongoing reports of low-level violence in Xinjiang between 1998 and 2001, the state's integrationist agenda proceeded apace internally, while China's imperatives in Central Asia appeared to have been secured with the consolidation of its bilateral relations with the Central Asian states and the formation of the SCO. The development of a convergence in Sino–Russian interests in Central Asia also reflected a broad theme in both states' foreign policy since 1991 – a desire to see the development of a multipolar world order rather than the perceived unipolar US-dominated paradigm of the post-Cold War era. The development of the SCO was thus in line with China's overall foreign policy goal of improving relations with a wide number of states in order to facilitate the operationalisation of 'collegial sharing of power among nations' (Zheng 1999). By 2001, China and Russia's influence in the region was ascendant with the formation of the SCO, with the United States' strategic imperatives in the region limited to concerns over Caspian hydrocarbon resources and 'pipeline politics' in general (Miles 1999). Except for Washington's sporadic efforts regarding the activities of Osama bin Laden toward the end of the 1990s, witness the US cruise missile assault on alleged 'terrorist' training camps in Afghanistan in August 1998, it was not thoroughly engaged in the region nor particularly cognisant of regional politics (Rashid 2001a). Moreover, the US was seemingly prepared to adopt a wait-and-see approach to Russia and China's attempts at forging a regional response to the issues of 'separatism, terrorism, and religious extremism' in Central Asia.

Therefore, on the eve of the attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, Russia and China had extended their political, economic and security/military influence across the Central Asian states. Within Xinjiang, China's 'double-opening' strategy proceeded apace although continued low-level violence throughout the province remained a not-insignificant irritation to the authorities. The events of 11 September 2001 would, however, generate developments that not only challenged China's foreign policy framework in Central Asia but also key elements of its integrationist techniques and tactics of rule in Xinjiang. It is to this complex and fluid process that we now turn.

7 Walking on three legs

Balancing China's Xinjiang, Central Asia and grand strategy derived interests, 2002–2009

The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington DC on 11 September 2001 simultaneously presented Beijing with both challenges and opportunities with respect to its foreign policy in Central Asia and integrationist agenda in Xinjiang. In particular, with the rapid expansion of US military, political and economic influence into the region with the launching of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan was a contradictory development for Beijing's position in Central Asia and Xinjiang. On the one hand it promised to end the Taliban's control of Afghanistan and Al Qaeda's use of the country as a base for the spread of radical Islamism, which Beijing had long perceived as a major problem to be combated. The George W. Bush administration's prosecution of the 'global war on terror' also provided Beijing with the opportunity to reframe its struggle with Uyghur separatists. From 2001 onward, Beijing would increasingly paint Uyghur separatism as a monolithic force, inspired by radical Islamist ideology and supported by Washington's *bete noire*, Al Qaeda. The 'war on terror' thus provided China with an unprecedented opportunity to legitimise its actions in Xinjiang as part of an international effort to combat 'terrorism'. As we shall see, however, this would not be without significant complications for Beijing. The evident Central Asian tilt towards Washington in late 2001 and into 2002 on the other hand was viewed by many observers as constituting a mortal blow to the SCO and by extension the interests of its major drivers, China and Russia. Over this brief period all the Central Asian states bar Turkmenistan signed military cooperation and base access agreements with Washington and received major injections of economic aid (Chung 2004: 994–996; Rumer 2002; Yom 2002). This led prominent Central Asian analyst, Stephen Blank, to assert in August 2002 that:

> In every respect, America's war against terrorism has diminished China's power and standing in Central Asia. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the linchpin of its strategy to fight terrorism and separatism has been discredited and shown to command no effective military resources or political support by the members.
>
> (Blank 2002)

Such an assessment, however, failed to consider the history of China's approach to Xinjiang and Central Asia not only since the collapse of the Soviet Union but ultimately since the establishment of the Communist regime's control over the region in 1949. As the preceding chapters have demonstrated, there has long been a dynamic of interaction between what may be termed China's Xinjiang, Central Asia and grand strategy derived interests. During the Maoist era (1949–76) Beijing sought to negate the factors that had historically led the region to be open to external influences, be they economic, political/ideological or cultural in nature, so as to ensure Xinjiang's integration with the 'New China'. Thus, Beijing deployed a series of policies – from the institution of 'national regional autonomy', ethnic minority language script 'reform' to the encouragement of Han colonisation – that were primarily aimed at firmly reorienting the region away from external non-Chinese influences. This desire was amplified with the degeneration of Beijing's relations with the Soviet Union from the late 1950s. In this period, Xinjiang was perceived as a strategic buffer against the machinations of 'Soviet socialist imperialism' as much as anything else, with the result that the security of the region was largely privileged over such goals as economic modernisation.

However, as detailed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, the dynamic between China's three tiers of interests gradually shifted after 1976 toward a more balanced equation whereby the goal of integration for Xinjiang was increasingly perceived to be best ensured by seeking to utilise the region's geopolitical and strategic position to establish greater linkages with Central Asia. In the post-1991 period in particular, this orientation has also become enmeshed in Beijing's broader grand strategy. In this sense, Beijing now clearly views the integration of Xinjiang as not only serving core internal functions but also increasingly as contributing to the advancement of China's position in international affairs. Significantly, the nature of China's integrationist strategy – based on the 'double opening' to both the rest of China and Central Asia – grants China significant security, economic and strategic benefits that serve to further consolidate of Beijing's control of Xinjiang and the expansion of Chinese power in Central Asia. Thus, Beijing's diplomacy and foreign policy in Central Asia is not only inextricably connected to its quest to integrate Xinjiang but also to its global foreign policy.

This chapter will proceed in three major parts. First, it will begin with an exploration of the trajectory of China's integrationist strategy within Xinjiang since 2001. This section will focus on the intensification of Beijing's integrationist strategy under the rubric of the Great Western Development campaign as the practice and discourse which surrounds this campaign illustrates the linkages between China's three tiers of interests. Second, it will examine how China responded to the changed Central Asian strategic environment post-9/11 with particular emphasis on the evolution of its multilateral diplomacy through the SCO and its bilateral relationships with individual Central Asian states. This is important as China's foreign policy in Central Asia has been variously characterised as constituting a 'new regionalism', establishing vassal relations between China

and Central Asia or as geopolitical manoeuvering (Chung 2004; Swanstrom 2005; Lanteigne 2006/07). What will emerge from this discussion is that all three conceptualisations can be seen as constituting accurate pictures of China's multilateral (new regionalism) and bilateral (vassalisation) diplomacy/relations in Central Asia. Ultimately, China's conception of 'new regionalism', as embodied in the SCO, privileges state sovereignty within a multilateral context and is driven by China's concerns with its own sovereignty and control of Xinjiang and the strategic benefits of offering Central Asia an alternative vision of inter-state relations than the generally 'liberal' order proffered by the US. Finally, it will provide a discussion of how Beijing's Xinjiang and Central Asia derived interests fit within its broader grand strategy of 'peaceful rise'. It will emerge in this respect that to a large degree this grand strategy is concerned with hedging against potential US containment of China.

The Great Western Development: the domestic and diplomatic implications of the intensification of integration in Xinjiang

As we have seen, despite China's contemporary claim that Xinjiang has been 'an inseparable part of the unitary multi-ethnic Chinese nation' since the Han Dynasty (206BCE–24CE), it has only been since the Qing conquest of Xinjiang in the mid–eighteenth century that China-based states have been able to consolidate their control over the region for an extended period (Forbes 1986). However, China became more concerned regarding the security of Xinjiang with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 due to the convergence of external dynamics such as the Islamic revival in neighbouring Central Asia and Afghanistan and internal dynamics associated with China's post-1978 reform era. In Xinjiang these internal dynamics stemmed from an initial 'liberalisation' and 'reform' of the state's approach to the region, particularly toward ethnic minority religious and cultural practices (Christoffersen 1993: 136). Ultimately, such 'liberalisation' generated increasing demands by ethnic minorities for greater political autonomy and contributed to a wave of ethnic unrest in Xinjiang toward the end of the 1980s (Clarke 2007). China's strategy to manage this unrest has rested upon the development of a 'double-opening' approach: to simultaneously integrate Xinjiang with Central Asia and China proper in economic terms and to establish security and cooperation with China's Central Asian neighbours (Clarke 2003).

Ultimately, this strategy has been underpinned by a circular logic. For China, security and control of Xinjiang was increasingly perceived from the early 1990s onward as being reliant upon accelerating economic growth and development in order to win the acquiescence of the region's non-Han ethnic groups to ongoing Chinese rule. Yet, this could only occur in the authorities' view, if security and control were resolutely maintained, as demonstrated by the assertion of the autonomous region's chairman in the mid-1990s, for example, that, 'we must use economic development to maintain stability, and on the other hand, we must use

political stability to guarantee economic development' (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1996c: 57). Thus, security within Xinjiang was to be achieved by economic growth, while economic growth was to be assured by the reinforcement of the state's instruments of political and social control, which in turn was to be achieved by opening the region to Central Asia. Significantly, the economic opening to Central Asia was to provide Beijing with a high element of leverage to induce Central Asian states to aid it in its quest to secure Xinjiang against Uyghur 'separatism' into the 2000s.

Solving China's nationality problems under new historical circumstances?

This logic has continued to inform China's approach to Xinjiang into the twenty-first century, although it is now framed under the rubric of the Great Western Development or *Xibu da kaifa* (GWD) campaign. While this campaign is a nationwide one, its operation in Xinjiang has reflected the intensification of the longstanding state-building policies in the region, with the region envisaged to become an industrial and agricultural base and a trade and energy corridor for the national economy (Becquelin 2004). This goal can only be achieved with the development of greater interaction and cooperation between China and the Central Asian states – a point underlined by Chinese policy which has sought to develop a new 'Continental Eurasian land-bridge' that will link not only the major economies of Europe, East Asia and South Asia but also enmesh Xinjiang with China (Clarke 2008b). State investment in regions targeted by the GWD for such infrastructure developments amounted to 1.3 trillion yuan ($190 billion) in 2007 and Beijing allocated a further 438 billion yuan ($64 billion) for 2008/2009 (Le Miere 2009). Much of this investment in Xinjiang has been channelled to large infrastructure projects, such as building highways, power plants, telecommunications networks, oil and gas extraction and the construction of pipelines (Weimer 2004: 188; Handke 2006; Niazi 2005b). Xinjiang's own oil and gas resources are substantial, with the region's production of oil accounting for 12.7 per cent of the national total in 2004 while its production of gas accounted for 14 per cent of the national total (Handke 2006: 53). Perhaps more important than Xinjiang's own oil and gas is the role that it is playing as an 'energy junction' between Central Asia, South Asia and East Asia. This latter aspect was underlined with the opening of the Sino–Kazakh pipeline in late 2009.

This points toward what has arguably been the major shift in China's approach to Xinjiang since the foundation of the PRC in 1949. Although the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 removed a long-feared threat to the security of Xinjiang, it nonetheless presented China with a new set of challenges, including the uncertain prospect of dealing with five independent Central Asian states and a regional Islamic revival. Both of these seemed fraught with danger from Beijing's perspective given that a wave of unrest had erupted in Xinjiang in 1990–1, including an Islamist-inspired rebellion in the township of Baren in the south-west of the province which, as we saw in Chapter 4, raised the spectre of 'hostile

external forces' and 'national splittists' colluding to challenge Chinese control. China's response to these challenges was to diverge from its traditional approach of attempting to isolate Xinjiang from Central Asian influences. This attempt to isolate Xinjiang had worked against the 'geographic template' of the region which 'produced axes of outside cultural influence that penetrated the region' determining that the major sub-region's of the province were in fact oriented 'outward' toward the proximate external civilisations, be they Indian, Central Asian or Chinese (Rudelson 1997: 39–41). China's approach to the region since 1991 has, however, been underpinned by a realisation that Xinjiang's 'geographic template' need not be an obstacle to its integration with China but rather an asset in the prosecution of this enduring Chinese project.

Significantly, simultaneous with this new thrust for 'opening up the west' of China there has been a shift in emphasis in how the state has framed its approach to such regions as Xinjiang and their ethnic minorities. One of the great themes of twentieth-century China's history has been the struggle to establish a coherent national form that would not only consolidate China into a modern nation-state but also protect the territorial boundaries inherited from the Qing Dynasty. In this regard, the two dominant political movements of the twentieth century – the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party – based their strategies to consolidate the post-imperial state on the basis of Han racial nationalism and Leninist multiculturalism respectively (Fitzgerald 1996; Mackerras 1994). Unlike the Soviet Union, however, the PRC did not maintain the 'fiction' of a multi-national union with a theoretical right to national self-determination, but implemented a system of 'national regional autonomy' for the fifty-five non-Han ethnic groups officially recognised by the state after 1949 (Connor 1984: 38).

In the CCP's construction, the various non-Han ethnic groups could only achieve their own social revolutions within a unified Chinese state and under the leadership of the Han-dominated CCP. Indeed, soon after establishing the PRC, the CCP adopted five guiding principles for its handling of the ethnic minority issue: (1) no region would be permitted to secede from the PRC; (2) both 'Han chauvinism' (i.e. assertions of Han cultural superiority) and 'local nationalism' (i.e. separatism) would be opposed; (3) autonomous organs of government would be established in regions predominantly populated by minority peoples; (4) equality between nationalities, freedom of religion, and the preservation and development of minority languages and customs would be guaranteed; and (5) the central government pledged to aid in the development of ethnic minority regions (Schwarz 1962: 100–1; Benson and Svanberg 1998: 89). While the CCP's implementation of each of these principles varied with the ideological vicissitudes and campaigns of the Maoist era, they nonetheless remained entrenched in the party's discourse on the minority issue. However, as Liu notes, the effect was that plurality existed only in a *cultural* sense while the 'political unity' of the PRC remained Han-centred, and in effect sacrosanct (Liu 2004: 154). Under Deng Xiaoping and his successors, the CCP has arguably tended to emphasise its commitment to the economic development and modernisation of China's ethnic minorities, often to the detriment of its commitment to protect the *cultural* plurality

of the PRC (Barabantseva 2008: 577; Mackerras 2003). This has had two major effects in the context of Xinjiang in the 2000s. The first relates to changing Han conceptions of Xinjiang and predominant attitudes toward non-Han groups such as the Uyghur. The second relates to the impact of this discourse on the state's approach to the region's ethnic minorities.

Under the GWD in particular, the balance the CCP had long-maintained between cultural plurality and Han-centred political unity has shifted in favour of a discourse that envisages 'China as a transformative force of civilisation' with the 'primitive' and 'underdeveloped' periphery, such as Xinjiang, as its subject (Fiskejo 2006: 15). Others have suggested that analogous to a Chinese version of 'manifest destiny' whereby Xinjiang, with its relatively untapped natural resources, wide open spaces and, by Chinese standards, sparse population is simply awaiting the 'spiritual impulse of the Chinese nation' to transform it (Becquelin 2004; Moneyhan 2002/03). This is reflected most clearly in the official language of the GWD which embeds 'ethnic minorities in an exotic aura' and 'localise[s] them in one geographic area, the West, thus demarcating them as localised elements of the Chinese nation state' (Barabantseva 2009: 228). The 'West' is officially constituted not only by geographically western regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet but also autonomous regions in Guangxi and Jilin, demonstrating that it is ultimately a political, economic and ideological designation (Goodman 2004: 320; Barabantseva 2009: 238; Sines 2002: 6).

These disparate regions are united in the official imagination as they are conceived of as economically under-developed, lacking in infrastructure, and predominantly 'ethnic'. A June 2000 article by the head of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, Li Dezhu, clearly exhibited this change to a 'developmentalist' approach to solve China's ethnic minority issue. For Li, the key to 'solving' China's 'ethnic question' lies in accelerating the development of the 'economy' and 'culture' of the ethnic minorities. The rationale of economic development as a cure-all for China's ethnic problems was clearly expressed:

> So the final solution for these problems lies in developing social productivity in areas of minority nationalities. The strategy to promote social and economic development of western China is a fundamental way to speed up the development of minority nationalities, and *a necessary choice to solve China's nationality problems under new historical circumstances*. [Emphasis added]
>
> (Li 2000)

Significantly, for the subsequent discussion of the trajectory of Chinese policy in Xinjiang in the 2000s, Li also elucidated the state's conviction that 'national unity' and 'development' are inter-linked, arguing that the GWD, 'will provide the material foundation for strengthening national unity and social stability; while national unity and social stability will create a favourable environment for implementing the strategy' (Li 2000). However, it also acknowledged that the process of accelerated economic development and integration entailed by

the GWD could not only contribute to inter-ethnic tension but also provide an opportunity for external 'hostile forces' to meddle in China:

> On the other hand, implementing the strategy may bring about new issues and problems which might challenge national unity and social stability. Implementing the strategy will lead to further opening-up. *Overseas hostile forces will probably take this opportunity to penetrate China. We must be highly vigilant on this and take effective measures to safeguard national unity and social stability in order to smoothly implement the strategy.* [Emphasis added]
>
> (Li 2000)

This perception of a relationship between internal challenges to 'national unity' and the penetration of external influences has been a defining anxiety for Beijing in the context of Xinjiang. Yet, as we shall see below, the reliance on economic modernisation and development as an instrument to neutralise ethnic minority dissatisfaction with Chinese rule fails to account for the fact the ideology of 'developmentalism' that has engulfed Xinjiang has contributed to political, economic and cultural marginalisation of the Uyghur, providing the conditions not only for Uyghur unrest but also inter-ethnic tensions.

Yet the reliance on economic modernisation and development as an instrument to neutralise ethnic minority dissatisfaction fails to account for the fact the ideology of 'developmentalism' that has engulfed Xinjiang has contributed to political, economic and cultural marginalisation of the Uyghur, providing the conditions not only for Uyghur unrest but also inter-ethnic tensions due to a change in Han Chinese perceptions of Xinjiang stimulated by the GWD. In this latter respect, while Xinjiang was long considered by most Han to be a barren, isolated cultural backwater that served as a place of exile, recent Han migrants are increasingly envisaging the region as a 'land of opportunity' (Kardos 2008: 7–12). In addition, Han in Xinjiang are increasingly prone to be dismissive of Uyghur claims to disadvantage pointing to the government's preferential treatment of minorities – from exemption from the one-child policy to affirmative action-type quotas to tertiary institutions and political/administrative positions – and to the economic development and modernisation that Beijing has brought to the region (Sautman 1998). The prevailing attitude, and one that was borne out during the unrest in Ürümqi in July 2009 noted in the introduction to this book, was that Uyghurs are ungrateful 'natives' treated too leniently by the state. Indeed, one Han demonstrator on the streets after the initial unrest asserted that the Han Chinese population had simply 'run out of patience' with the Uyghurs (Sommerville 2009).

Such perceptions of Xinjiang often conflict with reality. For example, the notion that Xinjiang has 'untapped' resources and abundant land is undermined by the fact that most of the arable land in Xinjiang is already under cultivation and water resources are increasingly scarce, while there has been significant desertification

due to urbanisation, extensive irrigation and land reclamation projects spurred by increased Han settlement since 1949 (Blua 2004c; Radio Free Asia 2006; Becquelin 2004: 366). While economic stimulus has been provided by the direction of state investment toward large-scale infrastructure or mineral extraction projects it has also led to competition for resources and jobs in which the region's ethnic minorities are at a disadvantage due to lower levels of education, particularly given their generally lower proficiency in Mandarin (Weimer 2004: 186–88; Bachman 2004: 161–73; Moeller 2006). Uyghur marginalisation is also reflected in their lack of representation in the Xinjiang CCP, with ethnic minorities comprising around a third of party members. Despite the fact that China's policy on regional autonomy explicitly states that the head of an autonomous region, prefecture or county must be a member of the ethnic group exercising autonomy, none of the first Party secretaries at any level of the Party in the region are from an ethnic minority (Mackerras 2006; Becquelin 2004: 363).

Such political and economic marginalisation has also been accompanied by a gradual demographic marginalisation of the Uyghur. While Han colonisation of the region has been a constant element of the state's strategy for integrating Xinjiang, it has accelerated since 1990. Indeed, the Han population rose from 5.32 million or 37.6 per cent of the region's population in 1990 to 7.49 million or 40.6 per cent of the population in 2000 (Mackerras 2001: 291–93; Mackerras 2004: 8). Significantly, the figures from 2000 did not account for the substantial 'floating population' of some 790,000 Han seasonal migrants seeking employment in the energy and cotton industries which would have taken the Han population to close to 8.28 million or near parity with the total Uyghur population in 2000 which stood at 8.345 million (Becquelin 2004: 369–70; Mackerras 2004: 8; People's Daily 2006).

As we have seen in previous chapters, two aspects of Uyghur culture – religion and language – have also been closely managed by the state. The CCP has always exhibited a concern to manage the Islamic faith of the Uyghur. The state's approach has been characterised by alternating periods of 'soft' and 'hard' policies toward religious and cultural expression. The 'soft' approach has been characterised by a relative tolerance and even encouragement of institutionalised Islam when it is perceived as necessary to gain the acquiescence of the Uyghur population. The 'hard' policies in contrast have been characterised by campaigns against religious education outside of state-sanctioned institutions, 'illegal' mosque construction, the institution of bans on mosque attendance by persons under eighteen years of age, and the 're-education' and 'reform' of religious leaders when the state perceives Islam to be a threat to security (Fuller and Lipman 2004: 333–4). The state also identifies censorship of cultural and media circles as an important instrument of social control. This has arguably been reinforced since 2001, with the authorities limiting the use of Uyghur language in education and the increased censoring of Uyghur literature dealing with political or cultural history (Dillon 2003; Amnesty International 2002; Human Rights Watch 2009: 9–11).

The close link between Islam and Uyghur identity has meant that any attempt by the state to regulate religious practice and expression is a cause of resentment for the Uyghur and is often perceived as an attempt to weaken Uyghur identity. For the state, however, heightened Islamic consciousness, if not managed, is perceived to be at the root of outbreaks of opposition and violence (Shicor 2005: 126–9). In the post-9/11 climate, Beijing in particular has been able to deploy a discourse that equates calls for greater autonomy from the Uyghur with 'terrorism' in order to delegitimise dissent and mobilise public support for its suppression (Clarke 2008a). The domestic portrayal of Uyghurs as 'terrorists/extremists' bent on 'splitting' Xinjiang from China with the aid of 'hostile external forces' has linked in the public imagination the two enduring anxieties of Beijing in the region – separatism and foreign intervention or influence. This was reflected in the Han population's nationalistic response to the events in Ürümqi, as their anger was not only directed at the Uyghurs but also toward the West, and the US in particular, for 'harboring' such 'splittists' as Rebiya Kadeer. It is at this juncture that the discourse of the GWD intersects with China's foreign policy and diplomacy. It will be recalled that one of the dominant themes of the GWD is that China's continued 'rise' can only be ensured through the exploitation of the abundant and 'under-developed' resources of China's west. From this perspective, the threat of 'separatism' from ethnic minorities such as the Uyghur, in league with 'hostile external forces', imperils China's future and cannot be tolerated. Indeed, Ürümqi's mayor claimed in the wake of the unrest that the Xinjiang issue was 'neither an ethnic nor a religious issue but a battle of life and death to defend the unification of our motherland' (BBC News Online 2009).

Post-9/11 diplomatic implications of China's Xinjiang 'problem'

While Xinjiang and the Uyghur have long posed problems for Beijing, it has only been since the 9/11 terrorist attacks that China has chosen to go on the diplomatic 'front foot' on these issues. In particular, Beijing has sought to leverage the international community's concern over Islamic extremism of the Al Qaeda variety to lessen criticism of its handling of Uyghur dissent in Xinjiang. In this respect, Beijing was relatively successful with the US State Department listing the 'East Turkestan Islamic Movement' (ETIM) – a group that China claimed was 'supported and directed' by Osama bin Laden – as an 'international terrorist organization' in September 2002. Chinese claims regarding linkages between groups such as ETIM and Al Qaeda were also given credence by the fact the US captured 22 Uyghurs in Afghanistan who were subsequently detained at Guantanamo Bay (Mackerras 2009: 138–40).

However, from 2003 onward, this strategy turned sour, as Washington began to attempt to rebalance its traditional concerns to promote and protect human rights in China with the exigencies of the 'war on terror' This rebalancing was best reflected in Washington's handling of the Uyghurs at Guantanamo Bay and in its rhetorical support for Uyghur human rights issues. The first signs of this rebalancing came in the final months of 2003 when the Bush administration refused

to acknowledge China's issuing of its first list of Uyghur 'terrorist' organisations. This equivocation was further underlined in 2004 when controversy broke out within the US over the fate of the Uyghur detainees at Guantanamo, with then Secretary of State Colin Powell declaring in August that the Washington would not repatriate them to China in the event of their release due to concerns about their likely treatment. In fact in May 2006 when five of the twenty-two Uyghurs held at Guantanamo Bay were released they were not repatriated to China but rather granted asylum in Albania, prompting a swift diplomatic protest by China to both Tirana and Washington (BBC News Online 2006; China Daily 2006). Despite this, the Bush administration maintained that the seventeen remaining Uyghurs were in fact 'enemy combatants' and should not be released. However, in late 2008 a Washington DC circuit judge ruled that the remaining Uyghurs should be freed and resettled in the US, an outcome that the Bush administration refused to accept. It has subsequently emerged from litigation mounted against the US government by a number of law firms representing the Uyghur detainees that the Bush administration had in fact, as early as 2003, designated some of them as 'non-enemy combatants' Their release, however, was stymied when the administration re-defined them in 2005 as 'no longer enemy combatants', thus implicitly justifying their continued detention on the basis that they had at some time in the past been 'enemy combatants' (Pinney 2008).

Beyond the Uyghur detainee issue itself, the Bush administration shifted more toward the US's traditional concern regarding the human rights of ethnic and religious minorities in China. This shift was reflected in a number of Uyghur-related developments. First, from 2004 the National Endowment for Democracy provided US$75,000 annual funding for the Uyghur American Association (UAA), an organisation that promotes independence for 'East Turkestan', much to the displeasure of Beijing. Second, President George W. Bush personally met with Rebiya Kadeer in Prague in June 2007 and praised her as a 'human rights defender', while prior to attending the opening ceremony for the 2008 Beijing Olympics Bush also made direct reference to the Uyghurs and Tibetans in a speech celebrating the tenth anniversary of the US Congress passing the 'International Religious Freedom Act' (Kan 2009: 9; Uyghur American Association 2007).

Under the Obama administration the profile of the Uyghur issue has continued to rise due to a number of factors. The Obama administration, much like its predecessor, has had to grapple with the issue of the remaining Uyghur detainees at Guantanamo Bay. In May 2009 the Obama administration planned to release and resettle the remaining Uyghur detainees in Virginia as, like its predecessor, it could not persuade third countries such as Germany, Sweden or Australia to accept the former Guantanamo detainees (Lee 2009). This plan fell victim to US domestic politics as Republicans seized on it as an example of Obama's 'soft' stance on terrorism in order to score a 'hit' on the administration (Gingrich 2009). This was perhaps a relief for the Obama administration given that the resettlement of Uyghur detainees in the US would have undoubtedly been perceived in Beijing as a slap in the face. In the end, the administration was able extricate itself from this dilemma by persuading Bermuda and the tiny Pacific island state of Palau in July

to accept four and thirteen Uyghurs respectively (Eckholm 2009). The Obama administration's efforts to close Guantanamo Bay have also raised accusations that the previous Bush administration had permitted Chinese military and security personnel to interrogate Uyghur detainees at Guantanamo in September 2002, raising a further potential problem in developing the administration's relationship with Beijing (Chung 2009).

China's multilateral and bilateral dilpomacy in Central Asia, 2002–09: the dynamics of 'new regionalism' and 'vassalisation'

Despite being dismissed in the wake of 9/11 as an ineffectual 'talking shop', the SCO was able, largely through the efforts of Beijing, to reestablish itself as a prominent actor in Central Asia's strategic environment. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the pessimistic assessments of the SCO's future immediately after 9/11 were fundamentally flawed as they did not take into consideration either the importance that Beijing attaches to the organisation or the bases of Chinese interests in Central Asia. In this latter respect, such accounts failed to account for the PRC's long standing dilemmas in Xinjiang and how these have shaped Beijing's perceptions of Central Asia and Chinese interests therein. Bejing's quest to integrate Xinjiang has not only influenced its multilateral diplomacy through the SCO but is also apparent in its bilateral relationships with key Central Asian states. Indeed, China's bilateral relationships with Central Asia strongly reflect a long standing trilogy of interests that are intimately connected to Beijing's integrationist strategy in Xinjiang – namely security, development and energy. As noted above, a number of observers have suggested that Sino–Central Asian relations are increasingly defined by a dynamic of economic and political dependency resembling imperial China's 'vassal' relationships with neighbouring states. However, as we shall see below, this is a simplistic reading of China's 'traditional' 'vassal' relations with tributary states. In particular, it will emerge that while China is increasingly looming as a dominant economic and perhaps military power in Central Asia it also provides its Central Asian partners with certain economic or political/security goods in return for guarantees regarding the issue of Uyghur 'separatism' in Xinjiang.

China and the post-9/11 evolution of the SCO

The SCO, formed in June 2001, is of major importance not only for understanding China's approach to Central Asia but also to the development of its wider foreign policy grand strategy. Indeed, the SCO is the only multilateral grouping in which China is involved that has from the first been driven by Beijing. This is all the more noteworthy as the SCO's agenda was initially focused on military and security issues, areas which Beijing had traditionally been loath to engage with on a multilateral basis. Moreover, the SCO, both through its declarations and practical measures has developed a normative agenda, although one that is at odds

with the normative agendas of other multilateral actors in Central Asia such as the EU not to mention the 'democracy promotion' agenda of the administration of President George W. Bush. China's pre-eminent role in the SCO has been demonstrated through the framing of the organisation's agenda by the principles of China's 'New Security Concept' which stresses such things as non-interference in the internal affairs of member states and sovereign equality. While this could be portrayed as rhetorical window-dressing on the part of Beijing, it nonetheless reflects China's decision to engage Central Asia on the basis of shared interests in order to achieve its own strategic interests while preventing overt opposition from the region.

For Beijing, the SCO is an example of 'new regionalism' in that it is defined by 'open, functional, interest-based cooperation among contiguous states' that is underpinned by a mutual respect for the member states' sovereignty (Chung 2004). However, what is actually 'new' about the 'new regionalism'? For Fawcett, regionalism simply, 'implies a policy whereby states and non-state actors cooperate and coordinate strategy within a given region' in order to 'pursue and promote common goals in one or more issue areas' (Fawcett 2004: 433). Thus, regionalism is conceived of as a policy *and* a process (Schulz, Soderbaum and Ojendal 2001: 5). However, regionalism can be divided into two types—'soft' and 'hard', where the former is defined by a process of promoting a sense of regional awareness/community and the latter by the consolidation of regional groups/networks or sub-regional groups, 'formalised by interstate arrangements and organisations' (Fawcett 2004: 433). The 'new regionalism' however is also 'extroverted' reflecting the greater inter-dependence of the contemporary global political economy and is an 'instrument to supplement, enhance or protect the role of the state and the power of the government in an interdependent world' (Schulz, Soderbaum and Ojendal 2001: 4). Therefore, the 'new regionalism' is conceived of as operating not against the prevailing systemic structure but as means by which states can mediate or negotiate the challenges posed by the numerous transnational processes identified under the rubric of 'globalisation' The development and operation of the SCO, as we shall see below, correlates well to these parameters in that it exhibits both 'soft' (promoting a sense of regional awareness/community) and 'hard' (regionalism formalised by inter-state arrangements) elements of regionalism.

However, 9/11 intervened to place the development of the SCO process in some doubt and the subsequent US invasion of Afghanistan to oust the Taliban and capture Osama bin Laden resulted in a Central Asian tilt toward the US to the detriment of China and Russia, and the SCO. For example, in 2001 and 2002 all of the Central Asian states except Turkmenistan signed military cooperation and base access agreements with the US, as well as receiving significant economic aid packages. Uzbekistan especially benefited from increased US interest in the region, receiving not only an initial aid package worth US$150 million but also the conclusion of a US–Uzbek 'Strategic Partnership' in March 2002 (Rumer 2002: 59–60). The security and economic benefits of the sudden US engagement with the region was seen as a windfall for the Central Asian states, with Kyrgyz Prime

Minister Kurmanbek Bakiev reportedly suggesting that the basing of thousands of US military personnel at Kyrgyzstan's Manas airbase was a potential 'gold mine' (Peuch 2002).

Despite this both China and Russia attempted to reinvigorate the SCO process. At the SCO foreign ministers' meeting in Beijing on 7 January 2002, the Russian and Chinese foreign ministers put forward proposals to improve the SCO's anti-terrorism and security capabilities. Moreover, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov maintained that the SCO should assume responsibility for regional security, suggesting that China and Russia were already wary of the direction of the US involvement in the region. These efforts made limited headway in 2002 due to the wide array of US agreements and cooperation with the Central Asian states noted above. Indeed, the lack of evident practical action to make good on SCO rhetoric regarding regional military and security cooperation in 2002 led some observers to consider it a 'stillborn' organisation made irrelevant by the penetration of US power into Central Asia.

Nonetheless, the SCO did make some progress in establishing the organisation's operational framework. These included initial law enforcement agency meetings in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to coordinate responses to border security issues, illegal migration and drug trafficking and the official adoption of the SCO charter, establishment of the SCO secretariat in Beijing and the conclusion of agreement to open the 'Regional Anti-Terrorism' (RAT) centre in Bishkek (Blagov 2002). Between 6–11 August 2003, all of the SCO states except Uzbekistan also conducted 'Cooperation–2003' joint military exercises on Kazakh and Chinese soil, the first joint military exercises China had ever taken part in (Carlson 2003). Yet, the absence of Uzbekistan illustrated Tashkent's half-hearted commitment to the SCO and strengthened Russian and Chinese perceptions that Karimov's government was yet to be convinced of the benefits that the SCO could contribute to Uzbek security. Therefore, the 8 September 2003 SCO meeting in Tashkent assumed great importance for the strategic imperatives of China and Russia in the region. At this summit it was announced that the SCO secretariat would begin its functions on 1 January 2004 in Beijing and the executive committee of the RAT centre would open on 1 November 2003 in Tashkent and not Bishkek as previously announced. The transfer of the RAT to Uzbekistan from Kyrgyzstan was symptomatic of Russia and China's desire to see Uzbekistan drawn away from the US orbit (RFE/RL 2003). Therefore, by 2004 the SCO had achieved a measure of success in re-establishing its pre-9/11 positions in the region.

However, the major events that would enhance the SCO's attractiveness to the Central Asian states were internal in origin. In March 2005, Kyrgyzstan experienced the Tulip Revolution that toppled long standing President Askar Akayev, while in May, Uzbekistan also experienced a wave of violent unrest in Andijan in which approximately 4,000 people rioted and were violently suppressed by the Uzbek military. The significance of these events stemmed from their role in souring Central Asian perceptions of the US role in the region, with Central Asian

leaders criticizing the US government's promotion of democracy and human rights as opposed to 'stability' The aftermath of these events demonstrated that China's previous investment in 'community building' in the region through the guiding principles of the S-5 and SCO had not been in vain. Thus, China's emphasis on common interests in economic development, security, stability and 'anti-terrorism' through the SCO combined with China's wider emphasis on 'non-interference' in other states' internal affairs to make China appear as reliable partner from the perspective of the region's remaining authoritarian leaders (Rumer 2006).

The SCO's subsequent July 2005 summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, furthered the tilt of the Central Asian states away from the US and was arguably a triumph for Chinese strategic interests in Central Asia as it demonstrated the Central Asian states' disillusion with the Bush administration's agenda in the region. Thus, the heads-of-state declaration released after the conclusion of the summit requested that 'the members of states of the SCO consider it necessary that the respective members of the antiterrorist coalition set a final timeline for their temporary use of objects of infrastructure and stay of their military contingents on the territories of the SCO member states' – a thinly veiled message to Washington that the immediate post-9/11 glow in its relations with Central Asia had faded (SCO Secretariat 2006). The sentiment expressed by the SCO was underlined when Uzbekistan subsequently cancelled its agreement with the US regarding the US military's use of the Karshi-Khanabad air base, with the last US Air Force plane flying out on 21 November 2005 (Rumer 2006: 141).

These two trends of further progress in the SCO's security cooperation and anti-US rhetoric remained predominant over the next few years. Indeed, the SCO's June 2006 summit in Shanghai resulted in the conclusion of agreements concerning further joint SCO anti-terrorism exercises, and the establishment of a US$900 million credit fund, supplied by China, to establish a SCO Business Council and SCO Inter-Bank Association. This meeting also saw the attendance of representatives of four observer states in Iran, India, Pakistan and Mongolia. Meanwhile, the heads-of-state declaration re-stated the SCO's commitment to combating the 'three evils' while celebrating the organisation's promotion of a 'new security architecture' that 'discards 'double standards' and seeks to settle disputes through negotiation on the basis of mutual understanding' and respects the right of all countries 'to pursue particular models of development and formulate domestic and foreign policies independently and participate in international affairs on an equal basis' (SCO Secretariat 2006).

The 16 August 2007 summit of SCO leaders in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek not only further underlined these trends but also highlighted some emergent problems for the SCO. While the summit captured headlines for the anti-US rhetoric of Iranian President Ahmedinejad it was more significant for the re-emergence of Russia as an equal driver with China of the organisation's agenda (Eurasianet 2007). Indeed, President Putin was publicly enthusiastic about the SCO 'Peace Mission 2007' joint military exercises held between 9 and 17 August

at Chelyabinsk arguing, 'The idea of holding such regular exercises on the territory of various SCO member-countries deserves consideration' as this would 'bolster the SCO's potential in security matters' (Interfax 2007). While the summit produced the now customary declarations of 'good neighbourliness, friendship and cooperation,' perhaps the most significant factors were the explicit Russian and Iranian anti-US rhetoric and Sino–Russian hesitancy to admit new members to the organisation (Marat and Murzakulova 2007). In this latter respect both China and Russia's position on SCO expansion was running counter to that of the Central Asian members with Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev asserting confidently prior to the summit that expansion was simply 'a matter of time' (ITAR-TASS 2007). Such Chinese and Russian reticence was unsurprising given that expansion of the SCO to include any of the current observers would introduce extra-regional powers while diluting Sino–Russian dominance over the organisation.

China's endeavors toward building a shared sense of regional interests among the states of Central Asia through the SCO, which had some success since 2001, was subsequently threatened by Russia's intervention in Georgia in August 2008. Indeed, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev attempted, but ultimately failed, to get the SCO's unconditional support for its incursion into Georgia at the 28 August 2008 summit meeting in Dushanbe, Tajikistan (Farizova 2008). The summit's declaration noted the members' 'deep concern' over the Ossetia-Georgia issue and called for *all* parties to resolve the issue through diplomacy. Moreover, the declaration reasserted the SCO's proclaimed commitment to the territorial integrity of states, good-neighborly relations and common development (SCO Secretariat 2008). For Beijing, the Ossetia–Georgia issue was unwelcome on a number of counts. First, China could not recognise Russia's intervention in Georgia as to do so would risk setting a precedent that could potentially be used against it in the future regarding Xinjiang, Tibet or Taiwan. Second, 'separatism' is one of the 'three evils' along with extremism and terrorism that form a core issue for the SCO, and thus Russia's actions arguably undermined this pillar of the grouping (Blank 2008). In terms of the power dynamics within the SCO, Russia's precipitous action in Georgia has arguably strengthened China's position as Beijing has to the present stood by the stated principles of the organisation (Swanstrom 2008).

In summary, the development of the S-5 and the SCO, reflects China's endeavor to establish multiple regional and global relationships in order to counter US primacy in the international system – a goal achieved to an extent in 2005 and 2006 with the tilt of the Central Asian states back toward the SCO and China. Moreover, as the statements from the 2005, 2006 and 2007 SCO summits demonstrate, China increasingly views the SCO as a forum in which to present its foreign policy as a distinct alternative to that of the US. Of central importance here has been China's commitment to embed within the SCO a normative framework – focused on maintaining 'stability' and guided by concepts of non-interference in 'internal affairs' – that supports the political status quo in Central Asia. This is not only important for China's specific interests in Central Asia, such as ensuring the security of Xinjiang and a stable immediate regional environment, but also

for its strategy of 'peaceful rise' which places a premium on the maintenance international security and 'stability'

China's bilateral relations with Central Asia: toward 'vassalisation'?

A number of observers have suggested that Sino–Central Asian relations are increasingly defined by a dynamic of economic and political dependency resembling imperial China's 'vassal' relationships with neighbouring states (Swantsrom 2005; Goldstein 2005). China's dominance can be seen through its bilateral trade relationships with individual Central Asian states and its major investment in acquiring Central Asian oil and gas. However, China's interests in its bilateral relationships go beyond this, albeit crucial, desire for energy security to encompass wider political, economic and strategic interests. As will be demonstrated below, China's interests within its bilateral relations with Central Asia are intimately connected to its strategy toward Xinjiang. Before moving the discussion to focus on this however, it is necessary to briefly clarify the concept of vassalisation.

In John K. Fairbank's classical exposition, imperial China's foreign relations were framed through a complex of practices that he referred to collectively as the 'tribute system' According to this model, imperial China structured its foreign relations with non-Chinese through a hierarchical ordering of culturally superior to inferior, focused on a Sinic cultural and geographic centre (Fairbank 1968: 1–17). Yet, there is an important aspect, particularly in the actual *practice* of this vision of world order that has been overlooked and is important to note in the context of China's relations with Central Asia. Through analysis of the practice of relations between the Qing Empire and various non-Chinese peoples of Central Asia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for example, scholars such as Joseph Fletcher, James Millward, and Peter Perdue have demonstrated that the Fairbank model of a hierarchical relationship between the imperial centre – personified in the 'Son of Heaven' – and the 'tributary' state was more often fiction rather than fact (Fletcher 1968; Millward 1998; Perdue 2005). As they have suggested, the Fairbank model was often modified to serve practical material interests in imperial China's foreign relations.

Thus, while the ideal vision of the Chinese world order was hierarchical, in practice the conceit of Chinese civilisational superiority, and the Confucian emphasis on moral example, which lay at its core permitted the toleration of difference and plurality in the realm of 'international relations' Indeed, the Chinese *did not* attempt to make the conceit of hierarchical relationships embodied in the theory or ideal state of the tribute system fact through the conversion of the barbarian to Chinese ways. What lay at the core of the Chinese world order, was that *datong* – i.e., 'great harmony' or 'universal commonwealth' that theoretically all emperors sought to facilitate – would be achieved by the cultural attraction and example of the Sinic centre. This has a resonance with contemporary Chinese foreign policy in Central Asia – whereby it has made a great virtue in recent times, particularly through the SCO, of emphasising common interests and reserving differences as a distinct counter-point to the neo-liberal agenda

of the West. It should also be noted that the hierarchical 'tribute system' often cost imperial China considerably more than it gained in economic terms, as for the hierarchical model elucidated by Fairbank was primarily an internally-focused political construct. As such Fairbank noted that in imperial China's foreign relations, 'the rulers of China usually declared themselves ready to sacrifice economic substance in order to preserve political form' (Fairbank 1968: 12).

Thus, traditional 'vassal' relations often did not necessarily conform to the conventional picture of a dominant China and weak Central Asia but of a more fluid and pragmatic set of relations. During the Qing period (1644–1911) for example, economic or trade advantage was given to Central Asian khanates in return for security guarantees for China's position in Xinjiang (Fletcher 1968; Millward 1998; Newby 2005). Indeed, the Chinese term *fan* usually translated as 'vassal' has the meaning of 'a hedge, a boundary; to screen, to protect,' which is suggestive of the role of Central Asia can play, in Beijing's perception, regarding Xinjiang (Fairbank 1968: 9). As we shall see below, this more nuanced view of the 'vassalisation' of Central Asia, whereby China provides Central Asia with certain economic or political/security goods, for example through the SCO, in return for guarantees regarding the issue of Uyghur 'separatism' in Xinjiang, is one that is more accurate than the one that is initially invoked by the 'vassal' label.

As previous chapters have demonstrated China's relations with individual states of Central Asia have been shaped and defined by two factors – the collapse of the Soviet Union and Beijing's goal of integrating Xinjiang into the People's Republic. As noted in the introduction, since the Soviet collapse Beijing has attempted to utilise Xinjiang's geopolitical position – its 'intermediate position in Eurasia' – in order to simultaneously achieve the security and integration of Xinjiang and, as this project has progressed, increase China's power and influence in Central Asia (Millward 2007). Integration here is understood in its two predominant senses: (a) the relationship between the majority and minority populations of a given state and 'the patterns by which the different parts of a nation-state cohere'; and (b) 'the manner and degree to which parts of a social system (its individuals, groups and organs) interact and complement each other' (Mackerras 1994: 7; Seymour 1976: 6). The first understanding of integration can be seen as a means by which a large, multi-ethnic state can ensure and maintain sovereignty over its territory, while the second concerns the operation of society once the territorial integrity of the state has been ensured. In the context of Xinjiang, the goal of integration encompasses both senses – the mechanisms by which the state has attempted to incorporate the territory of the region and the deeper endeavor to incorporate the non-Han peoples of the region into the 'unitary, multi-ethnic' Chinese state.

This goal of Chinese policy in Xinjiang not only serves core internal functions but has also served as a key driver of China's bilateral relations with the Central Asian states. In particular, it has been the way in which integration has been conceived of as both a goal and a series of policies in Beijing since 1991 that has generated this dynamic. The key here is that during the Maoist era and into the early 1980s, Beijing perceived Xinjiang's geopolitical position as a liability and obstacle

to its goal of integration due not only to the vast geographical distance between the region and the Chinese heartland but also to the obvious historical, ethnic and linguistic affinities that linked the Turkic–Muslim peoples of a Central Asia then divided between Soviet and Chinese spheres. The Soviet collapse, however, came as something of an epiphany for Beijing. With the Soviet menace to its western frontiers gone it would no longer view Xinjiang's geopolitical position as an obstacle to be overcome in search of integration but rather as an important asset to achieve it.

Thus, a dominant goal of Chinese policy from this point onward would be to make Xinjiang a 'Eurasian Continental Bridge' connecting the region's economy with that of Central Asia through the development of direct trade relations with neighbouring Central Asian states, increasing state investment in infrastructure projects, and fully developing and exploiting Xinjiang's oil and gas resources. However, this was to be achieved by a contradictory internal logic. In order to solve the separatist issue the CCP had to deliver economic development through the entrenchment Deng Xiaoping's economic strategy of 'reform and opening', while simultaneously maintaining 'stability and unity' in Xinjiang through the strengthening of the CCP's hold on power (Ürümqi Xinjiang Ribao 1991e; Christoffersen 1993; Becquelin 2000). Therefore, the security of the region was to be achieved by delivering economic growth, while economic growth was to be assured by the reinforcement of the state's instruments of political and social control, which in turn was to be achieved by opening the region to Central Asia. Significantly, the economic opening to Central Asia would come to offer Beijing a significant element of leverage to induce the Central Asian states to aid it in its quest to secure Xinjiang against 'separatist' elements. This logic has continued to inform China's approach into the twenty-first century, although it is now framed under the banner of the domestic Great Western Development campaign. While this campaign is a nationwide one, its operation in Xinjiang reflects the intensification of Beijing's long standing state-building policies in the region (Becquelin 2004).

This strategy in the 1990s was characterised as one of 'double-opening', that is, an attempt to simultaneously integrate Xinjiang with Central Asia and China proper in economic terms, while establishing security and cooperation with China's Central Asian neighbours (Christoffersen 1993). The key elements of this strategy throughout the 1990s demonstrated its purpose to serve the 'internal' goal of tying the province closer to China and the 'external' goal of utilising the region's position to accelerate economic relations with Central Asia. These included the re-centralisation of economic decision-making to increase the region's dependency on Beijing; the expansion of Han colonisation of the region; increased investment for the exploitation of Xinjiang's potential energy resources; the opening of border trading 'ports' with Central Asia; and significant investment in infrastructure links (e.g. highways, rail links, air routes, etc.) with Central Asia (Becquelin 2000, 71–4; Pannell and Ma 1997, 218–26).

The external manifestation of this approach was a concerted endeavor to develop greater economic and trade relations with the newly independent Central Asian states, particularly Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, through the extension incentives

for border trade and improvement of infrastructural links (Pannell and Ma 1997, 223; Christoffersen 1998: 24; Harris 1993: 123). Significantly, a major theme of Chinese overtures to the Central Asian states was Xinjiang's potential role in linking the economies of China and Central Asia to become the hub of a 'New Silk Road' (Martin 1994: 30–2; Li 1994: 18). One of the major commodities that would traverse this road, however, was to be oil/natural gas rather than the silk of times past. Indeed, Xinjiang's petrochemical industry was to become a 'pillar' industry within the government's 'double-opening' strategy for Xinjiang with the primary goal of establishing the region into a transit route and refinery zone for Central Asian oil and gas. Such an approach ultimately enmeshed China into the wider geo-political competition for not only access to Central Asia's oil and gas, but for greater political and economic influence in the region. Indeed, Beijing's reorientation of its energy strategy toward Russia and Central Asia in the early 1990s was very much a strategic manoeuvre rather than a 'market' approach to energy security induced by the realisation of the strategic weakness of China's growing dependency on Middle East sources of oil and gas (Andrews-Speed, Liao, Dannruther 2002, 42–3).

In relation to China's foreign policy, the development of this strategy proved to be a further spur in generating China's greater engagement with the states of Central Asia (Martin 1994). In many respects China's economic and security concerns regarding its frontiers with the new states of Central Asia were complementary. The development of bilateral relations, spurred on by the development of economic linkages noted above, was further strengthened by the identification of common interests in the security sphere. Significantly, as we have already noted, China used its emerging bilateral relations and the nascent multilateral forum of the S-5 to pressure the Central Asian states to control and suppress the activities of 'splittist' elements within the significant Uyghur diaspora population in the region – a theme that has continued to define China's participation in the S-5 and subsequent SCO process (Ong 2005; Chung 2004). Indeed, since 2001, China by virtue of bilateral security agreements with key Central Asian states and police/security cooperation through the SCO has successfully extradited a significant number of alleged Uyghur 'separatists and terrorists' from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Nepal (Mukhamedov 2004).

Domestically, the question of Xinjiang's economic development has assumed national importance over the last decade with the central government's launching of the 'Great Western Development Plan' in 2000 which envisages the creation of Xinjiang as an industrial and agricultural base and a trade and energy corridor for the national economy (Becquelin 2004; Moneyhan 2002/03). This goal can only be achieved with the development of greater interaction and cooperation between China and the Central Asian states – a point underlined by Chinese rhetoric and policy since 2001 with ongoing references to the mutual benefits of developing a 'Continental Eurasian land-bridge' that will link the major economies of Europe, East Asia and South Asia (Xinhua 2005; Garver 2006; Raballand and Andresy 2007: 248). Since 2001, Sino–Central Asian trade and economic relations have experienced a 'boom' with Sino–Central Asia trade flows more than tripling

from US$1.5 billion in 2001 to US$5.8 billion in 2005 (Raballand and Andresy 2007: 250; Peyrouse 2007: 16; Norling and Swanstrom 2007: 355). A closer examination of the structure and nature of this trade reveals that not only are Sino–Central Asia trade relations increasingly unequal but also a relationship of economic dependency is developing that China will undoubtedly seek to leverage in order to negate 'separatist' tendencies that it sees as the major threat to its position in Xinjiang.

Although the increase in trade flows noted above is significant, Central Asia now accounts for merely 0.6 per cent of China's overall foreign trade (Peyrouse 2007: 18). China, however, accounts for 12 per cent of Central Asia foreign trade. China's dominance in the realm of Sino–Central Asian trade relations is further underlined if we breakdown this trade data on a state by state basis. In particular, it becomes clear that China's influence is predominant in the Central Asian states with which it shares borders with China accounting for 34 per cent of Kyrgyzstan's foreign trade, 15 per cent of Kazakhstan's and 10 per cent of Tajikistan's. Of Chinese exports to Central Asia, 85 per cent consist of low priced manufactured goods, while over 85 per cent of Central Asian exports to China consist of raw materials, petroleum, and ferrous and non-ferrous metals (Peyrouse 2007: 18). Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, with whom China shares the most significant economic relations, reflect this point most clearly. Some 86 per cent of Kazakh and 78 per cent of Kyrgyz exports to China, for example, are comprised of petroleum, non-ferrous metals and iron and steel (Wu and Chen 2004: 1067).

China's growing economic weight in the region is also reflected in the number of Chinese companies operating throughout Central Asia with, for example, 744 Chinese enterprises (including 40 large companies) established in Kazakhstan, 100 in Uzbekistan and 12 in Kyrgyzstan by 2005 (Peyrouse 2007: 18). The lack of diversification in Central Asian exports to China has also resulted in growing regional concerns that China's economic interests are simply based upon a need to extract natural and mineral resources necessary to fuel its resource-hungry economy. The flooding of Central Asia markets with cheap Chinese-manufactured consumer goods, combined with the increasing activities of Chinese companies and enterprises has also reinforced societal concern that Russian dominance will simply be replaced by that of China (McMillan 2009; Wilson 2007: 42–5). Yet there remain major impediments to the development of stronger Sino–Central Asian trade. The most important concerns the lack of adequate infrastructure linking the region to China and ongoing trade barriers such as tariffs and visa restrictions (Xinhua 2007; Raballand and Andresy 2007: 242–3). The latter issues have been important in driving Chinese support for the efforts of the Central Asian states for membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO), which currently is limited to that of Kyrgyzstan (Peyrouse 2007: 17; Norling and Swanstrom 2007: 360–1).

For China in particular, investment in developing modern infrastructural links (e.g. roads, railways and telecommunications) between Xinjiang and Central Asia and the lowering of trade barriers are equally strategic as they are purely economic considerations (Garver 2006: 1). This imperative has been clear in

Chinese policy since the collapse of the Soviet Union, with Chinese investment in infrastructure both within Xinjiang itself and between the province and the neighboring Central Asian states a major element of Chinese policy. Since 2001 this has been reinforced and also reflects a key element of the Great Western Development of facilitating economic development in Xinjiang. China has, for example, pledged significant amounts of funding for the development of highway and rail links between Xinjiang and the neighbouring states of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan since 2002. These have included a pledge of US$15 million for the construction of a highway linking Xinjiang and Lake Issyk-Kul in Kyrgyzstan in 2003, a Chinese government-funded US$2.5 million feasibility study to construct a Kyrgyz–Xinjiang rail link, a trilateral Uzbek–Kyrgyz-China project to link Andijan (Uzbekistan), Osh (Kyrgyzstan) and Kashgar (Xinjiang) by a 1,000 km rail and highway connection (Peyrouse 2007: 30; Dillon 2003; Moore 2008).

China's energy security strategy of diversification and increased investment and exploration of its state oil corporations has also continued since 2001. Since 2002 China has focused its efforts on investment in exploration, acquisition of development rights for oil and gas fields, and pipeline construction in Central Asia. Examples of the former have included a Sino–Kazakh agreement in May 2004 for joint exploration and development of oil and gas resources in the Caspian Sea and a US$600 million loan to Uzbekistan in July 2006 for the joint exploration of energy deposits. Meanwhile, Chinese state-owned energy companies have invested heavily in acquiring rights to oil and gas fields with, for example, CNPC's acquisition of PetroKazakhstan in 2005 for US$4.2 billion and the International Trust and Investment Corporation's purchase, for some US$1.9 billion, of a stake in oilfields in western Kazakhstan (Bobokulov 2006: 82; Blua 2004b; Blank 2006; Len 2007, 164; Wilson 2007: 42–5). China's investment in pipeline construction projects has also been significant, reflecting its desire to diversify sources of energy and establish Xinjiang as an important transit route for eastward flowing oil and gas. In April 2008, for example, a joint venture between Uzbekneftegaz and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) to build and operate the 530 km section of the 1,830 km Turkmenistan–China natural gas pipeline was concluded, while the following month saw CNPC unveil a plan for a new Kazakhstan–China natural gas pipeline to carry 40 billion cubic meters of gas per year, 30 billion of which would flow to China, from the Darhan block on the Caspian Sea (Len 2007, 164; Wilson 2007: 42–5; Oil and Gas Journal 2008). The 988 km Kazakh–Chinese pipeline linking Atasu in western Kazakhstan and Alashankou in Xinjiang, which began construction in 2005, was also scheduled to be completed by the end of 2009 (China Daily 2009b).

Chinese activities in the sphere of infrastructure links have not been limited to Sino–Central Asian ones. China has also utilised Xinjiang's geo-strategic position as a launching pad to establish important linkages with South Asia, particularly with Pakistan and Iran (Garver 2006: 3–5; Niazi 2005b; Swanstrom, Norling and Li 2007: 395). Although, Sino–Pakistani cooperation in the development, improvement and maintenance of the Karakoram Highway – that links the major city of southern Xinjiang, Kashgar, with Islamabad – has been ongoing since

the opening of the highway in 1969, it has received renewed attention since 1991 (Haider 2005a: 258–9). In particular, Sino–Pakistani cooperation in the development of a deep water port at Gwadar on the Arabian Sea has spurred further development and maintenance of the Karakoram Highway (Haider 2005b). China's major involvement in the Gwadar project, financing some 80 per cent of the estimated US$1 billion construction costs, is driven by the clear strategic dividends that its successful completion could grant Beijing (BBC News Online 2007). Strategically, Gwadar provides China with access to the Arabian Sea and potential diversification of its oil imports from the Gulf states and Africa through a secure, land-based route to Xinjiang (Haider 2005b: 98). Moreover, Gwadar will provide the shortest route for Central Asian oil and gas exports to world markets. Furthermore, China's involvement in the port may also provide it with the ability to monitor US naval activity in the Persian Gulf, Indian naval activity in the Arabian Sea and check future US–India cooperation in the Indian Ocean (Haider 2005b; Niazi 2005a). The economic pay-offs of the Gwadar port may also be significant for not only Pakistan but also for Xinjiang and Central Asia, with the upgrades of the Karakoram Highway and the operationalisation of the deep water port estimated to lift Gwadar's cargo trade volume from 200,000 20ft containers in 2005 to nearly 300,000 by 2015 (Swanstrom, Norling and Li 2007: 395). This would effectively halve, for example, the distance that exports from Xinjiang would have to travel from the approximately 4,000 km to China's east coast to 2,000 km south to Gwadar (Star Online 2007).

Conclusion

Thus, China's relations with Central Asia have reflected the pre-eminence of the goal of integration for Xinjiang, with an emphasis placed on the establishment of political, economic and infrastructural links with the Central Asian states, particularly Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, it also reflected China's concern for the 'safe' expansion of its political, economic and strategic power. In this respect, the developments in the sphere of Sino–Central Asian trade relations, Chinese investment and acquisition of Central Asian oil, and investment in infrastructure projects demonstrate Beijing's growing 'gravitational pull' for the region. As noted previously, this has resulted not only in Central Asian acquiescence to China's dominant role in the SCO but also in Central Asian assurances and cooperation with Beijing on the issue of Uyghur 'separatism' in Xinjiang.

While China's strategic and economic weight ultimately plays a great role in determining that the Central Asian states will 'toe the line' on such core security interests for Beijing as the issue of separatism, China's 'soft power' in the region has also been significant and highlights the connection between Beijing's Central Asian foreign policy and its global approach. In this regard, it has been noted that China has undertaken a 'charm offensive' in order to mitigate anxieties about the implications of a 'rising China' (Kurlantzick 2007). In the Central Asian context this has consisted of coupling its growing dominance of Sino–Central Asian trade

and political influence with, for instance, practical expressions of its rhetorical commitment to 'common prosperity' through the provision of low-interest loans for local development projects (Trilling 2007). In combination with its multilateral efforts through the SCO, these developments ultimately highlight that Beijing's approach to Central Asia is fundamentally strategic in nature and informed by an acute understanding of the region's geopolitical importance.

8 The integration of Xinjiang

Securing China's 'silk road' to great power status?

This book began with a brief account of the inter-ethnic unrest that erupted in Xinjiang's capital, Ürümqi, in July 2009. The July unrest and some of the Chinese government's rhetoric surrounding it, particularly claims relating to the Uyghur's alleged desire to 'split' China, were then juxtaposed against the fact that China's sovereignty in the region is not disputed by any state in the international system. The apparent disjuncture between the strength of China's contemporary position in Xinjiang and the anxiety expressed regarding 'nationalities unity' in the aftermath of the unrest, pointed toward a number of questions that have been the core focus of the book. These questions concerned the 'what', 'who' and 'how' of the process of Xinjiang's enmeshment into the contemporary Chinese state: *what* was defined and claimed as constituting 'China's Xinjiang', *who* was deemed to constitute the population of the region, and thus became Chinese citizens, and finally, *how*, through what strategies, techniques or policies, has the Chinese state sought to make good on these claims?

Although the '*what*' of Xinjiang was determined by the middle of the twentieth century, Chinese rule in Xinjiang had been regularly challenged since the late Qing era by both internal rebellions of the Turkic-Muslim population and the machinations of external powers, most notably Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union. This dynamic was, as we saw in Chapter 2, a prominent factor in the crises that lead to the establishment of the ETR in north-west Xinjiang after the fall of Sheng Shicai. After the PLA's 'peaceful liberation' of Xinjiang in 1949, Beijing's focus largely shifted to ensuring that Chinese sovereignty over the region would be seen to be legitimate in the eyes of the region's non-Han population. As detailed in Chapter 3, this was a particularly urgent goal in the immediate post-liberation years when Xinjiang's population remained predominantly non-Han in composition.

Chapter 1 suggested that the manner in which the Chinese state has attempted to resolve these '*who*' and '*how*' dilemmas was reflective of a form of power described by Foucault as 'governmentality'. Foucault's characterisation of 'government' as the 'conduct of conduct' is essential to the analytical and descriptive power of the notion of governmentality. This definition relies on a number of meanings or senses of the word 'conduct' In the first sense 'to conduct'

means to lead or direct. In a second, and perhaps more important sense, the moral or ethical dimension is emphasised, such as 'to conduct oneself' (Foucault 2002: 341; Dean 1999: 10). This second sense, which implies a self-guidance, refers ultimately to the realm of our behaviours and actions. The exercise of power through this 'conduct of conduct' constitutes a 'management of possibilities' Thus, 'government' not only refers to political structures or the management of states 'but also modes of action ... that were destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people' and to ultimately 'structure the possible field of action of others' (Foucault 2002: 341).

As we have seen over the course of the preceding chapters the 'management' of the possible field of action of 'others' has been central to the state's integrationist project in Xinjiang. This has been particularly prevalent under the PRC with Chapters 3, 4 and 5, for example, noting the political effects of the state's categorisation of the region's population into thirteen distinct ethnic groups and the management of religion. Ultimately, these chapters have also demonstrated that the Chinese state's long-term endeavour to integrate the region has also had at its core, a concern to establish the legitimacy of Chinese sovereignty. Chapter 3, for instance, demonstrated that the CCP sought legitimacy through the application of its interpretation of the Leninist model of 'national self-determination' and the revolutionary Maoist model of political and economic organisation. Subsequently, Chapters 4, 5 and 6, detailed the innovations in Beijing's approach to Xinjiang as the Party moved away from the Maoist model from the late 1970s onward. In particular, these latter chapters charted the rise of a strategy that sought to utilise the geopolitical position of the region as an asset in its attempt to integrate the region.

Yet, these latter chapters also demonstrated that the policies Beijing has pursued in the region in the furtherance of this goal have contributed to growing insecurity amongst the non-Han population of Xinjiang, a dynamic that suggests a failure to resolve the '*who*' and '*how*' questions of Chinese governance of the region. Despite this, it is clear that the PRC has achieved a level of control and power in Xinjiang that its Qing predecessors would have envied. The basis for this lies in the connections between the processes of territoriality and governmentality noted in Chapter 1. The practice of Chinese policy in Xinjiang since 1949, and particularly since the late 1970s, suggests Beijing has ultimately recognised that to simply conquer and hold a particular territory will not necessarily make it an 'integral' part of the whole nation-state. Rather, 'the area within will no longer be construed as a passive enclosure to be policed and kept orderly; it will be a source of resources, livelihood, output, and energy' (Maier 2000: 818). As Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 have demonstrated, under the PRC Xinjiang is no longer simply conceived of as a strategic buffer region in the traditional sense but as a potential strategic and economic asset that can actively contribute to the power of the nation-state.

But this focus on the evolution of the state's integrationist strategies in Xinjiang has been just one 'track' or theme that has been the focus of the book. The other track that has been simultaneously explored has concerned the impact of

integrationist strategies on the PRC's foreign policy in Central Asia. During the Maoist era (1949–76) this impact was largely of a negative nature, in the sense that Chinese policy was based on the assumption that the integration of Xinjiang required the isolation of the region from external, non-Chinese influences. As we saw in Chapter 3, this essentially meant that the influence of the Soviet Union was to be minimised. Yet, ethnic minority unrest and dissatisfaction generated by the CCP's intensification of its strategies of integration and ideological radicalisation from the mid-1950s onward provided the Soviet Union with ample opportunity to leverage its legacy of influence in the region.

By the time of Deng Xiaoping's re-emergence as the pre-eminent figure in the CCP in the late 1970s, Chinese perceptions of a Soviet threat to Xinjiang had been heightened with Moscow's invasion of neighbouring Afghanistan. As we saw in Chapter 4, this external threat to China's position in the region was also coupled with the outbreak of significant internal unrest within Xinjiang during 1980 and 1981. This presented a key element of continuity with the preceding Maoist period, in which the single greatest threat to the integration of Xinjiang from Beijing's perspective remained the possible convergence of internal unrest and external interference. During the 1980s however, Beijing began to mitigate the potential for this to occur by implementing a strategy toward Xinjiang that combined elements of both continuity with, and change from, established patterns of rule. As such, throughout the 1980s Beijing reinvigorated two instruments of integration that had been emblematic of the Maoist era – the XPCC and Han in-migration. Yet, simultaneously the regional authorities began to construct an economic approach that sought to utilise Xinjiang's geopolitical position to stimulate both cross-border trade with neighbouring Central Asia and link the regions economy with that of the interior. This approach contributed to an improvement in Sino–Soviet relations as China sought to develop greater economic cooperation with the Soviet Central Asian republics. Additionally, the CCP also returned to an ideological approach regarding the ethnic minority question in Xinjiang that was similar to the 'united front' policies pursued in the immediate post-1949 period. Thus, the 1980s saw a relative relaxation of constraints on ethnic minority cultural and religious practices.

As demonstrated in the final sections of Chapter 4, however, this strategy resulted in dynamics that counteracted the state's integrationist imperatives. Indeed, the development of greater contacts between Xinjiang and the contiguous regions of Soviet Central Asia, that were the consequence of the authorities' outward oriented economic strategy and relaxation of religious and cultural restraints, converged with a changing external environment. This convergence resulted in a more forceful expression of ethnic minority identity than had been seen in Xinjiang since 1949. The major dilemma for the Chinese authorities from 1986 onward was to maintain the delicate balance between the greater religious and cultural freedoms, which they perceived as contributing to social stability, and the major instruments of integration – Han in-migration, the XPCC and economic development – that underpinned continued Han dominance of Xinjiang. The outbreak of the Baren Incident in April 1990 suggested that the authorities

had not foreseen the inherent contradictions between these two major aspects of their strategy in the region.

Additionally, the radical Islamic ideology expressed during this uprising suggested that the external threat to Xinjiang had changed from that of the Soviet state to that of movements within the Soviet Central Asian republics themselves. Thus, the source of threat to Chinese rule in Xinjiang had shifted from that of a state (the Soviet Union) to non-state movements or organisations. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the creation of five independent Central Asian republics would reinforce this transformation with important implications for Chinese foreign policy. As Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrated, China's conduct of its relations with the various Central Asian republics post-1991 exhibited its pre-eminent concern with the stability and development of Xinjiang. The internal parallel of this goal of China's foreign policy was the reinforcement of the complex of integrationist techniques and tactics of rule over the corresponding period.

China's initial response to the systemic jolt caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, as highlighted in Chapter 5, was based not upon strength, but upon a sober recognition of China's relative weaknesses and vulnerabilities. From 1991 to 1995, Beijing struggled to develop a coherent and consistent approach to both the emerging regional and international order. As such it can be characterised as a consolidatory and pragmatic period of foreign policy, in which China gradually established a prioritised set of political, economic and strategic interests that were deemed to be central to securing China's national security. In essence, China sought to orient its foreign policy strategy toward regions where there were fewer obstacles, both in terms of competing powers and strategic concerns, for the expansion of China's political, economic, strategic and military influence. An over-arching theme of 'engaging the periphery' in China's post-1991 foreign policy, whereby China sought to construct conducive relations with its immediate neighbours on the basis of shared economic and security concerns/interests, was notable throughout the 1990s. In the Central Asian context, China strove to first ensure the security of Xinjiang then to turn the region's potential linkages with neighbouring Central Asian states, which had been viewed negatively since 1949, toward its advantage. Within the context of China's global foreign policy Central Asia emerged after 1991 to be a path of least resistance. This was the case as it offered Beijing relatively favourable conditions for the expansion of its influence due to the desire of the Central Asian states to diversify their foreign relations in the wake of the Soviet collapse and the absence of a significant US presence.

The subsequent 1996–2001 period, explored in Chapter 6, was characterised by the full emergence and expression of China's strategy of 'peaceful rise' in Central Asia and the subsequent heightening of China's influence in the region. In particular, this period not only saw the further development of China's bilateral relations with the states of Central Asia but also Chinese agency in the evolution of the Shanghai Five multilateral mechanism to address the challenges emanating from the region. China's re-evaluated strategy to develop and integrate Xinjiang was reinforced by these external dynamics as it underlined for the authorities

that to secure their control, China's foreign policy calculus had to be aligned with the state's overall goals in Xinjiang. The assumption that underpinned much Chinese policy in Xinjiang during this period was that increased economic development and prosperity for the various ethnic minorities would diminish ethnic separatism.

Chapter 7 meanwhile, demonstrated that the 2002–09 period has been defined by the events of 11 September 2001 and China's response to the changes in international and regional affairs wrought by them. In particular, this period saw China reinforce its strategy of 'peaceful rise', which can be seen through the continuity of its approach to Central Asia, and its relations with the US and Russia in the region, and in the further development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Within Xinjiang, the events of 11 September 2001 provided a further stimulus for the intensification of the major facets of Beijing's integrationist project – Han in-migration, economic and infrastructure development and rigorous suppression of ethnic minority discontent or opposition. In this latter respect, the 'War on Terror' permitted China to re-frame its struggle against Uyghur separatism in a global context with Beijing now portraying unrest in Xinjiang as the work of 'extremists', 'Islamists' and 'terrorists' This rhetorical shift by Beijing was deployed within its diplomacy in order to achieve the tacit approval, or at least acquiescence of key Western states (especially the US) for its ongoing suppression of ethnic minority dissent in Xinjiang. While, as we have seen, this strategy proved to be successful initially, by 2009 China's decision to attempt to demonise all Uyghur opposition as 'terrorism' had backfired by raising the Xinjiang and Uyghur issues to an unprecedented level of international prominence.

China's strategy in Xinjiang and Central Asia has been defined by the endeavour to achieve the 'double integration' of Xinjiang with China proper and Central Asia. Beijing has sought to achieve this through the extension of modern infrastructure throughout Xinjiang and the connection of these to neighbouring Central Asian states. Yet, as noted in Chapter 7, this strategy was significantly affected by the implications of the 9/11 attacks. The projection of US political and military influence into four of the five Central Asian states was perceived to be a negative consequence of the 'War on Terror' as it not only undermined Beijing's bilateral relations with the region but also the SCO. Significantly, these developments also exacerbated perceptions in Beijing that Washington was bent on the strategic 'encirclement' of China, a development that Beijing's post-Cold War foreign policy had sought to avoid (Gao 2002). US strategy in Central Asia was perceived in geopolitical terms with Washington's core goals identified as the containment of Russia, the 'encirclement' of Iran and Iraq, the expansion of US influence in South Asia and the 'containment' of China's rise (Gao 2002). Washington's aim, according to this view, was not only to weaken China's position in Central Asia, and therefore jeopardize the integration of Xinjiang, but also China's wider foreign policy strategy:

> China has constantly strengthened its political, security, economic and trade relations with Central Asian countries ... China is the 'potential enemy' of the

> United States; and Central Asia is China's great rear of extreme importance. The penetration of the United States into Central Asia not only prevents China from expanding its influence, but also sandwiches China from East to West, thus 'effectively containing a rising China'
>
> (Gao 2002)

Such perceptions reflect the interlinked nature of China's interests in Xinjiang and Central Asia, and their connection to – and role in – Beijing's grand strategy of 'peaceful rise' China's foreign policy in Central Asia has reflected the pre-eminence of the goal of integration for Xinjiang, with an emphasis placed on the establishment of political, economic, and infrastructural links with the Central Asian states. Moreover, it also reflected China's concern for the 'safe' expansion of its political, economic and strategic power, a central facet of the strategy of 'peaceful rise' Interestingly, the SCO has been increasingly lauded by Chinese media as embodying a new world order of 'regional cooperation' characterised by the 'Shanghai spirit'. However, as one observer has noted, this 'new regionalism', as Beijing would have it, can be defined as 'open, functional, interest-based cooperation among contiguous states' that differs from the regionalism practiced by the EU which is 'closed, identity-based, and ideologically buttressed by liberal democratic values' (Chung 2004: 993).

The SCO, and the principles that underpin it, reflect China's endeavour to establish multiple regional and global relationships in order to counter US primacy in the international system – a goal achieved to an extent in 2005 and 2006 with the tilt of the Central Asian states back toward the SCO and China as a result of the unrest in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The strategic importance Beijing attaches to Xinjiang and Central Asia was noted in a Chinese commentary prior to the 2007 SCO summit in Kyrgyzstan and reflected in some respects the 'traditional' geopolitical view of the region as expressed by General Zhang Zhiyong in 1947. The article, '*SCO Reshaping International Strategic Structure*', asserted that: (1) the region was characterised by an emerging balance between China and Russia; (2) as US strategic pressure on Russia mounts, the SCO's importance to Russia has risen making Russia, 'even more dependent on help from the SCO' to combat US challenges to Russia's traditional pre-eminence in the region; and (3) securing China's western frontier will play a key role in China's overall foreign policy (Li 2007: 49). Yet, the logic subsequently propounded to illustrate this latter point highlights explicitly the inter-linkages that Beijing perceives between the security and development of Xinjiang, its position in Central Asia and its grand strategy:

> Even more importantly, as China embarks on the *great enterprise of national resurgence*, the biggest threats to its national security continue to be attempts to damage China's *territorial integrity and interference of outside forces* in its unification process. In this sense, China's strategic focus will remain in the southeast in the foreseeable future, with western China continuing to be the 'rear' in China's master strategy for many years to come. *Nevertheless, only*

> *if the rear is secured will the strategic frontline be free from worry* ... As the squeeze on China's strategic space intensifies, a stable western region takes on additional importance as a strategic support for the country. *The strategic significance of western China is self-evident.* [Emphasis added]
>
> (Li 2007: 49)

China's position in Central Asia and Xinjiang is therefore clearly linked, in Beijing's perception, to its ability to successfully pursue its strategy of 'peaceful rise' or 'great enterprise of national resurgence' As the preceding history of China's strategy in Xinjiang and Central Asia suggests, Beijing is arguably in a stronger position in the region than at any time in the history of Chinese attempts to control Xinjiang. It has consolidated and extended its mechanisms of political, economic and social control within Xinjiang through such instruments as Han colonisation, increased state investment in the petrochemicals industry and modern infrastructure developments. Externally, Beijing has succeeded in leveraging its developing political and economic clout in Central Asia to enlist these states, both in a bilateral and multilateral sense, to resolve long standing border disputes, develop security and military cooperation and undermine and control pro-separatist movements or organisations amongst the Uyghur diaspora in the region.

Moreover, as Chapter 7 demonstrated, China has also been successful in absorbing and then countering the effects of the injection of major US influence into the region post-9/11 through the intensification of the major elements of its strategy toward Central Asia. Beijing played a major role in the reinvigoration of the SCO, assiduously worked toward the revitalisation of its bilateral political, economic and military relations with key Central Asian states, and continued its quest to diversify its access to the region's oil and gas resources. Taken as a whole, China's strategy presents a complex web of inter-linkages between its imperatives of integration and control within Xinjiang, its drive for security and influence in Central Asia and its over-arching quest for achieving a 'peaceful rise' to great power status. For China's position in Xinjiang, and hence Central Asia, the 'key link', to appropriate a phrase of the Maoist idiom, has proven to be the realisation that the region's 'geographic template' should not be perceived as an obstacle to integration but as an asset to be utilised in this enduring project.

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