# INSIDE XINJIANG

Space, place and power in China's Muslim far Northwest

Edited by Anna Hayes and Michael Clarke

Routledge

# Inside Xinjiang

The tensions between ethnic Muslim Uyghurs and the growing number of Han Chinese in Xinjiang have recently increased, occasionally breaking out into violence. At the same time as being a potential trouble spot for China, the province is of increasing strategic importance as China's gateway to Central Asia, whose natural resources are of increasing importance to China. This book presents much original research on a range of different aspects of Xinjiang. It covers social, political and economic subjects, concentrating especially on how current trends in Xinjiang are likely to develop in the future.

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# Routledge contemporary China series

# Inside Xinjiang

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Far Northwest

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# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| AIDS | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| CASS | Chinese Academy of Social Sciences |
| CCP | Chinese Communist Party |
| CCPCC | Chinese Communist Party Central Committee |
| CCTV | Chinese Central Television Station |
| CL | Commitment Letter |
| CM | Cadastral Map |
| CNTV | Chinese Network Television |
| CSCEC | China State Construction Engineering Corporation |
| CSW/s | Commercial sex worker/s |
| ETR | East Turkestan Republic |
| EU | European Union |
| FL | Farmer's List |
| GCA | Greater Central Asia |
| GCAP | Greater Central Asian Partnership for Cooperation and Development |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GMD | Guomindang |
| GWD | Great Western Development campaign |
| HDI | Human Development Index |
| HIV | Human Immunodeficiency Virus infection |
| IDU/s | Intravenous drug-use/rs |
| IELTS | International English Language Testing System |
| KfW | *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau Bankegruppe* |
| LAB | Land Administration Bureau |
| LDWR | Large-scale development of the Western regions |

| | |
|---|---|
| LLC | Land Leasing Contract |
| LRB | Land Resources Bureau |
| LUC | Land Use Certificate |
| MSA | Metropolitan Statistical Areas |
| MSM | Men who have sex with men |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organisation |
| NDN | Northern Distribution Network |
| NGO/s | Non-government organisation/s |
| NPM | Nineteen Provinces and Municipalities Support Xinjiang |
| PAP | People's Armed Police |
| PLA | People's Liberation Army |
| PLWHA | People living with HIV/AIDS |
| PRC | People's Republic of China |
| QQ | Tencent QQ |
| SEAC | State Ethnic Affairs Commission |
| SEZ/s | Special Economic Zone/s |
| SOE/s | State-Owned Enterprise/s |
| STI/s | Sexually transmitted infection/s |
| TAPI | Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline |
| TAR | Tibetan Autonomous Region |
| TCM | Traditional Chinese Medicine |
| TG | Township Government |
| UAA | Uyghur American Association |
| UHRP | Uyghur Human Rights Project |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| US | United States |
| USA | United States of America |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialists Republics |
| VC | Village Committee |
| WB9 | World Bank Health 9 Project |
| WRB | Water Resources Bureau |
| WUC | World Uyghur Congress |
| XJHAPAC | Xinjiang HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care Project |
| XPCC | Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps |
| XUAR | Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region |

# Contributors

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# Introduction

## Inside Xinjiang

*Michael Clarke and Anna Hayes*

The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) is China's largest province, shares borders with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia and Mongolia, and possesses a variety of natural resources, including oil. Such factors are often commonly cited in contemporary commentary on the region to explain its importance to Beijing. As such, Xinjiang (literally 'New Frontier') is often deemed to be primarily of strategic or geopolitical importance to the People's Republic of China (PRC) with political, economic and social developments within the region given meaning through how they impact, positively or negatively, on China's strategic health along its Central Asian frontiers.

Raffaello Pantucci and Alexandros Petersen (2012), for example, have argued in this vein that China's recent endeavours to construct a 'New Silk Road' of trade and infrastructural interconnections linking the major economies of Eurasia is in part an outgrowth of Beijing's strategy to bring economic development and prosperity, and hence stability, to its 'restive westernmost province' (2012, p. 31). Moreover, this core concern 'is reflected in a combination of security, economic and cultural efforts that China has instituted across the region' that have contributed to the emergence of Beijing's 'inadvertent empire' in Central Asia (Ibid.). What 'matters' about Xinjiang in this context is how Chinese imperatives there shape its foreign policy and diplomacy in Central Asia – that is, how does Xinjiang affect China's ability to manage its encounter with contemporary Central Asia?

Although we do not dispute the veracity of such analyses, we argue for a greater consideration of the internal bases of China's position in Xinjiang. A brief examination of the factors that contributed to Xinjiang's transition from the frontier *par excellence* throughout Chinese history into the contemporary 'integral' province of the PRC suggests that the political, economic and social interactions among and between the non-Han and Han peoples of the region, in particular, should be brought into the foreground of analysis. In particular, notions of space, place and power are considered of paramount importance in analysing the internal dynamics of Xinjiang.

## Xinjiang: from a 'Frontier' to a '*Bordered*' land?

Drawing on the wave of scholarship about 'frontiers' in comparative historical perspective, we note here that the continued conceptualisation of Xinjiang as a 'frontier' may be problematic as the term in its simplest understanding within this scholarship refers 'to a meeting place of peoples in which geographic and cultural boundaries were not clearly defined' (Adelman & Aron 1999, p. 815). In important respects, this is the manner in which the frontier is conceived of in such works in the Chinese context as Owen Lattimore's *Studies in Frontier History* (1962) and more recently, in Peter C. Perdue's, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (2005). In this understanding the Inner Asian frontiers of China (for example, Xinjiang), due to the convergence of ecological and geographic factors, were 'a liminal space where cultural identities merged and shifted, as peoples of different ethnic and linguistic roots interacted for common economic purposes' (Perdue 2005, p. 41).

Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly (2005, p. 635) however also notes that the concept's meaning varies according to place. In the North American context, for example, the 'frontier' immediately invokes the moving zone of settlement *and* progress that was central to Frederick Jackson Turner's description of the expansion of the United States across the continent in *The Frontier in American History*. This understanding has some resonance with China's late 20th and early 21st century approach to Xinjiang in which a Han-dominated China is conceived of as a transforming and modernising agent in the 'underdeveloped' peripheries of the PRC (Becquelin 2004; Moneyhon 2002/03; Barbantseva 2009).

That is to say, Xinjiang is no longer understood of as that classical 'frontier' described by Lattimore (1962) and Perdue (2005) and defined by cultural fluidity, but in a much more static fashion, what Adelman and Aron (1999) describe as a '*bordered* land'. They argue that the early colonial period of North American history (circa 18th century) was characterised by the fluid, liminal conception of the 'frontier' but that this was transformed by the mid-19th century as 'Old World empires imploded, yielding to new political configurations' in which 'dynasties ceded to nation-states' and 'a new liberal cant came to govern international affairs' (p. 816). Central to this new 'cant' were treaties and agreements that recognised and codified territorial boundaries. Significantly, they argue that:

> This shift from inter-imperial struggle to international coexistence turned borderlands into *bordered* lands. To the peoples for whom contested borderlands afforded room to maneuver and preserve some element of autonomy, this transition narrowed the scope for political independence. With states claiming exclusive dominions over all territories within their borders, Indians lost the ability to play off rivalries; they could no longer take advantage of occupying the lands 'in between'. Thus, as colonial borderlands gave way to national borders, fluid and inclusive intercultural frontiers yielded to hardened and more exclusive hierarchies.
>
> (Adelman & Aron 1999, p. 816)

A similar process is arguably discernible in the changing relationship between China and Xinjiang from the 18th century onward.

Defining Xinjiang as a 'frontier' in a historical sense is, at least outside of the PRC, uncontroversial. Indeed, despite the PRC's claims that Xinjiang has been an 'inseparable part of the unitary multi-ethnic Chinese nation' since the Han Dynasty (206BC–24AD), when it was 'peacefully liberated' by the People's Liberation Army in 1949, it was distinctly non-Chinese in ethnic composition, with Uyghurs accounting for 75 percent of its population. Also at that time, the region's cultural sensibilities were also predominantly non-Han, with Turkic languages and Islam dominating the cultural make-up of the region. Finally, the region was also non-Han in its geopolitical orientation as it had much stronger economic and political ties to its Central Asian neighbours than it did with the Chinese mainland (Toops 2004, p. 34; McMillen 1979).

Historically these factors had contributed to the region's liminal position between China-based polities to the east and the largely nomadic polities of the Turkic and Mongol peoples of 'Inner Asia'. From the mid-18th century onward the region that is now defined as Xinjiang found itself buffeted by pressures emanating from the expansion of the Qing, Russian and Zunghar Mongol empires. Ultimately, this three-way competition between the two ascendant sedentary Eurasian imperial states (that is, the Qing and Russia) not only eliminated the last great nomadic polity of the Zunghar Mongols but also resulted in the conquest of Xinjiang by the Qing. As Peter Perdue has documented, the Qing's conquests of the mid-18th century effectively 'closed' the nomadic frontier between itself and the expanding Russian empire to the West, drawing a curtain on a period of Eurasian history (Perdue 2005).

The subsequent consolidation of Qing rule in Xinjiang was also of seminal importance as it was under the Qing that the various peoples and sub-regions of Xinjiang were in fact first administered and governed as a single unit under the dominion of a China-based polity (Millward 2007). Just as significantly, however, the retention of the region for much of this time was ultimately 'negotiable' and based on strategic cost-benefit assessment as to its worth to China-based empires: 'Since its conquest in the eighteenth century, Xinjiang had been viewed as a bulwark of the empire's defences, control of which was arguably preferable to allowing it to fall prey to petty, squabbling tribes and polities, but ultimately negotiable' (Newby 2014, p. 323).

This perception of the region only began to change for the imperial court with convergence of internal rebellion and external pressure/imperialism in the 19th century (Millward 2007, pp. 135–139; Newby 2005, pp. 232–238). The great Turkic-Muslim rebellion of 1866–1877 led by Yaqub Beg, in particular, saw the development of far reaching strategic debate about the future of Qing dominion in the region as both Tsarist Russia (via its annexation of the Ili Valley in 1871) and Great Britain took advantage of Qing weakness to extend their spheres of influence in the region (Kim 2004). With the Qing reconquest of Xinjiang in 1877 and the court's subsequent granting of provincehood to the region in 1884 (including the extension of the *junxian* system of administration applied throughout

China proper), the region's relationship to the core of the empire was, at least in theory, transformed. No longer was Xinjiang to remain simply a strategic buffer. It was now conceived of, and to be administered, as any other province of the empire. This, as Millward notes, also signified a 'fundamental shift in the governing principles of the Qing Empire as a whole' which revealed a transformation of the relationship between the centre and periphery and the non-Han and Han:

> The late Qing state took an administrative model employed in the agrarian core of its sprawling empire and applied it to the ecologically and culturally different regions of the periphery. The debates over the pragmatics of provincehood thus hinted at deeper issues involving the nature of the empire and the status of the Manchus, Mongols and other Inner Asians in a realm dominated demographically by Han Chinese. Though proponents of provincehood stressed the fiscal savings and reduction of troop numbers to be realised by the reform . . . underlying these claims was the assumption that a Xinjiang that was both demographically and culturally more like China proper would be both easier and cheaper to govern.
>
> (2007, p. 138)

Under the PRC this transformation, first put in train during the late Qing period, has arguably reached its apogee. Xinjiang is now vigorously defined (and defended) as an 'integral' province of the 'multi-ethnic, unitary' Chinese state in which, according to the Chinese government's 2009 *White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang*, 'the people of all ethnic groups . . . cherish dearly this . . . remarkable situation'.[1] Demographically, the region is now characterised by an altered ethnic ratio, which has seen an increase in the Han population, and a decrease in the Uyghur and other non-Han ethnic ratios. In 1949, the Uyghurs accounted for 76 percent of the regional population (He & Guo 2000, p. 147), with Han Chinese numbering just 6.7 percent (Iredale et al. 2001 p. 166). However, waves of Han migration, resulting from both government programs as well as private economic motivations, have seen the Han population grow rapidly. Han Chinese now account for close to 40 percent of the overall population in the XUAR (not including members of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, *see Chapters 2, 6 and 7 in this collection*), with Uyghurs accounting for approximately 42 percent (Statistical Bureau of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region 2012). The effect of this on the ethnic ratios is clear, with the non-Han population being diluted within the region and the Han population experiencing a substantial boost. More concerning though is the effect of this changing ethnic ratio on regional ethnic relations.

Developments such as the July 2009 Ürümqi inter-ethnic riots and more recent events in 2014 such as the 1 March Kunming knife attack, April and May bombings in Ürümqi and the August uprising in Shule county near Kashgar demonstrate that Xinjiang remains a site of considerable political and ethnic unrest and contention. The evident political, economic and social fissures behind such violence and unrest directly challenge President Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist

Party's (CCP) 'China Dream' rhetoric regarding the resilience of China's 'inter-ethnic harmony'. One young Australian student has recently captured one aspect of this reality:

> As I took the twenty-seven hour train ride from Ürümqi, Xinjiang's capital, to Kashgar, I started up a conversation with a lively and wonderfully opinion-ated twenty-something Han Chinese female passenger. But upon hearing of my travel plans, she stared incredulously back at me and told me quite frankly that if I stayed in the *Weizuren* (Uyghur) part of town, I would undoubtedly be raped, pillaged, and plundered by all of its locals. She went out of her way to drive me from the Kashgar train station to my accommodation in the heart of the old city alleyways, and sat locked in her car glancing warily at her sur-roundings, refusing to drive off until she saw me safely enter the front door of my hostel.[2]

The contributions in this volume provide important insights into this conten-tious social, economic and political terrain through analyses of: the experiences of rapid modernisation for the region and its people; the influence of increased con-nectivity to other regions on ethnic and regional identities; the private and public lives of the region's inhabitants; and how space, place and power in the region are configured and reconfigured, and ultimately, applied in the region.

## Analysing space, place and power

This collection is divided into three distinct sections, all of which seek to address an over-arching question of: What is life like in China's 'New Frontier'? The first section, titled '*Identity formation and sense of belonging*', explores the themes of collective memory, space, place, identity and diversity as it relates to selected sites within the region. Here Ildikó Bellér-Hann, David O'Brien and Anna Hayes consider the ethnic and social fabric of the region, the convergence, negotiation and contestation of identities within the region, and each author provides evalu-ations of the various sense/s of belonging experienced within their research foci.

For Bellér-Hann, her analysis centres on fieldwork conducted near Kashgar in 1996. While some dimensions of this fieldwork have previously been published, Bellér-Hann has waited until this collection to publish some of the more personal accounts of this research. It centres on both personal recollections of individual Uyghur experiences of the collectivisation period, and the wider experiences of rural Uyghur communities during this time. This was a period whereby Uyghurs experienced significant disruption to their traditional identify formation and sense of belonging, as their way of life was increasingly challenged, and threatened, under the collectivist program. Most importantly, she notes that it was the very activities that perpetuate community among the Uyghurs, such as praying, trans-mitting skills and religious knowledge, and shrine-visiting, that were singled out for criminalisation during this problematic period. As a result of their shared expe-rience of the negative consequences of collectivisation however, an unintended

effect of this period was a strengthening of a sense of local belonging and communal cohesion among Uyghurs.

This sense of increased local belonging and communal cohesion is a theme also considered in the chapter by O'Brien. However, in his analysis, based on his fieldwork in the region following the Ürümqi riots in 2009, O'Brien analyses the increasing agency of Han as political actors in the region. He considers what historical factors have provided the Han in Xinjiang a shared sense of belonging, and why they feel apart from not only non-Han nationalities in the region, but also Han from other regions in China, and increasingly, the central leadership. Here, second- and third-generation Han migrants to Xinjiang feel they are more regionally rooted than more recent Han migrants. Thus, for O'Brien, categorising the 'Han' as a single entity within analyses of the region is highly problematic as this group constitutes a highly diversified and stratified society. He argues Xinjiang's Han population is highly complex and multifaceted, and that within this categorisation exists an array of factors that contribute to 'difference' among them including the many divisions of class, language, region of origin, and time of migration. However, he also identifies a united regional Han concern over the perceived failure of the central government to act to prevent outbreaks of ethnic violence in this region. Hence, following the Ürümqi riots, there has been an increased awareness of ethnic identity across the region, and a desire for more recognition of 'sacrifices' paid by long-term Han migrants in Xinjiang.

'Otherness' and 'difference' are also themes explored in Hayes' chapter examining depictions of regional history and ethnic identity in the Xinjiang Regional Museum in Ürümqi. Based on fieldwork conducted in 2012, she considers how the official representations of Xinjiang's ethnic minorities and regional history, provide insights into the wider lived experiences of minority nationalities in Xinjiang. She argues that rather than providing contemporary museum 'contact zones', where more inclusive representations of regional history and realistic representations of a region's multi-ethnic population are displayed in order to bring to light the wrongs of the past and to foster reconciliation and new beginnings, the Xinjiang Regional Museum exhibitions continue to be framed through projected images of 'ethnic harmony', 'national belonging' and selective history. In addition, Hayes demonstrates that museum exhibitions are configured around upholding official rhetoric on national unity, harmonious society and a multi-ethnic 'motherland', as well as securing the territorial integrity of the Chinese state. As a result, the real value of the museum is that it provides a microcosm of the lived reality of Xinjiang's multi-ethnic population, whereby non-Han groups have been increasingly marginalised, their history and experiences have been overlooked and overshadowed by dominant discourses of the Han Chinese state, and their agency has being increasingly diminished to that of a dancing, singing, colourful 'Other'.

The second section of this collection is titled '*Inter-ethnic relations in Xinjiang*'. It examines predominantly Uyghur-Han interactions and the two-way power dynamics at play. In this section, Joanne Smith Finley, Yangbin Chen, and James Leibold and Danielle Xiaodan Deng examine the constructed ethnic identities contained within state media, the creation of ethnic enclaves as a signifier of the

divided nature of Xinjiang society and the lived reality of these depictions in the everyday inter-ethnic relations in Xinjiang.

In her chapter, Smith Finley uses the body of work by Mando-pop artist Dao Lang to examine how the geopolitical space in Xinjiang, cultural identity and belonging to place are represented and contested through his audio texts and visual works. Dao Lang, a Sichuanese Han who migrated to Xinjiang, has used his music to promote inter-ethnic harmony within Xinjiang and beyond. However, as demonstrated by Smith Finley, his attempts to forge a new, all-inclusive ethnic identity in the region (that is, a multi-ethnic 'Xinjiang' identity), via his musical fusion of Han and non-Han musical styles, has not been successful and is highly problematic. Detailed analyses of Dao Lang's lyrics demonstrate that the unequal power balance and ethnic tension between Han and Uyghurs in Xinjiang is unintentionally present within his songs. In addition, Smith Finley identifies a 'civilising mission' within his lyrics and media interviews he has given. This 'civilising mission' is centred on official rhetoric pertaining to the region, including the encouragement of Han from other parts of China to migrate to Xinjiang and his endorsement of official views that place Xinjiang as an inseparable part of the Chinese state. However, Smith Finley also identifies that Dao Lang's retreat from Xinjiang to Beijing, following the Ürümqi riots, is symptomatic of the fragile nature of both ethnic unity and ethnic harmony in Xinjiang, and government rhetoric that celebrates its achievement, regardless of evidence to the contrary. Ultimately, she concludes that Dao Lang's attempt to use his music to tell a story about the local (that is, the Uyghur), has failed due to his inability to step out of the official narratives and rhetoric.

Similarly, Chen has also examined representative identities within Chinese state media and the internal 'orientalism' that has resulted. He has chosen 'Uncle Kurban' and 'Brother Alim' in order to examine and critique the state representations of Uyghurs to predominantly Han audiences. These two identities were chosen as they allow a timeframe of analysis that spans from 1958 to 2014. In his analysis, Chen found that the associated themes of state media representations of these men vary from loyalty to the party (Uncle Kurban), to philanthropy across ethnic groups (Brother Alim), with the latter nicely tying into the narratives embodied in 'The Harmonious Society', 'Chinese Dream' and 'The Positive Energy' state ideologies. Therefore, Chen argues the politics of representing Muslim Uyghur minority images demonstrates the state's relentless efforts in shaping Uyghurs from an unfamiliar ethnic minority 'Otherness' to a friendly part of national 'self'. It implies a strategy of internal and external soft power exerted by the CCP regime, which functions as an instrument for curbing the Uyghur independence movement, as well as for modelling Uyghur's national identity and enhancing Chinese nation-building. However, these representations depart significantly from mainstream views of Uyghurs, both in social media and in daily discourse, which identify Uyghurs as 'thieves', 'gangsters', and following the Kunming attacks, 'terrorists'. As a result, according to Chen, for the majority of Han Chinese, these positive state images of Uyghurs have become increasingly incomprehensible given the gap arising from the inundation of negative representations of Uyghurs in cyberspace. Therefore, he argues

that while the Uyghurs crave modernised and non-stereotyped Uyghur representations in the state media, it is likely that in an effort to enforce national harmony, the single-sided minority media representations will remain the norm, conforming to state ideologies.

Leibold and Deng also examine inter-ethnic relations and tensions. However, their chapter does so by examining the extent of Uyghur residential segregation, and questioning whether or not there is a lack of ethnic cohesion and solidarity in Xinjiang and China more broadly. They used a mix-modal methodology, combining a range of qualitative and quantitative indictors, to chronicle the extent of Uyghur segregation at different spatial scales and over time. Their research demonstrates that Uyghurs are not only the most segregated of China's fifty-five ethnic minorities, but also that Uyghurs exhibit patterns of enclave residency that are similar, if not higher, than other 'hyper-segregated' ethnic/racial groups worldwide. Their study has found that even in increased urban settings like Ürümqi, there continues to be Uyghur and Han residential segregation, although on a macro-level segregation is slowly decreasing. They argue that while this spatial polarisation can lessen ethnic tensions or conflicts, the longer-term trend of residential segregation does not augur well for ethnic relations in Xinjiang. Furthermore, Leibold and Deng also identify that in Ürümqi, residential segregation mirrors a larger structure of social distance marked by serious religious, linguistic and cultural barriers. As a result, they warn that any attempts to force residential integration and more demographically mixed neighbourhoods would likely exacerbate existing tensions, with inter-ethnic conflict increasing. Therefore, they conclude that in divided societies like Xinjiang, mutual trust and sense of fraternity can only take root slowly and requires careful state engineering, consociational institutions and grassroots community building, as well as ongoing conflict management and conflict reduction tactics.

The final section of the collection pays far greater attention to policies guided by the state and the implications of such policies on the region. It is titled '*Government policies in the region and beyond*', and here authors Alessandra Cappelletti, Hankiz Ekpar, Timothy Grose and Michael Clarke examine the unequal distribution of wealth in the region and the resultant development gap there, as well as the mandatory labour transfer policy and its impact on both regional and social inequalities. This section also analyses the increased incidence of Human Immunodeficiency Virus infection/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/ AIDS) among Uyghurs, and demonstrates the problematic government policies that have resulted in increasing HIV infection across the province. Finally, consideration is given to the need to negotiate between 'outside-in' and 'inside-out' analyses of the geopolitics of Xinjiang in order for a more nuanced understanding of the region to emerge.

Cappelletti draws on her fieldwork research to analyse the main socio-political dynamics underpinning the unequal distribution of resources and wealth within Xinjiang by using the case studies of Kashgar (predominantly Uyghur) and Shihezi (predominantly Han). Her findings demonstrate that government policies have not led to the expected socio-economic outcomes they intended to drive, and

Cappelletti's findings demonstrate that the distribution of wealth across Xinjiang remains unequal, and that areas inhabited by Uyghur people suffer socio-economic disadvantages due to exclusionary mechanisms caused by disparities in education, job training, access to credit and financial services, together with the inadequate availability and provision of healthcare services. In addition, she also identified a segment of Uyghur society that she calls the 'coopted elite'. This group has a hybrid identity that allows them to act as intermediaries and they control Uyghur communities on behalf of Beijing. The use they make of ethnicity is extremely helpful in their willingness to preserve and show their symbolic capital, which positions them in front of other Uyghurs and Beijing. While there are some problems with this group raised by Cappelletti, she argues that their cultural background and leadership power in Uyghur communities, together with their Han education and respect of the Party line and rules, make them the perfect bridge between a disadvantaged part of society and those who benefit from that disadvantage.

It is the structural vulnerabilities stemming from Uyghur disadvantage that form the basis of Ekpar's analysis of adolescent Uyghur HIV vulnerability. In examining the geographic location of Xinjiang along two of the world's major drug trafficking routes, the Golden Crescent and the Golden Triangle, Ekpar argues that this, coupled with Uyghur inequality in Xinjiang, has made them an especially vulnerable group to HIV transmission. In addition, while acknowledging that the central and local governments have shown strengthened commitment in halting the spread of HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang, Ekpar identifies the lack of cultural, linguistic and social sensitivity of those programs as limiting their effectiveness among Uyghurs. She argues that structural factors, and their link to increased HIV/AIDS vulnerability, require urgent and adequate attention from authorities and policy makers. Therefore, the development of structural interventions, in accordance with successful international evidence, is urgently required in Xinjiang. In addition, Ekpar urges that a combination of individual, behavioural and structural interventions can work together, and are indeed necessary, in order to halt the spread of HIV across Xinjiang, and in China.

In his chapter on the Xinjiang Class, Grose has found that returning to Xinjiang after studying in Inner China is not an act of altruism or patriotic duty. Instead, he found that among those Xinjiang Class Uyghurs he interviewed, returning to Xinjiang often meant they had exhausted all other avenues for living outside of Xinjiang, or they were returning home due to parental pressure, often focused on the expectation of them to settle and marry. For those returning to Xinjiang, reacclimating to life in the region can be very difficult, especially for young women. The process of moving away to study also has significant impacts on Uyghur identity formation, making returnees experience significant cultural dislocation and generation gap upon their return. Most important however, are Grose's findings that although this government policy aimed to increase Uyghur participation in the socio-economic development of the region, the jobs for graduates simply are not there. As a result, many of the Xinjiang Class Uyghurs feel disillusioned by this experience and voice their discontent through various means, including migrating overseas. The failure of this policy, to fully articulate into real job prospects with

real benefits in terms of pay and conditions is a worrying outcome, particularly in a region that already experiences ethnically driven tensions. In addition, it is also worrying that for those who have not benefitted, their discontent is heightened by the feeling that they have experienced a great deal of loss for no real return.

The final chapter in this section is Clarke's analysis of geopolitics in the region, and the presence of 'inside-out' and 'outside-in' approaches to the region. He argues the dominant geopolitical narratives of Xinjiang deployed by important state and non-state actors can be characterised as predominantly 'outside-in' approaches to Xinjiang that often attempt to incorporate or subsume the identity politics of the Uyghur and Xinjiang into the predominant discourse/narrative of the external observer. He identifies two prominent, and indeed hegemonic, 'outside-in' geopolitical narratives of Xinjiang. The first, and one that emanates from the West, is anchored in a judgement that only the spread of 'free markets, democracy and human rights' can bring stability and development to the post-Cold War order. The second, which emanates from Beijing, can be defined as a 'developmental' one that at its core is concerned with state-building and the increase of China's material power. As a result of these two narratives, Clarke argues that the dominant geopolitical narratives of the region either ignore or purposefully obscure the (potential) existence of what might be termed 'inside-out' perspectives on Xinjiang and its place in this contested environment. Even so, there remains the potential for these dominant 'outside-in' geopolitical narratives of Xinjiang to be challenged by 'inside-out' perspectives derived from aspects of Xinjiang's ethnic, social and religious 'reality'. Some of these have potentially troubling implications for not only Beijing's state-building project in the region but also the West's neo-liberal agenda. However, Clarke argues that the ability of such 'inside-out' geopolitical imaginings to positively affect the politics of the region is limited by the constraining effects of the two hegemonic geopolitical scripts elucidated by the West and China.

Xinjiang is a region of immense importance, not only in studies of China and Central Asian relations and politics, but also in wider analyses of continuing East-West tensions, minority rights, development and inequality, and increasingly, diasporic nationalism in cyberspace, as demonstrated by the Uyghur community in exile (to name just a few). This collection attempts to analyse what life is like in Xinjiang for the diverse population that lives there. It offers important insights into the social, economic and political terrains of Xinjiang. As demonstrated in the collection, this involves a tangled web of analysis as people's lives intersect with government policies, and in all discussions, it must be remembered that even within groupings such as 'Han' and 'Uyghur' there exists a vast array of voices and opinions. Ours is not an attempt to polarise the population, or determine what is right or wrong, but rather, to identify some of the challenges the region continues to pose, in an attempt to foster broader understanding of the region and its peoples.

## Notes

1  Information Office of the State Council of the PRC, 'White Paper on Development and Progress in Xinjiang', *China Daily*, viewed 21 September 2009, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ethnic/2009–09/21/content_8717461.htm
2  Alice Dawkins, 'From the Western to Eastern Frontier: An Australian in Search of China in Xinjiang and Heilongjiang Provinces', *Australia-China Youth Association*, viewed 14 September 2014, http://www.acya.org.au/2014/09/western-eastern-frontier-australian-search-china-xinjiang-heilongjiang-provinces/

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**Part 1**

# Identity formation and sense of belonging

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# 1    The burden of the past

## Uyghur peasants remember collectivisation in southern Xinjiang

*Ildikó Bellér-Hann*

## Introduction

Much has been written about how people's perceptions of the present are inevitably shaped by their memories of the past and, in turn, how such memories inform individuals' sense of belonging. In recent decades this unabated interest in the intricate relationship between history, memory and identity has produced numerous studies across a wide spectrum of disciplines. This upsurge in memory studies more or less coincided with the end of the Cold War. Socialism emerged as a useful laboratory where relevant theories could be applied and tested, as all of a sudden scholars were able to carry out unimpeded fieldwork and have greatly improved access to the archives.[1] Researchers focusing on China have followed suit, which was made possible by the end of the Maoist era and the far-reaching reforms introduced by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1980s, reforms which retained socialist principles but allowed for important changes in all areas of life.[2] While Mao Zedong's reputation as a great leader has been upheld, the grave mistakes of the collectivised period came under scrutiny. In view of this upsurge in interest in the history of Chinese state socialism, it is all the more remarkable that such issues to date have rarely been discussed in the context of Xinjiang, especially with reference to its minority populations, either by local or by foreign scholars. This is presumably due to ongoing political tensions between Uyghurs and the Chinese state.[3] In an attempt at least partially to fill this gap, this chapter is a preliminary enquiry into Uyghur villagers' memories of and reflections on the collectivised period.

Following a brief description of fieldwork conditions, I shall summarise the written account of a local cadre. This will be augmented with data which I gathered among Uyghur villagers in 1996, during monitored interviews.[4] Finally, the strategies employed by local actors to make sense of their past will be analysed in the light of some influential theories on memory and history.

### *Fieldwork*

This chapter is based on my notes taken during fieldwork carried out in southern Xinjiang in 1996 in two villages situated near Kashgar. This research has already resulted in various articles, but I was unwilling to publish some of my

other findings for fear that such a publication could have severe consequences for my interlocutors. Now, almost 20 years later, this concern has abated.[5] Yet, in view of the continuing paucity of publications on rural Uyghur communities and the almost complete absence of studies addressing Uyghurs' experiences during collectivisation, the topic has not lost its actuality.

Most of the fieldwork was carried out in two Uyghur villages selected by my Han research partners in the vicinity of Kashgar in southern Xinjiang, in the course of four months in 1996. Most of the time I was accompanied by my Han research partner, who was fluent in Uyghur, the language we both used throughout the research. Another Han researcher, who was instrumental in obtaining a research permit, visited us briefly during fieldwork. They together drew the parameters of the interview conditions: we could pay one visit only to each household in the neighbourhood specified by them, and sensitive topics such as religion or politics were to be avoided. The official focus of the research was changes in Muslim women's life following the introduction of reforms, but I was interested in all facets of rural Uyghurs' experiences. My research partner wished to carry out a basic survey on the households we visited, a plan that could not be realised because people were too suspicious of our motives. They found it hard to believe that we were working for our respective universities only. Therefore, they often refused to reveal precise or even approximate figures of their household's economy, claiming ignorance or inability to understand what we wanted, or to remember details. This is indicative of the constraints under which data was collected. I only partially succeeded in my efforts to collect life histories, since we were unable to build up closer, more trusting relationships. People were much more obliging when the conversation turned to farming, rituals and personal matters; topics which appeared to be free of political sensitivities. I started asking more questions about individual life experiences (weddings, the birth of children, the acquisition of skills) and local traditions (gender relations, rituals and production). Instead of uninterrupted narratives to questions of 'when did you get married' and 'how was the celebration', people responded by giving brief flashbacks and fragments, describing the context of the event. They also used the collectivised past as a suitable reference point to explain and praise improvements in the reform era. My interlocutors typically included rank-and-file farmers as well as village- and township-level cadres, old and young, men and women, people of different class origins. Monitored interviews were conducted in about a hundred households, but additional data was also gathered during informal encounters.[6]

## Ibrahim's journal

In August 1996, following the arrival of my second Han research partner from Ürümchi, we were offered the unique opportunity to visit an elderly Uyghur cadre with a reputation of possessing much knowledge about history and local tradition, in a village situated in the vicinity of Kashgar but outside our regular field locations. We visited Ibrahim U. in his village home and conducted a long, three-hour interview with him. Ibrahim was born in 1930, his father was a poor farmhand

(*yallanma kämbäghäl*), and his mother worked as a servant in the house of a local official (*bäg*). Recognising the boy's talent, the somewhat eccentric official had him educated in the School of Fine Arts (*Güzäl Sanatlar Mektiwi*) in Kashgar, where he studied painting and calligraphy. Following his graduation, first he was employed by the *bäg* as a scribe, and later for a very short time he was in the service of the Guomindang. It was thanks to this education that, following the 'Liberation' of Xinjiang in 1949, he was immediately recruited by the new power-holders as a cadre, a position he held for 43 years, retiring in 1993. He had been a member of the Communist Party for 40 years. His wife remained a peasant throughout their marriage. Ibrahim retained a strong sense of peasant identity, but he regretted that none of his children became a cadre. A kind and willing interview partner, he was very outspoken about his own troubles and confrontations with the local administration of which he had long been a member. He was proud of his poetry, some of which he had published, and he also showed us his handwritten historical notes in which he recorded the important events of his township during his years as a township cadre.[7] The following account is based on my own notes from Ibrahim's summary of important events (*chong ishlär*) titled *Memoirs* (*Khatirä*), augmented by additional information which Ibrahim divulged during our conversations.

Ibrahim characterised the pre-socialist period as an era of stagnation when local officials ruled, aided by the official responsible for communal water management (*mirab*) and religious dignitaries. On the eve of the communist victory the ethnic composition of the population in the locality was homogenous, with Uyghurs making up the overwhelming majority. Other groups were represented in very small numbers; in Ibrahim's township of more than ten thousand people, there were only two Han, six Kyrgyz and four Uzbek families. Ethnic homogeneity was paralleled by a hierarchical, feudal social structure. Seventy percent of arable land was in the hands of rich landlords (*zimindar, pomshchik*), 20 percent belonged to rich middle (*halliq ottura*) and middle peasants (*ottura dikhan*) and 10 percent was cultivated by the largest group comprising poor (*kämbäghäl*) farmers. Landless peasants were in effect bonded labourers (*qul*), being completely dependent on their landlord: for example, a certain Sawut Haji had as many as a hundred such dependents. Rich landlords' land was cultivated by poor peasants, who were either tenant farmers or sharecroppers. All means of production (land, draught animals and agricultural tools) were owned by the landlords. Poor peasants were not much better off than the landless labourers employed for a year, seasonal labourers and hired farmhands. The ideology of exploitation was provided by the religious elite, who maintained that he 'who has to endure hardship in this world will have comfort in the other world' (*bu dunyada japa tartsa, o dunyada rahät bar*). Conditions were so hard for the poor that many young men could not even afford to get married, while the rich could take as many as three or four wives.[8]

Between 1949 and 1953 the Chinese Communist Party consolidated its power.[9] Dramatic political events at the time included the fleeing of Guomindang soldiers in the wake of the arrival of the People's Liberation Army in 1949 and the establishment of a military committee (*härbiy häy'ät*) in a school building. This

happened with the cooperation of members of the old local leadership. The main historical periods outlined by Ibrahim correspond closely to the rest of China. They include the defeat of the nationalists and the communist victory dubbed as 'Liberation' (*azatliq*), the first land reform (*birinji yär islahati*), the setting up of the communes (*ali kopiratsiyä*), the Great Leap Forward (*chong qazan*), the years of the Cultural Revolution (*zor mädäniyät inqilawi*) and the second land reform (*ikinji yär islahati*) in the early 1980s, which marked the beginning of de-collectivisation. The replacement of Islamic courts by regional courts marked a shift of juridical power from the religious to the secular realm. New administrative units (*shang*) were set up staffed by a party secretary (*shuji*), a head (*shangjan*) and a scribe/clerk (*katip*). From each neighbourhood, one representative was elected who had to attend a month-long training course. The peasants' association (*dikhanlar uyushmisi*) was founded at this time and the old system of public grain tax was abolished. Rich peasants' land, animals and agricultural implements were confiscated and redistributed among the landless. The 'anti-three campaign' (*üchgä qarshi härkät*) was the local realisation of the national campaign launched in the years 1951 and 1952 against corruption, waste and bureaucracy: in 1951 the three richest tyrants (*zomigär*) were publicly executed. Participation in the country-wide anti-imperialist campaign was ensured by the locally organised rally to support North Korea against the USA.[10]

The years 1952 and 1953 saw the organisation of mutual aid teams (*hämkarliq guruppisi*) and the introduction of state monopoly over grain. Collectivisation started in earnest in 1954 with the setting up of the first small cooperatives. In 1956, large-scale collectivisation was introduced and manufacturing and commercial units were transferred from private into public ownership. As collectivisation was gaining momentum in 1957, a political campaign aimed at breaking the resistance to accelerated collectivisation was launched against rightist elements (*ongarluqqa qarshi härkät bashlandi*). The year 1958 witnessed the continuation of the anti-rightist campaign, the organising of the people's communes (*khälq kommunisi/gongshe quruldi*), the setting up of communal eating halls ( *jama'ät ashkhanisi quruldi*) and the launching of the backyard steel-production campaign (*tömür-polat tawlash*).

According to Ibrahim, in 1959 the central commune comprised 370 cooperatives which elected 177 representatives. Among the elected commune leaders, there were two Han and two Uyghur. As property relations were transformed, only houses and the small gardens attached to them, a maximum of three sheep per household and some trees were left in private property. The anti-capitalist campaign continued in the form of attacks on rich peasants' capitalist tendencies (*halliq ottura dikhanlar kapitalistik khahishlarini zärbä berish*). Large-scale mobilisation of labour was undertaken, which resulted in the construction of long stretches of new irrigation canals, the repair of old ones, as well as land reclamation. Following the People's Congress in 1961, the communal kitchens were abolished and some local communes underwent administrative reorganisation, while ownership of collectivised trees in villages was transferred to their previous owners. The 'anti-three campaign' was re-launched in 1963, this time directed at

those cadres who abused their position and sought to gain profit at the expense of others. In an effort to correct previous mistakes, cadres had to apologise publicly for their alleged or real excesses.

In November 1966, the Cultural Revolution (*zor mädäniyät inqilawi*) was launched. Ibrahim characterised the period briefly by making references to frequent beatings (*zärbä*), the anti-three campaigns, Lin Biao's assassination, attempts to increase production (*dolqunni kötürüsh*), political education (*lushiän tärbiyisi*) and the persecution of rightists.[11] Ibrahim's account almost abruptly stops with the brief listing of the end of the Cultural Revolution, the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, the fall of the Gang of Four and the introduction of the reforms.

## Narrating the everyday[12]

Based on my interviews with Uyghur villagers, this section allows some insight into the quotidian, entirely absent from Ibrahim's memoirs. As memory 'needs spaces and tends toward spatialization' (Assmann 2012, p. 24), it comes as no surprise that reminisces of ordinary farmers were organised around spatial as well as temporal axes. Uyghur villagers' temporal parameters are no different from those drawn up by Ibrahim or mainstream historians. They also saw the 'liberation' of Xinjiang in 1949 as a major rupture, which marked the end of the old social order and the beginning of accelerated change. The other major temporal boundary was drawn in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a period which marked the end of collectivisation and the launching of the reforms. This period was referred to as the second land reform (*ikinji yär islahati*) or a time when people were given land (*yär bärgän chagh*).

Like Ibrahim, Uyghur farmers also used the Russian loanword *kopiratsiyä* to describe collectivisation and identified pre-socialist social classes using socialist classifications. The richest landlords (*chong bay, pomshchik*)[13] owned seventy *mu* land or more and lived exclusively on other people's work.[14] Rich middle peasants (*halliq ottura*) had holdings between 30 and 70 *mu* and often took part in production themselves and worked alongside their farmhands. Lower middle peasants (*ottura dikhan/ ottura halliq*) owned ten to 30 *mu* land, while households with five *mu* land or less were considered poor (*kämbäghäl*), because they were unable to meet their minimal subsistence needs. The landless (*chakar*) worked the land of others and lived in their employer's house, on whom they depended for the period of their contracts. They received just enough to fill their stomachs. *Bägs* (local officials) were mentioned (by a few) with resentment as the privileged few who possessed over 100 *mu* land controlled water rights and exercised political power.

The spatial organisation of everyday life before 'liberation' was determined by the requirements of agricultural work around which all other economic and communal activities were organised. Following 1949, people's lives continued to be divided between the fields (or, for a few, the workshops) and their houses. However, the drastic social engineering caused changes in the daily and seasonal rhythm of everyday life and, subsequently, in the use of space and time. A normal workday started at 4 a.m. Among the five daily prayers prescribed for all

Muslims, for the Uyghur of Xinjiang the early morning prayer has been tradition-ally privileged over the rest.[15] The early start of communal work rendered the performance of the morning prayer – for men in the mosque, and for women at home – impractical and even impossible. Young couples had to carry their babies and heavy wooden cradles to the house where the communal crèche was set up, accompanied by older children. Communal breakfast was followed by work in the fields. About an hour was granted for lunch, which young mothers used to run to the crèche to breast-feed their babies, not having any time for eating and rest-ing. This was again followed by collective work lasting until 7 p.m. The one free day allowed weekly was used to catch up with household tasks, work one's tiny garden plot, carry out illegal production for the black market or visit parents. In some families even this became a complicated undertaking, if the wife's parents happened to live some distance away. This was also the day when visits to a shrine or to the cemetery could be made to pay respect to the deceased, as local custom requires. This arrangement, however, ran against local practice, which dictated that such visits should be undertaken on a segregated basis, women visiting on Thursdays (and perhaps Saturdays), and men visiting on Fridays following the early morning communal prayer.

Men and women had to be out in the fields throughout the year; when no other work needed to be performed, they had to level the fields and collect manure and wood. As one man concluded, 'We were made to do many useless things, just to keep us busy'. Other jobs performed by the brigades included the construction of roads, irrigation canals and dams. In building a much-needed infrastructure, as elsewhere in China, some concessions were made to local custom: men and women typically worked in segregated groups, and female working groups were led by women cadres (cf. Davin 1976, p. 147).

Before 'Liberation', combining agricultural work and handicrafts had been made possible by the intra-familial division of labour, which ran along genera-tional and gendered lines, and the seasonal nature of agricultural work. In the collectivised period, most people, including skilled craftsmen, were given tasks in agriculture, and only small numbers were appointed to work in the commu-nal workshops (*karkhanä*), where the few selected could practise their skills. But many skilled craftsmen had to work in agriculture and were prevented from trans-mitting their knowledge to their children or to apprentices, since production for private gain was not merely frowned upon but also severely punished. The sub-sistence orientation of the communes discouraged market exchanges and led to a dramatic decline of the cash economy, and many bazaars were closed down for a while. Some craftsmen resorted to moonlighting in the privacy of their homes to exchange their products on the black market. The pre-socialist practice of child labour was perpetuated under collectivisation. Most older children participated in adult work. Often, they were assigned special tasks, such as the collection of animal dung for fuel and stones for industrial enterprises. Households needed the work points earned by their children, who, whenever possible, were registered as older than their real age: children over 12 had access to a full adult food ration, which also meant that such children had to perform the work of an adult. Because

of the interruption of traditional apprenticeship practices and religious education, and in view of the fact that attendance of secular schools was not obligatory, many village men and women who were adolescents during the years of the Cultural Revolution remained illiterate and unskilled.

The setting up of communal canteens and childcare facilities during the Great Leap Forward also necessitated the creation of temporary or long-term positions previously unknown: women were appointed to staff the kindergartens and crèches and to cook and serve in the communal kitchens or workshops. The enforced communal commensality resulted in the Uyghur name of the period, 'Big Pot' (*chong qazan*), which for several years rendered private kitchens redundant, emptied households of their last teapot and prevented people from practising quotidian commensality and ritual as well as everyday hospitality, the cornerstones of Uyghur social relations.

There are some indications that new conditions favoured the perpetuation or even strengthening of social cohesion in areas where the commune did not take responsibility. The lack of available cash and the discouragement of working for private gain made it difficult to hire wage labourers. But there was a need for new houses and for repairing and extending old houses to accommodate married sons and their families. The construction of private houses required the organisation of working groups recruited on an informal basis. Participation in such projects was voluntary and assumed long-term mutuality. The time and the nature of reciprocating help remained open-ended. Individuals belonging to these groups were socialised into unquestioned assumptions of mutual aid with households with which they habitually shared some resources (for example, labour). Pooling resources within such groups evolved gradually over the years, was based on existing kinship and neighbourhood ties or was cemented and reinforced by the conscious creation of such ties.

Thus, while the everyday use of houses was drastically reduced due to communal control over production, houses retained and even increased their symbolic value as they became the only valuable asset left in private property that could be passed down to descendants as inheritance. They also became the sites of illegal productive and religious activities and the objects of genuine voluntary activities. Some families had to leave their homes for a longer period of time. Many men and women were drawn into the backyard steel production, which involved working in the open cast mines or cutting wood to heat the furnaces, and the construction of makeshift huts and ovens. Recruiting principles complied to some extent with the traditional modesty code (*namähräm*): typically, newly married, childless couples were selected in an effort to keep young families together and to avoid sending unmarried people or burdening couples with young children. Simultaneously, this separation of young couples from their natural social environment went against local norms, which considered such a couple neither an independent economic nor a viable communal unit in its own right. But it was the mobilisation of women away from the domestic sphere, for what were commonly considered to be male tasks, unsuitable for women, which was widely seen as the violation of traditional ideas of the gendered use of space and division of labour.[16]

Villagers agreed that hard physical work in industry, in construction and in the fields all year around went at the expense of women's domestic duties and proved harmful for their physical and emotional well-being. Few concessions were made to women's reproductive roles. The pro-natal policies under collectivisation combined with local expectations of women to bear as many children as possible resulted in numerous pregnancies and births but relatively few surviving children, due to miscarriage, infant mortality and the difficult conditions for pregnant women, women in labour and young mothers. Since draught animals and carts were owned by the commune and were mostly accessible by cadres only, women were habitually used as beasts of burden, shifting heavy loads, a practice which was not rooted in local tradition. Middle-aged and older female interviewees commonly attributed their back pain and other ailments to the demands of this period and reported a heavy workload even in advanced pregnancy and soon after giving birth. Poor diet, inadequate calorie intake, lack of fuel to heat during the bitterly cold winters and the absence of adequate health services were all perceived as contributing factors to women's health complaints and the cause of the high rate of infant and child mortality. Throughout the first part of the collectivised period traditional midwives provided the necessary services to women in labour. Later some were trained as barefoot nurses while others either withdrew from practising altogether for fear of being accused of illegal activities performed for private gain, or continued to provide the necessary services for little or no remuneration in secret.

Collective crèches and kindergartens were set up in designated private houses or in the production brigade headquarters. Small children were entrusted to the care of old women and women who had recently given birth. As a result, frail, elderly and even sick women as well as lactating mothers still weak after delivery could find themselves in charge of a large number of babies and small children. Several women recalled how they were regularly harassed by the production team leader shortly after delivery to return to communal work quickly, often before the forty-day 'liminal' period prescribed by custom was over. Occasionally, when the crèche could not be opened, working women had no choice but to take their children with them to the fields. Communal childcare and obligatory agricultural work for women entailed a further complication: lactating women often breastfed absentee mothers' babies left in their care. This meant that a great number of milk siblings (*imildash*) were created, who, following Koranic edicts, were then prohibited from marrying each other. This practice limited the circle of available marriage partners in the neighbourhood and went against the grind of endogamous tendencies as this generation grew up and came to marriageable age. At the same time, life-cycle and religious rituals and the obligatory hospitality continued to be observed under restricted conditions, sometimes with the support of the commune, but always in very modest circumstances.

Strict work discipline and inadequate and unfair remuneration were recurring themes in local reminiscences. Only if they were never late for work and worked tirelessly could people get the full work points (*nomur*). A day's work was measured with the Chinese unit of *gong*, but the value of one *gong* varied not only

from place to place but also according to the type of work performed. Work points for daily performance were then added up at the annual accounting between community and individual. People received a minimal daily grain allowance (*norma*), which, as informants bitterly recall, was always inadequate. In one village the daily grain allowance was given as 200 grams per person (altogether six kilograms per month). In another village, an adult who fully took part in production had his monthly grain allowance fixed at 30 *jing* (15 kilograms) of cereal per month: 20 *jing* of maize and ten *jing* of wheat, half of which was chaff. The discrepancies in the figures may indicate memory lapses, fluctuations over the years in the harvest and the commune's success or differences between individuals' entitlement. Daily allowance was graded according to gender, status and age.[17] These figures need to be put in the context of Uyghur dietary practice, approximately 80 percent of which is made up of grains. Breakfast and lunch consisted of bread and tea, while the evening meal comprised a simple, grain-based cooked meal.

While normative notions of the gendered division of labour were violated, patriarchal patterns were inadvertently reinforced by unequal remuneration: as elsewhere in China, women's maximum remuneration was consistently kept lower than men's. A typical example quoted was that, for agricultural work, the maximum daily earnings of a man were ten *nomur*, while that of a woman was eight. Although remuneration varied according to workplace, the gender difference remained: in one village workshop, a seamstress could receive a maximum of 18 *nomur*, and a male tailor 25 *nomur*, for a day's work. When specifying food rations and workload, my interview partners rarely differentiated between the various periods. But reminiscences stressed malnourishment, there was no talk of famine, which is consistent with reports, according to which minorities in western China were 'better off during the famine because the authorities, however ruthless, found it harder to enforce their demands' (Becker 1996, p. 101).[18] Due to food scarcity, mulberries and turnips, normally common property available to all, became commoditised and sold on the black market and used in unofficial market exchanges, which often took the form of barter. While the money economy was almost eliminated from daily life, at the time of the annual accounting with the commune, individuals were forced to enter the market to acquire cash and pay their debt. Ironically, households could only fulfil their duty towards the collective if they broke the rules and engaged in black-market activities at a time when local markets were banned, and trading and production for private gain were criminalised.

Insufficient grain allowance was explained by the fact that much of the harvest was stored in grain depots and benefited cadres and town dwellers, allegations which were fully confirmed by former cadres. One former production brigade accountant (*boghaltir*) recalled that, since he was responsible for bringing grain from the collective grain store, he could help himself and his immediate family more generously. At the end of each year, the work points collected were compared to the amount of grain which had been allocated to each individual. At the annual accounting, most people ended up with a negative balance. This was the case in communes where production did not reach its target level, for instance, where the commune could not achieve self-sufficiency. In such places, households

were made to pay for the amount of cereal they consumed but did not earn. The paying off of debts (*qärz*) loomed large over many families. Some people had to sell their remaining possessions to the collective; sometimes a last felt mat or a badly needed winter coat was used as payment for accumulated debts. Only the economically successful brigades could afford to reward their workers with cash payment from the collective income (*yilliq daramät*). The lopsided realisation of the ideology of social justice characteristic of the collectivised period was sometimes expressed through the metaphor of food and cooking: 'The big pot was full; the small pot was empty' (*chong qazan liq, kichik qazan quruq*).

## Personal narratives

The generalised mode of narration became more personal in the course of unmonitored, unstructured, private conversations, and they often focused on retribution and humiliation for political 'crimes'. Yusup explained how his maternal grandparents had been classified as rich landlords. His mother, a teacher, was a temperamental woman with strong anti-communist views. In 1958 she joined the region-wide anti-Chinese revolt, for which she was repeatedly beaten and even imprisoned for a while. She was eventually set free but was banned from teaching until 1978. In the early reform period, she was rehabilitated but died soon afterwards. Such references to the anti-Chinese uprisings were invariably made in spontaneous conversations taking place when my Han colleague was out of earshot.

Exceptionally, one could hear stories about the mild treatment of members of the ruling classes. Such stories were typically told by their descendants, who became successfully integrated into the modern post-reform socialist elite. Hawwa, a woman in her early forties, occupied an important position in the town leadership. Her maternal grandfather owned 35 *mu* land and, as a religious dignitary, served simultaneously in the mosque and in the Koran school. Since he had two daughters but no son, he was not so concerned with amassing a great deal of wealth to leave to his children, a statement consistent with the local ideology that women should not inherit real estate. He could therefore afford to be generous to his labourers. His generosity was rewarded with milder treatment at the time of collectivisation, and his family integrated into the new system more smoothly than others. However, for each story about the successful integration of traditional elite families into the new socialist elites, there were many more about the demise of such families. Mämtimin's grandfather used to own 100 hundred *mu* land. Although he managed to sell some of his land shortly before the land reform and became officially classified as a middle-peasant rather than a rich landlord, there were many people who testified against him. He was badly beaten and eventually killed. His grandchild, in his mid-thirties at the time of our conversation, never attended school and never learnt a skill; he remained illiterate. At the time of the interview, he was living with his twenty-six-year-old wife, also illiterate, and their two small children, in poverty. Maryam, a middle-aged woman, in great financial difficulty at the time of our conversation, explained that her paternal grandfather used to be a religious

dignitary and possessed over 100 hundred *mu* land. Like in Hawwa's story, this man, too, was described as someone who had treated his servants and labourers decently, but he died just before collectivisation, on his way back from the pilgrimage to Mecca. In the 1990s, some of this land was retained by the village following de-collectivisation, which was greatly resented by Maryam.

Negative memories abounded concerning the means of retaliation meted out to those who either did not comply with the political currents of the time or had the 'wrong' family background. Beatings, imprisonment and the public humiliation of individuals found guilty of political crimes are remembered with particular horror but were mentioned briefly and always in unmonitored conversations. Public humiliation took the same form as elsewhere in China: self-criticism and, especially during the Cultural Revolution, the parading of the guilty person in the dunce's long paper hat (*qalpaq kiydürüsh*). Often, whispered, fragmentary references to beatings and humiliation were not at all connected to a particular period. My interlocutors emphasised temporal continuities, and not once did I hear about the improvement or reversal of policies throughout collectivisation.

Nevertheless, in some stories major ruptures did occur. Ähmätjan's father had possessed 12 *mu* land prior to 1949 and was not a rich landlord. However, agriculture was not his only source of livelihood. His wealth amassed from trade was the main reason why he was classified a rich peasant. Following 'liberation', he started fearing for his life, and in 1951 he left for the north of Xinjiang, taking his two teenage sons with him. When, in the post-reform period, Ähmätjan returned to claim land for cultivation and to settle down, the production team leader accused him of having left his home, an accusation tantamount to being a traitor. Ähmätjan argued, saying, 'I was a child at the time. Besides, I did not go to America; I have remained on Uyghur soil'. Eventually, he received three *mu* land from the collective and was reintegrated into the local community, but the accusations left a bitter taste. The tension caused by Ähmätjan's dislocation and return could only be solved by his appealing to the overarching ethnic definition referring to Xinjiang as the homeland of all Uyghurs, in order to counter the more exclusive, oasis and commune-based definition of belonging put forward by the officials in order to deny him access to the community's scarce resources.

Such more personal accounts were typically embedded in a timeframe which went beyond the temporal parameters of collectivisation. The fate of individuals who suffered political retribution during the Maoist period was thus used to explain their position in the 1990s, showing local people's acute awareness of the intimate connections between past and present. This is a reminder that 'oral narratives told in the present about the past need to be valued as a history of the present' (Hershatter 2011, p. 23).

## Uyghur memory community

I have already commented on the fundamental differences between Ibrahim's written account and of the memories of villagers whose experiences Ibrahim no doubt shared and could have told, had he chosen to do so. His awareness of the

new campaigns and policies were derived from his active participation in commune level administration. He knew no Chinese and drew on the Uyghur socialist neologisms translated from Chinese. Ibrahim's account focused on what he saw as the most important events taking place in his locality throughout the collectivised period. He realised their power to transform local society irreversibly and wished to record them for posterity. His *Memoirs* comprise a catalogue of chronologically arranged policy directives and implementations in the manner of annals but lack a narrative plot, analysis and conclusion. In spite of his title, he wished to write history rather than personal reminiscences, which is demonstrated by the almost complete invisibility of the chronicler, his focus on political events and the absence of personal experiences. Only at one point is this neutrality broken, when he mentions the beatings to which critics of the policies implemented during the Cultural Revolution were subjected. His words, 'we were repeatedly badly beaten', stand as a blunt reminder that Ibrahim, like many other minority cadres, himself got caught up in the tug-of-war between his role as a minority cadre and as a member of his own community (Harrell 2007). Thus Ibrahim's *Memoirs* are situated at the interface between memory (lived history, *Geschichte*) and history (an intellectual operation, *Historie*), in Pierre Nora's sense (1989, pp. 7–8). Ibrahim's work demonstrates a local example of history in the making, an account approaching but stopping short at becoming *Historie*.

In contrast, Uyghur villagers' accounts demonstrate the making and the workings of a 'memory community' (Nora 1996). They do not contradict Ibrahim's work; they rather serve as complementary, elaborating on daily experiences as communal, but hardly ever personalised. They are also devoid of narrative plot and structure and focus on collectively endured hardship and the suffering of the quotidian caused by the big events recorded by Ibrahim.

In contrast to Ibrahim's account, villagers' temporality did not follow that of the state's projects closely. References to retribution, to hunger and poverty were hardly ever attributed to different periods. They focused on the 'state effect', the effect of practices that 'make state structures appear to exist' (Mitchell 1999, pp. 89–90). These comprised the temporal and spatial rearrangements of everyday life in the wake of central policy directives which caused major disruptions in local traditions and culture. Thus, villagers' generalised, collective account of continuous suffering set the scene for those small, personalised social dramas of the everyday, which to date have remained untold.[19] However, their accounts include numerous observations highlighting the cause-and-effect relationship between new policies and their impact on local traditions.

In addition, their generalised memories correspond to the everyday manifestation of collective memory as defined by Jan Assmann. This collective memory has a temporal horizon of 80 to 100 years, is strongly influenced by contemporaries of the remembered events, mediates a collective identity, and strengthens community cohesion, but it lacks cultural characteristics. In contrast, precisely these elements are included in Assmann's definition of cultural memory, defined as a 'body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose "cultivation" serves to stabilise and convey that society's self-image'

(1995, p. 132). Thus, cultural memory also has a binding character and itself consists of objectified culture (Matten 2012, p. 9). Uyghur villagers' accounts of everyday life during collectivisation thus display the workings of communicative memory when they recount hardship and suffering, and refer to the detrimental nature of state effects upon their cultural traditions. Communicative memory and collective memory meet at the point where contestation over the reorganisation of space and time takes place and moral judgements are made about the compatibility of Uyghur traditions with the social engineering of the Chinese state. Where communicative memory projects a self-image of suffering, evoking tropes from cultural memory (disruption, subversion of, and local traditions) reflects agency: disapproval, criticism and defiance of the very state effects which caused suffering. In face of restrictions and the enforced communal control of daily life, Uyghur peasants responded with the same 'weapons of the weak' which they mobilised to counter restrictions on production and trade: secrecy, deceit, lies, feigning acquiescence and so forth (Scott 1985). Under such conditions, not only physical spaces such as houses and specific plots of land, but also the acquired socialist vocabulary may become *lieux de mémoirs* (Nora 1989) which buttress identification with a locality and its community.

For the recollections of people old enough to relate direct experience, the baseline for evaluating these decades was the pre-socialist period. Villagers generally acknowledged the fairness of socialist ideology which had informed the first land reform, but were dismissive of the misguided policies which fundamentally changed for the better following the end of collectivisation. Such praises for the reform period were warranted because of the fieldwork constraints but relative to the excesses of collectivisation, I believe that most people, who experienced collectivisation first hand, were genuine in their praise of the reforms.

## Conclusion

While the data presented here lack the volume, detail and precision which would be necessary to do justice to Uyghur villagers' diverse experiences, they nevertheless reveal local people's ways of dealing with the acceleration of history. They illustrate the polymorphic nature and historical embeddedness of memory as well as its intimate connectedness to the present.

Ibrahim's written account and local people's memories appear complementary and are interlinked. Both are rooted in personal experience. Rank-and-file villagers' accounts fill in some of the gaps left by Ibrahim, allowing a generalised glimpse into the concerns and preoccupations of the quotidian. The narratives were told in the first person plural, most likely as a cautious response to the interview conditions which did not allow for the building up of trust. If we take Pierre Nora's differentiation of *Historie* and *Geschichte* as our point of departure, we may conclude that Ibrahim's account tends towards becoming *Historie* insofar as it distances itself from the oral tradition of the quotidian but fails to provide a proper narrative and an analysis. Ordinary villagers' accounts pick up the narrative of the participating eyewitness with emphasis placed on communally endured

hardship but stop short of becoming personalised accounts, *Geschichte*, social dramas which could only be told under conditions much more favourable than those prevailing in Xinjiang in the mid-1990s. Villagers' stories of suffering and displays of agency emerge as the consequence of the state's forceful reorganisation of traditional spatial and temporal arrangements.

In Xinjiang, as elsewhere in China, from the 1950s, the state 'was no longer an external, peripheral presence, but often was embodied in a familiar neighbour such as a woman leader, activist, or labor model' (Hershatter 2011, p. 9). Yet, Uyghur villagers' structural position within the People's Republic today and the continuous state effects they experience may cause villagers to emphasise the externality of the Chinese state to Uyghur society when remembering collectivisation (cf. Harrell 2007, p. 223). The presence of Chinese party secretaries at most levels of decision-making has been uninterrupted ever since 1949. Uyghur villagers remain aware that policy directives originate in Beijing and, as some of the unmonitored conversations indicate, anti-Chinese sentiments remain strong: participation in anti-Chinese uprisings during collectivisation together with personalised accounts of suffering endured during collectivisation still belong to the untold (old, whispered) chapters of the Uyghur past. My interview partners may have been aware that their suffering was shared by millions of Han and other peoples, since policies were implemented nationwide, but their discourse remained resolutely local. The criminalisation of activities perceived as essential for perpetuating community, such as praying, transmitting skills and elementary religious knowledge, and shrine-visiting had the unintended effect of strengthening a sense of local belonging and communal cohesion. As commemorative memory reaches out to Uyghur cultural memory (traditions) as the most important point of reference through which group loyalties and discontent with policies are articulated, it has every potential to flow into and strengthen Uyghur supralocal, ethno-national identity.

## Notes

1  For some more recent examples see Pine et al. 2004; Fitzpatrick 2006; Todorova & Gille 2010; Yurchak 2013.
2  For example see Siu 1990; Watson 1994; Becker 1996; Litzinger 1998; Friedman 2005; Guo 2007; Guo 2009; Li 2009; Dikötter 2010; Hershatter 2011; Matten 2012; Guo 2012; Day 2013; Zhou 2013.
3  Although Li (2011) has published on Xinjiang, his work mostly refers to the Aksu *bingtuan* with its predominantly Han population. To the best of my knowledge, to date Sawut Pawan is the only one who has carried out extensive fieldwork among the Uyghur in Kashgar and Ili and is preparing a major publication which at present bears the working title *Classification and Uyghur Village Society 1950–1980*. To date there exist no independent oral history collections in Xinjiang (Barnett 2010, p. 83).
4  This chapter is by and large the outcome of research carried out jointly with Chris Hann, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council of Great Britain (R000 235709). Fieldwork was carried out in 1996 in villages near Kashgar. I would like to express my thanks to Dr Tsui Yen Hu and Professor Fang Xiao Hua, to the Chinese authorities who issued the research permit and to Uyghur farmers and their families

who generously welcomed me into their homes. I am solely responsible for the contents of this chapter. I am grateful to the Institute for Advanced Study at Nantes where the writing up of this material took place for providing excellent working conditions.

5  I still prefer to preserve the anonymity of the precise locations of fieldwork.

6  My difficulties during fieldwork are not unique. They confirm Robert Barnett's observation that oral history is a relationship with the state (2010, p. 83). In the context of Xinjiang, the same could be said about all forms of ethnographic research.

7  As I expressed interest in all his writings, he readily gave me a copy of his lithographed poems as well as his journal. But some minutes later my Han research partners confiscated the documents taking them out of my rucksack. After some heated negotiations my Han colleagues agreed that I could keep his journal overnight and must return it to them the following morning. I was also warned not to have a photocopy made. For want of a better option, I spent the best part of the night reading through and taking copious notes of Ibrahim's work, while his poetry (with the exception of one poem) has remained inaccessible to me. For a comparable experience see Pickowicz 1994, p. 128.

8  For a detailed description of social hierarchies in pre-socialist Xinjiang see Bellér-Hann 2008, pp. 55–178.

9  For a general history see for example Fairbank 1989.

10  For a brief summary of these campaigns see Weggel 2002, pp. 76–78.

11  Curiously, Ibrahim's account of the Cultural Revolution substitutes the Campaign against the Four Olds with the Anti-Three Campaign (Weggel 2002, p. 87). One can only speculate that the recurring stepping up of the anti-capitalist and anti-rightist campaigns made local people oblivious to the actual slogans, considering the new campaigns simply to be a repetition of the previous one, transferring the old terminology. It is also possible that the Anti-Three Campaign during the Cultural Revolution referred to the national Campaign Against the Four Olds, that is, old ideas, old culture, old practices and old customs, but it proved difficult to translate the latter two into Uyghur separately, since the terms 'practices' and 'customs' are usually translated into Uyghur with *örp-adät*, the single composite term of Arabic origins.

12  For the comparable experiences of Han villagers elsewhere in China see Li 2009; Hershatter 2011.

13  The term *pomishchik*, from the Russian *pomeshchik*, often pronounced locally as *pomshchuq,* was used ambiguously by informants to denote people in the top two categories.

14  Chinese area measurement,1 *mu* = 0.0067 hectares.

15  Bellér-Hann 2008, pp. 343–344. For an elaboration of a wide range of pre-socialist social practices see ibid.

16  The large-scale mobilisation of women in industry and construction was a source of both pride and shame, depending on the social position of my interlocutors. Township cadres, in unison with my Han colleagues, evaluated this as the full realization of women's emancipation and quoted impressive figures: in one county in 1958, 32 reservoirs and 838 irrigation canals were constructed, 11,800 *mu* of uncultivated land was opened up and an area of 36,000 *mu* was afforested by women. In contrast, especially women's accounts focused on the hardship they had to endure.

17  The age groups (infant to seven years old, seven to twelve years old, adult) corresponded closely to traditional ideas concerning the life stages of men.

18  For this reason the region was also the target of the migration of starving Han peasants from outside the region, since, 'by comparison with most regions of China, Xinjiang was fortunate: its oases were fertile, it was under populated and it was protected by its irrigation system' (Tyler 2003, p. 192).

19  For an analysis of suffering among Han villagers elsewhere in China see Guo 2009, 2012.

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# 2 'If there is harmony in the house there will be order in the nation'[1]

An exploration of the Han Chinese as political actors in Xinjiang

*David O'Brien*

## Introduction

Xinjiang – the New Frontier – has been an autonomous region of the People's Republic of China (PRC) since 1955 and a province of Imperial China since 1884. At various other times in history this region has been ruled by the Tocharians, Yuezhi, Xiongnu Empire, Xianbei State, Kushan Empire, Rouran Khaganate, Han Empire, Former Liang, Former Qin, Later Liang, Western Liang, Tang Dynasty, Tibetan Empire, Uyghur Khaganate, Kara-Khitan Khanate, Mongol Empire, Yuan Dynasty, Chagatai Khanate, Moghulistan, Northern Yuan, Yarkent Khanate, Dzungar Khanate, Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China (Millward 2007). Its story is a history of conquest and settlement.

Officially, however, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) has been an inalienable part of China since the Han dynasty (206BC–24CE). In 2003, the Information Office of the State Council published a White Paper entitled *History and Development of Xinjiang*, prepared by the Information Office of the State Council. It stated that 'since the Western Han Dynasty [Xinjiang] has been an inseparable part of the multi-ethnic Chinese nation' (Information Office of the State Council 2003). This is the central aspect of government policy for all of the PRC's frontier regions; Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia are now, and have always been, an inalienable part of the motherland. There is and always has been 'one China'. To acknowledge otherwise would be to accept that China has in fact 'colonised' these vast areas.

Victor Mair (2005) has demonstrated there were no State names or names for human groups that outlasted a single dynasty in the Central Plains. However, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has sought, since its earliest days, to persuade the heterogeneous peoples of this vast area that they have always belonged to a single nation-state. Yet for all its authoritarian strength and penetration, the government has not been able to transform all its citizens into conscious and willing members of the 'Chinese nation' (Bovingdon 2010). For Benedict Anderson (1991), a nation is an imagined political community, which is imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.

On nationalism, James Millward and Peter Perdue (2004, p. 27) wrote, 'nationalism is about people, land and the relationship between them. Nationalism

projects seek to define a special relationship between a unique people and a particular piece of the earth's surface.'

However, Millward and Perdue warn that the fit between nationalistic claims and historical reality is 'often imperfect at best, far-fetched at worst' (ibid.). Max Weber has argued that the 'state' involves a relationship whereby men dominate men, a relationship supported by means of legitimate violence, or rather, what is considered to be legitimate violence. If the State is to exist, the dominated must obey the authority claimed by the powers that be. Politics and political action, strives for a share of power, or for influence on the distribution of power, whether between states or between groups of people within a single state (Weber 1946).

The nationalism project in Xinjiang seeks to create and maintain this special relationship between the region and the Chinese people. The CCP's most sacred duty is to maintain power in a region where it is acutely aware that many among the Uyghur population question its legitimacy. A key element of CCP control in Xinjiang has been the massive State-sponsored migration of Han people into the region. When the Party came to power in 1949, just over 6 per cent of the population was Han; today it is over 40 per cent (Statistical Bureau of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region 2012b).

This chapter presents the findings of ethnographic research carried out in Xinjiang between 2009 and 2013. It examines the Han as political actors in Xinjiang, and interrogates the identity of generations of Han migrants to Xinjiang. In its broadest sense, we can define a 'political actor' as any person, group or organisation capable of exerting genuine influence on political, economic or security issues. While members of other ethnic groups can be considered political actors in Xinjiang, this chapter demonstrates how the real power in Xinjiang lies in the hands of a small group of Han elite. In doing so, it identifies how a sense of 'Otherness' is central to identity in the region. It also demonstrates how this sense of 'Otherness' continues to evolve in ways that political actors in Urumqi and Beijing have less control over than they would like.

## Han political actors in an 'autonomous' region

### Who are the Han of Xinjiang?

In 1969, Fredrik Barth wrote that ethnic identities do not derive from intrinsic features but emerge from, and are reasserted in, encounters, transactions and oppositions between groups. An ethnic group can only be defined and structured from within, and only these 'objective' differences, considered significant by the actors themselves, are taken into account. He asserted that categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information but do entail social processes of exclusion and inclusion. It is not so much based on who we are, but rather, who we are not. Therefore, in Xinjiang, much of the meaning of being Han is made up of not being Uyghur.

According to James Leibold, the importance of ethnic signifiers, such as being Han, becomes clear when these signifiers 'assist people in making sense of their

world and [their] place with[in] it' (2012, p. 212). For Dru Gladney the Han *minzu* is a modern phenomenon, which did not exist before Sun Yat Sen tried to bring the various peoples of China together in opposition to the Qing. Gladney further argued that the ethnic signifier of being Han was fashioned in 'relational alterity', or through identifying 'Otherness' in the non-Han peoples of China. In doing so, the assigning of ethnic identities embodied the colourful, backward and exotic/erotic national minorities through a process of internal orientalism (Gladney 1994, cited in Leibold 2012, p. 211).

Furthermore, the biggest problem when discussing the Han as political actors in the XUAR is that they are not a homogeneous, nor clearly defined, group. Rather, they are a disparate people, speaking numerous dialects, hailing from many different regions of China, with a multitude of different cultures, histories, foods and worldviews. These disparate peoples, however, are brought together in a legal categorisation, even though they often do not necessarily feel close bonds of kinship to all of those peoples identified as being 'Han'. As a result, in analysing this heterogeneous group, Chris Vasantkumar (2012, p. 247) has identified the need for an expansion of:

> our analytic compass beyond the narrow confines of official *minzu* categories. Such an approach pushes us to attend not just to received abstractions but also to emergent forms of belonging and exclusion, constellations of social differentiation in which *minzu* may or may not centrally figure.

Yet, while Han identity is deeply complex and multifaceted, it is also the case that 'Han-ness' is ever-present in Xinjiang. For most Han and Uyghur it is a bi-polar ethnic world, encompassing everything from language, food, schools, areas of towns and the province itself. Even the time of the day is rigidly divided by ethnicity due to the official 'Beijing time' as opposed to 'local time'. While Xinjiang is two time zones behind Beijing, the government insists that all of China share one time zone. Therefore, when it is 8am in Beijing, it is officially 8am in Xinjiang. This is despite what the sun, or the international time zone, which posits it should be 6am in Xinjiang, might suggest. Most Uyghurs, however, choose to reject this and live their lives by 'local time', which is on par with the international time zones. Therefore, the province operates on a bi-polar concept of time.

Another key aspect in the positioning of the Han as political actors in Xinjiang is that much of the political discourse in Xinjiang reflects an inherent paternalism. It involves a discourse of authority over others for their own good, whereby non-Han peoples are viewed through the lens of requiring them to be 'civilised' in order for them to take their place in the great Chinese nation. As one Han government official told me:

> The Han are the most advanced of the Chinese people and we are here to help the Uyghurs to develop. Some of them do not believe that we are trying to help them but I know it to be true, that is what we do. We are a Chinese family and we are to help our younger brothers. The Uyghur people are very interesting,

> I really like their culture, their songs and their music, we must preserve these, but we must also help them to develop.
>
> (Interview May 2011, Urumqi)

While the official's intent was centred on furthering development within the region and among the Uyghur, the paternalism and 'Othering' of his approach demonstrates the serious ethnic divisions that dominate the Han as political actors.

### Ethnic classification

The national minority policies of the PRC stand in contrast to those of the Union of Soviet Socialists Republics (USSR). The USSR established a system based on federal republics with a theoretical right to secession for its national minorities. This approach reflected Moscow's aim to secure the boundaries of the former Tsarist Empire. On the other hand, the PRC instituted a system of limited territorial autonomy in order to manage its ethno-national differences (Clarke 2011). On 1 October 1955, Xinjiang was formally integrated into the PRC as an autonomous region, comprising autonomous counties, districts and prefectures. The CCP did adopt Stalin's definition of ethnic groups as 'an 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' (Stalin 1953, p. 307). Therefore, a key task during the early years of the PRC was the classification of its varied population into clearly defined ethnic groups.

This classification process was achieved through the deployment of ethnographic teams throughout the country. In Xinjiang, this process resulted in the official recognition of thirteen ethnic groups (*minzu*). They included the Uyghur, Han, Kazakh, Manchu, Kyrgyz, Hui, Mongol, Xibo, Tajik, Russian, Uzbek, Tartar and Daur ethnic groups. Significantly, these classifications did not diverge from the categories that had enjoyed official status under the Soviet influenced regime of the warlord Sheng Shicai, who ruled Xinjiang from 1933 to 1944 (Clarke 2011; Benson & Svanberg 1988). Therefore, the CCP ethnic classifications in Xinjiang merely reinforced these earlier classifications.

Regional autonomy for ethnic minorities aimed to provide them with administrative, economic and cultural privileges. It also provided for the use of ethnic minority languages at schools, fiscal subsidies, economic aid for ethnic areas from the State and other provinces, and preservation of ethnic culture and heritage. In 1955, Säypidan Äzizi, a Uyghur, was appointed Chairman of the People's Council, but real power lay in the hands of the Han People's Liberation Army (PLA) veteran Wang Enmao, who was appointed regional Party Secretary. This division of power continues today and is mirrored at every level of government of the autonomous regions. It has led to a situation whereby a member of the titular *minzu* holds a position that may appear to be one of leadership, but who is in fact subservient to the Party Secretary, who is always Han. This system avoids the appearance of colonialism and keeps non-Han officials in positions of visible authority in the region. However, at the same time, this system ensures the real

power within the region is firmly held by Han officials. It also puts Uyghurs into competition with other *minzu* groups and has divided any sense of a shared Turkic identity (Millward & Tursun 2004).

According to Matthew Moneyhon, this system has resulted in the CCP offering 'its left hand to sustain minority culture, while its right erased any hope for true autonomy or self-determination' (2003, p. 133). Gardner Bovingdon is equally critical. He has argued that dividing Xinjiang into 'a number of smaller autonomies' reflects the 'administrative genius' of the CCP because this process has meant that the CCP has 'simultaneously satisfied the goals of embodying the idea that Xinjiang belonged to thirteen different *minzu* and of counterbalancing the Uyghurs' overwhelming political and demographic weight' (Bovingdon 2010, p. 45).

### Han migration to Xinjiang and the Bingtuan

Like its predecessor the Qing, the CCP has regarded Han settlement in Xinjiang as key to gaining control over the vast region. Unlike the Qing, however, the State-sponsored migration policies of the CCP have been much more successful in actually getting Han settlers to stay in Xinjiang. Early Han migration to Xinjiang meant that by 1953, the Han comprised 7 per cent of the total population of Xinjiang. By 1964, the Han population had reached 33 percent, with Uyghur's comprising 54 per cent of the population by this time. A decade later, at the beginning of the reform period in 1978, the demographic balance had reached 46 per cent Uyghur and 40 per cent Han. In the most recent 2010 census, the Han figure was still hovering around the 40 per cent mark, while the Uyghur figure has fallen to 42 per cent (Statistical Bureau of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region 2012b). This demonstrates not only the success of the CCP in attracting Hans to the region, but it also highlights the impact of this migration on the regional Han-Uyghur ratio.

Of particular importance to increasing the Han population in Xinjiang was the creation of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (*Xinjiang Shengchan Jianshe Bingtuan*). The *bingtuan*, as it is commonly known, was initially made up of de-mobilised PLA and Guomindang (GMD) (Nationalist) troops. Much like the earlier Han settlers during the Qing, the *bingtuan* was originally mandated to reclaim land, garrison the frontier region, and populate strategic border regions and transportation corridors within Xinjiang (Gaubatz 1996). It also provided a reserve military defence for the region, which was particularly important in light of worsening relations with the USSR, leading up to and including the Sino-Soviet split (1960–1989) (Rossabi 2004).

Much of Xinjiang's population growth in the 1950s up to the 1970s involved migrants re-settled and employed by the *bingtuan* and this organisation remains hugely significant economically, if less so militarily, in Xinjiang today. From 1954 to 1957, the *bingtuan* population grew from 200,000 to 300,000 and by 1966 it numbered 500,000 to 600,000. During the Great Leap Forward famine years (1959–1961), the *bingtuan* handled more than 2 million Han refugees from outside

Xinjiang and processed another 1.6 million Chinese rusticated youth. Although many of these migrants returned east when they could, a 1975 report claimed that some 450,000 had settled in Xinjiang (Millward & Tursun 2004). The *bingtuan* itself was, and remains, overwhelmingly Han. Of its 2.6 million members just over 2.3 million are Han (Statistical Bureau of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region 2012a). The corps has over 16 million *mu* of farmland, nearly a third of Xinjiang's arable land. In addition, its members comprise nearly 13 per cent of Xinjiang's total population or nearly a third of Han registered within the province (Becquelin 2004). While the *bingtuan* is administered by both the central government in Beijing and the provincial government of XUAR, it has sub-provincial powers on par with sub-provincial cities and its economic and social development are administered separately from that of Xinjiang. The *bingtuan* administers its own internal affairs, with its own public security apparatus, courts, procuratorate, judiciary and jails. In regard to the powers it does not exercise itself, it is answerable not to the Party organisation or the government of Xinjiang, but instead, directly to the State Council in Beijing (Becquelin 2004; Bovingdon 2010).

## Decades of turmoil

The Great Leap Forward (1958–1961) was a nation-wide economic and social campaign aimed at utilising China's vast population to rapidly transform the country from an agrarian economy into a modern communist society. In Xinjiang, Great Leap policies included the launching of agricultural communes, abolition of material incentives, curtailment of private plots, and the virtual closure of rural markets and bazaars. However, it also included attacks on religion, along with a change in the nationality policy from one which advocated respecting minority culture to a much more assimilationist approach (Clarke 2011). This campaign proved to be as much of a disaster in Xinjiang as it did in the rest of China. It resulted in death and famine on a massive and devastating scale (McMillen 1984; Benson & Svanberg 1988; Millward & Tursun 2004). It was a bitter experience for those who lived through it.

Similarly, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) was also damaging. From September 1966, thousands of radical Red Guards, heeding Mao's call to 'ferret out revisionists' and to 'smash the Four Olds' (old customs, old culture, old habits and old ideas), began to travel throughout China. Those who arrived in Urumqi formed an organisation known as the Second Red Headquarters. Over the course of the following month another 5,000 Red Guards arrived in Urumqi from Beijing and began to attack the established political authorities. In the process, they accused Xinjiang Party Secretary Wang Enmao of being a 'native emperor' presiding over an 'independent' kingdom and attacked the head of the *bingtuan*, Tao Zhiyue, labelling him a 'reactionary' (Clarke 2011). In response, Wang organised his own Red Guard group, the First Red Headquarters, to defend against the outsiders (Millward & Tursun 2004).

Serious factional fighting gripped Xinjiang with conditions becoming so chaotic the central authorities were compelled to officially suspend the movement

there and place the turbulent *bingtuan* under direct military control. The situation became even more serious when the PLA itself split and a rogue unit joined the Red Guards. United, this group besieged Hami and fought pitched battles with regular PLA units. There was also serious concern over the risk these break-away groups posed to the nuclear test centre at Lop Nur. According to some reports, in May 1967, Wang himself may have used the security of these facilities as a bargaining point in his efforts to save himself and to prevent a further deterioration in the regional situation (McMillen 1984; Millward & Tursun 2004; Clarke 2011).

As with the rest of China, this chaotic period saw attacks on minority religions and cultures, categorised as embodying the 'Four Olds', with many mosques and tombs destroyed, and many religious leaders being attacked. There are no detailed contemporaneous published accounts of these events. However, local newspaper reports calling for 'unity' and a reported uprising in Yining in early 1969, together with on-going border skirmishes with the USSR, point to a real danger of large-scale rebellion and/or Soviet involvement (Clarke 2011). Wang Enmao was removed in 1969 as the purge of top CCP leaders continued under the direction of Mao. For the next 10 years, Xinjiang experienced a succession of leaders and policies that fluctuated according to the prevailing struggles taking place in Beijing and the region remained deeply unstable (McMillen 1984).

Following Mao's death in 1976, and the end of the Cultural Revolution, the unresolved issue of what to do with the remaining Han youths proved a sensitive one for the authorities. Almost 1.6 million rusticated youths had travelled to Xinjiang during the Cultural Revolution. Life in Xinjiang had proven tough and with the end of the Cultural Revolution, many, understandably, wished to return to their families. However, their home cities were not prepared for such an influx, nor were the Xinjiang and *bingtuan* authorities keen to lose such a large labour force. Protests began to spread throughout the region, the most serious taking place in Aksu in November 1980. During the Aksu protest, approximately 5,000 to 6,000 rusticated youth, predominantly from Shanghai, occupied the local Party administrative offices for over 50 days. The dispute was only resolved after a high-level meeting of Xinjiang and Shanghai authorities. They drew up a staggered schedule by which youth who met certain criteria could return to their homes (Millward 2007). While the majority of rusticated Han youths eventually did return, somewhere in the region of 450,000 would remain permanently in Xinjiang (Millward 2007). Again, for those who experienced the Cultural Revolution, this period of time remains a bitter memory. In addition, along with the Great Leap Forward, these events led to decades of turmoil in the XUAR.

## Reform and opening up

As a result of Deng Xiaoping's reforms, from 1978 onwards, China's economy began to develop rapidly. However, for decades, much of this development was confined to the eastern coastal provinces. Economic development in Xinjiang lagged far behind, and inequalities between Uyghur and Han became more apparent. The slow development in Xinjiang, and other western regions of China, was

not addressed in any meaningful way until 2000 when the 'Great Opening of the West' campaign (*Xibu da kaifa*) was launched. This campaign aimed to accelerate the development of central and western regions and to alleviate regional inequalities. However, many studies suggest that the income gap between Uyghur and Han actually increased during this period (Becquelin 2000, 2004; Bhattacharya 2003; Bovingdon 2002, 2004, 2010; Gladney 2004; Howell & Fan 2011; Koch 2006; Mackerras 2001; Moneyhon 2003; Wu & Xi 2014).

It is evident that the 'Great Opening of the West' campaign has seen a significant increase in the amount of central government money flowing into Xinjiang. In early 2003, Beijing reported it had invested more than 70 billion yuan in building highways, power plants, dams and telecommunications facilities. Furthermore, fixed asset investment in road transportation reached a historic high of 10 billion yuan and 10.7 billion yuan was invested in 'pollution control' (Becquelin 2004). As a result, unlike the poor provinces surrounding it, Xinjiang is, today, a relatively prosperous province. Indeed, it is the only province in the designated 'west' of the 'Great Opening of the West' campaign, with a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita ranking above the national average (which puts it 12th in provincial rankings). However, while it is prosperous relative to other western provinces, there have been worrying outcomes from the campaign, which undermine these achievements. According to Becquelin (2004, p. 362):

> Xinjiang's economic structure fits the picture of a peripheral area, whose main function is to supply the core with raw resources and industrial products, while most of its manufactured goods are imported from the more developed parts of the country.

This has resulted in a significant division across Xinjiang between those who have benefited from this campaign and those who have not.

Xinjiang's economy is heavily reliant on oil and gas extraction and cotton production. It has been estimated that the region is home to 35.7 billion tons of oil and 22 trillion cubic metres of natural gas, which makes up about 30 per cent and 34 per cent of China's total reserves, respectively (Han 2013; Zhao 2001). However, because the State regards natural resources to be State property, according to Han 'all the revenues from natural resource extraction go to State-owned enterprises and the central government' (2013, p. 47). As a result, there is a perception across XUAR that most of this wealth flows out of the province and this is one cause of regional discontent.

In reality, the CCP has had great success in developing Xinjiang and in bringing it closer to the centre both politically and economically. Yet Xinjiang is also China's most unstable province with a violent insurgency targeting security forces and, at times, Han settlers. There is also a constant fear of major ethnic conflict breaking out between the Han and Uyghur populations while strong tensions also exist within the Han community. Reflecting the earlier discussion of the lack of homogeneity among those classified as belonging to the Han ethnic group, there

is conflict within Xinjiang's Han population between newly arrived migrants and those who have been in the region for much longer. Xinjiang's deep-rooted instability was very apparent in the chaotic summer and autumn of 2009.

## Urumqi Riots 2009: from the Han perspective

The 2009 riots, which erupted in Urumqi on a hot summer evening in early July, were the worst outbreak of social unrest in China since the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989. They have had wide-ranging repercussions for local and national governments, many of which are still being felt, and they brought the issue of political legitimacy in China's border regions to the national fore. Beijing clearly anticipated trouble in the highly sensitive year of 2009 and had already moved an estimated 80,000 troops and People's Armed Police (PAP) officers to Tibet and Xinjiang. 2009 marked the 60th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, the 50th anniversary of the failed Tibetan Insurrection in 1959, and the 20th anniversary of the 1989 student protest in Beijing (Lam 2009). The CCP had been embarrassed by deadly violence in Xinjiang before, and during, the 2008 Olympics and was determined that it would not happen again in such a sensitive year. However, despite this increased security presence, local and national leadership were taken completely by surprise by the riots and were left reeling as they struggled to regain control of the streets in the days that followed.

According to official figures the riots, which broke out in a number of areas in the city of 2.3 million people, left 197 people dead and over 1,700 injured (Ansfield & Wong 2009). As the crisis deepened, President Hu Jintao was forced to return to China from a G8 summit being held in Italy to take personal control. While most of the fatalities occurred on the night of July 5, it took three days, and the deployment of thousands of PAP and regular soldiers onto the streets of Urumqi, before the situation was brought under control (Branigan 2009).

According to Uyghur eyewitnesses I spoke to on a visit to Urumqi in November 2009, the violence was triggered when police attempted to disperse a large crowd gathered in People's Square. This crowd was attempting to protest what they saw as the inadequate handling of a violent row, which had broken out thousands of miles away in a toy factory in Shaoguan City, Guangdong. The mass late-night brawl at the 'Early Light' toy factory, involving up to 1,000 local Han Chinese and Uyghur workers, who had been recently recruited from Xinjiang, led to two Uyghur deaths and 118 injuries. According to an official investigation, the fight was triggered by a disgruntled former employee of the factory falsely alleging on the internet that a young Han Chinese woman had been raped by a group of Uyghurs after she mistakenly walked into a Uyghur dormitory (*Reuters* 2009). This allegation, which was later disproven, was enough to unleash serious ethnic conflict within the dormitory compound.

Following the June 25 brawl, blurry pictures from Shaoguan were circulated, sparking rumours of much greater loss of life than the official figure of two deaths. The original People's Square protest in Urumqi mostly involved students from Xinjiang University. The students had asked permission to hold a protest in the

square but the authorities had refused. However, those behind the protest decided to go to the square anyway and a crowd gathered, numbering in the region of 300–400 people. This group called for a proper investigation into the events in Shaoguan. Police attempted to disperse what was, at this stage, a peaceful protest. Following a number of small-scale skirmishes, the crowd seemed to disperse. According to a number of Uyghur eyewitnesses (pers. comm. November 2009, Urumqi), many in the crowd were angered by what they saw as the heavy-handed approach of police.

By 8pm, a larger and more violent crowd had gathered at the Uyghur bazaar in Erdaoqiao. The Erdaoqiao bazaar had once been the largest and most important Uyghur bazaar in Urumqi but has, in recent years, seen a large influx of Han traders and stall owners. From accounts, it appears that this crowd began attacking Han-owned shops, hurling bottles and stones at the small number of regular police who, being outnumbered, quickly withdrew.[2] For the next four hours, the city descended into total chaos with mobs of mostly young Uyghur men attacking first, Han store owners, and then passers-by, taxi drivers and bus drivers, while the police awaited reinforcements and orders on what to do.

On the night of July 5, internet access was cut in Urumqi and all text messages and calls from abroad were blocked. In the days that followed, these restrictions were extended to the rest of the XUAR, and social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, and video sharing site YouTube, were blocked throughout China. The internet remained blocked throughout all of Xinjiang until May of the following year.

Over the next two days, crowds of Han Chinese, many carrying homemade weapons, began amassing in various parts of the city, demanding revenge and in some cases attacking Uyghurs (Sommerville 2009). It was only on July 8, following President Hu's early return to China, that large numbers of security forces, some sources put the figure as high as 50,000, began to flood the city (Lam 2009). In the weeks that followed, a bizarre panic over syringe attacks broke out in Urumqi and then spread to other cities. According to officials, nearly 600 people reported being pricked with needles in Urumqi alone, but only 106 victims showed signs of jabs, bumps or rashes, while the others were injured by sewing needles or pins rather than syringes, and some 'needle-pricks' were actually insect bites. None of the reported victims have suffered from illness, poisoning or other reactions (Coonan 2009).

In August, Hu Jintao visited Xinjiang where he told government officials 'the key to our work in Xinjiang is to properly handle the relationship between development and stability in the region'. He also stated that emphasising the 'three unshakeable goals', 'upholding the central task of economic construction', 'maintaining social stability and combating separatism', and 'upholding unity among the country's different ethnic groups to ensure joint prosperity and development' were their primary goals and purposes (cited in Ansfield & Wong 2009; cited in Lam 2009). Yet, just weeks after his visit, an incident involving the most senior official in Xinjiang, Wang Lequan, demonstrated a crisis in authority following the Urumqi riots.

### *A crisis of authority*

On 3 September 2009, a large and angry crowd of Han protestors gathered in front of government buildings in People's Square in the centre of Urumqi demanding the government improve security in the city and across the region. In an attempt to calm the situation, Xinjiang Party Secretary, Wang Lequan, appeared on the balcony. Through a megaphone he told those gathered below that the government was working hard to improve things. As he attempted to speak, however, he was shouted down by the crowd and he was pelted with plastic bottles (pers. comm. November 2009, Urumqi). The significance of such a senior official being attacked by an angry crowd cannot be overstated. For Wang, a member of the Politburo and XUAR Party Secretary for 15 years – far longer than the usual 10-year limit designed to prevent regional leaders from becoming too powerful – to be attacked in such a manner by a clearly furious Han crowd was a most serious development and demonstrated that the relationship between the authorities and the Han population of Xinjiang as 'partners in stability' (Cliff 2012) was far from secure. Tear-gas and batons were then used to break up the protests, resulting in the deaths of five people (*Economist* 2009).

In November 2009, this anger, and the resulting crisis in confidence with regional authorities, was still palpable. One 42-year-old Han man told me:

> They [Xinjiang government] failed to protect us. The police were not able to cope with a few Uyghur boys with sticks and knives. Only when the Han people took to the streets did the situation get better. My wife's cousin was killed and I blame the government as much as I blame the Uyghurs. How could they allow this to happen? They are here to protect us and they failed us, the army should have shot these murderers, not allowed them all over the city burning and killing.
>
> (pers. comm. November 2009, Urumqi)

The riots of 2009 marked the point at which a serious failure in the 'partnership of stability' occurred in XUAR. Tom Cliff has written that this 'partnership in stability' holds that the Han do their part by occupying the border region and by accepting the Party as the best solution for a multi-ethnic, increasingly stratified China. In return, the Han population 'expect that what is being built in Xinjiang is being built in the first instance for them, regardless of the official policies granting special policies to minorities' (Cliff 2012, p. 82). Furthermore, Cliff argues that a central component of this informal contract were State discourses which emphasise 'the Han as "border supporters" who are contributing to "nation building" in a "remote" "ethnic" "region"' (ibid.). Inherent in this understanding is that the authorities will also keep them, the Han, safe while they are engaged in this nation-building. As the protests of September 2009 showed, many Han living in Xinjiang feel the authorities have not kept their side of the bargain. It also conveys their increasing feeling of insecurity.

In an attempt to respond to this growing crisis in authority, on 5 September 2009, Wang sacked Urumqi Party Chief Li Zhi, along with Xinjiang's top

policeman Liu Yaohua. In addition, he increased security patrols, which had already been very heavy since July 5 (*Economist* 2009). The following March, however, CCP heir apparent, Xi Jinping, flew to Urumqi to announce that Wang had been removed from his position as Party Secretary and had been given a new job in the State Commission for Political and Legal affairs. His replacement was also announced, with Wang being replaced by Hunan Party Secretary Zhang Chunxian. From a Han perspective the riots of 2009 may have marked a turning point for many in their relationship with the State. While there is much hostility directed towards the Uyghur, there is also a large amount of frequently expressed ill-will directed towards those in authority who are deemed by the Han to have failed in their most important duty, that of protecting them and keeping them safe.

## Han divisions and stratification today

When it comes to identity, Liisa Malkki has written that it 'is always mobile and processual, partly categorization by others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories et cetera' (Malkki 1992, cited in Hansen 2005, p. 158). In a very broad sense the Han in Xinjiang can be divided into three distinct groupings: early migrants, those who arrived in Xinjiang between the 1950s and 1970s; the sons, daughters and grandchildren of these early migrants; and more recently arrived economic migrants who have been drawn to Xinjiang in large numbers from surrounding provinces since the 2000s. This classification again demonstrates the problems with viewing the Han in Xinjiang as a homogenous grouping.

As previously discussed, early migrants to the XUAR were de-mobilised PLA and GMD soldiers who were tasked with opening up and developing the region. Women from densely populated eastern cities were also encouraged to move to Xinjiang to marry these ex-soldiers and raise families to help establish settlements. Most of these settlers joined *bingtuan* units, which were organised along military lines and engaged in military training once a week. According to Cliff (2009, p. 87):

> These "Reclamation Warriors" held a gun in one hand and a hoe in the other, and lived in constant fear of a Soviet invasion. The "desert to farmland mythology" of the *bingtuan* was created by the labour, and in many cases the sacrifice of these pioneers.

The large number of young people who came to, or were sent to, Xinjiang, as part of ideological campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s, were known as Educated Youth (*zhiqing*). They also form part of this early group of migrants to the XUAR. Xinjiang was deemed an especially harsh destination for these rusticated youths and thus attracted some of the most fervent and ideological migrants. These migrants, or 'Old Xinjiang people', claim primary credit for developing Xinjiang over the past 60 years and take credit for the hardship and self-sacrifice that this entailed. Those who migrated to the province more recently, represent a different

wave of migration. However, this wave of migrant is regarded as the 'successors' to the 'Old Xinjiang People' (Cliff 2012, p. 85).

In her fieldwork with Han settlers in the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu, and the Sipson Panna Dai Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan, Mette Halskov Hansen recorded similar feelings. She wrote that many 'felt that they had taken part in a very important political movement, but that the acknowledgement of their unique contributions had been somewhat reversed with the modernisation policies of the 1980s and [19]90s' (2005, p. 175). During my own fieldwork, I found similar sentiment being expressed by 'Old Xinjiang People'. It is notable that, as in Xinjiang, the majority of *zhiqing* in Yunnan came from Shanghai.[3] Mrs Lu (Interview May 2011, Urumqi),[4] who came to Xinjiang in the 1960s, told me:

> When we came here things were very tough and we suffered great hardship. Xinjiang was very undeveloped. There was really nothing here, everything was difficult and uncomfortable. I missed my family very much and there were many difficult years. The climate was harsh and the people were strange and uncivilized. But there was also great enthusiasm because we were doing this for New China, we were doing this for Chairman Mao. We were doing very important work and we were prepared to endure so much hardship. The young people today do not understand this, it is very different for them. Life is very easy in Xinjiang now, they do not appreciate all we suffered to make Xinjiang a developed place.

In addition, while there has been significant economic development in Xinjiang, there exists a perception among many older Han interviewees that this economic development has been, and continues to be, uneven and unfair. They felt it favoured the more recently arrived at the expense of the 'Old Xinjiang People', or rather, those who 'settled' the region. As China's economy has modernised and developed, there has been a decline in traditional State-owned enterprises (SOEs). This has had a particularly negative effect in Xinjiang where these usually large-scale and old-fashioned industries still dominated the industrial sector. As a result of SOE reforms, approximately 600,000 jobs were lost in Xinjiang between 1995 and 2000. This caused members of the minority nationalities, and Han who had settled in Xinjiang in earlier years, finding it more difficult to find employment in burgeoning private enterprises (Bovingdon 2004). While there is a growing Uyghur middle-class and business community, and almost everybody is materially better off now than a generation ago, a perception exists that economic development in Xinjiang is what Jessica Koch (2006) calls 'non-engaging'. Koch defines a 'non-engaging' economy as one which has been imposed, rather than negotiated, and which is designed to benefit the centre rather than the region.

Older Han migrants to Xinjiang often maintain strong emotional connections to their original home and though they may rarely or never have returned, still think in terms of their hometown as the place their ancestors were from.

Second-generation Han do not share this feeling. Hansen (2005, p. 184) found similar sentiments in Yunnan writing:

> the second generation grew up with the conviction that the clearly demarcated community of Han had remade a backward wilderness of poverty and humiliating living conditions into a prosperous, modern civilised area . . . At the same time the second generation has 'lost' a homeland in the sense that many found it increasingly difficult and unattractive to identify with their parents' place of origin.

Reinforcing Hansen's findings, a 36-year-old Urumqi Han man (Interview November 2010, Urumqi) told me:

> This is my home, my parents came here from the northeast but I consider myself as being a Xinjiang person. I have never been to the northeast and cannot think of it as my home. There are many problems here, sometimes I worry about living here, about being attacked by bad Uyghur people but I will not move, this is my home.

These second- and third-generation Han form another broad grouping who identify themselves as being from Xinjiang. They are proud of what their parents achieved and are determined to take advantage of the opportunities that now exist in a rapidly developing region. They see Xinjiang as their home, they are not settlers who are trying to tame the borderlands and protect against invasion, but are Chinese people living in China who want to share in all the material wealth and well-being of recent years.

Second- and third-generation Han also have a different relationship with Uyghurs compared to their parents. Earlier settlers were encouraged to respect and understand Uyghur culture. In my interviews with older Xinjiang Han, many expressed a sense of understanding and a friendship with Uyghurs. This is far less in evidence with the younger generation. A young Han man, the grandson of settlers who arrived in the 1960s told me (Interview, June 2011, Korla):

> There is a big difference between the generations here, the older people are still thinking like the 1960s and [19]70s, that they have been given this mission by Chairman Mao and that they are bringing Communism to the Uyghurs and they will be looked after by the Party now they are old but we know we have to look after ourselves. This is a tough place, and there are many Uyghurs who want to kill us, you have to be very careful here, but also this is my home, this is where I belong and I will do everything to survive here.

A third Han grouping in Xinjiang are those more recently arrived migrants. For many older settlers, and also second-generation immigrants, these newer arrivals are often viewed as being different and not 'of' the place. Some interviewees

expressed strong hostility towards these migrants who have become very visible in most of Xinjiang's larger towns and cities. One 41-year-old Urumqi man told me (Interview June 2011, Urumqi):

> They [recent economic migrants] should not be allowed to come here, many are thieves and are dangerous, you should be careful around them, they might rob you or even kill you, there are far too many here now, they should be forced to go home.

Supporting these views, a 35-year-old businessman, the son of early *bingtuan* settlers, told me (Interview June 2011, Korla):

> These people [recent economic migrants] are not like us, they have just come here to make money and then leave. They don't understand what it was like when my parents came here or what they went through. They will live here for a few years and then go back to where they are from and build houses and never think of us again.

Newly arrived migrants also mentioned this sense of separation and a feeling of hostility directed towards them. One 32-year-old taxi driver, who had moved to Urumqi from Gansu, said (Interview June 2011, Urumqi):

> It is hard to live here and I do not feel very comfortable. The Uyghurs are different and there can be trouble with them but also the Han people don't seem to like people who come here, they have lived here so long their thinking is different and sometimes they can be very bad mannered towards me. I think there is a big difference between the people who were born here and the people who came here.

In light of the 2009 protests against the authorities, it is also significant that many Han interviewees also expressed strongly negative views of the XUAR political leaders, regarding them as outsiders who had been appointed to senior positions without having any experience of living in the region. Typical of this view was one 27-year-old second-generation Han man who stated (Interview June 2011, Urumqi):

> All of the high leaders, not just Zhang Chunxian but all of the people around him are outsiders, they have never spent time here. Actually even now they don't spend much time here. Before when Wang Lequan was in charge all of the top positions were filled by people from his home province of Shandong. These people can't understand what it is like here and the Uyghurs in high-ranking positions really have no power.

This comment again reinforces how the political structure in Xinjiang operates. It is structured to ensure that the key political actors will always be Han. However,

the 'outsider' status of many of those in power also gives agency to older Han migrants to disrupt their power.

## Legitimacy and political action

The power to disrupt is, in a Weberian sense, 'illegitimated violence' and this is particularly de-stabilising in a region in which much of the political discourse stresses stability, harmony and promoting civilisation. When we examine the September 2009 protests we can see that this is a clear case of the Han disrupting, although those in the crowd may not have seen it in these terms, but rather as demanding their rights be protected. There is a tension here between what 'violence' is legitimated in order to protect the people against perceived threats and what 'violence' or 'disruption' is warranted in demanding something that the demonstrators have a 'right to'. It is the potential for disruption that the Han population can cause, which is of such concern for the authorities. This is because it is through them that the region is supposed to be 'civilised'. They are constituted and reconstituted as political actors both inside the official government structure, but also outside of it, as demonstrators. A hugely significant effect of this is that the Uyghurs are completely written out of the situation, except as an idea of danger.

For the CCP, stability trumps all other concerns in Xinjiang. While the region has shown rapid economic development, and could yet regain much of its importance as a trading post on a new Silk Road between China and Central Asia, the blocking of internet access for most of the year following the July 2009 violence caused serious difficulties and financial loss for businesses in region.[5] This demonstrates that the authorities are willing to risk damaging economic development in order to ensure social stability.

Despite this, Xinjiang remains far from stable. Indeed, the second part of 2013, and the first half of 2014, has been one of the most violent periods for many years with hundreds of people killed in attacks across the region. The attacks that occurred outside of the province on 1 March 2014 were perhaps the most significant however, as they jettisoned what, for many Chinese, had been a distant and poorly understood conflict, to areas outside of the region in a most brutal fashion. This incident saw 33 people (including four perpetrators) killed and more than 140 injured in a machete attack, as they waited in the ticket hall of Kunming railway station (*Xinhua* 2014). This incident also has significance because while CCP rule in Xinjiang will be fundamentally undermined if it cannot keep the region stable and if it fails to protect those who have settled there, it will be even more seriously undermined if regional instability continues to spill out into the Chinese heartland. The fact that the migration of large numbers of Han people into the region, a cornerstone of the government's policy, has led to serious conflict between Uyghurs and Han, and increasingly between the newly arrived and older generations of Han migrants, must be a source of serious concern for Beijing.

Many observers choose to examine Xinjiang politics in dichotomous terms of Uyghur versus Han. In seeking to understand who rules Xinjiang, and how, viewing the situation far too simplistically as a unified colonial Han ruling equally

unified resentful Uyghurs. However, this approach fails to take into account that both groups, and indeed the other eleven ethnicities that make up Xinjiang's population of 22 million, are hugely varied heterogeneous groups whose ethnic categorisation is a product of the PRC's ethnic policy, largely borrowed from the USSR. While it is undeniable that political actors in Xinjiang are predominantly Han, it is also the case that the category of Han is a complex and multifaceted one, with many divisions of class, language, region of origin and time of migration.

Han political power in Xinjiang gains its legitimacy from nationalist ideologies of Chinese civilisation and State, coupled with Socialist ideologies of social development, ethnic harmony and advancement together. In addition, there is also a general acceptance among the population of the use of 'legitimate' force to protect the people living there from real and imagined threats emanating from both inside and outside its borders. For many Xinjiang Han, the narrative of their sacrifices, made for the betterment of the nation and for the improvement of the 'primitive' peoples who live there, is especially important. At the same time, there also exists a perception among a significant proportion of Xinjiang Han that these sacrifices have not been appropriately rewarded by the nation, nor have they been appreciated by the 'ungrateful' Uyghur. In addition, as China now takes its place as one of the world's leading economies, and the Xinjiang economy continues to advance, there is a growing feeling among Han who have lived in Xinjiang for more than one generation that the time for sacrifice is over. There are also rising expectations that the rewards of their sacrifice must now be fairly distributed. Coupled with this is a fear of instability and increasing concerns over individual safety, which has increased significantly following the July 2009 riots.

## Conclusion

Since the establishment of the XUAR, there has been much bloodshed and insecurity and this continues to the present day. While many Han feel a strong sense of pride in what has been achieved in terms of developing the region, a belief also exists that the authorities in Xinjiang have not done enough to ensure that the relationship between the Han in power, and the Han who are ruled, is one of partnership. Much of the Han identity in Xinjiang takes meaning from a sense of 'self' and 'Other'. This identity derives from the continuing views that their membership of the Han nationality is different from, and by implication, more advanced than other regional ethnic groups, most especially the Uyghurs. In addition, while the political discourse of 'civilisation' creates a dichotomy between Han and Uyghur, it is also apparent that as more and more Han migrate to Xinjiang, the sense of 'Other' is diversifying and increasingly includes 'new Han' to Xinjiang. As a result, for many Xinjiang Han today, the 'Other' are not only the Uyghurs, but 'Otherness' can also be applied to different migrant generations, as well as local civilian Han and high-ranking Han officials from other regions in China. Interestingly, this sense of in-group Han 'Otherness' is also increasing the Xinjiang Han's sense of distance from the central leadership. As a result, for many Han people interviewed as part of this research, political actors in the region are perceived as

being distant and unconnected, are often not trusted, and perhaps most seriously of all, are perceived to be failing to protect them. The implications of this for CCP political legitimacy in Xinjiang are very significant.

## Notes

1 Title adapted from Chinese quote from the Four Classics: (Liji) Daxue. The original quote reads as: *Wu ge erhou zhi zhi, zhi zhi erhou yi cheng, yi cheng erhou xin zheng, xin zheng erhou shen xiu,* **shen xiu erhou jia qi, jia qi erhou guo** *zhi, guozhi erhou tianxia ping. ("Da Xue")*.
   The title is adopted from the bold type. I am very grateful to Yangbin Chen for his clarification on this translation and for his very helpful feedback on an earlier draft of this chapter. I am also very grateful to Melissa Shani Brown for her wise advice and suggestions.
2 This is very similar to what happened in Lhasa in March 2008 when Tibetan mobs attacked Han- and Hui-owned businesses which official Xinhua reports say resulted in 18 deaths and 623 injuries.
3 I am grateful to Yangbin Chen for pointing this out.
4 This is not the real name of the interviewee. It is a pseudonym.
5 Based on interviews with small and medium-sized business people in Urumqi and Korla between 2009 and 2012.

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# 3 Space, place and ethnic identity in the Xinjiang Regional Museum

*Anna Hayes*

## Introduction

Researching space, place and ethnic identity is not an easy task in normal circumstances. However, the sensitive political and research climate of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in the People's Republic of China can add additional complexities to this task. One under-explored avenue for this kind of meaningful research, that side-steps some of the more sensitive restraining factors, is the wealth of information that is presented for public dissemination and consumption at sites such as museums, monuments and other significant historical, cultural and religious sites in Xinjiang. While these sites normally depict official versions of regional history, the selection of topics, artefacts and the descriptors used to explain the significance of these items offers much insight into space, place and ethnic identity in Xinjiang for both Han and non-Han nationalities residing there. This chapter examines the representations of Xinjiang's nationalities and regional history in the Xinjiang Regional Museum. In examining how the region's nationalities and the regional history are presented in the museum, the chapter intersects with other works that have explored ethnicity and the contested histories of the region. However, rather than presenting an historical overview of the region, this chapter analyses what constitutes the official narrative of the region's nationalities and history, and if/how this representation has taken the form of a re-imagining of Xinjiang's people and its history. Finally, it considers to what extremes representations of minority histories provide an insight into the wider lived experience of minority nationalities in Xinjiang, and where they are situated in contemporary imaginings of the Chinese state and nationalism.

While there have been numerous studies on museums in south-western China, north-western China has not received similar academic attention. My research on museums in Xinjiang was conducted in September 2012. I primarily used observational research to collect field data from the Xinjiang Regional Museum as this method of data collection is useful in eliminating subjective bias (Kothari 2004, p. 96) and is extremely useful in assessing museum exhibitions. As this type of data collection was independent of respondents it enabled me to conduct my research without involving members of the minority nationalities in Xinjiang. This methodology also involved firstly, identifying what type of display was contained within the museum. I photographed, sketched and recorded how displays were

arranged visually, and transcribed the descriptors accompanying the displays in a field research journal. In addition, I observed other visitors in the museums, and recorded notes on how those visitors responded to the displays. When I returned from field work I analysed this data against other primary and secondary source materials, deconstructing the findings and using the extant literature of theorising museums to write my own research findings on the contested historical narrative and depictions of the regional nationalities at the museum. However, before examining findings of the field research at the Xinjiang Regional Museum, this chapter first examines key debates on the role and purpose of the museum in the contemporary era.

## The 'contemporary' museum

The museum has long been a place of public memory, artefact and nationalised mythology, which has experienced some change and transformation over time. It is important to recognise that there is no single definition of what a museum should be or seek to achieve, and there is wide debate in the literature over the purpose of the museum. According to Duncan and Wallach (2012, p. 46), '[t]he museum's primary function is ideological'. They posit that the museum traditionally served to 'impress upon those who use or pass through it society's most revered beliefs and values' (Duncan & Wallach 2012, p. 46). In her work on museums, Simpson acknowledged that traditionally, in Europe, the museum 'both reflected and served the cultural elite' and that it was a '"cabinet of curiosities", . . . the storeroom of a nation's treasures' (2001, p. 1). On the other hand, Witcomb (2003) has argued that in the contemporary era, there has been a 're-imagining' of the museum away from its traditional 'mausoleum' past to a more inclusive approach to representing contested histories and multiple senses of belonging. The concept of the museum as 'mausoleum' is not just restricted to what the museum houses. A 'mausoleum' or a 'royal temple' is the way in which Duncan and Wallach describe the traditional architecture of the museum throughout history, an architectural type that they assert 'echoes funereal and religious building types' (2012, p. 47). These connotations embody a sterile view of the museum, one which sets clear power boundaries between those who determine what should be housed in the museum, the narratives it should contain and the ways in which those messages should be communicated to the visiting public.

This traditional approach to history and artefact, and how they should be represented in the museum, has led to criticisms of museum exhibitions being focused on the majority, the dominant group, or the coloniser. According to Bordieu and Darbel, museums serve to 'reinforce among some people the feeling of belonging and among others, the feeling of exclusion' (cited in Duncan & Wallach 2012, p. 52). Similarly, Clifford (1997) warns that museum collections that are curated under colonial conditions result in museum exhibitions that embody the power relationships of that society. These types of museums reflect the senses of belonging, or not belonging, articulated by Bordieu and Darbel. More recently however, there have been considerable efforts to alter the traditional museum so it can become a

transformative space, allowing problematic or dominant past assumptions to be challenged by new ideas, voices and understandings. Pratt (1992) defined the possibility of the museum facilitating 'contact zones' that could result in meaningful reconciliation. She envisioned these spaces as allowing colonised and coloniser to come into contact with each other, where they could share stories and experiences, as well as a space where those previously 'geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations' (Pratt 1992, pp. 6–7). Clifford (1997) embraced the notion of 'contact zones', theorising it would provide greater pathways for not only increased understanding of indigenous populations, but it would also allow greater agency and scope for indigenous populations to be included in the narrative of the museum. These developments have enabled increased explorations of the minority, the oppressed and the colonised into the contemporary museum space, allowing wider interpretations of both contested histories and nationalised mythologies into museum exhibitions.

To demonstrate this shift, in her analysis of museums in the Caribbean, Cummins argued that for many years, the dominance of Europeans in the Caribbean meant the 'concentration of power and authority in their hands has been buttressed by the writings of historians' and that 'this has been reflected in museum displays' (1996, pp. 92–93). Throughout this period, paternalistic attitudes towards the African Caribbean community were mirrored in museum exhibitions. However, from the 1960s onwards, post-colonial historiographical trends towards 'peoples' history has meant that Caribbean historians re-oriented their focus away from the dominant European culture to be more inclusive of the Amerindian, African, European and Asian Caribbean cultures. This process allowed museums to be more inclusive of greater representations of the contribution of all four cultures to the development of Caribbean society.

For Buckley, the museum has an important role in maintaining the 'truth'. He has argued that 'it is both theoretically and practically possible to present a history in museums which respects the truth, and moves forward in search of it' (1996, p. 44). However, truth is a problematic concept, particularly in a colonial or post-colonial state. Like Cummins though, Simpson (2001, p. 1) has argued that in many parts of the world, the post-colonial museum has become a transformative space, one that seeks to allow for more interpretations of the past, and a space in which social and political issues can be addressed. Here, uncomfortable 'truths' are able to come to the surface, challenging long-held 'truths' on identity, value and worth. Like the aforementioned example from the Caribbean, this enables greater community representation in museum exhibitions.

Greater community representation in museum exhibitions is something Bennett rejects however. He feels that community galleries are predominantly idealistic representations of the *desired* community and that they do not necessarily reflect the *actual* community. In addition, he argues that the purpose of the museum is civic reform, guided by 'cultural technicians' who work alongside the government, not in opposition to it (Bennett 1998). Therefore, he identifies the importance of cultural studies, and shifting government notions about citizenry and contested histories through the influence of cultural technicians,

not the community, as being the starting point for greater inclusion in museums. However, given the slow rate of change traditionally demonstrated by governments, and the more recent resurgence of conservative governments in the Global North, this is a problematic approach to take as in all likelihood, it will continue to result in the silencing or continued marginalisation of groups such as indigenous populations. Furthermore, the 'contact zones' provided by community galleries such as the Migration Museum in Adelaide[1] can be invaluable in getting communities together, and talking, about their shared experiences.

Similarly, more conservative museum practices have not had much success in adequately representing female histories and experiences. As Porter has shown in her research on the depiction of women in museum exhibits, even contemporary museums still struggle in their depictions of women because ultimately, they are 'constrained by the underlying premise of empiricism' (2012, p. 66). Porter found representations of women and the feminine were at the background or the 'edge of the picture', while portrayals of men and masculinity were foregrounded in museum exhibitions. Furthermore, according to Porter, depictions of men and masculinity were 'more fully developed and with greater consistency' compared to depictions of women and the feminine that were often 'vague and idealized' (2012, p. 66). Therefore, if female representations in museums across the Global North remain problematic, it is likely that representations of indigenous and colonised groups, for example, also present ongoing problems for the cultural technicians and their respective governments, particularly if they are a conservative government or do not fully acknowledge the colonial history of their territories or regions.

While this section has sought to provide a concise overview of the different trends of thought on the purpose of the contemporary museum, the chapter now turns to considerations of museums in the People's Republic of China. Given the Chinese government remains a totalitarian state and it does not acknowledge Qing Imperial colonisation of regions such as Xinjiang, many of the above developments in museum practice may be out of reach of the cultural technicians employed within Chinese museums. Nonetheless, the innovative approach to embracing different histories, experiences, memories and cultural diversity in museum exhibitions described above nicely articulate the shifting trends that have occurred in museums in the contemporary era. In addition, these shifts offer much to museums in China, particularly those located in ethnically diverse areas such as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

## The Chinese museum as national mythology

In China, the museum plays an important role in civic education about the Chinese state and its national mythology. Ultimately, similar to museums elsewhere, it serves to inspire patriotism and nationalism. In their studies of the Chinese national mythology, Watson (1995) and Denton (2005) deconstructed the narrative of many of China's nationally significant museums and historical/cultural/religious sites. These authors argued that the national narrative imbued at these sites has

long been centred on past humiliations at the hands of external forces and China's abilities to overcome such aggression and hostility. Like Anderson's (2006) thesis on the intensification of nationalism through 'imagined communities', this narrative has been a potent force in unifying disparate Han Chinese populations spread across China under the umbrellas of nationalism and patriotism.

However, within this celebration of the survival of the Chinese state, the minority nationalities are often overlooked or marginalised. Instead, this national narrative predominantly focuses on the role of the majority Han Chinese in defending, restoring and building modern China. While there have been attempts to include minority nationality populations in China's national narrative, this has often been centred on idealistic representations of ethnic harmony between Han Chinese and minority nationality populations. Furthermore, this narrative often involves questionable historical accounts, in order to present modern China as an extension of a unified state that has occupied the same territorial space since the Han dynasty. This is particularly the case in troubled regions like Xinjiang and Tibet, where for some, sovereignty of the region remains contested.

In their work on museums in China, Li and Luo (2004) identified various museums across China. Their examination included museums in Xinjiang and Tibet, and the authors located these museums and their associated narratives into the wider nationalised mythology of a multi-ethnic and united China. The work was descriptive however, not analytical, and it is very much an official overview of China's main museums. What is of interest to this study is that it provides an account of China's broadened national mythology, one that is based on the unity of its multi-ethnic population. More importantly, Li and Luo accept this national narrative without question, and they do not challenge the assumptions that underpin this broadened national mythology and its problematic attempts to include minority nationalities into the national narrative.

Other studies of Chinese museums include Pan's (2008) work, which identifies the role Chinese museums have played in protecting China's cultural heritage. However, this work also did not critique the narratives contained within Chinese museums. On the other hand, Kim's (2011) paper on Chinese museums did question the contents of China's museums. It noted that there is very little research in both Chinese and English on minority nationality museums and argued the lack of Chinese scholarship was largely because national unity has long been prioritised over ethnic diversity. Therefore, papers on minority nationality museums are centred on the colourful nature of ethnic costumes rather than real explorations of the lived experiences of minority nationalities and how they are represented to mainly Han Chinese and non-Chinese audiences. Kim's paper also documented the difficulties faced by minority nationality museums in China, and the absence of engagement with minority nationality issues in such museums.

Therefore, while there are museums that contain exhibitions on minority nationality populations, much of the minority nationality narrative within these exhibitions appears to be centred on idealistic representations of ethnic harmony between Han Chinese and minority nationality populations. These representations have sometimes demeaned and degraded the minority nationalities depicted. In her

study of museum depictions of minority nationalities in south-west China, Varutti (2011) found the use of miniatures was common in such exhibitions and that the construction of these miniatures spoke volumes about the 'place' of minority nationalities in the Chinese state. Firstly, Varutti argued that the miniaturisation of the minority nationalities depicted in the displays represented the subaltern status of these groups in relation to the Han Chinese majority. Secondly, many of the miniatures of minority nationalities depicted female subjects who were exoticised and eroticised in the process. Miniatures depicting minority nationality women bathing bare breasted in creeks were common and they reinforced Han stereotypes of open sexual mores and 'availability' of minority nationality women. This perpetuates the 'Othering' of these groups, rather than accepting them as equal and contributing members of the Chinese state. Finally, when Han Chinese appeared in the miniatures analysed by Varutti she reported that they were dressed in work overalls, not ethnic costumes, and they were male, reflecting the overarching paternalism of the Chinese state and Han Chinese majority.

This is not unlike the representations of minority nationalities in other forms. Gladney (1994) noted similar findings in his examination of how nationality was represented in contemporary depictions of Han and non-Han subjects in art, film and the state sponsored media in China. Gladney found that while Han Chinese were typically depicted as 'normal and un-exotic', minority nationality women were repeatedly exoticised and eroticised. While many of his examples were also from south-western China, Gladney (1994) did remark that such depictions were even eroticising the Muslims in Xinjiang. In 1987, Gladney witnessed protests by Uyghur artists who were angered by Han Chinese depictions of Uyghurs that were either 'too humorous' or 'too sensual'. Again, bare-breasted Muslim women were the 'face' of regional minority nationalities in these artworks. In one painting, a nude Uyghur woman was surrounded by various regional iconography including (phallic) minarets and oil derricks. This artwork was regarded as being particularly offensive by the Uyghur artists and as evidence of Han Chinese denigration of their kinsfolk (women). The protests did little to change the status quo however, and Gladney (1994, p. 114) found that 'these representations continue'. On this basis, I was eager to see if these kinds of representations were present in the Xinjiang Regional Museum.

However, before I made it to the museum I did see somewhat toned-down, but still erotised, representations of minority nationalities like those described by Gladney. During the field work component of this research, I stayed at a hotel in Ürümchi that depicted Uyghur and Kazakh people, singing, dancing and playing musical instruments, in a mural on the wall of its foyer (see Figure 3.1). Similar to the artworks described above, the women depicted in these murals were highly sexualised, although they were not depicted nude and were instead fully clothed. The mural itself was very similar to the artistic style of Ting Shao Kuang, a Chinese-born artist who now resides in the United States.[2] Although they were clothed, I thought the images sexualised because they were represented dancing in a manner that left them in quite contorted physical posturing, arms asunder and often adopting quite passive posing. The women depicted had deep-red, pouty

*Figure 3.1* A panel from a mural representing regional minorities in Xinjiang, located in
a hotel in Ürümchi

Photo courtesy of Anna Hayes (2012).

lips, blushed cheeks and deep-red fingernails. Most noticeable however, was that each woman was depicted with deliberately noticeable round breasts, represented by outlined circles on their chests, some of which included clearly defined nipples. Other physical traits were not emphasised in this manner. Given the seeming 'normality' of this kind of representation of the region's non-Han peoples, in a hotel hosting both Han and minority nationality Chinese, as well as international tourists, my interest in visiting the regional museum was further heightened. I wanted to see just how minority nationalities were represented in the museum exhibitions, and to identify the nature of the official national narrative contained within that important regional museum.

## Xinjiang Regional Museum

Established in 1953, and rebuilt in 2005, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Museum houses an incredible array of artefacts and is an impressive museum. It documents the history of the region, particularly its past splendour as the link between east and west, when the Silk Road traversed its terrain. It provides a detailed history of the Silk Road, and contains a mummy exhibit, which includes the 'Loulan beauty', an Indo-European mummy who is on permanent display and is a key drawcard for many of the museum's visitors. It is a very modern museum that is well appointed with both static and interactive displays.[3]

*Figure 3.2* Relief map of Xinjiang housed in the central dome of the Xinjiang Regional Museum, Ürümchi

Photo courtesy of Anna Hayes (2012).

The museum has a grand, domed entrance hall, and its architectural style is of the type Duncan and Wallach identify as having dominated museums across Europe and North America until World War II. For Duncan and Wallach, the 'central Pantheon-like rotunda' style of architecture was used to 'recall . . . a classical prototype. This central space was the beginning and end of the ritual walk through the galleries to the left and right' (2012, p. 57). Housed within the grand central dome of the Xinjiang Regional Museum is a relief map of Xinjiang (see Figure 3.2). Due to the central location of the map, visitors to the museum pass by it several times during their 'ritual walk' in the museum. As visitors move to other exhibitions in the museum, and even as they enter and leave the museum, they pass by the relief map thereby making it a central exhibit of the museum. The other exhibitions housed in the Xinjiang Regional Museum comprise a fusion of history, politics and bold affirmations of the multi-ethnic harmony that exists within the region. In addition, the museum also houses visiting exhibitions that change on a regular basis. One of the permanent exhibitions is the Nationality Exhibition.

### The Nationality Exhibition

The introduction to the regional nationalities exhibition stated that its purpose was to 'represent the gorgeous conditions and customs of the 12 ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, and to show the splendour of the beautiful rarity of [the] treasure house

*Figure 3.3* An example of the wax mannequins in the Xinjiang Regional Museum. These
mannequins were modelled on members of each minority nationality depicted,
which offered an authenticity in their physical appearance.

Photo courtesy of Anna Hayes (2012).

of Chinese national culture'. As an exhibition, it was surprisingly well-conceived
and designed. Although it contained exhibits on the types of costumes, food, reli-
gion, dress, animal husbandry, musical instruments and other cultural artefacts
that demonstrated 'difference' and 'otherness', the mannequins contained in the
exhibit were in fact wax mannequins, modelled on people from that particular
minority nationality (see Figure 3.3). Therefore, there was an authenticity in their
physical appearance which was refreshing and encouraging to see. This was not
just a display that contained black-haired Eurasian shop-front mannequins dressed
in minority nationality attire, which is common in other museums within China
and beyond.[4] Nor did it contain the miniatures or exoticised and erotised minority
nationality women that Varutti (2011) found in other minority nationality muse-
ums across China. These exhibits demonstrated genuine efforts at respectfully
representing the minority nationalities that make up the region, at least in terms of
their physical appearance.

However, descriptors for the minority nationalities were problematic. As men-
tioned above, they were centred on 'otherness' and 'difference' and included
superficial descriptions that highlighted the 'beauty' of the minority nationali-
ties, as well as romanticised and even paternalistic statements about them. For
example, one of the descriptors for traditional dress among the Uyghur nationality
referred to the 'Graceful Women and Handsome Men' and how their traditional

caps reflected 'the Uyghur people's free, natural and unrestrained characters'. One descriptor on the Kazakh nationality stated '[t]he beautiful multi-colored scenery on the grassland endows strong hope of life for Kazaks to beautify their life'. This romanticised reasoning was used to explain why the yurts of Kazakhs included floral felts, tapestries and patterned bed covers. Another sign described the life of Kazakhs as 'full of songs and rhythms'. In reality, these exhibits offered very little information beyond the music, songs and dance of the minority nationalities. Instead, many of these exhibits reflected Gladney's (1994, p. 95) observations that when it comes to depictions of China's national minorities, '[t]hey sing, they dance, they twirl, they whirl. Most of all they smile, showing their happiness to be part of the motherland'. Overall, this exhibition did not offer meaningful information on their lives and lived experiences.

Another nationality featured within this exhibit was the Han Chinese nationality. In stark contrast to the above descriptors, the origins of the Han nationality in Xinjiang were mainly attributed to the Han dynasty, when troops were stationed there 'to cultivate and guard the Western Regions', clearly signalling their role within the region as protectors, securing the region and keeping it under Chinese rule. This descriptor also acknowledged the significant migration of Han Chinese from other areas of China to Xinjiang. It stated that 'the Han people from the Central Plains . . . continuously emigrated to Xinjiang, and became an important member of the ethnic groups of Xinjiang'. Han migration to Xinjiang has become an underlying cause of significant tensions in the region due to the disruption it has caused to ethnic ratios there. When Xinjiang was formally annexed into the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Uyghur accounted for 76 percent of the population (He & Guo 2000, p. 147), with Han Chinese numbering just 6.7 percent (Iredale et al. 2001, p. 166). Han migration to the province since this time has seen the ethnic ratio radically altered. As highlighted in the introduction to this collection, the Uyghurs now account for just 42 percent of the overall population, with Han Chinese figures reaching close to 40 percent (not including members of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps) (Statistical Bureau of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region 2012). In addition to the change on ethnic ratios, this has also caused tensions due to displacement, extra burden on environmental resources and employment practices which see jobs in the region favouring the Han Chinese, resulting in widespread unemployment or underemployment among the region's minority nationalities. Within this exhibit however, this migration was not unpacked and was treated as an important element in the modernisation story of the region, thereby ignoring the tangible concerns and tensions it has caused across Xinjiang.

This aforementioned Han nationality exhibit was also intriguing because although there was a *kang* (traditional bed which incorporates a stove for cooking and heating), and other 'typically Chinese' accoutrements, there was no Han Chinese mannequin dressed in *hanfu* – the national costume of the Han. Perhaps there is no need for this however, as the museum is, for the most part, tailoring its message to Han Chinese visitors and international tourists. Therefore, there is nothing necessarily 'exotic' about the Han Chinese in Xinjiang. On the other hand,

perhaps the absence of a Han Chinese mannequin demonstrates that there is no agreed upon national attire that represents all Han Chinese.

As Leibold (2010) has already demonstrated, the Han Chinese are divided on the question of national dress. While the *qipao* (banner gown) and Tang-style button-up tunics have generally typified a national dress for the Han Chinese, Han nationalists have decried these costumes as 'Manchurian' and therefore, not representative of the Han. This became a particularly controversial topic at the time of the opening ceremony for the Beijing Games and there was much debate as to what constitutes Han clothing. According to Leibold, it was the *shenyi*, or deep robe, that was generally accepted to be the closest thing to a national dress for the Han nationality. This style of dress dates back to the Yellow Emperor and it represented the clothing style of the Huaxia ethnicity. Therefore, in the lead-up to the Beijing Games, ethnicity and national identity were being debated by some in China.

In the end, China's Games Committee decided on a modern style of dress, with a Chinese flavour. The Chinese athletes wore a red and white tracksuit, with dragon motif on the sleeves. The red styling on the jacket, however, somewhat reflected the *qipao* style overlay of fabric and collar, so it would appear that the Tang-dynasty 'Manchurian' style won in the end. Perhaps this was because for non-Chinese audiences it is the Manchurian style of dress which is typically associated with notions of what constitutes 'Chinese national dress'. For their more formal uniform, China's Games Committee adopted Western dress, with athletes wearing white dress pants or skirts, and either a red or yellow dinner jacket, complete with a crest of the national emblem of China, set off with a yellow shirt and vibrant Olympic Ring tie for men, and a red silk scarf for women. There was also disagreement online about these uniforms too, although this criticism was based more on fashion merits rather than considerations of nationality. Some netizens even remarked that the outfits resembled *xihongshi chao jidan*, a scrambled egg and tomato stir fry dish that is a staple in Chinese cuisine (ChinaSMACK 2008; Lost Laowai 2008). Others dismissed the poor fashion sense as having strong links to place in China, with Shanghai being heralded as the centre of good fashion, and Beijing derided as having poor fashion sense. Therefore, the absence of the Han mannequin in the Nationality Exhibition demonstrates some of the inherent problems that exist within the Han identity.

Despite the absence of a Han Chinese mannequin, overall, the Nationality Exhibition depicted Xinjiang as a tranquil place, which has embodied multicultural unity 'since ancient times'. It stated:

> Xinjiang has been a multi-national homeland since ancient times. Forty-seven nationalities live here today . . . For a long time, they have cooperated as one family to build and safeguard the borderland.

The reference to the borderland here is particularly interesting as borderlands tend to be areas where sovereignty is contested, and, as identified in the introduction to this collection, Xinjiang has become a 'bordered' land, where increasing

degrees of autonomy are desired or enacted by local populations, from Boving-don's (2010) 'everyday resistance' through to the more sporadic acts of violence, as was seen in the Ürümchi riots in 2009 and the 2011 unrest in Kashgar and Khotan.[5] One could argue that Xinjiang not only represents a geographic border-land, but it has been a borderland in the context of its religion, culture, economic progress and development when compared to other inland provinces and those along the eastern seaboard. This was evident in the Nationality Exhibition because it did not provide meaningful accounts of non-Han lived experiences. Nor did it detail their contributions to the history of the region. Instead, it simply focused on their food, clothes, musical instruments and their contributions to animal husbandry. The narrative of these peoples mirrored Porter's (2012) findings on women in the museums she studied. In the Xinjiang Regional Museum, represen-tations of the minority nationalities were 'vague and idealized', and the minority nationalities existed in the background of a Han Chinese Xinjiang.

Nonetheless, it appeared that Han Chinese visitors to the Nationality Exhibition hall were genuinely interested by the exhibit, and there was a respectful engage-ment with the displays. While they may not have believed the official propaganda on the ethnic harmony that exists within the region, particularly after the afore-mentioned events, visitors would likely have reflected on the diverse peoples that make up the region. Although the accounts of the region's nationalities did not move beyond the official national narrative and were disappointing as a result, it was pleasing to see the care taken to display the various nationalities. The use of mannequins that were modelled on members of that particular nationality was an important gesture heading in the direction of what one would expect from a contemporary museum.

### Regional history and national narratives

Unfortunately, the exhibits on regional and Silk Road history did not offer even the slightest gesture to the region's nationalities, nor did they contain the type of engagement expected of a contemporary museum when it comes to contested his-tories. These exhibits were largely designed around the official historical account of the region, which asserted that the province has been an 'inseparable part of China since ancient times'. As a result, many of the artefacts and descriptors con-tained within this exhibition were framed to demonstrate this continual rule by the (Han) Chinese, firmly legitimising Xinjiang as Chinese territory. There was no scope for other voices or accounts of the region's history to appear within the exhibition. In fact, the longevity and cultural, social, political, religious and devel-opmental achievements of the various nationalities present in the region were almost completely overshadowed. There was very little discussion of regional non-Han history, but much discussion of Han garrisons, Han Viceroy's and Han unification of the 'great motherland'.

While there were a couple of accounts of the contributions of non-Han regional nationalities to regional history, they began with the firm acknowledgement that Han rule had been established in the region. For example, in a descriptor contained

in the general history of Xinjiang exhibit, the following account of regional history was provided:

> In 60 BC, during the Han Dynasty, Turpan came under Chinese rule. In 327 AD, Gaochang Prefecture was established. In 460 AD Gaochang became known as a kingdom. In 640 AD, with the establishment of the Tang Dynasty, Tur[p]an became a part of the Xizhou Prefecture. In 840 AD the Uyghurs established a kingdom in the region. Since ancient time[s] Turpan has been inhabited by many ethnic groups with different religious beliefs. . . This local civilisation made outstanding contributions to the motherland's unification and its economic and cultural prosperity.

This descriptor did not demonstrate a critical engagement with regional history. In addition, the span of time covered in this one descriptor means only the most scant information can be provided here. What is noticeable, however, is the absence of any discussion of how non-Han nationalities received Chinese rule, and nor does it acknowledge the circumstances under which the Uyghurs established a kingdom in the region. The descriptor also did not offer any real insight into ethnic relations and non-Han nationality experiences of self-governance within the region. Also noteworthy is the final sentence of the descriptor, which faithfully returns to the unification of the 'motherland' that occurred at this juncture. The national narrative of a unified, multi-ethnic state was faithfully demonstrated here.

Two other descriptors were equally illuminating. They were titled 'The Development of Uyghur Culture' and 'Turpan Prefecture in Qing Dynasty'. Here again, reference was made to the Uighur Kingdom established in Gaochang in 9 CE. Apart from mentioning the formal titles of the various members of the kingdom's leadership, the only other information provided on this kingdom is that '[i]n 1209, the Uighur King surrendered to Genghis Khan of Mongolia'. There was no mention of the nature of this kingdom, what its achievements were, whether there was a cultural, religious or societal flourishing, or decline, during this period of rule. Instead, this important period of regional history was given the most cursory of mentions.

Similarly, in the exhibition titled 'Turpan Precinct in Qing Dynasty' the descriptor briefly mentioned that in 15 CE, the 'chief' of the Turpan region converted to Islam. There was no mention of what circumstances brought about this conversion, nor did the descriptor convey the impact of this change for the Uyghur people of Turpan. Instead, the following sentence of the descriptor stated 'After pacifying Tur[p]an, the Qing Dynasty set up six districts . . . The Tur[p]an Prefecture was given authority to supervise the entire region. The Qing court also stationed soldiers along the frontiers to open up wastelands . . .'. The use of 'pacifying' here needs some unpacking as this is a carefully worded account of a brutal time in regional history. By 1759, the Manchu Qing rulers of China had indeed asserted control over this part of Xinjiang. However, they achieved this rule through a ruthless and bloody conquest which saw some parts of northern Xinjiang depopulated as a result (Bovingdon 2010). This descriptor does not reflect the reality of

the massacres that occurred during this period of time, nor does it provide any scope to demonstrate the impact of this on the nationalities living in the region, particularly the Uyghurs. Furthermore, like the descriptor discussed previously, it also does not provide any scope for discussion of the contributions of regional nationalities to regional history.

There was one descriptor that did acknowledge the contributions of non-Han regional nationalities to the development of the region. It was titled 'People of all Nationalities Built Xinjiang Together' and it stated:

> In 1st century BC to 3rd century AD, the people of all nationalities living in Xinjiang depended on their own diligent work, built the beautiful homes, which had promoted development of agriculture, animal husbandry, handi-craft industry, commerce and communication, and had pushed forward the advance of society.

This descriptor is highly problematic, and potentially inflammatory to non-Han regional nationalities. This is because it completely diminishes their history, lived experiences and, ultimately, their survival within the region. It does not acknowl-edge their historical independence from, and periodic challenges to, Chinese rule and influence in the region. Neither does it accurately represent their global histori-cal importance and contributions to the dynamic Central Asian region, including the historical importance of the Silk Roads. Instead, it represents the non-Han regional nationalities as having been relatively passive members of the greater Chinese state. I use passive here as unlike their Han Chinese counterparts, there are no significant museum representations of important non-Han regional actors in this version of regional history. Therefore, for the average museum visitor, the tales of singing, dancing, animal-raising minority nationalities could reasonably be interpreted as demonstrating these groups had made very *little* contribution to regional history.

This Han-centric narrative very much reflects Wang's articulation of the role of societal 'elites' in the 'construction' of historical memory and sites of significance in China. He argued that these elites 'select which part of history to remember, and which parts to forget' (Wang 2012, p. 3). In Xinjiang, the Han Chinese could reasonably be positioned as the regional 'elites' due to the racial power structures that exist within the province. While Wang's analysis of societal elites was cen-tred on what he called China's 'master historical narrative', or rather, the national mythology surrounding *Wuwang guochi* (Never forget national humiliation), his sentiments have strong correlations to both Xinjiang, and the historical narrative assigned to the region in the Xinjiang Regional Museum. Here visitors are witness to the instrumental approach to historical memory, which Wang asserts allows for '. . . competing elites . . . [to] use history as a tool to mobilize popular support' (2012, p. 23). In turn, popular support is sought from both domestic Chinese and international tourists on the legitimacy of Xinjiang as a province of greater China and constitutes a bold attempt to deny that it has ever been colonised by the Han Chinese. After all, how can one colonise a territory that has been a part of the accused colonising state 'since ancient times'?

In addition, Wang posits that the way in which history is defined by the government of a state is in fact a 'deeply political issue that is closely related to the legitimacy of the government' (Wang 2012, p. 6). Therefore, the virtual absence of non-Han regional nationalities in the grand narrative throughout the museum offers much insight into the nature of Xinjiang's politicised historical memory. In fact, like Clifford's (1997) warning on the undertones and inherent problems of the museum collection curated under colonialism, one could argue that the historical narrative contained within the Xinjiang Regional Museum comprises the '*master* historical narrative', to repurpose Wang's words.

Further to this, Wang concludes that China's historical memory and national narrative is still framed by 'official statements rather than public consensus' and that much of the untold historical narrative for the (Han) Chinese population could involve narratives around the 'tremendous failures and catastrophes that have been caused by the party' (2012, p. 242). For non-Han populations, an additional factor here could also be the virtual absence of their own historical memories and experiences in official regional and national historical narratives. This results in a disconnect occurring between these groups and the collective (Han) Chinese national imagining. If we consider Smith's (1996, p. 383) argument on the importance of collective memory, whereby he argued 'no memory, no identity; no identity, no nation', the problematic nature of Xinjiang's social and political fabric becomes clearer. It is near impossible for one to have a national imagining in the Chinese state when so much of the historical memory of one's particular group is overlooked, ignored or supplanted, particularly when this occurs alongside a *constructed* regional historical memory. This disconnect is vividly demonstrated in outbreaks of violence in the region such as the 2009 riots. On that day, and in the weeks that followed, ethnicity and divisive nationalism came to the fore in both the bloody attacks and bloody retributions that occurred during this outbreak of violence.

One descriptor clearly demonstrated the problematic national mythology underlying the exhibits in the history section. It was titled *The Establishment of Xinjiang Province* and it read as follows:

> The Han dynasty was the important development stage of our country as a unified and multi-nationality State. Under the support of all walled cities and people of all nationalities of Xinjiang, [the] Han Dynasty set up the Military Viceroy's Office of the Western Regions in 59BC, [and] Xinjiang was listed as [the] Han dynasty's domain formally and it became an inalienable component of the great motherland. The unified political situation, the popularisation of setting up garrison stations for troops and peasants to open up wasteland and grow food grains and the exchange of the economic culture between east and west, all had promoted the local economy and regional culture with characteristics to be developed.

This descriptor firmly asserts, again, that not only has Xinjiang long been a part of the unified multi-ethnic state that is modern China, but also that it was the

hard work and input of the Han Chinese that saw it modernise and grow into contemporary Xinjiang. However, in addition to this very official account of regional history, one descriptor seemed to contradict the overarching message that Xinjiang has been an inseparable part of China since the Han dynasty. This descriptor stated:

> In 1884, [the] Qing dynasty built Xinjiang as a province formally and set up prefectures and counties . . . A series of measures had been adopted to strengthen the rule and to develop production, which had consolidated the unity of the multi-nationality country further [emphasis added by author].

One of the central issues in the contesting claims for sovereignty in Xinjiang is the competing Uyghur-Han historical claims to the area, both of which sometimes contradict the other. Only the Han claims are represented in the museum. However, this acknowledgement of the 1884 annexation sits more comfortably with alternative views on regional history, which refute the official Chinese claim that Xinjiang has been an inseparable part of China since the Han dynasty.

Like the account of Xinjiang's history in the museum, in a government 'White Paper' by the People's Republic of China's Information Office of the State Council (2003) it was stated that since the Han dynasty (206BCE–220CE) Xinjiang 'has been an inseparable part of the unitary multi-ethnic Chinese nation'. Conversely, the name Xinjiang, which only came into being in the eighteenth century (Gladney 2004, p. 102), translates as 'New Frontier', signalling this more recent territorial acquisition. This translation was contested by the 'White Paper', however, which claimed that Xinjiang is more accurately translated as meaning 'old territory returned to the motherland' (Information of the State Council 2003) and this translation was also found within descriptors at the Xinjiang Regional Museum. While these claims do not make sense historically, they are repeated in government produced documents and periodicals, including a book purchased from the Xinjiang Regional Museum specifically marketed to tourists. It claimed Xinjiang translated as 'the old territory was regained' (Ding 2008, p. 59). The reality is that Chinese control was really only imposed on Xinjiang in the latter part of the eighteenth century by the Qing imperial expansion, certainly not as early as the Han dynasty, which is claimed by the Chinese government (Clarke 2007; Dillon 2004; Millward 2009). Prior to this time, control was never completely centralised or formalised.

This historical 'confusion' is not just restricted to official periodicals and academic debate. When reading the history of the region contained within the museum, many visitors marvelled at how long Xinjiang had been a part of China. One woman declared 'I never knew it had been a province of China for so long!' Others revisited their own history lessons. One man stated to his friend that he thought it had only become a part of China in the Tang or Qing dynasty, certainly not as early as the Han dynasty. He walked away from the display shaking his head at this new information.

Millward has argued that the perpetuation of the 'continuous rule since the Han dynasty' mantra constitutes an historical falsehood when it comes to regional

history. Furthermore, he stated that this historical falsehood has now 'backed' Chinese historians and ideologues 'into a corner' (Millward 2009, p. 71). This is due to the public displays of official Chinese condemnation of Western colonialism and imperialism in the nineteenth century, while at the same time there has been a deliberate national amnesia regarding the imperial conquests and colonial land seizures made by Qing imperial expansion in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As a result of the aforementioned Chinese version of history, many Chinese scholars and government officials are unable to acknowledge Xinjiang and the reality of its problematic past, that is, territorial annexation and subjugated peoples by Qing imperialist forces. As a result of this, it is difficult for the Chinese government to appropriately respond to calls from within these areas for greater self-determination or independence from China because of the resultant 'historical anxiety' (Millward 2009, p. 71).

The museum and other sites of historical, cultural or religious significance are the sites in which this historical anxiety is most evident. It should be noted that this is not something unique to the Xinjiang Regional Museum, or indeed, other museums across China. As Kavanagh stated 'museums can be places where history is both remembered and forgotten, as curators have to decide what to collect and what to let go, what to record and what to ignore' (1996, p. 5). However, in the Xinjiang Regional Museum, the favouring of Han Chinese history and memory of the region, which is the basis of many of the exhibitions in the museum, serves to reinforce the dominant political paradigm of the region, that is, continued and *historically* legitimised Chinese control over a colonised territory. This reinforces the anxious history of the region, because regional nationalities' history, and even the presence of minority nationalities in the region, is completely overshadowed by the dominant Han collective history and memory in Xinjiang. Yet, as Buckley reminds us, '[h]istory itself is political' (1996, p. 42), therefore, in a region that is still experiencing colonial rule this should come as no surprise.

Ding subtly acknowledges this politicised, historical anxiety in his aforementioned periodical, sold to visitors to the museum who want to learn more about Xinjiang. He describes Xinjiang as:

> . . . a land that has its flesh and blood, its spirits and life. And there will be different images and ideas of Xinjiang of [sic] the people who have different purposes and angles for understanding the region . . .'
>
> (Ding 2008, p. 19)

In the Xinjiang Regional Museum, it is the official version of history that dominates the exhibitions contained within it, causing an obvious anxiety for those outside of these official accounts. Also notable from the aforementioned quotation is Ding's personification of the region, rendering Xinjiang an inseparable part of the Chinese state. To lose it would be akin to losing a limb, it is after all a place of 'flesh and blood'.

For an insight into how the museum sees its role within the wider society, I located and examined museum documents that included the 'Code of Conduct'

for the Xinjiang Regional Museum and China's national 'Long-Term Development Plans for Museums 2011–2020)'. In the Xinjiang Regional Museum 'Code of Conduct for Museum Staff' (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Museum 2013), the museum described itself as a 'window to the outside' for both 'domestic and foreign' tourists so that visitors can learn about the 'rich history and culture of the motherland' as well as embracing 'patriotic education of national unity, thereby safeguarding national unity'. In this sense, domestic tourists are those who travel to Xinjiang from 'outside the region', meaning domestic tourists from other provinces across mainland China. These stated purposes of the museum demonstrate the intention of the official narrative contained within its exhibitions. This is a projected image, it is not a window to peer through in order to see the reality of the province for oneself, nor is it a transformative space where the history, society and politics of the region can be opened up for new discussions or debates in 'contact zones'. Instead, this is a museum that seeks to reinforce official rhetoric on national unity, harmonious society and a multi-ethnic 'motherland' that embraces its minority nationalities, as well as securing the territorial integrity of the Chinese state.

In addition, a recruitment advertisement for the museum stated that the number one recruitment condition for potential candidates was that they needed to 'love the motherland' (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Museum 2013). Within this parameter, there is no scope for other views of the motherland, or where one belongs when they sit apart from the dominant Han imagining of Xinjiang. Therefore, the 'angles' and 'purposes' that are served by the museum again are those which embody Beijing's desire for a unified multi-ethnic state, one in which Xinjiang, and the Chinese 'motherland', is safeguarded. However, there is an inherent misunderstanding within this approach, and this lies at the heart of the continued social and political unrest that continues to break out across Xinjiang. Belonging cannot be enforced upon a population or group of people. Instead, it needs to be desired, accessible and it needs to accurately reflect the status quo. The marginalisation of the history and experiences of non-Han regional nationalities in the Xinjiang Regional Museum speaks volumes about the marginalisation of these groups in the day-to-day existence of contemporary Xinjiang society and politics. The museum then, becomes a microcosm of the 'world outside', that is, the lived reality of Xinjiang's multi-ethnic population. As a result, the museum does in fact meet its stated purpose as it mirrors the dominant Han imagining in Xinjiang and the continued 'pacification' of the non-Han regional nationalities there.

## Conclusion

Contained within China's national long-term development plan for museums (2011–2020) is the statement that a twenty-first century museum must 'resolutely get rid of the shackles of museum development ideology and institutional barriers to innovation and museum management systems' (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Museum 2013). This chapter demonstrates that the Xinjiang Regional Museum has some way to go before it meets this particular goal. Currently, it

reflects a more traditional approach on how museums should function within a state. It contains a nationalised mythology that is intent on informing and uniting the masses under a shared history and sense of identity, but this mythology is one in which the minority nationalities have long been marginalised and 'pacified'. However, in order to 'rid the shackles' the Xinjiang Regional Museum would also need to rid itself of the official rhetoric pertaining to Xinjiang's past. It would need to become a transformative space, one that did allow past assumptions to be challenged by new participants, ideas, voices and understandings. The likelihood of this occurring in the rigid contemporary Chinese state seems highly unlikely. Indeed, there would need to be a significant shift in the political structure of the Chinese state for this to eventuate. As a result, the non-Han nationalities of Xinjiang continue to be marginalised within the official regional narrative contained within the Xinjiang Regional Museum.

## Notes

1　The Migration Museum, established in 1986, is located in Adelaide, Australia. Its exhibitions contain 'contact zones' on Indigenous dispossession across Australia and it also details stories of migration and settlement in South Australia. The Migration Museum contains a community exhibition space, called the Forum, where communities can present their stories of their collective history, migration experience and senses of belonging. According to Finnimore (2008, p. 75), the Forum 'allows for different perspectives and voices in interpretation of histories'. In 2011, the Adelaide Uyghur community curated an exhibition in the Forum. See: Hayes, Anna 2012, 'Uighur Transnationalism in Contemporary Australia: exile, sanctuary, community and future', in Anna Hayes and Robert Mason (eds.), *Cultures in Refuge: Seeking Sanctuary in Modern Australia*, Ashgate, Farnham, pp. 179–193.
2　You can view artworks by Ting Shao Kuang at his online gallery: http://tingshaokuang. net/. His work titled 'Silk Road' is just one example of the sexualised imagery he uses to depict the female subject. His depiction of minority women sees his subjects exoticised and eroticised, and they became objectified 'Others', a position that is common to other depictions of minority nationality women. Interestingly, his style is a fusion of what has been labelled the 'Yunnan School' and Western art styles, and many of the women depicted display outward identifiers of being from various minority nationalities in Yunnan. For an in-depth analysis of his art style and the 'oriental orientalism' of this fusion in his artworks see Gladney (1994).
3　Please note, all observations and direct quotes from descriptors in the Xinjiang Regional Museum were recorded during two separate visits to the museum by the author on 14 September 2012, and 22 September 2012. Descriptors are reproduced from notes and photographs taken during these visits.
4　During fieldwork at the Turpan Museum in September 2012, an exhibition on minority nationalities from Yunnan Province was being housed at that museum. This exhibition contained Eurasian shopfront mannequins in minority dress and constituted an eroticisation of minority nationality women due to their posing, sculptured features and the plump, red pouting lips. In addition, as some of the examples of minority nationality clothing included very short skirts, many visitors to the museum paused, pointed and discussed the minority nationality costumes at length.
5　The July 2009 riots in Ürümchi were reported to have begun following the beating deaths of two Uyghur factory workers in southern China by Han Chinese co-workers (Roberts 2011). The killings led to widespread protests and violence erupting across Xinjiang. The riots that followed resulted in the death of approximately 197 people, 1,600 people

were injured and 1,434 people were detained (Lewis 2009). In 2011, further violence broke out on the anniversary of this event in Kashgar and Khotan, when Uyghur groups launched separate attacks in the two cities. One of the reasons given for the violence was the detention, without trial, of Uyghur men after the anniversary of the 2009 riots. In addition, tensions were also heightened by the government's destruction of traditional Uyghur houses in Kashgar. The demolition of these houses, labelled 'unsafe' and 'unsanitary' by Beijing, is viewed by the Uyghurs as both cultural destruction and an attempt by Beijing 'to break up their communities and reduce their influence in the city' (Dillon 2011).

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**Part 2**

# Inter-ethnic relations in Xinjiang

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# 4 Whose Xinjiang? Space, place and power in the rock fusion of *Xin Xinjiangren*, Dao Lang

*Joanne Smith Finley*

## Introduction

In this chapter, I explore how geo-political space (Xinjiang, or the 'New Frontier'), cultural identity and belonging to place are represented and contested through the audio texts (lyrics, vocal styles and instrumentation) and visual texts (music packaging, video CDs) of Chinese Mando-pop artist Dao Lang. A Sichuanese (Han) migrant to the regional capital, Ürümchi, Dao Lang paints himself as a *Xin Xinjiangren* or 'new Xinjiangese'. Drawing on traditional Uyghur musical instrumentation to infuse his soft rock ballads, he lives out the romantic vision of a solitary soul suspended in a silent and empty desert landscape (*terra nullius*). At the same time, the Dao Lang project seeks to bridge the cultural chasm between the inhabitants of Xinjiang (including indigenous groups such as the Uyghurs and Kazakhs, and newcomers such as Han and Hui in-migrants) and Han Chinese living in China proper. What emerges is an ideal vision of a new, all-inclusive regional identity: within Dao Lang's art, Xinjiang the territory is a distinct and unique part of the People's Republic of China (PRC), populated by *women Xinjiangren* (We Xinjiangese), conceived as a united body of subscribers to an ancient Central Asian culture fused with Chinese characteristics. The various peoples of Xinjiang, who share the most beautiful melodies emanating from Central Asia, as well as the fruits (natural resources) of the region, should have no reason, the singer argues, to come into conflict. Yet a close analysis of the song 'Wolf in Sheepskin' (2006) seems to tell a different metaphorical tale: one of local aversion to cultural fusion symbolised by the impossibility of inter-ethnic courtship. In revealing the fragility of Dao Lang's inclusive conceptualisation of space and place, the song illustrates the two-way power dynamics and tensions that characterise contemporary Uyghur-Han relations, and foreshadows the singer's flight from Xinjiang following the 2009 Ürümchi riots.

## Xinjiang the geo-political space

It is necessary first to situate the Uyghurs (and indeed the Han Chinese) within the context of politically contested territory. The Uyghurs originated on the steppes of what is today's Mongolian Republic. Defeated in battle by Kyrgyz nomads in

840 CE, they abandoned their Orkhon kingdom and migrated westward in three groups. One of those groups settled in the region now called Xinjiang in 845 CE, where they fused with indigenous Indo-European farmers and turned to a sedentary lifestyle (Geng 1984, p. 6). The Uyghurs speak a Turkic-Altaic language and, though they have subscribed to a diversity of religious beliefs over the course of their group history, the contemporary Uyghurs have been adherents of Islam – to varying degrees – for at least 500 years (Bellér-Hann 2008, pp. 303–6). Meanwhile, the territory they have inhabited for well over a millennium was not fully or meaningfully incorporated into the Chinese empire until the Qing reconquest in 1878, a fact reflected in the name given to the newly created province, Xinjiang (or 'New Frontier') (Millward 2007, pp. 124–46).

The Han are the majority ethnic group in the PRC, accounting for 91.51 per cent of the total population according to the 2010 census (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2011). Yet, reflecting China's short history of direct political control over Xinjiang, the proportion of Han within the regional population amounted to just 5 per cent prior to Chinese Communist Party (CCP) accession in 1949 (Toops 2004, p. 245). In order to bring political stability to the Western peripheries and further China's 'civilizing mission' (Harrell 1994), the CCP embarked in the early 1950s upon a programme of Han population transfer. According to the most recent PRC national census conducted in 2010, Han Chinese now account for some 39 per cent or 8,416,867 persons, compared to the Uyghurs, who account for 46.4 per cent or 10,019,758 persons.[1]

However, the conceptual frame does not stop at contested territory; it involves also the contestation of cultural identity and place: 'Both as a creative practice and as a form of consumption, music plays an important role in the narrativization of place, that is, in the way in which people define their relationship to local, everyday surroundings' (Bennett 2004, p. 2). In this sense, specific musics become 'symbolic anchors' in a region and signs of belonging (Lewis, cited in Bennett 2004, p. 3). Not only this, but everyday objects and commodities (such as music CDs and music reviews) may possess an emotive force in the ways in which they are used to delineate, reinforce or transform identities and positions, as well as notions of tradition and authenticity (Milgram 2005, p. 231).

## Parallel yet separate soundscapes

The ethnomusicologist Rachel Harris, writing on the Xinjiang soundscapes of the 1990s, spoke of 'parallel musical worlds': one dominated by covers of Uyghur traditional folk songs, translated into Chinese and sung by Han composer, Wang Luobin; the other by original songs produced and recorded by Uyghur performers and sung in the long-time regional *lingua franca* of Uyghur. The two worlds were entirely separate (Harris 2005a, p. 387). Within the latter world, two 'Voices of the Uyghurs', each a singer-dutarist, competed in the articulation of alternative representations through the medium of 'new folk'.[2] In this new vision of the Han-Uyghur relationship, the Han no longer appeared as the benevolent 'older brother' in the 'great family of nationalities'; instead he was cast as 'coloniser'

to the Uyghur 'colonised'. In this way, each artist firmly rejected ideal state discourses of 'nationality equality' (*minzu pingdeng*) and 'nationality unity' (*minzu tuanjie*) and promoted an alternative truth (Smith 2007; Smith Finley 2013a). Following disturbances in Ghulja (Yining) in 1997, heavy restrictions were placed on freedom of speech in order to suppress the oral expression of negative ethnic stereotypes, considered to have exacerbated inter-ethnic tensions. Intensified censorship within the cultural sector followed (Bequelin 2004), so that it now became impossible to express political ideas in lyrical metaphor. Into this vacuum came Han migrant Dao Lang, the model '*Xin Xinjiangren*' (New Xinjiangese), who produced songs and cultural products embodying fusion and unity on musical, cultural, social and finally political levels.

## Dao Lang the man

Dao Lang (original name, Luo Lin) was born in Sichuan province in 1971. As a child, he was exposed to minority musics from an early age, and would listen to Xinjiang folksongs played to him by his father on an old record player. Something of a hermit – 'Actually, I am an ascetic in the world of music' (China Internet Information Centre 2004) – Dao Lang quit secondary school at the age of seventeen, and left home for Neijiang city, where he learned to play keyboards. Two years later, he was bar-hopping in Chengdu, Chongqing, Xi'an, and in Tibet. Asked in an interview about his 'wandering years', Dao Lang stated that he had wished to 'venture out into the world' (*chu qu chuang*), and quoted a Jin dynasty proverb to paint himself as a pioneer: a man of broad ambition, willing to travel to distant places to further a great cause (*hao nan'er zhi zai sifang*) (Xiao, Shi & Chen 2011). He toured for more than four years until he eventually met his second wife, Xiao Mei, in Hainan in 1995 (China Internet Information Centre 2004). She, a Han Chinese born and raised in Xinjiang, subsequently 'took him home' to the region, where they settled in Ürümchi. Failing in his original musical enterprises (which included writing advertising jingles for local radio and releasing a CD of sundry pop music), in 2001 Dao Lang buried himself in a library to reflect on his situation. When he had first arrived in Xinjiang, he knew nobody, and, to divert him, his wife would play him local Xinjiang music. This finally inspired Dao Lang so much that he set out to meet the local Uyghur people. Travelling to the Tarim basin, he discovered the beautiful music and dance culture of the Dolan Uyghurs (he would later adopt this ethnonym as his artistic name).[3] Feeling 'recharged', he produced an album with the stated aim of 'promoting the Xinjiang region' to Han in China proper.

His first successful release, *Love Songs from the Great Desert* (*Damo qingge*) (2002) was a collection of minority folksongs, re-arranged and sung by Dao Lang. In his own words, all but four songs were 'oldies written by others' (China Internet Information Centre 2004). I shall return to this point later. The album nudged open the door of his success: 'It was like a fire spreading quickly from Xinjiang to the northeast, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xi'an, Chengdu and other areas of the country. The only city that remained unmoved was Beijing' (China Internet

Information Centre 2004). However, it was his next release, *Turkestan Love Songs* (*Xiyu qingge*) (2003),[4] which became Dao Lang's first big hit in Xinjiang. Like the previous album, this was a compilation of covers of twelve traditional songs from the region. In the wake of its success, the artist ceased to perform under his personal name of Luo Lin, and fully adopted his chosen stage name: 'Using the name Dao Lang is also to promote this remote city [sic] to my countrymen, the beauty of this region, a place that has nurtured me and given me tremendous opportunities' (China Internet Information Centre 2004). His third album, *The First Snows of 2002* (2002 *nian diyi chang xue*) (2004), finally secured his fame at a national level, selling a total of 2.7 million copies. In particular, the title track, released in January 2004, resonated throughout China and beyond to the outside world (Xin 2012).

From the beginning, Dao Lang has presented himself, and been characterised in the media, as the reluctant superstar: he is a loner, a hermit, a family man. In keeping with this image and his personality, the artist only rarely gives interviews, and seldom tours, to the frustration of his adoring fans. Following his rise to fame in 2004, the singer explained: 'I don't want to show off; [I want to] remain sensitive to music and retain peace of mind. I fear if I become frivolous, I would damage my pure inspiration for music' (China Internet Information Centre 2004). He dislikes appearing on popular Chinese televised variety shows, and goes on concert tours as seldom as possible. When he does appear on a public engagement, he is always wearing a baseball cap, a habit one music journalist interpreted as 'a conscious effort to separate his private self to that of Dao Lang the public figure' (Xin 2012).

While Dao Lang's private, solitary personality stands entirely at odds with the lively and uninhibited performances that characterise Uyghur social activities and life cycle rituals (Smith Finley 2013a, p. 98), it is apparently his love of solitary places that draws him to the north-western borderlands. The notion of loner is communicated through a series of photo shots of Dao Lang sitting or walking alone in sand dunes or desert ruins with just a guitar for company (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). This love of harsh and lonely terrain has proved the inspiration for several of his original compositions, such as 'The Poplars of Kashgar' (*Kashenge'er huyang*). The artist claims to have taken almost three years to write this song, which is based on the powerful emotions he experienced in that oasis. During a recent press conference in San Francisco, Dao Lang explains:

> To a man, Kashgar is a very tough place to be in. I was there, and I had said before, this place makes a man [. . .] Desert, Gobi, poplar trees, only poplar trees could grow there for one thousand years . . . one thousand years without toppling over . . . one thousand years without decaying [. . .] After seeing it, from many photos, so strange, that distorted form. In that distorted state, I believe many men could have been through that experience, that very painful stage in their growing up. That type of pain and suffering is just like the poplar tree, even when distorted, even when in pain, even when the soil is poor, without water, it still grows, it will grow. So I say that place makes a man.
>
> (Baidu 2013)
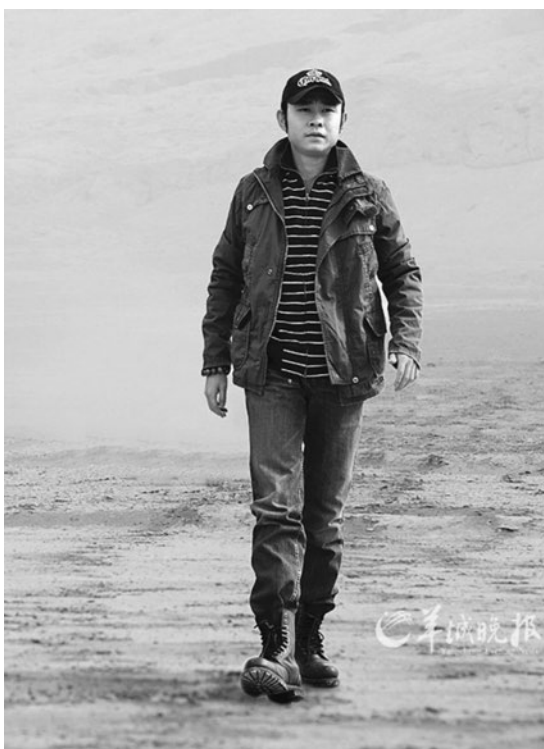
*Figures 4.1 & 4.2*  Dao Lang and the north-west borderlands
Photos reproduced with the permission of *Yangcheng wanbao* (*Yangcheng Evening News*, 2011).

The song proved so affective for the singer that, when his record company asked him to change the song's title on the grounds that the four characters (*Kashenge'er*) were strange and hard to pronounce, he refused, stating that without that title the song would lose its meaning: 'it refers to a special place' (Baidu 2013). His response suggests a reverence for the land that is almost religious, an idea that re-emerges later in the same press conference:

> Besides promoting Xinjiang's song and dance, there is also the sunshine of Xinjiang, just like here [San Francisco], similar, *just like the same God's hand touching you* [. . .] That one is a beauty without makeup'.
>
> (Baidu 2013, my emphasis)

In 2013, the singer signalled his intention to retreat again, once he had completed tours of China, the United States of America and Canada (his first live performances for five years). Stating that he was 'not a terribly confident person, more of the introverted type', he spoke of needing four to five years to write new material: 'I am not very suitable for the entertainment world, with my type of personality, so I don't come out to "dance" often' (Baidu 2013).

## Contesting place: the rock fusion of Dao Lang

So, how does the rock fusion of Dao Lang convey particular notions of space, place and identity? Frith (1996) identified four conventions in the production of popular music, including: sound (what you hear); performance (what you see); packaging (how music is sold); and the music's embodied values (ideology). In terms of sound, Dao Lang has drawn on the 'exotic' sonic qualities of traditional Uyghur music to infuse both his re-arrangements of regional folk songs previously collected by Han song collector Wang Luobin,[5] and his own compositions, including soft rock ballads and rock-style re-workings of Chinese revolutionary classics; both feature Uyghur instrumental backing (cf. Harris 2005b, p. 632). This mixing of popular soft rock with the 'ancient sounds of Xinjiang' has, in the eyes of some fans, created 'spectacular results' for Chinese pop (Anon. 2011).

While much has been made of Dao Lang's initial rise to popularity, described as taking place 'out of the blue', and without any packaging or promotion (China Internet Information Centre 2004; Xiao, Shi & Chen 2011), a marketing strategy seems to have been in evidence from quite early on in his career. In 2003, the record company that produced Dao Lang's second album, *Turkestan Lovesongs*, asked him to assume a name from within the minority community. At that time, the singer suggested several possibilities (including Maigaiti, Abdulraj and Awati), but these were all vetoed by the company. Finally, it was agreed to select the ethnonym 'Dolan' (Dao Lang), because this translated into 'swordsman' in Chinese, better fitting the imagination that [Han] people have of the western borderlands (Zhang 2011). In this way, a local ethnonym – and important cultural symbol – was appropriated in the construction of an artistic identity for a Han incomer, and an entrenched stereotype of the sword-wielding nomad barbarian was reproduced (cf. Abramson 2003).

If we examine some of the packaging of Dao Lang's albums, a metaphor of domination and subordination quickly emerges in the descriptive text. The cover of his 2004 CD release, titled *Searching for Maira* (*Xunzhao Mayila*), announces Dao Lang as 'the mysterious singer who conquered (*zhengfu*) the Western regions'. The credits attribute the regional folk song 'In That Far-away Place' (*Zai na yaoyuan de difang*) to song collector Wang Luobin, the words and/or music of four tracks to Dao Lang, and five further tracks to other musicians, including some Han and some minority artists. Three tracks feature accompaniment by these minority artists on *matouqin* (*Morin Quur*, a Mongolian stringed instrument) or violin. Yet they do not appear on the cover of *Searching for Maira*; nor do they feature in the artwork on any other of the singer's CD releases; the indigenous peoples of the region are essentially rendered invisible (see Figure 4.3). The images we see instead are of an apparently uninhabited territory, a pristine virgin land, where the sun rises and sets over snowy mountains, and an eagle soars over the deserted ruins of Gaochang (the ancient Buddhist kingdom of the Uyghurs in Turpan): in short, *terra nullius*.[6] Alternatively, we see the lone figure of Dao Lang himself, set against a backdrop of sands, desert rocks or autumn poplars: one Han 'conqueror' sitting alone in a landscape devoid of local inhabitants.

The notion of occupation of virgin land is suggested still more strongly in Dao Lang's re-arrangement and delivery of the song 'In Praise of Xinjiang' (*Xinjiang hao!*). While the words to this song would express pride in the homeland, joy in the changing of its seasons, and hospitality towards visitors if sung by an indig-



*Figure 4.3* Cover of music CD *Searching for Maira* (2004)

enous person, they take on a quite different complexion when delivered by a Han in-migrant:

> *Women Xinjiang hao difang a* (Our Xinjiang is a good place)
> *Tianshan nan bei hao shouchang* (With good pastures north and south of the Tianshan [Heavenly Mountains])
> *Gebi shatan bian liangtian* (The Gobi sands become fertile land)
> *Jixue ronghua* (The snows melt and water the farmsteads)
> [. . .]
> *Lai, lai, lai, lai* (Come, come, come to . . .)
> *Women meili de tianyuan* (Our beautiful pastures)
> *Women ke'ai de jiaxiang* (Our lovely homeland)

Uttered by a Han singer who migrated to the region from China proper just a few years before, the phrase 'our Xinjiang' (*women Xinjiang*) – often heard on the lips of Han residents of Ürümchi and other urban centres – acts to appropriate the region for Han incomers while dispossessing its original inhabitants. At the very least, it reconstructs the region as a multi-ethnic territory, which is 'home' to many different nationalities, regardless of time of arrival. Linguistic anthropologist Arienne Dwyer, has shown how in the Chinese media, the new, non-ethnic identity *Xinjiangren*, expressed in the Chinese language, has been consciously promoted for all the inhabitants of the Northwest. This construction conceptually joins together Turkic speakers, Mongols, and others who consider themselves indigenous to the region with new migrants to Xinjiang: that is, Han Chinese and Hui (Dwyer 2005, pp. 30, 34). The term deliberately blurs ethnic distinctions, serving to reinforce the notion that Xinjiang is an 'inalienable' part of the PRC, and that any PRC nationality has a right to reside there. When Han people who have settled in the region call that place 'our Xinjiang', they are asserting ownership over the territory and articulating an equal sense of belonging. This is especially true for earlier generations of Han settlers, and for their children who were born and raised in Xinjiang. According to Rudelson and Jankowiak (2004, p. 306):

> Many [. . .] Hans truly committed themselves to making a better life in Xinjiang and have come to see themselves as "Xinjiang people" [*Xinjiangren*]. Hans who have lived in Xinjiang for decades insist that they are very different from the Hans in China proper.

The song continues:

> *Maisui jinhuang daohua xiang a* (Golden spikes of wheat, fragrant rice flowers, ah)
> *Feng chui caodi jianniu yang* (Cows and sheep graze the wind-blown grasslands)
> *Putao gua guo tian you tian* (Grapes and melons, fruits sweet so sweet)

> *Mei tie jin yin biandi cang* (Coal, iron, gold, silver hidden in the ground)
> [. . .]
> *Lai, lai, lai, lai* (Come, come, come to . . .)
> *Women meili de tianyuan* (Our beautiful pastures)
> *Women ke'ai de jiaxiang* (Our lovely homeland)
> [. . .]

Again, if sung by a member of an indigenous group, these lines could be interpreted as gratitude for the many fruits of the homeland, and joy in the region's self-sufficiency. However, when the same lines are delivered by a Han incomer – in Chinese – they cannot help but suggest the appropriation and exploitation of natural resources that rightly belong to others (at least from the perspective of those others). At the same time, the singer appears to be sending a clear message to other Han people in China proper that they too should hasten to claim their share in this rich and fertile land ('Come, come, come . . .').

## The legacy of Wang Luobin

As mentioned previously, Dao Lang has re-arranged and produced modern rock adaptations of a number of traditional folk songs previously popularised by song collector Wang Luobin. Wang made a career out of collecting minority songs from the Northwest, re-arranging them, adding Chinese-language lyrics, and presenting them to Han audiences as 'Xinjiang folk songs' (Harris 2005a, p. 383–4). This was possible because such songs are passed down through unwritten oral transmission, and lack ties to any one local author (Harris 2005a, p. 389). Wang then proceeded in 1993 to copyright the songs he had collected, a move which apparently credited him with their authorship (Harris 2005a, p. 388). After Dao Lang recorded new cover versions of many of these songs, he was not surprisingly dubbed 'the Wang Luobin of the 21st century' (China Internet Information Centre 2004). This association has been problematic for him because, during the 1990s, a number of Uyghur musicologists and musicians, as well as prominent Han musicologists, accused Wang of 'stealing' the Uyghurs' songs. They declared, moreover, that Wang had an insufficient knowledge of minority customs, and that his Chinese-language lyrics misrepresented and devalued Turkic culture. The most prominent critic in this affair, the Uyghur intellectual Sidiq Haji Rozi, was later forced to seek asylum in the United States. Back in Xinjiang, however, Wang Luobin had become virtually 'unassailable' in official state discourse (Harris 2005a, pp. 388–9; 392; 394; 399).

As neatly observed by Harris, Wang's relationship with the peoples and musics of Xinjiang fully illuminates Han-minority relations, in particular, majority consumption of Otherness and the contestation of identity (2005a, p. 381). The ambiguities surrounding ownership of the songs and belonging to the region continue to surface within contemporary state discourses around the song collector. According to the Chinese government's web portal (China.org.cn), which I visited in 2011, Wang had never set foot in Xinjiang until 1949, and 'dug out' his first

tune, 'The Girl from Daban City', from a Uyghur driver in Lanzhou after plying him with wine and cigarettes. After the lyrics were translated into Chinese, this state-endorsed web narrative continues, 'the first great Xinjiang folk song was born' (China Internet Information Centre 2006); reading this, one might almost think that the song did not exist until made linguistically accessible – and culturally acceptable – to a Han audience. An article on Wang Luobin in *Beijing Review*, first published in 1993 and updated in 2009, presents his career in equally ambiguous terms. Settling in Xinjiang in 1949 as an artist attached to the People's Liberation Army, it states, Wang remained in the region until his death in 1996. His arrival led to *his creation* of several hundred widely loved folk songs; many of *his masterpieces* originate from folk songs in Xinjiang and the Northwest; and many of *his lyrics* have gone beyond the borders of China to be cited as *typical Chinese songs* (Cui 1993, my emphasis). Perhaps the most astonishing assertion made by this particular writer is to describe 'In That Faraway Place' as 'characterised by strong folk flavor and melody, and deep feeling [. . .] loved and sung by successive generations *since it was created in 1939*' (Cui 1993, my emphasis). Perhaps it is only fitting, then, that most photographs of this 'Father of Northwest Chinese folk', as he is affectionately known, show him replete in cowboy hat, a representation entirely consistent with the Han goal of 'civilising' China's Wild West (cf. Sines 2002). Despite his insufficient knowledge of copyright law (which, to be fair, constituted a widespread problem in China through the 1980s and 1990s), Wang himself seems to have adopted a more realistic position in relation to his work. Describing how an elderly female fan in Singapore once gave him a pendant inscribed with the words 'Conveyor of Songs', he remarked: 'I liked that title. I have never regarded myself as a famous composer of lyrics. "Conveyor of Songs" suits me best' (Cui 1993).

   Although Dao Lang's appraisal of the song theft saga is quite generous, Wang's case has created a legacy of mistrust within the local community of Uyghur musicians and intellectuals, and this continues to cause problems for Dao Lang's artistic aims in the present. Speaking to the press in San Francisco in 2013, Dao Lang stated that he regretted not meeting Wang Luobin before his death, and praised his achievements in re-arranging Xinjiang music to make it accessible to the Han people. However, the artist also acknowledged the difficulties he had inherited as a result of the controversy around Wang's work:

> It could be that copyrights were then not very clear [. . .] Wang had always thought of himself as a person who passed down songs, but people erroneously assumed the songs were his original compositions. This created some misunderstandings between local Xinjiang minority musicians and Han musicians. Inevitably, this poses the biggest problem for us when we are promoting Xinjiang [. . .] we have the best melodies in Asia, actually in Central Asia. We all know that the centripetal force of Xinjiang music lies in Central Asia; it is from there that this musical style is inherited. There is no dispute as to what type of music the Han people like – they like melodies. From this angle, there are no contradictions in Xinjiang music, no problems of communication. But we

need to identify a platform on which to communicate on the basis of national cultural identity, and a national musical language (*minzu wenhua de rentong he yige minzu de yinyue yuyan*).

(Baidu 2013)

It is not clear from the original interview transcript in Chinese whether Dao Lang here refers to national culture and identity at the level of the PRC (the multi-ethnic Chinese nation), thus means to encourage the harmonious merging of Han and minority music cultures; or whether he refers to national culture and identity at the level of the minority nationality (the Uyghur ethnic group), thus means to highlight the importance of engaging with local music and culture on the terms set by local people. He uses the ambiguous term *minzu* in Chinese, which can refer either to the Chinese nation or to a minority group in China, depending on the context in which it is used.

Certainly, there is a significant appetite in the cities of China proper for new music fusions that successfully combine traditional folk material from China's peripheries with modern music genres and instrumentation. At the start of 2007, *The Wire* carried a fascinating article recounting a singular performance by eight itinerant musicians from Kashgar prefecture, which took place under the banner of 'The Soul of Dolan' in November 2006. According to the enthusiastic reporter, the ensemble played 'an ecstatic groove of splintered serialist trance . . . topped with *qawwali*-style chants and devotional declamations with an interplanetary twirling dance' (Barker 2007). Sitting in with them was Mamer, a Beijing-based musician with folk group Iz (Traces), who hails originally from northern Xinjiang.[7] A regular at Nameless Highlands, an outlaw bar situated on the capital's north fourth ring road, he is said to have played a 'liquid, hypnotic guitar intro before being suddenly swamped by the full ensemble' (Barker 2007). For other examples, we need look no further than Beijing-based Uyghur artists, Äskär (rock fusion) and Arken Abdulla (new flamenco fusion) (Baranovitch 2007). However, while such fusions may be well received by Han and foreign audiences in China proper, regardless of the ethnic background of the artists who deliver them (minority or Han), the dynamics of their reception among audiences in Xinjiang are more nuanced. I shall return to this point later.

## Gendering of regional and national spaces

Popular music is a central means both for the framing of discourses of national culture and identity and for the expression of discourses of gender, and the gendering of place (Bennett 2004, p. 6). In the context of appropriation of folk music from Xinjiang by (Han) 'outsiders' to the region, the two processes are achieved simultaneously: the indigenous peoples of Xinjiang are rendered subaltern to China's ethnic Han majority, even as Xinjiang the territory is gendered female and subordinate through the voyeuristic gaze on the minority female (cf. Gladney 1994). As Harris points out, local accusations against Wang Luobin of appropriation, exploitation and misrepresentation of Xinjiang regional culture imply

a sense of collective Uyghur ownership, not only of a musical tradition but also of Uyghur women's bodies (2005a, p. 395) – a reaction to his perennial selection of songs relating to women, girls, love and flirtation. This focus on minority women similarly pervades many of Dao Lang's releases, including both cover versions and original compositions; see, for example, 'New Awarguli' (Awargül is a female given name in Uyghur; the lyrics tell of the 'beautiful eyes' of an 'intimate friend' who 'took my heart' and was lost in faraway Yili [Ghulja]); 'Big Eyes' (*Da yanjing*; the male protagonist speaks of 'your big eyes oh so pretty', claims he 'dares not look at you', and describes how his 'desire is set on fire' as he 'hungers for you'); and 'In That Faraway Place' (about a handsome girl, tantalisingly concealed in a yurt in a distant place). It is significant that the inspiration for his first massive hit single 'The First Snows of 2002' was triggered by the vision of a minority female. As recounted by Dao Lang in interview:

> One evening in the early winter in 2002, as I was stepping out of my studio, snowflakes were flying about and on the streets people were excitedly exclaiming: 'This is the first snow of 2002!' A Uyghur girl in a long bright red skirt was waiting at the bus stop and, together with the aroma of barbequed mutton wafting out of the restaurant nearby, all these conjured a scene, and a tune sprang into my mind.

> (cited in Zhang 2011)

However, perhaps the most revealing metaphor of the relationship between Xinjiang and China proper, between the Uyghurs and the Han, is found in the song 'Wolf in Sheepskin' (*Pizhe yangpi de lang*, 2006). On the surface at least, the focus of this song appears to be the hopeless pursuit of an unattainable romantic dream:

> [. . .]
> *Ni bie danxin* (Don't be afraid)
> *Wo zhidao xiangyao he ni zai yiqi bing bu rongyi* (I know it's not easy to be with you)
> *Women lai zi bu tong de tian he di* (We come from different worlds)
> *Ni zongshi ganjue he wo yiqi shi manwubianji yinleng de kongju* (You always feel cold unease when you're with me)
> *Wo zhen de hao ai ni* ([But] I truly love you)
> *Wo yuanyi gaibian ziji* (I'm willing to change)
> *Wo yuanyi wei ni liulang zai Gebi* (I'm willing to drift across the Gobi)
> [. . .]
> *Wo yuanyi wei ni beifu yishen yangpi* (For you, I'll wrap myself in sheepskin)
> *Zhi qiu ni rang wo kaojin* (Just let me be close to you)
> [. . .]
> *Ni shi wo de tianshi, shi wo de mengxiang* (You are my angel, my dream)
> *Wo lou ni zai huai li jiangjin wo de shenti* (I draw you close to my body)
> *Rang ni wo de xueye jiaorong zai yiqi* (Let our blood fuse and flow as one)

   In 2013, a reporter named Zhang Jun, from the China Voices Broadcasting Station in the United States, asked Dao Lang what kind of emotional state he had been in when he wrote this song, enthusing: 'It's such a philosophical song [. . .] I could feel myself running on the grasslands and on the plateau, seemingly connecting with the same emotions as you' (Baidu 2013). Given the deep affect created by this song among his fans, Dao Lang's reply to this question was surprisingly mundane. He claimed that he had had 'no thoughts in his head' before beginning to write the song, and related a somewhat unconvincing tale about how he had overheard some men chatting while eating in a restaurant. One of them had evidently blurted out 'Hey, you're just a wolf in sheepskin' in the context of a man doing something illicit and being found out by his wife. According to the artist, he had found this exclamation 'meaningful' simply because he was on the point of composing a song (Baidu 2013).

   Yet a close reading of the song words and the accompanying music video suggests otherwise. As Rudelson and Jankowiak note, 'Hans and Uyghurs practically never marry. This normative restriction can become a source of sexual tension and animosity for Han men whenever they confront the fact that the local population does not consider them suitable marriage partners' (2004, p. 311). This perception of 'forbidden fruit' has led to the flourishing of karaoke halls in Ürümchi, where Han males (usually businessmen, government officials and police officers) pay to be accompanied by a Uyghur 'hostess' (*sanpei xiaojie*); accompaniment in this context can mean anything from a girl drinking, smoking, singing and dancing with her Han client to allowing him to touch her breasts or, in rarer cases, take her to a hotel for sex (Smith Finley 2015, forthcoming). In this context, I suggest that it is not stretching the point too far to interpret 'Wolf in Sheepskin' as a sad and frustrated recognition of the current impossibility of inter-ethnic romance (and Uyghur-Han unity more broadly), and a desire that this situation will one day change. In the accompanying video, Dao Lang is filmed driving an expensive-looking four wheel drive (perhaps representing the relative affluence of Han males) into the desert, where he proceeds to perch on a mountain top and break his heart over a distant female figure dressed in pure white. While this woman does not appear to be of obvious Uyghur descent (one may assume that the use of a Uyghur female in this film might have led to street demonstrations of the proportion seen following the publication of *Sexual Customs* in 1989, a book considered highly derogatory by China's Muslims), she is clearly a female of minority descent, having large eyes, reddish-brown hair and a high nose. She lingers at a tantalising distance, astride a pure white horse, as Dao Lang waits patiently by a campfire in the moonlight. Suddenly, the frame changes and she is wearing a black top with a multi-coloured skirt, and riding a black horse. As she approaches Dao Lang, he takes her horse by the reins and leads her away . . . the next shot is of the pair galloping together through the empty desert, she on the white steed and he on the black. Yet at the song's end, though she reaches for Dao Lang's hand, she ultimately withdraws it, as the image alternates in a visual collage with a painting of (apparently) a Uyghur female. It is then not coincidental that Dao Lang has subsequently

acquired the label of 'Wolf of the Western regions' (Wang 2012). While Dao Lang's own loyalty to his Xinjiang-born Han wife seems beyond reproach, as read from the sentimental media coverage of his family life (see Zhang 2011; Xiao, Shi & Chen 2011), the song must have proved an instant point of identification for Han men in Xinjiang and China proper, who dream of possessing an exotic Uyghur female and of her bearing their beautiful, mixed-race children. Indeed, the ideas in the song and images in the video can be linked directly to contemporary social phenomena in Xinjiang. It is certainly 'not easy' (indeed, it is practically impossible) for a Han male to court a Uyghur female in the current climate of inter-ethnic conflict. Even were the political and socio-economic tensions that underlie the conflict removed, it would remain the case that Han and Uyghur persons 'come from different worlds', the former having a Confucian 'structure of relevance' (Eriksen 1993), while the latter's is based upon Islamic social laws. Some Han men have indeed been 'willing to change' and to 'wrap themselves in sheepskin' (that is, convert to Islam, at least in the area of dietary prescriptions), but Uyghur families have rarely agreed to the proposition (cf. Smith Finley 2013a, 2013b). In this context, the suggestion that Han and Uyghur blood 'fuse and flow as one' seems indeed an impossible dream.

## Dao Lang's rock fusion as 'civilising mission'

So what do the Xinjiang regional media and Dao Lang's official biographer have to say about this artist and his work? Part 6 (Dao Lang the Man) of Di Hua's biography *Who is Dao Lang?* (*Shui shi Dao Lang?* 2004) includes a section entitled 'Never Leave Xinjiang' (*Yongyuan libukai Xinjiang*). Here the writer observes:

> He's not like some musicians who leave Xinjiang for a bigger creative space as soon as they get famous; Dao Lang is still in Xinjiang following a local lifestyle, eating big chunks of meat and taking large gulps of alcohol.
>
> (Di Hua 2004, p. 163)

This presentation of Dao Lang's ability to 'do as the Romans do when in Rome' (*ruxiang suisu*) itself buys deeply into essentialist stereotypes of the region circulating in official media as well as among ordinary Han Chinese. In short, ethnic groups in Western China (Uyghurs and Tibetans) are routinely represented as 'savage' (*yeman*) and as following a predominantly meat-based diet (Smith Finley 2013a, p. 97). Like certain minority groups elsewhere in China, they are also characterised as being capable of consuming vast quantities of alcohol (cf. Blum 2001, pp. 124–25: on the Wa; Gladney 1994, p. 98: on the Mongols). Meanwhile, the subtitle for this section borrows the phrase *libukai* (inseparable; inextricably linked) from state discourses around the ideal of 'nationality unity'.

    In the regional media, the concept of fusion (of musical, social and biological types) takes centre stage in feature articles on the Dao Lang phenomenon. The Ürümchi-based female journalist, Hou Fei, enthused in 2003:

Dao Lang absorbs Xinjiang culture just as if breathing in fresh air; he lives a Xinjiang lifestyle alongside the Xinjiang people [. . .] yet he is a southerner who only migrated to the region in the mid-90s [. . .] He has completely blended into (*rongru*) Xinjiang. He studies Xinjiang folk music, and is learning to play *tämbur* with a Uyghur teacher. He has married an 'authentic' (*zhengshi*) Xinjiang girl, who has borne him a 'local' (*dichan*) Xinjiang baby . . . how can we say he is not a real *Xinjiangren*? Let's drink to our Dao Lang, our ethnic music, our Xinjiang!'

(Hou 2003a)

Given that the writer chooses to place the words 'authentic' and 'local' in quote marks, the average reader might be forgiven for observing: 'The lady doth protest too much, methinks.'[8] In what sense has Dao Lang 'blended into' Xinjiang? To what extent does he live a Xinjiang lifestyle? Does he for example attend the Friday prayer at mosque, and eat only in halal restaurants? The reality, of course, is that Dao Lang lives alongside a particular sector of 'Xinjiang people', namely, established Han settlers who were once newcomers like himself. He may have tried to learn to play traditional Uyghur stringed instruments, but it is minority musicians who play on his recordings and these individuals are not pictured on his CD sleeves: this does not suggest artistic collaboration on an equal footing. He has married a daughter of the previous generation of Han in-migrants, and she has given birth to an ethnic Han baby in Xinjiang. These are the rather tenuous grounds on which Hou Fei claims that Dao Lang has been absorbed into the local culture. She ends by proposing a toast to Dao Lang's regional credentials as a bona fide *Xinjiangren,* seemingly unaware of the growing trend among local Uyghurs to renounce alcohol and tobacco (since the late 1990s).

Revealing her youthful inexperience in failing to acknowledge the contribution of Dao Lang's predecessor,[9] Wang Luobin, Hou Fei writes in a second feature:

Covers of minority songs are a recent phenomenon on the Chinese music scene [. . .] Their fascination has to do with endowing old cultural elements with new strength, allowing audiences to find one voice within the familiar and the strange [. . .] in Xinjiang, the diversity of Central Asian culture gives this place the possibility of embracing all cultures; the mark of this diverse culture is its ability to fuse together'

(Hou 2003b)

Her narrative implies that indigenous artists are stagnating in a somehow static 'old culture', while Han artists – such as Dao Lang – are needed to imbue that culture with new vigour; in other words, Han society (and language and music) is advancing and innovating, while minority societies (and languages and musics) are standing still. Han audiences are 'fascinated' by Dao Lang's music because his oral delivery in Chinese and musical re-arrangements sanitise Xinjiang's cultural traditions and make them palatable to a Han audience. Meanwhile, Hou capitalises on the historically syncretic quality of Central Asian cultures and tra-

ditions by pointing out that, in that case, Xinjiang is fully able to embrace the Han culture too. In this way, the process of fusing Han and local musics comes to symbolise the fusion (dilution) of the Uyghur demographic in Xinjiang through Han in-migration, and the state's desired goal of their assimilation into China's 'great multi-ethnic family' (*Zhongguo minzu da jiating*). If language and culture constitute the symbolic boundaries of the global age (Morley & Robins 1995, p. 1), then Dao Lang's music represents the permeability of the national limits, both Han and Uyghur.

Musing further on Dao Lang's treatment of traditional folk songs, Hou Fei goes on to suggest the superiority of Dao Lang's cover versions in relation to the local originals:

> The oral transmission (*chuanchang*) of songs is very important in terms of creating positive publicity for the West: in the minds of Chinese in the 'interior' [*Kouli*, meaning Han Chinese in China proper], Xinjiang tunes signify humour, happiness, a clear rhythm, short sentences and a narrow musical range. But, when they hear Dao Lang's songs, they feel diversity and complexity.
>
> (Hou 2003b)

In a similar vein, she cites a Han internet poet (web identification: 'Xinjiang black horse') as follows:

> The songs covered by Dao Lang are old tunes, long familiar to our ears; and yet they are no longer those standard tunes. Dao Lang has fused them with elements of pop and rock music, and a slightly hoarse vocal. Without doubt, the ear is meeting with the romance of music.
>
> (Hou 2003b)

It is interesting to compare their reductionist evaluations of the region's traditional songs with musicologist Rachel Harris's criticisms of Wang Luobin's cover versions: she argues that, in them, the complexity of Uyghur song is 'ironed out' and replaced with a 'stereotyped pseudo-exotic sound'; that the original asymmetric rhythms give way to a regular four-beat; that modality gives way to the pentatonic scale; and that the original 'elastic' vocal is replaced by the smooth nasal delivery associated with Chinese pop (Harris 2005a, pp. 396–7).

Hou Fei ends by lauding Dao Lang's ability to produce original compositions with a flavour that is more uniquely 'Xinjiang' than the indigenous songs that preceded them. Declaring that, since the mid-1990s, Xinjiang (by which she means Xinjiang-based Han) has also created 'some original popular tunes of its own', she writes:

> Vocabulary such as desert, white poplar, fellow soldier, vineyard, black eyebrows, shared by all singers in Xinjiang, have been *more deeply excavated* by Dao Lang. Almost as if he *brought the words back to life* [. . .] Within the

*territory* of Chinese music, the component of Western music will become ever greater; and this process is still going on.

<div align="right">(Hou 2003b, my emphasis)</div>

Again, we have the sense that it is the fusing of traditional melodies and instrumentation with lyrics in the Chinese language that has injected local songs with new blood, and made them palatable to the Han audience. At the same time, the latent analogy between the growing importance of so-called 'Western music' in the national music sphere, and the increased incorporation of Xinjiang the territory into the Chinese nation, is unmistakable.

In rare interviews with Dao Lang himself, the notion of a Chinese civilising mission is less prominent but nonetheless present. Asked the origin of his unique musical style, the artist related how many had urged him not to cover Xinjiang folk songs on the grounds that they were 'unfashionable' (*yidian dou bu shishang*). His response was to set out to show them the value of Xinjiang music not by giving them what they wanted but by bringing them an unexpected sound (fusion): 'Only in this way can you create a sense of belonging in an entire generation' (Xiao, Shi & Chen 2011). His explanation suggests less the singer's overt mission to promote Xinjiang to Han in China proper, and more a covert mission to embed a feeling of indigeneity into the psyche of the Xinjiang Han. Reflecting on the time he spent with the Dolan Uyghurs, the singer contrasts the rough and ready Dolan vocal with the sophistication of Chinese regional operatic styles: 'Many people say my voice is unique. The fact is, I have combined the *bold* and *rough* Uyghur music with the high pitch of Sichuan opera. The result is I have created something different' (China Internet Information Centre 2004). According to Han fans posting on an unofficial website, this voice 'melts countless hearts' (Anon. 2011). Dao Lang continues:

> When I was making *Love Songs from the Great Desert* [. . .] I thought a lot about the *unsophisticated* customs of the Uyghur people and also about the years when I was drifting. I thought about *nature*. The music flew into my soul, and tears flew out of my eyes.
>
> <div align="right">(China Internet Information Centre 2004)</div>

These thoughts chime with two prevalent stereotypes of minority groups circulating among Han Chinese: first, that they are simple and guileless (a quality little respected in Chinese culture); second, that they remain closely linked to the earth (in other words, most are subsistence farmers, thus are less developed or urbanised than Han).

## Dao Lang as 'Guardian of the Borderland'

As noted by Bennett, the power that can be invested in music as a statement of identity has led to music becoming an instrument and expression of nationalism (2004, p. 5). If Dao Lang's personal intentions in 'promoting' Xinjiang are sincere,

it must be said that his project embodies the perfect vehicle for the state to promote its (Han) nationalist agenda. The PRC leadership is, after all, no stranger to the cynical manipulation of music – folk and popular – for political ends (cf. Perris 1985; Tuohy 2001; Ho & Law 2012). While Dao Lang's music may originally have been born of a genuine desire to communicate the wild beauty of the Northwest to Han compatriots, it seems subsequently to have become an emblem for ethnic unity, national unification, and Chinese neo-patriotism. To give some examples: in 2007, Dao Lang sang 'In Memory of Fellow Soldiers' (*Huainian zhanyou*) at the 80th anniversary celebration of People's Liberation Army (PLA) Day, held in Ürümchi; note that the PLA, along with the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC, a para-military organisation), has constituted the key means of securitising the region since the 'peaceful liberation' of Xinjiang in 1949. Also in 2007, Dao Lang performed his original song 'Honour' (*Rongyu*) at a state celebration of the completion of Beijing's Olympic Sports Stadium, a core symbol of Chinese national pride in recent years. New Year's Eve 2007 saw the artist in Beijing, welcoming in China's Olympic year with film director Zhang Yimou (once-critic-now-turned-patriot), pianist Lang Lang and actor Jackie Chan (Anon. 2008–2014). In 2008, Dao Lang performed Wang Luobin's song 'In Praise of Xinjiang' (*Xinjiang hao!*) and an original composition 'On Erdaoqiao' (*Guanyu Erdaoqiao*) at the Xinjiang Spring Music Night,[10] one of a series of annual, televised gala events held in celebration of the Chinese Spring Festival, and known for their ability to connect domestic space with national space, and then transnational space (the Chinese diaspora) (Sun 2007). In the same year, he released the compilation *Red Classics*, comprising rock versions of ten Chinese revolutionary songs,[11] and contributed to the Olympic theme song 'Beijing Welcomes You'.

This process precisely mirrors the 'wheeling-out' of Dao Lang's predecessor, Wang Luobin, at numerous state occasions in the 1990s, and again in 2000, when Premier Jiang Zemin visited Xinjiang. As Harris put it, Wang's songs were 'perfect vehicles for promoting the state's preferred images of harmonious minority nationalities' (2005a, pp. 401–2). Compare this state-sanctioned media persona with Dao Lang's preferred image of 'low-key' (*didiao*), reluctant superstar. In 2004, he had told his biographer: 'A pop star is a product you deliberately create and package, to be often displayed to others; I would rather people pay attention to my music' (Di 2004, p. 163).

## Conclusion: taking folksongs back to the folk?

So: how far can Dao Lang be said, in the words of an independent Han musician from Xinjiang, to have 'taken folksongs back to the folk' (Hou 2003b)? Assuming that 'folk' here means the indigenous Uyghurs – that is, those who orally transmitted the songs from generation to generation over the decades – the statement barely sticks at all. One reason is that Dao Lang's core audience is Han, be they situated in Xinjiang, China proper or the diaspora. It was the Beijing Music Society, based in China proper, that voted him 'Best Pop Singer/Artist of the Year' in 2002, making him only the second artist ever to receive the honour (the first was

Chinese rock artist Cui Jian, in 1987). Similarly, it was at the Fifth Chinese Music Media Awards that his 'innovative music style' earned him seven nominations in 2005 (Anon. 2008–2014). From 2004 on, after being signed to a five-year contract by Universal Music (China and Hong Kong), he stepped beyond PRC national boundaries to enter the international phase of his career (McClure 2004). The 2004 album, *The First Snows of 2002*, had 'swept across Chinese communities around the world like a tornado . . . Dao Lang became the best known singer to the hundreds of millions of Chinese living in the diaspora, to whom he introduced an "ethnic wave"' (Wang 2012; cf. Xin 2012; Baidu 2013).

Dao Lang's biographer claims that Ürümchi residents treat Dao Lang as if he had 'brought honour to the family' ('family' here meaning the Xinjiang Han) (Di 2004, p. 165). Commenting that while people recognise the singer on the street, he is rarely bothered or surrounded by anyone, Di attributes this to local people's love and respect for the artist and for his creative space (2004, p. 167). Perhaps, however, it is because Dao Lang's core audience is not in Xinjiang, where Han constitute less than 40 per cent of the regional population and number just eight and a half million persons, but in China proper and the diaspora. For one thing, first- and second-generation Han settlers in Xinjiang have been known to scoff at Dao Lang's 'ethnic music', being well acquainted with the authentic product. For another thing, bilingual Uyghur youth in the regional capital prefer to listen to Chinese-language songs performed by native Uyghur artists rather than by ethnic Han musicians.

The second reason why Dao Lang has not succeeded in 'taking folksongs back to the folk' is that, like Wang Luobin before him, he has aroused the ire of Xinjiang's indigenous artists. Consider the following excerpt from a 2012 interview with Beijing-based Uyghur flamenco fusion artist, Arken Abdulla:

> 'Dolan' is a musical form, a cultural form on a par with Beijing opera; it is a piece of cultural heritage. Dolan music has nine suites; there is also Dolan art; and Dolan is an ethnonym. I grew up in the Dolan region, but I wouldn't dare to casually assume the artistic name 'Dolan', or haphazardly alter Dolan folk songs. Because I believe that this [cultural heritage] is the very essence of an ethnic group as it is handed down. You cannot appropriate it blindly.
>
> (Kang 2012)

Tangible in his words is a sense of incredulity at the idea that an 'outsider', who is not conversant in the local language, and is unfamiliar with the complexities of the local culture, might presume to adopt the local ethnonym and proceed to make music under that banner. Arken continues: 'The singer Dao Lang has no connection whatsoever with real Dolan music' (Kang 2012).

Music can become an especially strong marker of national pride and identity during times of war or internal socio-economic crisis (Bennett 2004, p. 5). Following the tragic ethnic riots in Ürümchi in 2009, a group of artists in Xinjiang called upon Dao Lang and other well-known musicians to launch a music movement as an 'alternative antidote for the injured, the bereaved and the bewildered soul'

(Anon. 2008–2014). Within four days, Dao Lang had written and recorded the song 'One Family' (*Yi jia ren*) together with the Uyghur chairman of the regional music association, Nusrat Wajdin. The lyrics proclaimed: 'Home is where we are; where we are in Greater China; we're one family, you and me; together through all odds'. In a statement, the artist observed: 'The 5th July riot jolted us awake to the importance of unity; we shall use our music to denounce separatism' (Anon. 2008–2014). He continued:

> I've lived in Xinjiang for the past 14 years and have seen with my own eyes the progress made [. . .] I wish to do my best as a responsible artist, to propose that artists from all ethnic groups get together to write songs on harmony and friendship, as a way to unite Xinjiang.
>
> (Anon. 2008–2014)

Dao Lang was subsequently spotted on Chinese Central Television meeting then President Hu Jintao during his August 2009 inspection tour of Xinjiang. During the visit, Hu urged residents of Xinjiang to focus on reform and development as well as ethnic unity and stability (China Central Television 2009). Dao Lang's presence is consistent with his contribution to a stream of pro-unification songs that celebrated the 'great family of Chinese nationalities'. One of these, 'China, We Are Your Children', was then being broadcast on local television throughout the day. It was cordially received by President Hu Jintao, and subsequently selected as 'a modern representation of ethnic unity in Xinjiang' (Wang 2012).

After several months of silence, during which Dao Lang tried – and failed – to put behind him the tragic events of 2009, the artist announced in an online video message in March 2010 that he had decided to leave Xinjiang. A note on the unofficial fan website informed fans that, as of April 2010, Dao Lang has a second home and recording studio in Beijing (Anon. 2008–2014). When Dao Lang spoke again, it was to state:

> Xinjiang has given me a new lease of life in music. It is a place that I will not forsake. I may be physically in Beijing, but my heart has never for a moment left Xinjiang. We still have a house there, and many friends too. There is also the great Gobi that excites me. Xinjiang is the home of my soul. I will never leave that place.
>
> (Zhang 2011)

His words echo those of Wang Luobin, who, when asked whether he would bid farewell to his home in Ürümchi to obtain 'a better lifestyle' in China proper, replied: 'My melodies stem from Xinjiang. They have helped me survive difficult times and I cannot pull myself away' (Cui 1993). In reality, however, Dao Lang has returned to Xinjiang to perform only twice since relocating to Beijing. On 11 September 2010, just over a year after the fatal riots, he travelled to Shihezi, a city in northern Xinjiang with a 95 per cent Han population, at the request of the Cultural Bureau, in order to 'put up a show of support' for its residents. This event

perhaps especially underlines the role played by his music in the articulation of the community and collective identity of the Xinjiang Han: an identity grounded in certain physically demarcated and 'safe' urban spaces (cf. Bennett 2004, p. 3). The second event was a solo concert – the first of its kind in Xinjiang – held at the Xinjiang Sports Stadium on 20 December 2012. According to journalists publicising the event in advance, Dao Lang was scheduled to return to 'that piece of land with which he is deeply in love, and to which he has given his soul'; meanwhile, the concert would dedicate 'songs with Xinjiang characteristics and Dao Lang style' to people of all ethnic groups, and demonstrate the singer's true feelings towards that 'hot piece of earth' (Wang 2012).

The violence that consumed Ürümchi in 2009 has had the effect of 'scaring some Hans out of their westward adventure' (Rudelson & Jankowiak 2004, p. 310). Yet, as Massey highlights, identities are multiple and constructed in relation to multiple locations (1993, p. 65). Like most Han migrants to Xinjiang, Dao Lang has all along retained strong links to his native place: Zizhong county, Sichuan. In February 2008, he attended a three-day primary school reunion there, arranged by a former classmate and good friend. Then, when a deadly earthquake struck his hometown on 12 May 2008, the artist made a donation of 100,000 Chinese yuan to the Xinjiang branch of the Red Cross under his original name of Luo Lin (Anon. 2008–2014). Dao Lang's withdrawal to the Chinese capital is symbolic both of the fragility of ethnic unity and ethnic harmony in the Northwest and of the government rhetoric that celebrates it. His attempt to 'author space' through the fusion of Han and Uyghur musical styles, and the visual superimposition of his figure on the desert landscape is, for the time being, thwarted; he has failed to 'tell a particular story about the local' (Bennett 2004, p. 3). At the same time, the state project of cultural imperialism has been disempowered in its ongoing attempt to speak for and represent the ethnic Others of the Northwest.

## Notes

1  Statistical Bureau of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, *Xinjiang tongji nianjian* (Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook) 2010, China Statistics Press, Beijing.
2  This term was coined by Rachel Harris (2002).The artists were Abdurehim Heyit, a native of Kashgar, and Ömärjan Alim, a native of Ghulja.
3  Dao Lang (刀郎) is the phonetic transliteration in Chinese of 'Dolan'.
4  The irony of this surprising English translation of the Chinese title will not be lost on anyone familiar with the ethno-politics of the region. See Bellér-Hann et al. (2007, pp. 4–6) for a discussion of the problems surrounding toponyms in Xinjiang. See Wang (2007) for a compelling account of contrastive perspectives on the Western Regions / East Turkestan and what these mean for Uyghur-Han relations.
5  They include: '*Awariguli* (a Uyghur love song)'; '*Tulufan de putao shu le (The Grapes of Turpan are Ripe)*'; '*Huar yu shaonian (Flowers and Youth)*': a Hui song; and '*Zai na yaoyuan de difang (In That Faraway Place)*': from Qinghai province in the North-west.
6  *Terra nullius* is a Latin term meaning 'land belonging to no one'. In international law, a territory which has never been subject to the sovereignty of any state, or over which any prior sovereign has expressly or implicitly relinquished sovereignty is *terra nullius*. Sovereignty over territory which is *terra nullius* can be acquired through occupation.

 7  The choice of name is significant: '*Iz (Traces)'* is the title of three important Uyghur artistic creations dating from the mid-nineties: the poem and the novel titled '*Iz (Traces)'* authored by the late nationalist writer Abdurehim Ötkür, and the cassette album '*Qaldi Iz (Traces)'* released by singer-dutarist Ömärjan Alim (1995). For an English translation of the poem '*Iz (Traces)'* see Allworth and Pahta (1988).

 8  This quotation, excerpted from the play *Hamlet* (1602) by William Shakespeare, has become a commonly used phrase indicating an unintentional apophasis. Where a speaker 'protests too much' in favour of some assertion, the idea may surface in others' minds that the assertion is false, something that they may not have previously considered.

 9  She is not alone in doing so. Chinese music critics have frequently credited Dao Lang with starting the trend of popularisation of Xinjiang music. See, for example, the American Chinese journalist who told Dao Lang at a press conference in 2013: 'You have set the example of successfully bringing regional music to the mass market' (Baidu 2013).

10  The lyrics to 'On Erdaoqiao' contain the following: 'Ten years ago, you left your enchanting smile behind at Erdaoqiao; ten years after, I paced up and down this deserted street; now this bustling street has become more beautiful; yet in this busy bazaar area, I couldn't find you'. The irony lies in the fact that while Dao Lang – along with other Han residents – considers the renovation of the Uyghur district in south-east Ürümchi an improvement, many locals and outside observers view the rebuild as a 'sanitisation' that has deprived the area of its original atmosphere, while bringing Hans into commercial roles where once were only Uyghur market stall-holders. In this sense, another reading of this song is suggested: ten years before, the district was alive with the enchantment of indigenous culture, but ten years on, this can no longer be found.

11  The ten tracks are all old revolutionary songs selected by Dao Lang. They include: '*Wo de zuguo (My Motherland)'*, which includes the line – 'if the wolf comes, we welcome it with a shotgun'; and '*Xiu hongqi (Sewing the Red Flag*)', a song composed for the 1964 musical '*Jiang jie (Sister Jiang*)', which is set towards the end of China's 'War of Liberation' (1946–9).

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# 5 From Uncle Kurban to Brother Alim

## The politics of Uyghur representations in Chinese state media

*Yangbin Chen*

## Introduction

In *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, Said (1981) revealed the politics of interpreting Islam in western media, arguing it is intrinsically linked with his well-known concept of *orientalism*, and his discussion about 'The Question of Palestine'. In contemporary China, the politics of coverage of Islam and Muslims on state media, particularly on ethnic minority Uyghurs in western China, is closely related to the 'Xinjiang Problem' (Yao 2014) and inter-ethnic relations. The Xinjiang Problem is framed as a characteristic of 'a modern manifestation of regional and religious conflict (Jihad) dating back from ancient times', 'a continuation of modern pan-Turkism and pan-Islamic East Turkistan independent movement', 'violence outbreak due to the failure of cultural identity of a modern multi-ethnic nation', as well as 'a disorder of the national system and ethnic policy', and so forth (Yao 2014). A common theme that emerges behind the 'question' or 'problem' is that the representation of the 'otherness' for the groups living in the periphery are often controlled and politicised by the dominant and majority groups.

In the decades following the introduction of the market economy, China's mainstream Han people's images of Uyghur people have largely been shaped by their daily encounters with Uyghurs, normally including Uyghur kebab or dried fruit vendors and Xinjiang restaurant owners. In the eyes of ordinary Han in inland urban China, a flux of Uyghur migrants since the 1990s mostly came along with stereotyped perspectives (Baranovitch 2001), such as the so-called Uyghur thieves (*weizu xiaotou*). This was exacerbated by the 2009 riots in Shaoguan city in Guangdong Province, and in Urumqi city in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), where Uyghurs have been easily viewed as a violent minority. All these negative Uyghur images are most commonly reflected in the Han netizens' online comments.[1] However, China's party-state-controlled media has represented Uyghurs using a different image. Popular Uyghur figures have appeared in newspapers, radios, films, TV programs and official websites. These Uyghur figures are always featured with positive characteristics, such as patriotism, loyalty to the party state, philanthropy and upholding ethnic harmony. This chapter examines two such state media representations of ordinary Uyghurs. The first is 'Uncle Kurban', an old Uyghur peasant from Hotan, Xinjiang. In 1958,

Uncle Kurban was a popular image in newspapers extolling the minority's admiration to Chairman Mao. The second is 'Brother Alim', a Uyghur kebab peddler in Bijie, Guizhou. In 2011, he was praised as a 'moral hero' for his philanthropic activities of donating his meagre income to help local poverty-stricken Han university students. The timeframe of these portrayals spans from 1958 to 2014, and the associated themes of the state media reports vary from loyalty to the party to philanthropy across ethnic groups. By extracting the hidden stories and scrutinising the 'preferred meaning' (Hall 1997, p. 228), the chapter argues that the politics of representing Muslim Uyghur minority images demonstrates the state's relentless efforts in shaping Uyghurs from an unfamiliar ethnic minority 'otherness' to the friendly part of national 'self'. It implies a strategy of internal and external soft power exerted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime, which functions as an instrument for curbing the Uyghur independence movement, as well as for modelling Uyghur's national identity and enhancing Chinese nation-building.

## The politics of Uyghur representation in Chinese state media: transcoding the single-sided and positive images

The media's use of signifiers demonstrating 'racial difference' was identified by Hall (1997) in his analysis of western media depictions of non-white populations. Hall posited that western mainstream white media depictions of black communities and individuals, which were predominantly negative portrayals, highlighted the western media's 'racialized regime of representation' (1997, p. 255). Adopting Hall's work as a theoretical reference, this chapter suggests that, in China's state media, there is a parallel idea of purposely 'ethnicized regime of representation' of Uyghur and other ethnic minorities. However, these portrayals stand in contrast to those analysed by Hall because the Chinese state media largely produces positive minority images. In contemporary China then, the state media have politicised the ethnic representation to enhance the official ideology such as loyalty and ethnic harmony across multi-ethnic China. Uncle Kurban's and Brother Alim's images provide proven and vivid showcases of this politicised representation.

The rationale for choosing Kurban and Alim for analysis in this chapter is based on their popularity in Chinese mass communication. In terms of the scale and the influence of these portrayals, both outshine any other traditional media representations of Uyghurs or *Xinjiangnian* (Xinjiang people) since Mao's era. Other examples include: a young Tajik girl named Gulandanm and her brother, a People's Liberation Army soldier Ami'er in the film *The Guest from the Icy Mountain* (*Bingshan shan de laike*); an unnamed Uyghur Kebab peddler played by a Han comedian Chen Peisi; and the Uyghur grandpa Alipa, the 2012 awardee of the *Touching China* Award, a televised CCTV program. Both Uncle Kurban and Brother Alim have caught enormous state media attention, for more than four decades for Uncle Kurban, and over one decade for Brother Alim. These representations are also notable as they span the timeframe from Mao's era and to the post-Deng era. More importantly, Kurban's story closely followed the CCP's newly established Xinjiang Autonomous Region in 1955. It linked his hometown

and long-term place of residence, Hotan, the heart of Uyghur cultural localities in southern Xinjiang, to the briefly touched national political hub of Beijing. In contrast, Alim's story evolved from a sojourned, not eye-catching and underdeveloped inland city, Bijie in Guizhou, and then sweeping to Beijing and back to Hejing County in central Xinjiang, his long-departed hometown. While there is some difference in their portrayals, there are also many similarities. This chapter now introduces and analyses the representations of both Uncle Kurban and Brother Alim.

## Uncle Kurban: the foggy truth and created myth

Probably the most notable minority image portrayed in the state media during the Mao era occurred in 1958, when Chairman Mao meet with an old Uyghur man named Kurban Tulum. The state media portrayal of this event highlighted the theme of minority admiration and loyalty to the CCP and the multi-ethnic Chinese state. Even now, the legacy of this story has been widely consumed by Chinese audiences, particularly those residing in Xinjiang. Since there was no interview data on Kurban, the event can only be recounted by the oral histories of third parties present at the event. Below is an excerpt from an oral history narrative, which was told by Mr Wu Cheng (the witness) and edited by Mr Xue Liyong (Wu & Xue 2010). It recounts Wu's observations of Chairman Mao meeting Kurban. Mr Wu Cheng is a retired Han cadre currently living in Hotan city, Xinjiang, who witnessed Mao's meeting with Kurban Tulum, as he was the organiser of the Hotan peasant visiting group to National Farming Tool Exposition in Beijing in May 1958. He recalls that Kurban was born in Yutian County in 1883, and that he had lived a meagre life by working as a seasonal labourer for Uyghur landlords. As a result of the land reforms led by the CCP in Xinjiang in 1952, Kurban was provided farmland, a house, a donkey and farming tools. In his recollections, Mr Wu posits that 'Kurban understood that his happy life was endowed by the CCP and Chairman Mao. He then grew a strong wish to see him in person' (Wu and Xue 2010). From the autumn of 1956, Kurban attempted to hitchhike twelve times from Yutian to make a trip to Beijing to see the Chairman. However, according to Wu, his efforts all were in vain as he did not fully appreciate the over 4,000 kilometre distance between Yutian and Beijing (Ibid.).

Finally in May 1958, Kurban was invited to join the 189 person Hotan agricultural delegation to Beijing. The delegation travelled several days by vehicles until they reached Beijing by train via Zhenzhou City on 18th June. Around 12pm on 28th June, Mao granted an opportunity to meet Kurban's delegation in Zhongnanhai compound. Everyone was excited during the meeting. Wu recalled:

> Chairman (Mao) specially approached Kurban, who also walked out of the crowd, greeted Mao in Uyghur custom. Chairman Mao extended his big and warm hand to Kurban, who held Mao's hand for a long time and was reluctant to release it. Mao then enquired Kurban's name, age and living condition through the interpreter. Newly liberated, and at age of 75 years old, Uyghur

peasant Kurban eventually saw his longed benefactor, Chairman Mao, and burst into tears . . .'

(cited in Wu & Xue 2010)

The significance of this meeting was also captured on film, when Mr Hou Bo, a senior photographer for the *Xinhua News Agency*, photographed the handshake between Chairman Mao and Uncle Kurban. His iconic photograph, which accompanied a news report on the event, was published in the *People's Daily* (Ding & Wang 1958, p. 6). The caption accompanying the image read, 'Kurban Tulum shook hands with Chairman Mao twice but still felt reluctant to leave', and the photograph captured a skinny and bearded old Uyghur man, wearing a *dopa* (a traditional Uyghur male hat) and a typical Uyghur robe worn by men. The men were in close physical proximately, and Kurban was captured gazing at Chairman Mao with admiration. The two held their right hands together. Mao, who stood much taller, also gazed at Kurban with a gentle smile. In the background, a group of people clapped hands and cheered.

Written by correspondents Ding Wen and Wang Lizhen, the original report told a riveting story and was published on the sixth page of the *China Daily*, on 21 August 1958. The publication came about two months after the actual event took place.[2] Hence, news of the event was circulated around Xinjiang and nationwide. The report was headlined 'Kurban Tulum Saw Chairman Mao'. The report had five sections following an introduction detailing Kurban's utterly destitute life before the liberation of Xinjiang by 'the CCP and the People's Government'. The five sections were titled: 'To see Chairman Mao with his own eyes'; 'To ride a donkey to Beijing'; 'Received Chairman Mao's reply'; 'Airmail from "Beijing to Beijing"'; and 'Saw Chairman Mao'. Three sections from the original report are summarised and rephrased below (the quotations are the direct translation from original sentences) (Ding & Wang 1958, p. 6).

The section titled 'To Ride a Donkey to Beijing' stated that in 1955, Kurban decided to ride a donkey to Beijing to see Chairman Mao but was persuaded to give up by local cadres and fellow peasants. He then tried to have a bus ride but also was declined by drivers. 'Air Mail Sent from "Beijing to Beijing"' writes, in June 1958, Kurban joined the Hotan delegation to visit the national farming tool exposition in Beijing. During his stay in Beijing, he looked forward to seeing Chairman every day. He could not eat and sleep well when appointment requests were not confirmed. Fellow delegates thought he was sick, but he just said, 'as long as I see Chairman Mao, my illness will be gone'. He even posted an air mail to Chairman Mao from his guest house in Beijing when he knew air mail was the fastest post. The last section, 'Saw Chairman Mao', ends as the highlight of the whole report in describing Kurban's eventual meeting with Chairman Mao. The style of writing was highly sensational, with the correspondents finally reaching the sublime moment. They stated:

The scene of visiting Chairman Mao was engraved on his mind vividly and continuously. He felt he became younger and was stronger. After returning

home, he would pass this news to his fellow villagers, and encourage all to improve the agricultural production and achieve more goals. Thus, they can repay Chairman Mao's kindness.

(Ding & Wang 1958, p. 6)

The writing style of the report resembled a 'creative writing' style, whereby the prose contained a blend of the reporters' imaginations and recreation of the event. Interestingly, compared with Mr Wu's recount, this news report was filled with much more detail which was elaborated by the correspondents. However, both writings failed to acknowledge the exact information or direct quotes from Kurban. After this report, Kurban became a symbol of Uyghurs in the early decades of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) history. The power of the state media started to symbolise the two men's relationship (Kurban and Mao) into the relationship of two collective groups: Uyghurs in Xinjiang and the CCP in Beijing. The news report, together with the original photo, effectively defied the vast geographic distance between the two places and the cultural difference between Muslim Uyghur and the mainstream Han. The preferred meaning was projected from showing the Uyghur's admiration of the CCP, and more broadly, ethnic minority's admiration of the CCP regime. In the meantime, the Uyghur cultural identity was presented selectively, covering Kurban's distinct Uyghur costume (*dopa* and robe) and physical characteristics (beard) but neglecting Uyghur language and religious affiliation.

In the years followed, an array of artistic reproductions has been respectfully made across China, which accelerated the media dissemination of the story of Kurban's meeting with Chairman Mao in Xinjiang and inland China (Ding 2011). The simplest way was to colour the original black and white photo to provide a more vivid effect. For example, there was a coloured poster printed in 1958 (Tang 2010), with a caption reading '28th June 1958, Chairman Mao Zedong granted an interview to Uncle Kurban'. Within the poster one can see the contrast of colours between the two persons. Kurban's social role as a Uyghur peasant was highlighted and he is depicted with a white beard, and he wore a white *dopa* and a white crumpled robe, seemingly cotton, tied with a brown cloth belt. His sleeve was folded up so readers could easily see his skinny and dark-brown hand. In contrast, Mao stood out as a prominent leader who looked significantly taller, gently tilting his head towards Kurban. He wore a grey pressed Zhongshan (Sun Yat-sen) suit (also called a Mao suit), and he had much bigger hands and lighter-brown skin.

Further reproductions ranged from news reports, drawings, posters, poems, music, art crafts, textbook materials, to operas and films, to name a few. The state media have seamlessly worked with other institutional mechanisms, such as the public education system and cultural projects, to engrave Kurban's image into the Chinese collective memory. For example, the story of Uncle Kurban was once adapted as a Chinese lesson in the primary school curriculum and was included in the primary school textbook. Therefore, the story had been read by millions of

young students before the 1980s. Even as late as 2003, a film, *Ku'erban dashu shang Beijing* [Uncle Kurban Visits Beijing] (2003), was produced by Tianshan Film Studio in Xinjiang. While the leading role of Kurban was played by a Uyghur actor, it was directed by two Han directors, Dong Ling and Li Chenshen. Moreover, a bronze monument marking this event, *Uncle Kurban and Chairman Mao* (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2), was erected in Hotan city's central square and is easily seen by visitors to the city (the Unity Square) (Tang 2012). It stands with a height of 9.5 metres and weighs 6 tons. The base of the monument is made from white marble, which is 12.26 metres in height and is inscribed with a poem by Mao. The bronze monument of Kurban and Mao stands on top of the marble base. The whole set in the square is so spectacular that it even dominates the buildings on either side of the monument. Given its prominence, and the enormity of the monument marking this event, it is without a doubt that the original event has been twisted in order to serve the official rhetoric of minority nationality loyalty and respect to Chairman Mao and the unitary party state.

Nonetheless, no other reproductions of the Uncle Kurban and Mao meeting have achieved such far-reaching impact compared to a specific painting and a specific song, both created during the latter years of Mao's era. On 8 September 1976, just one day before Mao's death, Mr Huang Zhou, a renowned artist, completed a traditional Chinese painting (using brush pen and ink) titled *Missing Chairman Mao Day and Night* (Tang 2010). In this painting, Kurban was depicted as a more affluent Uyghur old man, which was in contrast with Kurban's original photo image as an old and unadorned Uyghur male peasant. While Mao disappeared in this painting, Kurban and his donkey took over the central space in the painting. Instead of wearing a white robe, as he was in his original photo in 1958, he now wore a striped robe with a white cloth pant. He even wore a pair of shining black leather boots. His brown cloth belt also turned into a dazzling red belt, beautifully tied. Kurban's artistic image was also complemented with some new detail: he was playing tambura (*dongbula*, traditional Uyghur string instrument) and singing songs of praise, and riding on a robust black donkey towards Beijing, the destination in the east. On 9 June, Mr Zhao Puchu, a well-known Buddhist, artist and calligrapher, added an inscription on the top of the painting in his signature calligraphy style running vertically from right to left following traditional Chinese print format. This inscription read (Tang 2010):

> "I [in Kurban's tone] miss Chairman Mao day and night, for his great kindness. I play Tamura to recall my endless distress (in the past), and also to thank you, Chairman Mao, with the endless gratitude from a poor peasant. Brothers of all minzu (ethnic groups) in the borderland miss Chairman Mao day and night . . ." Huang Zhou completed this painting and Puchu wrote an inscription. When we were enjoying the painting, a great mentor (Chairman Mao) was just dying. We appreciated the painting with tears. I am holding my brush pen but hardly can write a character. Our hearts are together with Kurban Tulum as we all miss Chairman Mao day and night.

*Figure 5.1* Monument of Uncle Kurban meeting Mao Zedong, Hotan, China

*Figure 5.2*  Close-up photo of the monument (Uncle Kurban meeting Mao Zedong)
Photo courtesy of James Leibold, 2014.

The impact of the painting and calligraphy is enormous (Liu 2009). Thirty-seven years later (2013), this artistic masterpiece was sold in an art market auction for 16.5 million Chinese yuan (equivalent to about 2.75 million US dollars).[3] Moreover, the influence of this artistic representation among millions of Chinese was even more profound, particularly among the generations during Mao's era. There was a nation-wide circulation of the reprints in posters and magazines. The effect of publicity from the painting was far better than the photos. Nevertheless,

while the story embodied in the painting went viral, it was also transformed into a myth, which contained a simplified and twisted message: for decades, most people in China believed in a rumour that a Uyghur old man simply rode his donkey all the way from Xinjiang to Beijing to visit Chairman Mao.

Another remarkable masterpiece of the artistic reproduction of this event was the folk song *Salam Chairman Mao*. The song's music was composed by the great Chinese musician Wang Luobin, with lyrics written by Cao Qizhi and Chen Shuzai in 1959.[4] It was sung as the theme song for the music opera *Step by Step, Following Chairman Mao*, which was created by the then Xinjiang Modern Drama Troupe in 1959 and based on Kurban's story. The lyrics read:

> Chairman Mao, Chairman Mao, (I) miss you day and night. I want to work hard and save the travel expenses. How are you, Chairman Mao? One day when I see you, I will tell you, Chairman Mao, people all over the world love you. How are you, Chairman Mao? I miss you day and night. I want to ride a donkey to Beijing to see you. Chairman Mao, Chairman Mao, I am going to see you tomorrow, present a gift to you, tell you my innermost thoughts and feeling, dear Chairman Mao, great Chairman Mao . . .

In 1959, when the opera was playing in Beijing, the song was sung by a young Uyghur singer named Kelim. Both the singer and the song became a huge success. The melody and the lyrics were familiarised by several generations of Chinese afterwards through numerous replays in the state-controlled media such as radios and TV programs.[5] Arguably, the spreading of this song has further popularised Kurban's name among its audiences, numbering in the millions. Nevertheless, while the detail behind the Kurban story has slowly faded away, the image of Chairman Mao (as the preferred meaning) has been gradually reinforced and has stood out as the key component of the whole lyrics. Given the historical context, the opera was well accorded into the nation-wide mania of idolisation of Mao's preeminent status.

Nevertheless, I would argue that, with the change of Mao's era to Deng's era, the original representation, with state-prescribed meaning of Uyghur's loyalty to Chairman Mao and the CCP, was over-shadowed by Wang's gift of music; the presentation of the dominant meaning was overtaken by the influence of arts itself. After Wang's death in 1996, amazingly, the song once again regained its popularity in China, re-sung by another Han young pop music singer, Dao Lang (see Smith Finley in this book), in his album, *The First Snow in 2002*.

## Alim, 'grass-roots philanthropist': transcoding new Uyghur public image

The image of the Uyghur old man Kurban was mostly accepted by Chinese people of the older generation during Mao's era. In the Deng and post-Deng era, among others, a new image of a Uyghur middle-aged man was most noted in recent years and peaked in 2011. In this instance, the Uyghur man was Alimjan

Halik (*Baidu Baike* [Baidu Encyclopaedia] 2013), born in 1971. Alim was a kebab peddler from a Uyghur family in Hejing County, about 456 kilometres south of Urumqi. He was the only child in his family who received high school education. After retiring from the army in 1997, he migrated to inland China to make a living. In 2001, he arrived at an underdeveloped and small city, Bijie, in north-western Guizhou Province. While most his Uyghur fellow kebab peddlers flocked to the big cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, at that time, Alim was the only one in Bijie (*Baidu Baike* 2013). In a web image, Alim was portrayed standing and roasting lamb kebabs. Like Kurban, he shared two common characteristics of a Uyghur male's appearance: he sported a huge bushy beard (Alim's was black), and he wore a *dopa* (Alim's was broader than Uncle Kurban's, with a light pattern). The brick wall behind his stand was full of graffiti of mobile phone digits and illegible Chinese characters. This shabby environment hinted that Alim indeed was a humble Uyghur lamb kebab peddler in a Han-dominant city.

Since 2002, China's most influential TV station, Chinese Central Television Station (CCTV) Channel One, has been producing a featured program called *Touching China*. Each year, the program elected ten Chinese individuals (or groups) as the national moral models, for 'touching the public and touching China' (*Hudong Baike* [Interactive Encyclopaedia] 2014). The selection is based on two main criteria: the nominees' extraordinary contribution in a certain field of work or their exceptional moral impact in the community.[6] This well-received program can be seen as part of the state project to rebuild the moral system. In 2011, after a complicated and competitive online nomination process, Alim was awarded as one of the ten winners, as well as the winner of the third 'A Helping Hand' national moral model award (*Baidu Baike* 2013). He was identified as a 'Philanthropist of Lamb Kebab' from the grassroots and someone who has devoted himself to numerous charity activities in a local city where most of the beneficiaries are Han Chinese. According to the TV program, albeit earning a meagre income,

> in the past 9 years, as a Xinjiangnian, he earned less than thirty cents of profit from each lamb kebab sold. However, he has donated more than one hundred thousand yuan to help more than 169 local students from poverty-stricken families.
>
> (*Mian dui mian* [One on One] 2012)

Unlike the media report on Kurban in 1958, Alim's story was shown on both the television and the Internet via CCTV, Chinese Network Television (CNTV) and Tencent QQ (QQ), China's most famous instant online messenger. The new media representations of Alim resulted in two dimensions emerging in the contextualisation of the new 'Uyghur man' image. A macro-narrative elucidated the preferred meaning of ethnic unity, national integration and harmonious society, consistent with similar narratives around the representation of Uncle Kurban. Moreover, a resultant micro-narrative based on Alim's story constructed an affiliated meaning, that is, a kind and lovely Uyghur man who is still being pious in Islam and Uyghur

culture. In contrast, the narratives around Kurban did not contain a ray of Islam religion and had limited Uyghur culture representation.

In 2012, during the CCTV channel online and Channel 13 interview program, *Mian dui mian* (One on One), Brother Alim was interviewed, giving his story greater significance and media attention. The reporter guided Alim with his pre-set suggestive interview questions, which were closely in line with the official ideology. For example, Alim was asked by the reporter 'How do you see the word of "nice person" in your heart?' to which he responded 'It makes no difference among different *minzu* (ethnic groups) . . .' before giving his description of a 'nice person' (cited in *Mian dui mian* 2012). With regards to education, the cornerstone of Alim's gracious giving, the reported asked Alim whether or not he felt education 'should be the concern of government departments or the teachers', observing that Alim himself was 'only a lamb kebab peddler, [therefore] is it too far away from your life?'. In response to the question, Alim replied that education 'Is not far away at all'. He continued to confirm the multi-ethnic unity of China by further stating that education 'means we belong to one big family. Each of us, as the people living in the PRC, should feel it is our concern'. In addition, he went on to say that 'No matter what, when the country and the people are in trouble, people who stand out are heroes' (Alim, cited in *Mian dui mian* 2012). These insights provided a glimpse into the macro-level referred to above, that China is a multi-ethnic state and that everyone needed to play their role in ensuring and maintaining ethnic harmony.

The micro-narrative was also identifiable in the interview that being the role of Alim's Islamic faith and Uyghur culture in his actions. Part of the interview detailed Alim's personal story, which was full of his thoughts and insights into the lives of Uyghur migrants living in inland China, and was also loaded with Uyghur religious and cultural identities. For example, when asked if Alim had previously been a lamb kebab peddler, Alim replied that he had 'done it before in Xinjiang', continuing that 'Wherever I have been, there were my fellow people, those also doing lamb kebab business' (cited in *Mian dui mian* 2012). While this response alludes to a Uyghur affinity, Alim's subsequent response quickly rejects that allusion. In relation to his fellow kebab peddlers Alim stated that 'Some tried to exclude me . . . They just beat me and drove me away. They would not allow me to do this . . .'. When asked by the reporter if he thought it was not his role to 'educate those villains', asking whether it was 'far beyond your [Alim's] role as an ordinary small businessman?' Alim replied 'As a PRC citizen, everyone should think about this. One should not just look after his own children, but also help other poor kids, as this is a big family . . .'. Alim continued with a plea to his fellow citizens:

> [I am] waiting for everyone in our country, to all care for their children's education, to train them to become capable people, to improve their moral traits, (it is then) we will have a harmonious situation . . .
>
> (cited in *Mian dui mian* 2012)

In the same interview, Alim was portrayed as a vivid Uyghur (*weizu ren*), or Xinjiangnian. His lively words were taken to represent the typical experience of a Uyghur small business migrant in inland China, while keeping his Uyghur identity. This micro-narrative was not ignored in the TV programs. In one instance, Alim detailed his experiences of discrimination and difficulty based on ethnicity and language barriers. He recalled that:

> [Once in an inland city], there was construction work job with the pay for 40 yuan a day. I just wanted half, but the [Han] boss would not hire me, because they could not provide me [halal] food. [Moreover], in some other better working places, I could not read Chinese, could not communicate with others. Thus I only could make a living by selling lamb kebabs . . .
>
> (cited in *Mian dui mian* 2012)

When discussing Uyghur thieves, a common identity associated with Uyghur peddlers, Alim identified the relevant parts of the Islamic strictures that should govern Uyghur life. He states that 'The Koran says that, if eating pork was a sin, so was drinking the broth' (*Mian dui mian* 2012), identifying that he highly regarded the Islam beliefs in his everyday life. He believed in preventative measures such as keeping in check erroneous ideas from the outset and that one should stand firm against any misconduct, no matter how small it may be.

Prior to his *Mian dui mian* interview, Alim was interviewed for a CCTV documentary by one of the most influential TV presenters, Ms Chai Jing. In this 2011 interview, his image was also imbued with his Uyghur culture identity. He made jokes about his newly married Uyghur wife, saying 'she is so good, and if it is possible, I should marry one more girl who is as good as her' (Alim cited in *Kanjian* [Insight] 2011). Jokes aside, his statement to Ms Chai that 'I should marry a Uyghur girl, you know, that is crucial' demonstrated that his later articulated comments on ethnic harmony did not extend to intermarriage, at least in the 2011 interview.[7] He also mentioned that although he is without a mosque in Bijie, he kept praying at home whenever it was possible. This reinforced his explanation of the motivation behind his grassroots philanthropy, which he credited to his Islamic religious beliefs. In the program, his newly married Uyghur wife also added, 'I thank God every night that he has granted me such a good man' (*Kanjian* 2011). These insights into Alim, the man, speak to the aforementioned micro-narrative that Alim was a pious man, who upheld Islam and adhered to Uyghur culture.

## The local, regional, national and international impact: Guizhou, Xinjiang, Beijing and even London

Like the coverage of Uncle Kurban before him, there has been a longevity to the state media's coverage of Alim. Since coming to national attention in 2003, more than a decade has passed, with Alim still receiving media attention ranging

from local Guizhou Province to his hometown Xinjiang and Beijing. Notably, his debut was made at a local level when Guizhou Provincial TV Station reported his acts of charity to a young Han Chinese patient in 2003 (*Baidu Baike* 2013). In 2006, he was shown on a Bijie City TV program after donating 5,000 yuan to set up a local university scholarship. After he won the *Touching China* Award in 2011, the media's attention peaked in 2012. His story was viewed by an audience of hundreds of millions of Chinese when he was shown in the CCTV featured program *Jiaodian fangtan* (Focus Report) in 2011. This elevated him to national significance given that *Jiaodian fangtan* holds the prime-time 7:30pm slot, immediately after CCTV's daily news report. Following this report, the aforementioned *Kanjian* (2011) and *Mian dui mian* (2012) interviews took place.

Without a doubt, Alim also became an enormous success in the official media in his hometown in XUAR. During a pre-CCTV online nomination campaign for *Touching China* in 2010, his story was widely circulated by netizens, particularly in Xinjiang, who gave him an overwhelming amount of support. The current Xinjiang CCP general secretary Mr Zhang Chunxian made friends with him, and called him his 'younger brother'. On 20 January 2011, Mr Zhang and Alim connected their fingers, thumb to thumb, a sign in Chinese culture that means keeping promises. When Kurban and Mao met in 1958 they were aged 75 and 65, respectively. At the time of the 2011 meeting between Zhang and Alim, Zhang was aged 58 and Alim was 40. In the picture from a Xinjiang government-affiliated website, *Tianshan wang* (Tian Mountain Net), Alim and Zhang both beamed at each other. Alim was in a western suit and again had his *dopa* and beard. A bespectacled Zhang wore a dark jacket and white shirt without a tie (Wang 2011). On 7 February 2011, Zhang visited Alim's hometown in Hejing County and presented a gift to Alim's mother Tuohutihan. It was a sculpture of 'Chairman Mao meeting Kurban Tulum' (*Tianshan wang* 2012). Photographed by reporter Li Yang from Xinjiang Daily, another *Tianshan wang* image captured the scene of this family visit. Alim's mother, a short, elderly Uyghur woman wearing a coloured scarf, stood in the middle with Zhang on the left, and Alim's father on the right. However, the focus of the photo was the miniature replica of the Kurban and Mao sculpture. It looked like it was made of bronze and was carefully held by his mother's two hands and further supported by his father's left hand. This picture demonstrated that the XUAR government explicitly built up a symbolic connection between these two exemplary Uyghur-Han personal encounters. From the bygone years of Mao-Kurban, to the nowadays Zhang-Alim, the common theme signals the positive relationship between Uyghur-Han, between Xinjiang-China proper, minority and the CCP regime, which again was presented as part of the preferred meaning. This was a significant display of China's multi-ethnic harmony.

However, Alim also became an international symbol for multi-ethnic harmony as the state media's frenzy on Alim extended beyond China.[8] In 2012, Alim was selected as the No. 007 torch bearer and he took part in the London Olympic Torch Relay, together with 16 other Chinese people (Gulimina & Mou 2012). This time, putting on a smile and running, he wore a white jogging sports suit. In his right hand was the golden Olympic torch, leaving his left hand free to wave to the

people. Behind him were the British escorting team, and the crowd of spectators who were busy in taking photos of him. On 13 August 2012, a correspondent from *China Educational Daily* quoted Alim as stating with pride 'the moment when I held the torch, [I] felt a puff of miraculous power pouring into my body' (cited in Jiang 2012). He went on to say that 'the 300-meter running track passed very briefly, [I] felt especially proud along the way, because I represented China at that moment' (Alim, cited in Jiang 2012). Here, Alim became an integral part of China's most recent strategy in promoting soft power, internally and internationally (Barr 2012). It also attests to Alim's position as a citizen of greater China, in this instance, and confirming his earlier sentiments, although he is both a Muslim and a Uyghur, it is his Chinese citizenship that binds him to the Chinese state and its people, something he asserts is at the heart of his grassroots philanthropy, reinforcing the notion of China as a multi-ethnic state.

When the draft of this chapter was written in early 2014, Alim hit the headlines once again on Chinese state media. On 1 March 2014, an armed group, alleged to be Uyghurs, carried out a terrorist attack at Kunming Railway Station, targeting both civilians and police. Just four days later, there was a report from *Yunnan Information Daily* (*Souhu xinwen* [Sohu News] 2012) which stated 'Xinjiang kebab peddler led donations to the casualties in Kunming Attack'. The kebab peddler was Alim, and together with his Han and Uyghur business colleagues, he donated 45,000 yuan and called on others for more donations. The wording of the title of this report is noteworthy, as instead of his famous name Alim, he was simply referred to as a 'Xinjiang kebab peddler'. The story then went to air through China's major gateway websites, such as Sohu and Xinhua News Agency, as well as China's most popular social media tool Weibo (Microblog). Here, the state media magnified a positive group image of *Xinjiangnians* rather than Alim as an individual hero. Together with other positive representations of Uyghurs and *Xinjiangnians* at this critical time, the latest news coverage of Alim aimed to dilute the intense Han Chinese's outrage towards this attack, especially among the Han netizens' responses cyberspace. This was a considerable attempt to tone down the ethnic tensions between Han and Uyghur, and represented a concerted effort by state media to fend off attempts to cast hatred onto the whole Uyghur group, due to the alleged actions of a handful of Uyghurs. In this instance, it is Alim's identity as a Uyghur, and a Muslim, that are important, while previously it had been his identity as a citizen of greater China that had taken paramount importance. This report was about normalising and humanising the Uyghur, buffering them against a tirade of anger and emotion, and attempting to overcome simplistic views that cast all Uyghurs as 'terrorists'. In both instances however, regardless of which emphasis was made in the reporting of Alim, the constant in both examples is that Alim is a leading example of what can be achieved by multi-ethnic China. Following the Kunming attacks, this was an incredibly important focus as the attacks drew the increasing attention, both nationally and internationally, into the reality of 'ethnic harmony' in the PRC.

Furthermore, in the Alim reports, ethnic Uyghur identity and philanthropy comprise two much desired themes. The manifestation of Uyghur religious and culture

identities shows that the state media is transcoding its minority representation, while striking a careful balance between national unity and ethnic diversity in 'an era of critical pluralism' (Leibold & Chen 2014) in the post-Deng's era. Similarly, reporting philanthropy is also a timely prescription for the reconstruction of the socialist moral system under the market economy era. In the broader context of the state media, Alim only belongs to a handful of minority moral heroes among the large groups of national moral heroes over the years. However, the unique value of his example links to his Uyghur ethnic minority identity. A critical examination of the media coverage reveals the pattern of his philanthropy: he always helps Han communities but there is rare reportage of cases of him helping fellow Uyghur communities. This pattern attempts to project a strong but imperative signal that philanthropy can transcend the ethnic boundaries in China today.

## Comparing Uncle Kurban and Brother Alim: from an artistic reproduction to a transcoding of the static minority image

As a mass media production in Mao's era, Uncle Kurban was primarily a one-sided and artistic creation. His meeting with Chairman Mao was repeatedly reproduced and disseminated through various means including images, music and monuments. Without Kurban's original voice and the lack of a proper translation between Uyghur and Mandarin, the meaning of Kurban's image was categorically subject to interpretation by the state propaganda machines. As a result, in the newspaper report, paintings and music, the core theme underlining Kurban's image was chiefly tailored from a class conflict perspective. The rhetoric was that the CCP regime had liberated Uncle Kurban and his fellow Uyghur peasants from the ruling Uyghur landlord class. Thus, Uncle Kurban was indebted to the CCP, which was symbolised by Chairman Mao. This representation suggested a reciprocal relationship from the minority towards the CCP. In the meantime, the class conflict perspective also unwittingly combined with a ramification of nation-building for Uyghurs, requiring them to construct a Chinese national identity.

Technically, the effect of Kurban's image was silently essentialised through some key Uyghur symbols: a skinny old Uyghur man's body, a *dopa*, a Uyghur musical instrument and a donkey. Apart from these signifiers, the religious identity of the Uyghur, and Uncle Kurban, was unseen and inconspicuous. Furthermore, there was no voice recording left from Uncle Kurban, which is remarkable given there were no direct Chinese quotes from him used in various news reports. This can partially be explained by two assumptions. The first might relate to the unpopular and underdeveloped technology at that time. The second might be due to Kurban being illiterate in Mandarin Chinese. In essence, since the state discourses took front seat in the state media representations of constructing an image and narrative around Kurban, the authorities did not bother to include Kurban's original Uyghur quotes and their Chinese translation. Nevertheless, his smiling face and his handshake with Mao captured in the iconic Xinhua News Agency photo alone provided sufficient imaginary space for exploitation of the 'preferred meaning' (Hall 1997, p. 228). This process of essentialisation was purely interpretative and

was dominated by the state media, while at the same time, it was unresponsive to Uyghurs' voices. For most audiences, the story was simplified as a myth: 'Uncle Kurban rode his donkey all the way from Xinjiang to Beijing to pay tribute to Chairman Mao'.[9] As a result, his once-only trip to Beijing has been mystified as a kind of pilgrimage, denoting the Uyghurs' loyalty to the CCP regime. Geopolitically, Xinjiang is situated in the distant peripheries both to the then young nation of the PRC and to Islamic holy land in Mecca. Metaphorically, this Uyghur old man's eastward 'pilgrimage' could imply the CCP's endeavours of secularisation of Uyghurs in Xinjiang at the time. It was also a metaphor of a centripetal force from the remote borderland to the political hub of the young PRC. Nevertheless, while Uncle Kurban's story successfully underlined the macro perspective of political meaning, it failed to interrogate the micro perspective of Uyghur-Han ethnic interactions in everyday encounters.

In contrast, the production of Alim's image was mainly realised by more recent technologies: television and the Internet; and against a backdrop where more Uyghurs have become conversant in Mandarin Chinese. As a result, Alim appeared as a more interactive minority representation for the contemporary audience. He spoke fluent Mandarin, and his personal experiences and thoughts have been mostly 'heard' by majority audience through interviews and talk-show programs on television and the Internet. Alim's experience as a Uyghur, small business migrant's everyday life was a result of the deepening market economy, which can be echoed by millions of ordinary Chinese people. In addition, the story took place in inland China, which has been an increasingly popular arena for Uyghur-Han ethnic interactions. Moreover, as a core component of Uyghur ethnic identity, Islamic religious belief was occasionally presented in the state media productions, for example, mentioning the Koran, joking about marrying more than one woman, telling Allah's story about charity, and showing his habit of praying. Nevertheless, all the media discourse was strictly in line with the official rhetoric, such as ethnic unity, harmony and national integration. In several cases, Alim explicitly became an annotator, calling for both patriotism and the promotion of ethnic unity.

However, Alim's narrative about his ordeals in the early years of migration also testify to the common disadvantages experienced by Uyghurs who migrate to the mainstream Han inland cities. Their daily communication is hindered by their often poor proficiency in Mandarin Chinese. Moreover, halal food is hard to find in Han majority cities, meaning insufficient dietary supply can impede Uyghurs' integration with Chinese Han, particularly if there is no attempt to accommodate halal requirements by employers. In addition, Alim's honourable story even unintentionally disclosed the ugly side of Uyghurs' struggle in inland cities, for example, identifying how some Uyghur youths have been deceived and coerced to become petty thieves in inland cities, an issue that has serious ramifications for Uyghurs and the Chinese state (see Ekpar in this book).

Regardless of their different geographic locations and paths, Kurban and Alim share more conspicuous similarities in the politics of ethnic media representation. They possess the common ingredient: unique ethnic features, which are

characterised in their physical figure, Muslim Uyghur costume, cuisine and Turkic linguistic background. Again, the distinct cultural characteristics that distance one from the mainstream Han Chinese serve the most eye-catching news material for the state media. In addition, albeit the different timeframes, the representations of Kurban and Alim both are carefully crafted by China's rigidly controlled state media. They are positive, but single-sided, ethnic minority symbols in order to eulogise the official ideology and political loyalty to the CCP regime, in Kurban's case; and emphasising ethnic harmony and national integration, in Alim's case. Obviously, from the explicitly politicised minority image of Uncle Kurban to the more culturalised minority image of Brother Alimjan, there still lays an undisputable bottom line of political correctness: to uphold the CCP and the state's long-standing ethnic minority policy, reinforcing both ethnic harmony and the importance of recognising China as a multi-ethnic state.

Ever since Mao's era, the 'Xinjiang Problem' has remained unresolved. As a result, the state media has relentlessly produced positive Uyghur images in the hope of strengthening Uyghurs' national identity (within multi-national China) and to ease the ethnic tensions across China. This effort can be best exemplified by analysing statistics on the ethnic backgrounds of the winners of the *Touching China* Awards. In the first decade, from its advent in 2002 to the year of 2011, there were 114 individual winners. Among them, two were foreigners, with the remaining 112 all Chinese. Among the Chinese winners, there were only eight winners from China's ethnic minorities. These winners included: one Miao in Guizhou; one Qiang in Sichuan; one Yi in Yunnan; and two Tibetans, one from Tibet, the other from Qinghai. Interestingly, Uyghurs account for the most numerous among the ethnic minority winners, including: Brother Alim in 2011; Mother Alipa in 2009; and a village CCP party sectary, Dawut Axim, in 2003. This suggests that of the ethnic minority winners, it has been the Uyghurs who have derived the most attention from the state media, in relation to the *Touching China* Awards.

However, the sophistication of the issue of ethnic relations in China, particularly Uyghur-Han relations, cannot be completed with one stroke. In Mao's era, Uyghur-Han relations were subtracted into a simple formula of the relationship between two men, symbolised by the epitaph of 'Uncle Kurban and Chairman Mao'. Moreover, the ethnic relationship of Uyghur-Han was ambiguously entwined with the greater theme of the demonstrated political loyalty of ethnic minorities to the CCP regime. In the post-Deng era, the politics of media representation of Uyghur-Han relations transformed to become a daily issue in real encounters, particularly as both Uyghurs and Han migrated both inside of and outside of Xinjiang for work. Alim's story was chosen as a bankable news story by the state media because it ingeniously transcended a series of conflicting themes: inland-Xinjiang, Uyghur-Han and economy-morality. Nonetheless, it faced contestations by growing public opinions dominant in cyberspace, which is particularly exacerbated by the universalisation of mobile social media. This had contributed to Alim's officially constructed positive image being critically challenged by the stereotyped image held by some segments of the Han population of so-called *weizu xiaotou* (Uyghur

thieves), Xinjiang *xiaotou* (Xinjiang thieves), and *Qiegaodang* (Xinjiang Fruits and Nuts Cake Gangsters), which are flooding cyberspace discussions of Uyghurs and Xinjiang. The gap between the state media and these public opinions is almost incomprehensible. Moreover, as Uyghur migrants in inland China are disproportionally concentrated in traditional food related businesses such as roasting lamb kebabs, selling fruit and nuts cakes, and running Xinjiang restaurants, these stereotypical views of Uyghur are highly problematic. In addition, in the eyes of ordinary Han people, Alim's story, albeit morally praised, further strengthen Han people's stereotypes about Uyghurs or Xinjiangnians as being lamb kebab peddlers. Therefore, while its intention is to promote a positive Uyghur image and to enhance ethnic integration, in reality it is very hard to gauge how successful this single story becomes, particularly when there lacks the feedback from his fellow Uyghur communities.

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined a changing trajectory of Chinese official discourse in the state media's constructed 'regime of representation' (Hall 1997, p. 276), from an utter politicisation towards a gradual culturalisation of minority images. Previously, Gladney (1994) has suggested that minority images in China are feminised while Han images are masculinised, thereby symbolising a subordination-superordination relationship. In this chapter, the images of Uncle Kurban and Brother Alim both epitomised masculinised Uyghurs' representations in China's state media over the decades. In the case of Uncle Kurban however, the sub-text of the representation was dominated by the narrative of Uyghur political loyalty to, and admiration of, the CCP regime. This narrative was also an indispensable part of the campaign to idolise Chairman Mao. However, in the case of Alim, this type of preferred meaning has been subtly washed away, replaced with more cultural representations with a different tone highlighting ethnic unity and national integration between Uyghur and Han. Politically, this shift still categorically echoes the state ideologies, embodied in 'The Harmonious Society', 'Chinese Dream' and 'The Positive Energy' and so forth. Theoretically, Alim's case also demonstrates some notions raised in recent years, such as the depoliticisation but culturalisation of the ethnic issues in China (Ma 2007, 2010) and the divergence of political nationalism to cultural nationalism (Guo 2003).

Moreover, this chapter suggests that although Uyghurs often appear as the key target group for positive representations by the state media, they are also vulnerable to the single-sided and stereotyped representations of their ethnic group by others. In examining a cultural approach to communication, Carey (2009) suggested that 'communication is a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed' (p. 19). Keeping this in mind, the key points to consider in this chapter are first, who has the power and who does not have the power; and second, what kind of reality is to be constructed? Hall (1997) focused on the critique of the racialised and negative representation of the black image in the western media. In contrast, like the cases of Kurban and Alim, most Uyghur

and other minority images are invariably politically positive but one-sided. Kurban was depicted as a devout but silent worshipper to Chairman Mao; Alim was presented as a kebab-peddler-turned-moral-hero. To the majority of Han Chinese, these positive images become increasingly incomprehensible given the gap arising from the inundation of negative representations of Uyghurs in cyberspace. To Uyghurs, the process of making ethnic representation is externally imposed by the Han dominated state media rather than self-constructed. This approach really only touches on the question, 'how do/es the Han/state look at Uyghurs?'. Most importantly however, this approach fails to address another side of the question, that is, 'how do Uyghurs look at Uyghurs?'. Hence these ethnic minority images, albeit popular among the mainstream Han, have less impact on minority experiences of building ethnic identity.

Like other minorities, the Uyghurs crave modernised and non-stereotyped Uyghur representations in the state media, such as well-educated Uyghur elites in science and technology. These types of representations offer the potential to better enhance the Uyghurs' ethnic dignity. Furthermore, the current state media crafted images encroach on Uyghurs' space to unfold their real concerns, demands and even their discontent (Chen 2015) to the mainstream society in the course of the worsening 'Xinjiang Problem'. It is still uncertain whether the negative side of the representation can be openly debated in the state media in the future. Following the 1 March 2014 Kunming terrorist attack, Xi Jingping called for the nation to 'utterly oppose any speech and actions which endanger the great ethnic unity' (*Gaoceng* [Column of National Leaders] 2014).[10] His words hint that a transcoding of the single-sided minority media representation will remain a strenuous task.

## Notes

1 Netizens refers to Internet users in Chinese context, literally as 'net-people'. There is a colossus of webpages about these groups and events on popular Chinese websites, for example, Kaidi Community, Tianya Community, Souhu Community and Youku Net, Renren Net. Viewed on 5 March 2014, Google searches show that 380,000 Chinese entries for *Xinjiang xiaotou*, 192,000 Chinese entries for *Weizu xiaotou*, and 916,000 Chinese entries for *Qiegaodang*.

2 The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) was established on 1 October 1955.

3 'Huang Zhou's painting 'Missing Chairman Mao day and night' sold for 16.5 million yuan,' *Sina Collection*, viewed 4 March 2014, http://collection.sina.com.cn/auction/pcdt/20130602/2044115414.shtml.

4 Wang Luobin, the great Chinese folksinger and his song, 'Salam Chairman Mao' (1958), viewed 27 February 2014, http://club.kdnet.net/dispbbs.asp?boardID=1&ID=8262773&page=223.

5 Ironically and tragically, the composer, Wang Luobin, had been jailed for 15 years from 1964 to 1981 with the accusation of anti-revolution. There was a speculation that it was related to the song, *Salam Chairman Mao*. While in Uyghur, *Salam* means greeting, it unfortunately matches the homophonic in Chinese pronunciation, '*shale maozhuxi*' which could be misinterpreted as 'to kill Chairman Mao'. Wang died in 1996.

6 It is similar to the 'Australian of the Year' award and accompanying televised program. Both are part of a spiritual national building process.

7 The inter-ethnic marriages between Uyghur and Han are very rare in Xinjiang. Hence, local government recently provided economic incentives to promote them (Kaiman 2014).

8 Alim returned home after London Olympic torch-bearing relay 17 July 2012 (Gulimina & Mou 2012).

9 This misconception was so popular that even before I examined the primary sources in this research, I also took this myth for granted.

10 Xi Jingping stressed that people of all ethnic groups should value the political status quo of great ethnic unity (Gaoceng 2014).

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# 6 Segregated diversity

## Uyghur residential patterns in Xinjiang, China

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### Introduction

China's ten million Uyghurs are arguably one of the most segregated ethnic minorities in the world. In the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), the vast majority of Uyghurs live, study, work and socialise alongside their co-ethnics with only limited (and often tense) interactions with China's Han ethnic majority. Is this a case of cultural preservation or social isolation? Or a bit of both? What are the implications of living alone and apart from the Han majority in China? Segregation can help protect ethnic cultures, identities and dignity; but it can also alienate and marginalise minority communities from mainstream society, thus limiting opportunities for personal advancement. How does Uyghur residential segregation affect ethnic relations in the world's most populous country? This chapter seeks to first document the extent of Uyghur residential segregation, before probing some of these important questions.

Xinjiang is one of China's fastest growing and most ethnically diverse regions. The XUAR is China's largest administrative unit, yet also possesses one of its lowest population densities. At present, the XUAR is home to nearly 22 million people and 47 out of the 56 officially recognised 'ethnic groups' (*minzu*) in China. According to the 2013 *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook* (XJTJ), the indigenous Uyghurs comprise 47.30 percent of the XUAR, compared to 38.06 percent for the Han.[2] Due to several decades of state-sponsored and more recent self-initiated migration, the Han population has increased dramatically from a mere 222,000 or 5 percent of the total population in 1947 to nearly 8.5 million today (Millward 2007, p. 306; XJTJ 2013). Yet, ironically, Xinjiang's two largest ethnic communities still live largely separate and parallel lives in this 'Eurasian crossroad', which historically functioned as a 'conduit and melting pot' of diverse peoples, ideas, cultures and technologies since Neolithic times (Millward 2007, p. xii).

For many in the West, Uyghur 'self-segregation' is a natural, defensive mechanism – a cultural and emotional wedge against an alien, hegemonic and colonising Han Chinese civilization and state. In her wonderful new monograph, Joanne Smith Finley (2013, p. 17) identifies a series of 'symbolic, spatial and social boundaries' constructed by Uyghur residents of Xinjiang, of which 'the most obvious being ethnically based patterns of *settlement and residence*'. By choosing to live apart from the Han majority, Uyghurs resist the Han state and

exercise 'social agency', while identifying 'themselves as culturally and morally superior to the coloniser' (Smith Finley 2013, p. 167; *see also* Joniak-Lüthi 2015; Caprioni 2011; Bellér-Hann 2002). This rejection of the Party-state's ideology of '*minzu* solidarity', according to political scientist Gardner Bovingdon (2010, pp. 40–104), forms a repertoire of 'everyday resistance' to Han 'heteronomy' (rule by others), simultaneously strengthening their own collective ethnic identity while rejecting inclusion within the Han-centered 'Chinese nation/race' (*Zhonghua minzu*).

Inside China, however, there is growing concern about the lack of ethnic cohesion and solidary in Xinjiang and China more broadly. In the wake of the 5 July 2009 ethnic riots in Ürümqi, which left at least 197 people dead (including 134 Han residents), some Chinese policymakers and intellectuals are advocating a major rethink of current ethnic policies. For these would-be-reformers, the People's Republic of China (PRC) policies of regional ethnic autonomy, *minzu* recognition and preferential minority treatment block the natural processes of 'ethnic contact, exchange, and mingling' (*minzu jiaowang jiaoliu jiaorong*) (Hu & Hu 2011, p. 1). For former Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) political scientist Liu Junning, current policies exacerbate ethnic divisions and even fuel ethnic conflict. 'The policy of regional ethnic autonomy', Liu recently declared, 'is a disguised form of ethnic segregation' (Liu 2009; Xiao 2012), part of what Peking University sociologist Ma Rong (2012, pp. 168–91) identifies as the 'dual structure' (*eryuan jiegou*) that divides Chinese society into 'ethnic minority' and 'Han' components, and weakens the territorial integrity of the Chinese nation-state (*cf.* Leibold 2013).

Despite these contrasting depictions, few have attempted to document the scope and scale of Uyghur residential segregation and discuss its implications for ethnic relations in China. In this chapter, we first map the vectors of Uyghur residential segregation in China and then explore some of the consequences for Xinjiang and Chinese society more broadly. We adopted a mix-modal methodology, combining a range of qualitative and quantitative indictors, in order to chronicle the extent of Uyghur segregation at different spatial scales and over time.

Our findings confirm that Uyghurs are not only the most segregated of China's 55 ethnic minorities, but also exhibit patterns of enclave residency that are similar, if not higher, than other 'hyper-segregated' ethnic/racial groups like Blacks in the United States, Arabs in Israel and Whites in post-apartheid South Africa. While macro-level segregation is slowly decreasing due to increased urbanisation and inter-ethnic migration, Uyghur and Han communities continue to live together yet apart in major cities like Ürümqi. Over the short term, spatial polarisation can attenuate ethnic tensions/conflicts by minimising competition and social interactions; yet the longer-term trend does not augur well for ethnic relations in Xinjiang.

## Uyghur socio-spatial segregation in China

The isolation of Uyghurs within Chinese society is obvious to even the most casual of observers. Outside of the XUAR, Uyghurs are barely visible, and are almost completely absent from rural Han society.[3] China's economic reforms

have lured thousands of Uyghurs to coastal cities – through self-initiated migration, government-sponsored export-labour schemes (*laowu shuchu*) and inland schooling programs (*nei diban*) – yet their numbers are minuscule when compared to the one billion-plus Han majority. In the case of the former, Uyghur migrants use familial networks to pursue unstable work selling lamb kababs (*yangrouchuan*), nut-cake (*qiegao*), and other specialty products, or work in Xinjiang restaurants. A recent survey by Hanqiz Turaq (2013) found that 72 percent of the 150 Uyghur migrants in Wuhan believed differences in language and social customs blocked their interaction with other ethnic groups, causing them to exist like 'isolated islands' (*gudao*) from other residents of Wuhan. Similarly, government-sponsored Uyghur students and workers are generally housed and fed in separate dormitories and canteens while working or studying alongside their co-ethnics and away from the Han majority (Chen 2008; Grose 2014).

The nominal reason for this segregation is the respect and protection of social and religious customs; yet officials also fear the consequences of unfettered contact, pointing to past fights, brawls and even riots, such as the 2009 clash between Uyghur and Han workers at a toy factory in Shaoguan, Guangzhou (Watts 2009; RFA 2013). There are reports of the forced repatriation of nearly 1,000 Uyghurs from Yunnan province following the 1 March 2014 fatal knife attack at the Kunming railway station (RFA 2014). In Beijing, where one of the authors lives, Uyghurs have largely disappeared from public sight following recent unrest.
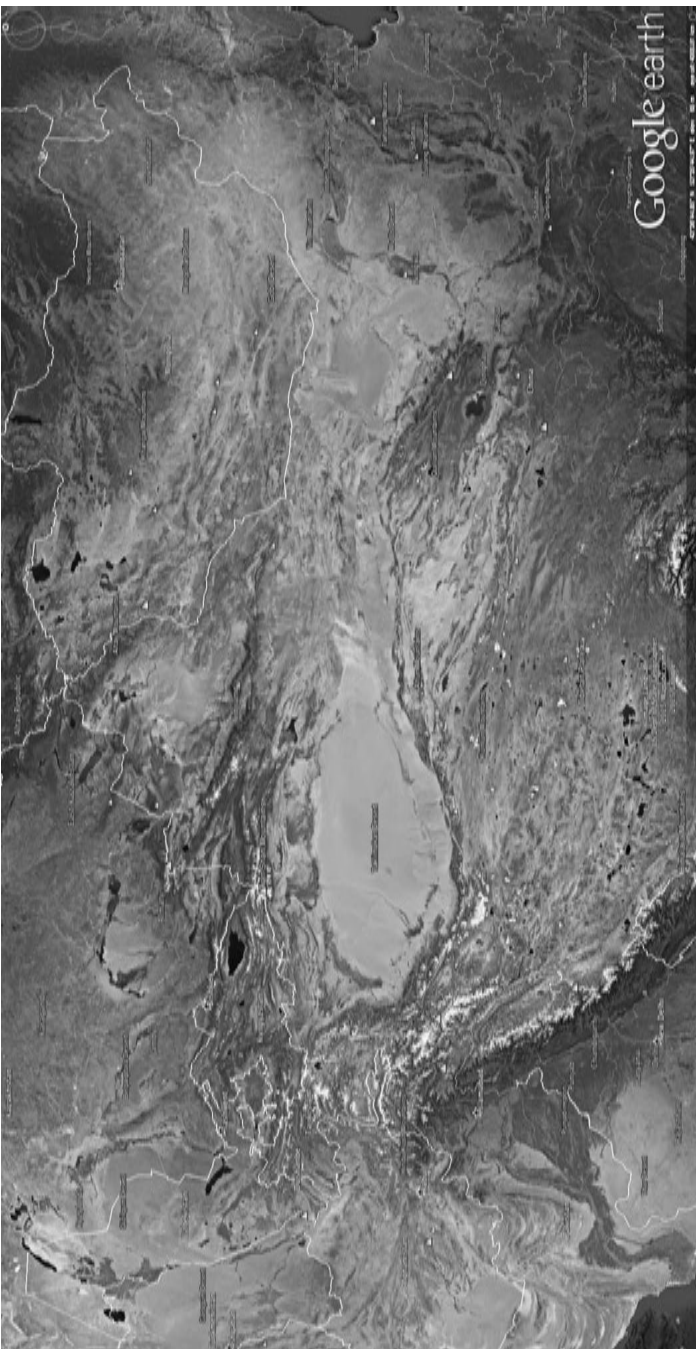
Inside the XUAR, Uyghur-Han residential segregation is chiefly an urban-rural, north-south phenomenon. Most Han reside in the major urban centers in the north while Uyghurs dominate the countryside in the south. The difference between the Han-dominated capital of Ürümqi and Uyghur-dominated countryside in the south was striking during research trips in 2012 and 2014. In general, cities are more ethnically mixed, with the Uyghurs remaining a significant majority in southern cities like Kashgar, Hotan and Aksu and a sizable minority in northern cities like Karamay, Hami and Yining, and even a majority in Turpan. Yet, these cities also exhibit internal segregation with Uyghur and Han residents clustering in different neighbourhoods; although this does not rule out occasion (even frequent) contact in workplaces, parks, markets, government offices and other shared public spaces. Head further afield into the small towns and villages of southern Xinjiang, and the pattern of residential segregation is even starker, with nearly 80 percent of all Uyghurs living in the south with only minimal contact with mainstream Han society.

As James Millward (2007, pp. 30–177) notes, Xinjiang's spatio-demographic ecology has deep historical and geographic roots. For over a century and a half, the people who are today known as the Uyghurs inhabited the oasis settlements to the north and south of the Taklamakan Desert while working the caravan routes along the old Silk Road that connects Europe to Asia. When the Qing dynasty conquered what they declared the 'New Frontier' (*Xinjiang*), the Manchu rulers broke with Han and Tang dynasty precedent in establishing their administrative and military headquarters in the Dzungaria Basin and Ili river valley north of the Tianshan

mountain range, while providing the Uyghurs to the south of the Tianshan mountains in the Tarim Basin – or what they termed the 'Muslim Region' (*huibu*) – a high degree of cultural and political autonomy (see Map 6.1). In Zungharia, as well as the new administrative capital of Dihua (which would be renamed Ürümqi in 1954), Manchu officials and banner armies established sedentary military colonies (*tuntian*) while regulating Han and Hui migration into southern Xinjiang; these state farms laid the residential and bureaucratic foundations for subsequent Han settlement of northern Xinjiang.

Following the establishment of the PRC, Han settlers flooded into the Northwest. With the establishment of the Xinjiang Production Construction Corps (XPCC or *bingtuan*) in 1952, the Communist Party-state settled demobilised Han soldiers and then Han migrants on military-style agricultural farms in the fertile plains to the north of the Tianshan mountains, luring over two million settlers to Xinjiang by the late 1970s (Seymour 2000). Today, over 5 million Han (64 percent of the total Han population in Xinjiang) live along the Tianshan Corridor (XJTJ 2013), which links Gansu province and the Chinese interior with Kazakhstan and Central Asia via a 'new Silk Road' – a string of Han-dominated or growing Han settlement cities (Hami, Ürümqi, Shihezi, Karamay, Yining, etc.) and a network of airports, roads, waterworks and railway lines that straddle the Tianshan mountain range as they dissect Xinjiang into a smaller more dense populated northern and much larger and sparely populated southern section (see Map 6.2). The Tianshan Corridor is already home to most of Xinjiang's urban centers and its economic engine, as well as the vast majority of the Bingtuan's 14 colonies, 7 cities, 17 regimental farms and pastures, 4391 enterprises and 2.70 million members (86 percent Han) (Cao 2010, p. 972; XPCC 2014). In late 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced ambitious plans for a 'Silk Road Economic Belt' that would connect China with Europe and the Middle East through Xinjiang and into the Central Asian states of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Here Xinjiang and its Tianshan Corridor loom large in China's "pivot West" (Pantucci and Petersen 2013; Leibold 2014).

We now have a rich store of regional ethnographies on contemporary Xinjiang, where scholars have mapped the often-strained contours of Uyghur-Han relations.[4] Here residential segregation is only one of a range of hard and soft boundaries that seriously curtail daily interactions between the two communities. There are important lifestyle and cultural barriers – such as language, religion, dress, perceptions of time and food taboos – and structural/institutional boundaries – like *hukou* (residency) restrictions, segregated schooling, *danwei* (work unit) corralling and endogamy. While economic reforms have corroded some of these barriers (easing *hukou* and *danwei* restrictions, for example), market mechanisms (chiefly, private property and industry) have re-segmented the labour market in Xinjiang in ways that actually help reinforce existing patterns of residential and socioeconomic segregation. In short, Uyghur-Han relations exhibit an oppositional culture of mutual prejudice and distrust, with socio-spatial boundaries both mirroring and perpetuating Uyghur residential segregation.

*Map 6.1* Topography of the XUAR
PRC. Map data © 2015, Google
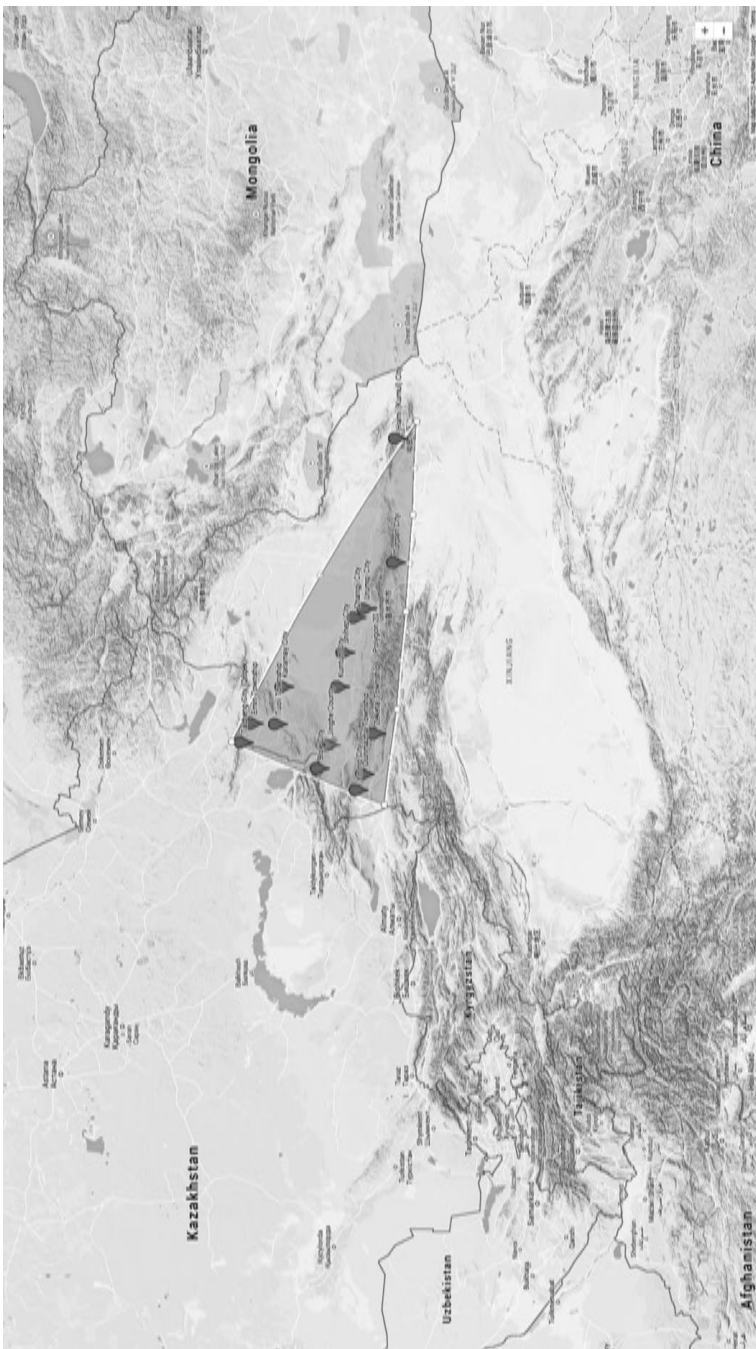
*Map 6.2* Tianshan Corridor, XUAR

Map data © 2015, AutoNavi, Google

## Measuring and mapping Uyghur residential segregation

Despite abundant ethnographic and anecdotal evidence, few have attempted to map and quantify the scope of Uyghur residential segregation. The influential Deputy Director of the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences, Li Xiaoxia (2012, p. 9) describes the pattern of ethnic-based residency in Xinjiang as: 'large scale admixture; small scale assemblages; and mutually interlocking and mixed residency' (*da zaju, xiao juju, hu xiangjiao cuoza chu*). In what follows, we put this depiction to the test by measuring Uyghur residential patterns with the assistance of two qualitative tools: 1) spatial demography as enumerated in official population statistics and 2) residential unevenness as aggregated in the dissimilarity index (D-index). While both these empirical methods are not without their limitations (see below), they help us to both visualise and quantify the dimensions of Uyghur residential quarantining. Equally important, they allow us to measure levels of segregation at different spatial scales, across time and even comparatively with other ethnic/racial groups in China and abroad.

Spatial and temporal scales are crucial vectors in any examination of residential segregation. Settlement patterns vary greatly between 'macro-spatial' areal units (the globe, nations and provinces) and more fine-grained, 'micro-spatial' areas (towns, cities, suburbs, neighbourhoods, and even streets). Similarly, residential structures can alter over time, especially in a society undergoing rapid socio-economic change like China. As a result, we seek to trace Uyghur residential segregation across different spatial and temporal scales (Fossett 2005, p. 479; 496–503).
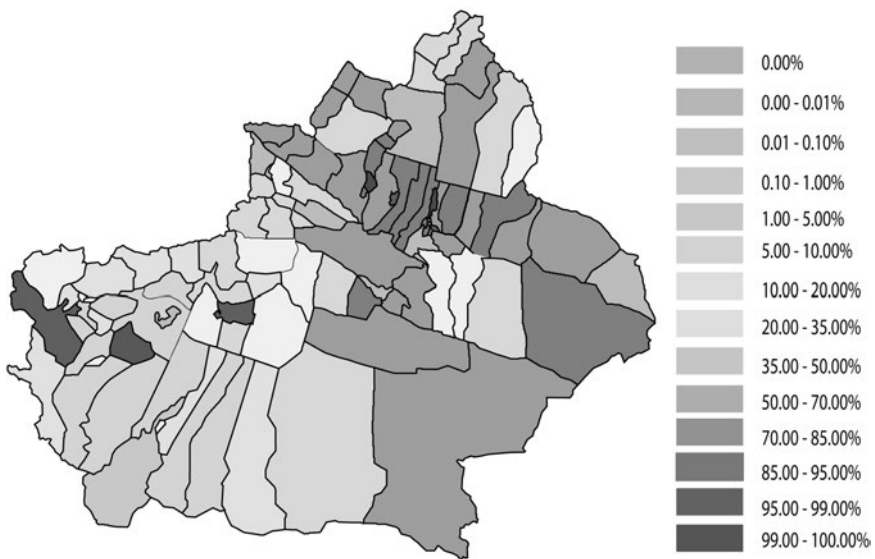
### *Spatial demography*

Population statistics in the national census and provincial-level statistical yearbooks provide valuable data for measuring patterns of residential segregation among ethnic groups in China. In particular, the annual *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook* (*Xinjiang tongji nianjian*) provides a breakdown of ethnic populations across various administrative units in the XUAR. Yet, these statistics are not without problems. The ethnic demography of Xinjiang is a politically sensitive topic, meaning we must adopt a critical stance towards any data generated by government sources.

There are significant discrepancies between the population figures reported in the national census and the statistical yearbooks,[5] with different methodologies and statistical standards employed. More importantly, the actual number of Han residents in Xinjiang is significantly higher than official data due to the absence of military personal and temporary migrants – those deemed to have spent less than six months in the XUAR (Smith Finley 2013, p. 27; Toops 2004, pp. 241–2).[6] Furthermore, while we lack evidence of any intentional manipulation, one cannot rule out the possibility of 'creative accounting' aimed at ensuring the Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities remain the majority in the XUAR. This said, any undercount is unlikely to affect the relative spatial distribution of the Uyghur population, which is the key focus of this chapter.
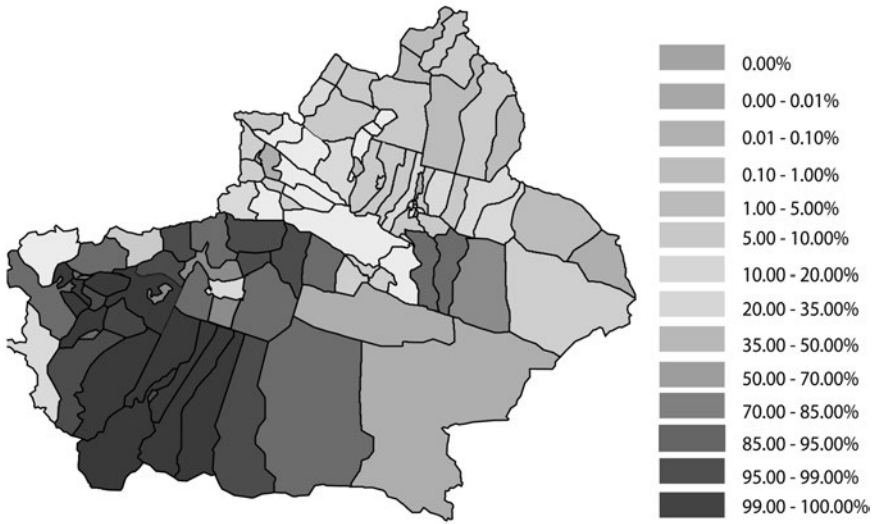
At national scale in 2010, 99.32 percent of all Chinese Uyghurs live inside the XUAR, with a mere 68,044 Uyghurs living as registered migrants or permanent residents in other Chinese provinces (NBS 2010).[7] In fact, the Uyghur population of neighbouring Kazakhstan (estimated at 250,000) is possibly five times greater than those living in the Chinese interior (Shichor 2010, p. 294–5). As a result, most Han Chinese rarely, if ever, encounter a Uyghur in their daily lives, with their impressions and knowledge of the community formed almost entirely from state schooling, the media and social networks.

As previously discussed, at provincial scale, most Uyghurs live in the country-side of southern Xinjiang; most Han, by contrast, live in northern Xinjiang and its urban centers (see Maps 6.3 & 6.4). While 54 percent of the Han in Xinjiang reside in cities, 81 percent of Uyghurs are rural inhabitants (Cao 2010, p. 977; Li 2012, p. 9). Based on the latest population statistics, 79.15 percent of the XUAR's Uyghurs live in the five administrative regions (Hotan, Kashgar, Kizilsu, Aksu and Bayingolin) of southern Xinjiang, a figure that increases to 85.63 percent if one removes urban centers from the picture (XJTJ 2013). In fact, the Uyghurs comprise more than 90 percent of the population in 15 out of the 18 counties in the rural southwest prefectures of Hotan and Kashgar, including 99.26 percent of the nearly 300,000 residents of Hotan county. During a recent survey of residential patterns in southern Xinjiang, Li Xiaoxia (2011, pp. 59–60) found that eight of the 20 administrative villages in Akesakemarelei, Kashgar Prefecture were completely segregated, with seven purely Uyghur and one purely Han village.



| | |
|---|---|
| | 0.00% |
| | 0.00 - 0.01% |
| | 0.01 - 0.10% |
| | 0.10 - 1.00% |
| | 1.00 - 5.00% |
| | 5.00 - 10.00% |
| | 10.00 - 20.00% |
| | 20.00 - 35.00% |
| | 35.00 - 50.00% |
| | 50.00 - 70.00% |
| | 70.00 - 85.00% |
| | 85.00 - 95.00% |
| | 95.00 - 99.00% |
| | 99.00 - 100.00% |

*Map 6.3*  Han Population Density by Administrative Unit, XUAR (2012)

*Source:* XJTJ 2013, Map by Bridget Leibold

| | |
|---|---|
| | 0.00% |
| | 0.00 - 0.01% |
| | 0.01 - 0.10% |
| | 0.10 - 1.00% |
| | 1.00 - 5.00% |
| | 5.00 - 10.00% |
| | 10.00 - 20.00% |
| | 20.00 - 35.00% |
| | 35.00 - 50.00% |
| | 50.00 - 70.00% |
| | 70.00 - 85.00% |
| | 85.00 - 95.00% |
| | 95.00 - 99.00% |
| | 99.00 - 100.00% |

*Map 6.4*  Uyghur Population Density by Administrative Unit, XUAR (2012)

*Source:* XJTJ 2013. Map by Bridget Leibold

One can trace this pattern of Uyghur spatial concentration back in time. In 1994, for example, 54.51 percent of all Uyghurs in Xinjiang lived in the 18 counties of Hotan and Kashgar prefectures; a figure that today remains largely unchanged at 51.27 percent (XJTJ 2013; XJTJ 1995). While state- and self-initiated migration has lured millions of Han Chinese into the cities of northern Xinjiang, the vast majority of China's Uyghurs continue to live in the same rural communities they have for centuries. Yet, with ambitious plans to increase Xinjiang's urban population from 9 million today to 15 million in 2020 and 20 million by 2030 (XUAR 2012), policymakers are actively contemplating the challenges associated with boosting Uyghur migration and urbanisation. If these targets are to be reached without flooding the XUAR with Han migrants from inland China, a significant number of these new urbanites must come from internal minority re-settlement. As a part of the 'comfortable housing project' (*fumin anju*), the XUAR government aims to relocate 700,000 impoverished farmers and 1.6 million nomads before 2015, with most settled into new or existing urban centers and suburbs (Li 2012, p. 13). The implementation of this urbanisation plan will determine the future shape of ethnic-based segregation and ethnic relations more broadly in Xinjiang for decades to come.

Residential settlement patterns are far more fluid and varied in urban Xinjiang. Yet Uyghur and Han communities still create their own geographies of place and space, with Joniak-Lüthi (2015) demonstrating how they are maintained through largely mono-ethnic social networks and differentiated yet fluid "lived space."
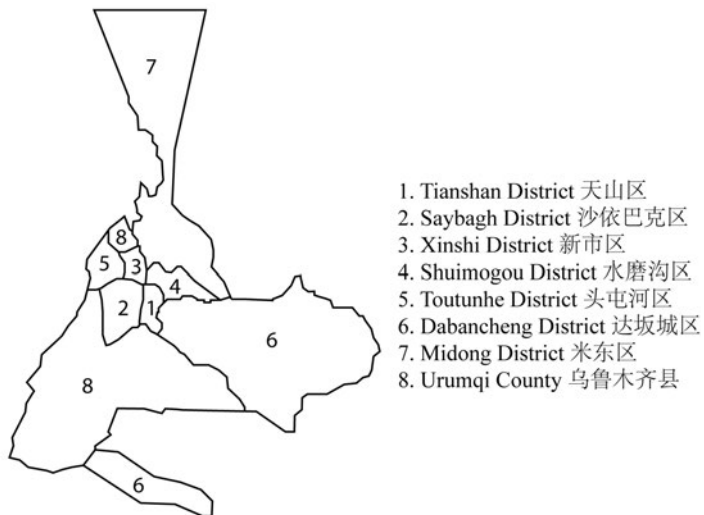
We have extensive ethnographic evidence of divided Uyghur-Han communities in major urban centers. In Aksu, Madlen Kobi (2014) and Li Xiaoxia (2012) have encountered segregated neighbourhoods and even residential blocks, with some areas refusing to sell or rent to Uyghurs; although Kobi notes the mitigating role of state *danwei* housing and socio-economic status in perpetuating mix-residency housing. In Korla, Tom Cliff (2012, pp. 43–98) documented (both discursively and through photographs) the dramatic spatial transformation of this frontier city: the bulldozing of brick-and-mud Uyghur houses, the re-direction of waterways, and the construction of a massive, Han-dominated 'new city district' (*xinchengqu*). In Yining, Jay Dautcher (2007) witnessed a similar process of Uyghur 'desettlement', where a growing Han population encroaches on traditional Uyghur neighbourhoods.

Over the last couple of decades, state-led construction and market force have dramatically altered the urban landscape of Xinjiang, and while ethnic communities have shifted in response, they tend to self-segregation when possible. Take the transformation of the previous center of Han settlement in Yining, 'Han people's street' (*Hanren jie*), which is now one of the clusters of Uyghur settlement in the city. Today, it is difficult to find a Han on Han people's street, with the neighbourhood 91.6 percent Uyghur (Li 2012, pp. 12–3). Finally, in the name of 'constructing cities to garrison the frontier' (*jiancheng shubian*), the Bingtuan have created a number of new 'Han cities' (*Hancheng*) (Li 2012, p. 14): such as Aral (91 percent Han), Wujiaqu (96 percent Han), Shihezi (94 percent Han), and Xinjiang's newest city Shuanghe (83 percent Han) (XJTJ 2013).

We find a similar pattern of segregation in the XUAR's capital of Ürümqi. We estimate that nearly half (45 percent) of the capital's Uyghur residents lived in the Tianshan District (*Tianshan qu*) in south-central Ürümqi in 2012 (see Map 6.5).[8] Originally the core of the old Manchu banner garrison, the Tianshan District has been home to a small yet stable community of Uyghur traders and merchants for over a century (Wang 2000, pp. 42–44). Yet, in recent years, millions of migrants have inundated the city, Han and minority alike. One estimate puts the number of internal minority migrants in Ürümqi at over a quarter of a million people or 35.4 percent of the city's total population in 2009 (Han et al. 2010, p. 39). Most of the Uyghur migrants have taken up residence in the tenement blocks south of the 'International Grand Bazaar' (*Xinjiang Guoji Dabazha*) in the northern part of the Tianshan District.

In a 2011 socio-spatial analysis of Ürümqi, Zhang et al. (2012, p. 821) found a strong statistical correlation between internal migrants from southern Xinjiang and Uyghur residential clustering, identifying the Tianshan District as a dense area of minority concentration. Following the 2009 Ürümqi riots, this pattern of residential segregation intensified in and around the riot's flashpoints. Han and Hui residents took flight from the Tianshan District (Li 2012, p. 17), accentuating the existing 'Uyghurs in the south, Han in the north' (*Nan Wei Bei Han*) residential pattern (Wang and Li 2013, p. 10).

At the sub-district level (*jiedao qu*), Zhang et al. (2012, p. 822) identified five areas of Uyghur residential clustering. Two of these areas are located in close

1. Tianshan District 天山区
2. Saybagh District 沙依巴克区
3. Xinshi District 新市区
4. Shuimogou District 水磨沟区
5. Toutunhe District 头屯河区
6. Dabancheng District 达坂城区
7. Midong District 米东区
8. Urumqi County 乌鲁木齐县

*Map 6.5* Administrative Districts of Ürümqi City

Map by Bridget Leibold

proximity to the Grand Bazaar: the Tuanjie Road sub-district (*Tuanjielu jiedao*), which is immediately to the southeast of the Grand Bazaar, and is 52.31 percent Uyghur; and the Heping Road sub-district (*Hepinglu jiedao*), which runs north-northeast of the Grand Bazaar and is 23.37 percent Uyghur. They also identified three other pockets of Uyghur residential clustering: the Yan'an Road sub-district (*Yan'anlu jiedao*) south of Xinjiang University, which is 42.64 percent Uyghur; the Hongyan sub-district (*Hongyan jiedao*) further south of the university, which is 36.92 percent Uyghur; and the Badaowan sub-district (*Badaowan jiedao*) located in the northeast of the city in the Shuimogou district (*Shuimogou qu*), which is 44.29 percent Uyghur.

Finally, if we decrease the spatial scale even further, we find the highest levels of Uyghur residential clustering in Ürümqi at the community level (*shequ*). A 2009 door-to-door survey of the Erdaoqiao community (*Erdaoqiao shequ*), which is located in the immediate proximity of the Grand Bazaar, found that 94 percent of the residents were ethnic minorities (almost exclusively Uyghurs) with 34 percent temporary migrants from southern Xinjiang (Han et al. 2010, p. 39). This survey found that most residents of Erdaoqiao are poorly educated and earn less than 1,000 *yuan*/month, with 28 percent living in accommodation of less than six-square-meters and 35 percent without access to an internal toilet and running water. At the community level there are a handful of Uyghur/minority ghettos in the Tianshan District, as summarised in Table 6.1. Following the 2009 riots, city planners poured millions of dollars into improving the social management,

Table 6.1 Uyghur/Minority Ghettos, Tianshan District, Ürümqi

| Community Name | Sub-District | Size (Km²) | Households | Residents | Migrants | Percent | Minorities | Percent | Uyghurs | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yan'an New Village Community (延安新村社区) | Bawan sub-district (大湾管委会) | 0.68 | 1457 | 5076 | 4139 | 82.00% | 4574 | 90.11% | na | na |
| Yanhua Community (盐化社区) | Bawan sub-district (大湾管委会) | 0.68 | 2063 | 5989 | 4713 | 78.69% | 3576 | 59.71% | 2968 | 49.56% |
| Fuxiang Street South Community (富康街南社区) | Heijiashan sub-district (黑甲山片区管委会) | 0.2 | 2736 | 6102 | 4085 | 66.95% | 4261 | 69.83% | na | na |
| Houquan Road North Community (后泉路北社区) | Heijiashan sub-district (黑甲山片区管委会) | 0.07 | 1680 | 3958 | 4333 | 109.47% | 2101 | 54.00% | na | na |
| Beiwan Street Community (北湾街社区) | Heijiashan sub-district (黑甲山片区管委会) | 0.16 | 2470 | 6270 | 4711 | 75.14% | 4891 | 78.01% | 2067 | 32.97% |
| Dawan North Community (大湾北社区) | Tuanjie Road sub-district (团结路街道) | 0.14 | 1975 | 4939 | 2902 | 58.76% | 3466 | 75.00% | na | Na |
| Bahuliang Community (八户梁社区) | Tuanjie Road sub-district (团结路街道) | 1.36 | 1139 | 3152 | 1891 | 60.00% | 2994 | 95.00% | 2154 | 68.30% |
| Saimachang East Community (赛马场西社区) | Saimachang (赛马场管委会) | 0.9 | 3728 | 10314 | 9760 | 94.63% | 9798 | 95.00% | na | Na |
| Dawan South Community (大湾南社区) | Saimachang (赛马场管委会) | 0.8 | 1345 | 3365 | 1856 | 55.16% | 2490 | 74.00% | na | Na |

Sources: Tianshan District People's Government (http://www.xjtsq.gov.cn). All figures are from the Tianshan District's web portal, with the exception of the minority population of Dawan South Community (Xinjing bao 2009) and the Uyghur population and percentage of the Bahuliang Community (Li 2012: 9). Where the percentage of migrants or minorities were provided, we used Tianshan government figures; otherwise we calculated them ourselves, resulting in some anomalies, such as the percentage of migrants in the Houquan Road North Community.

security and living conditions of these tenements; yet, migrant populations are highly fluid and these improvements – such as the state's 40 million *yuan* investment in the East Saimachang Community which helped double rent prices (Hao 2013) – will overtime force migrants into other, lower-priced residential pockets.

### *Dissimilarity index*

The dissimilarity index is another quantitative tool for measuring residential segregation. It calculates the evenness of spatial distribution, essentially quantifying here the percentage of Uyghurs that would need to move out of a given area (province, county, city or district) in order to achieve residential parity with the Han majority. The index's value ranges from 0 (complete evenness, viz. residential integration) to 100 (complete unevenness, viz. residential segregation). A value of 60 for Uyghur-Han segregation would mean 60 percent of either group would have to move in or out of the areal unit to achieve equal distribution. As an analytical benchmark, a *D* score over 80 marks an 'extreme level' of residential segregation; 60–80 is a 'high level'; 40–60 is a 'relatively high level'; 20–40 a 'medium level'; and below 20 is a 'low level' (see Zhang et al. 2013, p. 31).

The D-index is not without its limitations. As Massey and Denton (1988) point out, dissimilarity measures only one dimension of spatial segregation, namely relative evenness over space, and we require other analytical tools for gauging exposure, concentration, centralization and clustering among different residential groups. Yet, due to its widespread use in the social sciences since the 1950s, the index provides us with a useful tool for comparing levels of residential segregation over time, across spatial scales and even comparatively with different countries and ethnic/racial groups.

Table 6.2 provides the *D* value for each of China's 55 ethnic minority groups at the national scale as enumerated across the 31 provincial-level administrative units in 2000 and 2010, and indicates the percentage of each group that would need to move to another province in order to create an equal distribution with the Han majority. The data confirms the extremely high level of residential segregation for the Uyghurs, remaining consistently high in the range of 99–98, and dropping a mere 0.10 percent over the last decade. In 2010, the Uyghurs exhibited the highest rate of residential unevenness among China's 55 ethnic minorities.

When we reduce the spatial scale, the level of Uyghur residential segregation decreases. This mirrors the uneven spatial demography of the XUAR. Table 6.3 provides the *D* value for the Uyghurs and the other main ethnic minorities in Xinjiang at both the county level of administrative division and the district level in the regional capital of Ürümqi. Inside the XUAR, the Uyghurs continue to exhibit a 'high level' of segregation with a *D* value of 72, although they are less isolated than the Kirgiz and Tajik minorities. As one would expect, the *D* value decreases significantly at the district level in the more diverse capital of Ürümqi, here the Uyghurs exhibit only a 'medium level' of residential segregation, with the rates for each of the minority group decreasing. This seems to confirm the view of Li Xiaoxia (2012) that cities like Ürümqi provide more opportunities for ethnic integration

*Table 6.2  D value of China's 55 Ethnic Minorities at Provincial Scale, 2000, 2010*

| Ethnic Group | 2000 | 2010 | Percentage Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mongolian | 79.53 | 80.67 | 1.41% |
| Hui | 52.68 | 53.96 | 2.37% |
| Tibetan | 87.36 | 88.38 | 1.15% |
| Uygur | 98.70 | 98.60 | –0.10% |
| Miao | 77.91 | 73.33 | –6.25% |
| Yi | 87.55 | 87.24 | –0.36% |
| Zhuang | 90.03 | 87.66 | –2.70% |
| Bouyei | 92.24 | 85.67 | –7.67% |
| Korean | 84.02 | 80.16 | –4.82% |
| Manchu | 79.65 | 78.47 | –1.50% |
| Dong | 84.40 | 80.97 | –4.24% |
| Yao | 80.20 | 78.57 | –2.07% |
| Bai | 88.50 | 87.02 | –1.70% |
| Tujia | 81.12 | 77.23 | –5.04% |
| Hani | 96.50 | 95.60 | –0.94% |
| Kazak | 98.91 | 96.37 | –2.64% |
| Dai | 96.07 | 94.44 | –1.73% |
| Li | 95.96 | 93.09 | –3.08% |
| Lisu | 93.56 | 92.58 | –1.06% |
| Wa | 94.09 | 90.77 | –3.66% |
| She | 81.83 | 80.27 | –1.94% |
| Gaoshan | 38.52 | 35.75 | –7.75% |
| Lahu | 96.18 | 95.24 | –0.99% |
| Shui | 90.96 | 83.77 | –8.58% |
| Dongxiang | 96.46 | 96.06 | –0.42% |
| Naxi | 93.57 | 92.78 | –0.85% |
| Jinpo | 96.06 | 94.20 | –1.97% |
| Kirgiz | 98.07 | 97.35 | –0.74% |
| Tu | 88.74 | 79.90 | –11.06% |
| Daur | 90.11 | 87.13 | –3.42% |
| Mulam | 91.51 | 87.02 | –5.16% |
| Qiang | 91.39 | 89.74 | –1.84% |
| Blang | 95.90 | 94.93 | –1.02% |
| Salar | 95.47 | 92.51 | –3.20% |
| Maonan | 93.51 | 87.63 | –6.71% |
| Gelo | 94.57 | 88.08 | –7.37% |
| Xibe | 86.47 | 84.79 | –1.98% |
| Achang | 96.29 | 93.71 | –2.75% |
| Primi | 95.54 | 95.60 | 0.06% |
| Tajik | 95.60 | 94.06 | –1.64% |
| Nu | 95.60 | 86.68 | –10.29% |

*(Continued)*

*Table 6.2* (Continued)

| Ethnic Group | 2000 | 2010 | Percentage Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Uzbek | 97.13 | 94.99 | −2.25% |
| Russian | 87.56 | 83.86 | −4.41% |
| Ewenki | 90.11 | 88.60 | −1.70% |
| Deang | 96.79 | 95.69 | −1.15% |
| Baoan | 96.45 | 95.04 | −1.48% |
| Yugur | 94.81 | 91.42 | −3.71% |
| Jing | 87.91 | 83.10 | −5.79% |
| Tatar | 93.19 | 90.45 | −3.03% |
| Derung | 77.79 | 89.68 | 13.26% |
| Oroqen | 86.17 | 83.21 | −3.56% |
| Hezhen | 83.96 | 68.56 | −22.46% |
| Monba | 95.03 | 91.48 | −3.88% |
| Lhoba | 91.63 | 95.22 | 3.77% |
| Jino | 96.50 | 95.83 | −0.70% |
| Average | 89.39 | 87.00 | −2.74% |

Calculated using data from the 2000 Fifth National Census of China and the 2010 Sixth National Census of China. The value of $D$ is defined as: $D=1/2* \Sigma(Mi/M-Hi/H)$, where Mi and Hi are the numbers of minority and Han persons living in areal unit i (here China's 31 provincial-level administrative units), and M and H are the total number of minority and Han persons, respectively, in the population of China. The absolute differences between Mi/M and Hi/H are summed over all the areal units, and one-half of the sum of these differences is obtained. This calculation is performed for each one of China's 55 minority populations. The resulting value of the D-index for any one minority group, when multiplied by 100, represents the percentage amount of persons in that minority that would need to move to certain other residential areas in order to for them to have the same residential distributions with the Han majority over the whole country.

*Table 6.3* *D* value for Ethnic Minority Groups Inside the XUAR, 2011

| Ethnic Group | County level, XUAR | District level, Ürümqi City |
|---|---|---|
| Uyghur | 71.94 | 24.61 |
| Kazak | 63.69 | 40.94 |
| Hui | 40.25 | 27.58 |
| Kirgiz | 91.35 | 23.84 |
| Mongolian | 64.29 | 13.33 |
| Xibe | 68.79 | 14.79 |
| Russian | 44.65 | 18.79 |
| Tajik | 97.11 | 30.46 |
| Uzbek | 66.02 | 38.71 |
| Tatar | 59.46 | 41.35 |
| Man | 34.16 | 9.58 |
| Daur | 77.01 | 17.06 |
| Others | 45.41 | 7.18 |

Calculated from 2011 Public Security Bureau population estimates as provided in Tables 6.3–6.7 (各地，洲，县（市）分民族人口数) of the 2012 *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook* (新疆统计年鉴).

*Table 6.4* *D* value for Select Ethnic Groups at the Sub-district Level, Tianshan District, Ürümqi

| Ethnic group | 1990 | 2000 | Percentage change | 2010 | Percentage change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Uyghur | 30.1 | 30.1 | 0.00% | 28.3 | −6.36% |
| Kazak | 35.8 | 32.8 | −9.15% | 32.6 | −0.61% |
| Hui | 31.2 | 29.4 | −6.12% | 19.9 | −47.74% |

*Source:* Zhang Lingyun et al. 2013: 30

and residential mixing due to the higher proportion of migrants. According to Zhang Li et al. (2012, p. 826), Ürümqi is a 'multicultural city' (*duoyuan wenhua de chengshi*). Yet, like Li Xiaoxia, they note the continued existence of ethnic 'slums' or 'ghettos' (*penghuqu*) in certain quarters of Ürümqi city. Ethnic clustering, for Wang Jianji (2000, p. 55) at least, renders the city 'half integrated, half segregated' with patterns of residential settlement creating important 'barriers to social integration'.

In fact, as discussed above, the Uyghur population in Ürümqi is concentrated in the Tianshan District with the highest rates of residential segregation at the sub-district and community levels. While we were unable to obtain the data required to calculate the *D* value at these levels, Zhang Lingyun et al. (2013, p. 31) provides some illustrative calculations. Table 6.4 contains the *D* values for the Uyghurs, Kazak, and Hui at the sub-district level in Tianshan over the last three decades, and reveals a persistent 'medium level' of Uyghur residential segregation with only minimal change across time. Table 6.5 provides the 'location quotient' (*LQ*), another (less widely used) statistical index for quantifying the concentration of demographic groups over areal units, for the Uyghur, Kazak and Hui minorities. They conclude that despite a general decline over time, the Uyghurs continue to exhibit a 'medium level' of residential segregation (here indicated by a *LQ* score of 2.01–2.00) in the Saimachang, Erdaoqiao and Dawan sub-districts of Tianshan; although at levels slightly lower than both the Hui and Kazaks minorities.

One of the most valuable aspects of the D-index is the ability to compare levels of residential segregation internationally, although here we need to remain sensitive to differences in spatial scale, area/unit of analysis and methods of index calculation. In one of the few qualitative studies of comparative residential segregation, Johnston et al. (2007, p. 733) conclude that Blacks in major US cities exhibit significantly higher levels of residential segregation than ethnic minorities in England/Wales, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This conclusion mirrors the now substantial body of research on the high rate of Black residential segregation in urban America. Black-White segregation peaked during the 1960s and 1970s, with 'a steady but slow decline' since 1980. As measured by the dissimilarity index, Black residential segregation remained 'very high' in 2010, according to Logan and Stults (2011). In large metropolitan centers, especially in the Midwest and Northeast, Blacks still experience 'hyper-segregation' across several

*Table 6.5* LQ value for Select Ethnic Minorities at the Sub-district Level, Tianshan District, Ürümqi

| | Uyghurs | | | Kazaks | | | Hui | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sub-district Name | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 |
| Dongmen (东门街道) | 0.329 | 0.278 | 0.208 | 0.499 | 0.493 | 0.251 | 0.403 | 0.372 | 0.535 |
| Heping Road (和平路街道) | 1.276 | 1.57 | 0.388 | 0.541 | 0.717 | 0.182 | 3.705 | 2.128 | 1.582 |
| Jiefang North Road (解放北路街道) | 0.479 | 0.438 | 0.400 | 0.46 | 0.387 | 0.429 | 0.503 | 0.532 | 0.801 |
| Jiefang South Road (解放南路街道) | 1.761 | 1.818 | 0.917 | 0.281 | 0.494 | 0.733 | 2.245 | 1.414 | 1.2 |
| Shengli Road (胜利路街道) | 1.624 | 1.72 | 1.230 | 2.603 | 2.002 | 1.438 | 0.595 | 0.602 | 0.453 |
| Tuanjie Road (团结路街道) | 2.256 | 2.271 | 1.933 | 1.392 | 1.746 | 1.119 | 1.018 | 0.797 | 0.772 |
| Xinhua North Road (新华北路街道) | 0.57 | 0.398 | 0.383 | 0.406 | 0.43 | 0.345 | 0.719 | 0.58 | 0.831 |
| Yan'erwo (燕尔窝街道) | 0.564 | 0.463 | 0.537 | 2.755 | 4.148 | 1.792 | 0.51 | 0.582 | 0.831 |
| Saimachang (赛马场管委会) | – | – | 2.046 | – | – | 0.48 | – | – | 1.364 |
| Heijiashan (黑甲山管委会) | – | – | 1.050 | – | – | 0.891 | – | – | 2.496 |
| Er'daoqiao (二道桥管委会) | – | – | 2.396 | – | – | 0.206 | – | – | 1.642 |
| Xinhua South Road (新华南路街道) | 1.329 | 1.011 | 0.908 | 0.764 | 0.676 | 0.385 | 0.991 | 0.889 | 0.946 |
| Xingfu Road (幸福路街道) | 0.614 | 0.583 | 0.490 | 0.507 | 0.622 | 0.658 | 0.816 | 0.721 | 1.007 |
| Qingnian Road (青年路街道) | 0.317 | 0.345 | 0.579 | 0.494 | 0.581 | 1.056 | 0.364 | 0.362 | 0.482 |
| Jianquan (碱泉街道) | – | 0.415 | 0.238 | – | 0.482 | 0.273 | – | 0.51 | 0.639 |
| Dawan (大湾管委会) | – | 0.73 | 2.016 | – | 0.608 | 0.9 | – | 2.62 | 1.256 |
| Yan'an Road (延安路街道) | – | 1.822 | 1.193 | – | 0.612 | 2.75 | – | 1.249 | 1.118 |
| Hongyan (红雁街道) | – | – | 0.682 | – | – | 10.08 | – | – | 2.073 |
| Average | 1.01 | 0.99 | 0.98 | 0.97 | 1.00 | 1.33 | 1.08 | 0.95 | 1.11 |

*Source:* Zhang Lingyun et al. 2013: 32

dimensions of residential isolation (Fossett 2005, pp. 499–500). Similarly high levels of residential segregation have been found for Whites in post-apartheid South Africa as well as Arabs in Israel's main cities (Christopher 2001; Falah 1996).

Table 6.6 compares the *D* value averages for Uyghur-Han and Black-White communities in China and America over the last couple of decades at the highest level of spatial analysis available. As the table reveals, Uyghur residential segregation is significantly higher than Black segregation, remaining consistently high in the 99–98 range while Black segregation has declined from 73 in 1980 to 59 in the most recent census. These differences partially reflect varying areas/units of analysis, with the China data representing a national average based on either a provincial and county level unit of analysis, and the US figures plot an average over 300 plus 'Metropolitan Statistical Areas' (MSA) with 50,000-plus census tracts as the unit of analysis.

As one would expect, the Black-White *D* value varies greatly across MSAs, from a high of 81.5 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to a low of 21.9 in Provo, Utah (see Frey 2011), and when we compare this to Uyghur-Han residential segregation in Ürümqi, the resultant *D* of 24.61 looks comparatively low. The Ürümqi figure is roughly equal to the 23.40 *D* value Appold and Hong (2006) calculated for Malays in Chinese-dominated Singapore in 2000. Significantly, however, the Singapore figures are calculated from an average of nearly 100,000 areal districts while our Ürümqi figures are divided among a mere eight municipal districts. One would expect the Uyghur-Han dissimilarity rate for Ürümqi to increase significantly if

*Table 6.6* Comparison of *D* value Averages, Uyghur-Han (China) vs. Black-White (USA)

| Year | 1982 | 2000 | 2000 | 2010 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Area of analysis | Nation | Nation | Nation | Nation |
| Unit of analysis | County | County | Province | Province |
| | | | | |
| Uyghurs | | | | |
| Dissimilarity with Han | 99.33 | 98.72 | 98.70 | 98.60 |
| | | | | |
| Year | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 |
| Area of analysis | MSA | MSA | MSA | MSA |
| Unit of analysis | Census tract | Census tract | Census tract | Census tract |
| | | | | |
| Blacks | | | | |
| Dissimilarity with Whites | 72.70 | 67.80 | 64.00 | 59.10 |

*Sources:* Logan and Stults (2011); Deng (2010); Poston and Micklin (1993). The Uyghur-Han *D* value is the unweighted average for China as a whole across either the 31 provincial-level administrative areas or across the more than 2,000-plus county-level administrative areas (average 400,000 residents). The Black-White D value is the weighted average of the 300-plus metropolitan statistical areas using census tract data (average 4,000 residents)

the figures were calculated using all the sub-districts or community administrative units as a point of comparison.[9]

In sum, as the above empirical data clearly demonstrates, residential segregation among China's Uyghur population is extremely high. Uyghur spatial isolation has declined at the national and provincial scale over the last couple of decades; yet the rate of decline is minuscule and has slowed over the last decade. In the XUAR capital of Ürümqi, Uyghurs are far more residentially integrated and less likely to live in 'ethnic enclaves' like parts of southern Xinjiang; yet they remain concentrated in the Tianshan District and exhibit high levels of residential segregation in several sub-district and community-level locations. Thus, 'large-scale segregation, small-scale clustering, and mixed residency in some urban neighbourhoods' is perhaps a more accurate depiction of ethnic-based residency in Xinjiang.

## Implications of Uyghur residential segregation

There is widespread agreement in the social science literature that socio-spatial structures impact, and under certain conditions even shape, ethnic relations. Johnson et al. (2007, p. 714) argue that the spatial distribution of ethnic groups is a product of three interrelated processes: discrimination, disadvantage and individual choice. Yet, there is little agreement on the implications of ethnic-based residential segregation on inter-ethnic relations. Does social and residential integration foster competition, ethno-centralism and ultimately conflict; or is it the state of segregation that engenders mistrust, misunderstanding and ultimately tension and conflict? Where, in short, are the independent variables?

Putman (2007, p. 141ff) identifies 'two diametrically opposing perspectives' on the relationship between settlement patterns and inter-ethnic relations. The first is the 'contact hypothesis', which arose in the American academy following the 1960s anti-segregationist movement in the United States. Here progressives asserted that the educational and residential segregation of Blacks in America was detrimental to social solidary, and social proximity would naturally foster inter-ethnic tolerance and harmony. The Chicago School of American sociology has long argued that residential segregation creates 'social immobility and spatial entrapment', and advocates the breaking down of these barriers and the integration of minority communities into mainstream society through the creation of a 'melting pot' (Alba & Nee 1997, pp. 827–33).

A second opposing theory, which according to Putman (2007, p. 142) is supported by most of the empirical evidence to date, is the 'conflict theory'. Social integration – including the dismantling of homogenous residential neighbourhoods – fosters socio-economic competition, which in turn undermines inter-ethnic trust. In short, diversity engenders 'out-group distrust and in-group solidary' that can lead to ethno-centrism and even conflict. In order to stem this process of competition, neo-liberals like Will Kymlicka (1995, p. 10–33) stress the importance of recognising 'group differentiated rights/minority rights' and creating autonomous spaces to protect minority communities while accommodating their cultural differences.

Putman (2007, p. 144) puts forward a third possibility, the 'constrict theory', arguing that diversity reduces '*both* in-group *and* out-group solidary', and presents some preliminary evidence from the United States that ethnic communities in racially diverse neighbourhoods 'appear to "hunker down" – that is, to pull in like a turtle' (p. 149). Regardless, there is widespread agreement that homophilous tendencies – that is the natural inclination to associate with one's own kind (McPherson et al. 2001) – are commonplace in diverse, rapidly changing spatial environments.

Unsurprisingly, a similar debate exists inside China. There is little agreement at present over the relative socio-political merits of minority residential segregation, according to a recent State Ethnic Affairs Commission report (cited in Li 2012, pp. 12–3). One viewpoint holds that inter-ethnic contact engenders social integration, and argues that ethnic enclaves should be gradually and carefully dispersed. By redistributing and more fully integrating ethnic groups, the state can eliminate cultural misunderstandings and reduce tensions through active social management. An opposing view, asserts that ethnically concentrated areas are easier to manage, with the potential for conflict diffused and the chances of recurrence reduced. Yet, as many have noted, residential settlement patterns are often outside direct state control with market forces, cultural preferences and individual choice impacting on where people chose to live.

China's *Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy* (1984) guarantees ethnic minorities (like the Uyghurs) administrative and territorial autonomy 'where they live in concentrated communities'. 'The practice of regional autonomy for ethnic minorities', a 2000 State Council *White Paper* asserts, 'has ensured their equal footing and equal rights politically and satisfied the desire of all the ethnic minorities to take an active part in the nation's political activities to a large extent'. Today, the XUAR is one of 1,300-plus autonomous units that cover 64 percent of Chinese territory and is home to over 70 percent of China's minority population (Leibold 2013, p. 7). To date, traditional residential patterns and the law on regional ethnic autonomy continue to shape the geographies of Uyghur settlement and their interaction with other ethnic groups.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the number of autonomous units ballooned as local officials tried to take advantage of preferential state benefits for minorities. Yet, over the last decade, the political mood has shifted in China, and there is a renewed discursive focus on social cohesion, inter-ethnic contact and cultural integration. Ma Rong (2014a, p. 5), for example, argues that while regional ethnic autonomy is 'a viable option for a period of transition', it hardens ethnic identities, fosters inter-ethnic competition and can lead to 'endless conflicts' over the long term, and like others, Ma Rong envisions an eventual end to territorial-based autonomy as market forces intensify. The recently concluded Second Central Work Forum on Xinjiang called for 'orderly expanding the number of Xinjiang minorities who receive education, find employment and live in the interior', and 'orderly guiding the masses of each ethnic group in entering cities for employment'. This sort of ethnic mingling, the Forum concluded, is necessary for the 'establishment of a mutually embedded social structure and social environment' (Xinhua 2014).

Li Xiaoxia (2011; 2012) asserts that residential admixture has obvious long-term benefits but cannot be rushed or forced where conditions are not ripe. Ethnic enclaves can play a positive role in settling new migrants into an urban setting; yet ethnic-based segregation ultimately limits social interactions, heightens social inequalities, brews social disturbances and can block upward mobility. In contrast, increased contact between different ethnic groups will promote mutual understanding while reducing inter-group prejudice, bias, hostility and conflict. Residents of an ethnically mixed neighbourhood, due to daily social encounters, have a better capacity to understand one another and handle any ethnic issues, ultimately promoting inter-ethnic communication, contact and fusion.

Similarly, Wang and Li (2013) stress the benefits of integrated residency. In their survey of 160 residents of mixed neighbourhoods in Ürümqi, they claim to have uncovered both high levels of community support for integrated housing in Ürümqi and more intimate social interactions as a result. Among their respondents, 38 percent reported frequent socialising with friends from another ethnic group; 55 percent admit participating in other ethnic group's festivals; 58 percent were willing to have their children play with kids from another ethnic group; and 78 percent were willing to participate in community activities aimed at promoting ethnic sentiment. They call on the government to take a more active role in fostering residential integration by: 1) constructing ethnically mixed, low-income housing in wealthier Han communities; 2) creating a system of mixed residential housing allocation like the model that exists in Singapore; and 3) opening more communal spaces for multi-ethnic interaction and socialisation.

Yet, spatial integration, in and of itself, does not lead to social and cultural integration. Physical proximity is only one indicator of social distance. One can live surrounded by other ethnic groups and continue to work and play almost exclusively with one's co-ethnics. Appold and Hong (2006) failed to find any correlation between integrated residency and inter-ethnic friendships in Singapore. While mixed residential neighbourhoods do not guarantee socio-cultural integration and ethnic cohesion, some level of spatial proximity (even virtual proximity via the Internet or other communication tools) is a pre-requisite for physical contact, and both harmonious and conflictual relations. Li Xiaoxia and others seems to accept that some level of conflict is inevitable if China seeks to reduce ethnic-based segregation and foster social cohesion over the long term. 'Contact and friction are in essence symbiotic and frequent chafing is required to get to know someone', Li (2011, p. 65) writes, 'with the old saying "from an exchange of blows, friendship grow" (*buda bu xiang zhi*) pointing to this fact; in most circumstance, it's unreasonable to think that increased friction can be avoided in mix-residency situations'.

Thus far, we lack any systematic and empirically robust evidence on the impact of Uyghur residential patterns on ethnic relations. The violence that erupted in Ürümqi in July 2009 (which has continued in spasmodic yet deadly bursts across Xinjiang and now other parts of China) clearly reflects a high level of mistrust, ethno-centrism and even visceral hatred among certain segments of the Uyghur and Han populations. Yet, is this a result of residential segregation/integration

or other factors such as socio-economic and/or cultural marginalisation? In an internal report on the Ürümqi riots, Xu and Wang (2009, pp. 28–34) identified Uyghur residential clustering as one of the accelerants of ethnic hatred and violence, but also point to a range of other socio-economic challenges facing Uyghur migrants in Ürümqi. As Horowitz (2001, pp. 381–95) notes, the vast majority of inter-ethnic riots occur in urban areas, especially in contested areas of mixed and shifting ethno-demographic profiles. A similar pattern of ethnic demographic change and rising inter-ethnic tensions helped spark the 1992 race riots in south-central Los Angeles (Morrison & Lowry 1993).

In the wake of the Ürümqi riots, community workers and party cadres stressed social stability over more intimate social interactions. Since 2009, the authorities have tightened their grip over local communities. In Ürümqi and other urban centers, for example, city planners and community workers have pursued the 'three transformations' (*sanhua jianshe*): *danwei*-style management (*danweihua guanli*); grid-style coverage (*wanggehua fugai*) and society-focused service (*shehuihua fuwu*), dramatically increasing the number of security patrols, surveillance cameras and community workers in order to fully monitor and control daily interactions (Wu 2012). In Uyghur ghettos like East Saimachang this literally involves the 'sealing-off of small neighbourhoods' (*xiaoqu fengbi*) through gate construction, key-card access, sentry patrolled entry, and 'hotel-style' registration (Song 2011).

Given the high levels of prejudice and socio-economic disadvantage most Uyghurs encounter in Chinese society today, their desire to live apart from the Han majority is both predictable and understandable. Residential segregation mirrors a larger structure of social distance marked by serious religious, linguistic and cultural barriers. In light of the existing chasm, forced residential integration and more demographically mixed neighbourhoods are likely to exacerbate existing tensions, with inter-ethnic conflict increasing, especially if the state follows through on its ambitious plans to double Xinjiang's urban population by 2030. In divided societies like Xinjiang, mutual trust and sense of fraternity can only take root slowly and requires careful state engineering, consociational institutions and grassroots community building, as well as ongoing conflict management and conflict reduction tactics (Horowitz 2000, p. 563ff). Unsurprisingly, 'urban ethnic work' (*chengshi minzu gongzuo*) and 'ethnic conflict management' (*minzu chongtu yu guanli*) are two of the fastest growing policy topics in Xinjiang today.

In building long-term confidence and solidarity, Putman (2007, p. 161) highlights the value of 'permeable, syncretic, "hyphenated" identities' that can gradually draw-out previously isolated communities and encourage them to see themselves as 'members of a shared group with a shared identity'. Similarly, Horowitz (2001, pp. 497–509; 560–5) notes the possibility of gradual attitudinal changes over time. In the right policy and social environment, groups can accept or at least tolerate ethnic differences while coming to share a common civic identity that reduces the likelihood of inter-ethnic violence and fosters cooperation. Yet, without a solid foundation of trust, equality and belonging and a more open and inclusive form of politics, China's Uyghurs are likely to prefer the current pattern of residential segregation to any integrated state for decades to come.

## Notes

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2  These figures have been calculated from Table 3.7 of the 2013 *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook* with the data from 2012. The 6th National Census of 2010, using a different set of methodologies, put the Han population of the XUAR at 8,829,994 or 40.48 percent, and the Uyghur population at 10,001,302 or 45.84 percent of the total population of 21,815,815. See below for further details on the differences between National Census and provincial statistical yearbook data.

3  There are a few exceptions, such as the nearly 10,000 largely sinicised Uyghurs who have lived in Fengshu township in central Hunan province for hundreds of years. See *People's Daily* 2000.

4  See, in additional to those already mentioned, Kobi 2014; Cliff 2012; Zang 2011; Wu & Song 2013; Yee 2003; Han 2010; Hooper & Webber 2009.

5  For example, the population of Ürümqi is recorded as 3.113 million in the 2010 national census but as 2.494 million in the 2011 Statistical Yearbook.

6  Shen and Guo (2013, p. 59) put Xinjiang's floating population at 4.86 million in 2010 (a nearly 26-fold increase over the last 25 years); yet it remains unclear how many of these migrants are captured in official population statistics.

7  The number of Uyghurs living outside the XUAR has been increasing but at a significantly slower rate over the last decade. According to Yang and Meng (2012, p. 80), the number of Uyghurs living in coastal and central provinces increased by over six times from a mere 7,040 individuals in 1984 to 44,158 by the time of the 2000 Fifth National Census (National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China 2000). Yet, the number of Uyghurs living outside the XUAR increased by a mere 20 percent between 2000 and 2010, climbing from 53,771 to 68,044 individuals. Ma Rong (2014b, p. 8) asserts that nearly half of these individuals are students participating on the government sponsors "Xinjiang Class" inland boarding school program, and if they are excluded from the figures, the number of non-student Uyghur migrants to the interior actually decline significantly over the last decade. To get a sense for how small Uyghur communities are in major Chinese cities, according to the 2010 Sixth National Census, there were 6,975 Uyghurs in Beijing (0.00036 percent of the city's total population), 5,254 in Shanghai (0.00022 percent) and 1,162 in Chongqing (0.00004 percent) (XJTJ 2011).

8  Li Xiaoxia (2012, p. 9) estimates the 'floating population' of Ürümqi as 640,000 in 2009, representing a 36 percent increase since 2005. A significant number of temporary, illegal and homeless Uyghur migrants are not included in the official population statistics for the city, meaning the actual floating population in the regional capital is more likely between 1–2 million people.

9  Poston and Shu (1987, p. 710) note in their study of minority residential segregation in China that: 'The value of the index of geographic differentiation is influenced by the number of subregions used in its calculation. *Ceteris paribus*, the larger the number of subregions and the lower the level of geographic aggregation, the more precise the index'.

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**Part 3**

# Government policies in the region and beyond

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# 7 Socio-economic disparities and development gap in Xinjiang

## The cases of Kashgar and Shihezi

*Alessandra Cappelletti*

## Introduction

This chapter examines development inequality in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. It analyses the main socio-political dynamics underpinning the unequal distribution of resources and wealth within the region. I selected Kashgar and Shihezi as case studies because these two different localities allowed me to conduct an in-depth analysis of these issues. These sites also provided scope for reconsideration of a number of key factors impacting Xinjiang society as a whole, as well as the role of these factors in generating the current unequal distribution of wealth in Xinjiang. Differences and commonalities notwithstanding, I am considering Kashgar and Shihezi as two of Xinjiang's 'core areas',[1] where massive central, inter-regional, regional, local and also international investments are currently being channelled. They both retain, and are developing, a high potential for economic and industrial growth: the projects 'Large-scale development of the Western regions' (LDWR) (*Xibu Da Kaifa*)[2] and the 'Nineteen Provinces and Municipalities Support Xinjiang' (NPM) (*Shijiu shengshi yuanzhu Xinjiang*)[3] are deeply transforming the socio-economic patterns of the two areas.[4] The analysis contained in this chapter on the impact of the transformations generated by these developments and state-building measures on the local populations, is primarily based on a quantitative and qualitative research methodology. It draws on fieldwork[5] conducted in the region between May 2007 and September 2012. It also draws on participant observation, interviews and data collection undertaken during the KfW (*Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau Bankegruppe*) missions to Kashgar Prefecture, which were part of the Sino-German Poverty Alleviation Programme in Xinjiang.[6]

The findings of this chapter demonstrate that the distribution of wealth across Xinjiang is unequal, and that areas inhabited by Uyghur people suffer socio-economic disadvantages due to exclusionary mechanisms caused by disparities in education, job training, access to credit and financial services, together with the inadequate availability and provision of healthcare services. Thus, the overall development model, based on the spill-over effect expected from an 'induced' capital investment, and the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and open ports in strategic areas of the region,[7] need to be reconsidered and questioned

given new empirical data and socio-economic evidence from key geographic locations in the region. At the same time, the need to identify major factors of inequality[8] becomes more and more urgent, especially given the periodic outbreaks of violence involving the region since 2009, often considered terrorist attacks by authorities.[9]

In this chapter, I argue that the concept of 'ethnicity'[10] and the dynamics of élite co-optation,[11] as they are adopted and adapted to the Xinjiang context, need to be questioned and examined with a certain degree of attention on the way they are understood and employed by different social strata, in different contexts. I argue that from government officials to farmers, from intellectuals to common workers, ethnic identity and affiliation, and the extent of the cooptation of important Uyghur élite members into the establishment of the Chinese Party-State, these elements all play a major role in generating and shaping the current development disparities in the region.

Following an assessment of the disparities existing in Xinjiang, this chapter shifts the focus to the underlying dynamics producing them, and to the identification of the key factors of inequality. The emergence of a new Uyghur élite, which positions itself between grassroots Uyghur communities and the Han socio-political establishment (the dominant élite within Xinjiang society), highlights that the status quo maintenance in the region is being entrusted more and more to Uyghurs. In my research I identified that this segment of Uyghur society, which I will call the 'bridge society', bears a relevant responsibility for the current disparities in Xinjiang, and it has not been adequately observed and analysed by scholars in the field of Chinese and Xinjiang studies, nor by social anthropologists working on China. This notwithstanding, it seems that an awareness about the responsibilities of ethnic minority officials for the often difficult situations in the areas they administer is gradually emerging, as a report on the Lhasa riots of 2008 by the Beijing-based lawyers' organisation and think-tank *Gongmen* (Open Constitution Initiative) demonstrates (*International Campaign for Tibet* 2009). The report is very informative and analytical in its approach, in disclosing the structure of power in Tibetan areas. This report identified a 'new aristocratic class' comprising of Tibetan local officials, who are completely out of touch with their ethnic constituency, and blame 'foreign forces' for the unrest, instead of recognising the problems existing in their own way of governing. A similar awareness for Xinjiang is still far from emerging, mainly because the studies on the region have, thus far, been reticent in adopting this analytical perspective on Xinjiang élites. This is understandable however, considering the sensitivity of the issue, coupled with the difficulties faced when conducting fieldwork in the region, as well as negotiating the vested interests of the officials involved.

## Kashgar and Shihezi: differences and commonalities

Shihezi has been an important part of the development of the *bingtuan*[12] in Xinjiang (Bao 2010). In fact, the *bingtuan* farms have ensured the development of the city and its manufacturing industries. It has been a form of reclamation economy

that has become a key factor driving the development of Shihezi, and this is what has driven the development gap between the Northern and Southern provinces of Xinjiang (Zhang 2010). In her analysis of Shihezi as an immigrant city, Kardos (2008) used the oral histories of those who, as 'pioneers', moved to the North-Western frontier, reclaimed the land and built Shihezi, undergoing enormous difficulties and hardships in the process. Relying mainly on these oral histories and official documents, Kardos argued that what really happened at the time was not in line with the original project of creating a New China in Xinjiang, and had little to do with the grand ideological directives of either Moscow or Beijing. Rather, the inflow of capital and the stream of migrants to the region contributed to the fast development of Shihezi, an outcome which ended up being more in line with the 'pioneers' ideas than with the projects of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This resulted in the original steppe environment being transformed by large-scale projects of land reclamation and infrastructural plans. In his work, Cliff (2009) traced how Shihezi was conceived and represented by its residents and by the local CCP, mainly through architectural and visual elements. The literature on Kashgar is much more limited, mainly consisting of books detailing its history as an important stop on the Silk Road, to travel diaries and cultural features of the oasis (see Jarring 1986; Kuropatkin 2008; Dawut & Harris 2002; Sawada 2001).

The following data and information are mainly based on the quantitative and qualitative research undertaken during fieldwork by the author in both Shihezi and Kashgar, and from analysing data and figures taken from the two statistical volumes *Kashgar Yearbook* (2012) and *Shihezi Statistical Yearbook* (2012). The data demonstrates there are two very different environments existing in these locations. They include the almost four million residents of the Kashgar Prefecture, 64 percent of whom live in rural areas, compared to the 631,600 residents in Shihezi, the totality of whom lives in an urban context, on a territory four times smaller than the Kashgar Prefecture area (See Table 7.1). If we consider ethnicity we see that almost all of the population in Kashgar is Uyghur, while in Shihezi the ethnicity of the majority of residents is Han.[13] If we consider the per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP), we see that in Shihezi, GPD is six times higher than the GDP per capita in Kashgar. While Kashgar's per capita GDP is dominated by agriculture and the third sector, mainly tourism and transportation, contributing a mere 0.06 percent to the overall provincial figure, Shihezi is mainly a manufacturing and tertiary centre, with a GDP corresponding to 2.53 percent of the total provincial figure.

In addition to GDP considerations, Table 7.2 further demonstrates the extent of differences and commonalities in key aspects of the two societies. This table identifies how social values, customary norms, recognised authorities and political dynamics differ substantially between the two regional contexts under analysis. In particular, while Kashgar characterises itself as a traditional predominantly-rural society, with an important history as a religious and commercial hub, with strong ties to its Central and Southern Asian neighbours,[14] since being under the administration of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) regional

*Table 7.1* Main statistical indicators about Kashgar and Shihezi (2011)

| Indicator | Kashgar prefecture | Shihezi sub-prefecture level city |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Population | 3,872,000 | 631,600 |
| Major ethnic groups | 90.2% Uyghurs | Han 92% |
| | 7.2% Han | Uyghurs 2.5% |
| Area | 460 Km² | 112,057 Km² |
| GDP | 2,776 million RMB | 108,36 million RMB |
| GDP composition | 40,6: 17,2: 42,2 | 6,6: 51,1: 42,3 |
| GDP per capita | 7,085 RMB | 42,728 RMB |
| GDP as percentage of provincial GDP | 0.06% | 2.53% |
| State-owned enterprises | 11 | 36 |
| Urban population | 1,398,000 | 631,600 |
| Rural population | 2,474,000 | // |
| Birth rate (crude) | 27.02 | 5.72 |
| Unemployment rate (percentage of total workforce who are unemployed and are looking for a paid job) | 3.95% | 2.02% |
| Number of employed persons in state-owned units | 146,895 | 49,239 |
| Number of employed persons in units with a different kind of ownership | 30,396 | 40,046 |

Table compiled by author.

government it has experienced deep changes. On the other hand, Shihezi is an immigrant city established in the 1950s.[15] While its history reflects the turbulent dynamics of the history of modern China, its values and customs are, observationally at least, strikingly similar to the values and customs exhibited in several different places in Inner China, where the prevailing culture is Han. What is worth underlying is that the ethnicity of local authorities in the Kashgar prefecture is currently placed at more than 80 percent, while those in Shihezi are almost 100 percent Han.[16] Importantly, this means that the local population essentially deals with officials belonging to the same ethnicity, religion and culture in both areas, with cadres deeply rooted within the communities they administer, and trusted both by local people and Beijing.

Furthermore, while in Kashgar, Islamic religious authorities like *mollah*, *shaykh* and *imam*[17] still represent the bulwark of society and the guarantee of stable and consensus-driven communities, in the secular environment of Shihezi, cadres and officials act as referees for the whole population and the rule and legitimacy of the CCP is rarely questioned. In Shihezi one of my respondents, a Hui university student with some responsibilities in the Party office of the university, explained how, before being accepted and granted the 'Party badge', applicants were

*Table 7.2* Cross-sectional comparative table – common features and differences between Kashgar and Shihezi

| | Commonalities | Differences |
|---|---|---|
| *Geographical position* | | Shihezi is located in Northern Xinjiang (*beijiang*) and Kashgar in Southern Xinjiang (*nanjiang*). |
| *Administrative classification and governance* | The two areas are in the same country (*guojia*) and in the same region (*zizhi qu*). | Kashgar (*kashi diqu*) is a regional prefecture (*difang*) under the administration of regional authorities, while Shihezi (*shihezi shi*) is a sub-prefecture level city (*zizhiqu zhixia shengji shi*) belonging to the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (*bingtuan*) and depending only on the Corps, administration and the central government. As a *bingtuan* city, Shihezi enjoys a high degree of autonomy, with its own judicial system, health and education system, welfare measures, and other autonomous institutes. |
| *Population rights and duties, ethnicity* | Kashgar and Shihezi residents are citizens of the same country. They are subject to the national law, to its rights and obligations. | Kashgar prefecture residents are subject to the rules and regulations of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Shihezi are subject to the rules and regulations of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps. |
| *Economic situation* | The two areas are Special Economic Zones (*jingji techu*): Kashgar since 2010 and Shihezi since 1984. | Shihezi is mainly an industrial city (GDP composition: 6.6–52.1–42.3), while Kashgar's economy is based on the tertiary and agricultural sectors (40.6–17.2–42.2) . |
| *Central investments and development* | Kashgar is a target area in the central government plans for access to the natural resources of the region's Central Asian neighbours, mainly oil and natural gas. Shihezi is a core area for exploiting the natural resources of Northern Xinjiang, mainly oil and coal. For their respective strategic positions, the two territories are receiving special funding and are targets of special projects conceived and implemented by the central and local governments. | Shihezi experienced a booming urban development, becoming the second largest city in Xinjiang after the capital Urumqi. Kashgar's urban development has been much slower and the Prefecture is still rural. After 1949, the prefecture came to include historically important cities like Yarkand and Yenghisheher (*Shache* in Chinese). These cities were major Central Asian oases before the 1950s, although it is only recently that the central government has been implementing important plans for the city urban development. |

*(Continued)*

*Table 7.2* (Continued)

| Commonalities | Differences |
|---|---|
| *History* | Kashgar has more than 2,500 years of history, interconnected with the cultural and political environment of the Ferghana valley and Central Asian oases. Shihezi was established in the 1950s as a *bingtuan* settlement, and only in 1974 did it become a city. It lies in the steppe area of Northern Xinjiang, in the Southern part of the Zungar basin, where, in the eighteenth century, the Qing troops defeated the Zungar empire armies. |
| *Higher education and research* | Shihezi is home to the second largest university in Xinjiang, Shihezi University, with approximately 40,000 students. The city hosts laboratories and research centres in line with international standards with a rich international exchange network. Kashgar does not host any university, but is home to the Kashgar Teachers' College (*Kashi Shifan Xueyuan*), with approximately 12,000 students. |
| *Relationship with Beijing* | The central authorities overtly support the development and growth of Shihezi, through the China's State Council, since the city, and the whole *bingtuan* organisation, is seen as a bulwark of Han culture and values in a predominantly Muslim region. Kashgar has been considered to be on the outskirts of modernity for decades, at least since 1949, and attracted the attention of the central government only recently. As a consequence, hundreds of thousands of Han are moving to the city to invest in the booming real estate sector or to look for a job and a better life. |
| *Type of society* | Kashgar society is still a traditional one: in its socio-political environment, familial and religious authorities and ties are more important than institutions and formal relationships. Socio-political life is conceived and understood according to traditional norms and values that ascribe to each individual a place in that society. Basically, there is no concept of changing these traditional structures since the norms and values of the society exalt, or at least accept, the status quo.<br><br>Shihezi society can be considered modern and capitalist in nature, since it supposedly consists of formal and social relations that are determined by interpersonal actions motivated by the desire to attain rational goals. In this kind of environment, status is not ascribed but rather is achieved through personal effort and ability. Norms and values tend to be oriented towards change, progress, innovation and maximum benefits at minimum costs. |

Table compiled by author.

required to undergo a tough process of pre-selection and selection. She also stated that

> once a person enters the CCP, then it becomes difficult to leave it: this kind of choice is considered as a turnaround vis-à-vis the Party, and it can generate a negative impact for both the future career and social status of the person in question.
>
> (field notes, June 2011)

When discussing the CCP and its admission policies with people I met during my field research, I sometimes felt the Party took on the role of a stern parent, because it set the rules and did not expect to be questioned. However, during my fieldwork it appeared that this situation was well accepted by Shihezi residents, and they regarded the encompassing nature of the CCP and CCP membership as a normal situation.

Perhaps this unquestioning acceptance is in part due to the credit accorded to the Party for the reasonably affluent status of Shihezi. Among Shihezi respondents, those who were Party members were well aware they held a privileged status as a result of their Party 'badge', as well as their political affiliation and acquiescence towards Beijing. In addition, they knew perfectly well that, without the Party's support, they would just be average Chinese citizens without any special status. While the same situation could be assessed among Party members of Uyghur ethnicity in Kashgar, there were some notable differences. For instance, while Uyghur Party members acknowledged Party status accorded them a higher level on the social strata compared to the average Kashgarian, and both Han and Uyghur Party members expressed similar desires to climb further up the ladder when it came to both social status and career advancement, there was a difference between Hans and Uyghurs in terms of their relationship between themselves, the Party and Beijing. For Uyghurs, this relationship can be identified as more openly 'opportunistic' when compared to that of Han cadres and the CCP. For Uyghurs, there is a widespread perception that the CCP is an organisation conceived of and imposed from outside, it is not born within their own society. As a result, they lack the sense of belonging to the CCP and Beijing that is common among Han officials. That said however, while Han officials have this sense of belonging to the Party and regard it as being, in the end, a morally, socially and politically good entity, as well as a body that arose naturally from an historical process pertaining to their own society, they too have an opportunistic mind-set when dealing with the Party and also regard Party membership as having tangible beneficial outcomes.

For Uyghur cadres, alongside Party membership are expectations of high salary, a special status, as well as other benefits for themselves and their offspring. For instance, high-level cadres at the County and Prefecture level often expressed their will to send daughters and sons to study in the United States (US) and in the United Kingdom (UK), while the majority of Uyghur local officials show an equal interest in buying big and fancy cars and apartments for their children's birthdays or marriages, as do their Han counterparts. These expectations were regarded as a suitable exchange for their services in the territories they administer, which

are primarily focused on maintaining the status quo in those areas. This is not an easy role to fulfil, especially given their legitimacy is often questioned by their co-ethnics, predominantly in more urban areas where there are frequent outbreaks of political dissent. In rural areas this is less often the case; however, legitimacy does become an issue in matters related to land distribution, water resources and subsidies. In these instances, Uyghur cadres become important mediators between Beijing and the local population, and cadres were often chosen from among the ranks of those who were previously powerful members of the lay local élite. Thus, any reference or hint to the Party being a parental entity, as it was in Shihezi, was absent during the interviews with Uyghur cadres.

Although Party membership was regarded as opportunistic and career advancing, a small percentage of Uyghur cadres, less than 5 percent, reported they had experienced discrimination which had impacted the progression of their career within the Party *nomenclatura*. Given the sensitivity of this topic among Uyghur local officials and their unwillingness to reveal too much about their career opportunities to foreign researchers, this result may be an under-reported figure. Respondents who admitted to suffering discrimination due to their Uyghur identity did it in informal contexts and under the guarantee of anonymity. Thus the real percentage of those who suffer from workplace discrimination may be much higher. What emerged from the interviews is a context in which being Uyghur is regarded as a hindering factor: Uyghur local officials cannot aspire to climb the ladder of the Party or government roles, unless they accept compromises such as foregoing their religious practices and principles (such as to fast during Ramadan and to pray five times a day, and engaging in activities such as drinking alcohol, and eating in restaurants that are not exclusively *halal*, and so on), and to abide by the Party line in terms of political stance and commonly accepted norms. If the Uyghur cadre makes this compromise and guarantees that the whole family will follow his or her example, then there are chances to advance in their career. Two examples of such Uyghur leaders who reached the top of the Party and government positions are Nur Bekri, Director of the National Energy Administration, and Shorat Zakir, currently Chairman of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region People's Government.

Another significant difference between Han and Uyghur cadres is religion. In Kashgar, religious identity and cohesion among average Kashgarians marked a relevant difference in comparison to the secular life of the average residents in Shihezi. This deeply rooted religious identity poses a challenge to the secular establishment of regional and central institutions, something which does not exist in Shihezi, where there is a full convergence among the political directions of centre, local leadership and local residents. For this reason Islam in Xinjiang poses a problem to the central government, and it is considered to be an actual potential challenge to the rule of the CCP in the region. On the contrary, the population in Shihezi is perceived as more loyal and compliant to Beijing rule, policies and demands, since the city is administered by the para-governmental body of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XJPCC), with a leadership that emerged from the ranks of the People's Liberation Army.[18] While contrasts between the Shihezi leadership and Beijing exist, and can be important–involving investments and governance issues–there is still a platform for dialogue between centre and

periphery, which has been established and consolidated. In contrast, in Kashgar the only connecting point between Beijing and local people is the Muslim local élite who have been coopted by the Party-State and play a role in governing the Prefecture. In this context, local officials in Kashgar emerge as the joining bridge between a restive Muslim population and a secular, sometimes perceived as distant and 'Other', central government. Even so, when it comes to implementing Beijing's policies aimed at creating an administrative and political establishment with similar characteristics in Xinjiang, we can say that cadres and officials with different origins and ethnic affiliations share the same expectations and awareness: those that have been communicated by the Party.

### *Methodological note on comparability*

The underlying motivator for the comparison between Kashgar and Shihezi in this study is centred on an attempt to understand the extent to which the applied development model has affected both Uyghur and Han areas in Xinjiang. This development model has been implemented with an approach perceived as top-down by local communities. In addition, it has a similar institutional framework in both contexts, and has impacted socio-political patterns among local communities in both Kashgar and Shihezi. The next important comparative focus is whether there is any difference in the outcomes of these developmental measures, at the local community level, within the two societies. If indeed an actual difference exists, the next step would be to try to understand at which stage the whole process takes that different direction. I contend that the mechanisms of socio-economic development intersecting the two areas are highly contested in Kashgar, while in Shihezi they reach a wider, even if not yet a complete, consensus. In both areas, multiple stakeholders and interest groups have engaged in the process, with those who are increasingly excluded from such developments, exhibiting more and more divergent preferences for plans that may compete, coexist or conflict with each other.

Furthermore, the emergent and evolving new Uyghur élite, with its shifting institutional relationships and community engagements, are also influencing the development process as well as the outcome of the related measures. This has contributed to the formation of not a singular standard form of 'modern environment', but multiple forms of new social spaces in Kashgar. On the other hand, Shihezi poses a different challenge. Its development measures were implemented in an already industrial society and this has led to the existence of an array of dynamics at the top level of the city leadership, including the emergence of a resource-grabbing power struggle. Therefore, the comparison between the two case studies is conducted in two scales: analysing differences and similarities between Kashgar and Shihezi in the regional context (macroscopic); and within the respective areas (microscopic).[19] Considering that Kashgar and Shihezi are both located within the administrative borders of the regional territory, the exploration of the socio-political dynamics underpinning the development gap in Xinjiang becomes not only feasible, but also useful, once a further effort to understand the regional context as a whole is conducted. The interview samples of this research are illustrated in Table 7.3.

*Table 7.3* Interview samples in the Kashgar Prefecture and in the Shihezi Sub-prefectural level Municipality

| Kashgar Prefecture | | Respondents: 300 | |
|---|---|---|---|
| No. | Target group | Age range | Sample |
| 1 | Farmers* | 18–80 | 20% |
| 2 | Undergraduate and graduate students | 19–26 | 20% |
| 3 | Residents | 32–58 | 20% |
| 4 | Government officials* | 28–60 | 15% |
| 5 | *Bingtuan* officials | 23–60 | 10% |
| 6 | Professionals employed in private companies | 28–50 | 15% |

\* Part of the material related to interviews with farmers and government officials under the framework of the Sino-German Poverty Alleviation Program, Xinjiang.

| Shihezi Municipality | | Respondents: 180 | |
|---|---|---|---|
| No. | Target group | Age range | Sample |
| 1 | *Bingtuan* officials* | 28–50 | 20% |
| 2 | Undergraduate and graduate students** | 18–28 | 25% |
| 3 | University professors and administrative staff | 32–65 | 20% |
| 4 | Farmers cultivating small plots | 25–85 | 15% |
| 5 | Residents | 27–90 | 10% |
| 6 | Business operators | 31–58 | 10% |

\* We were not allowed to interview *bingtuan* officials and *bingtuan* farm residents belonging to the Uyghur nationality. The explanation provided was that foreigners are only allowed to conduct organised and approved-from-above interviews, and the request to interview Uyghur nationals in *bingtuan* settlements had not been accepted.

\*\* Interviews with students at Shihezi University were arranged by Professor Zhang Fengyan and by the CCP Bureau of the work unit. We were not allowed to interview Uyghur students. The President's office did not provide us with the necessary authorisation; the official explanation was that Uyghur students did not represent the university reality due to their small numbers.

### Core zones: investments, migration, geostrategic interests

Both Kashgar and Shihezi can be considered as core zones in XUAR, as well as areas with a high relevance for the whole of China. They are both SEZs, although it should be noted Kashgar only gained this status in 2010, and they both receive huge investments from the central and regional governments, and capital from large-scale investment projects. The main investment projects conceived for the region, and impacting the socio-economic environment in the two case studies are the Large-scale Development of the Western Regions (LSDWR) and the Nineteen Provinces and Municipalities (NPM). The project for the development of the Western regions was outlined and approved by the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee (CCPCC) in September 1999, with its implementation beginning

in 2000. What convinced the Chinese government that investments and development should reach China's periphery following a model similar to that applied in the south-eastern provinces can be attributed to a number of factors. However, the tensions existing in countries just outside of Xinjiang borders, and the incumbent internal potential turmoil of the province, both played big roles in this drive for investment and development. At the same time, the whole project represents a long-term plan involving the Western part of China, mainly those underdeveloped areas standing out against the Eastern and coastal provinces.

While the LSDWR started with the declared intention of closing the gap between China's regions, it has not always had a coherent set of measures, and has often been conceived with unclear aims. In addition, it was meant as a means to channel capital to underdeveloped areas, rather than a target in itself. It was also hoped that this process would have a stabilising effect on regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet, mainly by reshaping their socio-economic, cultural and political environments. The NPM project has a different genesis and scope: it involves only some areas in Xinjiang and it is aimed at bridging Xinjiang's prefectures, municipalities and villages with developed and 'modern' areas in Inner China. The purpose of these pairings is twofold: to further develop and strengthen the relations and cooperation between Xinjiang's key places and developed areas in Inner China, and to provide the recipient local authorities with goods, services and support in their efforts to reshape the socio-cultural environment in the communities living under their jurisdiction. In Table 7.4 it is possible to visualise part of the actions entailed by these pairings: the table content demonstrates the diversification of aims and close attention to social projects, in comparison with the exclusive focus on infrastructural and large-scale ventures of the LSDWR. We can assume that authorities in Beijing and in Xinjiang are gradually becoming aware of the importance of investments in projects aimed at improving the social environment of the region, in order to 'prepare' the local population to accept and adopt the development model proposed/imposed by Beijing. Only by bearing the responsibility with them, Beijing can aim to get more consensus for its policies, and this awareness can be understood from the NPM scheme here below.

During the Xinjiang Working Forum in 2010, the slogan *zhiyuan Xinjiang* (supporting Xinjiang) was frequently emphasised. However, this is not a new concept in the history of the development projects targeting border regions. The concept behind the expression encompasses the needs of business operators to be able to cope with the difficulties faced in the region. Even though Xinjiang is rich in natural resources, underground water, good agricultural and pasture land, the positive aspects of being located on the Chinese north-western border are often not obvious, due to the high costs associated with the transportation of resources, which can make the competitive advantages decline. Developing the region, both on an economic and social level, also entails remarkable difficulties and obstacles, hence the emphasis of the Xi Jinping administration in building markets with China's Central Asian neighbours through the development of a new Silk Road economic belt. Since the second half of the 1990s, different support measures have begun to be implemented, with special missions of officials from other

*Table 7.4* NPM program actions

| Provinces and municipalities | Supported area | Projects |
|---|---|---|
| **Beijing** | Khotan Prefecture: Khotan Municipality, Khotan County, Moyu County, Luopu County; 14th Agricultural Division of the XPCC | 5 large-scale pilot projects: 1. long-term engineering project to ameliorate Penghu district in Khotan Municipality; 2. an engineering construction project to develop new land for safe and earthquake-proof dwellings in Khotan County; 3. construction project for agricultural facilities in Moyu County; 4. construction works in the sickroom building of Luopu People's Hospital; 5. engineering works for red dates processing at the 14th Agricultural Division of the XPCC. |
| **Guangdong** | Kashgar Prefecture: Shule County, Jiashi County; Tumushuke Municipality (belonging to the 3rd Agricultural Division of the XPCC) | In the coming 5 years, Guangdong province (including Shenzhen), 9,600,000,000 RMB will be allocated to support "2 cities and 3 counties" for special projects in Kashgar prefecture; before the end of 2011 the authorisation procedures for every collective project, public service, basic construction, production development, buildings in the countryside need to be completed. |
| **Shenzhen** | Kashgar Prefecture, Tashikuergan County | Make an effort to solve the problems connected with people's livelihood in the supported areas, to improve people's lives, to invest people's properties into assets which will be useful for the entire life; solve the most urgent and basic problems connected with people's lives. |
| **Jiangsu** | Artush Municipality (Kyzilsu Kyrghiz Autonomous sub-prefecture), Haheqi County, Wuqia County, 10 Counties and Municipalities in Ili Khazak Autonomous sup-prefecture; 4th and 7th Agricultural Divisions of the XPCC | Projects related to the improvement of people's living standards. |
| **Shanghai** | Kashgar Prefecture: Bachu County, Shache County, Zepu County, Yecheng County | To solve the most important issues related to people's living standards and start a process of continuous development. |

| Provinces and municipalities | Supported area | Projects |
|---|---|---|
| **Shandong** | Kashgar Prefecture: Shule County, Yingjisha County, Maigaiti County, Yuepuhu County | To encourage projects aimed at guaranteeing a certain standard of living for the people; support the production fields of particularly interesting and typical local products; to put emphasis on people's intellect, and strengthen the work of supporting Xinjiang through its local talents; promote political awareness from the grassroots and the creation of grassroots organisations. |
| **Zhejiang** | 1 Municipality and 8 Counties of Aksu Prefecture; Alaer Municipality (belonging to the 1st Agricultural Division of the XPCC) | Attach importance to people's living standards, and to the support of cadres and local talents; special projects for particularly poor areas, and support for the production base and for handling and developing local natural resources. |
| **Liaoning** | Tacheng Prefecture | Mainly support families and individuals who have suffered from earthquakes and to build earthquake-proof houses. |
| **Henan** | Hami Prefecture; 13th Agricultural Division of the XPCC | Improve the employment chances for local people, focusing on strong and advantageous conditions in the territory and the development of the potential local opportunities. |
| **Hebei** | Bayinguoleng Mongol Autonomous sub-prefecture; 2nd Agricultural Division of the XPCC | Work on the local talents and on the potential opportunities in the territory, making sure that all the population will take advantage of the outcomes of the support. |
| **Shanxi** | Wujiaqu Municipality (belonging to the 6th Agricultural Division of the XPCC); Fukang Municipality in Changji Autonomous sub-prefecture | Consider the enterprises as local backbone; work for the unity among nationalities and for the common advantage. |
| **Fujian** | Changji Municipality, Manasi County, Hutubi County, Qitai County, Jimushaer County, Mulei County | Work in the fields of education, technology, production in order to improve all people's living standards and ameliorate the social and natural environment. |
| **Hunan** | Turpan Prefecture | Infrastructural projects and social projects aimed at improving living standards. |

*Table 7.4* (Continued)

| Provinces and municipalities | Supported area | Projects |
|---|---|---|
| **Hubei** | Bole Municipality in Bortala Autonomous sub-prefecture, Jinghe County, Wenxiang County; 5th Agricultural Division of the XPCC | Social and economic development and attention to the satisfaction of the local population. |
| **Anhui** | Pishan County in Khotan Prefecture | Work on the interaction between state and market, together with the improvement of health services. |
| **Tianjin** | Minfen, Cele and Yutian Counties in Khotan Prefecture | 10 infrastructural projects aimed at improving people's living standards and the local industries. |
| **Heilongjiang** | Fuhai, Fuyun and Qinghe Counties in Alatai Prefecture; 10th Division of the XPCC | Work on the agricultural and mining sectors, with emphasis on local talents and potential. |
| **Jiangxi** | Aketau County in Kyzil Kyrgyz Autonomous sub-prefecture | Projects in hydroelectric and industry fields. |
| **Jilin** | Alatai Municipality, Abahe County, Buerjin County and Jimunai in Alatain Prefecture | Projects aimed at solving the basic problems in peoples' lives, pointing at health, education and commercial services. |

Table compiled by author.

provinces conducting fieldwork in Xinjiang to assess the difficulties on-the-ground, organise the transfer of thousands of cadres to work there, and to facilitate the implementation of a great quantity of dedicated projects with different impacts on local situations, and it is hoped, eventually, the investment of billions of *renminbi* (RMB). The stated goal of the 'supporting projects' has always been the improvement of the people's standards of living, which is to say the prosperity and wealth of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang.

The NPM project was officially approved in 2010, just after the violent eruption of popular discontent in the region, during the summer and autumn of 2009. The main difference between the two plans lies in the partnerships between local administrations: what the NPM project aims to establish in an effort to match the needs of the local population directly and actually emerging from local communities; and to also invest in small-scale projects and differentiated fields at the grassroots level. At the same time, the framework and commitment of this programme are substantially in line with those of the LSDWR. Up until November 2012, 15 provinces and 4 municipalities had started to implement development projects in different administrative areas in Xinjiang, including divisions of the

Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (see Table 7.4). In the same way as for the LSDWR, the number of actors, beneficiaries and programs involved is not fixed, since new provinces and cities have been progressively joining the project and have begun investing in Xinjiang, and new areas of the region have since asked for support. This means that Table 7.4 should be taken as an approximate reference, which would need to be updated year by year.

These influxes of capital and investment in still underdeveloped areas, characterised by traditional societies and loose legal frameworks, are allegedly meant to establish new businesses and improve people's living conditions, especially in core areas. Recognising the geostrategic location and key role of Kashgar in the context of China's western regions, and the importance of Shihezi as both an industrial and commercial hub in northern Xinjiang, allows us to reasonably identify them as core zones. In Kashgar Prefecture however, these development measures are generating controversial effects. For example, the local job market has been disrupted by workers and newcomers from the investing provinces and municipalities. In addition, it would seem that those who can take advantage of the opportunities offered by the fiscal and business opportunities provided under this new economic environment, are those operators who already have capital to invest. Furthermore, these operators mainly comprise of wealthy and well-connected Han, and a tiny minority of wealthy Uyghurs. While this small segment of the Uyghur community is benefiting from the current development measures, when one considers its proportion to the total Uyghur population, we can see that the number of Uyghurs benefiting from this program remains very low. On the other hand, there are clear signs of improved living standards in different contexts that cannot be overlooked. Tap water and electricity facilities are reaching the most remote villages, and hospitals and schools are being built all over the Kashgar Prefecture. There are also growing opportunities for Uyghur students to study in Inner China or abroad, while attending universities in XUAR. Even so, it remains clear that the Uyghurs who benefit the most from these improved conditions are members of the coopted élite. This is something which is not occurring in Shihezi, where although the political and administrative élite is benefiting from the economic growth, there has been an important effort to re-distribute the newly generated wealth. At the same time, problems of corruption among cadres and officials are increasingly becoming more publicly known, and a huge anti-corruption campaign targeting the local administration, including the XJPCC leadership, has been spreading through the region since October 2014.[20]

## Unequal distribution of wealth and development gap

We have already seen how development plans and special economic measures employed in Xinjiang are allegedly aimed at bridging the gap between different provinces in China and disadvantaged areas within Xinjiang society. The central and regional governments assume that promoting development in core areas should help to bridge the latter with remote and underdeveloped zones, as a result of an expected spill-over effect. At the same time, data and information collected

in the field provide a picture which is still far from the results expected by the Chinese authorities.

According to official statistics, in 2009 Xinjiang's GDP amounted to 427,705 billion RMB, with a registered increase of 8.1 percent over the previous year, a value coherent with the national data for the same year, 8.7 percent. On a national level, Xinjiang was ranked 25 in the list of the Chinese regions on the basis of the GDP added value, followed by Guizhou, Gansu, Hainan, Ningxia, Qinghai and the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). Being the second region with less GDP increase (8.1 percent), it is positioned 30 in the inter-regional list, ahead of Shanxi province. The added value of the primary industry was 75.974 billion RMB, up by 4.5 percent over the previous year; that of the secondary industry was 192.959 billion RMB, up by 8.5 percent, while that of the tertiary industry reached 158.772 billion RMB, up by 9.2 percent over the previous year. The composition of the three industries was: 17.8; 45.1; and 37.1. The per capita GDP, based on the permanent population, was 19.942 RMB (US$2.920 at the exchange rate of the time), up by 6.5 percent over the previous year. The total consumer price index was up by 0.7 percent, while the price of food increased by 2.1 percent. Considering the above figures, and comparing Xinjiang data with those of other regions in previous years, the economic performance in XUAR cannot be considered satisfactory, but, since we are going to focus on trends, the annual increase rates are actually indicating an upward tendency. This means that Xinjiang cannot be considered one of the poorest regions in China (Wiemer 2004; Becquelin 2004), and, from a macroeconomic perspective, analysts maintain that the performance of the region is still satisfactory in the long run. At the local level, the situation needs to be more carefully analysed, considering details such as the locations of local powers, the positioning of local élites, and the discourses and representations used by the main actors of this development drive.

In 2009, 60.15 percent of Xinjiang's total population was still living in the countryside, and it was almost totally Uyghur. According to scholarly analysis of field research data, it has been found that urban expansion has enhanced geographic inequality between the two major regions in Xinjiang, north and south, and it has created a selective distribution of wealth along ethnic lines (Clifton & Schmidt 2006; Bhalla & Qiu 2006). The main factors explaining the outline of urbanisation patterns in Xinjiang include: geography, such as topography and water systems; institutional, such as urban policies; economic, such as per capita GDP; and social, such as the education level of the population and migration issues. The state authorities played an important role in encouraging and facilitating the immigration to Shihezi and because it belongs to a special frontier migration project, the sub-prefectural level city has its own territory, agricultural and commercial enterprises, and its own industries. In addition, it also operates its own courts and police stations, and it has one national level university, Shihezi University. In stark contrast, the development of the predominantly Uyghur city of Kashgar has followed a different path. While once an important oasis on the Southern Silk Road, along with Shache (*Yarkend* in Uyghur), Kashgar did not develop as a relevant urban centre. Instead, Kashgar and Shache diminished to mere villages, with

Kashgar later absorbing other oases, like Shache itself, Yingjisha (*Yengisheher* in Uyghur) and Yecheng (*Karghalik* in Uyghur), which were very important cultural and religious oases until the nineteenth century. Their decline, following the annexation of the region during the Qing Dynasty, resulted from the new imperial policy applied in Xinjiang, which essentially adopted the approach of 'develop the North and neglect the South' (Zhang & Cappelletti 2012). Thus, these centres now have a lower administrative level than before, and they did not develop like other localities across Xinjiang in terms of their size and services.

It has already been assessed that Xinjiang is a fast-growing region, where job opportunities are increasing and wealth is more and more widespread. These opportunities have also begun reaching the most remote areas of the region, where substantial investments from the central government and State-owned enterprises (SOEs) are allegedly aimed at improving people's living standards, together with environmental conditions and infrastructures. According to Kuznets curve theory of the U-shaped relationship between development and inequality, this fast growth and development drive should produce a 'spill-over effect' over the long term, which should lead to the inclusion of all social actors within the new environment, effectively ensuring that access to resources and wealth is equally distributed across society and communities. However, remarkable inequalities still exist, particularly in the more rural areas of southern Xinjiang, which has an ethnic ratio of approximately 80 percent of the population there comprising of Uyghurs. Moreover, in some counties such as Yuepuhu (*Yopurgha* in Uyghur) and Shule (*Yenghisheher* in Uyghur), severe economic and social problems are affecting local communities. Again, the mainly urban, predominantly Han, northern part of the region appears to be benefiting the most from the incoming new wealth.

In some villages of the Kashgar Prefecture, which ranks second poorest for per capita GDP after the Khotan Prefecture, an average salary for a four-member-family can vary from 600 to 1,200 RMB per year. This salary is complemented with subsidies and allowances, which are making farmers more and more dependent on local authorities and state aid. This scenario was also identified during fieldwork in the counties of Yuepuhu, Shufu (*Konasheher* in Uyghur), Shule, Jiashi (*Peyzawat* in Uyghur) and Aketao (*Akto* in Uyghur). Therefore, the ongoing difficult socio-economic situation affecting the poorest areas of southern Xinjiang, combined with socio-economic measures implemented by local authorities that are leading to increased reliance on local authorities and state aid, are unpopular and are often considered to be unsuitable to local traditional communities. These measures are regarded by affected populations as having exposed them to a development model imposed from the top. There is also a perception that such measures have been implemented by a distant and alien centre, which is mainly concerned about its own interests, and one that is far too engaged in fulfilling requests and claims made by the more compliant Han population. Moreover, the expansion of XJPCC settlements far into the south of Xinjiang (*The Economist* 2013), has generated new tensions and dissent among the local population. This is because the new *bingtuan* settlements are believed to occupy the best irrigated land and the most fertile plots, which is highly problematic for local communities.

In addition, there is a common feeling among the broader Uyghur population of 'having been left behind'. A major problem that almost always emerged during interviews was the lack of 'capacitation',[21] which means that Uyghurs have the perception of being unable to climb the social ladder, no matter how much effort and commitment they put into their studies and work. Qualifications and professional experiences notwithstanding, obstacles are always perceived as too tough. Among respondents, a frequent reason of complaint was the impossibility to move forward in the professional and educational environment, due to the presence of Han counterparts who represent unfair competitors, mainly due to linguistic, educational and political factors.

The increasing local discontent, together with the perception of being considered as 'second-class citizens', is one of the factors that led to the large demonstrations by Uyghur students, migrant workers and common people in July 2009 in Urumqi. These protests spread to other areas across the region, especially in the South. The clashes which followed left almost 200 people dead, generating hundreds of casualties.[22] In the aftermath of these events, data on the ethnic background of those killed was released by the central and regional authorities, and it highlighted that the majority of victims were Han. During the whole autumn of 2009, tensions and riots continued, with frequent outbreaks of violence occurring in different parts of the region, making the international community–mainly business operators and human rights activists–wonder about the actual extent of local stability, and global attractiveness, of the Xinjiang environment. The seriousness and wide reach of the 2009 events forced former President Hu Jintao to return to China from Italy, where he was participating in the G8 assembly, and was making official visits to several European countries as part of this tour.

According to one account of the 2009 riots by an eyewitness I met in September 2011 in Xinjiang's capital city, Urumqi, this was a situation that escalated over time. They recalled:

> On the 5th July there were at first hundreds of people on the streets of the *Tianshan* area (the biggest Uyghur district) in Urumqi, then gradually they became thousands. What made the protests break out was a perceived mishandling of the Shaoguan incident,[23] during which a discriminatory attitude towards Uyghurs emerged from the side of authorities. After the demonstration took off, groups of Uyghur peasant workers living in the area close to the Television Station joined the march, and the main motivation for them was to claim equal rights and work conditions as the Hans. Confronted with the police, part of the mob became violent. It is not possible to exclude that they joined the march with the aim of committing violence since the beginning though.

> (field notes, September 2011, Urumqi)

Therefore, by this account and other reports collected in 2011 and 2012, the link between dissatisfaction and socio-economic discrimination among the Uyghur population is considerable. In addition, other accounts demonstrate that

this dissatisfaction and discrimination has fostered the strengthening of religious identity among segments of Uyghur society. Recently, there has been an increase in raids and terrorists incidents in the region and also in other parts of China (such as the Kunming Railway attacks and the Beijing car explosion incident). Perhaps the radicalisation of the religious identity can be traced back to a power struggle between an old religious local leadership, which sees itself superseded by the new, lay and different leadership represented by the CCP cadres. The manipulation of this sense of discrimination and socio-economic disadvantage by the old leadership generates a radicalisation of the religious identity, thus we can say that the link between discontent, socio-economic discrimination and radical Islam is very strong, mainly because of the role played by this traditional religious leadership now dispossessed of its original power among the local society.

## Policies on land use

A direct effect of the current development and economic growth in XUAR is the rapid increase of land prices, and, in our specific case, of the value of agricultural land in the Kashgar Prefecture.[24] In Kashgar, before the raids of the summer 2011,[25] average land prices were approximately 200,000 RMB/*mu*, while today they fluctuate between 700,000 RMB/*mu* and one million RMB/*mu*. In Han areas, which attract the highest real estate pricing, a new apartment currently costs 4,400 RMB per square metre on average, while in 2011 the price was 2,500 RMB. Already identified by Chinese media and political representatives as the 'new Shenzhen' or the 'Dubai of Central Asia', Kashgar real estate costs per square metre experienced a fivefold increase over the last 15 years. In the year 2011, new apartments measuring 400 square metres have been sold in Kashgar, raising speculation among some analysts and investors that it may be experiencing an overheated economy, and they warn of a potential real estate bubble. Considering these trends, analysts and experts expect that property costs in Kashgar will exceed 5,000 RMB per square metre (approximately 610 euro) over the next five years, while investors are already turning to more affordable areas such as Khotan, which is 800 kilometres south-east of Kashgar. Here, prices for urban land are currently valued at 100,000 RMB/*mu*.

Land in China is state-owned (*guoyou*) and managed by local authorities, who have the right to handle it respecting the national law (*guojia falu*) and local regulations (*difang guiding*). Until a few years ago, agricultural land did not have any commercial value, since its use was pledged to farmers by local authorities, through the issuance of certificates of land use, which were valid for 30 years and were renewed almost without exception. Therefore, it is only recently that land has started to be assigned a certain 'price', which follows market dynamics, thereby generating a swift process of appreciation as long as the area continues to attract investors. This has seen developers increasingly becoming interested in the new business opportunities, fiscal facilitations and chances of real estate speculation offered by the business environment in Kashgar (see Table 7.5).

*Table 7.5* Main actors and documents related to land acquisition processes in Kashgar rural areas

| Actors involved in the land acquisition process | Documents related to agricultural land renting |
|---|---|
| **Water Resources Bureau**, WRB (Prefecture/County/Township) 喀什水利局 | **Cadastral Map**, CM 户籍图 (compiled together with an institute of Qinghua University in Beijing) |
| **Land Resources Bureau**, LRB (Prefecture/County) 国土资源局 | **Land Use Certificate**, LLC 农村土地承包经营权证/国有土地使用证 validity: 30 years |
| **Township Government**, TG 乡政府 **Village Committee**, VC 村民委员会 (both "own" the land) | **Land Leasing Contract**, LLC 农村集体土地承包合同 validity: from 2 to 15 years **Committment Letter**, CL 土地分配到户的承诺涵 **Land Allocation Farmers' List**, FL 土地分配统计表 |

- negotiate with **Investors – Developers** 投资者 for the rights on the land and the related rents

- interact with **Farmers** 农民 for land allocation, acquisition and use/rights in more general terms

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The Land Use Certificate (LUC), *Guoyou tudi shiyongzheng* or *Nongcun tudi chengbao jingying quanzheng*, is a document valid for 30 years. It is issued by the Land Administration Bureau (LAB) with headquarters in the regional capital Urumqi, and it provides farmers with the right to cultivate the land and make a living out of it. This document is valid for all eventual intents and purposes, providing farmers with strong legal protection due to three main reasons. Firstly, the LUC is issued by a regional-level authority, which is also in charge of drafting cadastral maps, together with an Institute at Qinghua University, which is responsible for the designs. Secondly, as mentioned above, the LUC has a long-term validity of 30 years. Thirdly, after its expiry date, the LUC is automatically renewed by the LAB, unless other circumstances have arisen that may affect its renewal. According to fieldwork research, this document is quickly being replaced by the Land Leasing Contract (LLC), *Nongcun jiti tudi chengbao hetong*, at least in all the sites I visited in the Kashgar Prefecture. This new document is issued either by the Village Committee (VC), *Nongcun weiyuanhui*, or by the Township Government (TG), *Xiang zhengfu*, and it has a different status than the LUC, in format, contents and legal validity. The most relevant differences are firstly its validity, which ranges from just 2 to 15 years. A second key difference concerns the legal guarantee of the document, which is much weaker than that granted

by the LUC. Due to the LLC being issued by local authorities, it does not have the same gravitas as those issued by regional authorities. Thirdly, the document also includes two fields where the cost of the rent for the use of land and water respectively must be indicated. These two fixed amounts of RMB are arbitrarily renegotiated by authorities year by year, according to market prices. In addition to these factors, the VC and TG are also in charge of developing Commitment Letters, which are documents signed by the unit that manages land use. This is done jointly with farmers, and both parties commit themselves to respecting laws and regulations about land use and rights. In addition, authorities engage in the allocation of plots to farmers' families following fair criteria (considering areas such as income, number of family members and their situations, as well as active labour force, and so forth). The VC and TG are also responsible for compiling the Land Allocation Farmers' List, which is a document that contains the list of farmers, assigned plots and related signatures. They also negotiate with investors and developers on possible uses and destination of plots, and importantly, they are charged with repossessing the land from farmers, in accordance with the law.

When interviewing local authorities and farmers on land use and rights, it became apparent that both parties faced a significant and important problem. Even though the law prescribes that farmers need to hold the original versions of land-related documents (contracts, CLs, and other personal documents), and that a copy must be preserved at the local authorities' premises, the majority of farmers did not have any such documents in their possession. In some cases, original documents simply did not exist, while in other cases, they were kept in local offices. The situations in which we could find farmers with documents at hand corresponded to just 15 percent of the examined cases. When asked about the reasons why farmers did not have any documents, local authorities answered with statements such as: 'They (farmers) are like animals, they lose documents immediately'; 'Uyghurs are so backward that they cannot keep the house in order, and the documents get quickly dirty or lost'; 'These Uyghurs are ignorant and illiterate, they cannot read documents, thus there is no point in distributing them' (field notes, August 2011, Shule County). The most disappointing aspect of these answers however, was that they were provided by local authorities of Uyghur ethnicity, who adopted expressions and terms which are usually heard from their Han counterparts.

Moreover, in order to make the LLC acquire a stronger legal guarantee, which is very important for farmers in case they need to contest a repossession order issued by local authorities at the court, the document would need to be notarised. According to authorities, notarisation of documents is avoided by farmers because they do not want to pay the related expenses for such as process, which typically costs 200 RMB. According to farmers, the notarisation requirement is simply an excuse put forward by authorities because they want to have the freedom to seize plots without incurring serious legal retaliations. Another problem I identified was that the replacement of long-term with short-term contracts is implemented through procedures that are not completely transparent. The loose legal framework, and a tacit consent from above, allows authorities to justify their decisions by using different excuses, objections and protests notwithstanding. Farmers are

either threatened or persuaded, depending on the specific case. I also found that contracts and certificates were full of errors, incongruities and improprieties. Indeed, 72 percent of documents were monolingual (only in Mandarin or only in Uyghur), while 92 percent of the examined contracts and certificates included errors whereby the personal details of respondents did not correspond to those on identity cards. In 81 percent of the cases examined, the fields devoted to the amounts of land and water rents had been left blank. In two sites there were neither contracts nor certificates, but land use was regulated by oral agreements and tacit consents between local authorities and farmers. In other sites, contracts and certificates lacked fundamental parts, like the signature of the farmer or the stamp by authorities, or they did not have any legal value due to incorrect documents' formats and contents. These problems in land-related documents deeply compromised their respective legal validity.[26] When questioned about the possibility to redress these problems, 85 percent of local authorities declared that it may be possible and that they know how to do it, while the rest of respondents declared that maybe it is possible but they do not know how to deal with these issues. Moreover, a high level of disagreement on the way to deal with these problems existed among those authorities asserting that a solution is actually possible.

Under these conditions, legal guarantees for farmers are very weak and authorities are allowed to seize plots without the risk of being exposed to any relevant legal consequences. In several examined cases, authorities seized the land – with or without any compensation depending on circumstances – and entrusted its management to special financial agencies in return for loans, which were then used by the same authorities to grant compensation, or to start investing in infrastructure and real estate projects. In this way, local authorities become key local economic actors, with a certain degree of independence in relation to Urumqi and Beijing. After a previously agreed period of time, the management of the land goes back to local authorities, who need to settle accounts. Under these circumstances, farmers have to deal with a situation in which it is extremely hard and risky to invest time, energy and money in their plots.

Another finding emerging from interviews and participant observation was the general lack of awareness, both from farmers and local authorities, on the importance of having a regulated legal framework that sets clear rules and conditions for handling land issues, in order to avoid social instability, the eruption of violence and political consequences. For farmers, this lack of awareness can be motivated by their high rates of illiteracy, together with their unwillingness to side with any idea or position which could attract the attention of authorities, which may have a negative impact on their relationship with local authorities. For the authorities, it is important that they highlight their direct interests in the business of land and land use, as it also generates profits for them. For this reason, it would seem that both parties are willing to preserve a status quo that includes unclear legal ties for authorities and weak guarantees for farmers. These dynamics have a deep impact on local Uyghur communities, and generate an array of socio-political consequences. Among them, a relevant one is the redefinition of the concept, understanding and legal value of land (*tudi*). 'Collective land' (*jiti tudi*), believed

to be a 'common good' since the 1950s, has become a 'commercial asset', as it is specified in new land contracts. Farmers and authorities are now dealing with 'commodity land' (*shangpin tudi*), a definition which makes land fully fit into the dynamics of commercial transactions. From a public asset entrusted to farmers who make a living out of it, land becomes then a profitable business opportunity for investors and local authorities. Considering that the agricultural sector in Kashgar is dominated by small-plot farming, these new conditions are quickly transforming the socio-economic environment in the area, mainly for the shift from the traditional small-plot farming to large-scale agricultural enterprises.

This overall operation of reshaping the demography, society and economy of the Kashgar Prefecture is possible through the use of a segment of Uyghur society, the 'bridge society'. This bridge society, acting as a mediator between the Han establishment and Uyghur communities at large, benefit from the current development and growth in Kashgar. However, since members of this society enjoy the benefits of land acquisitions, they do not have any interest in either understanding the farmers' claims, or in finding a shared solution. To make the whole situation acceptable to Beijing and higher bodies, and to avoid engaging with farmers' discontent, local authorities hide behind rhetorical strategies, which allow them to proceed in pursuing their goals regardless of the impact. Local Uyghur cadres distance themselves from illiterate farmers, often labelling them as 'animals' and 'backward people'. They promote the 'development of thought' (*sixiang fazhan*) and 'social progress' (*shehui jinbu*), and their activities are conducted under the label of 'public interest' (*gonggong liyi*). This sees land being seized because: the new agricultural factories will make plots more productive for the whole community; or a new hospital or a new educational complex for farmers' children will be built on the seized land; or a new road will connect the village to the prefectural capital; or new apartment blocks with all the modern facilities will replace the old houses without tap water and electricity. These stated goals fit into the context of the establishment of a 'harmonious society' (*hexie shehui*) and of a 'well-off society' (*xiaokang shehui*). The distance between the promised 'development' of programs such as the 'comfortable housing project' and the harsh reality of the dislocated farmers only becomes clear later when they cannot afford to live in the new apartment blocks, since they cannot pay the electricity and water bills, and other expenses. They are thus obliged to move to cities in Xinjiang or Inner China to look for a job, but since they are not qualified, normally they can only find poorly paid work. Others may become involved in illegal activities in order to support themselves. In this way, they cannot benefit from the new infrastructures established on their former plots, but the new condition they find themselves in is one of dislocation and dispossession.

This alleged shift from the 'private' sphere to the 'public interest' entails an understanding of 'development' as an ideological category invoked by profit-seeking entities, and fits very much into the theoretical framework proposed by Ugo Mattei (2011) in his study of the commons. The expropriation of 'privately used plots' in favour of an alleged 'public interest' and for the construction of 'infrastructures which are of benefit to the whole community', is then, very often, a formal operation undertaken by profit-seeking public authorities turned into

key local economic actors. Local authorities then become powerful business operators who, on their territories, have a higher degree of freedom than Beijing in adopting state rhetoric and shaping local environments. We are then faced with a deceitful juxtaposition between 'State' and 'market'. As the borders between the two entities become blurred, and the legal framework is not suitable to settle the new situation, this leaves room for abuse of power and the emergence of corruption. The polarisation of the socio-political struggle between a 'private interest' and a 'common interest', juxtaposing individuals and state, reveals itself to be a fake problem. Given Mattei argues that in our contemporary world multinational entities are stronger than states, a new legal framework is needed to regulate the operations of privatisation of public properties (the 'commons') by states, in favour of multinational entities (since to sell commons means to expropriate citizens for the sake of multinational profit-seeking entities). I am arguing here that investors and developers, together with local and regional authorities, have turned into business actors in the Kashgar Prefecture, and have now become stronger than Beijing on their territories, and farmers do not have legal guarantees against the emergence of eventual abuses (in this case when land acquisitions occur). This new framework reshapes the configuration of power and balance of interests in the Kashgar Prefecture, taking the whole political struggle towards entirely new directions.

## Human development index (HDI) and 'ethnicity'

In both case studies, Kashgar and Shihezi, the HDI analysis,[27] considered for the time span 1999–2009, indicates a rising trend. The index does not allow us to understand if inequalities are still an issue: in order to obtain disaggregated data, we need to turn to fieldwork outcomes, which provide us with the possibility of a more in-depth and meticulous analysis. The HDI in the Kashgar Prefecture denotes a gradually rising trend, and the increase rate is faster than in Shihezi. This can be understood thanks to the huge influx of capital and investment into the Prefecture coffers, and to the growing number of developmental, infrastructural and industrial projects which are being implemented in the area, mainly due to Kashgar being accorded SEZ status in 2010. The HDI in Shihezi sub-prefectural municipality lies at a stable value. The development of the city dates back to the 1980s, when it was chosen as the vanguard of the economic and political development of the whole region. For this reason, the HDI is now increasing slowly since the development of Shihezi is already consolidated and well rooted. This notwithstanding, during our fieldwork we had the opportunity to better understand how much the observed HDI trends correspond to what the population perceives.

On the basis of the collected quantitative and qualitative information, and mainly from interview outcomes, we could assess a striking difference in self-perceptions about development and capabilities. This difference goes along the ethnic affiliation of the respondents, with almost the entirety of respondents of Uyghur ethnicity declaring dissatisfaction about their development achievements and capabilities. The remaining Uyghur respondents expressed their satisfaction,

as did their Han counterparts. The discriminating factor between the two groups of Uyghur respondents was CCP membership and their position within the local administration. This small part of the Uyghur population who declared their satisfaction, corresponding to an approximate percentage of 2.5 percent of Uyghur respondents, is the 'bridge society', mainly due to their role of being a 'bridge' between Beijing and the larger Uyghur community, and due to them being charged with maintaining the status quo.[28] As a result, the main factor behind inequality appeared to be based on ethnicity, conceived here more broadly as a label revealing an individual or a group's socio-economic status. Ethnicity is here considered not as an essential concept inborn into every human being, making him/her a product of tradition, history and generational ethnic affiliation, but only a political stratagem to better control a large population. In our research, we found that the label 'Uyghur' was repeatedly used to infer someone was 'backward', a 'thief', a 'cheater', 'dirty' and in reference to 'kebab sellers'. The labelling of a certain ethnic group in such a manner is a useful device in alienating sympathy for them from other groups, and to avoid a potential coalition of different social and ethnic groups against the central power. The same dynamics could be observed in the former Soviet Union.[29] Uyghur marginalisation has thus multiple dimensions, not only involving ethnic affiliation and inequality, but it also includes several other factors,[30] including ethnic identity, class affiliation, family affiliation and socio-political *guanxi*,[31] *danwei*[32] of affiliation, party membership, level of assimilation and adoption of Government-promoted political and cultural values, level of education and individual/group awareness, religion, *hukou*, age (for male Uyghurs) and gender.

The identity and label 'Uyghur' is already an indicator of inequality among individuals and communities. Just to mention a case from the field, a young Uyghur who moved from a remote and poor village in Xinjiang to a big city like Shanghai or Beijing to look for job opportunities and a better life, eventually found himself trapped in a society which allowed him to reach a certain point in the social ladder, without the possibility to make any step beyond it. For instance, he could find a low paid position in the construction or service sector, but could not hope to improve from that position onward. The main problem is that in Chinese society, being Uyghur automatically carries negative connotations such as one being a 'thief' or a 'deviant individual'. State rhetoric and very large differences in culture, as well as cultural, social and religious behaviour, play a big role in fostering these misunderstandings. While a Han migrant, under the same conditions, also experiences these problems, the difference is that when they both attempt to progress up the social ladder, or make a claim for the respect of their rights, the Han usually makes incremental progress, while the Uyghur comes to a standstill. In the case of an educated Uyghur, who holds a graduate degree, has studied abroad, knows a foreign language and knows how to move in the Chinese society, the situation does not change substantially. He/she can move forward together with his/her Han counterparts, reach a good position, but when the issue at stake becomes high, he/she has no chance to get the better of his/her Han counterparts. We can assess the same for government officials, cadres, academics and

so on. Members of the élite have the possibility of social mobility, but always up to a certain point. Leaders and chiefs are almost all Han. In brief, when we come to the issue of capabilities, a Uyghur has more real and perceived limitations than a Han. This causes us to consider why this is so. Put simply, it is because being Uyghur means to embody a batch of stereotypes and preconceptions, strengthened by a 'social pact' and its consequences, together with the political rhetoric which depicts Uyghurs as second-class citizens. The void of valid political representatives and intellectual voices in Uyghur society, together with the 'bridge society', are important obstacles for any process of self-awareness, and make the periodic renewal of political control by Beijing easier.

Referring to the concept of 'internal colonialism' as it has been conceived by Michael Hetcher (1999), the backbone of social relations is based on power struggles, with consequent domination, oppression and subjection of one group over the others. Hechter emphasises the stringent social dualism which apparently exists as a result of the exploitation of the subjected groups. The dominant group at the top, not a source of structural change, but, rather, a preserver of the structure in order to reap the benefits of such a set of social relations, and the exploited community lying at the bottom, which is in itself partly responsible for this situation, through the channel of its 'bridge society'. In other words, internal colonialism refers to structural arrangements typified by a relatively small dominant group which controls the allocation of resources (in this case, the Beijing power and its representatives), and a large, subjected mass composed of various groups with unarticulated interests largely divorced from participation in the development process and blocked from means of social mobility. The Hechter theory shall be adapted to the Xinjiang context taking into account the assumptions by Barry Sautman (2000), who argues that the Xinjiang case is different from the cases considered by Hechter. With a few adjustments, mainly involving investments and migrations, Xinjiang fits into the context of the theory of 'internal colonialism'. The small dominant group can be identified in Shihezi respondents, who are satisfied and optimistic about their future, and by the Uyghur coopted élite, while the subjected mass can be represented by the average Kashgar Uyghurs, controlled by the 'bridge society'.

On the basis of fieldworks and official data, I could assess that the HDI performance is outstandingly high in Han areas, and remarkably low among Uyghur communities. Considering the interview outcomes with Uyghur youth in both rural and urban areas, I could assess that the impact of economic and power disparities on decision-making processes has important consequences for sociopolitical stability. There exists a small segment of Uyghur society, the coopted élite, and they position themselves in the middle between the Hans and Uyghurs. I found that identities and expectations of the emerging Uyghur 'bridge society' turned out to be very different from what I initially hypothesised: devoid of any independence or even nationalist concepts, and of any sense of commonality with their co-ethnics. The approach to society and politics of these élites was very similar to that of Han cadres, including the willingness to share the profits of XUAR economic growth and development efforts with their counterparts. Even a struggle

for a real autonomy is not conceived in their discourses, since the satisfaction to be 'Chinese nationals', and the desire to have the possibility to send offspring to Inner China or US universities, prevails. At that point I started to work on the premises on which members of this Uyghur Muslim élite base their understanding of Islam and the Chinese state. Eventually I found that policies on family life, religion, formal education, administration and Party, shape the élites' understanding of their own Uyghur community and society, and ethnic identity is perceived as a symbolic capital to improve their status on one side, and as a label which allows them to disregard claims made by Uyghur commoners on the other. Being 'Uyghur' then means to speak the same language and follow the same social and religious codes of the Uyghur population, as well as to make unpopular policies and measures appear sustainable. Thus, when I thought that I finally found the main discriminating factor of inequality in the identifications and performing practices related to ethnicity, I realised that I was not always actually dealing with ethnically nuanced communities – in the sense that power dynamics and discrimination practices have a transverse nature–but with people who attached a certain meaning and importance to ethnic labels according to several different factors, like the wider context and the interlocutors.

So the next question was: why do Uyghur officials and cadres speak of Uyghur farmers in extremely derogatory terms, using expressions such as 'these Uyghurs are animals' and 'backward people', the same types of expressions that are often used by their Han counterparts? Do they not feel any sympathy for their Uyghur co-ethnics? I eventually realised that the reason why so many versions and understandings of ethnicity as an identifying factor are commonly accepted and performed in Uyghur society, was that each person, in consideration of his/her role, respective interests and interlocutors, was attempting to harmonise himself/herself with the changes and shifts in the context, and with changing social frameworks. They were doing so following the dynamics of the main political setting and personal socio-economic background over a time span of a life, starting from family education, until the acknowledgement of the latest measures and policies applied in response to particular political circumstances and social events. At the same time, 'ethnicity' as a concept is undergoing major transformations in the Chinese context, due to the current debate on China as a 'multinational state' (*duo minzu guojia*) moving towards a full-fledged 'nation state' (*zhonghua minzu*), some of the scholars involved in the discussion, also acting as consultants to the Chinese government departments of ethnic affairs, are Ma Rong and Yang Shengmin, while Barry Sautman is committed to this debate at the academic level.[33] Multiple factors are impacting the current perception of ethnic awareness among Uyghurs: the results of decades of restrictive policies on religious education and familial Islam, the growing number of pupils educated in Han schools, restrictive policies on teaching and publishing in Uyghur language, policies on agricultural land, the growing influence of popular Chinese TV programs and shows, the increasing number of Uyghur students and workers moving to Inner China, and the development model applied in Xinjiang's Uyghur areas in more general terms. At the same time, the understanding of ethnicity in today's China is experiencing

a divide in at least two directions, advocating a more essentialist definition on one side, and a circumstantialist approach on the other, as models for implementing ethnic policies and to establish a framework of interaction among different communities. In order to preserve the status quo and not to make inter-ethnic relations volatile, a 'bridge society', needs to be self-reflective within Uyghur culture, but also very sensitive to the social values of the secular state. This hybridity of identities, representations, perceptions and expectations, in relation to state-building efforts undertaken by Beijing, together with the analysis and understanding of the multiple interests, strategies and representations underlying the formation and transformations of this Uyghur coopted élite, as they emerge from education, Party and administration, are all areas worthy of further exploration.

## Conclusion

We need to consider what role ethnicity and élite cooptation dynamics play in the unbalanced situation currently existing in Xinjiang society? Based on the not disaggregated data from the case studies of Kashgar and Shihezi, we see that development disparities follow ethnic lines, meaning that Uyghurs are poor and disadvantaged, and Han are rich, basically because they unilaterally benefit from the outcomes of economic growth. However, it is important to consider just how to position Uyghur members of that bridge society who share the profits of economic development with their Han counterparts. The chapter highlights how a fundamental factor of development disparities is not ethnicity in itself, which can be considered as a symbol of diversity and community engagement, but the way it is perceived and negotiated by subjects in their interaction with other subjects and with the context. Local authorities in the Kashgar Prefecture feel and present themselves as Uyghurs in front of other Uyghurs, and legitimise their role and reputation by taking on symbolic, cultural and political capital associated with 'Uyghurness'. Starting from the clothes they wear, the ways they greet people and the behaviours they perform, religious identity and Muslim traditional charity activities, they introject those characteristics which make them appear powerful in front of other Uyghurs. This circumstantialist use of ethnicity turns out to be essentialist, when needed. For instance, when questioned about the ethnicity of a child born from a mixed marriage, a very rare situation, without any Han listening to the conversation, the answer is that the child is Uyghur, as if to be Uyghur is something which is automatically transmitted to the child and it has a priority over any other ethnicity. The perceived inborn nature of Uyghurness is also assessed when members of this bridge society give handouts to Uyghur poor and do not consider poor Han, as if ethnicity was inborn, superior to any social status. At the same time, the same respondents, members of the bridge society, refer to Uyghur farmers as 'animals', or 'backward', stating that 'Uyghurs are ignorant and not modern', which is the commonly understood meaning of the label 'Uyghur' in Han contexts. When rich Uyghurs distance themselves from poor farmers of the same ethnicity, using the ethnic label as Han do, means that they perceive themselves

as not entirely Uyghur, but instead, something in the middle, something different both from Uyghurs and Han. This hybridity of identities allows part of Uyghur society to act as intermediaries and they control Uyghur communities on behalf of Beijing. The use they make of ethnicity is extremely helpful in their willingness to preserve and show their symbolic capital, which positions them in front of other Uyghurs and Beijing.[34] They become defenders of Uyghurs' rights in front of Uyghur communities, and keepers of the status quo through the enforcement of the Party line within their communities, in front of the Han establishment. Their cultural background and leadership power in Uyghur communities, together with their Han education and respect of the Party line and rules, make them the perfect bridge between a disadvantaged part of society and those who benefit from that disadvantage.

## Notes

1 For the concept of 'core area' adopted in this paper, see Hechter (1999), Sautman (2010) and Oakes (2012).
2 For an analysis of the LSDWR, see Goodman (2004).
3 For an analysis of the project NPM, see *Outlook Weekly*, 'While central authorities start the biggest plan to support Xinjiang, next year funding will probably exceed 10 billion RMB' (*Zhongyang qidong zuida guimo duikou Xinjiang, mingnian zijin keneng chao baiyi*), 4 May 2010.
4 For more information about these projects, see below.
5 The concept of the fieldwork, in particular the qualitative research, has been elaborated mainly following Glaser and Strauss (1967).
6 Discussions and hints emerged during the presentation of research outcomes, in particular in Lausanne (International Workshop: Disorder, Action and the 'Public Good' in China, Dec. 2013) and Sierre (SEG Jahrestagung – Colloque annuel de la SSE, Nov. 2013), have been an important source of new understandings and interpretations of research findings.
7 Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and open ports have been established all over the region, the last ones are Kashgar and Horghos, respectively SEZs and open ports since 2010.
8 Bhalla and Qiu (2006) is an exhaustive work on inequalities among Chinese minorities.
9 While the Chinese government is assuming that a terrorist threat exists within China's borders at least since 2001, Xinjiang experts have been cautious to back these allegations. However, considering the dynamics and the characteristics of the raids across the region since 2011, foreign governments and academics are acknowledging that this kind of threat might be real.
10 For the different concepts of 'ethnicity' in anthropology, and the debate between 'circumstantialists' and 'essentialists', I refer to Fabietti (2007).
11 For the concept of 'élite cooptation', I refer to Martin (2001) and Buttino (2003). Marco Buttino investigated the historical dynamics framing the collapse of the Tzarist empire and the establishment of the Soviet power, focusing on the Muslim populations living in Tashkent, Semireche and Ferghana. In his study, Buttino provides the reader with outstanding insights on élite cooptation dynamics in the former Soviet Union, with reference to Muslim minorities.
12 The *bingtuan*, or Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, are an economic, political, military and social administrative organisation which is now active only in Xinjiang. Until 2012 the organisation was composed of 14 divisions and 175 regiments, administering 5 municipalities (one of them is Shihezi) and its own health, legal

and education system. In terms of its territory, especially the administered area, data is contested. The most reliable figure identifies its territorial reach to be 74,600 square kilometres, 5 percent of the total region and twice the size of Taiwan. This territory is only partly habitable (Yearbook of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps 2000–2010).

13 In population statistics temporary workers, military personnel and *bingtuan* residents are not included.

14 See Kuropatkin (2008) and Millward (2007).

15 See Zhang (2010).

16 According to the Law on Regional National Autonomy, the percentage of local cadres must correspond to the respective proportion of minority population members on the total people living in that specific area. For instance, in the Kashgar Prefecture, more than 80 percent of local officials are of Uyghur ethnicity. At the same time, high-ranking leaders are all Han.

17 Even if to a certain extent their socio-political authority has been eroded by Beijing policies aimed at building a more secular society and by the massive investments targeting both urban and rural areas, promoting a different model of society, the authority of traditional religious leaders is still very important, especially in rural villages. Studies on Xinjiang religion have been conducted by Thierry Zarcone (2008) and Rahila Dawut (2002).

18 Due to their peculiar administrative status, the XJPCC are often considered as a province inside the province, even if a process of integration of *bingtuan* areas with non-*bingtuan* areas is ongoing. In the administrative hierarchy, the Corps are at the same, if not higher, level of the regional government, responding directly to Beijing. See the previously mentioned bibliography on the XJPCC, mainly Bao (2010) and Zhang (2010).

19 For the comparative case study analysis methods, I followed Stake (1995, 2006).

20 As a background, see the analysis by François Godement (2013).

21 For the concept of 'capacitation', I refer to Sen (1999).

22 For a critical assessment, see Millward (2004).

23 Press reports of the Shaoguan Incident, and YouTube footage of the violence can be accessed from http://www.zonaeuropa.com/20090627_1.htm.

24 For an overview and an analysis of land policies in China, see Ho (2009, 2005).

25 For Michael Vines' report on the outbreak of clashes across Xinjiang please see http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/01/world/asia/01china.html.

26 About legality in Chinese rural areas, see Steinmüller (2013).

27 HDI represents the answer to the search for a definition of economic development: being a multidimensional figure, it involves indicators which are related to per capita GDP, but which mainly encompasses other factors. Their purpose is to understand if people have the tools and the possibility to improve their conditions in the future. The capability approach, as it has been conceived by Sen (1999) and Ul Haq (1996), is the core concept of the HDI.

28 This coopted élite needs to be the focus of further research.

29 See the multiple works by David D Laitin and Mark R Beissinger for studies on languages and politics in the Soviet and post-Soviet space.

30 This listing needs to be intended as a tentative progression of factors impacting on equality in a general context. I still want to remark that this progression can vary according to the different context an individual or a group finds itself in, because identity and ethnic affiliation can be both porous and shifting categories. For example, when a migrant worker needs medical assistance, the *hukou* can represent a major factor of inequality.

31 *Guanxi* means 'contacts', the possibility for one individual or group to use preferential channels to reach a position or get benefits from the political and administrative establishment.

32  *Literally* 'work unit'.
33  See Sautman (2010) and Leibold (2013).
34  See Chen (2014).

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# 8   Health in Xinjiang

## Uyghur adolescents' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS

*Hankiz Ekpar*

## Introduction

Since the first reported case of HIV in the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1985, the number of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) there has been climbing rapidly. According to official statistics, by 2011, the number of PLWHA in China reached 780,000 (Ministry of Health of the People's Republic of China 2012).While the overall prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in China remains low at 0.058 percent, some provinces, such as Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Yunnan, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Guangdong and Sichuan, experience much higher levels of HIV prevalence rates and they account for most of the reported HIV cases in China (Ministry of Health of the People's Republic of China 2012, p. 20). HIV in Xinjiang was first identified in intravenous drug-users (IDUs) and had been mainly concentrated among IDUs up until 2011 (Hayes 2012; Ni et al. 2012). In 2011, the HIV prevalence rate in Xinjiang became the fifth highest in China, more than triple the national level (Ni et al. 2012). Uyghurs, in particular those aged 20 to 39 years, made up the majority of the HIV infected population in this region (Ni et al. 2012).

Despite the fact that Uyghurs are disproportionately affected by this severe HIV epidemic, and both human security and national security concerns arise from this growing pandemic, the Chinese government and international communities have been slow to make a sufficient response (Gill & Gang 2006; Hayes & Qarluq 2011). Lack of relevant resources, suppression of open media accounts on the epidemics, widespread stigma attached to HIV/AIDS, and longstanding political and social tensions between ethnic Uyghurs and Han Chinese were among the factors that held back immediate and efficient responses from both China and wider international campaigns (Gill & Gang 2006). Also, structural factors beyond individual knowledge and action, such as poverty, cultural norms and beliefs, political culture, ethnic and gender inequality are largely overlooked by policy makers and healthcare providers when planning HIV prevention measures targeting Uyghurs.

This chapter investigates the structural vulnerability of Uyghur adolescents to HIV/AIDS. Such structural vulnerabilities are examined from economic, educational, cultural and political perspectives. Underlying the analysis contained within the chapter is the acceptance that structural factors such as poverty, lack of education, falling victim to human trafficking, and being linguistically

disadvantaged are among the driving factors that may put Uyghur adolescents at greater risks of contracting HIV. This chapter posits that understanding structural factors underlying Uyghur adolescents' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS will provide evidence to tackle root causes of rising HIV epidemics in this age group in Xinjiang. It proposes that combining information provision with structural approaches might be able to bring more sustainable and long-term positive effects on HIV/AIDS prevention in this region.

## Structural factors and adolescents' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS

Structural approaches to HIV prevention have increasingly drawn attention from scholars and policy makers from all over the world over the past two decades (Blankenship et al. 2006; Bonell et al. 2006; Gupta, Joe & Rudra 2013). Structural approaches to HIV/AIDS prevention seek to address broader political, environmental, social and cultural factors that may contribute to individuals' risk of HIV infection. This approach emphasises that HIV is a behavioural disease and how humans act and think are influenced by social, political, economic and cultural structures surrounding them (Blankenship et al. 2006; Parkhurst 2012; Rhodes et al. 2005; UNAIDS 2010a). In the past, biomedical and behavioural approaches to HIV/AIDS prevention have been the dominant frameworks in the fight against HIV/AIDS around the world. Although these two approaches have significantly contributed to the reduction of HIV infection worldwide in past decades, their limited scope has meant other factors that may hinder the progress of HIV/AIDS prevention must be considered. However, it is now recognised that these two approaches need to be combined. It is argued that while predominant individual-focused interventions have achieved significant success in preventing HIV around the world, to achieve long-term reversal of the epidemic, structural factors shaping and influencing individual behaviours need to be taken into consideration (Padian et al. 2008; Rhodes et al. 2005; UNAIDS 2010a).

As for the link between structural factors and adolescents' vulnerability to HIV, while much of the extant literature focuses on assessing in-school adolescents' level of knowledge, awareness and attitudes towards HIV/AIDS, a growing proportion of the literature investigates contextual factors, such as family, community, social and cultural influence, to provide a better understanding of young people's vulnerability to the HIV virus (Byrnes, Miller & Schafer 1999; Harrison et al. 2010; Kajula et al. 2013; Leclerc-Madlala 2002; Romer et al. 1994; Siegel et al. 1991; Wamoyi et al. 2010). In the Chinese context, although structural approaches were not directly cited, or defined, in many Chinese academic papers or policy documents, similar research has identified structural factors that may contribute to the target group's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

In their analysis of Chinese adolescents, researchers identified structural factors such as poverty, internal migration, cultural norms regarding sex and sexuality, and gender inequality as increasing Chinese adolescents' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS (Li et al. 2009; Lönn et al. 2007; Wang et al. 2005; Zhang, Li & Shah 2007). When it comes to Uyghur adolescents' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, there

is a gap in current literature in addressing structural factors. Although numerous studies have identified that Uyghurs, in general, pose great challenges to HIV prevention in Xinjiang due to cultural, social, religious and political reasons (Chen & Qian 2005; Gill & Gang 2006; Hayes & Qarluq 2011; Maimaiti & Andersson 2008; Sun et al. 2010), little has been done to systematically analyse the connection between Uyghur adolescents' structural surroundings and their HIV vulnerability.

However, since Uyghurs are the most affected ethnic group by HIV in Xinjiang, there are a remarkable number of studies examining their level of HIV/AIDS knowledge and attitudes. For example, a study by Maimaiti et al. (2010), which was conducted among college students, showed Uyghurs have lower levels of HIV/AIDS knowledge compared to their Han Chinese counterparts. In another large-scale study that was undertaken across Xinjiang, inclusive of members of the general population from different ethnic groups, researchers concluded that Uyghurs have the lowest level of HIV/AIDS knowledge compared to other ethnic groups (Li et al. 2007). However, Uyghurs did not always score the lowest level of HIV knowledge in relevant studies. In one study, which examined the HIV/AIDS knowledge of Uyghur and Han Chinese public servants and teachers, it was found that among those Uyghurs studied, this cohort had a relatively higher-level of understanding of HIV/AIDS and they were more prone to take protective actions towards HIV (Liu et al. 2012). These results indicate that Uyghurs with higher educational levels may have a better opportunity to acquire knowledge about HIV/AIDS. These studies have a common theme of examining individual-level of HIV/AIDS knowledge and assuming that the less knowledge individuals have, the more vulnerable they are to HIV/AIDS.

Apart from the predominant information assessment-based studies, there are an increasing number of studies which examine social and cultural facilitators of HIV-risky behaviours among Uyghurs. As an example, Sun's (2007) doctoral dissertation examined the inter-relationship between poverty, cultural discontinuity, mental illness and the spread of drugs and HIV/AIDS in Sa'adaite district of Ghulja city, Xinjiang. She used participant observation and in-depth interviews to explore the social and cultural factors that may contribute to many residents of this district taking up drugs and contracting HIV. She argued that on a societal level, the remote location and political agenda centred on regional stability in Ghulja posed significant barriers in terms of economic development in this region. On a community level, high unemployment rates, harsh living conditions, and cultural norms regarding gender roles and sexual practices created easy opportunities for drugs and HIV to invade this community. On a familial level, high divorce rates, lack of family education and lack of strong family bonds easily contributed to children falling into delinquency. On an individual level, lack of education and poor Mandarin Chinese proficiency as well as joblessness pushed those people to join drug-smuggling businesses and further increased their HIV vulnerability. Overall, she concluded that poverty, strong desires to become rich by smuggling drugs and child trafficking, taking up drugs to relieve anxiety and mental illness, as well as community and family dysfunction in an era where modernity and traditional

cultural norms clash, were the main causes of high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in this district (Sun 2007, p. 154).

Similarly, Simayi and Cao (2013) explored sexual behaviours and sexual attitudes of Uyghurs and their link with HIV/AIDS from a social and cultural perspective. They argued that in Uyghur culture, mostly influenced by Islamic marital laws and rules, premarital and extramarital sexual intercourse are strongly condemned. Yet, in recent years, with the increased exposure to foreign cultures and the weakening of religious consciousness, Uyghurs are faced with ever-weakening marital morality and sexual intercourse is no longer confined within the marriage. However, despite the decreased influence, Islam still has profound influence on Uyghur culture. Therefore, most sexual behaviours outside marriage are largely underground, or are denied, due to the fear of facing enormous moral pressure and discrimination once exposed. This makes it difficult to locate the source of infection or those who are infected choosing to remain invisible. This study, along with Sun's doctoral dissertation, have provided cultural, social and environmental overviews of Uyghurs' vulnerabilities to HIV and revealed deep contextual factors that may hinder the process of current individually based HIV prevention strategies.

As for Uyghur adolescents, the only available literature which systematically analyses social, cultural and environmental vulnerabilities of this particular age group is the 'Research report on vulnerability of out-of-school adolescents' to HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang' by Sun, Liu and Wang (2009). This report comes as part of a research project funded by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), investigating the vulnerability of ethnic minority adolescents' in western regions of China. The report demonstrates that Uyghur adolescents are especially vulnerable to HIV/AIDS due to higher rates of dropping out of school, being easily lured, abducted or trafficked by criminal groups into practices of stealing, pick-pocketing and drug smuggling, poverty, and gendered power relationships between sexual partners. This report is very significant because it explores structural factors that may put Uyghur adolescents at greater risk of HIV infection, which is unique in its approach. However, this report only provides a brief overview, rather than in-depth analysis, of each structural factor that may facilitate risky behaviours of Uyghur adolescents.

According to international experience, adolescents and young people aged between 10 and 24 can be especially vulnerable to HIV/AIDS due to social, cultural and economic reasons (WHO 2013). Lack of access to appropriate sexual health and HIV/AIDS education, early engagement in risky behaviours such as injecting drugs and commercial sex, lower condom usage, gender inequality, harmful social norms and lack of access to health services are among the main factors leading to young adolescents' susceptibility to HIV/AIDS (Strunin 1994; UNAIDS 2010b, 2013; UNICEF 2011; WHO 2006, 2013). According to a report by WHO (2006), in countries with generalised epidemics or with epidemics concentrated among high-risk populations such as commercial sex workers (CSWs) and IDUs, most high-risk behaviours commence during adolescent years. The report also suggested that in many countries, young people under the age of 25 make up

a significant proportion of IDUs, CSWs and their clients, and men who have sex with men (MSM), and many reported having engaged in risky behaviours in their adolescent years. Adolescents are also reported to play an important role in transmitting the virus among the general population due to them having multiple sex partners, low rates of condom usage and because they are often highly mobile (Stanton et al. 1999; WHO 2006).

Despite the fact that adolescents can be highly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, adolescents and young people from Xinjiang have not attracted sufficient attention from policy makers and healthcare providers responsible for HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns. When examining the regional and local government policy documents regarding HIV/AIDS prevention, although adolescents and young people have been identified as a key population, only how, and to which degree, popularising HIV/AIDS knowledge among them can be achieved has, thus far, been the focus (Government of Urumqi City 2007; Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Bureau of Health 2012). Efforts have been made to educate young adolescents on the risks of HIV/AIDS through different channels, such as school based HIV/AIDS education, featured speech competitions, distribution of pamphlets and brochures. As a result, the scope of these activities has been limited and their effectiveness has been less than ideal. Internationally, such behavioural interventions focusing on information provision has been argued by scholars to be less sustainable and calls have been made to address the underlying structural factors, such as social, political, cultural and environmental factors, to further reduce HIV-risk behaviours and vulnerability in target populations (Gupta, Joe & Rudra 2013; Gupta et al. 2008; Merson et al. 2008). Yet in Xinjiang, structural factors contributing to adolescents' vulnerability to HIV transmission, especially those who belong to the Uyghur nationality, have not been well examined and structural approaches have not been integrated into individual-oriented behavioural interventions. In recognition of the importance of analysing these structural factors contributing to Uyghur adolescent vulnerability to HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang, this chapter has deliberately adopted this approach to identifying HIV/AIDS vulnerability. However, before analysing Uyghur adolescent vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, this chapter first provides a general overview of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Xinjiang.

## HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang

HIV was first identified in Xinjiang among IDUs in 1995 and it had been mainly concentrated among intravenous drug users up until 2011 (Hayes 2012; Ni et al. 2012). In 2011, HIV prevalence in Xinjiang became the fifth highest in China and sexual transmission overtook transmission via intravenous drug injection making sexual transmission the main channel of transmission (Ni et al. 2012). In 2010, 45.7 percent of new HIV infections were caused by sexual transmission, and this number has leaped to 65 percent in 2011 (Ni et al. 2012). An estimated 36,159 people were reported to be living with HIV/AIDS in 2011 and among them 80.2 percent were from the Uyghur ethnic background (Ibid.). Although Urumqi and Ghulja cities accounted for the most HIV cases, Aksu, Kashgar, Hotan and

Turpan are the prefectures with the most rapid increases in HIV infections (Ni et al. 2012). Most alarmingly, the near equal gender composition of PLHIV in Xinjiang, with the male to female ratio in 2011 being 1.3:1, could be an indicator of the disease spreading from high-risk population to the traditionally low-risk general population (Hayes & Qarluq 2011; Ni et al. 2012).

Transmission through CSW, MSM and intimate partner sexual relationships has significantly contributed to the prevalence of sexual transmission. Although HIV incidence rates among CSWs in Xinjiang remain low at 0.85 percent, some areas may experience higher infection rates (Ni et al. 2012). For example, HIV infection rates among CSWs in Turpan was 4.5 percent in 2008 (Amut & Abdurehim 2011). Several studies identified that Uyghur FSWs have lower levels of HIV/AIDS awareness than their Han counterparts and as a result, were less likely to use condoms during commercial sexual exchanges (Musa et al. 2011b; Zhang et al. 2006; Zhang, J et al. 2007; Zhang et al. 2013). This lower level of HIV awareness could be the result of the lack of linguistically appropriate AIDS campaigns targeting Uyghur CSWs, financial strains caused by the cost of condoms, lower levels of educational backgrounds, as well as negative stigma attached to condoms (Hayes & Qarluq 2011; Simayi & Cao 2013). While there could be many similarities as to why both Han Chinese and Uyghur FSWs are highly vulnerable groups to HIV/AIDS, it seems that Uyghur FSWs face heightened vulnerability than Han Chinese FSWs due to their unique cultural, linguistic and social status.

As for MSM in Xinjiang, their HIV infection rate is even higher than that of CSWs in Xinjiang, standing at 2.72 percent in 2011 (Ni et al. 2012). Most MSM in Xinjiang are from the Han Chinese nationality (Wang, Ma & Yang 2011; Wei, Yahefu & Li 2008; Yang et al. 2007). However, according to Kamaliti's (2012) analysis, the reasons for the low representation of minority MSM in relevant studies could be that the majority of MSM from minority nationalities are from a Muslim background. In Islam, homosexuality is strictly forbidden. Therefore, these men bear great moral pressure coming from their families and communities and as a result, may choose to remain invisible, avoid public MSM entertainment venues and refuse to attend regular HIV check-ups. Besides these factors, many MSM among minority nationalities may also have poor levels of Mandarin Chinese competency. Considering the majority of volunteers employed by research and intervention campaigns to recruit participants speak Mandarin Chinese only, this may lead to minority MSM being hard to reach and be accounted for (Kamaliti 2012).

Another characteristic of MSM in Xinjiang is that Uyghur MSM are less likely to use condoms with their male and female sexual partners than Han Chinese MSM. According to Wang, Ma and Yang's (2011) study among MSM in Urumqi city, of whom the majority were Han Chinese, only 56.86 percent of respondents had consistently used condoms in their homosexual sexual exchanges in the past six months and the percentage stood at 46.27 percent when having sex with female partners. However, another study specifically investigating Uyghur MSM population's AIDS-related knowledge, attitudes and practices revealed that the percentage for consistent condom use with male and female partners among

Uyghur MSM in the past six months were 30.13 percent and 15.84 percent each, which is much lower than those study groups with majority Han Chinese MSM participants (Zhang et al. 2010). Again, in addition to these low rates of condom use, most Uyghur and Kazak MSM believe that marrying a female partner is mandatory in their culture and religion, which they are obliged to uphold. This highlights the fact that Uyghur and Kazak MSM in Xinjiang are much more likely to play a bridging role in spreading the disease to the low-risk general population than Han Chinese MSM.

The floating population is another key factor in the region's HIV/AIDS epidemic. In 2014, the floating population accounted for one-tenth of the total population of Xinjiang, numbering at 2,132,200 (Tianshan News 2014). In Xinjiang, the floating population is mainly comprised of intra-provincial migrants and inter-provincial migrants (Howell & Fan 2011). Intra-provincial migrants are mainly Uyghurs from rural and southern parts of Xinjiang. Inter-provincial migrants on the other hand are mostly Han Chinese from rural China in pursuit of better employment opportunities.

According to a 2009 survey in Urumqi by Howell and Fan (2011), those migrant workers, both Uyghur and Han, are mostly young and single, and have lower levels of literacy compared to indigenous locals. Migrant workers are not only more susceptible to HIV due to their mobile and unstable lifestyles, they are also disadvantaged in terms of accessing HIV prevention services and information (Gill & Gang 2006). Uyghur migrants, in particular, can be disadvantaged given the fact that most Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials in Xinjiang are printed in Mandarin Chinese language (Hayes 2012). The complexity of migrant workers in Xinjiang can be challenging for HIV prevention campaigns and may require more tailored and linguistically and culturally appropriate strategies if greater success in halting the disease among them is to be achieved.

Xinjiang's geographic location has also contributed to its emerging HIV/AIDS epidemic. Xinjiang lies between the two major drug trafficking routes of the Golden Crescent and the Golden Triangle, and this has made it a convenient hub for drug smuggling, distribution and consumption (Hayes 2012; Huang 2009; Wang & Jin 2008). In addition to location, the socio-economic disadvantages of Xinjiang's local inhabitants, especially those who belong to minority ethnic groups, has also contributed to the flourishing of the drug trafficking business in Xinjiang (Huang 2009). Studies have shown that most drug smugglers from Uyghur ethnic background are from rural areas, have lower educational backgrounds and most of them are unemployed (Huang 2009; Wang & Jin 2008). Those drug smugglers often become drug users themselves, and encourage their partners and family members to participate in the drug business, or influence their friends or acquaintances to take up drug use, so they can expand their market (Ibid.). Therefore, it is not only the geographic location of Xinjiang that contributes to the widespread practice of drug abuse, but also the low socio-economic and marginalised status of Uyghurs that increases their vulnerability.

While there are a number of ways of taking drugs, such as smoking or drinking, it is the practice of injecting drugs that is closely related to HIV infection. Studies

have found that Uyghur IDUs have an increased risk of HIV infection compared to IDUs from other ethnicities as they are more likely to inject drugs in larger groups, share rinse water and syringes, as well as having lower educational backgrounds and lower incomes (Zhang, Y et al. 2007). According to recent survey studies, rates of sharing injection equipment among IDUs from minority ethnic groups are as high as 44.4 percent in some locations (Li et al. 2013; China AIDS 2011). As a result, HIV prevalence among IDUs in some areas in Xinjiang is exceptionally high compared to the national level. In 2011, more than 50 percent of IDUs in Ghulja district tested HIV positive and in 2006 in Kucha county, the percentage stood at 66.20 (Ministry of Health of the People's Republic of China 2012; Musa et al. 2011a). Clearly, the unique cultural and social background of Uyghur IDUs can significantly influence their risk-taking behaviours and subsequently contribute to the widening of the HIV epidemic among this sub-group.

While officials have been tackling HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang since 1995 (Ni et al. 2012; Sullivan & Wu 2007), the number of reported HIV cases there have been increasing since that time. In addition, in 2000, Xinjiang had the highest prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in China (Government of Australia & Government of People's Republic of China 2000). Also in that year, the HIV prevalence rate among IDUs in Ghulja, Xinjiang, stood at 84 percent, overtaking Ruili, Yunnan, where HIV was first identified among IDUs about ten years prior (The UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in China 2002, p. 16). The explosive spread of HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang in such a short period of time certainly raises questions about the central government's political will and efforts in terms of containing the HIV epidemic in Xinjiang.

There are some similarities in the way the central government handled its national HIV epidemic in the early years and how they responded to HIV in Xinjiang when it started to emerge (Hayes 2012). As in the case of HIV prevention methods among IDUs, the Chinese government had been negligent of best international practices, such as needle exchange and methadone maintenance, despite the fact that its epidemic was mainly driven by transmission through intravenous drug use (Gill & Gang 2006; Hayes 2012). Also at this time, IDUs who were caught by authorities were incarcerated or sent to compulsory detoxification centres, instead of being provided with HIV/AIDS-related knowledge or methadone replacement programs (Gill & Gang 2006). This resulted in IDUs being hard to reach by public health authorities (Ibid.). It was not until 2001 that Chinese authorities introduced syringe exchange programs among IDUs and in 2004, methadone maintenance treatment among IDUs was pilot tested (Wu et al. 2007). However, as in the case of Xinjiang, those years between 1996 and 2001 had seen a rapid increase in HIV transmission among IDUs, yet it was those years that effective HIV prevention methods were largely absent from the national and local political agendas.

Since 2001, however, the HIV epidemic in Xinjiang has received significant attention from both national and international authorities and organisations. Large-scale programmes and initiatives were carried out by local authorities with the help of international aid and funding in an effort to contain the disease (Gill & Gang 2006). Perhaps the most significant efforts were those carried out by The

World Bank Health 9 Project (WB9) and Xinjiang HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care Project (XJHAPAC) by the Australian Agency for International Development. WB9 was launched in Xinjiang in 2000 and ended in 2008 (Mo 2009, p. 4). This project's sub-project on the prevention of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) was focused on strengthening government capacity in handling the HIV epidemic, improving HIV/AIDS surveillance systems, intensifying management of blood collection and introducing harm reduction strategies such as condom distribution (Mo 2009, p. 6). The Xinjiang HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care Project (XJHAPCP) was initiated in 2002 and finalised in 2009. The main achievements of this project were identified as expanding needle exchange practices, building extensive capacity, advancing comprehensive services as well as developing multi-sectoral leadership (UNAIDS 2009; XJCDC n.d.). Most significantly, this project had adopted some innovative and culturally sensitive approaches to HIV prevention in Xinjiang. For example, the project recruited Uyghur Imams into its HIV/AIDS prevention model. The Imams were educated on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention and their influential role within the Uyghur community was used to inform and educate the community through peer education delivered by the Imams. This model has been praised by the World Health Organisation and was identified as a model of best practice (AusAID 2013).

In addition to the major projects supported by international organisations, the Chinese government has also intensified its response to national and local HIV epidemics through its policy improvement and capacity building since 2001. As a result, by the end of 2011, overall HIV infection rates among IDUs in Xinjiang has dropped to 14.1 percent from 52.6 percent in 2002 (Ni et al. 2012). Also, by the end of 2013, more than 95 percent of county, city and prefecture level Centres for Disease Control (CDCs) had built HIV/AIDS departments and were equipped with essential laboratory equipment (Yu 2013). In the meantime, antenatal routine HIV screening has been promoted across the whole region, with antenatal care coverage reaching 76.52 percent and 81.36 percent respectively in urban and rural areas in 2011(Xinjiang Statistical Information Net 2013).

However, although international and national campaigns have made significant contributions to the fight against HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang, the role of non-government organisations (NGOs) has been limited due to the sensitive political climate around HIV/AIDS in China and Xinjiang in particular. NGOs are often seen as a threat to the Chinese government as they can often reach people who are under-served by government and may influence people's opinion of the government (Bonner et al. 2011). Therefore, there is a very tight regulation regarding the registration and operation of NGOs in China. In many developing countries, HIV/AIDS services' programming and operations are heavily subsidised by NGOs as they are more capable of reaching the poor at grassroots levels compared to national, regional or even local governments (Masud & Yontcheya 2005, p. 20). Yet in China, NGOs often struggle to survive with lack of funding and supportive environments.

The HIV epidemic in Xinjiang is still very challenging and needs more comprehensive and socially and culturally sensitive approaches. As in the case of Ghulja,

although the HIV infection rate among IDUs dropped from 84 percent in 2000 to just over 50 percent in 2011, this achievement has been limited when considering the amount of effort that has been put into containing the epidemic among this target group (Ministry of Health of the People's Republic of China 2012; The UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in China 2002). This is in line with the findings of Rhodes et al. (2005) in which they concluded individually oriented behavioural change approaches to IDUs can only reduce HIV infection rate among them by 20 percent to a maximum 45 percent. Such individually oriented behavioural change approaches may include increasing HIV/AIDS awareness among IDUs and improving their access to services such as HIV testing and counselling and clean syringe exchange programs (Gupta et al. 2008). Although studies have identified cultural and social factors that may contribute to risk-taking behaviours among Uyghur IDUs in Xinjiang, such as interpersonal reliance, perception of unity and poverty (Li et al. 2013; Zhang, Y et al. 2007), little has been done by policy makers to approach such structural factors in relation to HIV prevention. As suggested by Rhodes et al. (2005), addressing social structural factors is crucial in fighting against HIV/AIDS and such a focus will need to be adopted by Chinese officials if further, and sustainable, reduction of HIV incidences among IDUs is to be achieved in Xinjiang.

Also worrying is the climbing rate of sexual transmission in Xinjiang. While promoting condoms and raising HIV/AIDS awareness are important steps in preventing and containing the HIV epidemic in Xinjiang, as in the case of IDUs, broader contextual issues may need to be addressed. Xinjiang presents some unique obstacles in terms of HIV prevention, mainly related to its Uyghur population, who are religiously and culturally distinct from the state's majority Han Chinese population. Being a minority ethnic group, they are linguistically disadvantaged in terms of acquiring HIV/AIDS knowledge, which, as has already been demonstrated, are largely printed, broadcasted and communicated in Mandarin Chinese language (Simaya & Cao 2013). Studies also identified lack of Uyghur language speaking healthcare providers and volunteers as one of the barriers when addressing HIV-related problems among the Uyghur population (Hayes & Qarluq 2011; Kamaliti 2012; Maimaiti & Andersson 2008). It has also been identified that social stigma towards HIV positive Uyghur patients tend to be more severe compared to other populations, preventing those at risk from seeking relevant help (Simayi & Cao 2013). In addition, in Uyghur culture, men have more power in decision-making, making it difficult for women to negotiate condom use during sexual intercourse (Wang et al. 2009). Therefore, more interventions focusing on addressing structural barriers to HIV prevention may be needed. Such interventions may include developing more linguistically and culturally sensitive educational materials, recruiting more local language speaking healthcare workers and advocators, and empowering women through education, financial assistance and legal protection. Clearly, adolescents are a highly vulnerable group within this emerging pandemic. This chapter now analyses Uyghur adolescents' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang.

## Uyghur adolescents' structural vulnerability to HIV/AIDS

When identifying the social and political drivers of adolescents' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, poverty has often been found to be a major driver of vulnerability in many parts of the world. The link between poverty and HIV/AIDS is well-documented. Bolland's (2003) study revealed that those adolescents who live in high-poverty neighbourhoods were more likely to suffer from hopelessness and more prone to engage in risky behaviours such as substance-use, transactional sex and violence when compared to adolescents who were from more economically stable neighbourhoods. Another study, undertaken among adolescents from four countries in the sub-Saharan region, suggested that poorer adolescents, especially females, can be particularly vulnerable to HIV due to early sexual debut, lower rates of condom use and lack of access to health care services (Madise, Zulu & Ciera 2007). It has also been argued that poverty can be a push factor in young people migrating to other places, disrupting family and community norms regarding sex and sexuality, and therefore fostering HIV-related risky behaviours (Gebre, Belay & Kloos 2013, p. 96). In Xinjiang, the majority of Uyghur drug smugglers are from rural and impoverished areas and most of them are either peasants or unemployed (Huang 2009; Wang & Jin 2008). Huang (2009) argues that economic impoverishment and disparity experienced by ethnic minorities, especially those from rural areas, cause them to turn to the drug-smuggling trade in a desperate bid to become rich in a short period of time. At the same time, poverty creates social resentment, anxiety and stress, and can eventually lead to those involved turning to alcohol and drug abuse for psychological comfort (Ibid.). These findings demonstrate the inter-relationship between poverty and HIV vulnerability is present within Xinjiang.

Indeed, as Wu and Song (2014) argue, since the reform era, local Han Chinese and migrant workers from other provinces have taken greater advantages of the economic growth in Xinjiang compared to local Uyghurs. Although the central government has designed strategies to promote Xinjiang's economy and to alleviate poverty among minority ethnic groups, those strategies seemed to be failing (Ibid.). Many Uyghurs view the Chinese government as taking advantage of Xinjiang's rich natural resources, arguing that the Han Chinese are the main beneficiaries of those development policies (Jiang 2009; Yee 2003). According to Wu and Song's (2014) study based on a 2005 mini-census of the Xinjiang population, Uyghurs are more likely to be employed in the agricultural sector compared to local Hans and migrant Hans. Also, Uyghurs' yearly income is much less than local Hans' and migrant Hans'. Accordingly, Uyghurs' earnings are 51.8 percent and 33.4 percent less than average local Hans' earnings in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors respectively. Therefore, it is not hard to perceive that Uyghurs are disadvantaged in terms of economic well-being in Xinjiang compared to their Han Chinese counterparts. This economic disadvantage can certainly increase Uyghur's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

As for Uyghur adolescents, based on their extensive field research, Sun, Liu and Wang (2009) argued that poverty is the root cause of Uyghur adolescents'

vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. They identified dropping out of school early due to family financial pressure, being lured into or voluntarily engaging in drug trafficking, entering the sex industry for survival, and drug abuse as a means of relieving emotional stress, are all quite common among Uyghur out-of-school adolescents (Ibid.). Furthermore, the main reason identified in the study for Uyghur adolescents' being out of school was poverty.

Other studies have indicated that the high costs of schooling are responsible for the majority of drop-out cases among Uyghurs (Grose 2010, p. 99). In poorer, and Uyghur dominated, areas of Xinjiang such as Hotan, Kashgar, Aksu and Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture, only 31 percent of junior high school graduates made the transition to secondary high school in 2010. This figure is much lower than the overall regional level of Xinjiang, which stood at 83 percent (Sina 2010; *Xinjiang Statistical Information Net* 2011). In Hotan prefecture, where 96.4 percent of the population is ethnic Uyghurs, although the junior high school enrolment rate was 96.1 percent, only 12.18 percent of junior high school graduates made it to the secondary high schools in 2009 (Hotan Information Network 2013; Xinjiang Investment Network 2010). It is obvious that Uyghur adolescents are lagging behind their Han counterparts in terms of education, and this can adversely affect their financial and social well-being, as well as their health outcomes.

Apart from poverty and not being able to afford educational costs, there are other factors that may contribute to Uyghur adolescents dropping out of school or not pursuing higher education. Some Uyghurs regard education as having no use in finding jobs. In her field research in Sa'adaite district of Ghulja city, Sun (2007, p. 101) identified the perpetuation of a popular belief among Uyghur residents that 'the more you go to school, the more you lose'. Also, Kaltman (2007, p. 129) found out through extensive interviews that many Uyghurs think even with education and hard work, they will not be given the same opportunities as Han Chinese to achieve economic advancement under Han Chinese rule. This phenomenon can be a reflection of the lower employment rates of Uyghur graduates compared to their Han Chinese counterparts.

In 2006, Wang conducted a survey among ethnic minority University graduates in Xinjiang, and found that the employment rate of those graduates was only 33.82 percent (Wang 2006, p. 35). Similarly, Chen's (2011) survey among 969 participants, of whom 72.5 percent were Uyghurs, revealed the employment rate of minority ethnic graduates was 65.12 percent, whereas the employment rate of Han Chinese participants was 90 percent. However, individual study report results may differ from official government reports. In 2012, according to an official report, the overall employment rate for Xinjiang higher education graduates was 88.5 percent. The figure for minority graduates, of whom the majority were Uyghurs, was 80.5 percent (NBS Survey Office in Xinjiang 2013). Although it is noticeable that the employment rate for ethnic minority graduates is relatively high in the official report, it is still evident that there are disparities between ethnic minorities and Han Chinese. Given the high costs of higher education, it is not hard to understand why some Uyghurs in Sun's (2007) study, and as mentioned by Alimujiang (2013), would rather choose to enter the workforce earlier, or engage

in illegal activities to fund their living expenses, than to pay for an education that may not guarantee them employment.

For those Uyghur adolescents who did not continue with secondary high school education, either because they entered vocational training institutions or the employment market at a young age, they also face uncertain economic and employment prospects. Due to them not having the competitive skills associated with higher levels of educational attainment, they may end up in lower paying occupations, such as working in a bakery, butchering and hairdressing (Sun, Liu & Wang 2009). In addition, young women may end up staying at home awaiting marriage, rather than working outside of the family home. These out-of-school Uyghur adolescents make easy targets for criminal groups, who abduct or coerce them into committing criminal acts such as theft and drug smuggling. One means of coercion is to force this vulnerable group to take drugs so they come under the financial and emotional control of the criminal organisation (Ibid.). It is clear that the disadvantaged socio-economic status of Uyghurs, and their higher rates of being out of school at a young age, has certainly increased Uyghur adolescents' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS compared to their Han Chinese counterparts.

Street children and orphans can be especially vulnerable to HIV/AIDS due to their living environment and conditions. The definition of street children may differ from out-of-school adolescents, as street children may usually live on the streets day and night (Bi 2008), whereas out-of-school adolescents may have stable accommodation and may still be in the care of their parents. According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs of People's Republic of China (2014), nationwide there are an estimated 4,550,000 orphans who were not supported by welfare agencies in 2013. An estimated 1,840,000 counts of salvation support were delivered to street children by welfare agencies in the same year. In 2008, Chinese Youth Research Centre Street Children Study Unit (2008) estimated that there could be a total of 1,000,000 street children nationwide. The majority of the street children in China are boys and most of them are aged between 8 and 14 years (Ministry of Civil Affairs, cited in Cheng and Lam 2012, p. 133). Apart from street children, there are a massive number of 'left-behind' children in China, whose one or both parents have left their rural hometowns, and their child/children, to migrate to bigger cities in search of better income.

According to the All China Women's Federation, the number of 'left-behind' children in China topped 61 million in 2010, accounting for 21.88 percent of the total population under the age of 18 (Sina 2013). Near half of those children are living without both of their parents and the majority of them live with their grandparents or relatives. It is worth mentioning that approximately 2,057,000 of those 'left-behind' children live on their own without adult care (Ibid.). Although both street children and 'left-behind' children are highly vulnerable groups within Chinese society, their heightened risk of being exposed to HIV/AIDS has not drawn enough attention from either government policy makers or researchers in China.

Across China, there are approximately 100,000 street children who originated from Xinjiang, and they account for one-tenth of the total number of street children nationwide (Alimujiang 2013). In 2005, the Save the Children organisation

held workshops among children in Xinjiang and Yunnan, and discussed the factors that may make their lives difficult (Save the Children 2006). Children in Xinjiang indicated that homeless children could experience more difficulties than in-school children as they may easily fall prey to traffickers and drug abuse. Children in Yunnan on the other hand, did not indicate being trafficked as a source of difficulty. However, this is an area that warrants further research.

It is not hard to observe that child trafficking is a huge issue that concerns the everyday lives of people in Xinjiang. Many of the trafficked children are Uyghurs from poverty-stricken prefectures in southern Xinjiang and the majority of them are aged between 11 and 14 years (Li 2004). Most Uyghur street children are abducted or tempted away from their homes to east and central China by traffickers and are forced by criminal gangs to steal, beg and prostitute themselves (Alimujiang 2013). In Xinjiang, there are also cases where impoverished parents present their children to human traffickers, believing their children can make a fortune by engaging in small businesses in inland cities just like their 'bosses'. Other parents are well aware that their children will be tasked to become pickpockets and to steal (Ibid.). Once those children are trafficked to inland Han Chinese majority cities, they become confined to their Uyghur gang community, as many of them do not speak Mandarin Chinese and there are many cultural and religious barriers that contribute to them finding a sense of belonging among Uyghur criminal gangs (Ibid.).

The physical and emotional harm Uyghur street children endure at the hands of traffickers, or even by angered members of the public, is considerable. Alimujiang (2013) identified that criminal gang 'bosses' often set quotas for children to accomplish each day. If the child does not reach the quota, he or she would be beaten up heavily as a punishment. In addition, they are forced to witness the violent punishment of their fellow street children and are told they will face the same consequences if they fail to finish their duties (Ibid.). Criminals often entice children to take drugs so they can ensure they have tight control over them. Once the children get addicted to drugs, they become more loyal to the 'boss' in order to maintain their supply of drugs (Ibid.). This places them at huge risk of contracting HIV.

There is no exact data about the HIV prevalence among Uyghur street children. Yet conservative estimates of the risk of HIV infection for Uyghur street children can be hypothesised by considering the incidence of HIV among the Uyghur floating population, who work in inland Chinese cities. In a study conducted by the Beijing Aizhixing Institute, HIV prevalence among the Uyghur floating population in Beijing is stated as being relatively high, although the exact prevalence rate itself is not provided (Aizhixing Institute 2010).Considering Uyghur street children are often introduced to drugs by their traffickers, and they are often confined to their Uyghur gang community, it is logical their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS would be situated within the relatively high to extreme range.

The extent of the HIV/AIDS problem among Uyghur street children can also be hypothesised by considering the content of the award winning documentary by Chen Dongnan titled *The Trail from Xinjiang* (2013). This documentary is

about the vagrant lives of Xinjiang thieves in An'yang city, Henan province. In this documentary, the main character is Musa. Although Musa is from the Hui ethnic group (a Mandarin speaking Muslim ethnic group) from Xinjiang, he has the typical experience of Uyghur street children in inland cities and his major outside connection is with Uyghur and Hui street thieves. He left Xinjiang at the age of 14 with the dream of experiencing the excitement of large cities, yet he soon fell prey to the criminal gangs and was forced to become a pick-pocket. He was introduced to drugs by gang members and the documentary shows him injecting drugs intravenously. In 2009, he was diagnosed as HIV positive.

Other main characters in the documentary are a Uyghur named Ali and another Hui called Little Musa. Ali was sold to human traffickers by his brother at the age of nine, while Little Musa had been abducted by criminals. Both Ali and Little Musa inject drugs, with Little Musa injecting drugs up to eight times a day. They could not find jobs other than pick-pocketing and they needed to steal in order to be able to pursue drugs. They both faced significant discrimination because of their criminal activities. Even when Ali was at the hospital for medical help, he was recognised as a Xinjiang thief, due to his distinct facial appearances, and was looked down upon as a result. Similarly, when Musa went to have a HIV check-up, he was told he needed to go back to Xinjiang to receive free medication.

This documentary revealed the tragic and hopeless life experiences of Xinjiang thieves in Chinese inland cities and how they were trapped in toxic life cycles with little to no external help. They are victims of this impoverished and distorted society and they bear discrimination in all aspects of lives. Whether being forced to or not, they find a pleasure in drugs, a psychological relief that cannot be found in real life. Due to their living circumstances, they may not have access to, or were afraid to access HIV/AIDS-related services. Therefore, it is clear that Uyghur street children or former street children can be highly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and there are many institutional, legal, educational and financial barriers that need to be addressed if any attempt to reduce HIV/AIDS among Uyghur street children is to be achieved.

## Conclusion

Uyghurs face significant vulnerability to HIV/AIDS due to their disadvantaged economic, social and linguistic status as well as some of their cultural norms and beliefs. Apart from these factors, the geographic location of Xinjiang, whereby it lies on the drug trafficking routes of both the Golden Crescent and the Golden Triangle, creates an environment for easy entry of drugs followed by HIV transmission facilitated by needle and drug-injection equipment sharing. As a result, the fight against HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang faces unique challenges compared to other parts of China. Examination of the government response to HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang suggest that although the central and local governments have shown strengthened commitment in halting the spread of HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang, what is lacking is the cultural, linguistic and social sensitivity of the programs. Also, while in the past many efforts have been made to contain the epidemic, the majority of these

efforts were focused on behavioural interventions, such as providing clean needles and individual interventions, such as promoting preventive knowledge. Structural approaches, which may address structural factors such as incarceration of IDUs, the illegal nature of prostitution, discrimination towards MSM, and gender inequality, have been largely overlooked. This chapter demonstrates that structural factors, and their link to increased HIV/AIDS vulnerability, require urgent and adequate attention from authorities and policy makers. Structural interventions to address those structural factors can then be developed in accordance with successful international evidence, and a combination of individual, behavioural and structural interventions can work together to halt the spread of HIV across China and in Xinjiang.

Uyghur adolescents stand out as a unique adolescent group in the Chinese context due to their distinct ethnic and cultural background, and due to their structural vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Analysis also demonstrates Uyghur adolescents are disadvantaged in terms of their economic well-being compared to local and migrant Han Chinese living in Xinjiang. Due to the high costs of schooling, especially secondary education, and less-than-desired educational outcomes after graduation, the drop-out and non-attendance rate of Uyghur adolescents from schools are higher than that of their Han Chinese counterparts. The chances of Uyghur out-of-school adolescents becoming involved in drug-smuggling businesses are high. Emotional emptiness, caused by poverty and stress, was also found to be contributing to young Uyghur adolescents' turning to drugs to relieve psychological stress. More tragically, some Uyghur adolescents may be abducted or tempted away from their homes to Chinese inland cities and become street children who are tightly controlled by criminal gangs.

This chapter also demonstrates that Uyghur street children in inland Chinese cities are especially vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. These children are frequently confined to their Uyghur gang community due to cultural and linguistic barriers that may prevent them from making external connections. They are often forced to pick-pocket and endure considerable physical and emotional harm at the hands of their traffickers, and sometimes by angered members of the public. Traffickers often entice Uyghur street children to take drugs so that they can financially and emotionally control them with the promise of drug supply. In the absence of solid research into this particularly vulnerable group, analysis of their structural vulnerability suggests that their risk of HIV infection could be alarmingly high compared to other adolescent groups. This conclusion is reached given the high HIV prevalence rate among the Uyghur floating population, of which Uyghur street children are key members.

Overall, structural factors, such as poverty, higher drop-out rates from schools and lower attendance rate in secondary education, and heightened risk of being targeted by criminal groups and being trafficked, can all increase Uyghur adolescents' HIV-risks. Therefore, in order to adequately address the structural factors identified in this study, poverty alleviation processes among Uyghurs need strengthened commitment from local, regional and central governments. Development projects targeted at improving Xinjiang's economic status should give special

consideration to Xinjiang's Uyghur population, providing them more opportunities to keep up with local and migrant Han Chinese populations. Secondly, there is a need to decrease Uyghur adolescents' drop-out rate and non-attendance rates in schools, especially in secondary high schools. This can be done through providing incentives to reduce educational costs, such as tuition fees, books and stationary fees, improving teaching quality, and improving educational outcomes by providing more employment opportunities for Uyghur higher education graduates. As for Uyghur street children, there may be a need to improve safety awareness among Uyghur adolescents, implementing tougher punishments against convicted child traffickers, a strengthening of provincial cooperation to rescue trafficked children, and the provision of counselling, detoxification and re-skilling services for former street children. If successfully implemented, these measures could reduce Uyghur adolescents' chances of being involved in risky behaviours and therefore, reduce HIV prevalence among this group on a long-term basis. With sexual transmission being the main mode of HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang, this is an important target population to reach with effective HIV/AIDS prevention strategies.

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# 9    Protested homecomings

## Xinjiang Class graduates and reacclimating to life in Xinjiang

*Timothy Grose*

## Introduction

Since establishing the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has recognised the importance of recruiting minority *minzu*[1] to participate in its state-building programs. As early as November 1949, Mao Zedong himself proclaimed that a large cohort of minority *minzu* cadres (Ch. *ganbu*) would be needed to 'completely solve the nationality problem and to isolate nationalist reactionaries' (cited in Meng 2010, p. 1).[2] In 1957, Zhou Enlai, the then Premier of the PRC, echoed Mao's concerns and predicted that 'if the issue of [training minority *minzu*] cadres is not properly resolved, there will be no one capable of carrying out our policies' (cited in Wang 2004, p. 120),[3] a stance widely embraced by the CCP's current leadership (Xinhua 2010). Indeed, the CCP firmly believes that installing minority *minzu* leaders in non-Han regions, at least at lower-level positions (Dreyer 1970; Mackerras 2001, p. 290; McMillen 1979; Bovingdon 2004, pp. 28–30), is key to maintaining social stability.

As part of its strategy to enlist minority *minzu* in the ranks of the Party, the CCP has invested heavily in developing a comprehensive education system for young minority *minzu* individuals. To this end, the CCP has designated twenty-two institutions of higher learning for non-Han students, the most prestigious being the *Minzu* University of China (Ch. *Zhongyang minzu daxue*) in Beijing. In addition to these institutions, minority *minzu* classes (Ch. *minzu ban*) wherein students complete a year of preparatory classes before they begin their regular coursework, have been established throughout Chinese universities (Sautman 1998, pp. 83–86). More recently, the CCP has extended its programs to train non-Han students into senior-secondary schools (Ch. *gaozhong*). At the forefront of these programs are national-level boarding schools for ethnic Tibetans and Uyghurs. Past research has focused on the effects these boarding schools may have on the ethno-national identities of its students (Chen 2008; Chen & Postiglione 2009; Grose 2015a; Zhu 2007), but little attention has been placed on these individuals after they complete their formal schooling and return to their places of origin (Postiglione 2009).

In an attempt to begin filling this gap in the literature, this chapter profiles individuals who have graduated from Xinjiang Class boarding schools (Ch. *Neidi xinjiang gaozhong* ban; Uy. *Ichkiri ölkilärdiki shinjang toluq ottura sinipliri*) and returned to Xinjiang. First, the chapter will describe the circumstances Xinjiang

Class graduates are under when they decide to return to Xinjiang. My research suggests that few Xinjiang Class graduates return to Xinjiang with the intention of serving the Party. More often, institutional restraints that cripple mobility in China, unrelenting pressure from family members (especially parents), and the inconvenience of practicing Islam in *neidi* (Inner China), compel Xinjiang Class graduates to return. However, this return only marks the beginning of a sometimes frustrating process of reintegration. The second part of this chapter describes how these young adults reacclimate to daily life in Xinjiang. After a brief period of readjustment, most of my male informants re-establish a genuine sense of belonging in Xinjiang; my female informants, who are often expected to conform to rigidly defined gender roles, tend to find this readjustment process more discouraging.

## The Xinjiang Class: training Uyghur elite in *neidi*

Arguably the most dramatic reform to state schooling in Xinjiang is being implemented far beyond that of the autonomous region's borders. In 1999, the General Office of the State Council (Ch. *Guowuyuan bangongting*) formally established the 'Xinjiang Class' as part of its broader efforts to 'strengthen minority education' (Ch. *jiaqiang shaoshuminzu jiaoyu*). The program, which officially began the following academic year, was designed to attract minority *minzu* students from Xinjiang, primarily young Uyghurs,[4] to complete their senior-secondary schooling (Ch. *gaozhong*) in *neidi*.[5] By 2014, over thirty-five thousand individuals had graduated from the Xinjiang Class and another thirty-five thousand students were actively enrolled in the program.[6]

Academically, the boarding school program prepares students for China's national college entrance examination (Ch. *gaokao*). During their four-year course of study, which includes one year of preparatory coursework (Ch. *yuke*), students assiduously study China's national curriculum while they master Chinese. To meet the latter goal, all courses are conducted in *Putonghua*, China's national language, and students are expected to continue speaking in *Putonghua* outside the classroom.[7] According to recent figures, over 90 percent of all Xinjiang Class graduates attend either a four-year university or a technical school in *neidi* (Tianshan Net 2009).

Politically, the Xinjiang Class is intended to train a new generation of minority *minzu* elite (Chen 2014) who are sympathetic to the Party and who, in the wake of recent violence, can provide a stabilising element to the region. To this end, Xinjiang Class students, the vast majority of whom are Muslim, are thrust into a Han cultural milieu, and are expected to adhere to a rigid set of school policies, many of which are aimed at curbing religious practice. With the exception of being provided halal (Ch. *qingzhen*) meals, Xinjiang Class students are forbidden to engage in public religious practices, including customs as mundane as greeting each other with the expression 'Ässalammu Äläykum' [Peace be with you] to rituals with more explicit religious overtones such as reciting post-meal supplications (Uy. *chay du'asi*) and performing Islam's obligatory five daily prayers (Uy. *bäsh*

*waq namaz*). Meanwhile, students are expected to participate in festivals that are usually associated with Han culture, such as the Spring Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival and Qing-Ming Festival.

Contact between students and their parents is also regulated and tightly monitored. Xinjiang Class students are only permitted to return home once a year, during summer recess, and they must remain on campus during the month-long winter break, which corresponds with the Lunar New Year. Although school administrators arrange sporadic 'official' campus tours for a small number of parents (Tianshan Net 2011), they generally discourage parents and relatives from visiting Xinjiang Class campuses. In fact, a November 2005 article published in the *Xinjiang Daily* reports that a father who was on business in Beijing was only permitted to meet with his daughter at the school's work office (Ch. *zhiban shi*), and the entire visitation was supervised by a school official (*Xinjiang Daily* 2005).[8]

Unquestionably, the Xinjiang Class divorces students from the influences of their parents and close relatives. Xinjiang Class students are therefore susceptible to a type of 'double exposure' to CCP ideology (*cf.* Taynen 2006, p. 48). That is to say, Xinjiang Class students are subject to CCP values in the classroom and at 'home'.[9] I am confident that the CCP is acutely aware that limited contact between Uyghur students and their parents may disrupt one of the few remaining avenues for the transmission of Islamic knowledge (Waite 2006). Put another way, Xinjiang Class students, insulated from Central Asian and Islamic cultural norms, learn 'lessons in how to be Chinese' (Hansen 1999) in a 'sanitised' environment in *neidi*.

However, the wedge driven between Xinjiang Class students and their social networks in Xinjiang appears to have also opened the way for unintended consequences, some of which may undermine the political goals of the program. As the next section will describe in detail, Xinjiang Class students, having spent their formative years in *neidi*, often feel ostracised by their peers and neighbours post-return. These feelings are often compounded by the frustration of securing employment in a job market where employers unequivocally prefer hiring Han employees (Benson 2004, 214; Dautcher 2009, pp. 273–294; Kaltman 2007, pp. 29–39 and pp. 100–107; Liu 2010).

Nevertheless, graduates of the Xinjiang Class are expected to return to Xinjiang after completing their university education to fill critical-need occupations. As I have pointed out elsewhere (Grose 2015b), one document urges:

> Xinjiang Class students should be encouraged to return to Xinjiang for employment . . . in order to strengthen the Communist Party's work at the grassroots level. Xinjiang Class students should be guided to be employed as civil servants at basic level public service institutions in order to fully utilize [these students'] professional skills and expertise in order to meet the needs of education, health care, family planning, agricultural technology, and other areas that have a high demand for professionals.
>
> (General Office of the Ministry of Education and
> the General Office of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission 2008)

The above document confirms that Xinjiang Class graduates will 'inevitably' (Ch. *bijiang*) become important contributors to Xinjiang's social and economic development.

## Dragging their feet back to Xinjiang

Having earned degrees from some of China's most prestigious universities, my informants, unless they were bound to a contractual agreement,[10] rarely envisioned that years of education in *neidi* would lead them directly back to Xinjiang. Invariably, my informants insisted that work comparable to their abilities and expertise is unavailable to Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Others claimed that tightened restrictions on religious practice in the region and discrimination they face at the hands of employers spoil their plans to return (Grose 2015b). These reservations notwithstanding, some individuals are presented with few other options but to return.

Laws and policies aimed at preventing migrants from pouring into China's largest cities can pose insurmountable challenges for some Xinjiang Class graduates who wish to remain in *neidi*. China's *hukou* (housing registration permit) system is a noteworthy example. As one informed observer explains, the *hukou* system 'control[s] internal migration through managing temporary residents/visitors; and [it institutes] a tiered management of *zhongdian renkou* (targeted people) in the population' (Wang 2004, p. 117). To be sure, the *hukou* system does not target minority *minzu* specifically: regardless of ethnic background, an individual who does not possess a local *hukou* will likely be disqualified from important public services (such as subsidised housing, free public education, access to certain health care benefits) and employment opportunities, which make it nearly impossible to remain in a city without proper documentation.[11] Nonetheless, and as others have convincingly shown, minority *minzu*, particularly Uyghurs, who seek employment in *neidi* often face a sort of 'double discrimination' based on local/foreign divides (Ch. *bendi ren* vs. *waidi ren*) (Han 2010; Hansen 2005) as well as their ethnicity (Hoy & Ren 2003; Iredale, Bilik & Su 2001, pp. 221–227).

Xinjiang Class graduates can only temporarily sidestep these barriers. Upon matriculating in a four-year university, Xinjiang Class graduates, similar to all university students in China, can register for a temporary group *hukou* (Ch. *jiti hukou*) provided by their university, which essentially functions as a residency permit. However, after graduating from university, individuals are only provided a brief grace period to find work or continue their studies before these certificates expire. Unemployed Xinjiang Class graduates in *neidi* struggle to extend their stays, and often to no avail. Arzugül's experience provides a case in point. I was first introduced to Arzugül during extended research in 2010, and we met on several occasions in 2011 and 2012. Arzugül graduated from Shenzhen's Xinjiang Class in 2006 and then attended one of Beijing's medical colleges to study Traditional Chinese Medicine. Upon completing her six-year medical degree, Arzugül hoped to continue her formal education in Sweden, where she aspired to open her own practice. Unfortunately her International English Language Testing System results, an English examination required for post-graduate study in Europe,

did not meet the specifications required by Swedish universities. Although disappointed, Arzugül salvaged some solace in the possibility of continuing her studies in Beijing. Clinging to this hope, Arzugül devoted her summer to preparations for the Chinese post-graduate examination (Ch. *yanjiusheng ruxue kaoshi*). After failing her post-graduate examination twice, Arzugül accepted the reality that she would have to return to Xinjiang. Sighing, she said, 'There's nothing I can do. It was God's will for me to return to Xinjiang' (Uy. *Amal yoq. Huda buyrup, Shinjanggha qaytimän*) (*field notes*, 26 June 2012).

In many cases, constant pressure from parents can stall their children's plans to pursue opportunities outside of Xinjiang, even more so than government policies on migration. Parents of Xinjiang Class graduates risk losing an essential source of security altogether if their children do not return to Xinjiang. Many parents of Xinjiang Class students have responded by asserting their authority in new ways, especially when brokering marriages (*cf.* Smith Finley 2013, pp. 300–305).

This pressure appears to weigh heavily on young Uyghur women. Méhrigül, a 2009 graduate of Shenzhen's Xinjiang Class, was swayed by her parents to return to Xinjiang. Prior to returning to Xinjiang, Méhrigül spoke to me at length about her post-graduation plans to study in Turkey. She even participated in a volunteer project in Istanbul during the summer months preceding her final year of university. Beyond gaining valuable overseas work experience, Méhrigül hoped her participation in the program would strengthen her application for a Turkish government scholarship. During a follow-up interview in May 2013, I asked Méhrigül, then a university senior, about her plans to study in Turkey. Shaking her head, Méhrigül informed me that her application had been rejected. Surprisingly to me, Méhrigül did not appear disappointed. Rather, she enthusiastically spoke about a recent job offer she had received from a major Chinese development company headquartered in Beijing (*field notes*, 20 May 2013).

To her disappointment, Méhrigül's parents did not support her decision to work in the capital. According to Méhrigül, her parents insisted that working in Beijing offers few benefits. Her father pointed to financial concerns and calculated that working several years in Beijing would not provide enough income for purchasing a flat. Meanwhile, Méhrigül's mother warned her about the difficulties she would surely encounter trying to find a Uyghur husband in the Han dominated capital city (*field notes*, 1 June 2013).

Méhrigül reluctantly followed her parents' advice. After her commencement ceremony in Beijing, Méhrigül returned to Ürümqi to work at a bank. To reward Méhirgül for returning to Xinjiang, her father arranged a week-long holiday in Singapore, and when Méhirgül arrived in Ürümqi, a newly built home near *Döngköwrük* (Ch. *Erdaoqiao*), a district of the city especially popular among Uyghurs, was waiting for her. I asked Méhirgül if she was content with her decision. Shrugging, she replied, 'I am going to try it out [working in Ürümqi]. If I don't like my job, I will reapply for the Turkish government scholarship' (*field notes*, 1 July 2013).[12]

For a smaller proportion of my informants, the decision to return reflected strong commitments to Islam. First and foremost, this group of informants voiced

concerns about the inconveniences that may arise from adhering to Islamic dietary laws in *neidi*.[13] Certainly for Äziz, a 2008 graduate of the Xinjiang Class in Dalian, his commitment to Islamic dietary laws did not waver, despite the unpleasant social consequences it sometimes invited. Trained as an engineer, Äziz aspired to work for the China State Construction Engineering Corporation (CSCEC; Ch. *Zhongguo jianzhu*), China's largest construction and real estate conglomerate. After several attempts, Äziz was finally offered a position – that is, if Äziz complied with one important condition. The hiring manager explained that since the majority of employees working for CSCEC are Han and employees often eat communally at canteens located on-site, CSCEC could not provide special halal meals for its workers. Faced with the difficult decision to work for CSCEC at the expense of his religious observances, Äziz ultimately declined the job offer and returned to Qäshqär where he began working at a local government office. Äziz looked back at his decision without the slightest hint of regret:

> I could have said yes [and accepted the offer], and then just not eat at work, but everyone around me would wonder why I wasn't eating. More importantly, though, if I worked there, I would not only represent other Uyghurs, but I'd represent all Muslims. If I ate pork, my Han colleagues would think that all Uyghurs will eat pork under the right circumstances. Then, all Han people will think that abstaining from pork really isn't important to us [Uyghurs and Muslims]. Since my childhood, I've feared God (Uy. *Hudadin qorqtim*), but Han people have no fears (Uy. *Héchnémidin qorqmaydu*) [presumably because many Han people are atheist], so they don't understand these things. I guess, I probably could have found better-paying work in Ürümqi, but there are too many Han there.
>
> (*field notes*, 12 June 2012)

Äziz's piety extends beyond eating halal food. At the risk of being dismissed from his job,[14] Äziz attends weekend prayers at a local mosque, and in order to sidestep the Comprehensive Law Enforcement (Ch. *Zonghe zhifa*) officials who monitor mosque attendees, Äziz slips in and out of the mosque using a small side entrance.[15]

## Re-establishing feelings of belonging in Xinjiang

The return to Xinjiang only marks the beginning of a sometimes lengthy period of reacclimation. Upon their return, Xinjiang Class graduates must re-adapt to life in communities wherein Uyghurs compose a significant proportion of the local population. My research suggests that Uyghur Xinjiang Class graduates initially struggle to re-establish feelings of belonging, understood here as multi-layered emotional attachments to a certain locale (Lovell 1998), in Xinjiang. Typically, these readjustment periods are brief, especially for the young men I have spoken to. However, my female informants, who are expected to conform to rigid gender roles, tend to re-adapt to life in Xinjiang more slowly.

Dramatic changes in social environment can be an immediate source of emotional discomfort for Xinjiang Class graduates post-return. As noted above, Xinjiang Class graduates typically live for a minimum of eight years in *neidi* (four years as Xinjiang Class students and four years as undergraduates). For those students who pursue graduate degrees in *neidi*, their stay can extend well into a decade. Removed from communities wherein Islamic and Central Asian social norms pervade, several individuals admitted to feeling alien to their new lives in Xinjiang. Äziz, the individual who turned down a job offer with CSCEC, recalled:

> I remember feeling sad (Uy. *häsrät chiqtim*) about returning to Xinjiang. The people in Qäshqär are still very poor, many are still uneducated (Uy. *bilim sapisining töwän*), and the farmers' lives are grueling (Uy. *bicharä*). Even in my own home, I wasn't able to completely fit in (Uy. *a'ilä muhitqa singip kirälmäy*), and I felt as if I was a guest (Uy. *méhmandä hés qildim*). In my mind, it felt as if other Uyghurs thought I was a Han. But I have been back for nearly a year now. Things have become much better (Uy. *yahxi bop käldi*), and I have reconnected with many of my friends.
>
> (*field notes*, 15 June 2012)

At first glance, Äziz's admission that he was misidentified by other Uyghurs as a Han, or at least regarded as a 'Sinicised' Uyghur, fits neatly with recent studies examining the volatile relationships between Uyghurs who have been educated in Chinese, individuals commonly referred to as *minkaohan*, and those individuals who have studied in Uyghur, known as *minkaomin*. According to these studies, *minkaomin* Uyghurs rarely fully embrace their *minkaohan* peers (Taynen 2006; Smith 2000; Smith Finley 2007b). A closer examination of Äziz's statement casts doubt on the depth of the *minkaomin* and *minkaohan* cleavage and underscores the social 'flexibility' of young, well-educated Uyghurs (Smith Finley 2013, p. 389). In other words, by acknowledging that his situation 'has improved' (expressed by the phrase *yahxi bop käldi*), Äziz insinuates that the hostility and mistrust he sensed from other Uyghurs soon dissipated. During my visits with Äziz in 2012 and 2013, I witnessed ample evidence suggesting that he is popular among his (non-Xinjiang Class) peers. While strolling through Qäshqär's old town (Uy. *kona shähär*), Äziz was regularly stopped by friends and acquaintances, each greeting him warmly shaking his hand and saying '*ässalamu äläykum*'.

Other Xinjiang Class graduates were too tied up in their hectic work schedules to feel stigmatised. I reconnected with Muhtar, a 2007 graduate of Dalian's Xinjiang Class, in Ürümqi, June 2012, one year following our previous meeting in Beijing. Over the course of the evening, Muhtar recounted to me the major moments of the last year. After completing a short training program, Muhtar started working 50-hour weeks at a local bank, a schedule that afforded him little time for leisure. His social life was limited to meals with his roommate, a colleague who also graduated from the Xinjiang Class, and weekend outings with a group of Muhtar's middle school classmates from Qäshqär who were studying at Xinjiang University (*field notes* 7 June 2012).

During follow-up interviews with Muhtar in 2013, it initially appeared to me that little had changed in the young man's weekly routine. He continued to work fifty-hour weeks but still managed to find time to gather with his friends. However, it soon became apparent that Muhtar was in the middle of several major life changes. To begin, Muhtar purchased a flat in a high-rise apartment complex located just east of *Döngköwrük*. To help Muhtar maintain his new living space, his parents travelled from Qäshqär to live with him. Muhtar insisted that I visit him at his new home. I gladly accepted the invitation.

At dinner, I soon realised that the changes in Muhtar's life did not end with the purchase of new a house. Seated on a large rug (Uy. *giläm*) and eating a hearty bowl of *längmän* noodles prepared by his father, Muhtar shared more joyful news – he would marry in 2014. After making his announcement, Muhtar proceeded to share pictures of his fiancée, a young non-Xinjiang Class (*minkaomin*) Uyghur woman from Ürümqi whom he met through a work colleague. In preparation for his upcoming marriage, Muhtar was renovating the house's interior, installing internet service, and decorating the living room with large rugs and sitting mats (*field notes*, 30 June 2013).

Subtle but important details stand out in Muhtar's routine – namely his reconnection with primary and middle school classmates and his romantic relationship with a non-Xinjiang Class (*minkaomin*) woman. As noted above, recent literature examining Xinjiang's education system and the social impact it may have on young Uyghurs advances the argument that different modes of schooling (such as *minkaomin*, *minkaohan*, and experimental 'bilingual' schools) stratify Uyghur society. However, the lines dividing the so-called '*minkaomin*' and '*minkaohan*' Uyghurs may not be as clear as they were in past decades (*cf.* Grose 2014). Certainly, Muhtar's routine challenges the frequent practice of employing the '*minkaomin*'/'*minkaohan*' labels as discursive tools to describe the behaviours of young Uyghurs. Put another way, the fact that Muhtar, as an ethnic Uyghur who speaks fluent Chinese and who has grown up in cities dominated by Han culture, does not spend his spare time with Han colleagues or with other *minkaohan* Uyghurs is significant. Muhtar is not partial to the company of other 'acculturated' Uyghurs, and he appears to navigate between and be accepted by various Uyghur social circles (Grose 2014; Smith Finley 2013, pp. 360–366) – an assertion supported by Muhtar's relationships with his childhood friends and his non-Xinjiang Class spouse.[16]

This is not to say that among my sixty-plus informants I never encountered an individual who felt caught between Han and Uyghur peer groups; though these cases were rare. One notable example is Läyla, a 2008 graduate of the Xinjiang Class program in Hangzhou who spent her early childhood in rural Turpan. After graduating from the Xinjiang Class, Läyla enrolled at a well-known university in Beijing. Before being formally introduced to Läyla, I was told by another Xinjiang Class graduate that she was a 'victim' of the boarding school. When what was meant by this statement, the individual replied, 'You will see yourself'.

Although I never observed anything suggesting that Läyla was a 'victim' of the boarding school program (admittedly I did not know what I should have been

looking for), my interactions with Läyla stood apart from those spent with the vast majority of my informants. Unlike the group of Xinjiang Class graduates I befriended at that particular university, Läyla, whom I met with regularly over a period of four years, rarely participated in the activities organised by her Uyghur classmates. Regardless if the gathering was large, such as a party organised for the Roza and Qurban festivals, or a small dinner, Läyla often found excuses not to attend.

Normally quite reserved, Läyla opened up about the difficulties she has experienced socialising with both her Han classmates and other Uyghurs. The conversation began with Läyla's exciting announcement that she would soon visit her parents, whom she had not seen in over a year. Clearly Läyla anticipated a joyous homecoming; however she also expressed anxiety over her trip:

> Sometimes I feel as if I don't fit in in Xinjiang. It's as if I'm not quite Uyghur, and I'm not quite [Han] Chinese. I'm kind of in the middle of both of them. It's as if our [Uyghur] parents tell us to study hard, so we can have a good future and then when we graduate, they want us [young, single Uyghur women] to marry and take care of our children. I think this is a waste of our education.
>
> (*field notes*, 25 July 2013)

From her statement we can see that Läyla understands her complex identity as consisting of bifurcated components. On one end, Läyla pairs her 'Uyghur' identity with 'traditional' responsibilities of women, more specifically marriage and parenting. On the other end, she couples her 'Chinese' identity with education and, by extension, secular 'modernity' and socio-economic progress. I interpret Läyla's response to mean that Uyghur parents only superficially encourage their children to pursue higher education (that is, to compete with Han at their own game) (Rudelson 1997, pp. 127–129). Furthermore, from her remarks about marriage and child-rearing, we can surmise that Läyla believes that pursuing higher education and conforming to certain aspects of Uyghur society are mutually exclusive paths.

Läyla's reservations about marriage and parenting were shared by several of my female informants, and non-Xinjiang Class urban Uyghur women alike (Smith Finley 2013, p. 391), suggesting that the ease by which Xinjiang Class graduates transition to life in Xinjiang may be influenced by gender. Indeed, many of the men I have spoken to have successfully reintegrated in Uyghur communities, and the examples of Äziz and Muhtar demonstrate that these young men have re-established ties with (non-Xinjiang Class) friends and classmates from their hometowns. For young women, however, this transition can be more discouraging.

Older (Uyghur) women who value commensality rituals, which may be in decline among young, educated Uyghurs (Smith Finley 2103, pp. 391–392), can be one source of tension. After graduating from university in Hangzhou in 2008, Gülnaz returned to rural Qäshqär to serve as a school teacher. Soon thereafter, Xinjiang's provincial-level and local governments arranged a position (Ch. *fenpai*) for Gülnaz at one of Qäshqär's senior-secondary schools. Since the school is

located near Gülnaz's natal home, she moved in with her parents, and she regularly accompanied her mother to social gatherings. Although these informal gatherings are meant to be a form of leisure, Gülnaz remarked about the stress she feels around her mother's friends. Here, I paraphrase from my field notes:

> I felt uneasy after coming back to Xinjiang. As is pretty common if you live in a village [in Xinjiang], all of my mother's friends and neighbours come over to sit around the table to snack and talk. I attended these gatherings too, but I didn't speak or eat anything. My mother would get angry at me [for my impoliteness], but for some reason, I didn't know what to say. Looking back, I realise that life in the Xinjiang Class and college was too simple. I didn't do anything but study. I was never around adults, and as a young woman I didn't know how to talk with women older than myself. Really, I didn't know how to act around adults. In the Xinjiang Class, I was only around my classmates.
>
> (*field notes*, 7 July 2013)

Kamirya, one of Gülnaz's Xinjiang Class schoolmates who also spent her childhood in Qäshqär, felt equally despondent upon her return home. After graduating from university in Hefei, Kamirya worked as an elementary school teacher for three years in rural Qäshqär before moving to Ürümqi with her husband. While living in Qäshqär, Kamirya felt alienated from the company of her mother's close female friends. Again, I paraphrase my informant's response:

> I remember feeling mad when I was around my mother and her friends. I would go to a neighbour's or to my aunt's house, and they would force me to eat. I didn't want to eat anymore though. I was full. Actually, they were just being hospitable – making sure guests have enough to eat is part of Uyghur culture. But I was used to eating in cafeterias, and I only ate the food I wanted to eat [while studying in *neidi*]. I could eat as little or as much as I wanted. No one cared. I didn't have to act polite or think about how to act. I just did what I wanted.
>
> (*field notes*, 7 July 2013)

These two statements help to illustrate the tensions between the (Han) cultural norms Xinjiang Class students are immersed in while studying in *neidi* and those prevalent in Uyghur communities. Removed from a Uyghur cultural milieu for nearly a decade, these two young women failed to comply with simple hospitality norms. Extending hospitality to close friends and neighbours through conversation and offering tea, snacks or cooked meals has been a practice of Uyghur commensality culture that has persevered throughout the PRC's socialist era (Bellér-Hann 2008, pp. 202–10; Dautcher 2009, pp. 129–39).[17] In order to play the role of a proper guest (Uy. *méhman bolush*) and correctly perform these commensality norms, Gülnaz and Kamirya should have accepted the offered food and drink and contributed to the conversation. Their idleness was likely regarded by the other women present as impolite or even as a social offense (Bellér-Hann 2008, p. 208).

Feelings of alienation can also arise during interactions Xinjiang Class graduates have with similar-aged women. Hajigül, a female graduate of the Xinjiang Class in Hangzhou who is now studying in the Netherlands, remarked about feeling distant from her former (non-Xinjiang Class) schoolmates:

> While I was still in university [in China], I came home during every break, and every time I came home, I began to feel more and more like a stranger (Uy. *barghansiri yat tuyulatti*). I still had my girlfriends in my hometown [Aqsu], but we are different (Uy. *pärq bar*), and we want to talk about different things. They wanted to talk about children and making money, but I wanted to talk about school and my dreams of going abroad. It was as if they thought I had become Westernised (Uy. *ghéripiliship kätkändäk*).
>
> (*field notes*, 1 September 2011)

As a single woman in her late twenties who is still in school, Hajigül is likely treated as an outcast by her peers in Xinjiang (*cf.* Bellér-Hann 1998). As these accounts demonstrate, female graduates of the Xinjiang Class must carefully balance their careers aspirations with the expectations tied to marriage and parenthood or risk becoming targets of stigmatisation (*cf.* Smith Finley 2013, 340–348).

Yet, some women challenged these gender norms. These young women were not raised in an environment wherein daily chores are identified as specifically male or female (Bellér-Hann 1998);[18] others admitted to not knowing how to perform domestic tasks (preparing meals being a notable example), and, above all, most of my female informants criticised gender inequality in Uyghur society. Some young women even deferred marriage in favour of their own career. Hasiyät, a 2007 graduate of the Wuxi Xinjiang Class, complained:

> It's important (Uy. *muhim*) for us [women] to know how to cook because 98% of Uyghur men think it is important. Women must learn how to cook. If not, we will lose face (Uy. *yüzi tökülgändäk*) in front of our friends. Also, [after marriage] our husband's parents won't like us [if we can't cook] (Uy. *yahxi körmäydu*). Actually, cooking and age are really important points (Uy. *nuqtilär*). Most [Uyghur] girls marry before the age of 25. The more successful we [Uyghur women] are, the harder it will be to find husbands. You see, it is hard to find someone as good as ourselves. There are very few Uyghur men who are hard-working (Uy. *tirishchan*), have dreams and are responsible (Uy. *mäsuliyätlik*). And then, we have to be able to cook for these guys (Uy. *tamaqni yahxi étilixi kéräk*) and wash their clothes. Of course successful girls don't want to live like that.
>
> (*field notes*, 27 July 2013)

In her statement, Hasiyät tacitly expresses her unwillingness to submit to her future husband. That is, she accuses young Uyghur men of being unmotivated and intimidated by women who are career oriented, and she questions the existence of

Uyghur men who are 'good enough' for the growing number of highly-educated Uyghur women.

Indeed, patriarchal attitudes remain widespread in contemporary Xinjiang (Bellér-Hann 1998; Caprioni 2008; Dautcher 2009). Before he returned to Xinjiang, I asked Muhtar who would be responsible for domestic tasks (Uy. *a'ilä ishliri*), particularly the cooking, once he married. He answered emphatically, 'Absolutely the woman' (Uy. *choqum ayal*) (*field notes,* 19 June 2011). One year later, after Muhtar shared the news about his upcoming marriage, I jokingly reminded him of the above exchange. Muhtar, blushing in embarrassment, confirmed that his fiancée 'cooks very well'. Muhtar's father, who was preparing the meal in the kitchen, overheard our conversation, burst into the living room, and added, 'He wouldn't marry her if she couldn't cook' (Uy. *tamaq étälmisa bolmaydu*) (*field notes,* 30 June 2013).

The disappointments experienced while re-adapting to social life in Xinjiang have undoubtedly frustrated my informants, but complaints about these issues were often drowned out by strongly voiced objections to the CCP's current course in Xinjiang. Rather than spearheading government-planned development in the region, Xinjiang Class graduates are often stuck working menial jobs, if they are employed at all. Based on my research, opportunities for Xinjiang Class graduates appear to be limited to a few, mostly undesirable professions.[19] One Xinjiang Class graduate, he himself a banker in Ürümqi, reproached the CCP for this situation, 'Xinjiang Class graduates can only be bankers (Uy. *banka mulazimätchisi*), teachers (Uy. *oqutquchi*) or police officers (Uy. *saqchi*) [in Xinjiang]. Really, the Xinjiang Class is about our assimilation (Uy. *assimiliyatsiyä*)' (*field notes,* 21 June 2012). Many of informants agreed with this assessment, and a majority of the individuals I have spoken to who have returned to Xinjiang are engaged in these three professions.

My informants insisted that the best-paying, most prestigious jobs in Xinjiang are reserved for Han employees. Diyanät, a 2004 graduate of one Beijing's Xinjiang Classes who now works in Khotän, explained:

> It's simple. If a Uyghur with a master's degree who can speak perfect Chinese and a [Han] Chinese with a high school diploma apply for the same job, the Han will get the job every time.
>
> (*field notes*, 13 June 2012)

Sumbul, a 2004 graduate of Hangzhou's Xinjiang Class who spent six months looking for permanent work in Ürümqi, similarly commented:

> It's so hard for me to get a job. You won't even believe how common it is for employers to be unwilling to hire Uyghurs. It is even harder for Uyghur women. You rarely find a company, a government office, or a school seeking Uyghur women.
>
> (*field notes*, 17 July 2013)

To be sure, Chinese laws seek to protect ethnic minorities from discriminatory hiring practices (see Law of the PRC on Regional Ethnic Autonomy 1984; Constitution of the PRC 1982), yet these laws appear to be sporadically enforced (see CECC 2011; Fay 2013). In fact, there are a number of documented cases in which employers specifically reserve vacancies for Han employees, especially in the private sector (CECC 2010).

Unemployed or unable to find meaningful work, Xinjiang Class graduates commonly direct their frustrations towards the CCP. Adalät, a 2004 graduate of Shenzhen's Xinjiang Class, protested:

> I don't think I belong here [in Xinjiang], not because I hate my hometown, but because I disagree with so many policies here. [The policies] are not based on principles at all, but always sway according to the government's own interests. You [as a Uyghur] are never treated like you are a person who has his/her own rights as a citizen. There is no fairness; power and money dominate all.
>
> (*field notes*, 8 June 2012)

Certainly, Adalät's criticism of policies in Xinjiang is vague. Nonetheless, having known Adalät for several years, I can speculate with some degree of certainty that, as a non-religious young woman who was planning to emigrate to Australia with her then fiancé (now husband), she is likely referring to discriminatory hiring practices and those bureaucratic hurdles that ostensibly delay (or prevent) Uyghurs, from going abroad.

The discontent among Xinjiang Class graduates echoes criticisms that have reverberated throughout China's Uyghur population for the last three decades (Bovingdon 2010; Dautcher 2000; Kaltman 2007; Mackerras 2001; Smith 2000, 2002; Smith-Finley 2007a). But graduates of the Xinjiang Class are supposed to be different: the CCP pledged that these young Uyghurs would be a 'new force' (Ch. *yi zhi xinsheng liliang*) behind Xinjiang's rapid economic and social development (*Xinjiang Daily* 2012). This promise has yet to be fulfilled.

## Concluding remarks

This chapter has shown that those Xinjiang Class graduates who have returned to Xinjiang have not done so to repay the CCP for its 'altruism'. Nor have they returned as patriotic ethnic minorities who profess loyalty to the CCP. Rather, most graduates of the program return to Xinjiang only after exhausting other options or if they are under extreme pressure from their parents. Reacclimating to life in Xinjiang can be vexing, especially for young women. Despite these difficulties, Xinjiang Class graduates can and do re-establish genuine feelings of belonging in Uyghur communities. However, finding suitable, well-paying work has been a more pressing concern for my informants. Xinjiang Class students have been promised the reins of Xinjiang's development programs, but they, like non-Xinjiang Class Uyghurs, often find themselves on the sidelines. My informants have complained bitterly about the dwindling, if not non-existent, job opportunities

available to them, and for those individuals fortunate enough to secure full-time employment, they are often forced to perform menial tasks for low wages.

Discontent simmers among my informants who have returned to Xinjiang. Some individuals attempt to pave new avenues leading to opportunities abroad. Others resort to expressing their disapproval of the CCP through vocal critiques (Bovingdon 2002; Bovingdon 2010, pp. 88–94) and forms of media that the state cannot easily control (Dautcher 2000; Smith Finley 2007a, 2013). Regardless of the form of resistance, a sizeable group of Uyghur intellectual elites, many of whom have little to do with their time other than contemplate what they perceive is the government-sanctioned mistreatment of the Uyghurs, are reluctantly re-establishing roots in Xinjiang's major oases.

## Notes

1 '*Minzu*' is the Chinese term used to describe the PRC's 56 ethnic (and ethno-national) groups. The CCP identified these ethnic groups using a loose interpretation of Stalin's four criteria for ethnic identification (that is, common language, territory, economy and culture). Recent research has exposed the many imperfections of the CCP's ethnic identification campaign (Ch. *minzu shibie*). In light of the term's inadequacies, I will not attempt to translate *minzu* into English. For more on the ambiguity of ethnic designations in China see: Gladney 1996; Harrell 2001; Mullaney 2011.

2 *Yao chedi jiejue minzu wenti, wanquan guli minzu fandongpai, meiyou dapi cong shaoshu minzu chushen de gongchan zhuyi ganbu, shi bu keneng de.*

3 *Ruguo ganbu wenti jiejue bu hao, yiqie zhengce jiu dou meiyou ren luoshi.*

4 It should be noted that the Xinjiang Class enrols students from diverse ethnic backgrounds (such as Uyghur, Han, Hui, and Kazakh). However, Uyghur students consistently make up 85–95 percent of a Xinjiang Class's student body each year (Chen 2008, p. 83). Some officials have indictated that in the near future at least 90 percent of all incoming students will be Uyghur (Xinhua 2011).

5 From 2000 to 2014, the yearly enrolment of the Xinjiang Class jumped from 1,000 to 10,000 students. The number of schools hosting a Xinjiang Class correspondingly increased from 12 to 91, and these schools are spread across 45 cities (Xinhua 2013).

6 These totals have been calculated from yearly enrolment figures that are regularly announced. See for example, Hu & Zhang 2005; Xinhua 2006; Xinhua 2008; Xinhua 2013.

7 Of course, students find ways to subvert the Xinjiang Class's language policy, and many of my informants reported that they spoke in Uyghur when they knew that their activities were not being monitored. Nonetheless, according to a set of regulations representative of most Xinjiang Class schools, (1) students must speak only *Putonghua* during class and their daily activities; (2) students must communicate only in *Putonghua* during organised outings; and (3) students are encouraged to use *Putonghua* for all communication, regardless of location (Ch. *zai shenghuo ji qita quyu shiyong putonghua jiaoliu*) (Shanghai Fengxian Middle School 2006).

8 Although there is some flexibility in the implementation of these rules, information gathered from my research indicates that the vast majority of schools hosting a Xinjiang Class do not allow parents to visit their children.

9 See also Jennifer Taynen's (2006, p. 48) discussion on the impact parents employed as government officials have on the ethnic identities and feelings of belonging of their children.

10 Nine of my informants opted to enrol in one of China's pedagogical universities (Ch. *shifan daxue* or *shifan xueyuan*) to participate in these universities' teacher training

programs. Xinjiang Class graduates who become teachers receive a tuition-free university education. All nine of these students spent their early childhoods in southern Xinjiang (especially Qäshqär, Khotän, or Aqsu), and their parents were either farmers or common laborers. For families in southern Xinjiang who rely primarily on agricultural production for their often modest annual incomes, the Xinjiang Class provides the most feasible option for children from these impoverished areas to receive senior-secondary and university educations.

11  For a brief but excellent article on the *hukou* system, see Richburg 2010.

12  During research in Xinjiang June 2014, I spoke with Méhrigül. She still works at a bank and was planning to marry in September 2014.

13  Informants included in Chen Yangbin's (2014, pp. 208–209) research also elaborated on the difficulties maintaining halal diets while living and working in *neidi*.

14  Although Äziz has not officially joined the CCP, his position in a government office requires him to follow the same rules and regulations required of Party members. Members of the CCP are strictly forbidden to engage in religious activities, and a document issued by the XUAR Party Committee Propaganda Bureau stipulates:

'Though Party members are also citizens, they are first of all members of the party of the proletariat, and therefore enjoy only one freedom – the freedom not to believe – and absolutely do not enjoy the freedom to believe. They cannot have feet in two boats' (cited in Bovingdon 2004, p. 35).

15  Officials from the Comprehensive Law Enforcement Bureau (*zhonghe zhifa ju*) stood under blue canopies that were erected in front of nearly every mosque in Xinjiang 2012. In some cities, the responsibilities of this government department are focused primarily on sanitation and basic law enforcement; throughout Xinjiang, officials from this department also monitor religious activity.

16  I shared dinner with the newlywed couple in Ürümqi June 2014. They are expecting their first child in October.

17  Ildikó Bellér-Hann (2008, p. 203) also reminds readers that Uyghurs living in contemporary Xinjiang regularly self-describe 'the Uyghurs' as being an especially hospitable (Uy. *méhmandostluq*) people.

18  During several homestays with a Uyghur family who lives in Lukqun, 2006–2008, I often helped with domestic tasks. As a foreigner, the family I stayed with often worried about my well-being and specifically assigned 'women's and children's chores' for me to complete. During the morning hours of my summer visits, I helped to prepare vegetables for cooking and fed the family's three sheep. After the sun set and the temperatures dropped, I picked grapes. It was only on a temperate day in October that I was permitted to fertilise the fields with the other men.

19  To be sure, young Han Chinese who hold a college degree also struggle mightily to find work. Some statistics suggest that the unemployment rate of college-educated individuals aged 21–25 exceeds 16 percent (Tse & Esposito 2014) and in 2008, one third of China's 5.6 million college graduates failed to find work in their first year on the job market (Chin 2010).

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# 10 Xinjiang from the 'outside-in' and the 'inside-out'

## Exploring the imagined geopolitics of a contested region

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## Introduction

Gardner Bovingdon has demonstrated that narratives about, and representations of, ethnic and social identity within Xinjiang not only 'matter' but have become a key domain in which politics is contested in the region.[1] Taking inspiration from Bovingdon's approach this chapter seeks to explore the dominant geopolitical narratives of Xinjiang that have been deployed by important state and non-state actors. Ultimately such narratives, whether elucidated by prominent policy-makers, scholars, non-government organisations or sub-state actors can be characterised as predominantly 'outside-in' approaches to Xinjiang that often attempt to incorporate or subsume the identity politics of the Uyghur and Xinjiang into the predominant discourse/narrative of the external observer. Through the deployment of such narratives Xinjiang and the Uyghur in fact become the 'subject' of the politics of representation by external actors wherein they are embedded within wider international relations and foreign policy discourses which reduce the complexity of the region in favour of readings that conform to the dominant political discourse of the actors concerned. The presence of a number of conflicting geopolitical narratives of the region and its place in the world is itself noteworthy as it is symptomatic of Xinjiang's (and Central Asia's) 'reconnection' to major currents of contemporary world history. Additionally although the existence of such competing narratives signifies that Xinjiang (and Central Asia) are contested spaces it is a contest that is conceived of as being played out at the inter-state level. The dominant geopolitical narratives of the region either ignore or purposefully obscure the (potential) existence of what might be termed 'inside-out' perspectives on Xinjiang and its place in this contested environment.

I argue that there are two prominent, and indeed hegemonic, 'outside-in' geopolitical narratives of Xinjiang. The first can be characterised as a neo-liberal geopolitical vision that has been deployed by the United States (US), and other prominent Western states, since the end of the Cold War in 1991. In brief, this particular geopolitical narrative is anchored in a judgement that only the spread of 'free markets, democracy and human rights' can bring stability and development to the post-Cold War order. Significantly, this normative agenda is also coupled with the continued influence of what might be termed as 'classical geopolitical' analysis of international politics which, particularly from the US perspective, is

increasingly intertwined with foreign policy debates about managing the 'rise' of China.[2]

The second geopolitical narrative that I have characterised as 'outside-in' is that which emanates from Beijing. While this perhaps is a contradictory designation given that Xinjiang is recognised as part of the People's Republic of China (PRC) – indeed an 'integral' part according to the Chinese government – I believe that such a designation is warranted. I suggest that the geopolitical vision of Xinjiang espoused by Beijing can be defined as a 'developmental' one that at its core is concerned with state-building and the increase of China's material power. The content and dynamics of this state-building project ironically illustrates Beijing's enduring anxieties regarding the 'integral-ness' of Xinjiang. If the neo-liberal geopolitical narrative is concerned with the spread of free markets, democracy and human rights, Beijing's vision, in contrast, is concerned with the achievement of three core goals for the Chinese state with respect to Xinjiang – legitimacy, control and development – which are seen as vital to the consolidation of China's 'rise' as a great power.

There remains the potential for these dominant 'outside-in' geopolitical narratives of Xinjiang to be challenged by 'inside-out' perspectives derived from aspects of Xinjiang's ethnic, social and religious 'reality'. Some of these have potentially troubling implications for not only Beijing's state-building project in the region but also the West's neo-liberal agenda. However, I argue that the ability of such 'inside-out' geopolitical imaginings to positively affect the politics of the region is limited by the constraining effects of the two hegemonic geopolitical scripts elucidated by the West and China.

The chapter will proceed in four parts. The first will explore the problematic nature of the concept and discourse of geopolitics. This section is informed by the approach of the 'critical geopolitics' literature that seeks to deconstruct dominant or hegemonic geopolitical narratives in order to document/illustrate how states and policy-makers spatialise international politics. The second and third sections will then explore some representative elements of the neo-liberal geopolitics of the US/West and what I have termed the 'developmentalist' geopolitical narrative of Beijing and explore how these narratives shape these actors' approaches to the region. The final part of the paper will then turn its focus to examining how the potential for the generation of 'inside-out' geopolitical perspectives of Xinjiang has been constrained by those emanating from Beijing and the West.

## The problem of geopolitics

'Geopolitics' is often invoked to describe and explain the contemporary politics of Xinjiang and Central Asia with little by way of explanation as to what exactly the term means. Popular usage of it is often shorthand for a particular version of analysis that seeks to explain the dynamics of international politics through reference to the enduring effect of the physical and geographical environment on societies and states. In this understanding of the concept, the physical and geographical characteristics of the world are conceived of as *the* determining factors

of human history. The implications of this particular conception of geopolitics are far reaching:

> The materiality of this world is assumed to be objective, and as such it is located beyond the reach of any sort of human intentionality, including that involved in the negotiation of political power. Rather space is understood to represent an existential *pre*-condition for all politics, impacting – variously but always decisively – on the political process, for which reason it must serve as the point of departure for all political analysis and policy formulation. Meaning is not projected onto a geographical subject-world, but rather inheres in it as an essential quality, and the task of geopolitics is precisely to identify and analyse it.
>
> (Murphy et al. 2004, p. 621)

This particular understanding of geopolitics is arguably that which underpins what may be termed the tradition of 'classical geopolitics' that emerged from elements of European imperialist statecraft of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The geopolitical tradition that emerged during this period – especially from the writings of such Anglo-American figures as Alfred Thayer Mahan and Halford J. Mackinder and the European (largely German) tradition associated with Rudolf Kjellen, Friedrich Ratzel and Karl Haushofer – was characterised by many of the themes noted above by Murphy et al. (2004). Admirers of this tradition often construed the writings of these figures as representative of a geopolitics that was something akin to a neutral and even 'disembodied science' that revealed certain 'truths' about history derived from an understanding of the operation of set of enduring and geographically founded oppositions – most notably for example between 'sea power' and 'land power', 'heartland' and 'rimland', 'pivot' and 'periphery'. Significantly, such geographically founded oppositions were also conceived of as producing parallel political or ideological oppositions between individualism/democracy (sea power, rimland) and authoritarianism/totalitarianism (land power, heartland).[3] For purveyors of 'classical geopolitics', then, international politics throughout history can be understood as the interaction of, and conflict between, these opposing forces.[4]

Yet the emergence and development of classical geopolitics as a concept and discourse is inherently problematic due to its entwinement with European imperialism. As Gerry Kearns (2006, p. 75) has noted Mackinder's geopolitical vision, for instance, was underpinned by the deployment of discursive strategies that justified the maintenance of the British Empire. First, Mackinder (1904, p. 421) asserted that by the dawn of the 20th century the world had entered a 'post Columbian epoch' in which the lands of the globe had been almost completely politically appropriated and demarcated by European 'civilisation'. In this 'closed space world' the 'British had a legitimate interest in the affairs of every single part of the globe'. Second, international politics was a zero-sum game as the natural environment shaped 'cultural identity in ways that produce a world of . . . mutually hostile peoples', and in a 'closed space' world this presaged increased conflict between

such 'mutually hostile peoples' (Kearns 2010, pp. 187–88). Finally, for Mackinder international political conflict was understood as being primarily carried out through territorial strategies that prioritised control over natural resources. The deployment of these discursive strategies – the claim of the 'closed space' world, the division of humanity into incompatible 'aggregates', and the fundamentally territorial nature of international conflict – permitted Mackinder to represent the British Empire as an 'organic' or 'natural' entity (Kearns 2006, p. 75).

The school of *geopolitik* associated with the German geographer Karl Haushofer has also been broadly condemned for contributing to aggressive and expansionist imperialism. Indeed, as Haushofer conceived of the state as analogous to a biological organism that had to struggle for survival in a hostile environment, his geopolitics was broadly implicated in the Nazi's quest for *lebensraum*.[5] Although this geopolitics was tainted in the immediate post-1945 period, it nonetheless became a predominant form of analysis within Anglo-American strategic thinking during the Cold War. Perhaps the most significant example of the influence of classical geopolitical thinking on state policy was the discourse and strategy of 'containment' first elucidated by US diplomat George F. Kennan in the late 1940s. Kennan's strategy of 'containment' was in important respects Mackinder's 'heartland' thesis animated by the ideological threat of Soviet communism. Thus, the goal of 'containment' was to confine the Soviet Union and its communist ideology to its Eurasian 'heartland' through the creation and maintenance of a web of US-led alliances in Western Europe and East Asia.[6] For the duration of the Cold War US strategic policy appeared to be driven by an internalisation of Mackinder's warning that the security of 'free societies' would be imperilled if one power was permitted to dominate the 'heartland' of the Eurasian continent (Dalby 1990, pp. 171–88).

Gearoid O'Tuathail has argued in contrast that geopolitics 'is not an immanently meaningful term but a historically ambiguous and unstable concept' (1994, p. 259). Such ambiguity and malleability however does not render the concept meaningless or without practical political consequence. To do so O'Tuathail argues would be to 'assume a naive theory of language where words and concepts have stable, assured identities which refer unproblematically and unambiguously to a fixed set of referents' (Ibid., p. 260). Rather than seeking to 'define and isolate the essence of geopolitics', the 'critical geopolitics' approach instead seeks to problematise the ways in which 'geopolitics' is made meaningful in political discourse. For O'Tuathail and Agnew (1992, p. 192), the purveyors of classical geopolitics are ultimately engaged in the 'production of knowledge to aid in the practice of statecraft and further the power of the state'. Such approaches fail to acknowledge that geography 'is never a natural, non-discursive phenomenon which is separate from ideology and outside politics. Rather, geography as a discourse is a form of power/knowledge itself' (Ibid.).

While there are many perspectives encompassed by the label 'critical geopolitics' it is possible to identify five core arguments or claims of this approach that are relevant to the subject of this chapter. First, the geographies of global politics are 'neither inevitable nor immutable' but are 'constructed culturally and sustained

politically through the discourses and representational practices of statecraft' (Atkinson & Dodds 2000, p. 9; see also O'Tuathail & Dalby 1998, pp. 1–15). Second, such representational practices impact on the politics of identity as 'distinctions drawn between the domestic Self and external Others are sustained by geopolitical imaginations and the moral and physical boundaries that divide the world into 'our' space and 'their' spaces (Atkinson & Dodds 2000, p. 10). Third, geopolitical knowledge(s) 'are not the exclusive preserve of political elites' but 'also find expression in the everyday realms of television and films, novels and newspapers . . . and the politics of banal nationalism'. This is significant as such popular constructions of geopolitical knowledge contribute to 'the production and circulation of 'common sense' geopolitical reasoning which impacts on public opinion' (Ibid.). Fourth, 'the intellectual practices and epistemological assumptions inherent to geopolitical thought' require investigation, not least the tendency of 'classical geopolitics' to appeal to synoptic visions of global politics in which the historical, political, ethnic and social particularities of specific geographic regions are ignored/subsumed in favour of a universalist narrative (such as the appeal of classical geopolitics to binary geographic-cum-ideological oppositions of sea power and land power or heartland and rimland). Finally, critical geopolitics draws attention to the 'situated reasoning' of geopolitics – that is, 'the social, spatial, political and technological parameters of the modern state system'. For Atkinson and Dodds, then:

> At the core of critical geopolitics . . . is the belief that these geopolitical representations of global politics deserve serious attention, for it is such 'scripting' of the world that helps *constitute* and *legitimate* foreign policies.
>
> (2000, p. 11, emphasis added by author)

The significance of this approach for Xinjiang and the wider Central Asian region are considerable. There are perhaps no other comparable geo-cultural regions that have been as 'constructed' and as affected by the representational practices of external actors. Since the end of the Cold War alone these regions have been variously characterised and 'imagined' geopolitically as the heart of the 'world's axial supercontinent' (Brzezinski 1997, p. 50), a 'global fault-line' (Klare 2000, pp. 49–61), a potential 'shatterbelt' (Cohen 2005, pp. 1–22), and a 'Non-Integrating gap' (Barnett 2003). With respect to Xinjiang, prominent American scholar S. Frederick Starr has noted that the tendencies of external observers to fall back on such geopolitical representations are perhaps due to the fact that 'it is hard to find another region on which such diverse external cultural forces have been so consistently exerted' (2004, p. 7). Although this may in fact be so, it does not necessarily absolve us from failing to examine the potential for actors from within the region constructing and deploying their own particular 'imaginings' and representations of Xinjiang's place in the world. Prior to exploring this aspect of the problem in the final section of the chapter it is first necessary to explore how the US/West and China have geopolitically 'imagined' and represented Xinjiang and Central Asia as it reveals the respective political-ideological goals of each in

these regions. In particular, following Atkinson and Dodds, I suggest that the geopolitical representations of these regions deployed by the West and China produce a 'script of the world' that 'helps constitute and legitimate' the foreign policies of the US/West and the foreign *and* domestic policies of China in the region.

## Central Asia in the Western geopolitical imagination: toward a synthesis of neo-liberal narratives

Xinjiang and Central Asia have often been depicted in classical geopolitical terms as the 'pivot' of history. Most famously Halford J. Mackinder conceptualised this broad region as the 'pivot' of world history between the 5th and 15th centuries due to the military and strategic advantage accruing to the mobile, horse-riding nomad through the geographic conditions of the region. This 'pivotal' nature, however, was overturned in the early sixteenth century through the circumnavigation of the globe and expansion of the sedentary-based states beyond their 'homelands' on the periphery of the Eurasian continent (Mackinder 1904, p. 257). For Mackinder the dawn of the European 'Age of Discovery' and subsequent development in the power of European maritime-based states/empires overturned the core strategic advantage of the 'pivot' region (that is, the military prowess of horse-riding nomads). S. A. M. Adshead (1993) also developed a similar periodisation of Central Asian history, although going beyond a geopolitical description through the ascription of a specific function or role for the region. Thus, the 1200–1650 period is asserted to be the climax of Central Asia's 'active' phase in world history whereby it became a point of diffusion to the sedentary 'homelands' of Europe, Iran, India and China for political, military, economic, technological and cultural developments. Adshead's second period, from 1650 onward, is deemed to encapsulate Central Asia's decline into a 'passive' role in world history whereby it gradually became a point of 'convergence', and a recipient, for political, military, economic, technological and cultural developments generated from the surrounding sedentary civilisations.[7] Such schemas thus relegated Central Asia to a peripheral position in world history after the European 'Age of Discovery', whereby it was gradually absorbed into the expanding Russian, Manchu and British Empires.

This theme of the decline of the broad Central Asian region as a site of strategic, political, economic and cultural importance over time has been an influential one and has clearly informed what I have termed in this section the contemporary 'neo-liberal' geopolitical vision of the region. For much of the Cold War era Xinjiang and Central Asia were strategic backwaters for the United States and as such did not figure predominantly in the dominant geopolitical discourse of the era other than as constitutive parts of the 'Communist bloc' that was to be 'contained'. This was underlined with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, which was construed by Washington as the first step in the Kremlin's attempt to 'break out' of its Eurasian 'heartland' by securing access to a warm water port on the Arabian Sea. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 however removed the *raison d'etre* of the strategy of 'containment'. A number of prominent observers/scholars subsequently attempted to construct alternative narratives of international politics in

the early 1990s that nonetheless betrayed the influence of classical geopolitical thinking.

Francis Fukuyama's article (and subsequent book) examining 'the end of history' (1989; 1992) and Samuel Huntington's article (and subsequent book of the same name, sans question mark) 'The Clash of Civilizations?' (1993; 1997), to name but two of the most prominent examples, echoed the discursive strategies employed by Mackinder. Both invoked a moment of 'crisis' and emphasised the importance of spatialised cultural-ideological or civilisational blocs in order to 'naturalise' a case for the hegemony of the United States (Kearns 2006, p. 79). For Fukuyama, the collapse of the Soviet Union signalled the 'end of history' as the failure of state socialism meant that there were no longer any viable alternatives to the liberal-capitalist model of political and economic organisation (1989, pp. 8–13). Thus, history understood as the evolution and competition of ideal political and economic systems or forms had ceased. Those who lived 'in stable, long-standing liberal democracies', Fukuyama argued, existed in a 'post-historical' world as they could not imagine 'a world that is radically better than our own, or a future that is not essentially democratic and capitalist' (1992, p. 46). Meanwhile those who did not live in the 'post-historical' West, and in the 'Third World' in particular, would not only remain 'mired in history' but their countries would 'be a terrain of conflict for many years to come'. Crucially, the *only* path out of this 'historical' world was to emulate the liberal democratic West. Citing the example of the Soviet Union, for example, Fukuyama argued that 'it can start down the path staked out by Western Europe forty-five years ago, a path that most of Asia has followed, *or it can realize its own uniqueness and remain stuck in history*' (1989, p. 13, emphasis added by author). Under Fukuyama's schema historical progress for the non-Western world is predicated on jettisoning cultural or national 'uniqueness' or tradition in favour of a 'modernity' authored by the West.

Huntington, like Fukuyama, identified the collapse of the US-Soviet bipolar order as a moment of historical rupture that presaged a coming era of geopolitical conflict. For Huntington the end of the Cold War marked not the 'end of history' but the beginning of a new era in which the most fundamental sources of conflict in international politics would be cultural rather than ideological or economic in nature: 'The end of the Cold War has not ended conflict but rather given rise to new identities rooted in culture and to new patterns of conflict among groups from different cultures which at the broadest level are civilizations' (1997, p. 30). As Bassin has noted such conflicts for Huntington were 'interminable' as their sources lie 'in the very deepest core of social psychology, where self-identity is inextricably fused with a perceived opposition to an external Other' (2007, p. 354).[8] Huntington also opened his famous article with an assertion reminiscent of Mackinder's invocation of a 'closed world' moment by stating that 'The world is becoming a smaller place' (1993, p. 25). This 'closed world' moment was significant as the increased contact between civilisations that this compression of space entailed would not decrease but rather heighten recognition of, and anxiety about, cultural difference in a world that was 'for the first time in history . . . multipolar and multicivilizational' (Huntington 1997, p. 21).

In terms of prescriptions for US foreign policy the greatest 'lesson' of Huntington's civilisational geopolitics was that the US was the 'inheritor and defender' of 'Western civilisation', most particularly its values and institutions, 'notably its Christianity, pluralism, individualism and the rule of law' (1997, p. 311). The task of the United States in this multi-polar and multi-civilisational world is to 'preserve Western civilization' through a number of means including support for the 'Westernization' of parts of the developing world, restraining the military power of the 'Islamic and Sinic countries' and to 'maintain Western technological and military superiority over other civilizations' (Ibid., p. 312). Significantly, the key 'danger zones' for the US were the 'fault lines' created by the overlap of civilisational blocs which, according to Huntington's map of civilisations, occur in the Middle East, South Asia, and Central Asia. Thus, in their attempts to move beyond the ideologically defined geopolitics of the Cold War, Fukuyama and Huntington simply substituted other subjective factors – the non-geographical factors of 'liberal democracy' (Fukuyama) and social psychology (Huntington) – in its place.

The influence of such thinking on the policy approach of the United States toward the broad Central Asian region in the post-Cold War era has been significant. Prior to 11 September 2001, however, US and Western attention to Central Asia was often fixated upon specific issue areas directly impacting on Western interests rather than upon the trajectory of the region's development as a whole. For example, Western concern focused sporadically on issues surrounding the fate of former Soviet nuclear weapons and materials in Kazakhstan in 1992/1993, the 'pipeline politics' surrounding the Caspian Basin between 1996 and 1998 or the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan after 1996.[9] Many concurred with President Clinton's Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott's assertion in 1997 that this lack of focus was due to the fact that Washington had no compelling interest in Central Asia that would encourage it to become a competitor in the so-called 'new great game' for strategic influence in the region. Yet Talbott's subsequent iteration of what Washington's interests actually were in the region illuminated the continued influence of not only the classical geopolitics of Mackinder but also the post-1991 belief that the spread of Western-style liberal capitalism held the key for the region to wrench itself from the 'historical' and into the 'post-historical' world and thus avoid a Huntington-esque future.[10]

The United States, according to Talbott, wished to avoid the 'atavistic outcome' of a new geopolitical arm-wrestle for the region between major extra-regional powers such as Russia, China, Iran and Turkey. In fact its policy toward Central Asia would be guided by the overall goal of assisting the region's states in making the 'transition' toward liberal market democracies. Thus US policy toward the region would be framed by four objectives: the promotion of democracy, the creation of free market economies, the sponsorship of peace and cooperation within and among the countries of the region and their integration with the larger international community (Talbott 1997). 'If reform in the nations of the Caucasus and Central Asia succeeds', Talbott (1997) argued:

. . . it will contribute to stability in a strategically vital region that borders China, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan and that has growing economic and social ties with Pakistan and India. The consolidation of free societies, at peace with themselves and with each other, stretching from the Black Sea to the Pamir Mountains will open up valuable trade and transport corridor along the old Silk Road between Europe and Asia.

However, in an echo of Fukuyama, Talbott immediately noted that if Central Asia did not make this transition to liberal market democracy then it would remain 'mired' in history and 'become a breeding ground of terrorism, a hotbed of religious and political extremism, and a battleground for outright war' (Ibid.).

Left largely unspoken however was that Washington's active promotion of free markets, democracy and human rights in the region also clearly served an enduring geopolitical goal. The evolution of Central Asia into a region of stable, liberal, free market democracies well integrated into the global political and economic system would make it less likely that an extra-regional power or powers (such as Russia or China) could come to dominate the heart of Eurasia. These concerns were also apparent in some legislative initiatives in the US Congress in the late 1990s, most notably in the 'Silk Road Strategy Act' of 1999. This act, an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, presented Congressional views on what US goals should be in Central Asia. By and large it both reflected the views expressed by Talbott and the imprint of the dominant 'end of history' geopolitical narrative in which the spread of free markets and liberal democracy was perceived as the panacea for a variety of ills. According to the Act,

United States foreign policy and international assistance should be narrowly targeted to support the economic and political independence as well as democracy building, free market policies, human rights and regional economic integration.

(Silk Road Strategy Act 1999, p. 3)

Such a policy approach it was felt would 'foster stability in the region' and assist in the development of strong relations between the region and 'the stable, democratic, and market-oriented countries of the Euro-Atlantic Community' (Ibid. p. 4).

The subsequent events of 11 September 2001 only served to heighten these themes. In fact the relative neglect of Central Asia and Afghanistan by the West prior to 9/11 contributed to the resurfacing of pre-existing 'imaginings' and representations of the region in policy circles, scholarly treatments and popular media (Watson 2009, pp. 75–93). Thus the region was conceived of as a 'black hole' (Simpson 2001), a geopolitical 'cockpit of terrorism and ideological confrontation' (Blank 2005) or as part of the 'non-integrating gap' of the global system (Barnett 2003). The implication common to such perspectives was that the region remained 'outside' of the trajectory of 'modernity' as defined by the West. Perhaps the most 'tabloid' version of this argument can be found in Thomas P. Barnett's

essay, 'The Pentagon's New Map' (2003). Barnett conceived of 9/11 as a historical rupture that ushered in a 'new security paradigm' where 'disconnectedness' from 'globalisation' and its attendant 'emerging global rule set of democracy, transparency and free trade' defined the fundamental geopolitical map of the world:

> Show me where globalization is thick with network connectivity, financial transactions, liberal media flows, and collective security, and I will show you regions featuring stable governments, rising standards of living, and more deaths by suicide than murder. These parts of the world I call the Functioning Core, or Core. But show me where globalization is thinning or just plain absent, and I will show you regions plagued by politically repressive regimes, widespread poverty and disease, routine mass murder, and—most important—the chronic conflicts that incubate the next generation of global terrorists. These parts of the world I call the Non-Integrating Gap, or Gap.
>
> (Barnett 2003, pp. 174–175)[11]

The assertion that the region's lack of integration with the liberal global order (understood in both political and economic terms) arguably remains an article of faith in US policy and rhetoric. The latest iteration of this narrative is contained in Washington's 'New Silk Road Initiative' that aims to promote the liberalisation of trade, economic cooperation, and 'people-to-people' links between Central and South Asia.[12] The impetus for this initiative derives from the Obama administration's efforts to extricate itself from Afghanistan and its desire to create conducive conditions for the consolidation of an independent and stable Afghanistan after that withdrawal. In 2005, prominent American scholar and Eurasianist S. Frederick Starr (2005, pp. 164–65) began promoting the idea of a 'Greater Central Asian Partnership for Cooperation and Development' (GCAP). In a subsequent publication Starr defined 'Greater Central Asia' (GCA) as not only the five post-Soviet states of Central Asia – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan – but also the Chinese province of Xinjiang, Afghanistan, Mongolia, the Khorasan Province of Iran, 'the northern part of Pakistan' and 'even that part of northern India extending from Rajastan to Agra' (2008, p. 6). The 'pacification' of Afghanistan through the consolidation of the Karzai government in Kabul would be the core prerequisite for such an initiative to be feasible as it would transform not only Afghanistan but the broader Central Asian region, 'into a zone of secure sovereignties sharing viable market economies, enjoying secular and open systems of government and maintaining positive relations with the United States' (Starr 2005, pp. 164–165).

Significantly, the 'New Silk Road Initiative' unveiled by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2011 was modelled on Starr's GCAP. According to Undersecretary of State for Economic, Agricultural and Energy Affairs, Robert Hormats (2011), the 'basis for the 'New Silk Road' vision is that if Afghanistan is firmly embedded in the economic life of the region, it will be better able to attract new investment, benefit from its resource potential, and provide increasing economic opportunity and hope for its people'. Key to this vision would be for the US to assist countries

in this region to reorient their key infrastructure (such as highways, railways, telecommunications networks and so forth) southward and assist in 'removing the bureaucratic barriers and other impediments to the free flow of goods and people'. For the US, as noted by Secretary of State Clinton, the core assumption underpinning the strategy was that 'lasting stability and security go hand in hand with economic opportunity' (Ibid.).

Yet the geopolitical reasoning behind the Obama administration's 'New Silk Road' initiative was also clear: consolidation of an amenable regime in Afghanistan would provide Washington with the capacity to develop a north-south linkage between Central and South Asia to compete against the west-east linkages being developed by China and Russia. Such a development would ultimately contribute to Washington's enduring geopolitical interest on the Eurasian continent to ensure that no one power or group of powers would dominate.[13] One of the earliest expressions of this was the Obama administration's effort to expand the so-called 'Northern Distribution Network' (NDN), several transit corridors crucial to supplying US and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) forces in Afghanistan. Entrenching the NDN as the 'linchpin' of US strategy in Afghanistan and Central Asia, according to a number of advocates, would assist in building a 'Modern Silk Road' that 'could promote security, prosperity and connectivity within some of the most volatile, impoverished and isolated nations on the planet' (Kuchins, Sanderson & Gordon 2010, p. 39). Perhaps most symptomatic of this agenda has been Washington's promotion of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline (TAPI), the construction of which is projected by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to cost approximately $US12 billion (Petersen 2012). However, as pointedly noted by Joshua Kucera (2011), the TAPI is also clearly driven by Washington's contemporary geopolitical calculations:

> Look at a map of South and Central Asia – ideally, one where you can see topography and the quality of roads – and it's apparent that the most sensible way to ship goods from India west is not the northern route over the massive mountain passes and crumbling roads of Central Asia. It's the southern route, through Iran and Turkey. But, obviously, a US-backed plan can't include Iran.

As such current US policy toward 'Greater Central Asia', in Starr's terms, is ultimately constrained by Washington's broader geopolitical narrative that seeks to 'contain' a variety of adversaries that do not abide by its neo-liberal agenda.

## China's 'developmentalist' geopolitics: Xinjiang from 'buffer' region to a 'Silk Road' to great power-hood?

China too in the post-Cold War era has constructed a geopolitical narrative of Central Asia but one that is intimately connected to its control over a core constituent part of that region – Xinjiang or East Turkestan.[14] Ever since Xinjiang was 'peacefully liberated' by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1949, China's approach to the region has been defined by one over-arching goal – to integrate Xinjiang

with China. This has been a quest not only to consolidate China's territorial control and sovereignty over the region but also to absorb, politically, economically and culturally, the various non-Han ethnic groups of Xinjiang into the 'unitary, multi-ethnic state' of the PRC. In this context, 'integration' encompasses two core meanings. First, integration can refer to the relationship between the majority and minority populations of a given state and second, to 'the patterns by which the different parts of a nation-state cohere' (Mackerras 1994, p. 7; *see also* Dreyer 1976). Accordingly, this first meaning

> implies a political, cultural, social and economic structuring of a larger state which sees the minorities maintaining their own cultures and identities, but influenced by the majority and not seeking secession in a new sovereign state with its own independent government.
>
> (Ibid.)

The second aspect concerns 'the manner and degree to which parts of a social system (its individuals, groups and organs) interact and complement each other' (Seymour 1976, p. 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 first respect – incorporation of territory – the state has clearly been successful. Yet, in the second respect, although the Chinese state has *managed* the tensions arising from its governance of the non-Han peoples of Xinjiang, the question of the ultimate incorporation of these people remains unresolved.

This second aspect of Beijing's attempts to integrate Xinjiang centres ultimately on the question/problem of legitimacy. Legitimacy has been sought through the application of two broad instruments across two major historical periods. First, from 1949 to 1976 the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) sought to establish its legitimacy in Xinjiang through a strategy based on three planks: the application of its interpretation of the Soviet model of 'national self-determination'; the application of the revolutionary Maoist model of political and economic organisation; and the isolation of the region from Soviet Central Asian influences. After Mao's death, however, the Party moved decisively away from the Maoist model to increasingly rely on its capacity to deliver continued economic growth and development to the region and its peoples as its primary mode of ensuring legitimacy.

Yet, the various instruments that Beijing has deployed to this end have arguably contributed to growing insecurity among the non-Han population of Xinjiang. 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 Beijing's gradual recognition that to simply conquer and hold a particular territory will not necessarily make it an 'integral' part of the state. Rather, as Charles Maier has argued, territory must be made to work, to be 'productive' whereby the incorporated territory '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' (2000, p. 818). Conceived in this manner the incorporated territory 'is envisaged not just as an acquisition or as a security buffer but as a decisive means of power and rule' (Ibid.). Under the PRC (and especially since the late 1980s) Xinjiang has increasingly been viewed in this manner whereby it is no longer conceived of as a strategic buffer region (as it had arguably been perceived of historically) (Millward 2007) but as a potential strategic and economic asset that can actively contribute to the power of the state.

In some respects, this geopolitical re-imagining of Xinjiang reflects elements of what Christopher Hughes has recently characterised as a *geopolitik* turn in Chinese nationalism (2011, pp. 601–620). As noted previously *geopolitik* thought, associated with such figures as Kjellen, Ratzel and Haushofer, has been widely implicated in the aggressive imperialist expansion of European powers in the late 19th and early 20th century. These figures not only developed a conception of geopolitics that analogised the state to a living organism struggling for survival in a Darwinian international system but also claimed, as Hughes notes, 'that their own country's expansion was different from the 'imperialism' and 'hegemony' of the United States and the 'West' because it was aimed at restoring justice in an unjust international order' (Ibid., p. 605). This worldview, as I will suggest below, has a resonance not only with some contemporary Chinese commentary on international politics but also with the rhetoric associated with Beijing's 'Great Western Development' campaign. Both of these narratives intersect to produce an over-arching geopolitical narrative that justifies both Chinese diplomacy in Central Asia and its increasingly assimilationist governance of Xinjiang itself.

### Constructing Xinjiang as China's 'Silk Road'

The tipping point for the shift in the Chinese state's geopolitical perception of Xinjiang occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the decline and ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union and internal dynamics associated with Deng Xiaoping's 'reform and opening'. The collapse of the Soviet Union heightened the Party's concern for Xinjiang's security as the independence of Central Asia, and ongoing conflict in Afghanistan, augured an Islamic 'revival' that had potentially destabilising implications for Chinese rule in the region. Within Xinjiang itself, the extension of 'reform and opening', including relaxation of restrictions on ethnic minority religious and cultural practices throughout the mid-to-late 1980s had generated increasing demands by ethnic minorities for greater political autonomy and contributed to a wave of ethnic unrest in Xinjiang. This culminated in what appeared to be an Islamist-inspired rebellion with the Baren Incident in April 1990, in which a group of Uyghurs reportedly with arms supplied from nearby Afghanistan, attacked the town's police station and called for an independent 'East Turkestan' (Clarke 2007).

China's response to these challenges was to diverge from its traditional approach of attempting to isolate Xinjiang from Central Asian influences. The attempt to isolate Xinjiang had, as Rudelson (1997, pp. 39–41) observed, worked against the 'geographic template' of the region which 'produced axes of outside

cultural influence that penetrated the region' determining that the major sub-regions of the province were in fact oriented 'outward' toward the proximate external civilisations, be they Indian, Central Asian or Chinese. Since 1991 China's approach to the region has appeared to be guided by the realisation that this 'geographic template' need not be an obstacle to Xinjiang's integration but rather an asset in the prosecution of this project. Indeed, Beijing initiated a 'double opening' strategy in Xinjiang in the early 1990s that sought to facilitate not only both greater economic integration between the region and the national economy and but also between the region and neighbouring Central Asia. In this latter instance, it was envisaged that Xinjiang's ethnic and cultural ties/affinities with Central Asia could be profitably leveraged to connect the region's economy to that of the 'Great Islamic Circle' – or rather, Central Asia and the Middle East (Christoffersen 1993, pp. 131–36).

This logic has achieved particular intensity since the launching of the Great Western Development or *Xibu da kaifa* (GWD) campaign in 2000. While this campaign was a nationwide one, its operation in Xinjiang reflected the intensification of the long-standing state-building policies in the region. Xinjiang's economic development assumed national importance under the GWD as it was envisaged that the region would become an industrial and agricultural base and a trade and energy corridor for the national economy (Becquelin 2004). This goal could only be achieved with the development of greater interaction and cooperation between China and the Central Asian states – a point underlined by Chinese diplomatic rhetoric throughout the 2000s which has sought to frame Xinjiang as a 'Continental Eurasian land-bridge' that links not only the major economies of Europe, East Asia and South Asia but also enmeshes Xinjiang with China (Clarke 2008). Much of the GWD-oriented state investment in Xinjiang has thus been channelled to large infrastructure projects, such as building highways, power plants, telecommunications networks, oil and gas extraction and the construction of pipelines – developments that Beijing hopes will establish Xinjiang as a crucial trade and energy transit hub (Niazi 2005; Handke 2006; Weimer 2004; Garver 2006). Such imperatives have recently been reinforced with President Xi Jinping's 2013 exhortation for greater Sino-Central Asian cooperation to consolidate what he has termed a prospective 'Silk Road Economic Belt' (*Xinhua* 2013).

Yet such rhetoric is also clearly linked to Beijing's broader geostrategic interests in the post-Cold War era and, in particular, how to make good on the Party's claims to spearhead the country's 'national rejuvenation' to great power-hood. The integration of Xinjiang in this context not only serves core internal functions (that is, to ensure social stability) but is perceived as contributing to China's strategic position in international affairs. As noted previously, the removal of the Soviet threat to Xinjiang after 1991 offered Beijing the opportunity to capitalise on Xinjiang's geopolitical position to not only tie the region closer to China but also to develop it as an avenue through which to expand China's influence. Central Asia presented fewer obstacles, both in terms of competing powers and strategic concerns, for the expansion of China's political, economic, strategic and military influence than any other region (Xiang 2004). Prior to 9/11 in particular, the region was perceived

as offering China a strategically 'safe' axis for the expansion of its influence, 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 (Ibid., p. 109). This was not isolated to China's Central Asian diplomacy, with observers such as Zhao (1999) and Shambaugh (2004/2005) noting 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 in order to counter perceived US 'containment' of China.

The insertion of major US military, diplomatic and economic power into Central Asia after 9/11 and the invasion of Afghanistan however threatened this strategy. This development reanimated perceptions in Beijing that Washington was bent on the strategic 'encirclement' of China. US strategy in Central Asia was explicitly perceived in geopolitical terms with Washington's core post-9/11 goals identified in a commentary in the current affairs magazine, *Liaowang*, 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 jeopardise the integration of Xinjiang, but also constrain 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'.
>
> (Ibid., emphasis added by author)

Such perceptions reflected the inter-linked nature of China's interests in Xinjiang and Central Asia, and their role in Beijing's broader foreign policy strategy of 'peaceful rise'.

The subsequent souring of US relations with key Central Asian states by the mid-2000s, largely due to the George W. Bush administration's support for the 'Color Revolutions' in Ukraine and Kyrgzstan in 2005, provided Beijing (and Moscow) with an opportunity to reassert their nascent regional hegemony. China's diplomacy, particularly through the region's major multilateral forum, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), focused after 9/11 on establishing it as a reliable security and economic partner for the Central Asian states without any of the normative agenda often associated with US diplomacy. As a number of observers noted, China worked assiduously to frame the organisation as a model of 'new regionalism' defined by 'open, functional, interest-based cooperation' and adherence to a doctrine of sovereign equality and non-interference/non-intervention among the member states that contrasted it from the model of regionalism practiced by

such western-led multilateralism as the European Union (EU) which is 'closed, identity-based, and ideologically buttressed by liberal democratic values'.[15]

The SCO, and the principles behind it, therefore reflected China's endeavour to establish multiple regional and global relationships in order to counter US primacy in the international system – a goal achieved in the Central Asian context with the souring of US relations after the 'Color Revolutions'. According to an editorial in the *People's Daily* (2006), the 'Color Revolutions' in the post-Soviet space in 2005, ongoing US military campaign in Afghanistan and the Bush administration's 'freedom agenda' (or rather, active promotion of democracy) were constituent parts of a nascent strategy designed to 'open the south door to Central Asia' in order to 'separate Central Asia' from the post-Soviet dominance of Russia and China and undermine the SCO's influence.

Beijing's concerns regarding the security of its 'great rear of extreme importance' were further heightened with the inter-ethnic riots that erupted in Urumqi on 5 July 2009. While the authorities issued now boilerplate statements about the role of 'hostile external forces', such as the World Uyghur Congress (WUC), in fomenting such violence there was also explicit fingering of Washington for influencing these events. Even though the Obama administration's reaction to the 5 July events was muted, with State Department officials for example calling on China to 'exercise restraint' in its response, Beijing trenchantly criticised Washington's tolerance and support for the 'criminal and terrorist' organisations, the WUC and Uyghur American Association (UAA). An editorial in the *China Daily* (2009) argued that the US, through annual funding of $250,000 provided by 'its "private" Non-Governmental Organization, the National Endowment for Democracy' to the UAA was 'massively intervening into the internal politics of China'. Furthermore, such support 'seems to have little to do with concerns over alleged human rights abuses by Beijing authorities against Uyghur people' but:

> . . . very much to do with the strategic geopolitical location of Xinjiang on the Eurasian landmass and its strategic importance for China's future economic and energy cooperation with Russia, Kazakhastan and other Central Asia states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.
>
> (Ibid.)

From Beijing's perspective, US rhetorical (and sometimes material) support for such Uyghur advocacy groups based in the West is thus not predicated on a genuine commitment to abstract notions of human rights or democracy but rather on its calculated geopolitical interests to 'contain', and ultimately prevent, China's rise. That Beijing retains a geopolitically informed conception of the importance of Xinjiang for its rise to great power-hood has been most recently affirmed in the wake of an upswing of Xinjiang and Uyghur-related violence in 2014. With the 1 March knife attack at Kunming railway station in Yunnan and two bombings in Urumqi on 30 April and 22 May blamed on Uyghur terrorists, President Xi Jinping has not only called for a 'people's war on terrorism' in Xinjiang but also explicitly argued that 'the long term of stability of Xinjiang is vital to the

whole country's reform, development and stability; to the country's unity, ethnic harmony and national security as well as the great revival of the Chinese nation' (cited in *Xinhua* 2014). One Chinese international relations expert recently argued that Beijing's turn westward toward Central Asia can serve 'at least' four purposes in this respect:

> decrease China's energy dependence on Russia and the Middle East, weaken Russian influence in Central Asia, induce Central Asian governments to be more cooperative in fighting against separatism in Xinjiang and possibly reduce support for separatist movements among residents of Xinjiang and Central Asia.
>
> (Xie 2014)

As such President Xi's call for a 'Silk Road Economic Belt' constitutes China's own geopolitical 'rebalance' or 'pivot' to Asia (that is, westwards to Central Asia) (Ibid.).

### Integrating the inhabitants of China's 'Silk Road'

Hand in hand with this re-envisaging of Xinjiang as the hub of a 'Silk Road' there has been a shift in emphasis in how the state has framed its approach to the region's 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. The two dominant political movements of the twentieth century (the Guomindang and the CCP) based their strategies to consolidate the post-imperial state on the basis of Han racial nationalism and Leninist multiculturalism respectively.[16] 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 (Walker 1984, p. 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. Soon after establishing the PRC, the CCP adopted a number of core guiding principles for its handling of the ethnic minority issue including: no right to secession for ethnic minorities; opposition to both 'Han chauvinism' (or rather, assertions of Han cultural superiority) and 'local nationalism' (that is, separatism); implementation of 'autonomous' organs of government for non-Han populated regions; and preservation and development of ethnic minority languages and customs (Mackerras 2004). These principles, as Xiaoyun Liu (2004) has argued, protected cultural plurality while ensuring that the 'political unity' of the PRC remained Han-centred. While the Party's implementation of each of these principles varied with the ideological fluctuations of the Maoist era, they nonetheless remained entrenched in the Party's discourse on the ethnic minority issue.

Under Deng Xiaoping and his successors, however, the CCP has tended to emphasise its commitment to deliver economic development and modernisation to China's ethnic minorities, often to the detriment of its commitment to protect the cultural plurality of the PRC (Barabantseva 2008; Leibold 2013). The Party's reliance on development as an instrument to neutralise ethnic minority dissatisfaction in regions such as Xinjiang has failed to recognise that such an approach has contributed not only to the further political, economic and cultural marginalisation of the Uyghur but also provided the conditions for increased inter-ethnic tension due to a change in Han Chinese perceptions of Xinjiang stimulated by the rhetoric of such campaigns as the GWD. The long-standing Han perception of Xinjiang as a barren, isolated cultural backwater that served as a place of exile, for example, has given way to one that sees the region as a 'land of opportunity' (Kardos 2008, pp. 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 has been borne out during periods of unrest and violence in Xinjiang, such as the July 2009 Urumqi riots, has been that Uyghurs are ungrateful 'natives' coddled by the state (Millward 2009; Sommerville 2009; Han 2010).

A major problem with the state's approach is that it neither perceives nor acknowledges the hegemonic role and place of the Han in the PRC nor the fact that its reliance on economic development as the primary solution for China's ethnic problems has in fact played a large role in exacerbating those problems. This is reflected in the disjuncture between official and popular conceptions of Xinjiang and 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 2004; Becquelin 2004; *Radio Free Asia* 2006). 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; Bachman 2004; 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; Bovingdon 2011).

Such political and economic marginalisation has also been accompanied by well-documented demographic marginalisation and restriction of religious expression.

With respect to the former, that the region's ethnic balance has been transformed can be readily gauged by noting that in 1949 the Han population stood at approximately 5 per cent of the region's population while the Uyghur accounted for 75 per cent, but that this balance had shifted in 2010 to 40.1 per cent Han and 46 per cent Uyghur (Toops 2004; Mackerras 2012). In the latter instance, Uyghur religious expression has always also been closely managed by the state but in the past two decades the authorities have tended to increasingly rely on campaigns against religious education, 'illegal' mosque construction, mosque attendance by persons under eighteen years of age, and the 're-education' of religious leaders in order to manage the perceived threat from Uyghur religious identity (Fuller & Lipman 2004, pp. 333–34). 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, combined with economic under-development, is perceived to be at the root of outbreaks of opposition and violence (Shicor 2005). This dynamic has only been reinforced by the July 2009 Urumqi riots and the spate of violent incidents and protests seen in the region between 2011 and 2014.

Such a disjuncture is reflective of two significant changes: a change in Han conceptions of Xinjiang and predominant attitudes toward non-Han groups such as the Uyghur; and the embedding of the state's developmentalist approach to ethnic questions. 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 (Fiskesjo 2006). Nicholas Becquelin (2004), among others, has suggested that this is analogous to a Chinese '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.[17] This tendency is reflected, Barabantseva (2009, p. 228) argues, in the official language of the GWD which embeds 'ethnic minorities in an exotic aura' and 'localize[s] them in one geographic area, the West, thus demarcating them as localized elements of the Chinese nation state'.[18]

Such a categorisation also locates ethnic minorities (such as the Uyghur) in a problematic zone of 'under-development' which has become increasingly perceived by both local and central authorities as a root cause of China's inter-ethnic problems.[19] An early and significant expression of this view can be found in a June 2000 article by the then head of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission (SEAC), Li Dezhu. For Li (2000), 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, with Li asserting that, 'the final solution for these problems lies in developing social productivity in areas of minority nationalities' and that the GWD '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'* (Li 2000, p. 22), emphasis added by author). Li also elucidated the state's view that 'national unity' and 'development' were 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' (Ibid.). Significantly, in light of subsequent events in Xinjiang, Li also noted the dangers inherent in such an approach when he acknowledged that the process of accelerated economic development, integration and 'opening-up' could not only cause inter-ethnic 'contradictions and friction' but also provide 'overseas hostile external forces' the chance to 'penetrate China' (Ibid.).

More significant perhaps than Li's acknowledgement of this anxiety regarding a potential link between inter-ethnic tension in Xinjiang and external forces/influences was the equanimity with which it was accepted as an inevitable by-product of the implementation of the GWD. An explanation for this equanimity is hinted at in Li's assertion that the GWD would reverse one of the major dynamics of the 'reform' era – population transfers from the interior to the economically developed eastern provinces – and stimulate a 'population flow to the West' in which the more advanced Han will introduce 'talents, technology and capital' to assist in the development of the west (Ibid.). Li's perspective was arguably symptomatic of the beginnings of an elite debate in China about the necessity for a 'second generation' of ethnic minority policy. As Barry Sautman (2010), James Leibold (2013) and David Tobin (2014) have detailed, this debate has been generated by the perceived failure of the Party's 'first generation' of ethnic minority policy – based on the 'three planks' of identification of ethnic groups, a system of regional autonomy, and a system of preferential policies – in the wake of continued anti-state violence and inter-ethnic conflict in Xinjiang and Tibet throughout the 2000s.

The violence in Lhasa in May 2008 and Urumqi in July 2009, in particular, which saw Tibetans and Uyghurs attack ordinary Han rather than representatives of the state (for example, police officers and party officials) has arguably constituted a tipping point by providing those advocating radical change in the state's approach to ethnic issues with ample 'proof' of the failure of existing policy. For critics such as the prominent sociologist Ma Rong (2007, p. 214), the 'first generation' of ethnic minority policy based on the Soviet model, has politicised and institutionalised ethnic identity as it connects, 'each ethnic minority to a certain geographic area, provides these groups with political status, administrative power in their "autonomous territory", and guarantees ethnic minorities the potential to develop at a higher speed'. Ma argues that this policy framework emphasises 'equality between ethnic groups' rather than 'equality between citizens', and as such it has strengthened ethnic consciousness and entrenched inter-ethnic barriers (Ibid.).[20] In contrast, as Leibold (2013) has detailed, Ma advocates a reformist agenda that draws upon classical western liberal thought that stresses the importance of individual over group rights that, in brief, seeks to take the 'ethnic minority' out of ethnic minority policy. Thus for Ma, as Leibold explains,

The growing economic and social gap between Han and minority communities means that the Chinese state must continue to play a leading role in subsidizing marginalised communities – but these programs should be *minzu*-blind [i.e. ethnically blind] and instead target localities and individuals in need.

(Leibold 2013, p. 18)

## The constraining effects of 'outside-in' geopolitical narratives

The implications of the neo-liberal geopolitics sketched previously for the Xinjiang and Uyghur issues have been felt in two broad phases – the pre and post 9/11. In the pre-9/11 phase the Xinjiang and Uyghur issues were subsumed within the broader US foreign policy debate regarding the 'China threat'. The general tenor of this debate was fuelled by the convergence of two seemingly contrary dynamics in US foreign policy thinking – the triumphalism of the American 'unipolar moment' and growing fears regarding the 'rise' of China.[21] This contradiction was however more apparent than real due to the fact that although many in US policy and academic circles celebrated, in Fukuyama-esque fashion, the 'victory' of liberal market democracy over state socialism, China as a Marxist-Leninist state stood out as a historical anachronism in an era that was supposed to be defined by the burgeoning of 'free markets' and 'free societies' across the globe. In addition, American perceptions of China's increasing economic and military strength and development further confounded such 'end of history' assumptions (Roy 1996, p. 760).

In this context of growing American anxiety about the continued existence, and indeed increase in material power, of 'socialist' China, the plight of its ethnic minorities tended to become something of a lightning rod for criticism of Beijing. This support generally has been of a rhetorical nature (for example, US Congressional resolutions demanding protection for ethnic and religious minorities) and stands in stark contrast to Washington's active support (such as, provision of financial and military aid) to various ethnic minorities waging guerrilla campaigns against communist or socialist states throughout Asia during the Cold War. It is important to note here that the Tibetans, who were the only ethnic minority in China that were recipients of such support during the Cold War, have succeeded in maintaining Western support in the post-Cold War era. This, as Melvyn C. Goldstein notes, has been achieved by 'recasting the Tibet question not in geopolitical terms but in terms of the US commitment to freedom and human rights' (2006, p. 156). That is to say the Tibetan's have pitched their appeal in terms that speak directly to the core themes of the post-Cold War neo-liberal geopolitical vision (free markets, democracy and human rights) and have presented the Dalai Lama as a champion of the values expressed in that vision.[22]

The efforts of the Uyghur diaspora community to advocate for their nationalist claims vis-à-vis Beijing were hamstrung between 1949 and 1991 by 'subjective Uyghur shortcomings' and 'objective international constraints' (Shicor 2007, p. 118). With respect to the latter, the Uyghurs confronted an international situation that was not conducive to the successful prosecution of nationalist claims

vis-à-vis China. In contrast to the Tibetans, for example, the Uyghurs received no support from the US during the Cold War for a number of reasons not the least of which was the fact that when an East Turkestan Republic (ETR) was proclaimed by Uyghur and Kazakh nationalists in Xinjiang in 1944–45 it was done *with* Soviet support and *against* the US-supported Guomindang (GMD) government of Chiang Kai-shek. The geopolitical interests of the Soviet Union subsequently intervened at a crucial point to ensure that the ETR was dissolved and incorporated into the PRC in 1949.[23]

For the subsequent four decades the periodic re-emergence of the issue of Uyghur separatism was largely isolated within the context of Beijing's relationship with Moscow. While the immediate post-1949 years of Sino-Soviet comity insured that the issue effectively disappeared from the international spotlight the souring of Sino-Soviet relations in the 1960s provided Moscow with the opportunity to meddle. For example, when around 60,000 Uyghurs and Kazakhs fled Xinjiang for Soviet Kazakhstan in 1962 due to famine and persecution, Moscow attempted to incite further ethnic minority unrest in order to undermine China's control of the region and encouraged the organisation of Uyghur advocacy groups by Uyghur émigré leaders in Soviet Central Asia (Kamalov 2009, pp. 117–25; Sadri 1984, pp. 294–319). China's relative international isolation from the late 1950s through to the late 1970s and its activist diplomatic championing of 'national liberation' movements in the Third World also made it very difficult for Uyghur exile leaders such as Mehmet Imin Bughra and Isa Yusuf Alptekin (both based in Turkey) to gain significant 'traction' for their cause. Apltekin, who assumed leadership of the Uyghur community in Turkey upon Bughra's death in 1964, focused on a two-track approach. First, he actively sought to cultivate links to Turkish political and military leaders with pan-Turkist leanings, most notably Suleyman Demirel and Turgut Ozal. Internationally, Apltekin attempted to enlist support for Uyghur nationalist claims through a broad appeal to anti-communist sentiment in the Muslim world, the non-aligned developing world, and Taiwan (Shicor 2009, pp. 17–19). These efforts nonetheless bore little fruit due to Beijing's limited ties with Turkey, its ideological offensive in the Third World, and its ability to simply paint Uyghur nationalists as aided and abetted by both 'Soviet revisionism' and 'reactionary Turkey'.[24] The improvement in Sino-Soviet relations in the 1980s also contributed to the neutralisation of the Uyghur issue in China's foreign relations. For these reasons the Uyghur and Xinjiang issues were never truly embedded into the prevailing Cold War geopolitical discourse in the West.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent establishment of independent Central Asian republics however made Chinese anxieties about potential Uyghur separatism much more visible than was the case previously. Yet, throughout the 1990s Beijing succeeded in limiting the scope of its perceived Uyghur problem to Central Asia. While Uyghur advocacy groups proliferated in the Central Asian states, particularly Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, they had a limited effect on Chinese policy in Xinjiang and upon the growth of Chinese strategic and economic influence throughout the region. The Uyghur diaspora beyond Central Asia, in Western Europe, the United States and Turkey, while able to take advantage of the

openness of these societies to advocate for greater Uyghur autonomy in Xinjiang were nonetheless hampered by the relative obscurity of Xinjiang, their profession of the Muslim faith and their internal disunity. In this latter respect, the Uyghur diaspora had splintered into numerous advocacy groups in the post-Cold War period spread across Central Asia, Western Europe and the United States without a single recognised leader and divided on ideology and tactics (Bovingdon 2011, pp. 142–44).

Significantly, as the centre of Uyghur diasporic activities gradually shifted from Central Asia to Turkey and Western Europe and then to the United States over the course of the 1990s, the ideology and tactics of Uyghur advocacy groups gradually changed (Ibid., pp. 144–45; Shicor 2007, pp. 117–25). In the early 1990s, for example, a number of prominent Uyghur advocacy groups based in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan actively advocated the achievement of independence for East Turkestan through armed struggle in rhetoric bearing the influence of pan-Turkic and even pan-Islamist ideology (Shicor 2007; Bovingdon 2011, pp. 142–43). China's growing power and influence in Central Asia by the mid-1990s and increasing relations with Turkey, however, resulted in increasing pressure on these states from Beijing to limit the operation of Uyghur nationalist groups within their borders (Shicor 2007, pp. 120–21). Partly as result of this dynamic the centre of gravity for Uyghur diaspora nationalism shifted to Germany where 'the fact that Germany is a democratic society that upholds human rights, freedom of speech and civil liberties has been an advantage the Uyghurs could not but highly appreciate' (Shicor 2013, p. 618). Another palpable effect of this transition was that the Uyghur groups based there, while still advocating independence for East Turkestan, began to do so in terms more palatable to Western governments/societies – such as focusing on explicitly nonviolent means and liberal models of political mobilisation (Bovingdon 2011, pp. 146–51).

This was not an unusual phenomenon in the post-Cold War, 'globalised' world, where many repressed and under-represented groups were competing for the attention and support of 'global civil society'. Clifford Bob (2002, p. 37) has argued in this regard that, in contrast to many of the positive assumptions about the effects of globalisation in the 1990s, 'global civil society' was not in fact 'an open forum marked by altruism' but rather 'a harsh, Darwinian marketplace where legions of desperate groups vie for scarce attention, sympathy and resources'. In an effort to 'sell' their cause in this marketplace, such groups 'may end up undermining their original goals or alienating the domestic constituencies they ostensibly represent' as they seek to 'simplify and universalize their claims' in order to make their cause 'relevant to the broader missions and interests of key global players' (Ibid.). This effect is perhaps most visible in the establishment and rhetoric of two key advocacy groups for the Uyghur – the UAA and the WUC – the former based in Washington, DC, and the latter in Munich, Germany. Both of these organisations advocate for the Uyghur cause in ways that are consistent with the dominant neo-liberal geopolitical vision of the West.

The UAA, established in 1998 by a number of US-based Uyghur scholars and activists, seeks 'to promote the preservation and flourishing of a rich, humanistic

and diverse Uyghur culture, and to support the right of the Uyghur people to use peaceful, democratic means to determine their own political future' (Uyghur American Association 2012). The organisation since the late 1990s has maintained an up-to-date website presenting news coverage of Uyghur and Xinjiang-related issues and actively lobbies the US Congress on behalf of the Uyghur population in Xinjiang. Since 2002 the UAA has also run the 'Uyghur Human Rights Project' (UHRP) to promote the improvement of the human rights of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang through the publication of detailed reports of human rights abuses throughout the region (such as restrictions on religious observance, Chinese population control policies and so forth) and challenges to the preservation of Uyghur culture. As noted previously, the UAA also receives $250,000 annual funding from the US National Endowment for Democracy. In contrast to some of the Uyghur advocacy groups that emerged in Central Asia after the end of the Cold War the UAA avows that it 'does not take a position on independence for East Turkestan, but instead focuses its goal on promoting human rights and democracy for Uyghurs and others living in East Turkestan' (cited in Petersen 2006, p. 68). This suggests that the core premise behind the organisation is that the assurance of basic human rights for Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang and throughout China will ultimately facilitate the 'democratic aspirations' of the Uyghur. Such a standpoint also positions the organisation well tactically to rebut Chinese claims that it is advocating for an exclusively Uyghur homeland.[25]

The WUC founded in April 2004 in Munich was the outcome of a number of years of internal debate among a variety of Uyghur diaspora groups in Europe and Turkey regarding how to best unify into a single advocacy body and thus present a coherent narrative of the Uyghur cause to the international community (Shicor 2007, p. 122). This latter point was of particular importance to counter the post-9/11 diplomatic offensive of Beijing that sought to frame all Uyghur nationalism and dissent as manifestations of 'terrorism'. Indeed, the mission statement adopted by the organisation, like that of the UAA, speaks directly to the neo-liberal agenda of the West, and the US in particular, by stating that its 'main objective' is 'to promote democracy, human rights and freedom for the Uyghur people and use peaceful, nonviolent, and democratic means to determine their political future' (World Uyghur Congress 2004–2015). Highlighting its role as the central hub of an emerging 'network' of Uyghur advocacy groups across the globe, the mission statement also asserts that the core goal of the WUC is to become the 'the sole legitimate organization of the Uyghur people both in East Turkestan and abroad'. In its attempt to be seen as such not only by the Uyghur diaspora community but also by the international community, the WUC has explicitly embedded itself in the neo-liberal narrative (Chen 2012, pp. 77–88). As such:

> WUC endeavors to set out a course for the peaceful settlement of the East Turkestan Question through dialogue and negotiation. The WUC declares a nonviolent and peaceful opposition movement against Chinese occupation of East Turkestan and an unconditional adherence to the international accepted human rights standards as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights, and adherence to the principals of democratic pluralism and rejection of totalitarianism, religious intolerance, and terrorism as an instrument of policy.

(Ibid.)

The WUC can be seen as the culmination of the process noted by Bob (2002) of the necessity for such unrepresented peoples and causes to effectively 'market' their cause to global civil society. And to date the WUC has been successful in raising the profile of the Uyghur and Xinjiang issues. This has been due not only to the shifting geographic centre of gravity of Uyghur advocacy from Central Asia to Europe and the US but to the parallel shift in the rhetoric and goals espoused by bodies such as the UAA and WUC. In a broad sense these groups have established a 'normative trap' for the West by explicitly framing their goals in the prevailing neo-liberal language of 'freedom, democracy and human rights' rather than the 'national self-determination' rhetoric of the Cold War era. Such a strategy enables these groups to link the Uyghur cause to Western, and especially US, concerns regarding the continued rise of 'communist' China. Such an approach was neatly encapsulated in an opinion piece on the *Foreign Policy* magazine website by Nury Turkel (2009), a prominent member of the UAA, when he argued that:

> Uyghurs are not terrorists; nor are they a threat. In fact, Uyghurs could be a natural US ally. Uyghurs are the Tibetans you haven't heard about . . . Uyghurs have long faced discrimination and persecution as a minority – a fact recognized repeatedly by the US Congress and State Department, which has noted China's insidious strategy of using the US war on terror as pretext to oppress independent religious leaders and peaceful political dissenters. Uyghurs' struggle for self-rule is one against dictatorship and communism, not one to establish a *sharia* state through violence.

Thus, the UAA and WUC have focused much of their efforts on drawing the attention of western governments and publics to particular aspects of the Uyghur and Xinjiang issues that are of priority for these actors such as human rights abuses and the protection of 'indigenous' cultures.[26] Since 9/11, the UAA and WUC have also arguably sought to counter Chinese claims regarding the influence of radical Islamism by individualising the Uyghur 'struggle' via the construction of Rebiya Kadeer as a charismatic and recognisable leader. The success of this latter strategy can be gauged by the fact that Kadeer is now often referred to in popular media reporting on Xinjiang issues variously as the 'Uyghur Dalai Lama', 'the Mother of the Uyghurs', or simply as 'the Uyghur democracy leader'. President George W. Bush also met face-to-face with 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' (cited in Uyghur American Association 2007).

## Conclusion: toward the colonisation of the geopolitical imagination of the Uyghur?

Partha Chatterjee (1991) has argued that the agency of the colonised in the construction of their own post-colonial identities should be recognised as part of their resistance to colonialism itself. This informed his trenchant critique of Benedict Anderson's conception of nationalism as an 'imagined community' wherein post-colonial nationalism is conceived of as simply a product of the transferral of the concept of the 'nation' from Europe to the colonial world. For Chatterjee such a perspective condemns the post-colonial world to being nothing other than 'consumers of modernity' while:

> Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that our anti-colonial resistance and post-colonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonised.
>
> (Ibid., p. 521)

Yet Chatterjee suggests that 'fundamental' to anti-colonial and post-colonial nationalism is the reconciliation of two constituent domains – the material and the spiritual – and that the core struggle for anti-colonial and post-colonial nationalists is to retain and strengthen the 'spiritual' domain to preserve 'essential' markers of cultural identity while absorbing the material 'superiority' of the West. It is in this process of struggle that post-colonial nationalism:

> . . . launches its most powerful, creative and historically significant project: to fashion a 'modern' national culture which is nevertheless, not Western. If the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being.
>
> (Ibid., p. 522)

Importantly, Chatterjee argues that 'nationalism declares the domain of the spiritual its sovereign territory and refuses to allow the colonial power to intervene in that domain'. I would argue that the post-1949 history of Uyghur nationalism has engaged in just such a material and spiritual struggle. Yet it is one that has been complicated, especially since the end of the Cold War, by the fact that Uyghur nationalists have had to prosecute this struggle at multiple levels including within the Uyghur population in Xinjiang itself, between the Uyghur and the Chinese state, and increasingly between the Uyghur diaspora community and the West. Structuring this multi-level struggle are the constraining effects of the two dominant geopolitical narratives of the West and China with respect to Central Asia and Xinjiang and the Uyghur that have in effect 'colonised' the Uyghur geopolitical imagination from two directions. First, China's developmentalist geopolitical narrative has narrowed the permissible material and spiritual domains of Uyghur national sentiment by identifying core markers of cultural identity (such as religion and language) as barriers to a Han-centred 'modernity'. Second, the West's

neo-liberal geopolitical narrative has also exercised a similar disciplinary function through its privileging of core Western principles/values (for example, free markets, democracy and human rights) that in particular imperils the ability of the Uyghur diaspora to achieve what Chatterjee (1991) identifies as the fundamental task of anti-colonial/post-colonial nationalism: to 'fashion a "modern" national culture which is nevertheless, not Western'. Ironically, then, both the West's neo-liberal geopolitics and China's developmental geopolitics have had a Fukuyama-esque tendency to view key markers of Uyghur-ness as impediments to the progress of their particular visions of modernity.

## Notes

1 See Bovingdon, Gardner 2011, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*, Columbia University Press, New York.
2 See for example Clarke, Michael & Smith, Doug 2009, 'The Song Remains the Same: Converging Views on a Rising China', in Martin Griffiths, Tom Conley & Michael Heazle (eds.), *Engaging Foreign Policy Debates: Challenges for Liberal Democracies in a New Century*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 100–124.
3 See for example: Mackinder, Halford J 1904, 'The Geographical Pivot of History', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 23, no. 4 (April), pp. 2–437; and Spkyman, Nicholas 1938, 'Geography and Foreign Policy', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 32, no. 2 (April), pp. 213–236.
4 See for example, Owens, Mackubin Thomas 1999, 'In Defense of Classical Geopolitics', *Orbis*, Vol. 52, no. 4 (Autumn), pp. 59–76; Gray, Colin S 1996, 'The Continued Primacy of Geography', *Orbis,* Vol. 40, no. 2 (Spring), pp. 247–49; and Gray, Colin S 2004, 'In Defence of the Heartland: Sir Halford Mackinder and His Critics a Hundred Years On', *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 9–25.
5 For accounts of the relationship between *geopolitik* thinking and the Nazi's see Herwig, Holger H 1999, 'Geopolitik: Haushofer, Hitler and Lebensraum', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 22, nos. 2/3, pp. 218–241; and Bassin, Mark 1987, 'Race contra Space: The Conflict between German *Geopolitik* and National Socialism', *Political Geography Quarterly*, Vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 115–134.
6 For the initial elucidation of the concept of 'containment' and the influence of Mackinder see, 'X' 1947, 'The Sources of Soviet Conduct', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 566–582; and Mayers, David 1986, 'Containment and the Primacy of Diplomacy: George Kennan's Views, 1947–1948', *International Security*, Vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 124–162.
7 See Adshead, S A M 1993, *Central Asia in World History*, MacMillan, London, pp. 53, 86–90, 112–119, 177.
8 Indeed, Huntington asserted that 'We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know whom we are against' (1997, p. 21).
9 See for example, Perkovich, George 1993, 'The Plutonium Genie', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72 (Summer), pp. 153–165; Starr, S. Frederick 1996, 'Making Eurasia Stable', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75 (Jan/Feb), pp. 80–92; Olcott, Martha Brill 1999, 'Pipeline and Pipe Dreams: Energy Development and Caspian Society', *International Affairs*, Vol. 53, no. 1 (Fall), pp. 305–324; Garfinkle, Adam 1999, 'Afghanstanding', *Orbis*, Vol. 43, no. 3, pp. 405–420; and Rashid, Ahmed 2001, 'Afghanistan: Ending the Policy Quagmire', *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, no. 4 (Spring), pp. 395–410.
10 In fact the Clinton administration had made the 'enlargement' of the 'community of free market democracies' a guiding principle of US foreign policy in its 1995 National Security Strategy document. See Brinkley, Douglas 1997, 'Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine', *Foreign Policy*, No. 106 (Spring), pp. 110–127.

11 Thus Barnett divides the world into states within the 'Functioning Core' (North America, 'most' of South America, East Asia, Australia and South Africa), those who remain outside, in the 'Non-integrating Gap' (the Caribbean Rim, 'virtually all' of Africa, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and Southwest Asia, and much of Southeast Asia), and, in an echo of Huntington, so-called 'seam states' that 'lie along the Gap's bloody boundaries' (Mexico, Brazil, Turkey, Pakistan, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines).

12 See for example Kucera, Joshua 2011, 'The New Silk Road?', *The Diplomat*, 11 November, viewed 15 January 2015, http://thediplomat.com/2011/11/the-new-silk-road/?allpages=yes.

13 See for example Kucera, Joshua 2011, 'Clintons Dubious Plan to Save Afghanistan with a New Silk Road', *The Atlantic*, 2 November, viewed 15 January 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/11/clintons-dubious-plan-to-save-afghanistan-with-a-new-silk-road/247760/; and Kim, Younkyoo & Indeo, Fabio 2013, 'The New Great Game in Central Asia post 2014: The US "New Silk Road" Strategy and Sino-Russian Rivalry', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 275–286.

14 For a discussion of Xinjiang's geographic, ethnic and cultural connections to Central Asia see Clarke, Michael 2009, 'The 'Centrality' of Central Asia in World History: From Pivot to Periphery and Back Again?', in Michael Clarke & Colin Mackerras (eds.), *China, Xinjiang and Central Asia: History, Transition and Crossborder Interaction into the 21st Century*, Routledge, London, pp. 23–54.

15 See for example Chung, Chien-peng 2004, 'The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: China's Changing Influence in Central Asia', *The China Quarterly*, No. 180 (December), p. 989–1009; Ambrosio, Thomas 2008, 'Catching the "Shanghai Spirit": How the Shanghai Cooperation Promotes Authoritarian Values in Central Asia', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 60, no. 8, pp. 1321–1344.

16 For the 1911–1949 period, see Fitzgerald, John 1996, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture and Class in the Nationalist Revolution*, Stanford University Press, Stanford; and for the CCP's post-1949 approach see Mackerras, Colin 1994, *China's Minorities: Integration and Modernization in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford University Press, New York.

17 See also Moneyhan, Matthew D 2002/2003, 'China's Great Western Development Project in Xinjiang: Economic Palliative or Political Trojan Horse?', *Denver Journal of International Law and Policy*, Vol. 31, no. 3, pp. 491–519.

18 See also Sines, Abigail 2002, 'Civilising the Middle Kingdom's Wild West', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 21, no. 2 pp. 5–18; Goodman, David S 2004, 'The Campaign to "Open up the West": National, Provincial-level and Local Perspectives', *China Quarterly*, Vol. 178 (June), pp. 317–334.

19 For this broad tendency see, for example, Freeman, Carla 2012, 'From "Blood Transfusion" to "Harmonious Development": The Political Economy of Fiscal Allocations to China's Ethnic Regions', *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, No. 4, pp. 11–44.

20 For excellent discussions of Ma's arguments and influence in this debate see Leibold, James 2013, 'Ethnic Policy in China: Is Reform Inevitable', *Policy Studies*, No. 68, pp. 14–21; and Tobin, David 2013, 'Xinjiang Dreams: Worrying About Ethnicity', *China Policy Institute Blog*, viewed 15 January 2015, http://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/chinapolicyinstitute/2013/11/06/xinjiang-dreams-worrying-about-ethnicity/.

21 For the most explicit triumphalist statement see Krauthammer, Charles 1990/1991, 'The Unipolar Moment', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, no. 1, pp. 23–33.

22 For a critical perspective that challenges the non-violent image of the Dalai Lama's political strategy see Sautman, Barry 2010, '"Vegetarian between Meals": The Dalai Lama, War and Violence', *Positions*, Vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 89–143.

23 For this period see Wang, David D 1999, *Under the Soviet Shadow: The Yining Incident. Ethnic Conflicts and International Rivalry in Xinjiang, 1944–1949*, Chinese University Press, Hong Kong; and Klaus, Charles 2010, 'Creating a Soviet 'Semi-Colony'? Sino-Soviet Cooperation and its Demise in Xinjiang, 1949–1955', *Chinese Historical Review*, Vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 129–165.

24 In this latter instance it should be recalled that Turkish forces fought against the PLA during the Korean War.

25 See Bovingdon, Gardner 2011, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in their own land*, Columbia University Press, New York, pp. 150–51; and Petersen, Kristian 2006, 'Usurping the Nation: Cyber-Leadership in the Uighur Nationalist Movement', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 67–68.

26 See for example Nury Turkel's testimony to the US Congressional-Executive Committee on China 2009, 'Human Rights in Xinjiang – Recent Developments', Roundtable before the Congressional-Executive Committee on China, 111th Congress, 1st Session, 13 February, Washington DC, viewed 15 January 2015, http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-111hhrg48222/html/CHRG-111hhrg48222.htm.

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