TRENDS AND TRIGGERS IN THE UYGHUR RESISTANCE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

TRENDS AND TRIGGERS IN THE UYGHUR INSURGENCY, by MAJ Scott R. Perkins, 86 pages.

The Uyghurs of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) have been subjugated by the PRC since 1949. Efforts to control the population and reform the newly established PRC ultimately strengthened the Uyghur identity and undermined the national interest Mao sought. As a result, a primarily separatist resistance movement formed within Xinjiang. Despite success in controlling the population, the PRC has not addressed the underlying concerns of ethnic minorities due to internal considerations. Consequently, dissatisfaction continues and elements of Uyghur society have turned to more violent measures to bring about change. In response, the PRC has employed increasingly sophisticated and integrated approaches to maintain control in the strategically significant area of Xinjiang.

The Uyghur insurgency nearly ascended into the open insurgency phase, however, infighting resulted in the insurgency receding back into the incipient conflict stage. Analysis of trends indicates Uyghurs have failed to unite as a people, organize as a resistance, and have not exploited opportunities. There are two groups of triggers, traditional state conflict and neighboring state instability, which would change the momentum within the Uyghur insurgency in favor of the Uyghurs.

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ACRONYMS

CARL	Combined Arms Research Library
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
COIN	Counterinsurgency
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
ETGIE	East Turkestan Government-in-Exile
ETIC	East Turkestan Information Center
ETIM	East Turkestan Islamic Movement
ETIP	East Turkestan Islamic Party
ETIPA	East Turkestan Islamic Party of Allah
ETNC	East Turkestan National Congress
ETR	East Turkestan Republic
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
MPS	Ministry of Public Security
MSS	Ministry of State Security
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OBOR	One Belt, One Road
PACOM	Pacific Command
PAP	People's Armed Police
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
TIP	Turkestan Islamic Party
UAK	Uyghur Association of Kazakhstan

USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, referred to as Soviet Union
ULO	Uyghur Liberation Organization
WMR	Western Military Region
WUC	World Uyghur Congress
WUYC	World Uyghur Youth Conference
XPCC	Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps
XUAR	Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Historical Background

The arid desert of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, known as East Turkestan by many Uyghurs, has often been at the edge of empires, yet, central to economic trade. Its location along the eastern steppe was crucial to linking the east and west along what later became known as the Silk Road.[1] Prior to 1949, when the People's Republic of China (PRC) established control over Xinjiang Province, the area had been influenced, conquered, or administered by Russia, India, and Persia, in addition to Chinese dynasties.[2] The Uyghur people have experienced periods of varying autonomy, short-term independence, and subjugation since moving into Xinjiang in 840.[3] However, enduring independence has regularly been undermined by internal and external factors. The current state of the Uyghur dilemma lies in their disunity as a people, split between those content with assimilation into the Chinese state, those that desire autonomy, and those that expect independence by any means necessary.

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[1] S. Frederick Starr, Xinjiang "Introduction," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland,* ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk: Taylor and Francis, 2015), 7.

[2] James Millward and Peter Perdue, "Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk: Taylor and Francis, 2015), 29.

[3] Ibid., 40.

Statement of the Problem

The Uyghurs in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) have been unable to establish legitimate autonomy due to a failure to unite as a people, organize as a resistance movement, exploit opportunities, and advance their agenda. Additionally, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has been able to effectively manage the limited Uyghur resistance movement in XUAR through aggressive counterinsurgency techniques, controlling the narrative, and exploiting geopolitical opportunities. The Communist government of Mao Zedong took ownership of the XUAR in 1949. Efforts to control the population and reform the newly established PRC ultimately strengthened the Uyghur identity and undermined the national interest Mao sought. As a result, a primarily separatist resistance movement formed within Xinjiang. Despite success in controlling the population, the PRC has not addressed the underlying concerns of ethnic minorities due to internal considerations. Consequently, dissatisfaction continues and elements of Uyghur society have turned to more violent measures.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the Uyghur resistance movement in an effort to identify trends within the insurgency, the PRC, diaspora, and external support. This study will review the identified trends and apply J. Eli Margolis' Estimating State Instability framework to ascertain a set of conditions necessary for the success of the Uyghur resistance movement.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are focused on explaining why the Uyghurs have not been successful in gaining autonomy and identifying circumstances that could potentially support and further Uyghur resistance. The primary research question is: Why haven't the Uyghurs been successful in establishing legitimate autonomy? To fully answer the aforementioned question, this paper will answer the following questions; how has the PRC effectively controlled Xinjiang? What trends have developed that effect the Uyghur cause? What conditions are required to increase the probability of a Uyghur resistance capable of building momentum for their cause?

Assumptions

In applying the analytical framework to the Uyghur resistance movement, it is assumed the resistance has passed through the first three phases of an insurgency, leaving only the final phase, resolution. Leadership begins to emerge as the insurgency organizes during the first phase, pre-insurgency. Critical to this phase is the development of a group identity and the identification of a set of core grievances. During the second phase, incipient-conflict, insurgents begin to use violence against the established government. This allows the insurgents to expand recruitment, test the government, and solidify its "theory of victory."[4] The open insurgency phase, phase three, occurs when insurgents openly challenge the government and attempt to exert control within a specific area. Most analytical frameworks imply a degree of linear logic, however, insurgencies tend to exhibit characteristics of each phase as it applies for that specific movement. This thesis

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[4] United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012) 10.

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acknowledges this assumption, and will take the current nature of the resistance movement into consideration when drawing conclusions.

Definition of Terms

There is no shortage of disagreement regarding the terms insurgency, counterinsurgency, and resistance across the national security community. Regarding insurgency, this paper will utilize the definition provided by the *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency*; "Insurgency is a protracted political-military struggle directed toward subverting or displacing the legitimacy of a constituted government or occupying power and completely or partially controlling the resources of a territory through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations."[5] Counterinsurgency (COIN) is simply "the combination of measures undertaken by a government to defeat an insurgency."[6] According to the Joint Publication 3-05, Special Operations, a resistance movement is an organized effort by some portion of the civil population of a country to resist the legally established government or an occupying power and to disrupt civil order and stability.[7] Most academics that study Uyghurs refer to resistance efforts and acts of terrorism, but do not discuss Uyghur efforts in terms of an organized insurgency. This study will apply the term insurgency for most explanations, but will utilize resistance when directly referencing information.

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[5] CIA, *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency,* 1.

[6] Ibid.

[7] United States Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), GL 10.

A common definition for autonomy is also required for this study. Simply put, "autonomy is understood to refer to independence of action on the internal or domestic level."[8] This definition will be the standard used when seeking to answer research questions. It is worth noting that literature often uses the term "independence" when examining the desired end state of the Uyghur people. Legitimate autonomy is used for this thesis as it is a more appropriate term for a favorable outcome.

<u>Limitations</u>

This study will primarily utilize resources available through the Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library (CARL). Although there is extensive information accessible at the Combined Arms Research Library, resource availability is dependent on interest by other students in similar subjects. Additionally, although information from CARL is peer reviewed, there is literature that contains information from Chinese government sources or Uyghur diaspora groups. While certainly beneficial for adding perspective, this information comes with an implied bias and likely promotes each group's interests.

<u>Scope and Delimitations</u>

An extensive history of the Xinjiang region prior to 1949 is beyond the scope of this study, however, a brief description will be presented for context. Similarly, the ancestors of the present day Uyghur differed significantly in religion and lifestyle.[9]

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[8] Gardner Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 41.

[9] Millward and Perdue, *Xinjiang*, 40.

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Scholars argue the concept of a Uyghur identity came back into vogue as a result of Soviet influence in the 1920s. Despite the substantial difference in identity, this paper will focus on the modern Uyghur identity and will apply historical facts as they are relevant to the present day Uyghur. Further, it is beyond the scope of this paper to address the likelihood of substantial external support from established governments. It is unfeasible any government would directly support the disintegration of the Chinese state for the sake of human rights. This study will instead look at indirect support, namely through support to diaspora and refugees, as it is more feasible. This study will not apply any information regarding the Uyghur resistance after November 2017 to facilitate cohesive conclusions based on resources available at the time of the literature review.

<div align="center">Significance of the Study</div>

Literature regarding the Uyghurs often focuses on the influence of Islamic radicalization, human rights concerns, and the likelihood of Uyghur independence. What has not been covered in depth are the conditions that would have to exist for the Uyghur people to gain an increased level of autonomy. Through the application of the Analysis of Insurgency framework,[10] informed by historic and strategic context, this study looks to address trends regarding the Uyghur resistance movement and the conditions that would need to exist for a greater degree of autonomy.

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[10] CIA, *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency.*

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Information on the Uyghurs has increased substantially over the last 20 years as a result of access to technology by the Uyghur diaspora, and to a degree, the classification of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as a terrorist organization by the United States in 2002.[11] Early literature focused more on the geographic nature of the Xinjiang region, the competing claims of ownership by various empires or dynasties, and the movement of people in, out, and through the area. Following Xinjiang's incorporation into the People's Republic of China (PRC), literature highlighted the desire of the PRC to create a national culture and often makes mention of extreme measures the PRC has taken to exert its control over minority groups. More recent literature has focused on two extremes; the human rights abuses of the PRC and the participation by Uyghurs in terrorist organizations or activities.

The literature review consists of four sections aimed at reviewing the prevailing sources in regard to the Uyghurs, the PRC, and Xinjiang Province as it will apply to the analytical framework. First, the history of the region will be addressed to add context. Next, the Chinese policy in regard to the Uyghurs will be explored. Third, Uyghur organizations will be discussed in an effort to highlight key players in the resistance movement. Finally, literature on terrorist actions and acts of resistance will be reviewed. To close, this chapter will lay out the methodology used for this study.

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[11] Jayshree Bajoria, Holly Fletcher, and Beina Xu, "The East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM)," Council on Foreign Relations, last updated September 4, 2014, accessed October 3, 2017, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/east-turkestan-islamic-movement-etim.

<center>History of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region</center>

There is an abundance of information regarding what is now referred to as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Historic literature can be generally broken down into three periods; pre-1949, the Mao Zedong era, and post-Mao literature. Literature prior to 1949 often focused on the movement of people through what is now known as Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The Qing Empire first administered Xinjiang, as it is currently shaped, in 1760.[12] Authors, in general, point out that Xinjiang has been subject to the influence of multiple groups including those of Indo-European, Chinese, Turkic, Mongolian, and Persian descent.[13] The Uyghurs themselves arrived into Xinjiang in 840 after being defeated and driven off the Mongolian Steppe.[14]

Although experts generally agree on the previously mentioned facts, Gardner Bovingdon points out that both the Uyghurs and the PRC government have tailored and adjusted their facts to support their cause.[15] The history is further exaggerated due to the crackdown on Uyghur literature and education during the reforms of the Cultural Revolution and the subsequent dependence on story telling to preserve Uyghur history. The PRC version of events is no more dependable. In addition to influencing Uyghur history, the PRC have systematically built their own version of events to include adding

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[12] Millward and Perdue, *Xinjiang*, 27.

[13] Ibid., 28.

[14] Ibid., 40.

[15] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 24-25.

the phrase "Xinjiang has since ancient times been an inseparable part of China" to almost all text post 1959.[16]

Dru Gladney, a professor of anthropology at Pomona College who has written extensively on the Uyghurs and the XUAR, lays out Mao's intent during the Long March of the 1930s[17] to follow a policy similar to the Soviet program of minority republics. When the PRC was established in 1949, Mao chose to focus on a national identity over the interest of minorities and instead offered autonomy over independence.[18] Over the course of Mao's tenure, a number of policies were enacted to unite the people and accelerate the nation toward full productivity, namely, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution.

The reforms of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, which began in the 1950s and continued until 1976, affected the entire nation state, especially those areas with large minority populations. In Xinjiang, these reforms included the "recruitment of local ethnic cadres, Han immigration, land reform and economic development projects, and secular, communist-oriented schooling"[19] It was during this time, in 1953, that Xinjiang Province came to be known as the Xinjiang Uyghur

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[16] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 24-25.

[17] Dru Gladney, *Dislocating China: Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern Subjects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 11-12.

[18] Ibid., 164.

[19] Shale Horowitz and Yu Peng, "Holding China's West: Explaining CCP Strategies of Rule in Tibet and Xinjiang," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 20, no. 4 (December 1, 2015): 464, accessed May 2, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-014-9323-1.

Autonomous Region.[20] Surprisingly, the famine of the Great Leap Forward is rarely discussed. More often, the clash between religion and national reforms is addressed.

June Dreyer points out that initially, the PRC took a gradualist approach to implementing reforms, however, patience wore thin during the Hundred Flowers campaign.[21] Dreyer goes on to address the targeting of religion by the Red Guard within Xinjiang and the controversy surrounding Wang En-mao during the Cultural Revolution.[22] As a result of the controversy and Xinjiang's proximity to the USSR during a period of decline in PRC-USSR relations, there is a disproportionate amount of literature regarding Xinjiang during the Cultural Revolution.[23] With the death of Mao and the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution, a new era was ushered in.

Literature on the post-Mao period has focused on human rights abuses and the post-9/11 environment. The Strike Hard campaigns of the 1990s and perceived association between the Uyghurs and terrorist organizations are referenced in nearly all literature addressing this time period. Additionally, parallels and contradictions are often presented to point out how the PRC has administered control over Tibet compared to Xinjiang.

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[20] Xiaoxiao Li and Mei Zhou, "Uyghur Women in Xinjiang: Political Participation, Employment, and Birth Control," in *Ethnic China: Identity, Assimilation, and Resistance*, ed. Xiaobing Li and Patrick Shan (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 85.

[21] June Dreyer, "China's Minority Nationalities in the Cultural Revolution." *The China Quarterly*, no. 35 (1968): 97-98, accessed May 2, 2018, http://www.jstor.org/stable/652436.

[22] Ibid., 102.

[23] Ibid., 107.

Louisa Greve, in her essay posits that unrest along the border regions of China strengthen PRC authoritarian rule. She points out the changes in PRC policy toward the Uyghurs, from episodic crackdowns on "separatism" during the Strike Hard campaign to near constant pressure against the "three evil forces of separatism, terrorism, and religious extremism."[24] The PRC is able to fully repress the Uyghurs through political, military, economic, and social means by framing the Uyghurs as all three. Greve concludes by pointing out a number of intellectual initiatives aimed at addressing minority grievances and proposing policy alternatives.[25]

Although most scholars agree there is a link between terrorist groups and Uyghurs (it is hard to deny when 22 Uyghurs were detained in Afghanistan following 9/11) there appears to be some disagreement regarding the legitimacy of some Uyghur terrorist groups, notably the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM). In "Charting the Course of Uyghur Unrest," Justin Hastings calls into question the legitimacy of the ETIM as he explores the types of violent attacks and their location.[26] Regardless, when the US listed the ETIM as a terrorist organization following 9/11, the organization was legitimized and the PRC did not miss an opportunity to crack down on an internal threat.[27] These

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[24] Louisa Greve, "The Troubled Periphery: China at the Tipping Point?," in *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 1 (2013): 73-78, https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1315730347?accountid=28992.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Justin V. Hastings, "Charting the Course of Uyghur Unrest," *The China Quarterly; Cambridge* 208 (December 2011): 893–912, 896, accessed April 24, 2018, https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org.lumen.cgsccarl.com/10.1017/S0305741011001056.

[27] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs,* 136.

crackdowns were only another example of the push-pull-push interaction between the PRC and Uyghurs.

<div align="center">Chinese Policy Toward Uyghurs</div>

Literature concerning PRC policy in Xinjiang consistently describes the political, social, and economic means employed to repress the Uyghurs, with each author approaching these policies through their specific lens. Although many authors focus on the combination of policies to repress Uyghurs, occasionally scholars will discuss the role of economic development within Xinjiang as a stabilizing factor. Some authors have taken an interesting approach to interpreting PRC policy.

Martin Wayne, author of *China's War on Terrorism: Counter-Insurgency, Politics and Internal Security*, marks the PRCs success in suppressing the Uyghur insurgency as one of the few successes in the "global struggle against Islamic terrorism."[28] Wayne goes on to state that PRC efforts have been so successful it is arguable if China still faces a terrorism threat from Xinjiang.[29]

More moderate authors argue the aggressive techniques of the PRC are not justified and have ultimately created a resistance movement when none existed before. Gardner Bovingdon provides an excellent overview of the PRC policy of regional autonomy and compares it to international standards.[30] Additionally, Bovingdon goes

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[28] Martin I. Wayne, "Inside China's War on Terrorism." *Journal of Contemporary China* 18, no. 59 (2009): 249-261, accessed November 19, 2017, *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCO*host*.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 40-79.

into depth on specific social, political, and economic policies the PRC enacted to control the region.

Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland,[31] edited by Frederick Starr, consolidates the thoughts of a number of scholars on Xinjiang and the Uyghur people. More quantifiable data describing Han migration into the XUAR, as well as economic and education data that depicts the effect of PRC policy in the region, are provided over the course of the book.

<div align="center">Uyghur Organizations</div>

Uyghur organizations vary across the spectrum from non-violent organizations seeking change through political means to terrorist organizations. Interestingly, authors have recognized issues with cohesion in most Uyghur organizations as members pursue different objectives using conflicting strategies.

In "The Uyghur Lobby: Global Networks, Coalitions, and Strategies of the World," Yu-Wen Chen explores the consolidation of Uyghur diaspora groups into the World Uyghur Congress[32](WUC) and analyzes internal dynamics within the group. Most notable is the disunity among WUC affiliates. Although the WUC certainly has the potential to benefit the Uyghur cause, this disunity, and the emergence of the East Turkestan Government in Exile[33] has undermined efforts to date.

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[31] Starr, *Xinjiang.*

[32] Youwen Chen, *The Uyghur Lobby: Global Networks, Coalitions and Strategies of the World Uyghur Congress,* Routledge Contemporary China Series (New York: Routledge, Taylor, and Francis Group, 2014).

[33] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 150-151.

Yu-Wen Chen's findings are in contrast to the WUC website, which leads one to believe the organization is closely linked to NGOs, human rights mechanisms, and supportive governments.[34] Of course, the perspective of the author heavily influences literature on Uyghur organizations. It is also worth noting, that the interests of human rights commissions differ from the goals of the WUC. Most human rights organizations would like to see a reduction in violence against Uyghurs (or all minorities for that matter), however, they do not have a vested interested in the organization or internal politics of the government.

The ETIM is the most widely cited organization by authors debating resistance and terrorism within Xinjiang. No doubt, the ETIM became widely recognized as a result of the United States State Department labeling it a terrorist group after 9/11.[35] As an organization, the ETIM seeks independence to re-establish East Turkestan within XUAR for all Uyghurs.[36] Terrorist tactics are generally employed and the ETIM has links of varying degree to Al Qaeda and Islamic extremists within Pakistan.[37] Attacks conducted

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[34] "Introducing the World Uyghur Congress," World Uyghur Congress, last modified December, 7, 2010, accessed November 19, 2017, http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/?p=433

[35] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 136.

[36] "East Turkestan Islamic Movement," National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, last modified January 2015, accessed November 19, 2017, http://www.start.umd.edu/baad/narratives/eastern-turkistan-islamic-movement-etim.

[37] "Geopolitical Friends; China and Pakistan," *The Economist*, January 24, 2015, 74, accessed May 2, 2018, https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1648108386?accountid=28992.

by the ETIM are widely documented on terrorism databases and news articles, however, there are some scholars who still question how much of a threat ETIM poses.

Jacob Zenn discusses the role of Islam on Uyghur groups in his article on Islamism in Central Asia.[38] Zenn suggests the PRC is responsible for the increasing role of Islam within the Uyghur community. Many Uyghurs were pushed out of Xinjiang as a result of PRC crackdowns and fled to neighboring Pakistan and Afghanistan where they were exposed to radical Islam. This exposure led to a cross pollination of tactics including terrorism and insurgency by extremist organizations including the Taliban and Al Qaeda.[39]

Christopher Cunningham suggests that many claims of ETIM terrorism are exaggerated and are intended to provide justification for the PRC to safeguard economic and strategic interests.[40] There are a number of organizations this likely applies to given the limited information and outright lack of evidence provided by the PRC. Several other authors have made similar claims and it is likely there is a level of validity to their statements.

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[38] Jacob Zenn, "On the Eve of 2014: Islamism in Central Asia," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 15 (2013): 67-91, 116, accessed April, 23, 2018, https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1449599300?accountid=28992.

[39] Ibid., 77.

[40] Christopher P. Cunningham, "Counterterrorism in Xinjiang: The ETIM, China, and the Uyghurs," *International Journal on World Peace* 29, no. 3 (September 2012): 7-50, accessed May 2, 2018, https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1319492115?accountid=28992.

<u>Acts of Terrorism and Resistance</u>

Although groups are labeled as terrorist to justify crackdowns, acts of terrorism and resistance are highly controlled so as not to empower resistance movements. Existing literature has tended to highlight two events; the Baren uprising of 1990 and the separatists events of 1997 in Yining and Urumqi. More recent literature highlights the attacks of 2008 and 2014 and the Chinese reaction.

The term terrorism may be a bit misleading. Since as early as 2004 government officials within the PRC have grouped the terms separatism, extremism, and terrorism together, indicating that the three are directly linked.[41] As a result, demonstrations and riots that turn violent are often referenced as acts of terrorism. The Baren uprising of 1990 led to an increase in resistance activity and led to a demonstration in Yining that turned violent in 1997. Davis identifies two reasons for Uyghur violence; ethnic separatism and religious rhetoric.[42] Other scholars parallel Davis" reasoning and expand to discuss the role other nations play in promoting religious rhetoric.

In addition to the violent demonstration in Yining in 1997, there were a series of bombings in Urumqi and Beijing that targeted ethnic Han. Bovingdon points out that the strong response by the PRC government was intended to comfort the ethnic Han, but just as previous violence against Uyghurs strengthened their identity, the harsh hand of the PRC ultimately lent added weight to the terrorist acts and highlighted the continued

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[41] Elizabeth Van Wie Davis, "Uyghur Muslim Ethnic Separatism in Xinjiang, China," *Asian Affairs, an American Review* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 15-29, accessed May 2, 2018, https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/197416517?accountid=28992.

[42] Ibid.

repression by the PRC.[43] Dana Boehm builds on this point as she explores three factors likely to inspire terrorism; Religious oppression, political inequality, and economic deprivation.[44] Boehm examines the role China's Strike Hard campaign has played in reinforcing the Uyghur identity and suggests that China's efforts to suppress religion have simply added a religious character to the resistance.[45]

There was a rise in terrorist activity and subsequent PRC targeting of Uyghurs that lasted from early 2008 into 2009.[46] Cathy Cai points out the scale of these acts as well as the immediate claiming of responsibility by multiple terrorist groups was a wake up call for China. Al Qaeda even weighed in on the attacks and claimed they would avenge Chinese actions against Uyghurs by targeting Chinese workers in Algeria.[47] As with previous uprisings, a Strike Hard campaign followed. Literature regarding Uyghur unrest often addresses the PRC response, demonstrating the Chinese government will not allow unrest or acts of violence to go unpunished.

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[43] Gardner Bovingdon, "The Not-So-Silent Majority: Uyghur Resistance to Han Rule in Xinjiang," *Modern China* 28, no. 1 (2002): 39-78, accessed May 2, 2018, http://www.jstor.org.lumen.cgsccarl.com/stable/3181331.

[44] Dana Carver Boehm, "China's Failed War on Terror: Fanning the Flames of Uighur Separatist Violence," *Berkeley Journal of Middle Eastern & Islamic Law* 2, no. 3 (2009): 70-71, accessed April 23, 2018, https://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/jmeil/vol2/iss1/3/.

[45] Ibid., 90.

[46] Cathy Cai, "Terrorism in China: The Muslim Uyghurs and the Han Chinese," *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin* 40, no. 4 (October 2014): 51-5, accessed May 2, 2018, https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1679426911?accountid=28992.

[47] Ibid.

Uyghurs have embraced a number of passive resistance measures in addition to active acts of resistance such as demonstrations, riots, and acts of violence. Passive resistance measures appear to focus on maintaining the divide between ethnic Uyghur and Han so as to slow the process of assimilation. Further, passive resistance serves to build support for individuals and organizations that execute more active resistance.

The *Art of Symbolic Resistance* divides passive resistance measures into three categories; stereotypes, boundaries, and alternative representations.[48] These measures focus on the importance of embracing the Uyghur culture, separating Uyghurs from Hans through the use of distinct facilities and Uyghur language, and the use of song and storytelling to preserve the Uyghur history.

Other authors have recognized acts of everyday resistance as well. Bovingdon explores the threshold for everyday resistance and its effectiveness. Acts of non-compliance and the reinforcing of a narrative are considered value added, but simple expression of dissatisfaction in private carries little weight.[49] Bovingdon does point out when acts of resistance are done collectively, they further strengthen the Uyghur identity.

<u>Methodology</u>

The *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency*, updated by the Central Intelligence Agency in 2012, will serve as the baseline document to examine the Uyghur insurgency since 1949. This study applies the analytical framework to conduct a qualitative analysis

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[48] Joanne Smith Finley, *The Art of Symbolic Resistance: Uyghur Identities and Uyghur-Han Relations in Contemporary Xinjiang* (Boston: Brill, 2013), 130-72, accessed November 19, 2017, ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/carl-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1459308.

[49] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 84-86.

in an effort to identify trends in the Uyghur resistance movement, PRC, and diaspora communities. The framework outlined in the *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency* identifies four phases of an insurgency. The first phase is the pre-insurgency phase and will cover the historical and strategic context through the Baren Uprising of 1990. Phase two, the incipient conflict stage, will outline the expansion of the Uyghur resistance movement and implementation of increasingly aggressive tactics. Phase three, the open insurgency phase, will be discussed briefly as the Uyghur insurgency displayed signs of phase three, but never fully transitioned. The resolution stage, which has yet to happen, is the final stage and this thesis will attempt to identify future conditions required for this phase to play out in favor of the Uyghur people.

The conclusion is framed within J. Eli Margolis' Estimating State Instability (ESI) model. The purpose of the framework is to assist policy makers in their efforts to develop responses to political instability as opposed to a simple warning regarding instability potential[50]. Margolis states the model "builds on theory, joins trends and triggers into a logic of probability, and results in judgments able to inform policy, plans, and strategy."[51]

The ESI presents four stabilizing dynamics as analytic tools to estimate state instability. These dynamics include authority, resilience, legitimacy, and replacement. The dynamic of authority explores the PRC"s ability to pass and enforce laws within its borders, as well as, the application of external pressure through the use of organizations

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[50] J. Eli Margolis, "Following Trends and Triggers: Estimating State Instability," *Studies in Intelligence* 56, no. 1 (March 2012): 13.

[51] Ibid., 16.

such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Resilience addresses the relationship between the PRC and Uyghurs and the state's ability to respond to crisis. Legitimacy studies the PRCs right to rule in the eyes of Uyghurs. Finally, replacement will be explored within the context of the PRCs one party system.

Trends identified in the Uyghur insurgency, PRC, and diaspora will be applied to the dynamics of state instability. Triggers and opportunities within each dynamic will then be explored and conditions that would need to be present for Uyghur resistance success will be presented.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORIC AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

A working knowledge of the historic and strategic context in Xinjiang is needed to fully appreciate the dynamics between the Uyghurs and the Chinese state. This chapter is organized into four sections; geography, geopolitics, PRC strategy, and PRC Counter-Insurgency. The geography section will provide a baseline understanding of the terrain and its impact on the movement of people and ideas over time. Subsequently, the geopolitics section will explore events external to Xinjiang and their impact on Uyghurs. Finally, this chapter will consider Xinjiang's importance to China and how the region underpins its grand strategy.

Geography

The geography and history of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) weigh heavily on both Uyghur and Chinese perceptions. Broadly speaking, the region has been shaped by the movement of people and goods through the area over time. The massive size of the region, severity of the terrain, and availability of resources have provided the PRC with strategic advantages over competing foreign powers.

Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region covers an area roughly 1,600,000 square kilometers and borders Mongolia, Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan (see figure 1).[52] By the numbers, XUAR is China's largest province covering a sixth of its landmass, contains China's largest oil reserves, and lays

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[52] Michael Dillon, *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Far Northwest* (Abingdon, Oxon: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004) 3, accessed April 10, 2018, ProQuest Ebook Central.

claim to the second highest location on earth (K2) and the second lowest place on earth

(Turpan Basin).[53] The natural geography of the region creates three distinct geographic

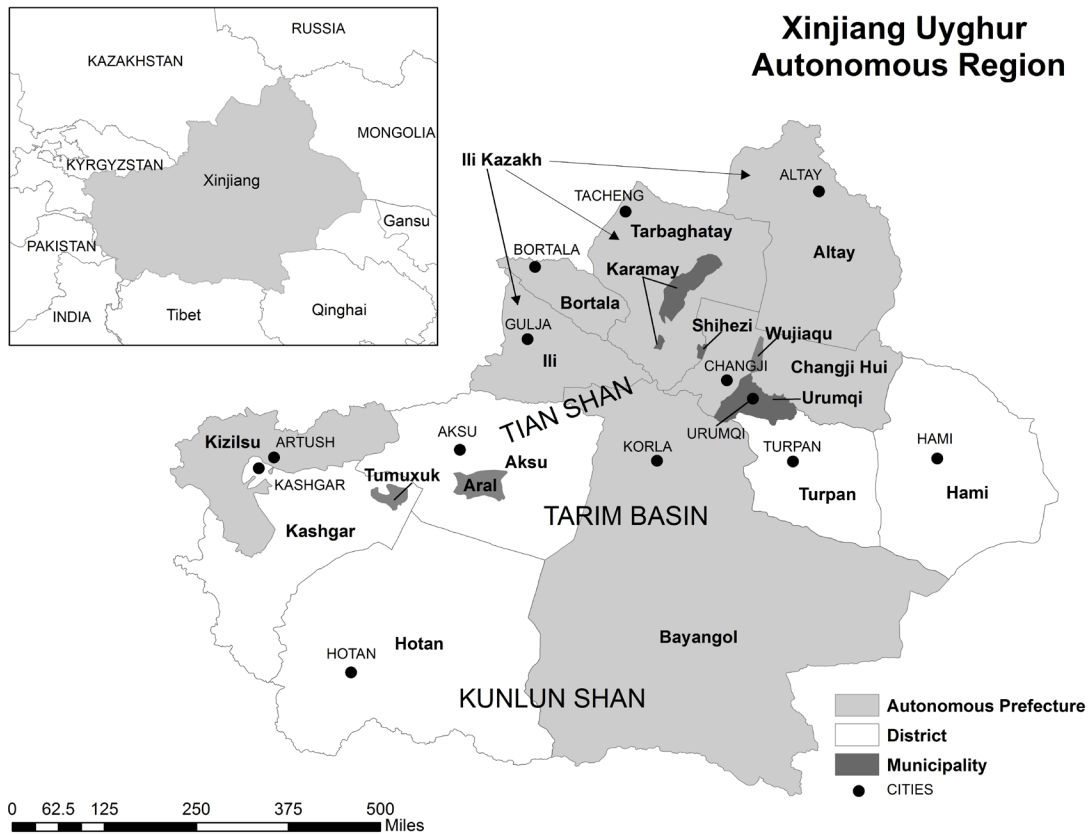areas, each with their own climate, culture, and history.

Figure 1.   Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

Source: Stanley Toops, "Spatial Results of the 2010 Census in Xinjiang," China Policy
Institute, accessed May 3, 2018, https://cpianalysis.org/2016/03/07/spatial-results-of-the-
2010-census-in-xinjiang/.

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[53] Millward and Perdue, *Xinjiang*, 29-30.

The largest geographic area is the southern region, which encompasses the Tarim Basin and associated Taklimakan Desert. It is bound by the Kunlan mountain range to the southeast, the Pamirs to the south, and the Tian Shan mountain range to the north. The southern region borders Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China's other restless region, Tibet. The dynamic topography requires much of the population to live at the edge of the basin to capitalize on available water.[54] Primarily home to the Uyghur and Uzbek, the population in the south are oasis-centered and live an agrarian lifestyle.[55] The southern region is home to the cities of Kashgar and Khotan both with timeworn links to the old Silk Road.[56] According to the 2010 China Census, 47.96% of Xinjiang's 21.82 million people live in southern Xinjiang.[57] Population centers in southern Xinjiang include Aksu, Korla, and Kashgar, all with over 450,000 residents.[58]

The central region of XUAR borders Mongolia and as such has a strong Uyghur population. It is located in a fork in the Tian Shan and is centered on the Turpan Basin. Its location makes it key to east/west travel between China's interior and the northern

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[54] Stanley Toops, "The Ecology of Xinjiang: A Focus on Water," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk: Taylor and Francis, 2015), 264-66.

[55] Witt Raczka, "Xinjiang and its Central Asian Borderlands," *Central Asian Survey* 17, no. 3 (September 1998): 373-407, accessed April 23, 2018, https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/220681801?accountid=28992.

[56] Toops, *Xinjiang,* 266

[57] Stanley Toops, "Spatial Results of the 2010 Census in Xinjiang," China Policy Institute, accessed May 3, 2018, https://cpianalysis.org/2016/03/07/spatial-results-of-the-2010-census-in-xinjiang/.

[58] Ibid.

region of Xinjiang. The residents of Turpan depend on run off from the Tian Shan for water much like their neighbors to the south.[59] Many Uyghurs believe that Turpan is the "center of their cultural universe"[60] That said, as ethnic Han flow west, their influence within the central region as increased. Within the central region lies the city of Turpan with roughly 240,000 people[61] and Hami with over 400,000 residents.[62]

The northern region consists of the Ili Valley and Zungharian Basin of which the Gurbantangut Desert is located. The climate of the northern region has lent itself to nomadic cultures with Kazaks, Mongols, Kyrgyzs, as well as Uyghurs settling in the region.[63] Additionally, the region hosts the regional capital, Urumqi, in addition to significant oil, mineral, and forest resources.[64] Contrary to the southern region of Xinjiang, the northern region has several major population centers. Urumqi is home to over 3 million and nearby Shihezi has over 600,000 residents.

Organized acts of resistance have been centered on locations of political significance, Urumqi, Khotan, and Aksu for example. It wasn't until more recently that acts have occurred outside of Xinjiang in Shanghai (2008),[65] Beijing (2013), and

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[59] Toops, *Xinjiang*, 266.

[60] Gladney, *Dislocating China,* 225.

[61] "Xinjiang, China," Geography of Xinjiang, accessed May 3, 2018, http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~jiltwu/World%20Politics/Geography.html

[62] Toops, *Spatial Results of the 2010 Census in Xinjiang.*

[63] Raczka, *Xinjiang and its Central Asian Borderlands*, 373-407.

[64] Toops, *Xinjiang,* 267.

[65] Cai, *Terrorism in China*, 51.

Kunming (2014).[66] A review of Gardner Bovingdon's data set on organized protests and violent events in Xinjiang-1949-2005 indicates most attacks were generally split between Xinjiang's southern region or along the east/west running economic corridor through northern Xinjiang through the late 1990s.[67] In 1999 attacks began to be centered on the southern region. Additional data shows this to be true in attacks that occurred in 2008 in Kashgar,[68] Khotan/Kashgar in 2011,[69] and Yarkland (near Kashgar) in 2014[70] with the exception of the 2009 Urumqi riots in which 197 people were killed.[71]

<u>Geopolitics</u>

Xinjiang's distance from Beijing and proximity to regional powers, namely Russia and the former Central Asian republics of the Soviet Union, has been a point of contention as Chinese governments have attempted to exert control over the region. Further, larger geopolitical events starting with the Great Game, through Mao's Long March, the Sino-Soviet split, and more recently, the events of September 11th have often undermined the Uyghur cause.

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[66] Colin Mackeras, "Xinjiang in China's Foreign Relations: Part of a New Silk Road Or Central Asian Zone of Conflict?" *East Asia: An International Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (March 2015): 28, accessed May 2, 2018, https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1677714289?accountid=28992.

[67] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 174-190.

[68] Hastings, *Charting the Course of Uyghur Unrest*, 911.

[69] Zenn, *On the Eve of 2014*, 76.

[70] Mackeras, *Xinjiang in China's Foreign Relations*, 28.

[71] Ibid., 27-28.

Xinjiang fell on the periphery of the so-called Great Game between the British, Russian, and Chinese and as such, was influenced by the geopolitics of the time.[72] The Yaqub Beg uprising was the first modern attempt by Uyghurs to attempt self-rule. The Qing Dynasty at the time pursued a policy of indirect rule in an effort to balance demands across the dynasty.[73] The uprising's leader, Yaqub Beg, took advantage of weak control by the Qing Dynasty to establish the Kashgar Emirate and quickly set about establishing diplomatic negotiations with the British, Russian, and Ottoman Empires. Ultimately, Yaqub Beg died, and divisions within the emirate led to its downfall and eventual reclamation of the area by the Qing Dynasty.[74] Although the Kashgar Emirate only lasted for thirteen years (1864-1877), it temporarily halted the flow of Han Chinese into the region. Dru Gladney argues the events of the Yaqub Beg uprising "crystallized Uyghur resistance against what they perceived to be a cultural and political Chinese threat to their identity."[75]

In 1933 Muslim forces based in Kashgar established the first East Turkestan Republic (ETR) after the assassination of Yang Cengxin, then Chinese governor of Xinjiang, in 1928.[76] Several leaders emerged amongst the newly declared ETR, each

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[72] Jieli Li and Lei Ji, "Still 'Familiar' But No Longer 'Strangers: Hui Muslims in Contemporary China," in *Ethnic China: Identity, Assimilation, and Resistance*, ed. Xiaobing Li and Patrick Shan (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 159.

[73] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 32-33.

[74] Millward and Perdue, *Xinjiang,* 62.

[75] Gladney, *Dislocating China,* 215.

[76] Linda Benson, *The Ili Rebellion: The Moslem Challenge to Chinese Authority in Xinjiang 1944-1949* (Armonk, New York, M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1990), 26-27.

based in a different region of Xinjiang. Significant divisions allowed Sheng Shicai, a Nationalist officer on Chiang Kai-shek's staff, to become the de facto leader in Xinjiang by 1934.[77] This quickly brought an end to the first ETR.

In 1944 anti-Han sentiment and growing Turki-nationalism[78] led to the Ili Rebellion, and with it, another attempt at establishing an East Turkestan Republic. Contrary to the government created by Yakub Beg and other Muslim leaders around Kashgar, the Ili Rebellion took place in Xinjiang's northern region and included heavy Kazak participation in conjunction with Uyghur efforts.[79] By all accounts the rebellion appears to have been well organized and led. Ali Han Tore, the newly appointed chairman of the ETR, promoted a political platform based on fourteen points, the most noteworthy of which was ending Chinese rule in Xinjiang.[80]

The Ili Rebellion aggravated China's fears of foreign encroachment, particularly on the part of the Soviet Union. The fears were certainly justified. Rebellion leaders were trained in the Soviet Union and returned to Xinjiang as the rebellion took place.[81] Additionally, the Soviet Union provided arms to resistance leaders and eventually sent military and civilian advisors to assist the ETR.[82] Despite all of the assistance, the Soviet

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[77] Benson, *Ili Rebellion*, 27.

[78] Ibid., 29.

[79] Ibid., 43-44.

[80] Ibid., 46.

[81] James Millward and Nabijan Tursun, "Political History and Strategies of Control, 1884-1978," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk: Taylor and Francis, 2015), 82-83.

[82] Benson, *Ili Rebellion*, 178.

Union signed the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance with the Chinese Nationalist government in August 1945.[83] In the treaty, Stalin recognized Xinjiang as an internal matter for the Chinese government and promised noninterference. This effectively limited future Soviet support to the ETR and paved the way for the Chinese Nationalist government to negotiate a coalition government with ETR leaders.

The downfall of the ETR came in 1949 as Communist forces swept through Xinjiang. ETR leadership recognized the need to negotiate with the newly established communist government before Communist troops arrived inside the ETR. The majority of ETR leadership were killed en route in a plane crash that went unreported for a substantial amount of time, leaving the ETR government leaderless and weak. In the end, the PRC was able to portray the Ili Rebellion and ETR as a movement against the corrupt Nationalist government and downplay the desire of the population to be free from Chinese rule.[84] Uyghurs on the other hand view the ETR government of 1944-1949 as proof of the long standing desire, and limited success, of the Uyghur independence movement.[85]

The Uyghurs in Xinjiang played a unique role from 1949 through the 1960s as Sino-Soviet friendship began to break apart. Many Uyghurs anticipated the PRC would

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[83] Millward and Tursun, *Xinjiang,* 83.

[84] O. Edmund Clubb, *China and Russia: The Great Game* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 370-371.

[85] Graham Fuller and Jonathan Lipman, "Islam in Xinjiang," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk: Taylor and Francis, 2015), 328-29.

follow the Soviet blueprint of establishing national republics with the right to secession.[86]

Mao, however, intended to establish "socialism with Chinese characteristics"[87] which

demanded minority groups recognize the Chinese state and defer to its policies. The

establishment of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is an example of the Chinese

approach to governing the minorities of Xinjiang. The name suggests minimal

management from the PRC and freedom of Uyghurs to govern XUAR internal affairs,

however, the PRC has manipulated the Uyghur people from the start. The XUAR

government was established and organized much the same as other autonomous regions

with similar goals that directly supported the PRC constitution.[88] Uyghur members of the

XUAR government are carefully selected by the PRC after being deemed trustworthy and

Han often hold positions of final determination. Additionally, minority military

organizations were absorbed into the PLA and quickly disbanded when the XUAR was

formed.[89]

At the same time, consequences of Mao reforms, namely the Great Leap Forward,

led to mass migration of Han into Xinjiang.[90] This in turn led to the migration of Uyghurs

into the USSR and its republics raising tension between the PRC and USSR as 67,000

residents of Xinjiang left. Stalin maintained influence in Xinjiang early on, granting

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[86] Justin M. Jacobs, *Xinjiang and the Modern Chinese State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), 176-178, accessed April 24, 2018, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[87] Ibid., 177.

[88] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 47.

[89] Ibid., 47-48.

[90] Ibid., 51.

100,000 Central Asians in Xinjiang citizenship in the 1940s.[91] In 1962, as the Sino-Soviet split was in full swing, the USSR began issuing Soviet passports to residents of Xinjiang against the wishes of the PRC.[92] Eventually, there was a complete breakdown in relations as distrust between the PRC and USSR led to the closing of diplomatic relations and the sealing of the Sino-Soviet border.[93]

Events in the USSR again grabbed the attention of Uyghurs when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. As former Soviet republics gained independence many Uyghurs believed these newly established governments would support Uyghur independence.[94] The PRC on the other hand viewed the break up of the Soviet Union as an opportunity to open up economically[95] and expand Chinese influence throughout the region. Further, with the looming threat of Soviet influence no longer present, PRC leaders found it unlikely the newly established independent states would be capable of immediately influencing matters in Xinjiang. As China's western border opened up and Chinese Muslims came into contact with politicized Islam, the PRC again cracked down on "illegal religious activity" through police controls and pressure on bordering countries.[96]

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[91] Lorenz M. Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008) 214.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Justin Rudelson and William Jankowiak, "Acculturation and Resistance: Xinjiang Identities in Flux," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk: Taylor and Francis, 2015), 307.

[94] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 139.

[95] Calla Wiemer, "The Economy of Xinjiang," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk: Taylor and Francis, 2015), 170.

[96] Fuller and Lipman, *Xinjiang,* 330-331.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was established ten years later after adding Uzbekistan to the Shanghai Five. The SCO promotes itself as a regional forum to strengthen relations, primarily security and economic, between China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.[97] Member states work together to fight what have previously been mentioned as the three evils; terrorism, separatism, and extremism. China's influence can be further seen as member states agree to avoid interfering in the internal affairs of other member states. The complement of token representation in internal politics and the PRCs use of political pressure within the SCO is a well-choreographed effort to prevent external influence and support for Uyghurs and ensure the PRC maintains control in the XUAR. Members of the SCO share a common concern regarding Islamic radicalization, and the events of September 11th 2001 reinforced this fear.[98] Recently, Turkey became a dialogue partner with the SCO, complicating the Uyghur/Turkey relationship and restricting external support from a long time supporter.

World politics again influenced the Uyghurs of Xinjiang following the attacks of September 11th 2001. After the 9/11 attacks the US State Department released a report naming a number of Uyghur groups as terrorist organizations with links to Al Qaeda, the Taliban, Hizb Ut-Tahrir, and Tableeghi Jamaat.[99] Further, twenty-two Uyghurs were detained in Afghanistan as US forces hunted Al Qaeda and Taliban forces. The UN and

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[97] Eleanor Albert, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 25, 2018, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/shanghai-cooperation-organization.

[98] Fuller and Lipman, *Xinjiang,* 350.

[99] Gladney, *Dislocating China,* 250-251.

the US formally recognized the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as a terrorist organization in 2002. Skeptics have pointed out that since 1962 Uyghurs have fled to Afghanistan during times of hardship. In 1962, over 12,000 Uyghurs had moved to Afghanistan as conditions inside XUAR worsened as a result of the Cultural Revolution.[100]

Scholars also point out that Uyghurs have not always been welcomed into Afghanistan with open arms. The Afghanistan Government of the 1960s often encouraged Uyghurs to continue to flee and settle in other countries such as Turkey.[101] Dru Gladney suggests that Uyghurs are an unlikely partner with international terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda and the Taliban due to a difference in forms of Islam and the limited degree to which Uyghurs associate their identity with Islam.[102] Conversely, Martin Wayne points out that while several Uyghurs were likely in the wrong place at the wrong time, there is evidence that Uyghurs have been training for years with extremist Islamic organizations.[103] Regardless of how facts are interpreted, one outcome holds true; UN and US recognition of the ETIM as a terrorist organization deeply affected the Uyghur cause by emboldening PRC action against Uyghurs. Further, the association with terrorism (and Islamic extremism) reduced the likelihood of western support for Uyghurs.

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[100] Jacobs, *Xinjiang and the Modern Chinese State*, 219-221.

[101] Ibid., 219.

[102] Dru Gladney, "The Chinese Program of Development and Control, 1978-2001," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk: Taylor and Francis, 2015), 109.

[103] Martin Wayne, *China's War on Terrorism: Counter-Insurgency, Politics, and Internal Security* (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2008), 50-52.

The recognition of the ETIM as a terrorist organization allowed China to capitalize on the events of September 11th to further pursue its national objectives, this time with a level of international support. This is consistent with a PRC strategy to "keep a low profile and never take the lead."[104] Central to this strategy is taking advantage of geopolitical opportunity, shaping dialogue through bilateral engagement, and promoting the perception of China as a nation "peacefully rising" to great power status.[105] Internally, the PRC recognizes the importance of Xinjiang to the narrative of this strategy. China implemented a number of initiatives to open up its western border following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Expansion west played into Chinese strategy by offsetting US pressure in the Pacific, opening up trade opportunities, and drawing Central Asia energy resources into China.

Xinjiang has historically been at the center of trade between coastal China and the rest of the world. Traders found a way to exchange goods, technology, and culture between Europe and China through Eurasia along what became known as the Silk Road despite the natural barriers created by daunting mountain ranges and harsh deserts. Spanning over 1500 years, the Silk Road peaked during the Tang Dynasty from 618-906

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[104] Malika Tukmadiyeva, "Xinjiang in China's Foreign Policy Toward Central Asia," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 12, no. 3 (Summer 2013): 101, accessed May 2, 2018, https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1478179207?accountid=28992.

[105] Ibid., 102.

AD.[106] It was during this time the Uyghurs became wealthy through their interaction with the Tang Dynasty, and as Dru Gladney points out, the Uyghur identity was solidified.[107] The effects of the Silk Road were experienced in a number of other ways, namely, religion and language. Multiple belief systems, including Persian Manichaeism, Buddhism, Christianity, and later, Islam passed through the region.[108]

Modern day China, as it strives to expand its influence, has begun to create a new Silk Road. Named the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative, it includes maritime and land routes to connect China to major economies (and resources) throughout Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa. The global supply chain will directly increase Chinese imports and exports and indirectly increase Chinese influence with more than 60 nations.[109] Scholars advocate that the long-term initiative will develop new market opportunities, support China's economic restructuring, and potentially promote social stability to its perceived, restless western region.[110] The associated infrastructure and resource development will create jobs and connect China, and the residents of Xinjiang, more thoroughly to the outside world. The majority of infrastructure will be developed

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[106] Tim Summers, "Roadmap to a Wider Market," *The World Today*, October 2015, 18, https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1719140240?accountid=28992.

[107] Gladney, *Dislocating China*, 193-194.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Nayan Chanda, "The Silk Road: Old and New," *Global Asia* 10, no. 3 (2015): 13-15, accessed December 29, 2017, EBSCOhost.

[110] Yunling Zhang, "One Belt, One Road: A Chinese View," *Global Asia* 10, no. 3 (2015): 8-12, accessed December 29, 2017, EBSCOhost.

along the northern and central region of Xinjiang passing through both Urumqi and Turpan.

Despite the positive economic impact of such an endeavor in the region, the situation is not all upbeat. Chinese policy has a habit of distributing opportunity to Han Chinese to the detriment of ethnic minorities. In 1999, the PRC commenced the Great Western Development Program designed to provide a "modern and civilized living environment and better public services."[111] An added benefit, from the PRC perspective, is the development program has led to an influx of Han into the area.[112] As of 2008 ethnic Han make up 40% of the population in the XUAR, up from 6.7% in 1949.[113] The flow of Han into the area, in combination with other policies designed to limit Uyghur education and representation, promotes assimilation of minorities into Han culture.

Xinjiang isn't the only internal matter that weighs on the mind of the PRC. Malika Tukmediyave suggests that PRC leadership is eager to bring stability to Xinjiang as it would allow China to give the Taiwan issue its undivided attention.[114] Needless to say, if Uyghurs were to gain any level of independence in Xinjiang, it would greatly undermine the "One China" principle that PRC leadership has gone to great efforts to promote. Additionally, minority independence is seen as a slippery slope. If one group attains independent status, others will likely come to expect the same. This in turn would

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[111] Jungmin Seo and Young Chul Cho, "Rethinking Beijing's Geostrategic Sensibilities to Tibet and Xinjiang: Images and Interests," *Pacific Focus* 28, no. 2 (August 2013): 309, accessed April 23, 2018, EBSCOhost.

[112] Ibid., 305.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Tukmadiyeva, *Xinjiang in China's Foreign Policy Toward Central Asia*, 101.

undermine the strategic buffer against historic and emerging adversaries that minority regions provide.[115] Xinjiang's location is crucial not only as a buffer to threats coming from Central Asia, but to control Tibet, another sensitive ethnic region.[116]

Finally, the PRC is not interested in returning to the so called "Century of Humiliation" in which "China's effective territorial control shrank by a third, its millennia-old imperial system collapsed, and the country was riven by internal uprisings, invasion, and civil war."[117] The Century of Humiliation inlaid the necessity of a strong nation for success in the outside world.[118] As such, the PRC has wholly embraced the concept of state sovereignty and has often made it central to international policy, as seen with the SCO. In addition to shaping international policy, PRC leadership has capitalized on the Century of Humiliation to promote a sense of nationalism throughout China proper.

Despite the efforts by the PRC to promote nationalism, China remains divided primarily along ethnic lines. In the 1950s the PRC began considering all ethnicities, including Han, as equal *minzu* (races).*[119]* This was a political move designed to use ethnic minorities against external actors by directly associating those minorities with China.[120]

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[115] Tukmadiyeva, *Xinjiang in China's Foreign Policy Toward Central Asia*, 92.

[116] Horowitz and Peng, *Holding China's West*, 457.

[117] Alison Adcock Kaufman, "The 'Century of Humiliation,' Then and Now: Chinese Perceptions of the International Order," *Pacific Focus* 25, no. 1 (April 2010): 2, accessed April 23, 2018, EBSCOhost.

[118] Ibid., 9.

[119] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 16.

[120] Gladney, *Dislocating China*, 16-17.

Following the identification of *minzu*, the PRC established autonomous regions,

prefectures, counties, and villages.[121] The following multilayered government essentially

pitted different minorities against each other from level to level. Still, the PRC

consistently favored the Han ethnicity in political postings, education and economic

opportunities, and social standing. This made it clear to Chinese minorities that despite

being placed in the same category as *minzu,* they were not equal. Further, this attempt to

strengthen the Chinese state ultimately strengthened the identity of many minorities.

    Internal security will remain important to China as it continues its rise as a great

nation. The combination of strategic depth, natural resources, and importance as an

economic corridor will make Xinjiang crucial to China's successful rise. To date, the

PRC has placed heavy restrictions on Uyghur travel, information flow outside of

Xinjiang, and is actively enhancing surveillance within XUAR. The PRC will continue to

take action to ensure Xinjiang remains secure as a part of China and will promote

stability and economic development for the foreseeable future.

<center>PRC Counterinsurgency</center>

    PRC counterinsurgency (COIN) fluctuates based on Uyghur actions and

prevailing internal politics at the time. Additionally, geopolitical threats shape how the

PRC reacts to Uyghur unrest. Initially, PRC actions in the region were relatively tolerant

(by Chinese standards), allowing Islamic religious and cultural practices.[122] As Mao-era

reforms swept through the country, the PRC initiated policies, enforced by Chinese

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[121] Gladney, *Dislocating China*, 18-19.

[122] Horowitz and Peng, *Holding China's West*, 462.

security forces, to force Uyghurs to assimilate into the Chinese state. Chinese security

forces include the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the People's Armed Police (PAP),

the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), the Ministry of State Security (MSS), and the

Bingtuan.[123] The 1997 National Defense Law established the PLA as "the ultimate

guarantor of the CCP"s authority" in 1997 and highlighted its role in internal security.[124]

Most literature does not delineate the specific organization responsible for crackdowns or

policy implementation, but simply credits "Chinese security forces." PRC COIN efforts

are multifaceted and designed to break up the identity of the Uyghurs, prevent outside

influence, and reinforce Han control. The PRC employs various methods including

crackdowns by security forces, controlling information flow, and regional policy.

The PLA was responsible for maintaining control of Xinjiang and making it

"inseparable" from the Chinese state from the outset.[125] Horowitz points out that "Han

Chinese military Veterans" controlled both the military and civilian institutions in the

region.[126] Dynamics between the Uyghurs and the PLA fluctuated over time with an

increase in PLA presence during PRC/USSR tensions, a reduction in forces as those

tensions were relieved in the 1980s, and a subsequent influx as unrest in the region

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[123] Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2017* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 62.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Michael Clarke, "China's 'War on Terror' in Xinjiang: Human Security and the Causes of Violent Uighur Separatism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 2 (April 2008): 276.

[126] Horowitz and Peng, *Holding China's West*, 462.

mounted following the Baren Uprising in 1990.[127] Although the size and role of the PLA changed, their reaction to unrest, real or perceived, has been consistent. Following the 1990 Baren Uprising, PLA resources were used in the ensuing crackdown that resulted in the death of 3,000 Uyghurs by some accounts.[128] After the Yining Rebellion in 1997, the PLA and PAP worked together to quell unrest. The combined effort resulted in 500 arrests and between 103 and 300 Uyghur deaths.[129]

More recently, the PRC has taken steps to modernize its military and project power outside of China. As such, the organization and structure of the military has adjusted accordingly. In 2016, the PLA established five regional commands designed to allow the PLA to conduct joint operations in each theater.[130] Xinjiang falls in the Western Military Region (WMR) and according to the 2017 U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission "is focused on missions associated with combating domestic extremism and terrorism in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Tibet Autonomous Region, as well as addressing an Indian border dispute contingency."[131] Interestingly, the

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[127] Horowitz and Peng, *Holding China's West*, 465.

[128] Wayne, *Inside China's War on Terrorism*, 81.

[129] Ibid., 85.

[130] James Char and Richard Bitzinger, "A New Direction in the People's Liberation Army's Emergent Strategic Thinking, Roles and Missions," *The China Quarterly* 232 (2017): 841.

[131] U.S. Congress, *2017 Report to Congress of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission,* 115th Cong., 1st sess., Washington, DC, November 2017, 246.

report details the reduction of an infantry brigade from the WMR, but does not indicate if the unit was removed from Xinjiang or Tibet.[132]

The paramilitary force known as the *bingtuan* are also crucial to implementing PRC policy and maintaining control. The *bingtuan* are military-agricultural settlements intended to "reclaim wasteland and defend the frontiers."[133] The proliferation of *bingtuan* in Xinjiang was more focused on securing the PRC/USSR border and increasing ethnic Han in the region. The *bingtuan*, also called the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), receives military training from the PLA and is organized in a hierarchical military manner, but are generally responsible for construction and agricultural projects.[134] Their presence, totaling over 13% of Xinjiang's population,[135] prevents Central Asian influence from penetrating China and provides a dispersed paramilitary capability throughout the region. Wayne points out the heavy *bingtuan* presence was key to PRC strategy to counter a Soviet offensive, as well as, prevent unrest in the region.[136]

Much like the *bingtuan*, the PAP has a close relationship with the PLA. The PAP was created in large part from demobilized PLA forces and fulfills an internal security

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[132] U.S. Congress, *2017 Report to Congress of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission*, 197.

[133] Thomas Cliff and Matthew James, "Neo Oasis: The Xinjiang Bingtuan in the Twenty-first Century," *Asian Studies Review* 33, no. 1 (March 2009): 83-43, accessed May 2, 2018, Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost.

[134] Ibid., 86-87.

[135] Wayne, *Inside China's War on Terrorism*, 78.

[136] Ibid., 79.

role.[137] Following the events of September 11th, the PAP executed an exercise with the XPCC in Xinjiang to "deal with sudden exigencies."[138] In 2009 following the Urumqi riots, the PAP response resulted in 197 killed and 1721 injured.[139] Bovingdon points out many of the resulting casualties included ethnic Han and PAP actions were insufficient to stop the escalating violence.[140] This calls into question the capability of the PAP and suggests at least a degree of dependence on PLA support.

The spectrum of Chinese security forces are used to enforce policies that restrict the Uyghur identity, prevent the ability to organize, and limit external influence.

Mao took steps to move ethnic Han into the region from the outset, however Mao-era reforms not only forced ethnic Han into Xinjiang, but Uyghurs out of the area. Later, Han migration was a result of PRC policies to promote economic development in Xinjiang.[141] These efforts have substantially changed the ethnic makeup in Xinjiang and diluted the strength of the Uyghur identity in the area. From 1949 to 1976, Han

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[137] David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) 8, quoted in Martin Wayne, *China's War on Terrorism: Counter-Insurgency, Politics and Internal Security* (New York and London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2008) 77.

[138] Yitzhak Shichor, "The Great Wall of Steel: Military and Strategy in Xinjiang," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk: Taylor and Francis, 2015), 121.

[139] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 168.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Hastings, *Charting the Course of Uyghur Unrest*, 895.

population in Xinjiang expanded from 6.7% to 40%.[142] Han population by percentage has remained in the 40 percent range from 1976 until 2010.[143]

Education was another COIN mechanism available to the PRC. Wayne outlines PRC efforts to counter the insurgent narrative of a better future through support to the insurgency.[144] The education system promotes the views and the role of the state, and with it, hope for the future through the PRC.[145] Further, the PRC understands education is a control mechanism to limit cultural and religious practice. The PRC controls the narrative by dictating language instruction, limiting exposure to mosques, and sending religious and education personnel to "patriotic reeducation."[146] When education policy is not enough, the PRC calls on its security forces to make a statement through crackdowns on institutions promoting Uyghur education. Chinese security forces destroyed private religious schools throughout Xinjiang following the Baren Uprising.[147]

Finally, the PRC has gone to great efforts to control information flow and shape the narrative in their favor. The PRC frequently shuts down mobile communication networks and the Internet in Xinjiang during times of unrest.[148] This prevents insurgents

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[142] Horowitz and Peng, *Holding China's West*, 462.

[143] Ibid., 463.

[144] Wayne, *Inside China's War on Terrorism*, 135.

[145] Ibid., 118.

[146] Horowitz and Peng, *Holding China's West*, 468.

[147] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 124.

[148] Phillip Potter, "Terrorism in China: Growing Threats with Global Implications," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (2013): 73.

from coordinating efforts or broadcasting their message to Uyghurs and the international community. China has also begun to exert influence in controlling information flow at the international level. In 2017 Cambridge University Press censored documents at the request of the Chinese government. [149] The documents covered incidents sensitive to China such as Tibet and Xinjiang. The PRC sees information flow, especially unrestricted information flow, as a threat to its legitimacy. [150]

The PRC has upgraded its COIN approach to incorporate emerging technology. This includes the use of digital surveillance systems and the collection of DNA samples from Uyghurs. In June 2017, authorities in Urumqi required all residents to turn in their cell phones, hard drives, and computers as part of an "anti-terrorist videos operation." [151] The PRC actively monitors and blocks websites covering politically sensitive matters like Xinjiang and Tibet. [152] These efforts prevent the spread of the Uyghur narrative and enable targeting of resistance leaders and supporters. On a more human level, authorities in Xinjiang began requiring Uyghurs to submit DNA and other biometric data for passports in 2016. [153] More recent reporting suggests a broader collection was conducted

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[149] U.S. Congress, *2017 Report to Congress of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission,* 468.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Radio Free Asia, "Xinjiang Authorities Take further Steps Towards Total Digital Surveillance," June 2017, 1, accessed May 2, 2018, https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1914647328?accountid=28992.

[152] Ronald Deibert, John Palfrey, Rafal Rohozinski, and Jonathan Zittrain, *Access Contested: Security, Identity, and Resistance in Asian Cyberspace* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 287, accessed May 1, 2018, ProQuest Ebook Central.

to obtain biometric data on all male Uyghurs aged 12-65 in Xinjiang.[154] This collection

was under the guise of providing free annual physical exams for Uyghurs. The collection

of DNA samples will add legitimacy to any claims laid against Uyghurs by the PRC.

The comprehensive COIN mechanisms of the PRC have effectively controlled the

Uyghur insurgency. They will continue to do so short of a major change in Chinese

internal politics or a significant geopolitical event. In the meantime, the PRC will

continue to improve on mechanisms that already work as they look to retain control of

Xinjiang.

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[153] Radio Free Asia, "Xinjiang Residents must Give DNA, Voice-Print for Passports," June 2016, accessed May 2, 2018, https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1794993409?accountid=28992.

[154] Sutirtho Patranobis, "Chinese Officials Collecting DNA from Xinjiang Residents, says New Report," *Hindustan Times*, December 13, 2017, accessed May 1, 2018, Newspaper Source Plus, EBSCOhost.

CHAPTER 4

INSURGENCY

This chapter aims to build on the historic and strategic context of chapter three and layout the Uyghur insurgency within the framework of the CIA"s Guidebook to the Analysis of Insurgency. Insurgency by its very nature is a non-linear affair. An insurgency will move back and forth through the stages of an insurgency based on actions, reactions, and counteractions between insurgents and the established government. Further, an insurgency will exhibit signs of multiple phases concurrently. Phases tend to be determined based on the overall relationship between all actors involved. The typology of an insurgency may vary based on the group or stage as well.

The Uyghur insurgency is primarily made up of two typologies. The first is a reformist-based insurgency. This is an insurgency that aims to bring about change in government policies through the use of insurgent tactics.[155] This should come as no surprise given the one party state of China. Uyghur leaders have little ability to influence change in their region within the existing political structure. Central to the reformist insurgency is not the overthrow or expulsion of the existing government, but rather a change in policy for the region or toward a specific group.[156] The Uyghur insurgency also consists of groups or individuals pursuing the more extreme separatist insurgency. As the name implies, the stated goal of this insurgency is an independent state and the eviction of the existing government. Given the limited information available on Uyghur groups it

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[155] CIA, *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency*, 3.

[156] Ibid.

is difficult to pin point the specific objectives of each group and which typology they subscribe to. The information must instead be deduced from the actions and experiences of each group.

The framework consists of four phases; the pre-insurgency phase, the incipient conflict phase, open insurgency, and finally, the resolution stage. The pre-insurgency phase began in 1949 with the dissolution of the ETR and lasted through the Baren Uprising of 1990. The incipient conflict phase began with the Baren Uprising and, with a brief period bordering on open insurgency, continues on today. It appears the insurgency never fully passed into open insurgency and certainly never reached the resolution stage. This chapter will describe the insurgency within the previously mentioned timeline and framework giving a brief description of the phase at the beginning of each section.

<u>Pre-insurgency Phase</u>

The first phase, pre-insurgency, builds on preexisting conditions and is often difficult to recognize.[157] Critical to this stage is the development of a strong identity for the potential resistance population and a narrative that capitalizes on existing grievances.[158] It is worth noting, that for the counterinsurgents, creating a better alternative, and in the Chinese case, a strong Chinese identity is crucial to the success of the established government.

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[157] CIA, *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency*.

[158] Ibid., 6.

Although the Uyghur identity has changed over time, even disappearing for nearly 500 years, it is nonetheless alive and strong today.[159] The Uyghur experiences of short-lived independence following both Yaqub Beg and the Ili Rebellion only breathed life into the identity, and created a narrative that reinforced hope of eventual enduring independence. The Uyghur identity is tied heavily to historic claims on the land in Xinjiang as well as the broader elements of identity. Of course, in the eyes of the PRC, this separatist vein is a constant threat that must be addressed.

The PRC in its infancy, recognized the importance of addressing concerns of select minorities so it could focus its efforts on other tasks at hand, namely support to the Korean War and Tibet.[160] The PRC attempted to address concerns of independence and autonomy a number of ways, eventually establishing regional autonomies in the mid 1950s. Of course, the PRC was consistently concerned about "local nationalism" and continued to seek consolidation of the Chinese identity.[161]

The Great Leap Forward brought about economic turmoil, famine, and radical social change in China as a whole. Within Xinjiang, it led to targeting of those suspected of "local nationalism" and a crack down on religious practices.[162] As Uyghurs fled the region, the PRC employed the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and *bingtuan* troops to halt migration out of China. Over the duration of the pre-insurgency phase, the borders

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[159] Gladney, *Dislocating China*, 207-208.

[160] Qiang Fang, "Struggling for a Better Solution: Chinese Communist Party and Minorities, 1921-present," in *Ethnic China: Identity, Assimilation, and Resistance*, ed. Xiaobing Li and Patrick Shan (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 210.

[161] Gladney, *Dislocating China*, 226.

[162] Millward and Tursun, *Xinjiang,* 93-94.

were porous at times and closed at others. The Uyghurs that managed to escape created diaspora communities throughout Central Asia and beyond.

During the Cultural Revolution the PRC cracked down on the "four olds" of ethnic, religious, cultural and political difference.[163] The Uyghurs were noticeably different in three of the categories and received harsh treatment throughout the period. Throughout the Cultural Revolution minorities were forbidden from participating in any type of religious acts, worship, or celebration. Further, a crackdown on educational opportunities resulted in the cessation of minority language instruction and the removal of Uyghur language books.[164] In the post-Mao period, initiatives such as the Great Western Development Plan encouraged ethnic Han to migrate west for economic benefit, as well as to help pacify the region. In the words of CCP policy advisor Ma Dazheng "Hans are the most reliable force for stability in Xinjiang."[165]

The religion of Islam initially had little impact on the Uyghur identity. Having converted from Buddhism by the 16th century, many Uyghurs still associated their identity with the area they reside in.[166] Denise Helly suggests Islam began to play a role as a unifying ideology of resistance as the PRC came to power in 1949.[167] Joanne Smith

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[163] Gladney, *Dislocating China*, 22.

[164] Bill Brugger and Stephen Reglar, *Politics, Economy and Society in Contemporary China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 328.

[165] Thomas Cliff, "The Partnership of Stability in Xinjiang: State Society Interactions Following the July 2009 Unrest," *The China Journal,* no. 68 (July 2012): 79-105, 271, quoted in Gardner Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang: Han Nationalist Imperatives and Uyghur Discontent," *Policy Studies* 11 (2004): 27.

[166] Gladney, *Dislocating China*, 212-213.

[167] Ibid., 218.

Finley builds on this notion as she outlines symbolic, spatial, and social boundaries, many of which are tied directly to Islamic practice and traditions.[168] Conflict between religion and Communism led to repeated crackdowns on religious freedom, or as the PRC labeled it, "illegal religious activities." Over time Islam has become an integral part of the Uyghur identity and has only furthered the divide between Uyghurs and ethnic Han.

As the Uyghur identity strengthened as a result of PRC pressure, the emphasis on resistance did as well. Resistance in the pre-insurgency phase is often easily explained away as a misunderstanding or a misinterpretation of the facts, however, it plays an important role in maintaining a psychological distance between the Uyghur people and the state. Gardner Bovingdon describes it as "everyday resistance."[169] That is of course, everyday, individual acts that slowly build on the existing narrative of a people who have the right to self govern and undermine the PRC as the legitimate power. Joanne Smith Finley goes on to describe passive resistance through the establishment of boundaries as previously mentioned. This process maintains the "us verse them" dynamic, slowing the process of assimilation and strengthening the Uyghur identity.

The practice of passive resistance appears to be correlated to several Uyghur grievances, specifically those related to Islam. For example, Finley goes into great detail on boundaries created around Muslim dietary restrictions.[170] Requirements to produce *halal* meals require spatial separation of Han and Uyghurs at multiple levels. Pigs must be raised at locations geographically separated from Uyghur populations. Restaurants

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[168] Finley, *The Art of Symbolic Resistance*, 130-172.

[169] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 80-104.

[170] Finley, *The Art of Symbolic Resistance*, 130-172.

were established to cater to specific ethnic groups based on dietary restrictions, and Han and Uyghurs rarely visit each other's houses for similar reasons. There is a strong taboo against intermarriage between Uyghur and Han as well, but this rarely happens within Xinjiang itself. Finally, the imposition of birth control on Uyghur women violates Islamic beliefs regarding children.[171] There are more secular grievances as well of course. These grievances include China's exploitation of natural resources from the region, as well as the testing of nuclear weapons inside Xinjiang. It is worth noting that just as the Uyghur identity has changed, so have grievances. By 2011, collective grievances had evolved disproportionately to concerns related to religious freedom.[172]

During the time period of pre-insurgency, passive resistance accounted for most acts of resistance due to the attention Uyghurs received from the PRC and its policies. The cumulative effect of these individual and collective acts is hard to calculate, however, it is clear that underlying dissatisfaction existed regarding the state of affairs in Xinjiang. Further, lasting change will not come from passive resistance alone. Lasting change will require a more active approach building on the successes of passive resistance.

There were active acts of resistance during this time frame, however, they tended to be spontaneous and lack organization. Gardner Bovingdon documented organized protests and violent events in Xinjiang from 1949-2005 in his book *The Uyghurs*.[173] Analysis indicates that events during the pre-insurgency phase were generally limited to

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[171] Finley, *The Art of Symbolic Resistance*, 135.

[172] Zenn, *On the Eve of 2014*, 76.

[173] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 174-190.

demonstrations and riots addressing dissatisfaction with a specific condition or event as compared to a broad set of grievances. Interestingly, there are a number of insurgencies listed in Bovingdon's data set, but comments indicate the insurgencies were discovered at an early stage and were subsequently crushed. These acts, in combination with everyday resistance, built a Uyghur narrative over time. It wasn't until the incipient stage that uprisings and acts of violence became more prevalent.

The Uyghurs were heavily suppressed for the duration of the pre-insurgency phase. As the internal situation in China changed and geopolitics led to the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, Uyghurs were able to transition into the incipient conflict phase.

Incipient Conflict Phase

The incipient conflict phase is characterized by the application of violence by resistance forces. This violence is often disorganized and may be dismissed by the government as the work of criminals or other illegal elements.[174] Additionally, in this phase the resistance will develop its vision, or as the framework refers to it, the "theory of victory". As the resistance gathers support it begins establishing its support networks to prepare for open insurgency.

Uyghur organizations emerged and anti-state activities increased throughout the incipient conflict phase. Most organizations formed outside of Xinjiang in locations with a political climate favorable to minorities. Anti-state activities also became more organized and certainly grew in scale. The PRC responded in kind by cracking down on

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[174] CIA, *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency*, 10.

Uyghur unrest via the Strike Hard campaigns that began in 1996 and the establishment of the SCO as previously discussed.

The Baren Uprising in April 1990 marked the beginning of the incipient phase. Two justifications, ethnic separatism and religious rhetoric, are presented for the uprising.[175] This event represents a shift from everyday resistance and small-scale pushback against PRC policies to a more aggressive approach. It is important to note that not only was the uprising violent, it was better organized and led to the creation of the ETIM,[176] a group that came to be well known following the events of 9/11.

Brent Hierman presents a dataset (courtesy of Gardner Bovingdon) outlining contentious events from 1955 to 2002. The data set clearly demonstrates the changing nature of resistance inside Xinjiang following the Baren Uprising. Acts of resistance evolved from demonstrations and riots to pre-meditated acts of violence including bombings, assassination, and insurgent acts.[177] Scholars have divided these events up into different series based on location and time period and a fairly consistent trend has emerged. A series of violent confrontations will occur followed by a heavy-handed PRC response. Scholars hold differing views on the impact of such PRC actions. In many ways the crackdowns have been effective in halting further acts of resistance, at least in the near term. On the other hand, the actions of the PRC reinforce the belief amongst Uyghurs that their grievances are not being, and will not be, addressed. Finally, the

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[175] Davis, *Uyghur Muslim Ethnic Separatism*, 15-16.

[176] Rudelson and Jankowiak, *Xinjiang,* 318.

[177] Brent Hierman, "The Pacification of Xinjiang: Uighur Protest and the Chinese State 1988-2002," *Problems Of Post-Communism* 54, no. 3 (June 2007): 53-56, accessed April 23, 2018, Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost.

majority of violence has shifted to southern Xinjiang. Some scholars suggest this is due to southern Xinjiang's proximity to states known to harbor extremist Islamic groups like Afghanistan and Pakistan.[178] It is also worth considering that southern Xinjiang has not received the same economic development northern and central Xinjiang have enjoyed.

Qiang Fang highlights more recent clashes through 2014 including the 2009 Urumqi riot and the 2014 Kunming train station attack.[179] As each incident is described, it becomes apparent that the acts of resistance have become substantially more violent and are occurring on a more frequent basis. Further, casualties as a result of the event have increased and the location of the attacks has expanded, reaching all the way to Beijing. The 2009 riot in Urumqi resulted in 197 people killed while the 2014 knife attack at Kunming train station attack resulted in 29 dead.[180]

Along with the creation of the ETIM, additional groups began to emerge during the incipient conflict stage. A quick search through existing literature highlights over twenty organizations that developed post-Baren. The groups, which are too abundant to name in full, vary across the spectrum of peaceful and violent approaches, secular and religious practices, and autonomy or independence end states. Although these organizations are referenced in a number of texts, little definitive information is available regarding the objectives, leaders, organization, or actions for all groups. Information tends to be spotty based on the location of the group and the stature of its leadership. Many groups formed shortly after PRC crackdowns and often are created outside of

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[178] Cai, *Terrorism in China*, 51.

[179] Fang, *Ethnic China*, 199.

[180] Mackeras, *Xinjiang in China's Foreign Relations*, 28.

Xinjiang itself. For example, the ETIM, Eastern Turkestan National Congress (ETNC), Uyghurstan Liberation Organization (ULO), East Turkestan Information Center (ETIC), and East Turkestan Islamic Party of Allah (ETIPA) all formed following the Baren Uprising. The ETIM was founded at a *madrassa* in Pakistan and reportedly had close links to the Taliban and Al Qaeda.[181] The ETNC and ULO were Kazakhstan-based organizations devoted to Uyghur independence in Xinjiang. They developed post-Baren, but the break up of the Soviet Union may have played more of a role in their formation. The ETNC, ULO, and Uyghur Association of Kazakhstan (UAK) later combined following the Ghulja Uprising in 1997 to create the Uyghur Association.[182] The East Turkestan Islamic Party of Allah (ETIPA), not to be confused with the East Turkestan Islamic Party (ETIP) responsible for the Baren Uprising, was created in 1993 and was responsible for the Ghulja Uprising.[183] Similar to the ETIM, the ETIPA appears to have operated in Afghanistan, likely associating with extremist groups in the region.[184]

Scholars suggest the increase in violent tactics is tied to the influence of Islamic extremist organizations located in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Jacob Zenn writes about the growing role of Islamism in Uyghur groups, specifically the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP).[185] Zenn suggests the TIPs close relationship with the Pakistani Taliban directly led

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[181] Rudelson and Jankowiak, *Xinjiang,* 318.

[182] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 142-143.

[183] Ibid.

[184] Boehm, *China's Failed War on Terror*, 106.

[185] Zenn, *On the Eve of 2014*, 76.

to integration with "Pakistani Taliban networks, ideology, and operations."[186] The TIP,

thought to be the successor to the ETIM or ETIP,[187] is responsible for a number of

attacks in Khotan and Kashgar in 2011.[188] Scholars also mention the establishment of

unofficial militant training camps across the Chinese border where Uyghurs may come

into contact with "increased Islamic extremism."[189]

The diaspora community began to organize during the incipient conflict stage as

well. Uyghur advocacy organizations grew to over twenty in the 1990s, but have

decreased since the events of September 11th.[190] Additionally, financial support to the

Uyghurs dried up due to "surplus organizations"[191] indicating the abundance of support

and lack of coordination actually undercut Uyghur efforts. Each organization aimed to

improve the life of Uyghurs and accomplish specific goals. It is also apparent, due to the

influx of organizations with varying aims that a clear vision for the Uyghurs as a people

was lacking. Formerly, diaspora groups were often geographically separated, forming

across Central Asia, Europe, and North America. In 2004 the World Uyghur Congress

(WUC) was formed in Munich, Germany as a result of the merging of the ETNC and

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[186] Zenn, *On the Eve of 2014*, 77.

[187] Boehm, *China's failed War on Terror*, 104-105.

[188] Zenn, *On the Eve of 2014*, 76.

[189] Davis, *Uyghur Muslim Ethnic Separatism*, 23-25.

[190] Gladney, *Dislocating China*, 244.

[191] Ibid., 249.

World Uyghur Youth Conference (WUYC).[192] The WUC exists to "represent the interest

of the Uyghur people in East Turkestan and abroad" according to their website.[193]

Many scholars consider the WUC an umbrella organization for the multiple

Uyghur advocacy groups.[194] Gladney points out numerous online organizations that aim

to support their cause, however, they do not appear to work together, except to share

information.[195] Further, most of the sites are not in Chinese or Uyghur, indicating the

websites are targeting external support. The predecessors of the WUC faced significant

disagreement on everything from tactics to topics as basic as the name of the

organization.[196] As the organization came together, special attention was paid to

balancing out the WUC to prevent specific regions from dominating the group.[197]

Bovingdon points out the newly formed WUC "achieved a greater degree of consensus in

articulating its mission and strategies."[198]

More important during this time frame was the emergence of Uyghur leaders.

These leaders, including Isa Dolqun, Anwar Yusuf Turani, and Rebiya Kadir, had grew

up in Xinjiang, but were forced to leave and ultimately settle elsewhere. As diaspora

communities began to organize, these individuals rose to positions of power and

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[192] World Uyghur Congress, "Introducing the World Uyghur Congress."

[193] Ibid.

[194] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs,* 146-148.

[195] Gladney, *Dislocating China*, 229-259.

[196] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 147-148.

[197] Ibid., 149-150.

[198] Ibid., 150.

influence within their respective groups. Although leaders emerged within these organizations, no single leader ascended to represent Uyghurs and their interests as a whole, especially not within China proper. This is likely due to Chinese policy and practice. Further, as the different Uyghur leaders began to wield power, they undercut each other's efforts, and ultimately, the collective interest.

Anwar Yusuf Turani, who met with President Bill Clinton in 1999 in search of support for the Uyghur cause, participated in the establishment of the East Turkestan Government-in-Exile (ETGIE) shortly after the establishment of the WUC.[199] ETGIE leaders made the announcement from the United Stated Congress and directly challenged the WUC as they set about seeking official recognition as the sovereign government of East Turkestan.[200] It is no surprise given the political climate of 2004, the US State Department refused to recognize the organization as such. The poorly timed move by members of the ETGIE, and the failure to tie their actions to the broader pro-Uyghur community, sapped momentum from within the diaspora.

Regarding the framework for the analysis of insurgency, it appeared the resistance movement was trending toward the third phase, open insurgency. Phase three consists of frequent, coordinated attacks designed to challenge the government. Generally, a shadow government will form to begin providing services to the population as well.[201] In the case of the Uyghurs, attacks have certainly continued and increased in size. The combination

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[199] Dru Gladney, "Responses to Chinese Rule: Patterns of Cooperation and Opposition," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk: Taylor and Francis, 2015), 382.

[200] Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs*, 150-152.

[201] CIA, *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency*, 13.

of attacks, labeling of Uyghur organizations as terrorists by the PRC, and the recognition of these organizations by portions of the international community was essentially a double-edged sword. In many ways, it has brought attention to the Uyghur cause and PRC human rights abuses, but it has also provided a justification for the PRC to crack down on Uyghurs. PRC Strike Hard campaigns targeting separatism and illegal religious activity have effectively controlled Xinjiang and prevented expansion into the open phase of insurgency.[202]

Moreover, a legitimate shadow government never formed within Xinjiang. As mentioned previously, in fighting, geographic separation, and PRC pressure has prevented an effective organization of any scale from forming within Xinjiang. The previously mentioned government-in-exile further set the resistance back in the process of its failed power grab.

Finally, there are no signs the Uyghurs have been able to significantly advance their insurgent skills. There are no reports of the use of heavy or crew served weapons. Most planned attacks are conducted with home made bombs or primitive weapons such as knives. There are no reports of Uyghurs infiltrating the government for intelligence or policy manipulation (of course this is likely due to the role of ethnicity in Chinese politics). Lastly, it appears most propaganda, or information, comes almost exclusively from external organizations. PRC efforts to control information flow in and out of Xinjiang have effectively supported their version of events based on their goals at the time. When China is promoting stability in the region, reporting indicates a reduction in

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[202] Fuller and Lipman, *Xinjiang*, 324.

terrorist and criminal activity. At the same time, the PRC is able to label groups as terrorist with little to no evidence of direct or indirect support to individuals involved.

While the PRC maintains control over the Uyghur insurgency inside of China, reporting indicates Uyghurs are participating more in external conflicts. The rapid rise of ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) has provided Uyghurs a new, highly violent organization for support geographically near diaspora communities in Turkey.[203] Upwards of 300 Uyghurs are reported to be training and fighting in Syria as of 2015. In July 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, then leader of ISIS, named China as a nation who had "seized Muslim rights" and encouraged Jihad.[204] Additional reporting suggests Uyghurs have spread into Southeast Asia and are in contact with organizations aligned with ISIS or other extremist groups. Four Uyghurs were detained in Indonesia in September 2014 after attempting to make contact with an Islamic militant associated with ISIS.[205] China recognizes Uyghur participation in jihadist movements as a threat and has been active in bringing captured Uyghurs back to China to face punishment. The PRC has also sought the return of Uyghurs who have simply fled China. In 2015, 140 Uyghurs were detained in Thailand after fleeing Xinjiang. The PRC worked with the Thai government to have

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[203] Christina Lin, "ISIS Caliphate Meets China's Silk Road Economic Belt," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 18, no. 4 (2014): 22.

[204] Ibid., 21.

[205] Andy Lala, *Indonesia Identifies 4 Suspected Militants as Chinese Uighurs*, Washington: Federal Information & News Dispatch, Inc., September 15, 2014, accessed May 2, 2018, https://search-proquest-com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1562194424?pq-origsite=summon.

them returned to China, where they will presumably be punished.[206] Uyghur participation in external conflicts will lead to advanced capability, sanctuaries, and potentially, a combat tested leader.

It is for these reasons the Uyghur insurgency still sits firmly in the incipient conflict phase. The Uyghurs have a strong identity, desire to resist, and are experiencing an international community more aware of their cause. Conversely, the Uyghur insurgency has not developed a comprehensive "theory of victory" that defines how they see the conflict ending. Meanwhile, the Chinese state has taken significant measures to neutralize the Uyghurs and control the region.

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[206] Radio Free Asia, "Uyghur Refugees Go on Hunger Strike in Thai Detention Center," January 2015, accessed May 2, 2018, https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1647737839?accountid=28992.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

This final chapter examines trends within the Uyghur insurgency and draw

conclusions within the framework of the J. Eli Margolis' Estimating State Instability

model.[207] A brief description of the trends will be followed by a description of the current

situation in Xinjiang. To conclude, Margolis' model is used to discuss the circumstances

required for a change in momentum for the Uyghurs.

Analysis

Over the course of this study several trends have emerged. The Uyghurs have

failed to unite as a people, organize as a resistance, and have not exploited opportunities.

The PRC on the other hand, has mastered shaping the narrative and maintained firm

control through aggressive counterinsurgency techniques.

The most notable trend is the lack of unity amongst the Uyghurs. This should

come as no surprise given the geography of Xinjiang, communication barriers, and the

constant pressure of the Chinese state. The incredible geographic distance between

communities in Xinjiang, restricted by rough terrain and limited infrastructure, has

separated Uyghurs from one another. The diaspora community has also been restricted by

the tyranny of distance. However, the impact is minimized by modern and unrestricted

communication.

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[207] Margolis, "Following Trends and Triggers: Estimating State Instability," 13-14.

The lack of unity internally or externally has directly led to a failure to organize as a resistance and establish an enduring "theory of victory." An effective insurgency is unlikely to form without strong leadership and a clear vision of victory. Uyghur groups vector towards different objectives between independence and greater autonomy, while a portion of the population likely wants stability even if that means assimilation. While hard liners may see independence as the only acceptable outcome, it does not take the current geopolitical realities into account. Xinjiang, especially the northern and central region are critical to Chinese grand strategy and the PRC has shown a willingness to go to whatever lengths necessary to retain control of the area. A greater degree of autonomy may be a more realistic outcome given broader geopolitical circumstances described in the conclusion.

Lack of unity necessitates the Uyghurs depend on a strong leader to maintain control and momentum in a specific direction. During the time period of the second ETR, when its leadership unexpectedly died, no effective leadership replaced them and the republic fell. In fighting within diaspora groups reduced their impact until Rebiya Kadir rose to the challenge. Even as she organized the WUC and subordinate diaspora groups, certainly a step in the right direction for the Uyghur cause, the ETGIE emerged to undercut WUC efforts. Effective leadership is critical to the success of an insurgency. Leadership and the promotion of the "Theory of Victory" drives the insurgency in a specific direction, coordinates efforts, and presents a real challenge to the existing state.

Finally, many scholars have noted that the Uyghur identity is strong. A more accurate description would be that their identity is resilient. It has been strong at times and weak at others. Uyghurs believe very much in their culture and all it entails, but each

understands their history and future differently based on their situation. The PRC has successfully driven wedges between minority groups through policies designed to pit them against one another. This disunity has prevented the Uyghurs from capitalizing on opportunity.

On multiple occasions geopolitical events have created opportunity within Xinjiang. This second trend focuses on the mismatch in PRC and Uyghur exploitation of opportunity. From the beginning, the PRC was able to capitalize on the Uyghur situation and shape it in a manner that supported their broad national goals. When the second ETR collapsed, the PRC crafted a narrative that depicted the ETR as a rebellion against the corrupt nationalist government, as opposed to the creation of a sovereign state. The Uyghurs on the other hand leveraged their relationship with the USSR during this time period to leave Xinjiang instead of building a base for external support while it lasted.

The break up of the USSR presented less of an opportunity for the Uyghurs, but again, the PRC made the arithmetic of that geopolitical event work in their favor to retain control and further their economic interest in and through the region. Uyghurs merely used the opportunity to establish additional, competing groups and hoped for a similar outcome for the Chinese state as they had witnessed across the border.

The events of September 11th, 2001 certainly put Uyghurs in the international spotlight. The PRC quickly moved to have the ETIM placed on the UN and US list of terrorist organizations. This well constructed political move allowed China to crack down on the Uyghurs (with international support) and gave the appearance of supporting the US-led war on terror. The Uyghurs, specifically diaspora groups, did not take advantage

of international attention to highlight PRC abuses and solicit external support for the Uyghur cause.

The final trend, firm Chinese control, has been consistent from the day the PRC was founded. There is no need to rehash the history of Chinese policy toward the Uyghurs. It is clear to see that for every action perceived as a threat to the central state the PRC has responded accordingly. Further, the PRC has continued to build and modernize its security apparatus to tighten its grip on Uyghurs in Xinjiang. As China pursues additional regional influence it has exerted pressure on neighboring countries, through the SCO and other security frameworks, to reduce Uyghur opportunity outside of China's borders.

<u>Conclusion</u>

The identification of trends leads to a final question: what would be required for Uyghurs to gain legitimate autonomy in Xinjiang? In other words, what would cause the momentum of the situation to change? J. Eli Margolis' Estimating State Instability framework is applied to answer these questions.[208] The structured, qualitative model, designed to address shortcomings in existing models, applies a "trend and triggers" approach to "inform policy, plans, and strategy." [209] The model presents four stabilizing dynamics in relation to state stability. Three of these dynamics, authority, resilience, and legitimacy, are focused on the state itself. The fourth, replacement, focuses on society.

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[208] Margolis, "Following Trends and Triggers: Estimating State Instability," 13-14.

[209] Ibid., 16.

Margolis goes on to point out "opportunity is also needed to convert existing tension into acts of instability."[210]

The dynamic of authority addresses the state's ability to pass and enforce laws within its borders.[211] The PRC has been sensitive to the idea of splitism, but it has clearly displayed an ability to control its territory and enforce its laws. The PRC has taken a multi-layered approach to maintain order within the region. This includes the establishment of the *bingtuan* along the borders and a heavy military and police presence in the area. More recently, external pressure through the SCO has been applied to prevent external support to the Uyghur insurgency.

Resilience is the second dynamic addressed by Margolis. Resilience speaks to the state's ability to adapt to address the needs of its citizens.[212] In a crisis of resilience the state would be unable to meet its basic responsibilities, adequately respond to crisis, or unable to change its relationship with society.[213] The dynamic between the Uyghurs and the PRC is complex. While many Uyghurs have what they need in the most basic sense, they are not satisfied with their opportunities or place in society. Further, the PRC appears uninterested in changing its relationship with the Uyghurs. The steady flow of Han Chinese into the area has slowly changed the ethnic dynamic in Xinjiang and mitigated the impact of Uyghur dissatisfaction. Finally, crisis in the eyes on the PRC is typically a crisis of security or stability. This can be, and has been, resolved through a

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[210] Margolis, "Following Trends and Triggers: Estimating State Instability," 17.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Ibid., 18.

[213] Ibid.

heavy-handed military approach. Of course, as discussed earlier, this further incites Uyghur resistance.

The third dynamic is legitimacy. Legitimacy focuses solely on the state's right to rule in the eyes of society. Indicative of a failure of legitimacy are protests, revolutions, and insurgencies.[214] China most fears a crisis in legitimacy as a result of the century of humiliation. The current situation in Taiwan, historic Russian, Japanese, and US influence, and unrest in Tibet and Xinjiang all contribute to this fear. It also explains why China has placed so much emphasis on the One China Principle and actively taken measures to control Xinjiang and Tibet.

Finally, Margolis points out society can exercise the dynamic of replacement. Replacement is a trait most often seen in democracies during the voting process. If an existing leader is inadequate, voters can exercise their role in society and vote that representative out of office. China's one party system rules that option out, however, Uyghurs can still take advantage of their role in society. By declining to support the existing system that places Uyghurs in token positions within the regional government, they can delegitimize the process. Of course, this is not without risk. By refusing to participate, they also lose a seat at the table for any actions they may have otherwise influenced. Further, if they choose to not participate, China may craft a narrative that completely excludes the Uyghurs from the political process from that point forward.

After studying the aforementioned dynamics it is clear a crisis of legitimacy would be necessary to provide the Uyghurs an opportunity to transition out of the incipient conflict phase and into open insurgency or resolution. The other three dynamics

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[214] Margolis, "Following Trends and Triggers: Estimating State Instability," 18.

are firmly controlled by the PRC state and unlikely to change. If there is any chance of Uyghurs gaining a greater level of autonomy in Xinjiang it will stem directly from geopolitical factors. Geopolitical factors would come in two forms; traditional state conflict and neighboring state instability.

China has a tense history with Russia (and its predecessor). As each nation pursues its expansion of regional influence, there is a potential for conflict and heightened tensions. Similarly, the US/China relationship is undergoing change as China challenges the existing rules-based order. The complex cooperation-competition dynamic creates friction between the two nations. On China's western front, an escalation between the two nuclear states of Pakistan and India or hostilities between China and India would change the role of China's security forces. Additionally, these events would likely throw off the balance of power in the region and create a refugee crisis that expands into China's western provinces. In these scenarios, an escalation of conflict would pull Chinese resources away from internal security and toward national defense, providing Uyghurs an opportunity to organize and press for greater autonomy. If presented correctly, Uyghur leaders could promote stability through greater autonomy as China focuses its resources on the external threat.

A more volatile, and likely, scenario would be instability in a neighboring country. Conflict on the Korean peninsula is an enduring theme that stands to draw the US, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) into a messy war. To the south and west China is bound by nations with a heavy Muslim population increasingly in contact with radicalized Islam. Pakistan has a number of destabilizing factors including political dissatisfaction, exposure to extremist religious

ideologies, and anger over the lack of government services.[215] India too faces a number of challenges such as a fractured political system and religious and linguistic divides.[216]

These scenarios to the west would certainly pull additional PRC resources into Xinjiang as opposed to attention in the opposite direction. PRC security forces are robust, however, the PRC would be forced to offset its interest in the east (South China Sea, Taiwan, and the DPRK) with its requirements in the west. Further, a humanitarian crisis caused by state collapse would rapidly change the demographic dynamics in the region and expose Uyghurs to a myriad of outside influence.

The Uyghurs would need local leaders capable of communicating with the Chinese state and consolidating Uyghur interest. Additionally, the Uyghurs would need to recognize this opportunity and use it to accomplish the reasonable goal of increasing autonomy as opposed to striving for independence. This would realistically improve living conditions and opportunity for the Uyghurs, and by presenting it as value added to the PRC state, likely not draw a heavy military response.

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[215] Jonah Blank, Christopher Clary, and Brian Nichiporuk, *Drivers of Long-Term Insecurity and Instability in Pakistan: Urbanization* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2014), accessed May 3, 2018, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[216] James Piazza, "Rooted in Poverty?: Terrorism, Poor Economic Development, and Social Cleavages," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 1 (2006): 159.

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