

THE UYGHUR INSURGENCY IN XINJIANG:  
THE SUCCESS POTENTIAL

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Strategic Studies

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## ABSTRACT

THE UYGHUR INSURGENCY IN XINJIANG: THE SUCCESS POTENTIAL, by  
Major Waqas Ali Khan, 138 pages.

Since 1949, the Uyghurs of Xinjiang have remained victims of Chinese social, political, religious, and economic persecution. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) government has successfully denied the Uyghurs the ability to establish an independent Xinjiang. The Uyghurs, except during a limited period, continually failed to unite against Chinese rule. Furthermore, systematic Chinese policies have reduced the Uyghur population majority in Xinjiang.

The CCP sensitivities in Xinjiang tie to the stability and integration of the state and thus, any secessionist movement has been suppressed. The events of 9/11 resulted in labeling the Uyghurs as terrorists and changed the situation in Xinjiang. The Uyghur insurgents sought support from global terrorist organizations and the visible effects of this decision can be viewed in Xinjiang post 2008.

This thesis evaluates the Uyghur insurgency in Xinjiang and determines its likely potential for success. The thesis hypothesizes that the current Chinese counterinsurgency strategy in Xinjiang will continue to deny the Uyghur insurgents an independent Xinjiang. The thesis concludes that the Uyghur insurgency, without any external support and recognition, is not likely to succeed. However, due to the nexus between the Uyghur insurgents and certain terrorist organizations, the situation in Xinjiang will continue to be contentious and complex.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE THESIS APPROVAL PAGE .....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
ACRONYMS.....	viii
ILLUSTRATIONS .....	ix
TABLES .....	x
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	7
Historical Context (Pre-1949).....	7
Strategic Settings (1949 to 2001).....	9
Current Situation (2001 to 2014).....	11
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	14
Research Questions.....	14
Delimitations.....	14
Hypothesis .....	14
Methodology .....	15
CHAPTER 4 STRATEGIC SETTING.....	18
Geography of Xinjiang .....	18
Natural Resources .....	23
Demographics .....	24
History of Xinjiang .....	25
Pre-Communist Era (before 1949).....	25
1949 to 1976 (Mao's Era) .....	31
1978 to 1999 (post-Mao to 9/11) .....	40
CHAPTER 5 CHINESE COIN STRATEGY POST-9/11 TO 2014 .....	50
Objectives and Primacy .....	51
Population Support .....	53

Establishment of Legitimacy in Xinjiang .....	57
Intelligence Driven Operations .....	61
Isolating the Uyghur Insurgents.....	63
International Recognition and Support to the Chinese COIN Strategy .....	66
Economic Activities and Initiatives .....	69
Control over Insurgent Activities .....	73
 CHAPTER 6 UYGHUR INSURGENCY POST-9/11 TO 2014.....	 77
The Cause: Religion, Culture, Language, or Sense of Deprivation? .....	78
Leadership and Organizational Crises .....	81
The Political Representation .....	82
The Insurgent Representation .....	85
The Armed Struggle: Insurgents to Terrorists .....	89
Recognition and Support: Domestic and International .....	92
Post-2008 and the AQ Factor.....	94
Political Support from Muslim World.....	95
 CHAPTER 7 ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION .....	 100
Analysis: Chinese COIN Strategy .....	100
Analysis: Uyghur Insurgency .....	108
Conclusions.....	112
The Future of Xinjiang.....	112
Chinese Sensitivities in Xinjiang.....	114
Tenets of the Chinese COIN Strategy.....	115
 APPENDIX A COIN ANALYSIS MODEL .....	 116
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 118

## ACRONYMS

AQ	Al-Qaeda
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in Maghreb
CAR	Central Asian Republics
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
ETIM	East Turkestan Islamic Movement
ETIP	East Turkestan Independence Party
ETLO	East Turkestan Liberation Organization
ETR	East Turkestan Republic
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMD	Goumindang
GWD	Great Western Development
GWOT	Global War on Terror
ISIS	Islamic State
PAP	People's Armed Police
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
TIP	Turkestan Islamic Party
TTP	Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan
USSR	United Soviet Socialist Republic
WUC	World Uyghur Conference
XPCC	Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps



## ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
Figure 1. Xinjiang Map .....	18
Figure 2. Xinjiang Topographical Map .....	20
Figure 3. Ancient Silk Route .....	22
Figure 4. GDP per Capita in Relation to Non-Han Ethnic Population .....	72
Figure 5. Insurgent Related Activities Reported, September 2001-December 2013 .....	75
Figure 6. Affiliate Organization of the WUC .....	84

## TABLES

	Page
Table 1. GDP Comparison between Xinjiang and Neighboring Countries .....	71
Table 2. Terrorism Related Activities Reported in SCO and Other Countries, 2001-2013 .....	76
Table 3. Glossary of the Insurgent Activities in Xinjiang, September 2001- December 2013 .....	98
Table 4. Chinese COIN Analysis, 1949-2014.....	107
Table 5. Uyghur Insurgency Analysis, 1949-2014 .....	111

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Insurgencies are easy to make and hard to stop. Only a few ingredients need to combine to create an insurgency; like oxygen and fire, they are very common and mix all too often. The recipe is, simply, a legitimate grievance against a state, a state that refuses to compromise, a quorum of angry people, and access to weapons.

— Richard Engel, “Insurgency Quotes,” Brainy Quotes

The Chinese counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy, against the Uyghurs in Xinjiang is a story of economic, social, religious, and political persecution.<sup>1</sup> Xinjiang became a Chinese province in 1884 because of its westward expansion by military force.<sup>2</sup> Ever since then, Xinjiang’s history is replete with examples of the use of brute force to suppress the Uyghurs demanding more autonomy and independence. Uyghur uprisings and revolts<sup>3</sup> led to the establishment of the East Turkestan Republic (ETR) in 1933 and again in 1944.<sup>4</sup> The issue, although significant for the Uyghurs, could not gain much of

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<sup>1</sup> Yitzhak Shichor, “The Great Wall of Steel: Military and Strategy in Xinjiang,” in *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 120-122.

<sup>2</sup> James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, “Political and Cultural History throughout the Late 19th Century,” in *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 46-47.

<sup>3</sup> The Uyghurs consider their uprising as a rightful act of demanding and pursuing independence from the Chinese, while the CCP terms the actions of the Uyghurs as separatism, terrorism, and extremism. Notwithstanding the interpretation differences and keeping academic aspects in view, this thesis will refer the Uyghurs as insurgents and the Chinese as counterinsurgents in Xinjiang.

<sup>4</sup> David Wang, “East Turkestan Movement in Xinjiang,” *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 4, no. 1 (Summer 1998): 2-3, accessed January 28, 2015, <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2FBF02876846>.

the world's attention primarily due to the limited access of media in the past and currently, due to the overriding events in the Middle East and Ukraine.

The history of unrest in Xinjiang dates back to the nineteenth century. The very name of the region, "Xinjiang," has a symbolic historical contention between the Uyghurs and the Chinese.<sup>5</sup> The Uyghurs maintain that the name implies new boundaries or dominions in the Chinese language. The Uyghurs refute this Chinese imposition, and prefer using East Turkestan or Uyghurstan.<sup>6</sup> However, the history of the name Xinjiang does not extend beyond the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup> The Uyghurs have inhabited the region since 700 AD, yet they remained mostly unnoticed until the dawn of the twentieth century.

The history of three famous rebellions in Xinjiang during the twentieth century provides insight of the past violence in the region. To prevent Xinjiang from seceding, the Chinese authorities have targeted the religious, economic, social, and political contours of the Uyghurs, to suppress the insurgency in Xinjiang. The Chinese policies rely upon control of free religious practices, socio-economic deprivations, and sporadic persecutions. The long-standing Chinese policies in Xinjiang have deepened the discontent and dissatisfaction among the Uyghurs.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Gardner Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in their Own Land* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 23.

<sup>6</sup> East Turkestan Information Center, "Who are the Uyghurs," February 23, 2009, accessed March 14, 2015, <http://uygurtv.dyndns.org/english/30000-han-chinese-migrants-pour-into-east-turkistan-per-day-haber,18.html-h18.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in their Own Land*, 24.

<sup>8</sup> Gardner Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang: Han Nationalist Imperatives and Uyghur Discontent," *East-West Center Washington Policy Studies* 11 (2004): vii,

Into the 1950s, Xinjiang, with its Uyghur majority, remained independent, and ethnically and religiously aligned with the Central Asian region. The differences between the Soviets and the Chinese in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries resulted in Soviet support for an independent Xinjiang.<sup>9</sup> The rise of the CCP in 1949 eliminated the Soviet support to the Uyghurs. Thereafter, the Uyghurs have not found any political, moral, or economic support for their cause. The events of the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 witnessed strategic U.S.-Sino collaboration. China not only provided the Uyghur youth to fight in the name of Jihad, but also supported the Mujahedeen against the Soviets by providing weapons and ammunition.<sup>10</sup>

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the creation of the independent Central Asian Republics (CAR) made China apprehensive of a similar uprising in Xinjiang. In the early 1990s, China initiated the Great Western Development (GWD) program to develop the western region, primarily Xinjiang.<sup>11</sup> However, the same program also resulted in migration of Han Chinese to Xinjiang in order to alter the demographics. The Uyghurs, 90 percent of the population in 1949, now stand at approximately 45 percent, not including the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the People's Armed Police

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accessed February 4, 2015, <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS011.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> David Keys, "China's Ethnic Violence," *BBC History Magazine* 10, no. 9-117 (September 2009): 18-19.

<sup>10</sup> Shichor, 149.

<sup>11</sup> Nancy Huang, Joie Ma, and Kyle Sullivan, "Economic Development Policies for Central and Western China," *China Business Review*, November 1, 2010, accessed December 22, 2014, <http://www.chinabusinessreview.com/economic-development-policies-for-central-and-western-china/>.

(PAP) and the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) personnel deployed across Xinjiang.<sup>12</sup>

Following 9/11 and the subsequent U.S. operations in Afghanistan, China seized the opportunity to link the Uyghur insurgency to the global terrorism.<sup>13</sup> In August 2002, the Chinese authorities declared the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) a terrorist organization. The United States, seeking support for the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), supported the Chinese stance. This emboldened the CCP to tighten its grip over Xinjiang through a new anti-terrorism campaign.<sup>14</sup> Twenty-two Uyghur fighters were captured by the United States in Afghanistan, and their confinement in Guantanamo supported the Chinese stance.<sup>15</sup> The acceptance of the Uyghurs as terrorists by the world gave China a free hand to operate at will.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> BBC News, “Xinjiang Profile,” October 14, 2014, accessed December 22, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16860974>.

<sup>13</sup> Beina Xu, Holly Fletcher and Jayshree Bajoria, “The East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM),” *Council of Foreign Relations*, September 4, 2014, accessed February 19, 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/china/east-turkestan-islamic-movement-etim/p9179>.

<sup>14</sup> Shirley A. Khan, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress RL33001, *U.S.-China Counterterrorism Cooperation: Issues for U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, July 15, 2010), 7-8, accessed February 11, 2015, <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL33001.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Adam Wolfe, “China's Uighurs trapped at Guantanamo,” *Asia Times*, November 4, 2004, accessed January 10, 2015, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/FK04Ad02.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Philip B.K. Potter, “Terrorism in China: Growing Threats with Global Implications,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* (Winter 2013): 73-74, accessed February 17, 2015, [http://www.au.af.mil/au/ssq/digital/pdf/winter\\_13/2013winter-Potter.pdf](http://www.au.af.mil/au/ssq/digital/pdf/winter_13/2013winter-Potter.pdf); Khan, 7-8.

Currently, there is increased unrest in the region. The use of hard power to tackle the insurgency is China's state policy towards issues of the ethnic unrest.<sup>17</sup> The Chinese believe that suppressing the Uyghurs to maintain peace and stability in Xinjiang is the right approach. The socio-economic reforms to deal with the roots of the insurgency and unrest, particularly for the Uyghurs, are practically non-existent.

The change in the Chinese policy towards terrorism particularly post-9/11, has attracted the attention of the terrorist organizations across the world. China has remained neutral on the U.S. policies in the Middle East, yet the Islamic State (ISIS) has announced its allegiance with the Uyghurs and plans to support the insurgency against Communist Chinese.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Al-Qaeda in Maghreb (AQIM), the Al-Qaeda (AQ) franchise in Northern Africa has also threatened Chinese interests in Algeria.<sup>19</sup> Irrespective of the policies adopted by the CCP in Xinjiang, the Uyghurs have not been able to create a serious threat since 1949. However, with the rise of ISIS and its so-called Islamic

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<sup>17</sup> Liselotte Odgaard and Thomas G Nielsen, "China's Counterinsurgency Strategy in Tibet and Xinjiang," *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 87 (January 2014): 1-26, accessed December 18, 2014, <http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/10670564.2013.843934>.

<sup>18</sup> Alexa Olesen, "China Sees Islamic State Inching Closer to Home," *Foreign Policy*, August 11, 2014, accessed January 10, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/11/china-sees-islamic-state-inching-closer-to-home/>.

<sup>19</sup> Chris Zambelis, "Uighur Dissent and Militancy in China's Xinjiang Province," Combating Terrorism Center, January 13, 2010, accessed April 9, 2015, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/uighur-dissent-and-militancy-in-china%E2%80%99s-xinjiang-province#>.

Caliphate, the efficacy of the CCP policies in Xinjiang needs a fresh evaluation from the long-term perspective to determine the potential for success.<sup>20</sup>

The Uyghurs insurgents have developed close associations with AQ, and many of its leaders are part of the AQ hierarchy. In addition, while seeking inspiration from its AQ affiliates, the Uyghur insurgents have added a terrorism dimension to its separatist movement in Xinjiang. Since 2008, Xinjiang has witnessed an increase in the insurgent activities. On the other side, Chinese authorities are determined to fight the three evils of separatism, terrorism and extremism, considering them as the biggest threat to national unity in Xinjiang.

Numerous research works provide insights into the Uyghur insurgency and the Chinese COIN strategy in Xinjiang. This thesis examines this insurgency and the Chinese response in Xinjiang province. The thesis focuses on the effectiveness of Chinese COIN strategy in Xinjiang from 2001 to the present (2014).

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<sup>20</sup> ISIS claims its ideology as teachings of Islam and aims at establishment of an Islamic Caliphate. However, the heinous and brutal actions by the members of the organization are contradictory to the teachings, values, and fundamentals of Islam.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

China's counterinsurgency strategy in Tibet and Xinjiang relies heavily on hard power and imposition. Well-functioning vertical coordination in the security sector of China's political system and assimilationist nationality dynamics combine to favor the use of force against ethnic groups that do not accept the political legitimacy of China's Communist Party. Transnational links contribute to China's difficulties with implementing counterinsurgency in Tibet and helps China implement its strategy in Xinjiang. Development strategies aimed at improving living standards are crowded out due to a lack of horizontal coordination between civilian and security agencies and a bias towards unitary nation-building in Chinese nationalism.

— Liselotte Odgaard and Thomas G. Nielsen,  
“China's Counterinsurgency Strategy in Tibet and Xinjiang”

This chapter reviews the key literature on the history of Xinjiang, the Uyghur Insurgency and the Chinese COIN strategy. The available literature will be reviewed in line with the layout of the thesis i.e. historical context, strategic setting, insurgency, and COIN from 1949-2001, and the current environment (2001-2014).

#### Historical Context (Pre-1949)

Owen Lattimore (1950) examines the history of Xinjiang since 600 AD. He explains the coalescing of Soviet, British, Japanese, and Chinese interests over Xinjiang from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries. He asserts feudal bureaucratic Chinese rule from 1884-1933 was marked with rampant corruption and venality, which led to the establishment of ETR in 1933 and in 1944.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Owen Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia: Sinkiang and the Inner Asian Frontier of China and Russia* (Boston, MA: Little, 1950).

Linda Benson (1990) provides insight into the colonial and imperialist Chinese system in Xinjiang after World War II leading to establishment of the ETR in 1944. She illustrates the impact of the Turkic nationalism, Islamic solidarity, and anti-Han sentiments existing in the Uyghur rebellion. She also informs on the Soviet involvement in establishing the ETR.<sup>22</sup>

James Millward and Peter Perdue (2004) illuminate the historical context of the issue and the power struggle in Xinjiang from 1884-1978. The authors explain the divergent interests of the external players including the Soviets, the British, and the Japanese in Xinjiang.<sup>23</sup>

James Millward and Nabijan Tursan (2004) explain the integration of Xinjiang into mainland China during 1884-1978, reassertion of Beijing's authority, massive demographic colonization, and stern political control by Chinese authorities.<sup>24</sup>

Michael Clarke (2013)<sup>25</sup> explains the transition of power in Xinjiang from the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) to the Goumindang (GMD) and later to the CCP in 1949. The author explains the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious differences between the Uyghurs and Hans. Clarke asserts that Chinese policies relied on the Marxist approach to

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<sup>22</sup> Linda Benson, *The Ili Rebellion: The Moslem Challenge to Chinese Authority in Xinjiang, 1944-1949* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1990).

<sup>23</sup> Millward and Perdue, 27-62.

<sup>24</sup> James A. Millward and Nabijan Tursan, "Political History and Strategies of Control, 1884-1978," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 63-100.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Clarke, "Ethnic Separatism in the PRC: History, Causes and Contemporary Challenges," *European Journal of East Asian Studies* (2013): 109-133, accessed February 11, 2015, [http://www.academia.edu/6729830/Ethnic\\_Separatism\\_in\\_the\\_Peoples\\_Republic\\_of\\_China\\_History\\_Causes\\_and\\_Contemporary\\_Challenges](http://www.academia.edu/6729830/Ethnic_Separatism_in_the_Peoples_Republic_of_China_History_Causes_and_Contemporary_Challenges).

handle the situation in Xinjiang rather than undertaking economic development and modernization.

In addition, the research works by David Wang (1998), Gardner Bovingdon (2004), Li Sheng (2005), Chris Hann (2011), and William Joseph (2013) all provide insight into pre-1949 situation in Xinjiang.

### Strategic Settings (1949 to 2001)

Donald McMillan (1979) explores the integration of Xinjiang into mainland China after 1949. The author explains how the CCP policies in Xinjiang denied independence to the Uyghurs for decades while the People's Republic of China (PRC) itself was not stable. He also explains the impact of the massive Han migration on Xinjiang and the Uyghurs.<sup>26</sup>

Gardner Bovingdon (2010) highlights the reasons for the Chinese failures in shaping the opinion of the Uyghurs to integrate into the Chinese nation. The book elucidates the contested and contradictory historical narratives about Xinjiang by the Uyghurs and the Chinese. Bovingdon asserts that the Uyghurs consider nationalism as a motivation source, while the Chinese authorities consider Islamic religion to be the sources of inspiration for the Uyghurs.<sup>27</sup>

Michael Clarke (2007) elaborates the elements of the Chinese state policy from 1991-2006 in relation to the ethnic minority discontent in Xinjiang. The author expounds

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<sup>26</sup> Donald H. McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang 1949-77* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004).

<sup>27</sup> Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in their Own Land*.

on the Great Western Development (GWD) program launched by the CCP and its effects in Xinjiang.<sup>28</sup>

Martin Wayne (2008) explains the Uyghur insurgency as an indigenous movement seeking inspiration from separatism and not primarily from religion. The author explains the genesis of Uyghur insurgency during the Afghan Jihad and Chinese support extended to the Mujahedeen against the Soviets. The author reviews the Chinese policies including Han oppression of the Uyghurs and exploitation of natural resources in Xinjiang as prime factors in creating the discontent and dissent in Xinjiang.<sup>29</sup>

Chris Hann (2011) explains the economic tyranny and resentment forced upon the Uyghurs in order to extend privileges to the Hans. He describes the formulation and implantation of the policies by the CCP in Xinjiang particularly after 1990 including the GWD project, and analyzes the current situation in Xinjiang in relation to enormous economic and infrastructural reforms.<sup>30</sup>

Dru C. Gladney explains the patterns of Chinese control in Xinjiang from 1978-2001.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the research by Dru C. Gladney (1999), Christian Tyler (2003),

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Clarke, "China's Internal Security Dilemma and the Great Western Development: The Dynamics of Integration, Ethnic Nationalism and Terrorism in Xinjiang," *Asian Studies Review* 31 (September 2007): 323-342.

<sup>29</sup> Martin I. Wayne, *China's War on Terroris-Counterinsurgency, Politics and Internal Security* (London: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>30</sup> Chris Han, "Smith in Beijing, Stalin in Urumchi: Ethnicity, Political Economy, and Violence in Xinjiang, 1759-2009," *Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 60 (July 2001): 108-123.

<sup>31</sup> Dru C. Gladney, "The Chinese Program of Development and Control, 1978-2001," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed., S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 101-119.

Michael Dillon (2003), Yitzhak Shichor (2004), Gardner Bovingdon (2004), Millward and Perdue (2004), Arienne Dwyer (2005), William Mosle (2006), Scott LaRonde (2008), Todd Reed and Diana Raschke (2010), and William Joseph (2014) are all excellent sources of information for this period in Xinjiang.

#### Current Situation (2001 to 2014)

The research material for the current situation is mostly available through articles and journals. At present, no book is available covering the entire period; however, a few cover the initial few years post-2001.

Gardner Bovingdon (2010) explains the daily resistance of the Uyghurs against Chinese political, social, and economic trends. He describes the existing Chinese policies in Xinjiang, including massive crackdowns against minor resistance, labelling it as separatism, terrorism, and extremism. The author also challenges the Chinese claims of alleging the international Uyghur organizations as contributors to the ongoing unrest in Xinjiang.<sup>32</sup>

Michael Clarke (2013) explains the sudden shift in the Chinese policies following the incidents of 9/11, and subsequent declaration of the Uyghur separatists as terrorists and extremists, thus nullifying the external political support to them.<sup>33</sup>

Kevin Sheives (2006) describes Chinese strategic interests in the Central Asian Republics, establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and its

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<sup>32</sup> Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in their Own Land*.

<sup>33</sup> Clarke, "Ethnic Separatism in the PRC," 109-133.

linkage with limiting Uyghur support. The research expands on consensus policy of the SCO member states on the three evil forces of terrorism, separatism, and extremism.<sup>34</sup>

Shawn Patrick (2010) asserts that current U.S. led GWOT has provided the PRC government with the freedom to target the Uyghur populace as terrorists, thus enabling AQ and other such organizations to emerge in the Central Asian region. The author argues that the current Chinese policies in Xinjiang unfairly suppress the Uyghur populace.<sup>35</sup>

Scott LaRonde (2008) asserts that the CCP government is following the policy of Mao's fundamental principles of insurgency to handle the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. He evaluates Mao's COIN model in relation to the U.S. military doctrine, drawing similarities and differences.<sup>36</sup>

Philip B.K. Potter (2013) elaborates on the linkage of China's economic and political emergence with the rise in support of terrorist organizations for the Uyghur insurgents. The author explains how the technological and social changes within China are making COIN difficult. Potter explains the linkages between the regional terrorists

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<sup>34</sup> Kevin Sheives, "China Turns West: Beijing's Contemporary Strategy Towards Central Asia," *Pacific Affairs* 79, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 205-224.

<sup>35</sup> MAJ Shawn M. Patrick, U.S. Army, "The Uyghur Movement: China's Insurgency in Xinjiang" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2010).

<sup>36</sup> MAJ Scott J. LaRonde, U.S. Army, "Protracted Counterinsurgency: Chinese COIN Strategy in Xinjiang" (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2008).

(AQ, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Taliban, and etcetera) and the Uyghur insurgents operating in and outside Xinjiang.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to those mentioned above, the informative research works on Xinjiang include; Gardner Bovingdon (2004 and 2014), William Mosle (2006), Martin Wayne (2008 and 2009), Parag Khanna (2008), Scott LaRonde (2008), Todd Reed and Diana Raschke (2010), Chris Hann (2011), William A. Joseph (2014), Liselotte Odgaard and Thomas G. Nielsen (2014), Brenda Bi Hui Org (2015), and William Joseph (2014).

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<sup>37</sup> Potter, 70-92.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Research Questions

The primary question, which this thesis seeks to answer, is; can the Uyghur insurgency achieve the independence of Xinjiang? In addition, the thesis will seek to answer following secondary questions:

1. What is the Chinese COIN strategy in Xinjiang?
2. How are the Uyghurs fighting the insurgency against the Chinese in Xinjiang?
3. Has AQ or other such like organizations influenced the Uyghur insurgency in Xinjiang?
4. Are the Uyghur people interested in supporting the insurgency?
5. Is the Chinese COIN strategy in Xinjiang succeeding?
6. What are the shortfalls in the Uyghur insurgency and the Chinese COIN strategy in Xinjiang?

#### Delimitations

The non-availability of the Chinese language resources and classified material elucidating any official details, and stance on Xinjiang and the Uyghurs, are the delimitations to this thesis.

#### Hypothesis

The current Chinese COIN strategy has been successful and is unlikely to change in the future. The Uyghur insurgents will not achieve independence or real autonomy for Xinjiang.



## Methodology

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization COIN doctrine and the COIN analysis model developed by the Department of Joint Interagency and Multinational Operations at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas serve as the base model for this thesis. The first part deals with the geography and demography of Xinjiang, historical context (pre-1949), and strategic setting (1949-1999). The second part reviews the conduct of the Uyghur insurgency from 1999 to 2014, while the third part reviews the Chinese COIN from 1999 to 2014. The last part of thesis will attempt to draw conclusions based on the findings to determine the future of the Uyghur insurgency and the Chinese COIN strategy.

This research adopts a combination of comparative and descriptive research with the prime focus on analysis of the Uyghur insurgency and the Chinese COIN strategy. The descriptive research will highlight relevant aspects leading to analysis and conclusions to answer the research questions. The descriptive research methodology approach, while utilizing the available material, will describe the events of the past that lead to the present situation. The thesis will analyze the Uyghur insurgent activities against the dynamics of insurgency in Xinjiang.

The CCP authorities are dealing with a protracted insurgency in Tibet and Xinjiang; however, no official document enunciating the theoretical and practical contours of the Chinese COIN strategy is available. The thesis researches the Chinese actions in the diplomatic, political, economic, military, and social domains in relation to attributes of a successful COIN strategy.

The thesis utilizes the Department of Joint Interagency and Multinational Operations, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College model (attached as Appendix A) as a guideline. The model has been suitably tailored to meet the thesis requirements. The Strategic Setting chapter explains the geography and demography of Xinjiang, natural resources and historical perspective in Xinjiang. To set the stage for the thesis, the historical perspective section deals with the Uyghur insurgency and the Chinese COIN strategy in three distinct periods i.e. pre-Communist era (before 1949), Mao era (1949-1976), and post-Mao era (1976-2001).

The Chinese COIN strategy chapter explains the CCP actions at domestic and international levels from 2001-2014. The chapter explains the Chinese COIN strategy in Xinjiang by utilizing the attributes of a successful COIN strategy, which include; objectives and political primacy, population support, relevance and legitimacy, intelligence driven operations, isolating insurgents from populace, international recognition to deny support to insurgents, economic activities and initiatives, and control over insurgent activities.

The Uyghur Insurgency chapter, while utilizing the attributes of a successful insurgency, explains the insurgency in Xinjiang. These attributes include; cause and ideology, leadership, organization, political and insurgent representation, the armed struggle—insurgents to terrorists, recognition and support, and external support.

The Analysis and Conclusion chapter explains the Chinese COIN strategy and the Uyghur insurgency from 1949-2014. The chapter attempts to predict the future of Xinjiang and related Chinese sensitivities. The Chinese have no documented COIN

strategy and doctrine. The last section attempts to lists the likely tenets of Chinese COIN strategy.

## CHAPTER 4

### STRATEGIC SETTING

#### Geography of Xinjiang



Figure 1. Xinjiang Map

*Source:* China Maps, “Map of Xinjiang, China,” accessed February 6, 2015, <http://www.chinamaps.org/china/provincemaps/xinjiang-map.html>.

Xinjiang is China’s largest political unit, located in the northwest covering an area of 1.6 million square kilometers. Xinjiang borders Mongolia (1,435 kilometers), Russia (56 kilometers), Kazakhstan (1,718 kilometers), Kyrgyzstan (980 kilometers), Tajikistan (450 kilometers), Afghanistan (80 kilometers), Pakistan (530 kilometers) and Indian

Occupied Kashmir (350 kilometers). Xinjiang also borders the Chinese provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, and Tibet Autonomous Region.<sup>38</sup>

Xinjiang is a land of three basins surrounded by three mountains.<sup>39</sup> The three basins are the Tarim, Turpan, and Dzungaria while the three mountains refer to the Kunlun (south), Tien Shan (center), and Altay (north).<sup>40</sup> The Kunlun ranges to the southeast separates Xinjiang from mainland China. The Karakoram range in the south separates Xinjiang from Pakistan. The Hindukush, Pamir Knot, and Tien-Shan ranges in the west and southwest separate it from Central Asia and Afghanistan, and the Altai Mountains in the north separate it from Mongolia.

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<sup>38</sup> Witt Raczka, "Xinjiang and its Central Asian Borders," *Central Asian Survey* 17, no. 3 (1998): 373-407; Millward and Perdue, 29.

<sup>39</sup> Millward and Perdue, 30.

<sup>40</sup> Li Sheng, *Xinjiang of China: Its Past and Present* (Umrichi: Zinjiang People's Publishing House, 2005), 1-2.



Figure 2. Xinjiang Topographical Map

Source: China Tourist Maps, “Topography Map of Xinjiang,” accessed February 6, 2015, <http://www.chinatouristmaps.com/china-maps/topography-of-china/topography-of-xinjiang.html>.

The Tarim basin lies towards the southern part of Xinjiang with the Taklimakan Shamo (desert) in the middle covering an area of 327,000 square kilometers. The Taklimakan Desert is uninhabitable and impassible, but has undiscovered oil and gas reserves. A chain of fertile oases of small towns and cities is located on the fringes of the desert. The important communication and population centers of the Tarim basin include Kashgar, Yarkand, and Khotan. This southern rim of Xinjiang had historically remained affiliated with and influenced by the sub-continent (present Pakistan and India), the Fergana valley (northern Afghanistan) and Central Asia (Transoxiana).<sup>41</sup> The Turpan or Turfan basin (depression) lies in the center and eastern part of Xinjiang. The basin is separated from the Tarim basin by the Kuruktagh (or Quruqtagh) Mountains and Bagrax

<sup>41</sup> Millward and Perdue, 30.

(or Baghrash) Lake.<sup>42</sup> Ayding Lake is also located in the Turfan basin, which is the second lowest point on the earth (155 meters or 508 feet below mean sea level).<sup>43</sup> The important communication centers in the Turpan basin include Urumchi (Wulumchi), Hami (Kumul), and Turpan. The eastern part of the basin is the Komtag Shamo (desert) which later turns into the Gobi Desert.

Tien Shan extends from west (Central Asia) to east, then further joins with Bogda Shan and divides Xinjiang into two distinct parts. The Tarim basin and Turpan basin lie in the southern and some parts of the northern portion of Xinjiang, while northern Xinjiang centers on the Dzungaria (Junggar) basin.<sup>44</sup> The environment in the Dzungaria basin is comparatively less harsh than the Tarim basin. Mountains ring the Dzungaria basin, which itself contains several small deserts combining an area of 142,857 square kilometers.<sup>45</sup> The northern parts of the Dzungaria basin are drier and mountainous, which extend to the Altay ranges. To the west of the basin, the Yili or Ili River valley extends between the shoulders of the Tien Shan west into Kazakhstan.<sup>46</sup> The valley is broad, fertile, well watered, and has historically been the grassland for pastoral nomads. The

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<sup>42</sup> China Maps, "Map of Xinjiang, China," accessed February 6, 2015, <http://www.chinamaps.org/china/provincemaps/xinjiang-map.html>.

<sup>43</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Lake Ayding," accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/10371/Lake-Ayding>.

<sup>44</sup> Sheng, 1-2.

<sup>45</sup> Benson, *The Ili Rebellion*, 19-20.

<sup>46</sup> Lattimore, 153.

geographic dimension of the Ili valley has historically kept it ethnically, culturally, and religiously closer to Central Asia than China.<sup>47</sup>

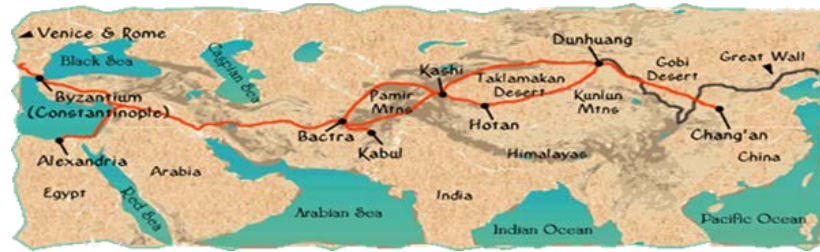


Figure 3. Ancient Silk Route

Source: China Tour Select, “Silk Road Map,” accessed February 26, 2015, <http://www.chinatourselect.com/Uploadfile/200805/20080527040726336.gif>.

Historically, Xinjiang served as a trade link between the west and China (Silk Route, figure 3) passing through the mountains and desert corridors. The layout of the region and availability of land routes oriented the people of Xinjiang more towards the traditions and culture of Central Asia. To the east, the Gansu corridor historically provides a natural route between Xinjiang and mainland China. To the west, the Ili valley and Kashgar link Xinjiang with present day Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (both former Soviet Republics). To the north, the grasslands of Dzungarian basin link Xinjiang with Mongolia through the Altay Mountains. At present, Xinjiang connects with adjoining regions and countries through numerous road networks.

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<sup>47</sup> Millward and Perdue, 31.



### Natural Resources

Xinjiang lies in the proximity of the oil rich central Asian region. The Chinese economy has witnessed a gradual and sustained increase in the last decades. The demand for the oil and gas has also increased gradually with the economic growth. China, at present is the second largest oil importer with approximately 35 percent of its oil provided by the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and remaining through Xinjiang and CARs.<sup>48</sup>

Xinjiang is rich in natural resources with approximately 138 different categories of discovered minerals. The region has vast reserves of approximately 20.9 billion tons of oil, 10.3 trillion cubic meters of gas, and 2.2 trillion tons of coal.<sup>49</sup> Xinjiang at present contains the largest energy sources for China, contributing forty-four billion cubic meters of gas annually.<sup>50</sup> It also provides approximately 240 million tons of coal per year likely to rise to approximately 750 million tons of coal annually by 2020.<sup>51</sup> The presence of these natural resources was one the prime interests of the Soviets before 1950.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Yufan Hao and Weihua Liu, “Xinjiang: Increasing Pain in the Heart of China’s Borderland,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 21, no. 74 (March 2012): 212-213.

<sup>49</sup> Sheng, 2-3.

<sup>50</sup> Edward Weng, “China Invests in Region Rich in Oil, Coal and Also Strife,” *New York Times*, December 20, 2014, accessed February 18, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/21/world/asia/china-invests-in-xinjiang-region-rich-in-oil-coal-and-also-strife.html>.

<sup>51</sup> Gabe Collins and Andrew Erickson, “Xinjiang Poised to Become China’s Largest Coal Producer: Will Move Global Coal, Natural Gas, and Crude Oil Markets,” *China Sign Post*, September 21, 2012, accessed February 11, 2015, <http://www.chinasignpost.com/2012/09/21/xinjiang-poised-to-become-chinas-largest-coal-producer-will-move-global-coal-natural-gas-and-crude-oil-markets/>.

<sup>52</sup> Benson, *The Ili Rebellion*, 31-32.

In 2008, Xinjiang ranked second in the oil production in China generating approximately 27.3 million tons of the crude oil. The province also provided the Chinese industry with twenty-four billion cubic meters of natural gas—the highest in China.<sup>53</sup> Xinjiang also contains approximately 115 of 147 raw materials found in China. Apart from the oil and gas resources, Xinjiang is the largest base for commercial cotton and beet sugar in China.

### Demographics

The population in Xinjiang is situated in the irrigable areas along rivers. The southern portion of Xinjiang facilitates east-west land communication routes along a line of oasis towns, while the northern portion of Xinjiang (north of Tien Shan) facilitates north-south land routes. Southern Xinjiang has remained host to outside influence by virtue of trade routes and irrigable land.<sup>54</sup>

The total population of Xinjiang is approximately 22.5 million (January 1, 2014) with an approximate population density of 13.7 per square kilometer.<sup>55</sup> The ethnic population division includes the Uyghurs (45 percent), the Hans (40 percent), the Kazakhs (7 percent), the Hui (4.5 percent), the Kirghiz (1 percent), and others (2.5 percent). Urumchi (also Urumqi) is the political capital since Xinjiang became a Chinese province in 1884.<sup>56</sup> It is currently the largest population center with approximately 2.8

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<sup>53</sup> Hao and Liu, 211.

<sup>54</sup> Millward and Perdue, 31.

<sup>55</sup> City Population, “China: Xinjiang Autonomous Region,” accessed February 28, 2015, <http://www.citypopulation.de/China-XinjiangUygur.html>.

<sup>56</sup> Lattimore, 45-46.

million citizens, while the other significant population centers include Korla (0.42 million), Gulja (0.37 million), Shihezi (0.32 million) and Kashgar (0.31 million).

### History of Xinjiang

Millward asserts, “even though, there is nothing predestined or metaphysical about the shapes of countries on the map, nation-states and ethnic groups tend to treat this territory as iconic—the connection between a people and its place is felt to be sacred and can inspire feats of courage, acts of violence, and works of art.”<sup>57</sup> The story of Xinjiang speaks of a continuous and untiring struggle of the Uyghurs for an independent East Turkestan. The subsequent sections will briefly cover the historical context of the Uyghur insurgency and the Chinese COIN strategy in three distinct eras i.e. pre-communist era, Mao era, and post-Mao era.

#### Pre-Communist Era (before 1949)

The Central Asian region, to include Xinjiang, has historically remained an area of religious, cultural, and territorial unrest. Xinjiang was ruled by the invaders until becoming a province of the Qing dynasty in 1884.<sup>58</sup> The available literature on the history of Xinjiang disputes varying Uyghur and Chinese claims. Historians have obscured the history of Xinjiang by presenting the information supporting their respective points of view.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the available history of Xinjiang today cannot be termed as reliable.

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<sup>57</sup> Millward and Perdue, 27.

<sup>58</sup> Lattimore, 46.

<sup>59</sup> Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in their Own Land*, 23.

The Uyghurs of Xinjiang are neither Han Chinese and nor Hui (Chinese Muslims), and have inhabited the area of modern day Xinjiang since the seventh century.<sup>60</sup> The name Xinjiang, by virtue of its meaning, is a historical dispute between the Uyghurs and the Chinese. The Chinese historians claim Xinjiang as part of the old Chinese dynasties since 60 BC.<sup>61</sup> The Uyghurs maintain that the name implies new territories or dominions in Mandarin, which by no means can be the name of a region that has existed for so long. The Uyghurs repudiate the Chinese name and prefer using East Turkestan or Uyghurstan.<sup>62</sup> The available literature suggests that the Uyghurs resided in present day Xinjiang before the eight century.<sup>63</sup> Lattimore asserts that the Uyghurs, as the tribal confederation of pastoral nomads, lived in modern day Xinjiang for centuries.<sup>64</sup> The Han Empire of the Tang Dynasty ruled over parts of Xinjiang from 618-907 but did not have complete control.<sup>65</sup> After the retreat of all Tang forces by 763, no Chinese empire or dynasty controlled or ruled over Xinjiang for more than a thousand years.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Lattimore, 12.

<sup>61</sup> Information Office of the State Council of the Peoples Republic of China, “East Turkestan Forces Cannot Get Away with Impunity,” 2002, accessed January 22, 2015, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2002/Jan/25582.html>.

<sup>62</sup> Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in their Own Land*, 24.

<sup>63</sup> Gladney, “Chinese Program of Development and Control,” 101-103.

<sup>64</sup> Lattimore, 122-123.

<sup>65</sup> T. H. Moh, “A Short History of Tibet” (Tibet Study Association, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, 2006), accessed January 21, 2015, <http://cc.purdue.edu/~wtv/tibet/welcome.html>, 16-28.

<sup>66</sup> James A. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 36.

Xinjiang has mostly endured under Chinese control; however, there have been periods of other rulers as well. It was ruled by a series of invading tribes from both Central Asia and Mongolia, mainly Tibetans, Mongols, Karakhanids, and Turks.<sup>67</sup> The period between the ninth through the thirteenth centuries also witnessed intermittent Uyghur rule in Xinjiang.<sup>68</sup> During the Mughal rule in India, Xinjiang maintained its local autonomy by paying tribute.<sup>69</sup>

In 1759, the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) captured and annexed the northern and southern parts of Xinjiang. Since then, the Uyghurs have lived under Chinese rule except for periods of limited independence. The Uyghurs have been a distinguishable entity, which is religiously, ethnically, linguistically, and culturally different from the Han Chinese.<sup>70</sup> Despite the Chinese efforts of integration and assimilation in Xinjiang, the Uyghurs have maintained their distinct identity since the nineteenth century.<sup>71</sup>

In geopolitical terms, the Central Asian region was also called Turkestan—a land inhabited by the Turkic-speaking people from the CARs to Turkey. In the nineteenth century, Tsarist Russia occupied the western portion of the Turkestan, now referred to as CARs and the eastern portion now referred to as Xinjiang, was under the control the Qing

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<sup>67</sup> Millward and Perdue, 34-35.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 40-42.

<sup>69</sup> Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 35-36.

<sup>70</sup> Benson, *The Ili Rebellion*, 21-22.

<sup>71</sup> Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in their Own Land*, 27-28.

Dynasty.<sup>72</sup> It was during this time that the name “Xinjiang” appeared in the available literature.<sup>73</sup>

Xinjiang, termed as the pivot of Asia, became a rival target between Great Britain and Russia during the nineteenth century.<sup>74</sup> After final conquest of the Punjab Province (Pakistan) in 1849, the British interests in Xinjiang mounted steadily, particularly focusing on the Tarim Basin, while the Russians focused on the western portion of Xinjiang. On the eastern side, the Qing Dynasty had infrequent and weak control over the region. In 1884, the Manchu Emperor made Xinjiang a province through Imperial edict.<sup>75</sup> The Qing dynasty, sensing increasing interests of the regional powers in Xinjiang, established military posts in Xinjiang. This period also witnessed adoption of stern and exacting policies towards the Uyghurs to deny their allegiance to the British or Russians. The British interests continued to be asserted in Xinjiang until 1890, when Russia and Britain reached a tacit agreement to keep Xinjiang as a neutral buffer zone between both states.<sup>76</sup>

The Chinese rule over Xinjiang during 1884-1949 is termed as an era of feudal bureaucracy marked with “corruption, bribery and venality” in all strata of the administration.<sup>77</sup> The Uyghurs lived under the suppressive Qing dynasty (1884-1911) and

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<sup>72</sup> David Wang, 1-2.

<sup>73</sup> Clarke, “Ethnic Separatism in the PRC,” 112.

<sup>74</sup> Lattimore, 29.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 47.

the Chinese Nationalists (1911-1949). Soon after the Nationalists took control over China, they forced the Uyghur leadership to go into exile.

During the first half of the twentieth century, Xinjiang became the center of the attention with Russia, Great Britain, and Japan intensifying their efforts by exploiting pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism.<sup>78</sup> The British, in an effort to make Xinjiang a buffer state, supported Muslims at Kashgar to establish the ETR in 1933. In pursuit of controlling Xinjiang, the Soviets even stationed their troops as far as Hami to thwart Japanese aggression.<sup>79</sup> The Japanese, during this era also tried to assert themselves by supporting a Chinese Muslim warlord of Gansu, Ma Zhongying. This period witnessed two distinct periods of the uprising by the Uyghurs in response to Chinese oppression, including establishment of the ETR in 1933 and 1944.<sup>80</sup>

The period from 1933-1941 saw Soviet influence grow in the internal politics of Xinjiang. Millward even suggested Xinjiang was similar to the Soviet satellite like Outer Mongolia.<sup>81</sup> The Soviets provided the monetary, military, and technical assistance to the provincial GMD government, thus exercising immense influence over the areas' politics.<sup>82</sup> Sheng Shicai, the governor of Xinjiang granted open concessions to the Soviets

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<sup>78</sup> David Wang, 3.

<sup>79</sup> Benson, *The Ili Rebellion*, 6-7.

<sup>80</sup> S. Frederick Starr, "Introduction," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 12-14.

<sup>81</sup> Millward and Nabijan, 79.

<sup>82</sup> Lattimore, 74-76.

on the oil and mineral resources in the province.<sup>83</sup> However, with the commencement of operation Barbarossa in June 1941, Soviet interests shifted to the western front. Sheng Shicai, seeing the success of the Germans, antagonized his Soviet masters by aligning with the GMD. Towards the end of World War II, the Soviets reinvigorated their interests in Xinjiang by supporting the Muslim populace instead of the GMD provincial government.

In November 1944, the Soviets supported another uprising in the Ili region leading to establishment of the ETR at Kulja.<sup>84</sup> A council of three—a Uyghur, a Kazakh, and a European Russian, headed the new ETR government. The extent of the Soviet support to the Ili rebellion was evident. The Chinese Nationalist Forces, with approximately twelve divisions in Xinjiang, could not defeat the rebellion. The Soviet interests in Xinjiang were linked to the oil and mineral resources, and thus, they capitalized on the strategic opportunity by supporting the rebellion.<sup>85</sup> Another factor in the success of the Uyghurs in establishment of the ETR was the transition from Sheng to GMD rule, which had left Xinjiang in chaos and anarchy.<sup>86</sup> However, the CCP historians report the incident as the anti-GMD Three District Revolution and not in entire revolt in Xinjiang.

During both instances of independence (1933 and 1949), the ETR could not be sustained due to the lack of cohesion between the Uyghurs, the Kazakhs, and the

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<sup>83</sup> Millward and Nabijan, 80.

<sup>84</sup> Benson, *The Ili Rebellion*, 6-7.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

<sup>86</sup> David Wang, 3.



Mongols. In addition, there were a few elements within these ethnicities, which joined the Chinese provincial government for personal gains, thus weakening the cause.<sup>87</sup> However, the mysterious plane crash killing the ETR leadership and secret deals between Saif-ud-Din (ETR leader) and Mao denied the Uyghurs an independent Xinjiang.<sup>88</sup>

The ETR collapsed due to internal turmoil and loss of key leadership. In the history of Xinjiang, 1949 was the only time the Uyghurs had an opportunity to seek independence from the Chinese. However, internal disputes weakened the cause leading to collapse of the ETR.

#### 1949 to 1976 (Mao's Era)

In 1949, the CCP came to power and declared the PRC. The end of the civil war left China's economic infrastructure destroyed and bankrupt. In addition, the start of the Cold War brought external threats to China. The Soviets were quick to align themselves with the new Communist state, primarily as an ally against the United States. The development of relations between both Communist states was more of a forced marriage as the tensions between both countries over Xinjiang covertly continued. The move of the U.S. Navy 7th Fleet to the Taiwan Strait in 1950 further enabled the strategic alignment of the PRC with the United Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR).<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Lattimore, 219-222.

<sup>88</sup> Millward and Nabijan, 86.

<sup>89</sup> U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "Milestones 1945-52: The Korean War, 1950-53," accessed March 22, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/korean-war-2>.

Sino-Soviet relations remained lukewarm, however, Mao's visit to Moscow in 1950 led to the acceptance of Xinjiang as an integral part of China.<sup>90</sup> The region came under the control of the Chinese, yet Xinjiang was still not stable. There existed a large number of Ili National Army and nationalist elements in Xinjiang, which had refused to surrender.<sup>91</sup> By 1949, there were three different armies functioning in Xinjiang: the INA with almost 25,000 fighters, the GMD with 80,000, and PLA with 100,000 soldiers. In 1936, Mao, in a letter addressed to Muslim Uyghur populace had promised self-determination to garner the support of the Uyghurs against the Japanese and the Nationalists.<sup>92</sup> However, Mao was never interested in giving away Xinjiang and later, the commitment by Mao proved to be only a temporary maneuver to gain time.

In 1949, the Uyghurs were in an advantageous position over the CCP to declare the independence of Xinjiang. However, limited external support and recognition denied the Uyghurs this opportunity. Being cognizant of weakness in Xinjiang, the CCP initially followed a moderate policy towards the Uyghurs. Wang Zhen, one of the "Eight Elders" of the Communist Party of China, pointed out that there were special problems affecting the CCP's consolidation and socialization in Xinjiang.<sup>93</sup> These problems included; a strong desire amongst the Uyghurs for independence; the diversity of the Uyghur culture and religion from the Han Chinese; existence of the strong Soviet influence, particularly in bordering areas; the historic and incessant resistance for independence by the Uyghurs

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<sup>90</sup> Benson, *The Ili Rebellion*, 121-122.

<sup>91</sup> Shichor, 132-133.

<sup>92</sup> LaRonde, 24.

<sup>93</sup> McMillan, 42.

across Xinjiang; poor infrastructure and greater distances within the province and from mainland China. To mitigate these problems, the CCP adopted certain policy initiatives in Xinjiang, primarily revolving around following:

1. Announcement of greater autonomy to the Uyghurs in Xinjiang in order to avoid any future uprising leading to independence.
2. Disproportionate allocation of funding to Xinjiang to develop the region in order to gain local support and simultaneous access to the natural resources.
3. Speedy immigration of the Han Chinese to Xinjiang in order to change the demographic equation.
4. Gradual enforcement of the cultural assimilation of the Uyghurs through strict control over religion, history, language and societal values.
5. Forceful suppression of any uprising against the CCP government, particularly for independence in Xinjiang.<sup>94</sup>

The CCP government interlinked the sovereignty of the PRC with Xinjiang. The fragile stability on its frontiers made the CCP believe that any successful independence movement in Xinjiang could trigger similar patterns in Inner Mongolia, Tibet and Taiwan. Another major sensitivity of the CCP government was the presence of significant natural resources in Xinjiang, which the Soviets had also been considering.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Maj William B. Mosle III, USAF, “Ethnic Discontent in Western China: Can China’s Provincial Policy Contain Instability” (Thesis, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, 2006), 7-9, accessed March 12, 2015, [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCEQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dtic.mil%2Fcgi-bin%2FGetTRDoc%3FAD%3DADA475675&ei=4YxzVcSDJo-WygSJ3oIY&usg=AFQjCNH0bg\\_zvEhu\\_9cabCvDBqOqvIyBg&sig2=MPZ60f3uJNSXjmhvBvSz8w&bvm=bv.95039771,d.aWw](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCEQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dtic.mil%2Fcgi-bin%2FGetTRDoc%3FAD%3DADA475675&ei=4YxzVcSDJo-WygSJ3oIY&usg=AFQjCNH0bg_zvEhu_9cabCvDBqOqvIyBg&sig2=MPZ60f3uJNSXjmhvBvSz8w&bvm=bv.95039771,d.aWw).

<sup>95</sup> Benson, *The Ili Rebellion*, 39-40.

Mao's initial commitment to the Uyghurs for more autonomy coupled with tolerant policies, kept the situation peaceful and stable during the first decade of the PRC government. These delaying tactics gained CCP the time to establish its foothold in Xinjiang.

On the rise of the CCP, the only skilled work force available for national level rebuilding was the military, comprising PLA and Nationalist Forces.<sup>96</sup> The demobilized military successfully rebuilt the communication infrastructure and within three years, the Chinese economy improved. In Xinjiang, the CCP made the Chinese military responsible for rebuilding and governing unlike other provinces where the political leadership remained responsible for it.

Xinjiang was an overwhelmingly agrarian based economy, but the periods of unrest, instability, rampant corruption and favoritism by the GMD in Xinjiang had affected the economy.<sup>97</sup> After Mao established the PRC, Xinjiang also witnessed an economic growth like the rest of the country, yet there were indicators of low-level instability. The cultivable land area was reduced from 802 thousand hectares (1918) to 373 thousand hectares (1949).<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, in the initial years of the CCP government, the economy of Xinjiang improved with a gradual increase in gross domestic product.

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<sup>96</sup> Keith Buchanan, Charles P. Fitzgerald, and Colin A. Rohan, *China, The Land and The People: The History, The Art and The Science* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1990), 388-389.

<sup>97</sup> Calla Wiemer, "The Economy of Xinjiang," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 164.

<sup>98</sup> Shuanqian Wang, *Zou Xiang 21 shiji de Xinjiang* (Urumchi: Xinjiang People's Republic Publishing House, 1999), 51-57.

The efforts of the newly established CCP provincial government led to increase in the cultivatable land to 1,690 thousand hectares (1955).<sup>99</sup>

In 1954, Wang Zhen established XPCC comprised of 80,000 soldiers from the GMD Xinjiang garrison.<sup>100</sup> The XPCC was a work force as well as responsible for guarding the Chinese frontiers.<sup>101</sup> The XPCC comprised mostly ethnic Han with military backgrounds, and the organization itself was capable of handling administrative and judicial affairs.<sup>102</sup> In the process, the massive Han migration started as a workforce, which otherwise was available in abundance in Xinjiang. By virtue of the CCP policies implemented through the provincial government and the XPCC, economic growth increased resulting in keeping Xinjiang stable during initial few years of CCP government.

In 1955, the CCP renamed the region the Xinjiang Autonomous Region giving hope of more autonomy to the Uyghurs.<sup>103</sup> However, covertly the provincial government had successfully eliminated the former ETR officials and leaders, and the Han headed all the key departments in government.<sup>104</sup> Unofficial reports claim that approximately 120,000 Uyghur Muslims were killed from 1949-1952 during anti-separatist operations

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<sup>99</sup> Weimer, 169.

<sup>100</sup> The XPCC is referred as Bingtuan.

<sup>101</sup> Millward and Nabijan, 89-90.

<sup>102</sup> China.org.cn, "Establishment, Development and Role of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps," May 2003, accessed March 4, 2015, <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/20030526/9.htm>.

<sup>103</sup> Millward and Nabijan, 91-92.

<sup>104</sup> McMillan, 68-69.

by the PLA.<sup>105</sup> However, another report claimed 30,000 total deaths. Irrespective of numerical figures, the CCP was posturing itself in a strong position in Xinjiang by systematically reducing the Uyghur opposition.

At the same time, the PRC relations with the Soviets were deteriorating. The Chinese government feared another uprising potentially leading to the independence of Xinjiang with possible Soviet support. The CCP adopted strict policies in Xinjiang and backed away from its promises of autonomy and possible independence made by Mao.<sup>106</sup> Not surprisingly, the provincial government treated other non-Uyghur ethnicities indifferently in order to isolate the Uyghurs.<sup>107</sup> The provincial government established autonomous regions for other ethnicities while neglecting the Uyghur majority. Meanwhile, the CCP started recruitment of non-Han ethnicities in the party in order to integrate other ethnicities.

The Hundred Flower Movement (1956) which sought criticism of the CCP resulted in the rise of anti-Han sentiment in Xinjiang. The few Uyghur cadres called for more autonomy by eviction of the Han Chinese from Xinjiang to create an independent state.<sup>108</sup> The movement led to the targeting of the pro-Soviet Uyghur populace in Xinjiang leading to over 100,000 arrests.<sup>109</sup> The CCP accused the Uyghur and other non-

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 101-103.

<sup>106</sup> Millward and Nabijan, 92-93.

<sup>107</sup> Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 242-244.

<sup>108</sup> McMillan, 86-89.

<sup>109</sup> Michael Dillon, *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Far Northwest* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 52-53.

Han cadres of treason, violence, and treachery, and later executed many of them. The CCP was successful in controlling the opposition in mainland China against the government; however, the situation in Xinjiang was not under control and the discontent against the CCP was on the rise.

The period from 1958 to 1978 saw China in economic crises and recession. The GDP per capita of China fell from 314 million yuan (1960) to 229 million yuan (1976).<sup>110</sup> This era witnessed the Great Leap Forward (1956-1959) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).<sup>111</sup> Despite economic constraints, the provincial government was able to link the Urumchi and Chinese rail systems during this period. In addition, the construction of a road system and air terminal made Urumchi an economic center of Xinjiang.<sup>112</sup>

The Great Leap was initiated for economic reforms, yet it turned out to be an anti-Soviet and anti-nationalism policy against the Uyghurs. The provincial government increased their efforts to control former ETR territory, including the nomadic pastures. In the process, the covert systematic elimination of nationalist leaders and the economic disruption in Xinjiang continued.<sup>113</sup> The massive shipment of food grain from Xinjiang to mainland China resulted in a shortage of food and approximately 80,000 ethnic Kazakhs Chinese fled into the USSR through the Ili valley.<sup>114</sup> The shortage of food in mainland China also made Hans migrate to Xinjiang and as a result, two million young Hans joined

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<sup>110</sup> Weimer, 168-169.

<sup>111</sup> Mosle, 19.

<sup>112</sup> McMillan, 165-168.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 121-123.

<sup>114</sup> Weimer, 168.

the XPCC by 1960.<sup>115</sup> Due to these policies, the period from 1958-1962 witnessed heightened tensions between the Han and other ethnic groups. The CCP not only removed the non-Han cadres from the provincial government but also increased the XPCC strength to approximately 600,000.<sup>116</sup>

In 1962, the CCP government deployed the PLA along the Sino-Soviet border to stop further movement of ethnic minorities to the USSR. Intense internal political crises existed within the CCP, which led to numerous purges of provincial leadership.<sup>117</sup> The same year, approximately 62,000 Uyghurs and other ethnicities rioted in Ili valley. The protestors demanded the opening of borders to allow movement to the Soviet Union. However, the borders remained officially closed until 1981, yet the Uyghurs kept fleeing to Soviet Union to escape Chinese rule.<sup>118</sup>

At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969), the CCP authorities reportedly attacked the Masajid (mosques) and Madaris (Islamic religious schools) in Xinjiang on numerous occasions. During these attacks, the CCP burned copies of the Quran and other religious books, converted the Masajid and Madaris into pigpens, and the religious leaders were publicly humiliated and executed.<sup>119</sup> Religion is always a

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<sup>115</sup> Millward and Nabijan, 90-91.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>117</sup> Linda Benson, "Education and Social Mobility among Minority Populations," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 210-211.

<sup>118</sup> Gladney, "Chinese Program of Development and Control," 122-123.

<sup>119</sup> Millward and Nabijan, 97.



sensitive subject, but even these Chinese actions could not incite the Uyghurs to revolt against the CCP control.

By the mid-1960s, the relations between the XPCC and the provincial government started deteriorating. The XPCC started showing its annoyance against the provincial as well as the CCP governments. Later, the XPCC under its leader Wang Zhen rebelled against the government leading to increased unrest and chaos. The PLA moved in to stabilize the situation, yet the clashes continued between the pro-Wang XPCC and the pro-Mao PLA forces. The internal differences between the XPCC and the PLA severely affected Xinjiang's economy. The XPCC being a prime organization assisting the agrarian based economy became involved in the provincial politics, one result of which was making Xinjiang a food scarce region. In 1975, due to the economic failures and involvement in the unrest, the CCP disbanded the XPCC as an independent entity.

The CCP had been successful in changing the demographic ratios in Xinjiang. By the mid-1970s, the Uyghurs comprised approximately 51 percent of the Xinjiang population while the Hans accounted for approximately 35 percent.<sup>120</sup> The Han mostly settled in the developed eastern and central parts of Xinjiang, while the Uyghur majority settled in less developed western and southern Xinjiang. The Uyghurs had meager representation in the provincial government of Xinjiang.<sup>121</sup>

By the end of Mao's era (1976), the CCP had firm control over Xinjiang. The government effectively controlled the media, education, religion, and culture. The systematic persecution of the Uyghur historians commenced a gradual decline of the anti-

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<sup>120</sup> McMillan, 9-10.

<sup>121</sup> Millward and Nabijan, 97.

Han Uyghur literature. The Chinese version of history became mandatory in the curriculum thus depriving the Uyghurs of their history.<sup>122</sup> The CCP government also changed the Uyghur orthography from Arabic to Cyrillic with an aim to sway the Uyghur youth away from the Muslim scripture.<sup>123</sup> The CCP policies in Xinjiang had met complete success in keeping the Uyghurs suppressed despite periods of intermittent disturbance. However, the separatist movement in Xinjiang still existed as the Uyghurs had found sanctuaries in the Soviet Union, and the Chinese suppression and oppression was becoming a source of motivation for them.

#### 1978 to 1999 (post-Mao to 9/11)

After the death of Mao in September 1976, moderates led by Hua Guofeng replaced the “Gang of Four” and the leftist radicals.<sup>124</sup> However, Hua’s term as the new leader was a transition to Deng Xiaoping who took over as the Communist leader in 1978 while the country was in a tumultuous state. With Deng as the new leader, the world witnessed internal as well as external change in the Chinese policies. During the period, the CCP focused on assimilating Xinjiang into China. The CCP revised its economic policies and successfully suppressed the Uyghurs. The envisioned assimilation aimed at targeting the cultural, linguistic, religious, economic, and social aspects of the Uyghurs. The subsequent paragraphs will explain each of these factors. As of 1978, the Uyghur

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<sup>122</sup> McMillan, 281-282.

<sup>123</sup> Millward, 235-237.

<sup>124</sup> Jan S. Prybyla, “Industrial Development in China: 1967-76 and 1976-78,” *JSTOR: Challenge* 21, no. 4 (September-October 1978): 7, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40719660>.

insurgency in Xinjiang was at a low level due to the lack of external support, non-influential leadership, and the economic condition of the region.<sup>125</sup>

The period from 1979-1999 witnessed numerous important events having an impact on the Chinese COIN strategy in Xinjiang. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Iranian Revolution in 1979 witnessed a close Sino-U.S. strategic collaboration. The CCP, fearing the annexation or independence of Xinjiang with Soviet assistance, supported the Afghan Jihad with weapons, ammunition, and equipment.<sup>126</sup> It was during this time that the Uyghur youth received training in Mujahedeen camps to fight against the Soviets. The Afghan Jihad gave the Uyghur insurgency in Xinjiang a new source of motivation and nationalism. In the subsequent paragraphs, the thesis examines how these trained and hardened Uyghurs, having defeated the Soviets as Mujahedeen, became Uyghur insurgents or terrorists.

There was no single or unanimous agenda for the Uyghurs inside and outside Xinjiang. Few Uyghurs sought the independence of Xinjiang as East Turkestan or Uyghurstan; some desired cultural distinction within given autonomous status, and the remaining pursued integration into the Chinese system.<sup>127</sup> The Uyghurs seldom had any recognized leadership at national and international levels particularly after 1976. Like other insurgencies, the Uyghur movement remained the victim of internal strife and

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<sup>125</sup> Christian Tyler, *Wild West China: The Taming of Xinjiang* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 152.

<sup>126</sup> Shichor, 149.

<sup>127</sup> Elizabeth Van Wie Davis, "Uyghur Muslim Ethnic Separatism in Xinjiang," Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, January 2008, accessed March 25, 2015, <http://www.apcss.org/college/publications/uyghur-muslim-ethnic-separatism-in-xinjiang-china/>.

disputes. There were unsuccessful attempts to organize across Xinjiang in different periods. In 1981, a few Uyghurs in Kashgar inspired by the Afghan Jihad established the East Turkestan Prairie Fire Party to fight Chinese oppression through armed struggle. However, the Chinese authorities by virtue of their intelligence networks received the information beforehand, and thus foiled the plans of a suspected insurgent activity by the party.<sup>128</sup>

Deng had realized the importance of being an economic power and opened China to the west.<sup>129</sup> The CCP adopted the policies of moderation and economic expansion in Xinjiang. The opening of borders and re-establishment of trade-links with the Central Asian region was a major milestone of this policy. Deng also ordered reactivation of the XPCC with a focus to improve the industrial and agrarian economies. The direct trade value of Xinjiang increased by fifteen times from \$31 million (1980) to \$459 million (1991), which was a major achievement by the Deng administration.<sup>130</sup>

The Deng era also witnessed the free religious practice for the Uyghurs including construction of Masajid (mosques) and Madaris (Muslim religious schools), and performance of the Hajj (pilgrimage).<sup>131</sup> The Uyghurs could visit the Middle Eastern countries and publish their history, openly challenging the Chinese version. The Uyghurs

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<sup>128</sup> Dillon, 52-59.

<sup>129</sup> Maurice Meisner, *The Deng Xiaoping Era: An Inquiry into the Fate of Chinese Socialism 1978-1994* (New York: Hill and Wang Publications, 1996), 74-75.

<sup>130</sup> Weimer, 170-171.

<sup>131</sup> Justin Rudelson and William Jankowiak, "Acculturation and Resistance: Xinjiang Identities in Flux," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 300-301.

were also able to study their version of history, which the CCP had earlier strictly banned.<sup>132</sup> As per Human Rights Watch, the human rights violations reduced considerably during this period. During Deng Xiaoping's first decade (1978-1988), Xinjiang was relatively peaceful and stable with no major incidents of unrest or clashes with the Uyghurs.

By 1988, Soviet forces in Afghanistan had been deeply embroiled against the Mujahedeen and visible signs of defeat were apparent. In Xinjiang, the CCP controlled all spheres of Uyghur society, but could not effectively control the external influences in Xinjiang.<sup>133</sup> In the 1990s, the Chinese authorities, sensing an "Afghan Jihad" like uprising in Xinjiang, replaced the tolerant policies with increased intolerance towards the Uyghurs.<sup>134</sup> The defeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan and the independence of new CARs induced a hope of an independent Xinjiang among some of the Uyghurs. The collapse of the Soviet Union ended any chances for external support for the Uyghurs from Russia. However, the Uyghur diaspora in CARs attempted to garner support of the newly established governments, but this was unsuccessful.<sup>135</sup>

In addition, the CCP feared Islam—the religion as ideology—as a danger to the Chinese nationalism. The tolerant religious policies diminished, and the provincial government placed a ban on construction of new Masajid and Madaris, and ordered

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<sup>132</sup> Tyler, 152-53.

<sup>133</sup> Mosle, 21.

<sup>134</sup> Rudelson and Jankowiak, 301.

<sup>135</sup> Dillon, 52-67.

numerous Masajid across Xinjiang to close.<sup>136</sup> The provincial government started removing anti-Han Imams (religious leaders who lead the prayers) in all Masajid and appointed pro-Han Imams.

The CCP actions to control religion forcefully stirred the Uyghur populace leading to rage, hatred, and anxiety. The Uyghur insurgents, seeing the guerilla warfare success in Afghanistan, believed a similar insurrection against the Chinese rule could succeed. In April 1990, a major uprising in Baren (Kashgar) led to twenty-two deaths; however, Chinese officials claimed it was a small-scale “counter revolutionary rebellion.”<sup>137</sup> In contrast, unofficial and unconfirmed sources reported deaths of up to 3,000 Uyghurs in the clash.<sup>138</sup> The Baren clash gave a new dimension to the Uyghur insurgency in the form of organized armed clashes against Chinese authorities. Following the Baren incident, the provincial government deployed a large number of officials to far-flung villages with Uyghur majorities, in order to control the anti-Han elements and propaganda. The Chinese authorities miscalculated the repercussions of providing the Muslim Uyghurs for Afghan Jihad. The Soviet defeat in Afghanistan produced a hope of independence amongst the Uyghurs, which changed the situation in Xinjiang during the 1990s.

The 1990s found Xinjiang with rising instability and reports of seizure of weapons, explosives, and ammunition. The earlier pattern of mandatory massive Han

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<sup>136</sup> Gardner Bovington, “Heteronomy and its Discontents,” in *Governing China’s Multi Ethnic Frontiers*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press. 2005), 138.

<sup>137</sup> Dillon, 26-27.

<sup>138</sup> Rudelson and Jankowiak, 316-317.

migration shifted to voluntary migration due to the moderate state policies towards western China.<sup>139</sup> The provincial government now had strict control over religion, the media, and education. The higher-level modern education was in the Mandarin (Chinese language) while literature was left for the Uyghur language.<sup>140</sup>

By early 1992, China recognized all of the CARs and initiated bilateral relations. The Deng administration was quick to gain the support of all CARs against any insurgent forces i.e. the Uyghurs. The establishment of the Shanghai Five and later the SCO was the outcome of the Chinese bilateral and multilateral engagements with the CARs. The PRC aimed at isolating the Uyghurs from any external support in the neighboring countries. The diplomatic, economic, and military initiatives within the CARs proved a major success against the Uyghur insurgency.

The Uyghurs, while seeking inspiration from the independence of the CARs from the Soviet Union, openly called for the establishment of Uyghurstan.<sup>141</sup> The Chinese response to such calls was a continuum of raids and clampdowns against the Uyghur populace to eliminate the perpetrators of independence. Xinjiang's provincial government also banned the cultural and social gatherings of the Uyghur Muslims on the mere suspicion of promoting separatism.

In 1996, the Taliban established control over most of Afghanistan. The Uyghurs found more inspiration and encouragement expecting support from the Taliban against

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<sup>139</sup> Bovingdon, "Heteronomy and its Discontents," 127-128.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 146-147.

<sup>141</sup> Sean R. Roberts, "A Land of Borderlands," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 229-230.

the Chinese rule. The CCP, while cognizant of the old association between the Taliban and Uyghur fighters in Afghanistan, promptly reacted across Xinjiang. A series of raids led to the arrest of over 2,700 suspects, seizure of 6,000 pounds of explosives and 31,000 rounds of ammunition.<sup>142</sup> The Uyghurs assert that the actual figures of arrests were over 10,000 with over 1,000 executed silently without any trial. In 1997, the insurgents started bombing public places in Xinjiang, particularly targeting the CCP officials and the Han populace. On February 25, 1997, a bomb exploded in Urumchi killing nine people. In the same year, two bombs exploded in Beijing on March 7 (killing two) and May 13 (killing one).<sup>143</sup>

In 1997, the residents of Kulja (Yining) staged a demonstration against the Chinese policies on religious and cultural issues. However, the peaceful demonstration turned violent, once the Chinese law enforcement elements shot and killed several protestors.<sup>144</sup> The incident was followed by three days of rioting in the area leading to the

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<sup>142</sup> Dru C. Gladney, "Responses to Chinese Rule: Patterns of Cooperation and Opposition," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 379.

<sup>143</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight, *Testimony of Dr. Dru C. Gladney, Freedom Fighters or Terrorists? Exploring the Case of the Uighur People*, Washington, DC, June 16, 2009, accessed March 21, 2015, <http://democrats.foreignaffairs.house.gov/111/gla061609.pdf>, 1-29.

<sup>144</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Devastating Blows: Religious Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang," 17, no. 2(C) (April 2005): 15, accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/china0405/china0405.pdf>.



arrest of thousands of Uyghur suspects, confiscation of weapons, ammunition, and explosives.<sup>145</sup>

The CCP, seeing the rise of terrorism and dissent in Xinjiang and its impact on the stability in the region, initiated the Strike Hard, Maximum Pressure Campaign. The campaign was characterized by “summary trials, pressure on the judiciary to process a large number of cases in an extremely short time, holding of mass sentencing rallies, and so on.”<sup>146</sup> The Chinese authorities were able to control the situation in the Ili valley by public executions and forcefully displacing Uyghur families to other parts of Xinjiang.<sup>147</sup>

During the campaign in the Ili valley, the CCP reportedly conducted the public execution of over fifty Uyghurs and displaced thousands of families to other parts of Xinjiang. The PRC government in the initial two years of the Strike Hard Campaign (1996-1997) executed over 210 Uyghurs, on various charges framed around separatism, terrorism, and extremism.<sup>148</sup> Following the Strike Hard Campaign of 1997, the provincial government enhanced its intelligence networks in the Uyghur community through coercion and money.<sup>149</sup> As a result, no significant incident occurred in Xinjiang after 1997 and the Uyghur insurgency was considered to be controlled. After the incidents of

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<sup>145</sup> Gladney, “Responses to Chinese Rule: Patterns of Cooperation and Opposition,” 375.

<sup>146</sup> Human Rights Watch, “China: Human Right Concerns in Xinjiang,” Human Rights Watch, October 2011, accessed March 18, 2015, <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/asia/china-bck1017.pdf>, 1-8.

<sup>147</sup> Dillon, 97-98.

<sup>148</sup> Gladney, “Responses to Chinese Rule: Patterns of Cooperation and Opposition,” 376.

<sup>149</sup> Tyler, 174.

1997, the Uyghur diaspora established the East Turkestan National Congress in Germany by amalgamating thirteen different Uyghur organizations.<sup>150</sup> However, the organization displayed the disagreements among the Uyghur organizations, and by 2001, the East Turkestan National Congress had ceased to exist.

Despite the intense response by the CCP, the Uyghur separatists continued their activities in 1998. In August 1998, the Uyghurs attacked two prisons in Kulja (Yining) resulting in the killing of ten guards and the escape of over eighty Uyghur prisoners.<sup>151</sup> In addition, there were reports of sporadic incidents of shootings, killings, and booby traps across Xinjiang.

Economically, the PRC government heavily invested in Xinjiang in comparison to other provinces. Ever since Deng took over as the CCP leader, the economic integration of Xinjiang was on a fast track. During the process, the CCP government also provided Xinjiang with additional subsidies.<sup>152</sup> For instance, by the end of 1999 the state share in Xinjiang province was approximately 77.2 percent compared with the overall national level share of 47.3 percent.<sup>153</sup>

The Chinese authorities used a balance of stick (Strike Hard) and carrot (Great Western Development) in Xinjiang to suppress the Uyghur insurgency as well as to

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 233-235.

<sup>151</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Devastating Blows,” 16.

<sup>152</sup> David Bachman, “Making Xinjiang Safe for the Han? Contradiction and Ironies of Chinese Government in China’s Northwest,” in *Governing China’s Multiethnic Frontiers*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2005), 158-159.

<sup>153</sup> Weimer, 174-175.

increase economic growth.<sup>154</sup> By 2000, the ruthless and unprecedented response by the Chinese against the Uyghur insurgency limited it to literature with no visible, credible, and organized roots inside Xinjiang.

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<sup>154</sup> Mosle, 23.

## CHAPTER 5

### CHINESE COIN STRATEGY POST-9/11 TO 2014

The post-9/11 era commenced with the Chinese COIN strategy in a position of definite advantage over the Uyghur insurgency.<sup>155</sup> The PRC systematically denied the Uyghurs of all attributes of a successful insurgency in Xinjiang, by targeting the religious, ethnic, social and the economic contours.<sup>156</sup> The CCP campaign (COIN) was so successful at the domestic and the international level, that it controlled and thwarted the Uyghur population, which sought more autonomy and independence.<sup>157</sup> The Chinese government was quick to align with the U.S. led GWOT and supported the subsequent operations in Afghanistan.<sup>158</sup> The strategic opportunity seized in supporting the United States enabled the PRC to label the Uyghur separatism as the Uyghur Terrorism—a threat to the global peace and stability.<sup>159</sup> China not only capitalized on this opportunity to improve its relations with the United States, but also projected itself as the anti-terrorism player at the global level, thus shedding away the notion of supporting the revolutions.

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<sup>155</sup> The PRC government does not officially use the terms of insurgent, separatist, or secessionist for the Uyghurs. It describes them as terrorists. However, for academic purposes and notwithstanding the technical and political issues, this thesis will refer the Uyghurs as insurgents and the Chinese government as the counterinsurgent.

<sup>156</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Allied Joint Publication 3.4.4, *Allied Joint Doctrine for COIN* (Brussels: North Atlantic Treaty Organization Standardization Agency, February 4, 2011), 1-135.

<sup>157</sup> Brenda Bi Hui Ong, “Hard Love and Empty Promises: China’s Domestic Counterinsurgency in Xinjiang,” *Small Wars Journal* (June 18, 2012): 1-2, accessed April 10, 2015, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/topics/Uyghurs>.

<sup>158</sup> Khan, 1-2.

<sup>159</sup> Xu, Fletcher, and Bajoria.

The PRC following initiation of U.S. operations in Afghanistan focused its efforts on containment of the Uyghur problem using diplomatic, social, economic, and military tools.<sup>160</sup> The Chinese government considers the religion as the biggest threat to the integrity of the state, and adoption of brutal and intolerant religious policies in Xinjiang ties directly to this perception. The Strike Hard Campaign continually pursued with the religion based ideology and considered “separatism, terrorism and extremism” as one.<sup>161</sup>

The subsequent paragraphs of the thesis will evaluate the Chinese COIN strategy from 2001-2014. The discussion will focus on the important tenets of a successful COIN strategy including; objectives and political primacy, population support, relevance and legitimacy, intelligence driven operations, isolating insurgents from populace, international recognition to deny support to insurgents, economic activities and initiatives, and control over insurgent activities.

### Objectives and Primacy

The CCP has clearly laid political objectives for the COIN strategy in Xinjiang. The PRC terms the Uyghur insurgency as “terrorism, separatism and illegal religious activities.”<sup>162</sup> Xinjiang is strategically, economically, and politically vital for the economy of the PRC due to its linkages with the territorial sovereignty and integrity.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> David Wang, 7.

<sup>161</sup> Gladney, “Responses to Chinese Rule: Patterns of Cooperation and Opposition,” 376.

<sup>162</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Devastating Blows,” 66.

<sup>163</sup> Gladney, “Responses to Chinese Rule: Patterns of Cooperation and Opposition,” 376.

The secession of Xinjiang may set a precedent for the other movements in Inner Mongolia, Tibet and Taiwan, thus leading to disintegration of the Republic.<sup>164</sup> The nationalism and unity of the state have always been dominant factors in the CCP policies towards Xinjiang. Any challenge to that nationalism whether ethnic, religious, or cultural is considered as a direct threat to the sovereignty of the PRC.

The pursuit of the political objectives beyond the frontiers of the country is important for gaining recognition at an international level. The Chinese government has relentlessly pursued its political objectives through maintenance of diplomatic and bilateral relations with the regional countries. Following the disintegration of the USSR and the establishment of Shanghai Five (as discussed in the previous chapter), the Chinese government continued to strengthen its economic and bilateral initiatives with CARs. The Chinese interests in the CARs linked to the presence of approximately 258,000 Uyghurs in these states.<sup>165</sup> In 2001, China supported the inclusion of Uzbekistan in the SCO. The Chinese interests in supporting Uzbekistan, in addition to the economical and bilateral aspects, is linked to limiting the Uyghur support. In 2002, the charter of the SCO was signed which mandated the member states to, “jointly counteract terrorism separatism and extremism in all their manifestations.”<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Ong, 1-4.

<sup>165</sup> Dru C. Gladney, WRITENET Paper No. 15/1999, “China: Prospects for the Uighur People in the Chinese Nation-state History, Cultural Survival, and the Future” (Paper, United Nations High Commission for Refugees Center for Documentation and Research, Geneva, Switzerland, October 1, 1999), 2-5, accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a6c84.html>.

<sup>166</sup> Shanghai Cooperation Organization, “Charter of Shanghai Cooperation Organization,” May 7, 2009, accessed March 28, 2015, <http://www.secsco.org/EN123/show.asp?id=69>.

Apart from the Central Asian region, the Chinese government continuously maintains the diplomatic and economic relations with the Middle East. At present, China is one of the largest exporters of weapons to the Middle Eastern countries. China is also one of the largest oil importers from these countries, primarily Saudi Arabia. In addition, the Sino-Saudi relations have grown in the past and China mostly supports the Saudi stance on Middle Eastern issues.<sup>167</sup> The economic and diplomatic ties has facilitated the Chinese government in keeping the 1979 type Jihad support from Middle East away from Xinjiang.

### Population Support

In cognitive and practical domains, popular support is the most essential ingredient of a successful COIN strategy. The people, being the center of gravity are a key to success in defeating the insurgents. Thus, the COIN strategy starts with the people and the issues faced by them.<sup>168</sup> However, the story of Xinjiang and the CCP policies since 1949 is mixed in terms of seeking popular support. Despite massive economic, infrastructural, developmental, and educational initiatives, its Strike Hard type campaigns are counterproductive. The majority of the Uyghurs firmly believe that the CCP government is repressive and harmful to the Uyghur cultural and ethnic identity.<sup>169</sup> The CCP government has adopted fluctuating policies in Xinjiang since 1949. These policies

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<sup>167</sup> Gladney, WRITENET 15/1999, 13.

<sup>168</sup> COL Peter R. Mansoor, U.S. Army, and MAJ Mark S. Ulrich, U.S. Army, "Linking Doctrine to Action: A New COIN Center of Gravity Analysis," *Military Review* (September-October 2007): 46, accessed April 19, 2015, [http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview\\_20071031\\_art007.pdf](http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20071031_art007.pdf).

<sup>169</sup> Ong, 3.

are a mix of carrot and stick, never intended to gain populace support except for a limited period during 1980s.<sup>170</sup> Although, the renaming of Xinjiang as the Xinjiang Autonomous Region implied greater autonomy to the Uyghurs, in reality, the adopted system of autonomy favors the political dominance of the Han.<sup>171</sup> To offset the numerical advantage to the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, the massive influx of the Han immigrants is a permanent tenet of the government policy. Today, the Xinjiang population comprises two major ethnic groups—the Uyghur (45 percent) and the Han (41 percent). The impact of this aspect will be discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

The PRC government's policies enunciate that the power and representation in non-Han dominant regions is based on the ethnic proportion of the population. In reality, the non-Han ethnicities share less representation, and the least influence and power in the provincial government. The state purposefully avoids recognizing the Uyghurs as a major ethnic group in order to dilute their potential political strength.<sup>172</sup> The CCP secretaries in all counties, municipalities, and prefectures are Han with no representation from the non-Han ethnicities.<sup>173</sup>

The problems in Xinjiang are more from the unequal distribution of the resources and opportunities between various ethnicities. To exacerbate these problems, the extent of development in urban and rural areas of Xinjiang differs widely. The Han mostly

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<sup>170</sup> Rudelson and Jankowiak, 300-301.

<sup>171</sup> Clarke, "China's Internal Security Dilemma and the Great Western Development," 333-334.

<sup>172</sup> Clarke, "Ethnic Separatism in the PRC," 117.

<sup>173</sup> Nicholas Becquelin, "Staged Development in Xinjian," *The China Quarterly*, no. 178 (2004): 363-364.



reside in well-developed urban areas while the Uyghurs and other ethnicities mostly reside in less-developed rural areas. The average income of a Han employee in Xinjiang in different sectors is approximately 68 percent higher than the Uyghurs.<sup>174</sup> The Uyghurs are employed in the agriculture sector (84 percent), while the Hans are mostly employed in manufacturing and transportation, sales and service, and professional and technical sectors.

The Uyghur insurgency in Xinjiang continuously revolves around the demands for rights, autonomy, and legitimacy. Historically, the Uyghurs always hoped for the promises of a good future made by the CCP, making them believe that they could also benefit from the economic development in Xinjiang; however, the announced policies unfortunately were not implemented. The CCP has always been extremely apprehensive of the insurgency and separatism in Xinjiang. It considers any voice even for legitimate rights as an act of separatism or a threat to state. The excessive use of force against the Uyghurs has also been a driving force in creating a huge wedge between the PRC and the Uyghurs.<sup>175</sup> Furthermore, the CCP apprehensions in Xinjiang had made them believe in use of force as the first option.

Another antagonizing aspect of the Chinese COIN strategy in Xinjiang lies in the constitutional amendments enacted since 2001. On December 29, 2001, the PRC government issued the third amendment to the Criminal Law of the PRC. The amendment aimed to, “punish the crimes of terrorism, to safeguard the security of state

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<sup>174</sup> Anthony Howell and C. Cindy Fan, “Migration and Inequality in Xinjiang: A Survey of Han and Uyghur Migrants in Urumqi,” *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 52, no. 1 (2011): 133.

<sup>175</sup> Wayne, 81.

and of people's life and property, and maintain public order.”<sup>176</sup> The amendment defined any activity causing harm to state security, social stability, lives, and property as terrorism. The constitutional amendments provided law enforcement agencies with the legitimate powers to detain, punish, and execute any Uyghur on suspicion of being a terrorist or supporting terrorism. The clauses of the third amendment to the Criminal Law of the PRC are strict enough to deter the supporters, financiers, and sympathizers of the Uyghur insurgents.<sup>177</sup>

In 2011, the CCP government considered a constitutional provision to legalize enforced disappearances (or secret executions). However, after considerable opposition at the domestic and the international levels, the proposal was not added.<sup>178</sup> Yet, in view of the past constitutional amendments relating to the terrorism, the subject provision may be included in the future. This will afford more maneuvers to the PAP and other security agencies in combating the Uyghur insurgency, thus making the lives of the oppressed Uyghurs more miserable.

However, the CCP government has given the Uyghurs additional incentives as part of preferential policies for Xinjiang. The government permits the Uyghurs to have more than one child, which is not the case with Han.<sup>179</sup> The provincial and central

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<sup>176</sup> Congressional-Executive Commission of China, “Third Amendment to the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China,” last modified December 29, 2001, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://www.cecc.gov/resources/legal-provisions/third-amendment-to-the-criminal-law-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china>.

<sup>177</sup> Ong, 1-7.

<sup>178</sup> Phelim Kine, “Beijing’s Black Jails,” Human Rights Watch, March 15, 2015, accessed April 22, 2015, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/03/15/beijings-black-jails>.

<sup>179</sup> Bovingdon, “Autonomy in Xinjiang,” 36.

government adopts less strict policies for the Uyghurs seeking to get college admission for higher education, which otherwise is not afforded to the Han population.<sup>180</sup> The Uyghurs have better prospects of finding jobs in the government establishment, and these policies are leading to an increase in the middle class of the Uyghurs.<sup>181</sup> The government officials very frequently highlight these policies in public fora to attract the attention of other Uyghurs.

### Establishment of Legitimacy in Xinjiang

The successful COIN strategy calls for the establishment of legitimacy over the people and the area. Legitimacy is the popular acceptance of the government's right to govern<sup>182</sup>. The CCP through active military, economic, political, and social policies has been successful in dealing the Uyghur insurgency in Xinjiang. However, the extent of establishing legitimacy remains questionable. The Chinese COIN in Xinjiang seems a blend of military, social, and economic policies, but the use of military has been a predominant factor in trying to establish the legitimacy.

The Chinese authorities identified linguistic, ethnic, and social differences as problems areas in dealing with the separatist tendencies. The events of 9/11 germinated the idea amongst the CCP thinkers that the ethnic minority identity within the Chinese borders has connections to the separatist mindset, thus requiring the censoring of the

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<sup>180</sup> Barry Sautman, "Preferential Policies for Ethnic Minorities in China: the Case of Xinjiang," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 4, no. 1-2 (1998): 86-118, accessed March 29, 2015, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241716053\\_Preferential\\_policies\\_for\\_ethnic\\_minorities\\_in\\_China\\_The\\_case\\_of\\_Xinjiang](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241716053_Preferential_policies_for_ethnic_minorities_in_China_The_case_of_Xinjiang).

<sup>181</sup> Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," 37.

<sup>182</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Allied Joint Publication 3.4.4, 3-22.

Uyghur literature.<sup>183</sup> The strict language policies in Xinjiang are a tool for the provincial government to strengthen its legitimacy. The Uyghurs consider the language and religion as the binding forces to preserve their identity. However, the Chinese government considers the religion and language as barriers to the economic development and prosperity of the Uyghurs. In 2000, the Chinese government introduced “Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (competence test in Chinese language) for non-native speakers.<sup>184</sup> The CCP adopted policy of making the Mandarin (Chinese language) a must for higher-level modern education while leaving the literature subjects in the Uyghur language.<sup>185</sup> In addition, the mandatory language test and the system of education for the higher education leaves no option for the non-Han ethnicities than to learn Mandarin. The government also links the language proficiency with the job prospects, thus the Uyghurs are opting for the Han schools. Thus, the preferential policies of the Chinese government for the Uyghurs can be availed subject to the Mandarin language proficiency.

The provincial government also believes in establishing legitimacy through use of force. In Xinjiang, the heavy-handed military and police response even to minor level incidents has been a common practice. A large contingent of PLA, PAP, and XPCC remains always stationed in Xinjiang to respond to any situation. The PLA is responsible for guarding the frontiers while the PAP holds responsibility of internal security and law

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<sup>183</sup> Clarke, “China’s Internal Security Dilemma and the Great Western Development,” 333.

<sup>184</sup> Arienne M. Dwyer, “The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy and Political Discourse,” *East-West Center Washington, Policy Studies* 15 (2005): 33-34, accessed April 2, 2015, <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS015.pdf>.

<sup>185</sup> Bovingdon, “Heteronomy and its Discontents,” 146-147.

enforcement.<sup>186</sup> The PAP also undertakes the counter terrorism and COIN operations in mainland China apart from assisting the PLA during war.<sup>187</sup> The total strength of the PLA deployed for border duties in Xinjiang is approximately 28,000. The strength of the PAP is unclear, yet unconfirmed sources report presence of approximately 30,000-40,000 police personnel deployed across Xinjiang. The Han dominant XPCC is another semi-military entity with an approximate strength of 2.5 million (13.3 percent of Xinjiang population). The military and semi-military elements deployed in Xinjiang are utilized for keeping a strict surveillance over the insurgent activities. The covert intelligence, use of security cameras, unannounced police checkpoints, frequent raids, searches, and identity checks are a common practice in Xinjiang.

The Chinese government allocates a separate budget for defense and domestic security. During this decade, the defense budget has gradually increased to meet the domestic and international challenges. The expected defense budget will rise to \$130 billion with a substantial 10 percent increase as compared to last year.<sup>188</sup> However, the domestic security budget on policing across the country is separate from the defense budget. The Chinese government allocated approximately \$130 billion in 2014 for its

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<sup>186</sup> Taylor M. Fravel, “Security Borders: China’s Doctrine and Force Structure for Frontier Defense,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 4-5 (August-October 2007): 722-725.

<sup>187</sup> Ong, 4.

<sup>188</sup> Megha Rajagopalan, “China Defense Budget Rise to Defy Slowing Economy,” *Reuters*, March 4, 2015, accessed April 11, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/04/us-china-parliament-defence-idUSKBN0M009120150304>.

domestic security, which was at par with the national defense budget.<sup>189</sup> The major portion of the domestic security budget is spent on removal of the anti-state content from the internet and limiting the activities of dissidents, terrorists, and separatists.<sup>190</sup> In 2014, the provincial government has requested an increase of \$331,000 to the existing security budget to combat terrorism.<sup>191</sup>

Media control is an important tenet of the Chinese COIN strategy in Xinjiang. Besides physical security measures, the provincial government is capable of controlling the electronic and print media. After the incidents of July 2009, the provincial government stopped internet services for almost ten months.<sup>192</sup> The government also has the ability to shut down the internet, landline, and cell phone communications in any of the provinces, thus aiding in control of the information.<sup>193</sup> The government authorities censor the news, particularly the terrorism related information in order to deny media space to the insurgents.<sup>194</sup> In addition, with over 630 million internet users (approximately 45 percent) in China and over 10.1 million users (approximately 49

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<sup>189</sup> Micheal Martina, "China Withholds Full Domestic-Security Spending Figure," *Reuters*, March 4, 2014, accessed April 11, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/05/us-china-parliament-security-idUSBREA240B720140305>.

<sup>190</sup> Potter, 73.

<sup>191</sup> Cui Jia and Gao Bo, "Xinjiang Doubles Terror Fight Budget," *China Daily*, January 17, 2014, accessed April 22, 2015, [http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/2014-01/17/content\\_17240306.htm](http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/2014-01/17/content_17240306.htm).

<sup>192</sup> Oiwan Lam, "China: When the Network was Cut in Xinjiang," *Advocacy Global Voices*, October 13, 2010, accessed April 30, 2015, <https://advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/2010/10/13/china-when-network-was-cut-in-xinjiang/>.

<sup>193</sup> Potter, 73.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-74; Khan, 83.

percent) in Xinjiang, the spread of information is becoming easier and becoming a challenge to state control over media. Prior to the Beijing Olympics in 2008, the media was instructed not to report the terrorist activities to show normalcy in the country. However, twenty such incidents were reported in China during the same year.

### Intelligence Driven Operations

Xinjiang has seen limited active military operations unlike other conflict zones around the world riddled with insurgency. However, Xinjiang has witnessed large permanent presence of the PLA and PAP. Since 1955, Xinjiang is part of the Lanzhou Military Region.<sup>195</sup> In 1990, the CCP government shifted the responsibility of internal security from PLA to PAP.<sup>196</sup> The PAP reacts as first responders to any situation across Xinjiang, while PLA remains on call for emergency purpose.

The Chinese COIN strategy relies heavily on the intelligence driven operations. The PLA and PAP had been dealing with the Uyghur insurgency sternly not only through active operations but also through spy networks. Following the Strike Hard Campaign and 9/11 events, the PLA and PAP have strengthened their intelligence networks in the Uyghur community utilizing the coercive and monetary techniques.<sup>197</sup> Both the PLA and PAP have cultivated a network of informers across Xinjiang inside educational and religious institutions, social and ethnic circles, industries, and farmlands. The timely

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<sup>195</sup> James C. Mulvenon and Andrew N. D. Yang, “The People’s Liberation Army as Organization” (Report, National Security Research Division, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2002), 20.

<sup>196</sup> Wayne, 81-82.

<sup>197</sup> Tyler, 174-175.

receipt of the actionable intelligence by the informer network significantly reduced the terrorist activities from 2001-2007. The protracted COIN campaign by the CCP in Xinjiang has split the Uyghurs into three groups; armed insurgent, status-quo seekers, and those desiring integration.<sup>198</sup> The Chinese authorities whilst capitalizing on this split in the Uyghur mindset are able to get the timely and accurate information about the insurgents and their plans.<sup>199</sup>

At the regional and international level, the PLA very regularly conducts joint exercises and training sessions to gain from the experiences of the other countries<sup>200</sup>. Since 2001, the PLA has been actively conducting COIN exercises<sup>201</sup> with Pakistan, Russia, India, Indonesia, and CARs.<sup>202</sup> These military exercises have enabled the PLA to develop a better understanding of the COIN operations. The PLA benefited from these experiences particularly from the Pakistan Army in handling the situation in Xinjiang, and the same is evident through reduced insurgent and terrorist activities.

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<sup>198</sup> Van Wie Davis.

<sup>199</sup> Dillon, 99-101.

<sup>200</sup> Ministry of National Defense: The People's Republic of China, "Military Exercises," accessed March 19, 2015, <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/MilitaryExercises/index.htm>.

<sup>201</sup> Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, "White Papers of the Government," accessed March 27, 2015, <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/>.

<sup>202</sup> Details of the COIN exercises include: Pakistan (2004, 2006, 2010, 2011, 2012), Kazakhstan (2003, 2007, 2010), Tajikistan (2006, 2007, 2011), Russia (2005, 2007, 2009, 2010), India (2007, 2008), Mongolia (2009), Uzbekistan (2007, 2010), Kyrgyzstan (2007, 2010), Turkmenistan (2007, 2010), Thailand (2007, 2008, 2010), and Indonesia (2007, 2009).



### Isolating the Uyghur Insurgents

The CCP utilizes the SCO forum to convince the member states of the terrorism threats. The PRC government often portrays the linkages of the Uyghur insurgency to the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate in Central Asian, thus a threat to CARs.<sup>203</sup> The PRC maintains the Uyghur insurgents have linkages to global terrorism and may call for the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate in the Central Asian Region.

The Chinese government, to offset the secessionist pressures from the Uyghurs, relentlessly pursues Han migration to Xinjiang. Since 2000, the pattern of mandated migration has changed to voluntary migration, due to the economic concessions given by the central government to Xinjiang.<sup>204</sup> According to 2013 population statistics, the total population of Xinjiang is approximately 22.64 million.<sup>205</sup> The Uyghurs comprise approximately 45 percent (10.19 million); the Hans comprise approximately 41 percent (9.06 million); Kazakhs comprise approximately 7.1 percent (1.61 million); and other ethnicities comprising approximately 6.9 percent (1.56 million) of the total population. Since 2001, the ratio between the Uyghurs and the Han population has generally remained same as the patterns of the Han moving back to mainland China has also been a continuous activity.<sup>206</sup> At present, the Han control the major urban population centers

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<sup>203</sup> James Millward, "Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment," *East-West Center Policy Studies* 6 (2004): 31-32, accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS006.pdf>.

<sup>204</sup> Bovingdon, "Heteronomy and its Discontents," 127-128.

<sup>205</sup> National Bureau of Statistics of China, *China Statistical Yearbook-2014* (China: China Statistics Press, 2014), accessed April 2, 2015, <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2014/indexeh.htm>.

<sup>206</sup> Howell and Fan, 123.

limiting the Uyghur population to the rural areas. The control of urban areas allows the government to limit the activities of the Uyghur insurgents. The Han migration policies besides controlling the population centers has diminished the political influence of the Uyghurs.<sup>207</sup>

Strict religious control is a state policy to isolate the Uyghur insurgents from gaining population support. The CCP government, by virtue of these policies has developed control over the religious affairs in Xinjiang including appointment of Imams (prayer leader) in all Masajid, pre-approval of the Jumma Khutba (Friday prayer sermon), ban on construction of new Masajid and Madaris, and publication of religious books.<sup>208</sup> However, as part of the preferential policies, the CCP government now allows more Uyghurs to perform the Hajj (pilgrimage). Since 1980, the number of Uyghur pilgrims has increased by approximately 300 percent.<sup>209</sup>

The CCP purposefully declares all Uyghur social organizations as terrorists with linkages to the global terrorism and blatantly ignores the motives, objectives, and ambitions of these groups.<sup>210</sup> However, the U.S. Department of State only recognizes the ETIM as a terrorist organization due to its involvement in the attack on the U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz authorities initially arrested two Uyghurs accused of involvement in the murder of the chairperson of the Ittipak Uyghur Association in Bishkek. The Kyrgyz government handed over both individuals to China for trial. In

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<sup>207</sup> Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," 25-26.

<sup>208</sup> Bovingdon, "Heteronomy and its Discontents," 138.

<sup>209</sup> Gladney, WRITENET 15/1999, 19.

<sup>210</sup> Wayne, 44.

August 2002, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing declared both individuals members of the ETIM and confirmed their involvement in embassy bombings, whereas the initial charges by the Kyrgyz government were different.<sup>211</sup> The capture of twenty-two Uyghurs also influenced the decision as the United States considered ETIM as subsidiary of the AQ.

The CCP government in order to further isolate the Uyghur insurgents regularly appoints the Uyghur elite into the party hierarchy.<sup>212</sup> The decision seems odd given Han-Uyghur animosity in Xinjiang, but the recruited and co-opted Uyghurs cannot affect the policy and decision making process. Despite an announced and implemented system of representation in the party affairs, the Han still control the key departments and administrative aspects in Xinjiang. The system of provincial governance in Xinjiang facilitates the Han control.<sup>213</sup> The CCP officials at the local government level frequently call the Uyghur party members to announce the unpopular policies in order to blunt the criticism of unpopular Han rule in Xinjiang. The Uyghurs are under-represented in all forms of governance particularly with the large influx of the Han migrants, the CCP claims to be justified in Han predominance. The co-opted Uyghurs in the party rarely report such disparities due to the fear of persecution, trial, or execution.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> J. Todd Reed and Diana Raschke, *The ETIM: China's Islamic Militants and the Global Terrorist Threat* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, June 2010), 62-63.

<sup>212</sup> Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," 28.

<sup>213</sup> McMillan, 47-48.

<sup>214</sup> Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," 30.

### International Recognition and Support to the Chinese COIN Strategy

The international community is seemingly confused over the Xinjiang issue. It neither considers China a terrorism victim, and nor does it question the Chinese victimizing the Uyghurs.<sup>215</sup> Since 2001, the Uyghur insurgency has received extraordinary attention at the global level. The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and subsequent establishment of the U.S. military bases in CARs made the issue more pronounced in media and political discussions.<sup>216</sup> Since the PRC was quick to align itself with the GWOT, it linked the Uyghur insurgency to the global terrorism. China also capitalized on the opportunity to strengthen its policy of active opposition to the international terrorism while smoothing rough patch of bilateral relations with the United States.<sup>217</sup>

The United States added the ETIM to list of terrorist organizations. One of the major factors in declaring the ETIM as terrorist organization with linkages to the AQ was the capture of twenty-two Uyghurs in Afghanistan, later detained at Guantanamo Bay.<sup>218</sup> The investigation and interrogation of these Uyghurs highlighted a different story. Out of the detained Uyghurs, five of them were victims of the bounty hunters receiving \$5,000 per person; ten Uyghurs did receive the training from AQ and the Taliban, but were to

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<sup>215</sup> Van Wie Davis.

<sup>216</sup> Millward, “Violent Separatism in Xinjiang,” 10.

<sup>217</sup> Potter, 73-74; Khan, 77.

<sup>218</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Appendix C: Background Information on Other Terrorist Groups,” *Country Reports on Terrorism*, April 2007, 139-160, accessed March 29, 2015. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/31947.pdf>.

return to Xinjiang to fight against the Chinese, while the remaining seven had affiliations with AQ as hardcore fighters.<sup>219</sup> Later, from 2006-2011, the U.S. government released these Uyghurs as being no threat to U.S. national security. The CCP claims of alleged connections of the ETIM and AQ are questionable. Interestingly, despite the strategic Sino-U.S. cooperation on terrorism, the United States refused to hand over the released Uyghurs to Chinese authorities, and instead handed them over to other countries.<sup>220</sup>

Following the U.S. decision on ETIM, the CCP openly declared all Uyghurs organization, irrespective of being separatist or not, as terrorists. The intentional silence at the international level, particularly at the United Nations has further emboldened the CCP to adopt harsh policies.<sup>221</sup> By supporting the GWOT, the CCP not only emerged in global politics but also efficiently used this cover to pursue the preferred policies in Xinjiang. Prior to 2001, China was considered as a patron of liberation movements and a counterbalance to the United States—viewed as “head of the snake” by insurgent and terrorist organizations.<sup>222</sup> However, the CCP government adopted an open policy against the terrorists declaring them a global threat. Although this elevated the Chinese strategic ties with the United States and the rest of the world, it also caught the terrorists’ attention. The ISIS announcement of its allegiance to the Uyghurs with plans to support the insurgency against Communist Chinese has linkage to the change in the CCP policies.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Wayne, 252-253.

<sup>220</sup> Van Wie Davis.

<sup>221</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Devastating Blows,” 16-18.

<sup>222</sup> Potter, 71.

<sup>223</sup> Olesen.

At the regional level, the Chinese government has used its political and economic influence to muster support of the CARs against the Uyghur insurgency. The SCO forum with the Chinese economic dominance enabled the PRC in declaring the Uyghurs as “extremist, separatist and terrorists.”<sup>224</sup> As part of the SCO declaration, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan frequently apprehend suspected Uyghurs residing in these states, and later handing them over to the Chinese authorities for investigations.<sup>225</sup>

The PRC government in addition to the political and diplomatic initiatives had utilized economic assistance to gain support in Afghanistan as well. The Chinese interests in Afghanistan are beyond the security considerations in Xinjiang. Besides denying the Uyghur insurgents safe havens in relatively unstable Afghanistan, the Chinese government is investing in mining at Lugal and Bamiyan provinces of Afghanistan.<sup>226</sup> By virtue of this support, the Afghan government has an agreement with the Chinese authorities to repatriate any captured Uyghur fighters back to China.<sup>227</sup>

The PRC government has very strong bilateral and economic relations with the Middle East and particularly Saudi Arabia. The current annual trade between China and

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<sup>224</sup> Roberts, 233-234.

<sup>225</sup> Clarke, “China’s Internal Security Dilemma and the Great Western Development,” 337-338.

<sup>226</sup> Raffaello Pantucci, “China’s Afghan Dilemma,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 52, no. 4 (August–September 2010): 21-27, accessed April 9, 2015, <https://www.iiss.org/en/publications/survival/sections/2010-e7df/survival--global-politics-and-strategy-august-september-2010-3ec7/52-4-05-pantucci-aed7>.

<sup>227</sup> Bachman, 183-184.

the Arab world has increased from \$25.5 billion (2004) to \$240 billion (2014).<sup>228</sup> The PRC is also the largest arms exporter to the Middle East and supports the Saudi stance on regional issues.<sup>229</sup> Owing to these diplomatic and economic interests with China, the Arab world generally ignores the Xinjiang issue despite its internationalization in July 2009.

In order to muster international support and recognition, the PRC continually tries to paint its counterterrorism operations in Xinjiang as a “flank of the US led war on terror.”<sup>230</sup> And this has provided the Chinese with the justification for the human rights violations in Xinjiang.

#### Economic Activities and Initiatives

The projected economic policies of the CCP government in Xinjiang revolves around undertaking extensive economic prosperity and development projects to an extent where the autonomy or independence becomes less desired for the Uyghur populace.<sup>231</sup> Besides the military “Strike Hard Campaign,” the CCP government invests heavily in Xinjiang.<sup>232</sup> Since 2001, the government has pursued the GWD aimed at the economic expansion of the western region. However, the CCP government attaches an interesting

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<sup>228</sup> Muhammad Zulfikar Rakhmat, “China Makes Political Inroads in the Arab World,” *Middle East Eye*, June 6, 2014, accessed April 11, 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/china-makes-political-inroads-arab-world-288986568>.

<sup>229</sup> Gladney, WRITENET 15/1999, 13.

<sup>230</sup> Xu, Fletcher, and Bajoria,

<sup>231</sup> Ong, 7.

<sup>232</sup> Human Rights Watch, “China: Human Right Concerns in Xinjiang,” 1-8.

clause of preserving national unity and social stability with the Hans as leading agents of the development. While development of the western regions particularly Xinjiang may bring prosperity and stability, but the inter-ethnic tensions may still prevail courtesy Han focused governmental policies.<sup>233</sup>

The efficacy of the GWD program in relation to the rise of inter-ethnic frictions is a debatable issue. The state policy for the GWD program are such that it attracts the Han population from mainland China. For every state run program falling under the ambit of GWD, the CCP government endows the supervision responsibility to the ethnic Han. The central government invests more in Xinjiang in comparison to other provinces.<sup>234</sup> The central government in order to keep Xinjiang under control provides approximately 60 percent of the capital investment in Xinjiang in comparison to approximately 32 percent in other provinces.<sup>235</sup>

The economic initiatives in Xinjiang and CARs have changed the dynamics inside the province. The total GDP per capita of Xinjiang increased by 21 times, from \$274 (2000)<sup>236</sup> to \$5,951 (2014).<sup>237</sup> In addition, the GDP of Xinjiang has continuously increased by 10-12 percent since 2001. The GDP per capita comparison between Xinjiang, China and neighboring SCO member states is depicted in table 1:

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<sup>233</sup> Clarke, "Ethnic Separatism in the PRC," 126.

<sup>234</sup> Mosle, 23.

<sup>235</sup> Wiemer, 174-175.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Duetsche Bank Research, "Xinjiang: Basic Facts," April 2015, accessed April 22, 2015, [https://www.dbresearch.com/PROD/DBR\\_INTERNET\\_EN-PROD/PROD0000000000247542.pdf](https://www.dbresearch.com/PROD/DBR_INTERNET_EN-PROD/PROD0000000000247542.pdf).



Table 1. GDP Comparison between Xinjiang and Neighboring Countries

Countries/Regions	Approximate GDP Per Capita (\$)		Increase (ratio)
	2000-01	2013-14	
Xinjiang	274	5951	1 : 21.7
China	949.2	6807	1 : 7.2
Russia	1771.6	14611	1 : 8.2
Kazakhstan	1229	13611	1 : 11.1
Tajikistan	139.1	1036	1 : 7.4
Kyrgyzstan	279.6	1263	1 : 4.5

Source: The World Bank, “GDP Per Capita,” accessed April 22, 2015, [http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?order=wbapi\\_data\\_value\\_2004%20wbapi\\_data\\_value%20wbapi\\_data\\_value-last&sort=asc](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?order=wbapi_data_value_2004%20wbapi_data_value%20wbapi_data_value-last&sort=asc).

Despite the massive increase in the GDP per capita of Xinjiang, the Uyghurs are still economically disadvantaged. The overall GDP per capita of Xinjiang varies with the ethnic distribution of population in the province (figure 4). The Uyghur dominant areas of Hotan, Kashgar, Aksu, and Turpan have relatively less per capita GDP in comparison to Karamay, Urumchi, and Shihezi with the Han dominant population.

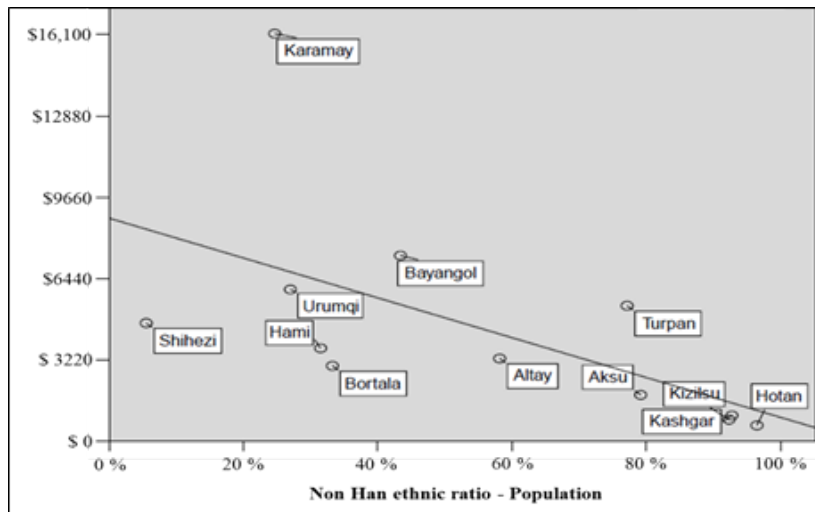


Figure 4. GDP per Capita in Relation to Non-Han Ethnic Population

Source: Yufan Hao and Weihua Liu, “Xinjiang: Increasing Pain in the Heart of China’s Borderland,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 21, no. 74 (March 2012): 215.

The enormous investments by the Chinese central government focuses on the agriculture, mining, and infrastructure development are designed to increase the job opportunities in Xinjiang. The overall agricultural production has increased in Xinjiang particularly with modern farming techniques. However, the average Uyghur farmer with less land is mostly reliant upon less modern techniques thus generates lower yields.<sup>238</sup> The rise in agricultural economy has improved the overall production in Xinjiang but the Uyghur earnings have not changed much. In the oil production center, the Han predominantly control the industry with very limited Uyghur representation. The Uyghur diaspora often raises questions about the massive channeling of natural resources from

<sup>238</sup> Ong, 7.

Xinjiang to mainland China. The provincial government primarily focuses on the areas with the Han majority i.e. eastern and central parts of Xinjiang.<sup>239</sup>

The Uyghurs of Xinjiang in comparison to the Han are poor, rural based, and less educated with reduced chances of higher education and have fewer job prospects.<sup>240</sup> Despite a rise in GDP and improvement in infrastructure, the sense of deprivation amongst the Uyghurs is on the rise as they consider the Han as main recipients of the economic growth. The private sector does not offer preferential policies for the Uyghurs and no fixed quota exists for the Uyghurs in oil industry, on agricultural farms, in private business, and in enterprises. The inequality in the job opportunities available to the Han and the Uyghur is a continuous source of an increased sense of deprivation amongst the Uyghurs.<sup>241</sup>

#### Control over Insurgent Activities

The policies adopted in the late 1990s facilitated the Chinese government in significantly controlling the insurgent activities. Prior to 9/11, the provincial government declared the Uyghur insurgency as an act of separatism by a handful of separatists underlining the peace and stability in Xinjiang. The provincial government even went on to declare that Xinjiang is a place where chances of terrorism and violence are remote.<sup>242</sup> However post-9/11, the Chinese assertion abruptly changed with linking the Uyghurs to

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<sup>239</sup> Howell and Fan, 132-134.

<sup>240</sup> Bovington, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," 36-37.

<sup>241</sup> Clarke, "China's Internal Security Dilemma and the Great Western Development," 336-338.

<sup>242</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Devastating Blows," 14-16.

the perpetrators of the global terrorism.<sup>243</sup> By the end of 2001, PRC had declared itself as one of the victims of global terrorism with a mandate from the international community to fight against the Uyghur insurgents. The CCP labelled the Uyghurs as the *East Turkestan Terrorist Forces* and did not account for the peaceful ones. The PRC also issued numerous documents about the activities conducted by the *Uyghur terrorists*. In January 2002, the Information Office of the People Republic of China State Council published a report providing details of the terrorist activities conducted by the Uyghurs in Xinjiang.<sup>244</sup> The document asserted that the Uyghur insurgents were responsible for 162 deaths and 440 injured in over 200 incidents. Although, numerous controversies about the accuracy and timings of the report existed, the document was able to attract the attention at the international level and thereby strengthening the Chinese stance.

From 2001-2007, no major incident, involving the Uyghur insurgents was reported; however, numerous incidents of bomb blasts and explosions occurred in mainland China. The researchers are split on whether the Chinese COIN was successful from 2001-2007 in preventing the terrorists acts, or the incidents were not intentionally made public. Figure 5 depicts the Uyghur insurgent acts since 9/11:

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<sup>243</sup> Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations, "Terrorist Activities Perpetrated by 'Eastern Turkestan' Organizations and Their Links with Osama bin Laden and the Taliban," November 21, 2001, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://www.china-un.org/eng/zt/fk/t28937.htm>.

<sup>244</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, State Council Information Office, "East Turkestan' Terrorist Forces Cannot Get Away with Impunity," January 21, 2002, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://www.china-un.ch/eng/23949.html>.

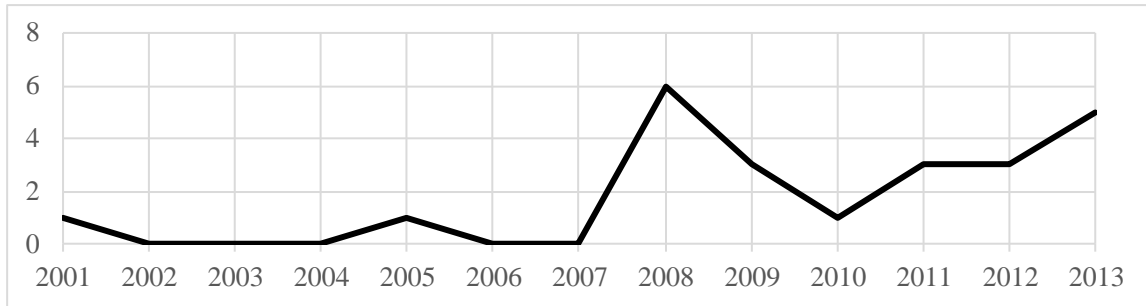


Figure 5. Insurgent Related Activities Reported, September 2001-December 2013

*Source:* Global Terrorism Database, accessed May 2, 2015, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/>; RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, accessed May 2, 2015, [http://smapp.rand.org/rwtid/search\\_form.php](http://smapp.rand.org/rwtid/search_form.php).

In addition to the compiled data in Figure 1, the number of terrorist related activities in China and Xinjiang are far less than the terrorist activities in the neighboring and other insurgency-ridden countries. Table 2 depicts the comparison of the insurgent/terrorist activities in Xinjiang and other regions.

Table 2. Terrorism Related Activities Reported in SCO and Other Countries, 2001-2013

Country	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Xinjiang	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	6	3	1	3	3	5
China	13	2	3	2	1	1	0	20	7	3	4	4	12
CARs	8	2	1	5	3	2	1	1	3	2	5	9	4
Russia	140	90	80	45	60	55	50	170	150	250	190	150	145
Afghanistan	-	10	10	90	170	290	350	410	500	530	410	1450	1420
Iraq	-	-	80	310	620	850	1015	1110	1130	1180	1290	1420	2850
Syria	-	-	-	3	-	3	-	5	-	-	50	178	275
Yemen	-	-	5	3	3	-	4	20	22	100	110	315	425
Nigeria	-	5	10	5	10	35	70	80	45	60	180	620	340

Source: Global Terrorism Database, accessed May 2, 2015, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/>; RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, accessed May 2, 2015, [http://smapp.rand.org/rwtid/search\\_form.php](http://smapp.rand.org/rwtid/search_form.php). The information has been obtained by applying time and region parameters from the Global Terrorism Database and RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents.

Interestingly, during the same period (2001-2013), the number of terrorist activities in the developed and emerging economies across the world was significantly higher than Xinjiang. The reported number of twenty-three incidents was less than the United States (236), United Kingdom (80), France (74), Germany (34), South Africa (28), and India (4,775).<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Global Terrorism Database, accessed May 2, 2015, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/>; RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, accessed May 2, 2015, [http://smapp.rand.org/rwtid/search\\_form.php](http://smapp.rand.org/rwtid/search_form.php).

## CHAPTER 6

### UYGHUR INSURGENCY POST-9/11 TO 2014

In 2001, the Uyghur insurgency was at its lowest levels with insignificant domestic, regional, and international support. The Uyghurs faced continued Chinese persecution economically, socially, religiously and politically.<sup>246</sup> In the initial years after 9/11, the Uyghur insurgents lost support at the regional and international level due to their involvement with terrorist organizations. The commencement of the U.S. operations in Afghanistan also kept Xinjiang away from the world's attention. Although, the capture of twenty-two Uyghurs did highlight the Xinjiang problem, the Uyghur insurgency was at a definite disadvantage in dealing with the Chinese COIN strategy.<sup>247</sup>

By 2001, the Uyghur insurgency did not possess any of the attributes of a successful insurgency.<sup>248</sup> The Uyghurs had very limited and non-influential leadership at the domestic and the international levels. However, the Uyghurs did find a new source of motivation and nationalism in religion.<sup>249</sup> The decades of Chinese protracted COIN in Xinjiang had significantly affected the desire for independence and directed the attention of a common Uyghur to economic prosperity and wellbeing.<sup>250</sup> The successful Chinese initiatives at the regional and international level further eliminated any chances of

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<sup>246</sup> Shichor, 120-122.

<sup>247</sup> Gladney, "Responses to Chinese Rule: Patterns of Cooperation and Opposition," 376.

<sup>248</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Allied Joint Publication 3.4.4, 3-5.

<sup>249</sup> LaRonde, 63.

<sup>250</sup> Ong, 1-2.

external support—an essential ingredient for a successful insurgency. Further, the strategic alignment with the United States on GWOT enabled the PRC to label the Uyghur separatism as the Uyghur terrorism with linkages to the global terrorism.<sup>251</sup>

The subsequent sections evaluate the Uyghur insurgency from 2001-2014. In the process, the thesis will compare the dynamics of a successful insurgency with the prevalent situation in Xinjiang including; cause and ideology, leadership, organization, political and insurgent representation, the armed struggle—insurgents to terrorists, recognition and support, and external support.<sup>252</sup> Towards the end, the thesis highlights the Uyghur insurgent activities in Xinjiang from 2001-2014 to ascertain the extent of unrest.

#### The Cause: Religion, Culture, Language, or Sense of Deprivation?

Every society in the world binds around its religious, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic contours, and the Uyghurs are no exception. The Uyghurs mostly speak a Turkic language and practice the Sunni Islamic school of religious thought similar to the CARs. There is a small percentage of the Persian speaking Tajik people residing in Xinjiang, who practice the Shia school of thought.<sup>253</sup> Historically, within the Uyghurs and other Xinjiang ethnicities, there have been religious, territorial, linguistic, and political differences. The clashes between the Uyghurs in Xinjiang on religious and

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<sup>251</sup> Khan, 1-2.

<sup>252</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Allied Joint Publication 3.4.4, 3-5.

<sup>253</sup> Hao and Liu, 211.



political issues is also an indicator of the existing divisions and splits.<sup>254</sup> These reasons have been a major factor in limiting the Uyghurs and other non-Han ethnicities from uniting for a common cause in Xinjiang.<sup>255</sup> Some of the scholars term the Uyghur insurgency as religious terrorism as commonly practiced today, where every terrorist action is attributed to Islam. However, others while discarding the religious factor term the political and social frustrations among the Uyghurs as the major reason for the unrest.<sup>256</sup> In reality, the situation in Xinjiang has been a mix of both.

The years of the protracted Chinese COIN has split the Uyghur population into three distinct divisions i.e. armed insurgents, status-quo pundits, and integration seekers.<sup>257</sup> This division in the population is slowly diminishing the ability of the Uyghurs to rally around Islam or any political cause. However, the armed insurgents by virtue of the linkages with the other insurgent organizations continuously seek inspiration to rally around a religious source of motivation.

Certain scholars assert the Uyghur insurgency is a religious cause and the CCP authorities have been particularly very apprehensive about the religious affairs in Xinjiang. The purging of unregistered Ulema (Muslim religious scholars), a ban on the religious education in unregistered Madaris, a ban on construction of new Masajid and Madaris and a prohibition on the sale of any religious material has incited anger among

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<sup>254</sup> Gladney, “Chinese Program of Development and Control,” 110.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>256</sup> Hao and Liu, 214.

<sup>257</sup> Van Wie Davis.

the Uyghurs.<sup>258</sup> However, the fear of persecution has kept the Uyghurs from supporting or uniting under a religious cause. The non-existence of the formal religious or political opposition by the Uyghurs against the PRC rule in Xinjiang limits the rise of the insurgency.<sup>259</sup>

By late 1990s, the CCP policies in Xinjiang made most of the insurgent Uyghurs flee to Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, or Uzbekistan.<sup>260</sup> These insurgent elements developed ties with AQ and other such organizations under a religious umbrella. The state control of the religious practices in Xinjiang is not a motivating force for a common Uyghur to support the armed rebellion, but is merely a valid grievance.<sup>261</sup>

In Xinjiang, the common peaceful Uyghurs have been the victim of the aftermath of any insurgent action. The years of continued oppression and sufferings have made the Uyghurs tired of the both the insurgents and counterinsurgents.<sup>262</sup> An average Uyghur, in Xinjiang today, feels insecure in their support of insurgent activity due to the repercussions and thus prefers the path of the economic prosperity. The religion may be amongst the top causes and reasons of the prevalent Uyghur grievances, but not the only and prime factor in motivating for the insurgency. The AQ attempted to utilize the religious platform to motivate the Uyghurs to wage war Jihad against the Chinese

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<sup>258</sup> David Wang, 7-8.

<sup>259</sup> LaRonde, 67.

<sup>260</sup> Potter, 73-74.

<sup>261</sup> Clarke, "Ethnic Separatism in the PRC," 115-116.

<sup>262</sup> David Wang, 10-12.

authorities.<sup>263</sup> However, these calls have not made any significant impact similar to the Afghan Jihad, except few sporadic insurgent incidents across Xinjiang.<sup>264</sup>

### Leadership and Organizational Crises

Since 1949, the Uyghur insurgency has been a victim of its leadership and organizational crises. The Uyghurs had no unanimously agreed upon agenda, thus splitting them between the insurgent and political organizations.<sup>265</sup> While some of the Uyghurs demand independence, the others are content with maintaining a cultural distinction. Some of the educated and employed are even comfortable with the integration into the Chinese system.<sup>266</sup> The Uyghurs are thus neither truly represented by the insurgent organizations, nor by the political organizations.

The suspicious plane crash killing the ETR leadership seriously affected the Uyghur issue.<sup>267</sup> The systematic elimination of the Uyghur leadership in late 1990s also had similar effects and by 2001, three of the most prominent Uyghur community leaders died under mysterious circumstances.<sup>268</sup> The Chinese authorities, in order to create a wedge between the insurgents and the peaceful Uyghurs attributed these killings to the Uyghur insurgents. However, the motives of the Uyghur insurgents killing their own

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<sup>263</sup> Zambelis.

<sup>264</sup> The details of ETIM and TIP related terrorism activities from 2001-2014 are mentioned at the end of this chapter.

<sup>265</sup> Van Wie Davis.

<sup>266</sup> Xu, Fletcher, and Bajoria.

<sup>267</sup> Millward and Nabijan, 86.

<sup>268</sup> Millward, “Violent Separatism in Xinjiang,” ix.

political elite remained unascertained. The Uyghur diaspora also remained a victim of the organizational crises due to divergent opinions among various organizations abroad. The Uyghur diaspora failed in the past to decide on tactics, objectives, and leadership, thus weakening the cause.<sup>269</sup> By 2001, numerous Uyghur organizations existed across the world with no interconnectivity and no common agenda.

### The Political Representation

The events of 9/11 and subsequent branding of the Uyghurs as terrorists by the Chinese government weakened the cause. The realization of disunity amongst the Uyghur diaspora led to the convening of numerous conferences and discussions to reunite all organizations to amicably project the Uyghur cause. In April 2004, a series of such conferences resulted in establishment of the World Uyghur Council (WUC) at Munich (Germany). The first General Assembly of the Conference elected Erkin Alptekin (son of Isa Alptekin, the first General Secretary of the first ETR 1933-1934) as the first President of the WUC.<sup>270</sup>

In 2005, Rabiya Kader emerged as the new leader of the Uyghur diaspora. Kader initially could not muster the Uyghur recognition primarily due to her past affiliation with the CCP as a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee. Following the incidents of the late 1990s in Xinjiang, the CCP authorities arrested Kader

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<sup>269</sup> Tyler, 233-235.

<sup>270</sup> World Uyghur Congress, "Introducing the World Uyghur Congress," last modified October 8, 2014, accessed April 25, 2015, <http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/?cat=149>.

on charges of communicating classified information to foreign agencies.<sup>271</sup> Amid intense international pressure, she was released in 2005. During the second General Assembly session of the WUC, Rabiya Kader emerged as the newly elected the president of the council and currently holds the position.<sup>272</sup>

The WUC is democratic organization with its leadership popularly elected by the participants from the Uyghur diaspora across the world. The council aims at “promoting democracy, human rights and freedom for the Uyghur people and use peaceful, nonviolent, and democratic means to determine their political future.”<sup>273</sup> The council has held four General Assembly sessions since its establishment i.e. April 2004 (Munich, Germany), November 2006 (Munich, Germany), May 2009 (Washington, DC), and May 2012 (Tokyo, Japan).

The WUC headquarters are in Munich, Germany with regional offices all across the globe. The council has proved to be an effective platform for the other Uyghur diaspora organization across the world. At present, twenty-eight Uyghur diaspora organizations operative in sixteen countries affiliate to the WUC.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Dillon, 82-83.

<sup>272</sup> World Uyghur Congress, “The WUC President,” last modified October 8, 2014, accessed April 25, 2015, <http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/?cat=153>.

<sup>273</sup> World Uyghur Congress, “Mission Statement,” last modified October 8, 2014, accessed April 25, 2015, <http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/?cat=150>.

<sup>274</sup> World Uyghur Congress, “Introducing the World Uyghur Congress.”

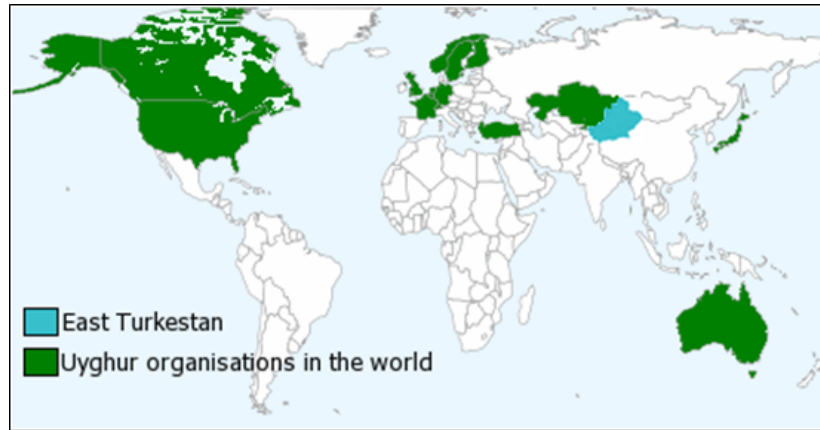


Figure 6. Affiliate Organization of the WUC

*Source:* World Uyghur Congress, “Affiliate Organization,” accessed April 25, 2015, <http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/?cat=425>.

The WUC clearly defines its objectives by aiming at the peaceful settlement of the East Turkestan issue through dialogue and negotiation. The organization repudiates the armed struggle and believes in a peaceful settlement. The organization has never claimed any affiliation or association with the Uyghur insurgent organizations. The WUC never mentions Xinjiang and uses East Turkestan in its conferences, memorandums, press releases, and statements. The council also organizes seminar and discussions on the problems being faced by the Uyghurs and thus is proving to an effective organization to project the Uyghur cause. The organization even uses the East Turkestan flag and emblem unanimously approved by all Uyghur diaspora organizations.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> World Uyghur Congress, “National Flag and Emblem,” last modified October 8, 2014, accessed April 25, 2015, <http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/?cat=143>.

### The Insurgent Representation

Besides the political organizations, numerous Uyghur insurgent organizations also focus on the independence of Xinjiang or East Turkestan. Interestingly, all Uyghur insurgent organizations like these political organizations also use East Turkestan and have a flag similar to that of the WUC.<sup>276</sup> By 2001, four major Uyghur insurgent organizations existed with connections to the insurgent activities in Xinjiang. These groups include ETIM, East Turkestan Liberation Organization (ETLO), United Revolutionary Front of East Turkistan, and Uyghur Liberation Organization.<sup>277</sup>

The ETIM tops the list as the major Uyghur insurgent group. The aims and objectives of ETIM completely differ from the WUC, where the former believes in peaceful resolution while the latter opts for the armed insurrection. Like the WUC, the ETIM cadres mostly comprises of the diaspora Uyghurs. The ETIM aims at “liberating the Uyghurs by defeating the Chinese invaders, and bringing economic, religious and social freedom to East Turkestan.”<sup>278</sup> However, a few scholars assert the ETIM’s ambitions are beyond Xinjiang and aim at the independence of East Turkestan comprising parts of Turkey, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.<sup>279</sup> However, this assertion is in contrast to

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<sup>276</sup> East Turkestan Information Center, “Who are the Uyghurs.”

<sup>277</sup> Millward, “Violent Separatism in Xinjiang,” 23-26.

<sup>278</sup> Radio Free Asia, “Uyghur Separatist Denies Links to Taliban, Al-Qaeda,” January 27, 2002, accessed April 22, 2015, <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/politics/85871-20020127.html>.

<sup>279</sup> Xu, Fletcher, and Bajoria.

the claims of the ETIM leadership made public in 2002.<sup>280</sup> Few scholars believe that the establishment of the ETIM and its armed insurrection is a product of the ‘Strike Hard Campaign’ in Xinjiang particularly after the Barren incident. The oppressive Chinese policies and imprisonment of large numbers of Uyghurs, designed to reduce violence in Xinjiang, strengthened the roots and ideology of the ETIM and other such insurgent groups in the Chinese prisons.<sup>281</sup>

The history of the ETIM began in the 1940s. However, it resurfaced as an insurgent organization in 1993 under the leadership of Hassan Mehsum. However, the organization did not claim any responsibility for actions in Xinjiang. The CCP government also did not highlight the involvement of the ETIM in insurgent related activities. Few scholars assume that it was part of the state policy not to highlight such incidents or organizations, which to some extent continues today.<sup>282</sup> In 2002, the U.S. Department of State declared the ETIM a terrorist organization amid Chinese demands and involvement in bombings of the U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>283</sup> Certain reports even suggest that before 2002, the United States had no confirmed evidence of ETIM involvement in any of the terrorist activities.<sup>284</sup> The declaration of ETIM as a terrorist organization was thus a political maneuver to gain Chinese support.

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<sup>280</sup> Radio Free Asia, “Uyghur Separatist Denies Links to Taliban, Al-Qaeda.”

<sup>281</sup> Gladney, “Responses to Chinese Rule: Patterns of Cooperation and Opposition,” 375-377.

<sup>282</sup> Potter, 83.

<sup>283</sup> Wayne, 44.

<sup>284</sup> Roberts, 1-4.



Following the declaration, the PRC government was quick to publish a report accusing the ETIM of involvement in killing of 162 people.<sup>285</sup> As mentioned earlier, this was one of the major turning points in the Chinese COIN strategy as separatists of the past were now the declared terrorists.

Due to close ethnic and cultural similarities, the ETIM had close ties with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which is another terrorist organization operating in Central Asia and Afghanistan.<sup>286</sup> In 2003, the Pakistan Army killed Hassan Mehusm during an operation along the Pak-Afghan border. The ETIM after his death apparently ceased to exist from 2002-2008, as it did not claim any terrorist activity in Xinjiang, yet it was active in Afghanistan against the U.S. forces as an ally to AQ and Taliban.

Abdul Haq Turkestani took over as the new leader of the ETIM. Abdul Haq had active links with AQ and was responsible for recruitment and training camps in Afghanistan. From 2001-2008, minor level sporadic incidents continued in Xinjiang, yet the ETIM did not claim responsibility for any minor or major level incident. However, the state controlled media often accused the organization of its involvement in bombings and assassinations. The organization is not the singular representative of the Uyghur sentiments and the existence of numerous political organizations seeking peaceful settlement manifests this fact.

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<sup>285</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, State Council Information Office, "East Turkestan' Terrorist Forces Cannot Get Away with Impunity."

<sup>286</sup> Gaye Christoffersen, "Islam and Ethnic Minorities in Central Asia: The Uyghurs," in *Islam, Oil and Geopolitics: Central Asia After September 11*, ed. Elizabeth Van Wie Davis and Rouben Azizian (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 45-59.

The ETLO is another Uyghur insurgent organization accused of violent incidents across Xinjiang and China. Since 2001, the ETLO has remained dormant and more inclined towards the peaceful resolution of the issue. The ETLO aims at achieving “independence for East Turkestan by peaceful means, however, maintains a military wing as well.”<sup>287</sup> The organization reportedly maintained close links with the IMU and Chechen fighters; however, the ETLO leadership denies any such association.<sup>288</sup> The ETLO is relatively moderate in comparison to the ETIM and has very few links to the terrorist activities. The United States refused to include the ETLO as a terrorist organization in 2003 due to lack of substantiating information.<sup>289</sup>

The United Revolutionary Front of East Turkistan is another insurgent organization founded in the mid-1970s with Soviet assistance. However, the organization’s role in the Uyghur insurgency is limited to press releases with very limited involvement in the insurgent activities. The Uyghur Liberation Organization is another insurgent group with very limited influence and role in the Uyghur insurgency. It was established in the mid-1990s, but later merged with the United Revolutionary Front of East Turkistan in 2001. The group is also associated to limited terrorist activities in Xinjiang and Kyrgyzstan.

Chinese sources claim a large number of the Uyghur insurgent organizations operating in Xinjiang. However, the available literature suggests that most of these

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<sup>287</sup> Millward, “Violent Separatism in Xinjiang,” 24.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>289</sup> Potter, 89.

organizations are small groups across Xinjiang and not insurgent or terrorist organizations.<sup>290</sup>

### The Armed Struggle: Insurgents to Terrorists

The latest violent stage of the Uyghur insurgency commenced in 2007-2008 with various insurgent organizations issuing threats in view of the upcoming Beijing Olympics. In 2008, another insurgent group, the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) emerged and announced itself as successor of the ETIM.<sup>291</sup> Few analysts even assert the ETIM refers to itself as TIP or East Turkestan Islamic Party (ETIP).<sup>292</sup> Following the emergence of TIP, Abdul Haq Turkestani (TIP leader) called for violence not only inside China but also against the Chinese interests around the world.

Abdul Haq was part of the ETIM or ETIP in 2003 and took over as the leader after the death of Hassan Mehsum (the founder of the ETIM).<sup>293</sup> He was also a member of the executive council of the AQ in Afghanistan and was involved in the planning process of the organization. Before his death, he attended an important meeting involving the senior Taliban and AQ commanders. During the meeting, the attendees discussed the impact of the impending operations by Pakistan Army in South Waziristan Agency (part

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<sup>290</sup> Potter, 74-76.

<sup>291</sup> Kirk H. Sowell, "Promoting Jihad against China: The Turkestani Islamic Party in Arabic Media" (An Independent Report Commissioned by Sky News, UK, August 1, 2010), 3-4, , accessed April 22, 2015, <http://www.ahlu-sunnah.com/attachment.php?attachmentid=2319&d=1291189127>.

<sup>292</sup> Potter, 72.

<sup>293</sup> United States Department of Treasury, Press Center, "Treasury Targets Leader of Group Tied to Al Qaida," April 20, 2009, Accessed May 3, 2015, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg92.aspx>.

of Federally Administered Tribal Areas along Pakistan-Afghan international border).<sup>294</sup>

During the meeting, Abu Yahya (leader of AQIM) who showed allegiance to the Uyghurs was also present.<sup>295</sup>

Under Abdul Haq, the TIP also threatened to attack the Beijing Olympics through a video message.<sup>296</sup> According to the Intelligence Center Virginia, the video showed a man with an assault rifle identifying himself as Abdullah Mansour saying, “We, members of the Turkestan Islamic Party, have declared war against China. We oppose China’s occupation of our homeland of East Turkestan, which is a part of the Islamic world.”<sup>297</sup>

Abdullah Mansour later emerged as TIP leader in 2012. Apart from threatening the Beijing Olympics, the TIP claimed responsibility for other such insurgent related activities conducted since 2008. At present, the TIP (ETIM or ETIP) is the most active and dominant insurgent group in Xinjiang and has strong ties with the AQ. Ever since the emergence of the TIP in 2008, the extent of violence, lethality, and precision in the Uyghur insurgency has increased. The insurgency has advanced to the complex and coordinated attacks involving sporadic firing, bomb blasts, and stabbings.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Potter, 75-76.

<sup>295</sup> Zambelis.

<sup>296</sup> Thomas Joscelyn, “The Uighurs, in their Own Words,” *Long War Journal* (April 2009), accessed May 4, 2015, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/04/the\\_uighurs\\_in\\_their.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/04/the_uighurs_in_their.php).

<sup>297</sup> Edward Wong, “Group Says Video Warns of Olympic Attack,” *New York Times*, August 7, 2008, accessed April 13, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/08/sports/olympics/08china.html?\\_r=2&](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/08/sports/olympics/08china.html?_r=2&).

<sup>298</sup> The details of the TIP or ETIM linked insurgent activities are at the end of this chapter.

In February 2010, Abdul Shakoor Turkestani took over as the TIP leader after the death of Abdul Haq in a U.S. drone attack along Pakistan-Afghanistan border. In April 2011, Abdul Shakoor, AQ appointed him as the commander in the region in addition to his duties as TIP leader.<sup>299</sup> However, Abdul Shakoor was killed in a drone attack on August 24, 2012. Abdullah Mansour was appointed as new TIP leader and continues to remain in control.

The TIP continues its insurgent activities in Xinjiang and in the last few years, the intensity of the violence has increased. By virtue of its close affiliation, the organization and hierarchy of the TIP is similar to AQ. At present, the organization is a merger of ETIM, ETIP, the East Turkestan Islamic Party of Allah, and the East Turkestan National Revolution Association.<sup>300</sup>

In addition, the *Go West* policy of the Chinese government has led to revival of the communication between the old time insurgents. However, there is little information about return of the Uyghur insurgents from Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Chechnya back to Xinjiang.<sup>301</sup> Yet, the return of the Uyghurs insurgents to Xinjiang is dependent upon the future situation and stability in Afghanistan particularly a complete drawdown of the U.S. forces.

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<sup>299</sup> Bill Roggio, "Al Qaeda Appoints New Leader of Forces in Pakistan's Tribal Areas," *Long War Journal* (May 9, 2011), accessed May 4, 2015, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/05/al\\_qaeda\\_appoints\\_ne\\_2.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/05/al_qaeda_appoints_ne_2.php).

<sup>300</sup> Peng Kuang, "Beijing wants Chinese Gitmo Detainees," *China Daily*, December 24, 2008, accessed April 30, 2015, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-12/24/content\\_7334470.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-12/24/content_7334470.htm).

<sup>301</sup> Potter, 75-76.

### Recognition and Support: Domestic and International

The Soviets were the staunch supporters of the Uyghurs in the twentieth century. However, as mentioned earlier, the collapse of the USSR in 1989 eliminated all hopes of a Russian supported insurgency in Xinjiang. The Uyghurs did hope for support from the newly established CAR, but the early diplomatic and economic initiatives by the PRC also denied the much-desired support.

By 2001, the Uyghur insurgents through AQ's support had established training camps in Afghanistan.<sup>302</sup> Nevertheless, the Taliban government had banned the ETIM members from fighting against China using Afghan territory. AQ had the policy to train and use the Uyghur fighters against the Chinese government in Xinjiang. However, post-9/11, the Taliban government had forbidden AQ in order to seek friendly relations with China to counter the U.S. threat.<sup>303</sup>

Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef (the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan before 9/11) asserts that Osama bin Laden followed the Taliban policy of non-intervention in China; however, he did not follow this policy in case of the United States.<sup>304</sup> The Uyghurs, despite presence in the Taliban cadres, did not enjoy support for Xinjiang primarily due to the above-mentioned political interests of the Taliban government. It is evident that the Taliban sought support from China and ignored the information about the Chinese

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<sup>302</sup> Brain Fishman, "Al-Qaeda and the Rise of China: Jihadi Geopolitics in a Post-Hegemonic World," *The Washington Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 48, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://csis.org/files/publication/twq11summerfishman.pdf>.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>304</sup> Abdul Salam Zaeef, *My Life with Taliban*, ed. Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 135-136.

oppression in Xinjiang. Bin Laden declared that the Central Intelligence Agency, with a view to incite conflict between China and Muslims, sponsored the bombings inside China.<sup>305</sup>

Post-9/11, the Taliban government was heavily targeted during the U.S.-led operations in Afghanistan. Any linkages with the ETIM or Uyghur insurgency during this period could not be ascertained. The ETIM had linkages with the Taliban yet it had no proven linkages with AQ by 2002. This argument is augmented by the undermentioned statement given by Hassan Mehsum (ETIM leader):

we don't have any relationship with Osama Bin Laden, and we have not received any help either. All our activities are solely aimed at achieving independence for East Turkistan from the Chinese invaders and kick the Chinese invaders out from that land. If there are Uyghurs among the Taliban, then they must have joined them out of their own Islamic feelings. Our organization's goal is to bring economic, religious and social freedom and independence for the Muslim peoples in East Turkistan.<sup>306</sup>

Hassan's interview and his claims denying any relationship with bin Laden and AQ are contradictory. Abu Musab Suri was one of the biggest strategists of AQ who conceptualized the organization's new strategy after the 9/11 attacks. The ideas presented by Musab transformed AQ into an ideological umbrella mustering and knitting other such organizations operating across the world.<sup>307</sup> Abu Musab explained that the Uyghur

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<sup>305</sup> Fishman, 49.

<sup>306</sup> Radio Free Asia, "Uyghur Separatist Denies Links to Taliban, Al-Qaeda."

<sup>307</sup> Paul Cruickshank and Mohannad Hage Ali, "Abu Musab Al Suri: Architect of the New Al Qaeda," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30 (2007): 1-14, accessed April 28, 2015, <http://www.lawandsecurity.org/portals/0/documents/abumusabalsuriarchitectofthenewalqaeda.pdf>.

fighters were trained by AQ in order to fight against the Chinese in Xinjiang.<sup>308</sup> Hassan Mehsum and Abdul Haq trained these Uyghur insurgents at Tora Bora camp under AQ's auspices.<sup>309</sup> During the U.S. led operations in Afghanistan, some of these Uyghurs were captured and later detained at Guantanamo Bay. It is unclear whether Hassan Mehsum's interview was conducted before or after the CCP government changed its stance on the Taliban government, and started openly supporting the U.S. led operations.

#### Post-2008 and the AQ Factor

In 2008, the TIP emerged and announced itself as successor of the ETIM.<sup>310</sup> Following the emergence of TIP, Abdul Haq Turkestani (the TIP leader) called for violence not only inside China but also against the Chinese interests around the world. The TIP is an AQ franchise in Xinjiang. The TIP works under the global umbrella of AQ as envisioned by Abu Musab. The TIP, apart from utilizing the training and administration facilities, also utilizes the AQ affiliated media groups. In 2008, the TIP claimed the responsibility of numerous bomb blasts in a propaganda video released through Al Fajr Media; affiliated with Al Qaeda.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Fishman, 49.

<sup>309</sup> Joscelyn.

<sup>310</sup> Sowell, 3-4.

<sup>311</sup> Fishman, 52.



The incidents of July 2009 leading to the death of approximately 184 people (including a large number of the Uyghurs), caught the world's attention.<sup>312</sup> The heavy-handed Chinese response against the Uyghur populace incited AQIM to issue direct threats to the Chinese government. On October 7, 2009, the senior AQIM leader Abu Yahya declared:

this massacre is not being carried out by criminal Crusaders or evil Jews who have committed crimes against our nation. Today, a new massacre is being carried out by the Buddhist nationalists and the communists against the Muslim population in Eastern Turkestan. It is a duty for Muslims today to stand by their wounded and oppressed brothers in East Turkestan, and support them with all they can.<sup>313</sup>

On July 4, 2014, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi announced its allegiance to the Uyghurs with plans to support the insurgency against Communist Chinese. Baghdadi in his address to followers at Mosul said, "Muslim rights are forcibly seized in China, India, Palestine and more than a dozen other countries and regions. Your brothers all over the world are waiting for your rescue, and are anticipating your brigades."<sup>314</sup>

### Political Support from Muslim World

However, interestingly the Uyghurs insurgency could not muster support and recognition generally from the Muslim world and specifically from the Middle Eastern. The Chinese diplomatic and economic strength successfully reduced the moral and

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<sup>312</sup> Edward Wong, "Riots in Western China Amid Ethnic Tension," *New York Times*, July 5, 2009, accessed April 12, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/06/world/asia/06china.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/06/world/asia/06china.html?_r=0).

<sup>313</sup> Zambelis.

<sup>314</sup> Olesen.

material support to the Uyghur insurgency.<sup>315</sup> The WUC has organized the Uyghur diaspora organizations under its umbrella, yet the organization draws limited support from the international community and Muslim world despite its presence across the globe.<sup>316</sup>

In the Muslim world, only Turkey officially supports and recognizes the Uyghur cause. After the July 2009 incident in Xinjiang, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as the Turkish Prime Minister commented, “no state, no society that attacks the lives and rights of innocent civilians can guarantee its security and prosperity. Whether they are Turkic Uyghurs or Chinese, we cannot tolerate such atrocities. The suffering of the Uyghurs is ours.”<sup>317</sup> He further said, “As a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, Turkey was determined to bring the issue of the Chinese crackdown onto the council's agenda.”<sup>318</sup>

Despite being the third largest trader with China, Turkey offers refuge and a political base to a large number of the Uyghur migrants.<sup>319</sup> Since 2009, the relations between both countries have remained disturbed due to the continuous Turkish support to

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<sup>315</sup> Gladney, “China: Prospects for the Uighur People in the Chinese Nation-state History,” 13.

<sup>316</sup> World Uyghur Congress, “Affiliate Organizations.”

<sup>317</sup> Matti Nojonen and Igor Torbakov, “China-Turkey and Xinjiang: A Frayed Relationship,” *Open Democracy*, August 5, 2009, accessed April 30, 2015, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/article/china-turkey-and-xinjiang-a-frayed-relationship>.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Julie Makinen and Glen Johnson, “Turkey embraces Muslim Uighurs who made Perilous Escape from China,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 2015, accessed, April 9, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-uighurs-turkey-20150203-story.html>.

the Uyghurs. In April 2012, the PRC invited Erdogan on a visit with a view to improve frayed relations between both countries. Enroute to Beijing, the Turkish Prime Minister made his first stop at Urumchi; visited the international public bazar, the Grand Mosque and talked to the Turkic Uyghurs.<sup>320</sup> The visit to Urumchi declared the extent of affiliation, commitment, and support to the Uyghurs. However, during the same visit, a Chinese newspaper *People's Daily Online* reported that Prime Minister Erdogan assured President Xi that Turkey would not allow any anti-China secessionist activity on its land.<sup>321</sup>

The details of the insurgent (terrorist) activities attributed to the TIP, ETIM, or other Uyghurs are outlined in table 3:

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<sup>320</sup> Julia Famularo, "Erdogan Visits Xinjiang," *The Diplomat*, April 14, 2012, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2012/04/erdogan-visits-xinjiang/>.

<sup>321</sup> People Daily Online, "Chinese Vice President Underscores Political Trust with Turkey," April 11, 2012, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://en.people.cn/90883/7783205.html>; Famularo.

Table 3. Glossary of the Insurgent Activities in Xinjiang,  
September 2001-December 2013

Date	Location	Suspected	Killed	Injured	Target	Type / Technique
October 14, 2001	Hotan City	Unknown	0	0	Infrastructure	Bombing/ Explosion
January 20, 2005	Usu and Karamay	Unknown	12	2	General Public	Bombing/ Explosion
May 5, 2008	Shanghai	ETIM	3	12	General Public	Firing
July 21, 2008	Kunming	TIP / ETIM	2	7	General Public	Bombing/ Explosion
July 21, 2008	Minshan	TIP / ETIM	1	7	General Public	Bombing/ Explosion
August 4, 2008	Kashgar	TIP / ETIM	0	0	Police	Unarmed Assault
August 10, 2008	Kuqa	TIP / ETIM	3	2	General Public	Bombing/ Explosion
August 12, 2008	Yamanya	TIP / ETIM	3	1	Police	Armed Assault
April 1, 2009	Urumqi	Unknown	1	2	General Public	Bombing/ Explosion
July 5, 2009	Urumqi	Uyghurs	184	-	General Public	Armed Assault
September 9, 2009	Urumqi	Unknown	-	-	General Public	Armed Assault
August 19, 2010	Aksu	TIP / ETIM (not confirmed)	7	14	General Public	Bombing/ Explosion
July 30, 2011	Kashgar	TIP / ETIM (not confirmed)	8	22	General Public	Armed Assault
July 30, 2011	Kashgar	TIP / ETIM (not confirmed)	-	-	General Public	Bombing/ Explosion
July 31, 2011	Kashgar	TIP / ETIM (not confirmed)	11	10	General Public	Armed Assault
February 28, 2012	Yeching	Uighur Separatists	22	14	General Public	Armed Assault
June 29, 2012	Hotan	TIP / ETIM (not confirmed)	0	10	Infrastructure	Hijacking

October 1, 2012	Kargilik	TIP / ETIM (not confirmed)	1	-	Police	Unarmed Assault
March 9, 2013	Hotan	Unknown	-	-	Police	Armed Assault
June 26, 2013	Lukqun	TIP / ETIM	24	-	General Public	Armed Assault
October 28, 2013	Beijing	TIP / ETIM	5	40	General Public	Bombing/ Explosion
November 6, 2013	Taiyuan	TIP / ETIM (not confirmed)	1	8	General Public	Bombing/ Explosion
November 17, 2013	Kashgar	TIP / ETIM (not confirmed)	11	2	Police	Armed Assault
December 30, 2013	Yarkand	TIP / ETIM (not confirmed)	8	0	Police	Armed Assault
March 1, 2014	Kunming (Yunan)	TIP / ETIM	33	140	General Public	Bombing/ Explosion
April 30, 2014	Urumqi	TIP / ETIM	3	79	General Public	Bombing/ Explosion
May 22, 2014	Urumqi	TIP / ETIM	31	90	General Public	Bombing/ Explosion

*Source:* Global Terrorism Database, accessed May 2, 2015, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/>; RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, accessed May 2, 2015, [http://smapp.rand.org/rwtid/search\\_form.php](http://smapp.rand.org/rwtid/search_form.php). The information has been obtained from the Global Terrorism Database and RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, by applying various parameters available on the websites.

## CHAPTER 7

### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

After having examined the Uyghur insurgency and the Chinese COIN strategy since 1949, the thesis analyzes both in subsequent paragraphs. The chapter also outlines the likely future of the Xinjiang problem. This chapter ends with an attempt to predict the tenets of the Chinese COIN strategy from the research.

#### Analysis: Chinese COIN Strategy

Through the end of 2014, the CCP continued its successful COIN strategy against the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. The economic, social, religious, and political initiatives by the Chinese government gave it a definite advantage over the Uyghur insurgents. The CCP government continues to maintain its political primacy over Xinjiang through its diplomatic and economic initiatives regionally and internationally. The Chinese government has a firm and decisive policy against the Uyghur insurgents. However, in comparison to the situation on 9/11, the Chinese control and influence over Xinjiang has slightly decreased.

The CCP in Xinjiang focuses on preventing Xinjiang secession. The CCP has always considered Xinjiang as extremely essential to the maintenance and preservation of national unity. This heightens the Chinese sensitivities, thereby making them utilize all elements of national power in Xinjiang. Since 1949, the CCP policies in Xinjiang have been a mix of tolerance and intolerance. However, post-9/11 these policies remained mostly inclined towards intolerance factor. The continuation of such policies at best have prevented the situation from getting much worse, but has not brought any fruitful results

in Xinjiang. These strict policies if continued will undermine and hamper the other efforts by the CCP government to bring stability in Xinjiang and region.

The Chinese government continually pursues the achievement of its political objectives in the neighboring countries as well. The diplomatic and economic initiatives in Central Asia, South Asia, and the Arab world have been successful in denying much-needed external support to the Uyghurs. Thus, the Uyghurs stand alone in their battle for independence of Xinjiang at international level.

Despite its success in past, the Chinese COIN strategy has few gray areas including the lack of the population support in Xinjiang. Unlike other contemporary COIN doctrines, the Chinese have no concept of the winning hearts and minds, but rely heavily on the stick and carrot principle in Xinjiang. Being an ethnically Han dominant society, the rise of other ethnicities in any part of the country is considered a threat to national unity and is thus, unacceptable to the CCP leadership. This mindset is the driving force behind the Chinese mal-treatment of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. However, the CCP has managed this aspect through massive Han migration to Xinjiang, which significantly reduced the Uyghur majority from 90 percent (1949) to a mere 45 percent (2014). The Uyghurs, though still a slight majority do not have the corresponding representation and influence in Xinjiang to highlight their grievances.

In addition, the CCP policies of assimilation and integration in Xinjiang have created divisions in the Uyghur society. Today, the Uyghurs may not be supportive to the CCP policies in Xinjiang, but the majority also does not support the insurgents. The Chinese policies have diverted the attention of a common Uyghurs towards the economic wellbeing, rather than seeking the independence of Xinjiang as Uyghurstan or East

Turkestan. The lack of freedom of speech and expression, coupled with the severe repercussions, prohibits the Uyghurs from communicating their anxiety, hatred, frustration, and grievances against the Chinese government in Xinjiang. The Uyghurs, seeing the Han Chinese controlling all aspects of life in Xinjiang, feel deprived and sidelined. Thus, the situation in Xinjiang will continue to remain fragile unless the population support is molded in favor of the CCP. However, with the system of governance in place from top to bottom, the CCP enjoys influence in all corners of Xinjiang. Thus, any chances for political rise of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang are remote.

The Chinese government in collaboration with the provincial government has enforced the constitutional amendments providing immunity to the PLA and PAP during COIN operations. Both organizations have the tendency to misuse these powers, thus committing human rights violations. The constitutional amendments have antagonized the population, yet the fear of arrests, persecution, and silent execution, forces a Uyghur to exercise restraint. The majority of population has witnessed the maltreatment to the insurgency supporters and avoid involvement in any such activity. However, in the depth of their hearts, the Uyghurs have continuously developed animosity, hatred and a desire for revenge against the Chinese. In future, if the Uyghurs are afforded with the opportunity to secede (similar to 1933, 1944, or 1990), the majority would tend to support irrespective of the current indicators in Xinjiang. Thus, the Chinese policies of assimilation, integration, and migration are failing to muster the support of a common Uyghur.

The Chinese policies of language and literature in Xinjiang are seemingly contributing to the assimilation of the Uyghurs in China. However, the statistics may not



speech volumes. The differences in the employment and education levels, between the Han and the Uyghur in Xinjiang is an evidence of this fact. The CCP government is systematically denying the Uyghurs their religious, cultural, and ethnic identity. Since, these policies are forced upon the Uyghurs, the level of willingness remains below par. The identity of any nation cannot be changed by force, and examples of ethnic cleansing and genocide in Africa, Eastern Europe, and Middle East are testament to this fact. The Uyghurs are a fact in Xinjiang, and the future of Chinese legitimacy is reliant upon the extent of their support. Post-9/11, the world has globalized at a rapid pace, wherein a minor terrorist or insurgent related incident is reported promptly, and Xinjiang is no exception. Although, the Chinese government at the central and provincial levels exercises near complete control over media, the Uyghur insurgency is gaining more prominence across the world. The reporting of human rights violations by the Chinese authorities in Xinjiang has exponentially increased, particularly post-9/11.

Following riots in the late 1990s, the PLA and PAP inculcated a network of informers across Xinjiang to report any insurgent related activity. These networks significantly reduced the insurgent activities, but could not eliminate the resistance. The hike in the insurgent activities particularly after 2008 has seriously challenged the writ of the government in Xinjiang. Although, the reported incidents are fewer when compared to the other insurgency-ridden areas, the trend is on the rise. The years of economic, social, and religious persecution faced by the Uyghurs may further exacerbate the situation in the future.

The CCP government is partially successful in isolating the insurgents physically, politically, economically, and psychologically from the peaceful Uyghurs. This isolation

is a result of the domestic, regional, and international policies of the CCP government. China, a major economic power, has been successful in the region, particularly in the neighboring countries, in denying support to the Uyghurs. In addition, the Uyghur insurgents have capitalized on the religious motivations, which the CCP government effectively checks through strict policies including bans on religious education, appointment of pro-Han Imams, projecting religions as the biggest threat to national unity, and ban on construction of new Masajid. However, these policies were in place before 9/11 as well, and were not fully effective. Currently, the terrorist organizations are significantly increasing their influence by spreading their agenda globally. The rise of ISIS, AQIM, Boko Haram, and other such organizations may serve as a role model for the Uyghurs, which may complicate the situation for China in the future. The government often calls upon the Uyghur in party meetings to announce the unpopular government policies in order to keep them away from forming a political front. The CCP government is also continuing to control the Uyghurs through a minimal representation in all political levels.

Post-9/11, the Chinese government capitalized on the opportunity of a strategic alignment with the U.S. on terrorism issues. The CCP government, by supporting the U.S. led operations accrued three major advantages; a smoothing of relations with the U.S., a declaration of the Uyghurs as terrorists, and a partial justification for the conduct of human rights violations in Xinjiang. The events of 9/11 have significantly changed world's opinion on terrorism. Today, it is easier to label any religion, ethnicity, or culture as part of the global terrorism movement irrespective of the extent of involvement. The Chinese government over the years has capitalized on this fact and has highlighted the

Uyghurs as terrorist, religious fundamentalists and a threat to the global peace. The CCP government continues to expose the linkages of the ETIM with AQ and its affiliates to gain international support.

At the regional level, the Chinese government has mustered the support of its neighbors through the diplomatic and economic initiatives. The establishment of SCO, followed by continuous engagements at bilateral and multilateral levels with the SCO member states, enables the PRC to form a unified front against the separatism, terrorism, and extremism (the Uyghurs). Similarly, the massive investments in Afghanistan and Pakistan also facilitates strengthening of the Chinese cause. The huge Chinese economy allows diplomatic and economic maneuvers in relatively poor and weaker regional countries, thus adding more positive recognition to the Chinese policies. The CCP also handles the Arab countries, and particularly Saudi Arabia, through an economic instrument of power. Interestingly, the Chinese have exercised a combination of diplomatic and economic initiatives, thus not only investing in a country, but also seeking bilateral diplomatic support for issues faced as well. These initiatives at regional and international levels have facilitated in a positive Chinese image internationally on the Xinjiang issue.

Although, the Chinese COIN strategy is a tale of oppression, the economic investment by the central government in Xinjiang has been immense. The industrial, agricultural, and infrastructure growth in Xinjiang has been made possible through the policy of the GWD. Xinjiang, once the backwater of China is currently amongst the leading provinces in economic terms. The GDP per capita growth over the years has risen very rapidly, however, the figures do not tell the whole story. The development in

Xinjiang has occurred mostly in Han dominated areas, with the Uyghur areas being neglected. The less developed areas in the past have been centers of the Uyghur insurgency. In comparison to the Han, the Uyghur are poor, less educated, less represented, rural based, and have fewer job prospects. The provincial government while fully cognizant of these facts affords limited chances for the Uyghurs in governmental setups only. However, most of the privately owned businesses including mining, industry, and agriculture, provide the least job prospects for the Uyghurs. Thus, in its totality, the sense of deprivation is on the rise amongst the Uyghurs, which may lead to further complications for the Chinese government in future.

The transition of the Uyghurs from separatists to insurgents and terrorists changed the situation in Xinjiang for the initial few years. The Chinese government post-9/11, sought justification for the human rights violations in Xinjiang in return for support to the U.S. operations. The period from 2001-2007 witnessed adoption of intolerant policies, which kept Xinjiang silent. However, after 2008, a surge in the insurgent activities was observed, which is still on the rise. The CCP government has successfully reduced the insurgent activities particularly in comparison to the SCO and other neighboring countries. However, the rising trends of terrorism will create alarm for the Chinese policy makers in future.

The Chinese COIN strategy and its success in various attributes during different eras is summarized in table 4:

Table 4. Chinese COIN Analysis, 1949-2014

Attributes of COIN Strategy		1949	1978	2001	2014
Political Primacy/ Objective (maintenance of national unity and prevent seceding away of Xinjiang)		Partial	Strong	Strong	Strong
Population support (Uyghurs)		Yes	Very limited	Very limited	Very Limited
Legitimacy over area		Partial	Very high	High	High
Intelligence Operations		Limited	High	Very high	Very High
Unity of Effort (Political, Military, Social, Economic, Information)		Limited	High	Very high	Very High
Neutralize Insurgency (reduction in insurgent actions)		Partial	Effective	Effective	Partially Effective
Isolate Insurgents (from)	Population	Nil	Yes	Partial	Partial
	Economic	Nil	Yes	Partial	Partial
	Psychological	Nil	Yes	Partial	Partial
Preparation for protracted campaign		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Secure Environment		Very good	Very good	Relatively good	Relatively good
Learn and adapt		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
International Recognition		Limited	Strong	Very Strong	Relatively Strong
Economic activities/ initiatives		Limited	High	Very High	Very High
Insurgent activities (scale)		Negligible	Negligible	Limited	High
Populace participation in Government		Acceptable	Limited	Very limited	Very limited

Source: Created by author.

### Analysis: Uyghur Insurgency

The Uyghur insurgency in 2014 is relatively stronger as compared to the situation in 2001. Post-9/11, the Chinese government managed to get the Uyghur insurgents, labelled as terrorists with linkages to global terrorism. The insurgency suffered serious setbacks for the first few years after 9/11, as it was devoid of any external support. The capture of twenty-two Uyghurs in Afghanistan, the declaration of the ETIM as a terrorist organization, and external support from AQ made the world believe in the Chinese stance. However, years later, the world's opinion seems to be changing. The Uyghurs have found political representation across the world, which never existed before. Thus, the Uyghurs are seemingly in a better position as compared to 2001.

As of 2014, Uyghur separatism is split between the political organizations (WUC) and insurgents (ETIM). Both groups aim at independence of Xinjiang from the Chinese rule, however, their modus-operandi differs. The WUC represents the educated and well-settled Uyghur diaspora, who migrated in search of a better future. The majority of the WUC members have witnessed less of the Chinese oppression. In addition, the WUC members reside outside China and have no fears of arrest, persecution, or execution. On the contrary, the insurgent Uyghurs (ETIM) could not find such opportunities, thus became part of the armed struggle or insurgency. The ETIM represents the lower or lower middle class of society, which is poor, dejected, and feels deprived of their rights—very common in insurgent movements across the world. The insurgents have seen the long episodes of the intolerant Chinese rule in Xinjiang, and feel frustrated about the policies have opted to struggle at a low level.

However, neither the WUC nor the ETIM actually represents the Uyghurs in Xinjiang in totality. The objective of both groups is similar; however, there exists no communication or coordination between them. In the media, the ETIM finds more space due to its involvement in terrorist activities—the hot topic for media channels across the world. In contrast, the WUC is mostly limited to the intermittent conferences and its website. No political group exists inside Xinjiang, which can effectively represent the Uyghur populace.

The ETIM is not the insurgent wing of WUC, and nor does the WUC back actions of the ETIM due to differences in their manifestos. Interestingly, none of these groups opposes or supports each other. This is a major factor in dividing the common Uyghur populace into three distinct groups i.e. seeking independence (political and insurgents), content with status-quo, and desiring integration. Despite this division in the population, the Uyghurs now have representation, which did not exist before 2001.

The insurgent Uyghurs have found new inspiration in the form of religion, which is supported by other organizations across the world. The Chinese claim to link Uyghur separatists with AQ and Islam has minimal reality. The root causes of an insurgency or armed struggle emanate from unequal distribution of resources, sense of deprivation, and social frustration, equally applicable in Xinjiang. The Chinese government earnestly links every action of peaceful and insurgent Uyghurs with terrorism, thus putting a curtain on its own actions in Xinjiang. The existing root causes of insurgency in Xinjiang are aiding the ETIM in gathering support from other organizations.

Prior to 2001, the Uyghurs and Xinjiang had not gained global prominence. However, the sudden change in the Chinese policies post-9/11 was a major factor in

internationalizing the issue. Before 2001, the terrorist organizations existed and were actively involved against the United States and West on an ideological basis. Despite being cognizant of the Chinese actions in Xinjiang, both Taliban and AQ did not become involved in China until 2001. Xinjiang was a domestic issue, which could have been amicably resolved by addressing the Uyghur concerns. The linking of the Uyghur to global terrorism has attracted the attention of AQ and ISIS, which now view China as *head of the snake*. The increase in the number of insurgent related activities and extent of lethality, precision, and accuracy is a testament to the fact that the Uyghur insurgency is complemented by these organizations.

However, the Uyghurs are still lacking external support from the world deemed sufficient to expand the insurgency. The economic and diplomatic initiatives of China are a major limiting factor in keeping the regional and international players silent on the issue. The Uyghurs have some representation in the western world, yet except for Turkey, no other Islamic country supports the Uyghur cause. Hence, the Uyghur insurgents may be able to create unrest and instability in Xinjiang, but are not yet able to fight for independence without external support. The level of the Uyghur insurgency since 1949 to 2014 against various attributes is summarized in table 5:



Table 5. Uyghur Insurgency Analysis, 1949-2014

Attributes		1949	1978	2001	2014
Ideology/Motivation		Nationalism	Nationalism	Religious/Nationalism	
Cause		Defined	Weakened	Weakened	Strengthening
Internal Support	Moral	Active	Indifferent	Passive	Available but passive
	Material	Active	Limited	Very limited	Limited
External Support	Moral	Yes	Moral	Limited	Relatively improving
	Political	Yes	Limited	Limited	Relatively improving
	Logistic	Yes	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
	Sanctuaries	Yes	Limited	Yes	Yes
Objectives		Independence	Autonomy / Independence		Independence
Leadership	Inside	Organized and recognized	Very limited/ covert	Undeclared	Very limited
	Outside	Yes	Limited and non-influential	Very limited and non-influential	Available at political and insurgent level
Environment	Local	Supportive	Semi-supportive	Non supportive	Non supportive
	International	Supportive	Supportive	Non supportive	Non supportive
Geography		Urban/Rural	Urban	Rural	Rural
Organizational pattern	Leaders	Yes	Very limited	Negligible	Available
	Armed Members	Yes	Very limited	Limited	Yes
	Supporters	Yes	Limited	Limited	Yes
Recognition		Yes	Limited	Very limited	Limited
National representation level		Yes	Limited	Negligible	Negligible

Source: Created by author.

## Conclusions

### The Future of Xinjiang

There is a significant change in the Uyghur insurgency compared to the previous few decades. The insurgency in Xinjiang is not at a stalemate and is instead gaining the momentum, however, slowly. The Uyghurs succeeding in gaining independence seems a far-fetched dream. The present status of the insurgency is incapable of creating serious unrest thus forcing the Chinese government to find a solution.

The rise in the insurgent activities, particularly after 2008, may have changed the security dynamics in Xinjiang. However, the accuracy in the available information remains questionable due to state control over the media. The Chinese government controls the flow of information on the internet and media channels. The analysis of the available information on the insurgent activities, suggests that the degree of unrest and instability in Xinjiang, stands far below the other insurgency-ridden countries. For instance, from 2010-2013, the total number of insurgent actions in Xinjiang totaled fifteen, whereas during the same period a significantly higher number of such incidents were reported in Afghanistan (3,810), Iraq (6,740), and Yemen (950), Nigeria (1,200), and Syria (503). The available information suggests that terrorism related activities in Xinjiang from 2001-2013, were much less than in other growing economies and developed countries. Thus, the Chinese claims of impending threats of massive terrorism activities in Xinjiang by the Uyghur insurgents are highly inflated and unsubstantiated.

The CCP government realized the importance of denying external support to the Uyghurs in the 1990s. The PRC continues to enhance its bilateral relations with its neighbors (potential sanctuaries for the Uyghurs) to limit support for the insurgency. The

CCP also realized the importance of economic prosperity in the mid-1990s and since then, has pursued the GWD to address the likely causes of insurgency. The economic development in Xinjiang has considerably raised the living standards of the Uyghurs, thus addressing the relative sense of deprivation.

Since 1949, the Uyghur insurgency is nearly devoid of any external support. The only political support emanates from Turkey, while the insurgents continually find support from AQ and ISIS. However, the level of influence these organizations enjoy in Xinjiang is far from practical manifestation. The insurgent movements are successful within the regions with power vacuum, whereas, the Chinese are handling Xinjiang, leaving no space for such organizations. The presence of over ten million Uyghurs in Xinjiang does not imply ten million supporters to AQ, ISIS, or TIP. As already discussed above, the majority of the Uyghurs are more interested in preserving their identical culture, seeking economic wellbeing, and leading a peaceful life than adopting an uncertain and dangerous insurgent path.

The economic prosperity in Xinjiang differs for various ethnicities, yet the Uyghurs are not completely deprived. Undoubtedly, the Han are the main beneficiaries of the development, but the Uyghurs also find jobs. The life of a common Uyghur in Xinjiang has improved significantly, which is evident from the GDP per capita increase over years. The massive Han migration, religious controls, assimilation policies, Han dominance of the political system, unequal distribution of wealth, human rights violations, raids, arrests, and executions will continue to be features of the Chinese COIN strategy in Xinjiang. The CCP government will continue to use a combination of carrot

(GWD) and stick (Strike Hard) type policies in Xinjiang. Irrespective of the oppressive and intolerant policies, the situation in Xinjiang will remain under control.

The population support remains a gray area in the Chinese COIN strategy, which is capable of affecting the stability in Xinjiang. The CCP government in its efforts to rid Xinjiang of the insurgency, will eventually have to give due accordance to this fact. The population being the center of gravity in the COIN environment can tilt the balance of success to any of the sides, which need realization amongst CCP ranks.

### Chinese Sensitivities in Xinjiang

The growing Chinese economy is dependent upon the oil and gas resources from the Central Asian and the Middle Eastern countries. Xinjiang is a conduit for the transportation of these resources from and through Central Asia to China. In addition, the presence of vast oil, gas, and coal reserves in Xinjiang makes it strategically important for China, besides serving as a route. The Chinese government, in order to reduce transportation costs, is investing heavily in the economic corridor through Pakistan. The economic corridor will not only provide a direct, shorter passage for Chinese goods, but will also serve as a shorter route for oil transportation from the Middle East. Interestingly, the economic corridor will link Pakistan with China through Xinjiang.

The Chinese sensitivities in Xinjiang will always remain extremely high towards any sentiments of separatism. China has and will continually utilize all available elements of its national power to defeat separatist tendencies in Xinjiang. Thus, the strategic importance of Xinjiang will not accept independent or autonomous Xinjiang. However, China without Xinjiang and its implications on the region, merits future research.

### Tenets of the Chinese COIN Strategy

There is no official document available to explain the Chinese COIN doctrine. However, the analysis of the situation in Xinjiang since 1949, suggests a systematic methodology followed by the CCP. The non-availability of a documented COIN doctrine does not imply that the Chinese are not well versed in the intricacies of insurgency and COIN. Thus, once viewed through the historical lens, the Chinese COIN strategy in Xinjiang includes following attributes: -

1. Strategic Vision (clearly defined political, military, and economic objectives)
2. Establish political primacy and legitimacy
3. Establish control over the area and inward/outwards movement
4. Presence of enough military and police force (to handle situations)
5. Strong intelligence network (quick response on credible information)
6. Unity of effort (at diplomatic, economic, information and military ends)
6. Economic activities (to divert attention of populace)
7. Assimilation policies (denying linguistic, cultural, ethnic identity)
8. Isolating the insurgent (from population support)
9. Deny insurgents of the external support (diplomatic and economic initiatives)
10. Deny safe havens to the insurgent (domestic, regional, and international)
11. Deny the political base and representation (making irrelevant)

## APPENDIX A

### COIN ANALYSIS MODEL

- I. Strategic and Historical Setting: Pre-Insurgency Situation
  - a. Historical Background
  - b. Current Geographic, Regional Context
  - c. Groups, Grievances, Attitudes, Connections
  - d. Galula's Prerequisites (cause, government administrative weakness, geographic environment, available outside support)
- II. Conduct of the Insurgenc(ies)
  - a. Initial Phase (leaders, goals, and type of insurgency)
  - b. Organization, Decision-making, Communication
  - c. Ideology, Objectives, Message
  - d. Strategy, Patterns, Use of Violence and Terror
  - e. Development, Phases, Adaptation
  - f. Operational Analysis (organizational COG, LOOs, culmination)
  - g. Decisive Points, Vulnerabilities for insurgency (from following or others):
    - i. Image(s) to key groups, efforts to shape image
    - ii. Recruiting
    - iii. Training, developing
    - iv. Movement
    - v. Internal, External Sanctuaries
    - vi. Money (obtaining, moving, distributing)
    - vii. Arms, ammunition, materiel
    - viii. Insurgent-controlled areas (administration, expansion)
    - ix. External influence, support, direction
    - x. Unity: competing organizations; fragmentation
- III. Conduct of the Counterinsurgency
  - a. Initial situation analysis, responses
  - b. Civil Military Organization, decision-making, integration

- c. COIN Plan
  - i. Analysis of insurgency (objectives, strength, strategy)
  - ii. Decisions, Policies
  - iii. Resources, Other Limitations
  - iv. Leaders
- d. Information, influence operations
- e. Implementation, Adjustments
  - i. Identification of key groups, mobilization efforts
  - ii. Populace Resource Control measures
  - iii. Key Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures
  - iv. Efforts in security, balanced development, mobilization, neutralization
- f. Operational Analysis (organizational COG, LOO, DO, culmination)
- g. External Support, Influence (including advisors' role, impact)
- IV. Responses of Population/Society
  - a. Key groups' initial support
  - b. Changes in Groups (objectives, membership, relationships); Emergence of new groups
  - c. Changes in Support to Insurgency, Counterinsurgency
    - i. Critical Perceptions (of ability to protect/coerce/reward, purpose, end state)
    - ii. Actions or Inactions (reasons, causes)
- V. Net Assessment/Current & Future Direction(s) Who won, Who lost, Why?
  - a. Option 1: Joint Principles with emphasis on SLURPO
  - b. Option 2: IDAD functions, principles: effectiveness and reasons
  - c. Option 3: Student Option
- VI. Lessons Learned or Observed for Current and Future Ops (Strategic, Operational, Tactical)

*Source:* Department of Joint, Multinational, and Interagency Operations, "COIN Analysis Model," U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2014.

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