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**CHINA'S MUSLIMS: SEPARATISM AND PROSPECTS
FOR ETHNIC PEACE**

by

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CHINA'S MUSLIMS: SEPARATISM AND PROSPECTS FOR ETHNIC PEACE

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ABSTRACT

The Uighur issue is of vital regional and global security importance to China. Although minority separatists are not well armed and seem to be largely disorganized, the violence poses a very real threat to China's ability to develop Xinjiang. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s behavior toward its Muslims has received renewed Western attention in the aftermath of 9/11. China's Uighurs have responded to CCP policies with violence and separatist activity, but the Hui (ethnic Chinese who are Muslim) have reacted with relatively high levels of accommodation. Some have blamed Uighur separatism on external influences (such as transnational terror) and Islam. However, the puzzle is, why do the Uighurs engage in separatism where the Hui do not? This study contributes to existing literature by directly comparing the Uighurs and Hui in order to determine the reasons behind Uighur separatism and Hui accommodation. This thesis argues that the Uighurs and Hui have faced different social and economic realities which have led to different perceptions of inequality and thus, different reactions to CCP policy. Also, unlike Uighur ethnic identity, Hui identity stems from and is compatible with the PRC and Chinese society. This study uses primary sources including interviews with Uighurs, Hui and Han Chinese conducted in western China during June and July of 2006.

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I. CHINA'S MUSLIMS, HISTORICAL LEGACIES AND THE UIGHUR QUESTION

A. INTRODUCTION

One of the most volatile and long-standing issues facing Beijing today is its relationship with its fifty-five ethnic minority groups. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s behavior toward its Muslims has received renewed Western attention in the aftermath of 9/11. Though there are ten distinct Islamic minorities in China today, the two largest groups are the Uighurs and the Hui. The Uighurs are a Turkic ethnic group and live primarily in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Although the Chinese government officially granted Xinjiang autonomy in 1955, Beijing has since prevented Uighurs from asserting control over the XUAR, which has led to Uighur discontent. This frustration has been manifested through violent bombings, assassinations, and other demonstrations. The Hui minority also possesses an autonomous region (Ningxia), but Hui Chinese can be found in virtually every major Chinese city. Unlike the Uighurs, the Hui have primarily pursued peaceful, cooperative strategies for coexistence with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The puzzle is, why do the Uighurs engage in separatism where the Hui do not? More broadly, what are the prospects for ethnic peace in China? What can the Uighurs and the Hui teach us about Beijing's changing relationship with its ethnic minorities?

This thesis addresses the above questions from political, economic, and social perspectives. Both minorities and the reasons behind each group's content or discontent will be explored. This thesis argues the following: though Uighurs and Hui are both Muslim minorities, they have reacted to CCP rule in different ways. First, the Uighurs have faced harsher social and economic realities than the Hui. Different realities have led to different levels perceived inequality; this difference has produced increased levels of ethnic tension among Uighurs. Second, Hui identity stems from and is compatible with the PRC and Chinese society. Uighur identity exists independently from the PRC and has not been successfully integrated into contemporary Chinese society. These differences in identity have made the Uighurs more predisposed to use violent separatism

than the Hui, as Uighurs do not rely on the PRC for ethnic identification. Finally, this thesis will then assess the future prospects of Islamic violence in China, as well as policy recommendations for the United States.

The Uighur issue is of vital regional and global security importance to China. Although minority separatists are not well armed and seem to be largely disorganized, the violence poses a very real threat to China's ability to develop Xinjiang. This resistance has also created a culture of fear in the region among Han and minority peoples alike. Beijing is currently able to assert effective control over its minority territories, but if this conflict of interest is not resolved, levels of violence could increase, leading to severe instability. Moreover, the XUAR, Ningxia, and other minority regions are important to the regional security picture. Uighurs and Hui share a common identity with not only similar ethnic groups in the region, but also with Islamic peoples worldwide. Several Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are also home to Uighurs, so an ethnic conflict could have severe regional consequences. As China's ties to the Middle East continue to grow, Beijing's relationship with each of its Muslim minorities will increase in importance. Thus, failure to resolve the Uighur issue might result in the intervention of other regional players or retaliatory policies. Therefore, from a global, regional, and national security point of view, China must find a way to reconcile its minority problem. An increase in violence would have long-lasting, negative consequences for Chinese national security and regional/global stability.

B. HISTORICAL LEGACIES

1. PRC Minority Policy Under Mao Zedong

Before examining the current status of Chinese Muslims, it is first useful to review the ways in which CCP-minority relations have evolved. The next sections will review the history of CCP-minority relations under Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and Jiang Zemin, respectively. In general, CCP-minority relations have been in a constant state of flux, from accommodation to intolerance, throughout the last five decades. This changing relationship has been driven by the Party's shifting perception of minorities as a threat to domestic security and stability. In short, when the CCP has perceived minorities to be a direct threat to stability, relations between the Party and minorities have been relatively poor. However, as perceptions have shifted and the Party has not perceived a

major threat to domestic security by minorities, relations have been characterized by mutual accommodation.

According to official figures, the CCP recognizes 56 different ethnic groups in China, but this has not always been the case. After Mao Zedong and the CCP established the People's Republic of China in 1949, immediate efforts were made to consolidate the Party's rule over not only China proper, but also its frontier regions (including Tibet and Xinjiang). In addition to military forces sent to occupy these borderlands, the CCP dispatched teams of anthropologists, sociologists, and demographers to collect census data and recognize ethnicities that sought to be known as official minority groups.¹ These researchers, relying heavily on Soviet assistance and advisers, used Joseph Stalin's "Four Commons"² to create 41 distinct ethnicities (*minzu*) in the 1953 census, of the 400 ethnic groups that applied.³ Of course, this process was controversial, as it is unclear why groups such as the Manchu were recognized, but other groups, such as the Cantonese, were incorporated into the Han majority. Today, China has 56 different *minzu*, and there are still groups within the Han majority and other minorities who feel that they should be recognized as their own, separate *minzu*.

After officially establishing a political identity for minority groups in China, the CCP began to use a combination of accommodation and assimilation in order to incorporate ethnic minorities into the Chinese Communist state. Although CCP-minority relations suffered initially from a mutual lack of understanding, the 1950s was a relatively peaceful decade, characterized by widespread accommodation (except for Tibet). As was mentioned above, the CCP relied heavily on the Soviet Union for guidance in political, economic, and social matters; such guidance also included advice on how to handle its ethnic minorities. Despite major differences in the demographic distribution of minorities in the PRC compared the USSR,⁴ Beijing was largely successful in its efforts to accommodate minorities in the 1950s.

¹ Dru C. Gladney, *Dislocating China: Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern Subjects*, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2004), 9.

² The "Four Commons" were: common language, common territory, common economic life, and common psychological makeup (or culture). These factors are, of course, highly subjective and since the 1953 census, 15 more ethnic groups have been recognized, bringing the official total to 56 today.

³ Gladney, *Dislocating*, 9.

⁴ According to June Dreyer, nearly half of the population of the USSR was composed of non-Russians,

Although CCP-minority relations in the early to mid-1950 have seemed to be characterized by accommodation, these relations began to shift during 1958-1959 because of two major events: the Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Great Leap Forward. During the Hundred Flowers campaign, Chinese intellectuals were encouraged to point out errors among CCP members, and to speak freely regarding the CCP's policies.⁵ Minority intellectuals were among the individuals encouraged, but the criticisms raised by minorities were different than those raised by the Han. For example, some minority intellectuals called for a halt in collectivization policies, citing them as against minority religions and customs. Others criticized minority party officials, while still others called for outright secession.⁶ As a result of this criticism (and the criticism raised by Han intellectuals), Mao launched the "anti-rightist" campaign, which aimed to wipe out challenges to the CCP. In minority areas, this campaign was directed at "local nationalism," which resulted in the elimination of many traditional minority leaders who had held credibility with their people.⁷

The "anti-rightist" campaign was followed closely by the Great Leap Forward, which, according to Colin Mackerras, led to a period of deteriorating relations between the CCP and China's ethnic minorities.⁸ When the CCP launched the Great Leap Forward during the spring and summer of 1958, the Party pushed a major effort to increase collectivization throughout China, especially in minority areas (which had not yet been subjected to these policies). These collectivization efforts were met with resistance among minorities, which led to some ethnic tension. However, Beijing's attitude toward Chinese minorities, in light of the threat perceived during the Hundred Flowers Campaign, also shifted. Traditional festivals, minority customs, and other "special characteristics" began to be perceived as direct threats to socialism, presumably

but in China, minorities comprise only about nine percent of the country.

⁵ Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China: From Revolution Through Reform 2nd Edition*, (New York: WW Norton and Company, 2004), 101.

⁶ June Teufel Dreyer, *China's Political System: Modernization and Tradition*, (New York: Pearson/Longman, 2004), 296.

⁷ Dreyer, 297.

⁸ Colin Mackerras, *China's Ethnic Minorities and Globalization*, (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 21.

because they contributed to reduced work efficiency among minority peoples.⁹ For example, time-consuming, intricately-woven hats and sashes were replaced with more practical belts and straw hats which allowed minority peoples more time to work.¹⁰ These new, less tolerant policies during the Great Leap Forward led to outright instances of separatism among some minorities, namely the Tibetans, Uighurs, Yi, and Hui, signifying a major shift in CCP-minority relations.¹¹

While the Great Leap Forward was a time of CCP-minority tension, its aftermath brought renewed accommodation among both minorities and the CCP.¹² However, within five years, Mao launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR), a nation-wide campaign that brought devastation to Han and minority peoples alike. During the GPCR, Mao's Red Guards attacked the "four olds" by destroying religious and cultural relics throughout the country. It is difficult to compare the atrocities committed in minority areas with those in Han areas; as such events were extremely destructive.¹³ Minorities perceived the destruction of religious relics, mosques, temples, and other symbols as a full-scale attack on their respective cultures. It is also important to recognize that troubles with minorities during the Cultural Revolution were blamed on class differences, rather than ethnic differences.¹⁴ The GPCR also led to violent incidents in minority areas, such as the Shadian rebellion in Yunnan province. During the summer and fall of 1967, a group of Hui Chinese attempted to reopen a mosque, closed due to the Cultural Revolution. When permission was refused, the Hui formed a militia and were accused of attempting to establish their own Islamic state.¹⁵ In the violence that followed, over one thousand Hui were killed and one participating village was completely destroyed. Relations began to change in 1971, however, when the Party began

⁹ Dreyer, 297.

¹⁰ Ibid., 297.

¹¹ Mackerras, *China's Ethnic Minorities*, 23.

¹² Ibid., 23.

¹³ For a detailed account of atrocities committed in minority regions, see Patrick French, *Tibet, Tibet A Personal History of a Lost Land*, (New York: Knopf, 2003)

¹⁴ Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic*, (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1991), 138.

¹⁵ Mackerras, *China's Ethnic Minorities*, 24.

printing books in minority languages and allowed minority languages on the radio.¹⁶ Despite this, the tense, even volatile CCP-minority relationship did not substantially improve until after Mao's death.

2. PRC Minority Policy After Mao Zedong

Mao's death and Deng Xiaoping's ascension to power marked another major shift in CCP-minority relations in the PRC. However, post-Mao CCP-minority relations did not begin with Deng Xiaoping; rather, Hua Guofeng took the first steps toward these improved relations. In March of 1978, Hua addressed the Fifth National People's Congress where he emphasized minority rights, autonomy, and accommodation.¹⁷ Deng Xiaoping followed Hua's lead and began to grant the PRC's minorities improved political, economic, and social freedoms. To be sure, most of these freedoms were identical or very similar to many of the reforms enacted throughout Han China. However, the results of liberalization in and outside of minority areas ultimately had a major effect on CCP-minority relations: marked improvement occurred.

From a political standpoint, perhaps the most significant reform concerning minority peoples was the redrafting of the 1982 PRC constitution. Compared to the previous, 1975 draft, the 1982 constitution, on paper, granted minorities considerable equality, compared to the Han majority. For instance, article four reads that:

All nationalities in the People's Republic of China are equal. The state protects the lawful rights and interests of the minority nationalities and upholds and develops the relationship of equality, unity, and mutual assistance among all China's nationalities. Discrimination against and oppression of any nationality are prohibited; any acts that undermine the unity of the nationalities or instigate their secession are prohibited...the people of all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written customs, and to preserve or reform their own ways and customs.¹⁸

¹⁶ Dreyer, 301.

¹⁷ Mackerras, *China's Ethnic Minorities*, 25.

¹⁸ Constitution of the People's Republic of China (1982).

This explicit language, which guaranteed fair treatment, represented a major shift in the political status of minorities. Minority affairs and problems were clearly no longer considered to be a problem of social class; by the language in the new constitution, everyone in China was to be treated equally. The 1982 constitution also contained a great deal of guidance on the day-to-day operation of minority autonomous regions. Section six and its 11 Articles outline a vague, but explicit acknowledgement of the autonomy of many minority regions. These articles allowed the local governments of autonomous regions control over their own finances (Article 117), economic planning (Article 118), social affairs (Article 119), and to some extent, over local security forces (Article 120).¹⁹ Article 116 also provided a means for local minority governments to draft and pass regulations of their own creation.²⁰ Thus, politically, the new PRC constitution represented a sincere attempt by the CCP to improve CCP-minority relations.

Economically speaking, Deng Xiaoping took a number of steps to improve the welfare and standard of living for all Chinese, including minority peoples. The opening of Special Economic Zones (SEZ's) in the early 1980s did not directly affect large numbers of minorities (as none of the new SEZ's fell explicitly in a minority autonomous area) but the few minorities located within these were allowed to partake in the economic benefits these policies yielded. Additionally, minorities benefited from Deng's land reforms and the liberal economic policies which allowed peasants to sell their goods on the open market.²¹ Though there were very few economic policies that were overtly directed at closing the wealth gap between the Han and the PRC's minorities, the financial benefits that came with reform ensured improved living standards, and as a result, an improved CCP-minority relationship.

Perhaps the most important improvements made regarding CCP-minority relations under Deng Xiaoping concerned social equality. Minorities were largely exempt from the one-child policy, for example, and various affirmative action programs granted minority peoples easier access to high-level education. Additionally, the state began to repair the cultural damage inflicted upon minorities during the GPCR. For

¹⁹ Constitution of the People's Republic of China (1982).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Dreyer, 301.

example, in Hui communities, Sufi tombs and shrines were rebuilt on land that had originally been seized by the state.²² Reformed travel policies allowed Chinese Muslims to begin making the annual Islamic Hajj to Mecca. In fact, in some cases, the PRC sponsored both official and unofficial Chinese pilgrims, providing financial assistance to many who could not afford the trip.²³ Other social reforms also contributed improved CCP-minority relations. In 1985, the revised Law of Regional Autonomy encouraged dramatic educational reforms in minority areas.²⁴ These reforms, directed at eliminating illiteracy, directed local schools to instruct in both Mandarin and minority languages. These new social policies, while imperfect, represented a major push by Beijing to improve the status of CCP-minority relations in Deng China.

Despite the efforts made by Deng Xiaoping and the CCP, reform in China brought a few specific problems to minority areas; these issues have led to violence and the resulting crackdowns in places like Tibet and Xinjiang. First, because many of the dramatic economic reforms initially affected the coastal areas (which are largely inhabited by Han), but not the frontier regions, the existing wealth gap between Han and minorities expanded. This gap, which was exacerbated by inflation, led to feelings of exploitation by many minorities, including many Uighurs.²⁵ Socially, educational reforms also produced some conflict. For example, the rising costs of educational reforms in minority areas, along with controversial curriculums²⁶ created frustration among Uighurs.²⁷

Minority frustration seems to have contributed to feelings of nationalism among both the Tibetans and the Uighurs in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Beginning in the fall of 1987, demonstrations became increasingly common in Lhasa; by October, at least one

²² Gladney, *Dislocating*, 140.

²³ Roundtable before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, 108th Congress, Second Session, "Practicing Islam in Today's China: Differing Realities for the Uighurs and the Hui," 17 May 2004.

²⁴ Linda Benson, "Education and Social Mobility among Minority Populations in Xinjiang," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Fredrick Starr (New York: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2004), 197.

²⁵ Dreyer, 302.

²⁶ For example, in Xinjiang, students were tested on the Chinese version of the region's history, an account which is highly and hotly disputed among many Uighurs today.

²⁷ Benson, 198.

full-scale riot had erupted. With the Dalai Lama's support, ethnic unrest in Tibet grew steadily into 1988 and 1989, resulting in martial law in Lhasa. Ethnic frustration also led to major violence in Xinjiang. The 1990 Baren Township incident marked the beginning of violent separatism in Xinjiang. This severe unrest among Uighurs was likely encouraged by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent independence of the Central Asian republics. Since the early 1990s, the unrest in Tibet has almost completely ceased, though Uighur separatism did not begin to slow down until 1998. In any case, the events of the late 1980s and early 1990s have clearly made an impression on the CCP and have directly influenced the PRC's stance toward Tibetans and Uighurs today.

Beijing's approach to its minorities today and during the 1990s has been two-pronged: accommodate the non-threatening and assimilate those that pose a threat to Chinese domestic stability. This dichotomy follows the CCP's historical approach to its minorities: when the Party has felt threatened, it has cracked down and when it has not, it has accommodated. From the CCP's point of view, the majority of China's minority people pose little or no threat to China's security. Thus, Beijing has made an honest attempt to accommodate groups like the Dai, and the Yi. In modern China, significant privileges are granted to non-threatening Chinese minority groups, such as tax breaks, exemptions from the one-child policy, and special educational opportunities.²⁸ In fact, the material benefits of Chinese minority status are so significant that there has recently been a major push by new minority groups to be "officially" recognized by the state as legitimate *minzu*.²⁹ Additionally, the Chinese government has made a major effort to stress the PRC's diversity and increase the perception that it truly is a multi-cultural state. A perfect example of this effort can be found by simply watching the Chinese New Year's celebration held every year in Beijing. The four-hour long celebration features dancers from diverse ethnic backgrounds: Tibetans, Mongols, Zhuang, Hui, Wa, and others.³⁰ No less than half of the ceremony is dedicated to minority performers, despite the fact that minorities make up only nine percent of China's total population.³¹ Thus,

²⁸ Gladney, *Dislocating*, 23.

²⁹ Mackerras, *China's Ethnic Minorities*, 40.

³⁰ Gladney, *Dislocating*, 55.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

current Chinese policy toward its non-threatening minorities is very liberal, and Beijing enjoys its multi-cultural heritage.

While members of ethnic groups not perceived as a threat enjoy benefits under current CCP policy, groups that do pose a perceived threat are treated very differently. These groups, which include the Tibetans, Uighurs, and Mongols, are presently the victims of assimilation, rather than accommodation. For example, despite the fact that unrest in Tibet has not had problems with separatism or violence since the early 1990s, Beijing's treatment of the Tibetan people has not improved. According to conversations with a variety of Tibetan subjects in Lhasa, China's treatment of Tibetans is very poor.³² One anonymous Tibetan told me that although conditions had improved since the Cultural Revolution, Tibetans are still subjected to intense prejudice, discrimination, and social repression. For example, children in Tibet are often taken from their homes during early childhood and schooled in eastern China. There, they are not taught Tibetan (instead they are taught Mandarin), and upon their return, have very little understanding of traditional Tibetan Buddhist teachings. This man's account of Beijing's stance toward Tibet indicates a desire to assimilate young Tibetans into the broader Chinese state, which reveals a serious dichotomy in CCP-minority relations.

3. The Uighur Civilization

As this thesis is focused on two specific Muslim minority groups – the Uighurs and the Hui – it is also useful to specifically examine the history of both peoples. In particular, Uighur history can be a very controversial subject as there are many issues - such as true Uighur identity and claims to the Tarim basin - that have been disputed by different parties. Xinjiang has been and is still an extremely dynamic place because it is a crossroads where Russian, Chinese, Central Asian, South Asian, and Arab peoples interact. This role, as a melting pot of civilizations can be used to help understand Xinjiang's history. The political history of the Uighurs and Xinjiang in general can be

³² The following conversation occurred in Lhasa during June of 2004 as part of an Olmstead-funded research trip with the United States Air Force Academy.

defined by the north-south dynamic of nomadic peoples ruling and/or invading the agrarian south.³³ The Uighur civilization is a byproduct of this political dynamic.³⁴

Although they were not originally Muslim, the first Uighur Empire was established in 744 in the Mongolian Orkhan River Valley. This empire was destroyed by the Kyrgyz in 840 and relocated to near present-day Urumqi, straddling the *Tianshan*. Uighur kings ruled this area during the ninth through thirteenth centuries until the 1370s, when the Mongols destroyed it. During the same time, the Karakhanids, a confederation of Turkish tribes which migrated west from Mongolia, ruled the Tarim Basin. These Muslims linked Xinjiang to the Islamic world and introduced Islam to the Uighurs. Present-day Uighur identity stems primarily from a combination of the traditions of the original Uighur Empire and those of the Karakhanids.³⁵

The fall of the Uighur and Karakhanid Empires ushered in Xinjiang's Mughal period, which lasted from fourteenth through seventeenth centuries. Under Mongol rule increasing numbers of Uighurs began to convert to Islam. The Mughal period was also a time of trade, as the Silk Road allowed Uighurs to trade with Chinese, other oases, and Central Asian empires.³⁶ In the 1670s, the Zungars took control of Xinjiang, which began a struggle between the Russians and various Sufi factions. Finally, in 1754 the Manchu Qing Empire conquered Xinjiang, though, according to some scholars, the province was not brought under the Han Chinese realm until 1821.³⁷ However, Qing control of Xinjiang fluctuated frequently and this led to major fractures in Uighur identity; loyalty to one's oasis became more important than to a Uighur nation. When the Qing dynasty collapsed in 1911, a number of factors contributed to the further fragmentation of the Uighurs including political loyalties (to China, Russia, and Britain

³³ James A. Millward and Peter Perdue, "Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century," in S. Fredrick Starr, ed. *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Central-Asia Caucus Institute, New York, 2004), 33.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁵ Millward and Perdue, 42.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁷ See Joseph Fletcher, "Ch'ing Inner Asia c. 1800" in ed. John King Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China, vol. 10, Late Ch'ing 1800-1911* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1978), 35-106. Cited in Dru C. Gladney, *Dislocating China: Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern Subjects* (University of Chicago Press: London, 2004), 215.

as a result of the Great Game), territorial loyalties, and religious loyalties.³⁸ Despite this, the Uighurs established the independent East Turkistan during the Republican period, which lasted until the CCP incorporated Xinjiang into the PRC. Though East Turkistan was only independent for a brief time, many older Uighurs think highly of the founders of the East Turkistan Republic and the writings of old resistance leaders are still available today.³⁹ However, it is unclear as to what extent the East Turkistan Republic period influences separatists today; more likely, separatists in Xinjiang are more motivated by the fall of the Soviet Union and the break-up of the Central Asian republics.⁴⁰

4. Uighur Separatism in Recent Years

Beijing's relations with its Uighur minority have been rocky throughout the history of the PRC and in the 1990s poor relations evolved into crisis. In response to Chinese actions in Xinjiang, Uighur activists have repeatedly engaged in violent and rebellious activity directed at Chinese interests and state authority in the name of an independent Xinjiang. According to a report issued by the Chinese State Council in 2002, "East Turkistan" terrorists caused over 200 incidents in and outside of China during the 1990s which resulted in 162 deaths and 440 wounded.⁴¹ The report divided incidents into six major categories: explosions, assassinations, attacks on police and government institutions, crimes of poison and arson, establishing secret training bases and raising money, and organizing disturbances, riots, and an atmosphere of terror.⁴² Violent separatism is not a new phenomenon in Xinjiang, but separatist efforts received renewed vigor after the 1990 Baren incident. Accounts of the incident vary, but according to the Chinese report a number of armed separatists took hostages and killed

³⁸ Dru C. Gladney, *Dislocating* 216.

³⁹ I attempted to acquire samples of these writings during my fieldwork, but I was unsuccessful. The work of Sabit Damulla and Khoja Niaz seemed to be highly respected, according to my informants, but it is currently only printed in Uighur. The one sample I did find was highly treasured by its owner.

⁴⁰ See Gladney, *Dislocating*, 18. Ethnic groups in Xinjiang seem to be well aware that their standard of living is better than their ethnic countrymen living in other parts of Central Asia. However, at the same time, they have also observed that the break-up of the Soviet Union gave the Central Asian Republics an opportunity for self-determination. Because of these two ideas, there are many mixed opinions among Uighurs in Xinjiang concerning an independent East Turkistan. For a well-researched and insightful argument regarding this issue, please see Gardner Bovingdon, "The Not-So-Silent Majority: Uighur Resistance to Han Rule in Xinjiang," *Modern China* 28, No. 1 (January 2002): 39-78.

⁴¹ Office of the State Council. "East Turkistan Forces Cannot Get Away With Impunity." 21 January 2002. available at http://english.people.com.cn/200201/21/eng20020121_89078 accessed 24 May 2006. 2

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2-7.

six Chinese policemen. This incident was documented worldwide and marked the beginning of the latest era of Uighur separatism.

After the Baren incident, violence in Xinjiang became increasingly common. Major demonstrations, assassinations, and bombings occurred throughout Xinjiang from 1990-1997, killing dozens.⁴³ Such events did not capture major international attention, however. A second major incident, which was well-documented in newspapers worldwide, occurred in the town of Yining (*Ghulja*), northeast of Kashgar. According to newspaper reports, Muslims and police clashed during riots, after the Chinese arrested dozens of Uighurs.⁴⁴ Beijing tried to downplay the significance of the riots, but the apparent fallout from the attack was equally bloody, as three bus bombings in Urumqi killed five three weeks later. According to the Chinese report, there were also several incidents in 1998 and 1999, but of these were not well-documented in Western newspapers.

Despite the bloody 1990s, the intensity of separatism in Xinjiang seems to have declined in the last six years. Aside from a number of assassinations throughout Central Asia and Xinjiang, there have been very few instances of separatism, even according to the Chinese report. In fact, according to Millward, it has become increasingly difficult to connect Uighur groups to the violent incidents that *have* occurred.⁴⁵ However, fears of separatists still persist throughout Xinjiang and attacks do occur periodically. According to the Xinhua News Agency, the bombing of a Xinjiang bus killed 22 on 27 March 2003.⁴⁶ This has led some analysts to believe “all the indications are that China faces a major increase in Uighur militancy.”⁴⁷ In summary, China’s problem with Uighur separatism has been bloody throughout the last twenty years, but its future is uncertain.

⁴³ See State Council Report and James Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment*, (East-West Center: Washington D.C., 2004).

⁴⁴ Patrick E Tyler, “In China’s Far West, Tensions with Ethnic Muslims Boil Over in Riots and Bombings,” *The New York Times*. (28 February 1997).

⁴⁵ James Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment*, (East-West Center: Washington D.C., 2004), 31.

⁴⁶ Xinhua News Agency, “‘East Turkistan’ Major Terrorist Threat to China, Official Says” 5 September 2005.

⁴⁷ “China’s Growing Problem with Xinjiang.” *Jane’s Intelligence Digest*, (13 June 2000). http://www.janes.com/regional_news/asia_pacific/news/jid/jid000613_1_n.shtml accessed 10 May 2006.

5. China's Hui Minority

China's Hui are the second ethnic group on which this thesis will focus; the next sections will introduce the Hui ethnicity and outline a brief history of the Hui people. According to Michael Dillon, the history of the Hui people dates back to the seventh century, when the Chinese began interacting with Middle Eastern Muslims, shortly after the establishment of Islam.⁴⁸ Most of this contact occurred between Chinese, Arab, and Persian traders; in fact, these traders were primarily responsible for Islam's introduction into China proper in the following centuries. Arab and Persian traders began to visit Chinese ports at Guangzhou, Quanzhou, and Hangzhou during the Tang Dynasty (618-907).⁴⁹ As trade ties increased, these Muslims began building mosques, temples and cemeteries, which led to the establishment of small Muslim communities in eastern China.

Muslims also migrated to China through the Silk Road in Central Asia. Under the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1378), thousands of Muslims from Central Asia entered western China, leading to the first legal establishment of a societal hierarchy in China: Mongols, foreigners, Han, and Nan.⁵⁰ It was also at this time that the Chinese developed the term "Hui," which originally began as a Chinese transliteration of the word "Uighur."⁵¹ Though this term was first officially recognized by Jiang Jieshi's Nationalist government, the term "Hui" came to be commonly used as the word for Islam. Muslims continued entering China during the Ming and Qing dynasties, through traders and Central Asian migrants. As time wore on, Islam began to spread throughout all of China proper, and prevalent Hui communities were established in provinces such as present-day Gansu, Shaanxi, Yunnan, and Ningxia. China's Muslims preserved their religious identity, despite some Chinese crackdowns, through the use of extensive Islamic education efforts.⁵² These efforts were increased as Muslims became increasingly assimilated into

⁴⁸ Michael Dillon, *China's Muslim Hui Community*, (Curzon Press: Surrey, 1999), 11.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁰ Dru C. Gladney, *Ethnic Identity in China: The Making of a Muslim Minority Nationality*, (Harcourt Brace and Company: Fort Worth, 1998), 30.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵² Dillon, 48.

the societies in which they were located. However, some education efforts failed, resulting in differing levels of assimilation throughout the country. Even today, these different levels of assimilation are evident, as Hui Muslims in SE China live very different lifestyles than those in the northwest.⁵³

It was only after the CCP established the People's Republic of China in 1949 that the word "Hui" came to be used to describe a specific ethnic group. In the early 1950s, the CCP sent census takers throughout China, responsible for identifying ethnic groups. In the years that followed, Beijing recognized 10 separate Muslim ethnic groups, including the Hui (and the Uighurs). The system, however, was not perfect. According to Djamal al-Din Bai Shouyi, a Hui historian, the Hui people were different than Central Asian Muslims in that they could not be identified using Stalin's "Four Commons."⁵⁴ In fact, according to some scholars, China's Hui population does not satisfy the requirements of any of the Four Commons, as they have no common language, economic life, territory, or psychological makeup.⁵⁵ Bai heavily influenced Beijing's decision to categorize all of China's Muslims who did not fit into the other nine ethnic groups as *Hui minzu*. Today, the term "*Hui minzu*" is assigned to Chinese Muslims who do not speak their own, unique language, but rather adopt the language of the populace in which they live.⁵⁶ Such a broad definition of the Hui has led many scholars to believe that their ethnic identity is equally wide-spread and imprecise. This is an important debate and it will be reviewed briefly in the literature review of this thesis.

6. Hui Reactions to Chinese Minority Policy

While Uighurs have responded to Chinese policy with violence directed at Chinese interests and authority, Hui reactions have been very different. Chinese policy is often created at national levels and its execution is left to local levels to enforce. Since the Hui minority is widely spread throughout the PRC, local policy enforcement and minority treatment has varied. This has produced a range of Hui reactions, from peaceful

⁵³ For an excellent argument regarding this point, please see Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic*, (Harvard University Press: Harvard, 1996).

⁵⁴ Cited in Dillon, 30.

⁵⁵ Jonathan Lipman, "White Cakes, Oil Cakes, and Common Blood: The Hui in Contemporary China," in *Governing China's Multiethnic Frontiers*, ed. Morris Rossabi (University of Washington Press: Seattle, 2004), 27.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

accommodation to outbreaks of violence. However, when Hui responses to policy have become violent, the motivations behind the violence seem to be different. Unlike Uighur separatism, Hui violence in China seems to stem from ethnic tension between Hui and Han Chinese, not desires for independence or secession.

Violent incidents among Hui have occurred and it is important to recognize this fact. For example, as recently as 2004 a dozen people were killed when thousands of Hui villagers clashed with Han farmers.⁵⁷ In Sichuan province, the week before, over 50,000 Hui villagers participated in a violent protest that led to several casualties.⁵⁸ According to Lipman, other instances of violence have occurred in the heart of China throughout the past decade.⁵⁹ In Shandong province in 2000, Han paramilitary police, state police, and Hui protesters clashed, killing at least five Muslims.⁶⁰ In Hebei province, hundreds of Muslims in Mengcun reacted to the hanging of a pig head on a mosque in another village; this resulted in severe violence, causing police to fire into the crowds.⁶¹ However, to say that these incidents reflect separatist desires or challenges to PRC or CCP authority would be misguided. Rather, they reflect small-scale, localized misunderstandings between China's ethnic minorities (who happen to be Muslim) and the Han majority.⁶²

Despite some degree of ethnic tension among Hui and Han Chinese, there seems to be little doubt that the Hui are loyal to the PRC. As was mentioned, the majority of Hui communities across China have responded to Chinese occupation through mutual accommodation. In other cases, however, Hui Chinese have reacted to policy through protests, rallies, and other nonviolent forms of resistance. For example, shortly before the Tiananmen protests in 1989, hundreds of thousands of Muslims rallied in Beijing, protesting the publication of a controversial book.⁶³ These Muslims, who were mainly Hui, demanded that Beijing immediately ban the book and burn all available copies.

⁵⁷ Philip P. Pan, "Ethnic Fighting Flares in China; Authorities Declare Martial Law in Rural Henan Province," *The Washington Post* (2 November 2004).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Lipman, 45.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 45.

⁶¹ Ibid., 46.

⁶² Ibid., 45.

⁶³ Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese*, 1-7.

Interestingly enough, despite the mass numbers of people who rallied, the protest stayed peaceful and according to Gladney, it seemed as if the Muslims were protesting *to* the Chinese government, rather than against it.⁶⁴ This is a key difference; unlike Uighur separatists, China's Hui recognize the necessity of the PRC and its authority. Thus, though there is evidence of ethnic violence among Hui Chinese, its nature is completely different than that of the Uighurs and this reflects Hui support of the PRC.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Separatism Literature

Literature assessing separatism spans the academic arena from political science to social psychology, but an integrative approach seems to be the most useful. There are many different frameworks by which one may analyze separatist movements and no single approach seems to completely explain the causes of separatism. For the purposes of this thesis, the literature on separatism/secession theory has been broken into three schools of thought: the identity school, the process school, and the grievances school. None of these schools seem to provide complete explanations, but each offers important insight into the roots of separatism. This thesis will integrate these three approaches in order to analyze the differences between the Uighur and Hui minority groups.

The first major school of thought regarding separatism is the identity school, which emphasizes the factors that contribute to increased group consciousness and the emergence of an identity-based separatist movement. According to Ralph Premdas, there are two major types of factors which cause separatism: primordial and secondary.⁶⁵ Primordial factors are long-standing divisions within a society that contribute to minority identity. Examples include language, culture, values, ethnicity, and religion. Secondary factors consist of shared features or experiences that have been recently acquired by minority groups, such as assimilation, colonialism, repression, or abuse by a central government. Primary factors tend to be more difficult for a central state to reconcile than secondary factors. It is important to understand that these factors only lead to separatism when a catalyst for change takes place. Such a catalyst often creates a new

⁶⁴ Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese*, 1-7.

⁶⁵ Ralph Premdas, "Secessionist Movements in Comparative Perspective," in Ralph Premdas, ed. *Secessionist Movements in Comparative Perspective* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 22.

consciousness among the ethnic group, sparking new nationalism and a new collective identity.⁶⁶ There are also other factors that can influence the development of such a movement including charismatic leaders, the role of intellectuals, and the solidarity of the movement's participants. One weakness of this approach is that Premdas never defined the term "catalyst" and it is unclear as to what sorts of events might spark a change in collective consciousness. Despite this, however, the identity school provides intriguing insight into the causes of separatism. It also incorporates a number of factors which other approaches have neglected, such as the role of nationalism and that of culture. Thus, it serves as a useful addition to other frameworks analyzed in this literature review.

The second major school of thought regarding separatism examines the processes through which separatist movements evolve. There are many different approaches within this school and this thesis will examine two. First, according to John Wood, there are five major progressions in a separatist movement: preconditions, the rise of the movement, the state's response, escalation/the point of no return, and resolution (sometimes by armed conflict).⁶⁷ Wood states that a secessionist movement begins with preconditions which fall into five different categories. When enough of these preconditions are present, ethnic tension may eventually give way to a movement, depending on the ideology, group solidarity, and the strategy pursued by movement leaders. When such a movement emerges, the central state's response will have a profound impact on the future of the movement.⁶⁸ The central state has two choices: repress the movement or use political institutions to better accommodate the desires of separatists. Assuming the state's response is insufficient; a movement will continue to progress until it passes the "point of no return."⁶⁹ When this point has been reached, the movement will most likely result in a violent resolution. However, Wood notes that the majority of such movements are resolved before they reach the point of no return.⁷⁰ This framework provides some important insights into the dynamics of the evolution of

⁶⁶ Premdas, 23-24.

⁶⁷ John Wood, "Secession: A Comparative Analytical Framework," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 14, no. 1 (March 1981): 107-134.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁶⁹ Wood, 128.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

secessionist movements, but its ability to predict the emergence of a movement is rather limited. For example, Wood uses a very large number of broad preconditions that may lead to separatism and secession. However, he does not specify to what extent each must be true for a movement to emerge. Moreover, he does not clearly identify how to tell when the “point of no return” has been reached. Without these details, it is difficult to evaluate why different groups under similar conditions have not broken into separatism/secession.

A second approach within the process school emphasizes the role of identity in the process involved with a separatist movement. This approach might be thought of as a hybrid of the identity and the processes schools because it demonstrates how ethnic identity affects the process behind a separatist movement.⁷¹ David Brown argues that an ethnicity’s sense of identity can strengthen in light of perceived economic exploitation, ethnic colonialism, and pervasive state policies.⁷² Minority elites then use these strong feelings of identity in order create personal legitimacy and social mobilization.⁷³ In light of this increased mobilization, ethnic separatist movements may emerge.⁷⁴ Such movements often have differing ideologies, but they possess a certain amount of unity based on their discontent with the central state. This approach provides limited insight into the context of ethnic identity that emerges in light of state repression. It provides a valuable addition to Wood, but even taken together, these approaches within the process school fail to explain the role of external and political factors. Thus, this school of thought is important to consider, but by itself, it does not provide answers to the research questions in this thesis.

The third school, used by groups such as Amnesty International and the private media, focuses on the impact of specific grievances on a minority group’s desires for separatism.⁷⁵ This school emphasizes abuse, economic exploitation, and oppression.

⁷¹ For the purposes of this thesis, this approach will be categorized under the processes school, as the framework focuses exclusively on the steps by which an ethnic minority moves from dissent to separatism/secession. Identity is considered to be a catalyst in this school and since the approach does not focus on identity, I will place it in the processes school.

⁷² David Brown, “From Peripheral Communities to Ethnic Nations: Separatism in Southeast Asia,” *Pacific Affairs* 61, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 58.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁷⁵ Amnesty International, “People’s Republic of China: China’s Anti-Terrorism Legislation and

Such state policies may create a group collective to rebel and/or demand autonomy. This collective consciousness exists separately from any religious, ethnic, or nationalistic identities that may or may not be present. Instead, it reflects the desires of a repressed people to end the repression. Such an approach must be considered when studying Chinese Muslims. However, because this approach places such an emphasis on repression and abuse, it is difficult to find objective, reliable data with which to analyze a case study. Data involving abuse is often one-sided, regardless of the source. Without objective accounts of repression and the effects that such repression has on separatist movements, it is difficult to use this approach for explanatory purposes.⁷⁶ Moreover, an oppression-centric framework neglects many aspects of separatism such as identity politics and the impact of external forces. Thus, though the grievances school may provide limited insight into the causes of separatism, such an approach is too subjective and narrowly-focused to solely provide an explanation for separatism.

2. Uighur Literature

Turning to current literature regarding ethnic tension among the Uighur and Hui minorities, the grievances and identity have been most commonly believed to explain the causes of Uighur separatism. In terms of grievances, one of the most important issues is Han immigration. According to Becquelin, China's major goals in the 1990s concerning Xinjiang included increasing its military presence in the region and quickening its systematic Han migration to the province.⁷⁷ Han migration, locally called "mixing sand," consists of Beijing's policies of providing incentives to encourage migrant Han Chinese to relocate to Xinjiang throughout the 1980s-present. These incentives have proved successful. For example, over 70,000 migrant workers moved to the Xinjiang Production Corps city of Shihezi in 1997.⁷⁸ Also in 1997, Xinjiang's provincial government admitted that hundreds of thousands of workers from across China have been moving to Xinjiang. These migrations have led to deteriorating relations between Han and Uighur residents, resulting in increased disputes between the two ethnic groups.

Repression in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region." <http://web.amnesty.org/library/print/ENGASA170102002> (Accessed 3 February 2006).

⁷⁶ Premdas, 19.

⁷⁷ Nicolas Becquelin, "Xinjiang in the Nineties," *The China Journal* 44 (July 2000): 67.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

A second grievance that is blamed for Uighur separatism focuses on the pseudo-colonial policies that Beijing has used to better incorporate Xinjiang with the Han Chinese state.⁷⁹ These arguments range in focus, but cover political and economic realms. Politically, Gardner Bovingdon has argued that the institutional structure of Xinjiang's autonomy reflects a major cause of Uighur separatism. He argued that Chinese political policy toward the XUAR has reduced the Uighur ability to control the province, but it has also increased the Uighur sense of collective identity.⁸⁰ For example, Beijing has systematically reduced the number of Uighurs with authority in the Xinjiang provincial government. As this has occurred, the Uighurs have felt increasingly excluded from decision-making processes. In turn, the Uighurs have found a common enemy against which to unite: their Han leadership.

Economically, the Uighurs also consider themselves to be the victims of Beijing policies. According to Dru Gladney, the Uighurs perceive Chinese economic policies toward Xinjiang as "ethnic colonialism."⁸¹ That is, Beijing is systematically exploiting Xinjiang in order to extract resources and provide wealth for the rest of the Han Chinese nation-state.⁸² Tension in Xinjiang has been exacerbated by the Uighur perception of a wealth gap among Han and Uighur residents. Moreover, many Uighurs believe that Chinese immigrants have stolen natural resources and other wealth which should rightly belong to Xinjiang's natives.⁸³ These economic issues have been widely blamed by scholars and journalists for causing Uighur separatism.

Though grievances provide a partial explanation for Uighur separatism, it is important to consider identity. The idea of identity among Uighurs has been extremely controversial among Western academics, as there is a large debate regarding the basis on

⁷⁹ This is known as "internal colonialism." Internal colonial policies are similar to the policies pursued by Western Europe against colonial states in terms of economic, cultural, and social exploitation/abuse. Unlike European colonialism, internal colonialism indicates that a state is pursuing such policies on a peripheral region within its own borders. Hence, the Chinese Communist Party is often blamed for internal colonialism in Xinjiang, Tibet, and other frontier regions.

⁸⁰ Gardner Bovingdon, *Autonomy in Xinjiang: Han Nationalist Imperatives and Uyghur Discontent*, (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 3.

⁸¹ Dru C. Gladney, "China's Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Internal Colonialism: The Case of the Uyghur Muslim Minority," *Harvard Asia Pacific Review* (Winter 1998-1999): 2.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 11-16.

⁸³ Colin Mackerras, "Xinjiang at the turn of the Century: The Causes of Separatism," *Central Asian Survey* 20, no. 3 (2001): 298.

which Chinese Muslims identify with each other. There are currently two major camps into which Western academics fall: religion and ethnicity. Some scholars, such as Raphael Israeli, argue that Chinese Muslims tend to associate their religion as an underlying source of unity.⁸⁴ Scholars in this camp argue that Islamic revivalism is currently underway in China and this movement can be blamed for at least some of the violence by Chinese Muslims.⁸⁵ The second camp, represented by Dru Gladney, argues that ethnicity is the predominant quality with which Chinese Muslims identify. Gladney has argued that Chinese Muslims exist on a scale of integration with the Han Chinese state. The Hui can be seen on the most integrated side, with the Uighurs at the extreme end of the non-integrated side.⁸⁶ Despite Chinese efforts to assimilate all of its minorities, including Muslims, because the Uighurs identify with their ethnicity and not their faith, they are unlikely to allow themselves to be assimilated with the Chinese state. This unwillingness to assimilate has created some sense of nationalism and in extreme cases, violent separatism.⁸⁷

The emergence of Uighur identity may also be attributed to Chinese educational and religious oversight. According to Dwyer, the Chinese state has pursued language policies that have created the Uighur perception of cultural destruction.⁸⁸ For example, the Chinese state has reduced the number of Uighur-language schools in favor of Mandarin-language institutes.

Beijing has also taken active measures to control the role of Islam in Uighur society. Males under the age of 18 are not permitted in Xinjiang's mosques and Uighurs perceive this policy as Beijing's way of restricting the Uighur way of life. As a result, Uighurs are forced to turn to underground mosques in order to preserve their culture. Proponents of this point of view argue that since the Chinese loosened their religious policies in the 1970s violence has been on the rise in Xinjiang. It is also true that there are religious

⁸⁴ Raphael Israeli, "The Muslim Minority in the People's Republic of China," *Asian Survey* 21, no. 8 (August 1981).

⁸⁵ Colin Mackerras, "Some Issues of Ethnic and Religious Identity among China's Islamic Peoples," *Asian Ethnicity* 6, no. 1 (February 2005): 7.

⁸⁶ Dru C. Gladney, "Islam in China: Accommodation or Separatism?" *The China Quarterly*, no. 174 (June 2003): 466.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 466.

⁸⁸ Arienne M. Dwyer, *The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse*, (Washington: East-West Center, 2004).

figures in Xinjiang that seek to promote violence against the Chinese state. According to Mackerras, South Xinjiang in particular is home to several extremist Muslim clerics that preach extremist rhetoric and encourage Uighurs to fight against their Chinese repressors.⁸⁹ However, the Islamic argument does not explain why Uighurs have engaged in separatism but other Muslim minorities (such as the Hui) have not. Hence, Islam alone cannot be used to explain the causes of Uighur separatism.

These social policies all create fear within the Uighur populace as they feel their culture is being contained and reduced.⁹⁰ Such fear has led to the emergence of Uighur identity, though the number of identities that may be found among Uighurs has been widely debated. In any case, Uighur identity likely plays some role in explaining the roots of separatism.

Though most acknowledge that grievances and identity play a role in explaining Uighur separatism, external factors are also important to consider. Colin Mackerras, for example, has blamed outside influences for inciting separatism in Xinjiang.⁹¹ According to him, outsiders, such as Central Asian Uighur exiles, the West, and Islamic groups have contributed to Uighur separatism by actively inciting subversion. This point of view has also been adopted by the Chinese state, but as a whole, the argument is not persuasive. For one, the Uighurs do not possess any major external leadership structure or leadership figure (like the Tibetan Dalai Lama). Additionally, there is very little evidence that Uighur separatists have received substantial aid from external sources. To be sure, there are several groups of Uighur exiles and activists that operate outside of China. Additionally, the number of internet sites sponsoring Uighur opposition groups has grown steadily throughout the last 15 years.⁹² Thus, external forces may be blamed for perpetuating separatism among Uighurs, but it seems unlikely that they are an actual cause.

While there has been much debate over the causes of Uighur separatism, the question of why Uighurs rebel, while other Muslim ethnic minorities do not has not

⁸⁹ Colin Mackerras, "Xinjiang," 297.

⁹⁰ Dwyer, 1-5.

⁹¹ Colin Mackerras, "Xinjiang," 294.

⁹² Dru C. Gladney, "Responses to Chinese Rule: Cooperation and Opposition," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Fredrick Starr (New York: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2004), 383-89.

received much attention. This question represents a gap in current scholarship and the issue needs to be explored more carefully. It is now time to examine China's Hui minority and the ways in which the Hui fit into the grievances and identity schools of separatism. It is also useful to examine the role of external factors on the Hui minority.

3. Hui Literature

Like the Uighurs, China's Hui do not possess an organized resistance group. According to Gladney, the Hui are primarily Han Chinese, but they tend to blend in well with the indigenous inhabitants of the places in which they live. For example, Hui living in Tibet tend to speak Tibetan, while Hui living in Beijing will often speak Mandarin. This has unique implications for evaluating Han-Hui relations. According to Lipman, unlike the Uighur question, Beijing's relationship with the Hui must be understood at the local, rather than the national level.⁹³ In most places, Han cadre and Hui minority leaders have managed to cooperate, allowing them to resolve disputes peacefully. However, in a few locations, the Hui and the Han have clashed and occasionally engaged in violence. Such violence has not reflected a Hui desire to secede or break away from the Chinese state however, and in general, Han-Hui relations have been relatively peaceful. The nature of relations varies from place to place and violence has only been used by a few Hui outliers.

Grievances seem to be conspicuous in Han-Hui relations. Han migration in particular is important to consider. Like the Uighurs, the Hui maintain a different way of life than China's Han majority. However, because the Hui live all over China, migration policies have affected the Hui differently than they have affected the Uighurs. Most Hui communities have adapted to their proximity with Han neighbors without incident.⁹⁴ Despite Han migration throughout China, the Hui have been able to maintain some degree of local autonomy.⁹⁵ Such autonomy has undoubtedly led to relatively peaceful Han-Hui relations. Relations have been especially peaceful in regions where the Hui have remained in the majority.⁹⁶ However, in locations where Hui are both small

⁹³ Lipman, 47.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁹⁶ Chuah, 156-57.

minorities and the local Han cadre allow little minority autonomy, clashes have occurred. In sum, migration policies have affected the Hui differently than they have affected the Uighurs; this difference may partly explain why Uighurs have resorted to separatism and Hui have not.

Internal colonialism and assimilation have also played a role in Han-Hui relations, but with less significance than the Uighur case. When the Han pressure to assimilate begins to overtake Hui nationalism tension may emerge.⁹⁷ In response, Han and Hui people tend to minimize everyday contact so that a relative peace can still be achieved. However, intense social situations like this exist in many places throughout China where the Hui are a substantial minority. Most Hui are able to live with a tense Han-Hui social relationship, but at times, catalysts can turn a tense situation into a violent confrontation. Examples of such situations are very uncommon in China today, though in 1856 a rebellion in Yunnan resulted in the deaths of millions of Hui.⁹⁸ Despite the potential for violence among the Hui, the majority of Hui communities either do not experience intense assimilation or have reacted to it without violent confrontations.

Identity also plays a role in Han-Hui relations. As was discussed above, the Hui have tended to adapt closely with the indigenous populace and this has led many Hui to find a niche in contemporary Chinese society. According to Gladney, the Hui can be seen as the most closely incorporated Muslim minority into Chinese society and culture.⁹⁹ From an ethnic perspective, the fact that the Han and Hui share some sense of ethnic similarity undoubtedly creates the basis for a peaceful relationship. However, according to Chuah, the fact that the Hui *do* have a distinct identity has contributed to some tension between the Han and Hui.¹⁰⁰ Distrust, prejudice, and discrimination from both sides has contributed to tension and intensified hostility between the two peoples. Hui identity is also important from a religious perspective. Many Hui identify strongly with Islam and disruption of religious activities has, at times, sparked ethnic unrest. Thus, Han-Hui relations in China are clearly tied to the politics of identity.

⁹⁷ Chuah, 157-58.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁹⁹ Gladney, "Islam in China," 466.

¹⁰⁰ Chuah, 160.

Finally, it is important to recognize the role external factors play in Han-Hui relations. As China's economic interests in the Middle East have increased, Muslim countries have begun to take an increased interest in Beijing's treatment of its Muslim minorities.¹⁰¹ However, it is nearly unthinkable that a Middle Eastern would intervene on behalf of the Hui, in the event of major Chinese repression. Moreover, the majority of Hui living abroad have not taken steps to create expatriate communities. Instead, they have largely conformed to overseas Chinese communities with only a few identifying characteristics (such as halal restaurants).¹⁰² Thus, without major external assistance, it appears that such factors have little impact on Han-Hui relations.

The reasons for the Hui tendency to avoid separatism are unclear and competing ideas have been debated. It is clear that Han-Hui relations are very different than Han-Uighur. This distinction raises an important question: with whom do the Hui most closely relate, the Uighurs or the Han? Insight into this question is critical in order to explain the Hui reluctance to use separatism. According to Lipman, ethnically, the Hui are virtually identical to the Han majority. Hui speak Mandarin, look like Han, and live in nearly every city in China. Thus, from an ethnic perspective, the Hui may identify very closely with the Han Chinese. Lipman also argues that because of this identification with the Han, the Hui have no separatist desires. In other words, despite a few specific grievances, the Hui are loyal to the PRC as a nation-state.¹⁰³ Lipman's argument has been expanded upon by other authors. According to Gladney, many Hui are critical of Uighur separatism and view such action as disloyalty to the Chinese state.¹⁰⁴ The arguments favoring ethnic identity integration as the cause of a lack of separatism are not flawless, however. One must recall the identity debate facing Chinese Muslims. Authors such as Israeli have argued that Chinese Muslims identify very strongly with Islam, not ethnicity. Proponents of this argument say that the Hui are not loyal to the Chinese state or any ethnic nation, only with a global Islamic identity. This identification with a global religion and not with a unified, isolated group has contributed to the lack of a separatism

¹⁰¹ Dru C Gladney, "The Muslim Face of China," *Current History* 92, no. 575, (September 1993): 275-280.

¹⁰² Lipman, 49.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁰⁴ Gladney, "Islam in China," 466.

movement among the Hui. Thus, this issue is clearly a matter of debate and there is currently no single answer as to why the Hui have not attempted a major separatist movement.

As demonstrated above, previous studies have debated the motivations and future of China's Muslims. The lack of definitive answers to these questions has provided the opportunity to expand on the current debate. This thesis will add to the current literature by making a direct comparison of China's two largest Muslim ethnic groups. This comparison will seek insight into the following questions, why do Uighurs engage in separatism, but Hui do not? What are the prospects for ethnic peace among Chinese Muslims?

D. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

This thesis will use Steven Van Evera's method of a controlled comparison regarding the causes of ethnic separatism. According to his *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, this method compares observations regarding two or more case studies in order to test a theory. The hypothesis in this thesis is that Uighurs use separatism and Hui do not because of grievances and identity issues. In order to test this argument, this thesis has first established the similarities between the two groups. Next, the differences between the Uighurs and the Hui will be evaluated on grievances and identity politics. This thesis will then attempt to show that these differences are the reasons behind the inconsistency among Chinese Muslims' reactions to CCP policies.

This study uses primary sources including interviews with both Uighurs and Hui and translated Chinese media sources. I also draw on ten days of field work which I conducted in western China during June and July of 2006. My secondary sources come from a variety of scholarly journal articles and books.

I conducted field research in Kashgar and Urumqi, China from 27 June 2006-8 July 2006.¹⁰⁵ Because of Chinese law, field work in the PRC is extremely restricted. Thus, I adapted my research methodology to accommodate local laws and regulations. My interpreter and travel partner was Assistant Professor Haning Hughes from the Air

¹⁰⁵ This research was funded by the Air Force Institute of National Security Studies at the United States Air Force Academy. I would like to thank the Institute for their generous contribution and support.

Force Academy's Department of Foreign Languages. In order to conduct my research, I relied on two main methods: observation and interviewing.

During my time in Xinjiang, Professor Hughes and I made a concerted effort to observe the local economic and social conditions, from both the Han Chinese and Uighurs' points of view. To do this effectively, we traveled extensively on foot and at times, by donkey cart. Taking pictures to document our experiences, we explored as much of Xinjiang as we could, given our time and monetary constraints. We both maintained detailed daily journals in which we recorded our experiences, thoughts, and reflections. By doing this, I feel that we gained a somewhat limited but important perspective regarding contemporary Xinjiang and the social and economic conditions which facing the people there.

Observation is important, but without interacting with the people of Xinjiang, it would have been impossible to gain any sense of how the Han and Uighur interact in modern China. Throughout our time in Xinjiang, Professor Hughes and I conducted dozens of informal, but structured interviews with a wide variety of Xinjiang's residents. We did our best to interact with as broad of a sampling of Uighurs as possible: old, young, assimilated, unassimilated, rich, poor, etc... Additionally, we conducted a number of interviews with Han Chinese, Hui Chinese, and other ethnic groups. Despite our efforts to find expatriates, we were only able to interview one, a British citizen, at length. Most interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese and Professor Hughes provided language support when necessary. On some occasions, we used English and even Uighur to interview people. English was used when the subject felt most comfortable with its use. Uighur was used on a few occasions when we happened to have a bilingual Uighur standing nearby. These interviews provided extensive insight into the mindsets of Uighurs, Hui, and Han Chinese living in Xinjiang.

Finding interviewees under the unique constraints of Chinese law was challenging at times and our methodology for interviewing was somewhat unorthodox. In order to find subjects, we generally started by shopping. In a market, for instance, we often began by demonstrating interest in a particular product. While Professor Hughes browsed, I would often begin to converse with people standing nearby about everyday subjects, such as the day's business. Generally, I then began asking questions about the informant's

family, their past, and so on, at which point, Haning would intervene. She would explain that we were American tourists and that we were curious about Xinjiang. Working together, we then asked a variety of questions and let the informant guide the interview. Because of the nature of some of our research goals and PRC law, it was not possible to ask direct questions, such as “how do you feel about the current social conditions in Xinjiang?” Instead, we asked vague questions that often led to an extensive discussion, from which we were able to draw conclusions regarding the informant’s opinions. In order to maintain discretion, we did not take notes during the interview, however, after each, we went to a restaurant or our hotel and took extensive notes concerning what we had heard. Through this methodology, we interviewed a large number of subjects and gained many important insights into the dynamics of life in Xinjiang.

Throughout our trip, we also conducted dozens of brief, less detailed surveys where we asked a few common questions to a number of people, with which there was not time to conduct a lengthy interview. Our questions were usually in regard to Han-Uighur relations, Uighur identity, and Uighur beliefs regarding Islam. Of those surveyed, taxi drivers proved to be our most fruitful sources of information, though we tried to ask people from many different backgrounds: tour guides, merchants, teenagers, and others. These short encounters provided interesting supplements to the insights gained through longer, more detailed interviews.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the interview data collected will be used in this thesis only as supporting evidence and not as the basis for any assertions. The sole exception for this approach concerns my discussion of Uighur cultural identity in Chapter III for which there is a lack of literature. I recognize that the fieldwork performed for writing this thesis was far too incomplete to draw many independent conclusions. Though we interviewed dozens of people, quality field research requires hundreds of subjects and given the constraints of time and money, such research was simply not possible. Still, many of those interviewed confirmed the extensive field research performed by other researchers, which have been cited in this thesis. Thus, I will use anecdotal evidence from my time in China as supporting evidence, but not as a sole source for a new, otherwise unsupported conclusion.

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II. THE POLITICS OF MINORITY GRIEVANCES

A. INTRODUCTION

The grievances school provides a useful framework for evaluating the differences between the Uighur and Hui reactions to CCP policies. Though it does not completely account for the causes of separatism, the grievances school is nonetheless a valuable framework for evaluating separatist movements. As it is often used by human rights groups and media activists, the grievances school has been criticized for providing a biased account of events and policies. The grievances school maintains that separatist movements rise out of perceptions of inequality among members of peripheral ethnic groups within a state. These perceptions, which are generally political, economic, and social in nature, are created by specific policies of a host government toward minority groups. For instance, religious persecution might cause a minority group to mobilize and engage in acts of violence directed at state authority. In the case of the PRC, two particular grievances are often blamed for creating perceptions of inequality among some ethnic groups: Han migration and internal colonialism. Beijing's sponsorship of Han migrant workers has created Uighur perceptions of inequality and forced assimilation, but the Hui have generally adapted to increased numbers of Han migrants. Additionally, CCP colonial policies, such as economic exploitation and social crackdowns seem to have been accommodated by the Hui, but not by the Uighurs. Under closer review, however, such an outlook misses a number of important points. Chinese minority policy, like most CCP policies, has varied considerably in its execution throughout different regions of the country. This has given local officials free reign to enforce policy along ethnic lines. This chapter will argue that the CCP policies toward Uighurs have been executed in relatively more restrictive ways than those toward Hui Chinese. Because Uighurs have faced harsher economic and social conditions as a result of CCP policy, they have perceived greater inequality (relative to the Han Chinese) than have the Hui. This difference in perceptions helps to explain the differences in reactions by two ethnic groups.

This chapter will use two different grievances – Han immigration and inequalities created by internal colonialism - to demonstrate the differences between the Uighurs and the Hui. For each grievance, a short description of how policies have been implemented toward Chinese minorities in general will be provided. For each minority, this chapter will evaluate the extent to which these policies have contributed to ethnic tension in China and why. Finally, this chapter will draw direct comparisons between the two groups' responses to these two grievances and review explanations for Uighur separatism and Hui accommodation based on this comparison.

B. HAN MIGRATION, INTERNAL COLONIALISM AND ASSIMILATION

In order to understand the differences in the ways in which Chinese policy has affected the Uighurs and Hui, it is first necessary to briefly overview the ways in which migration, colonial, and assimilation policies have affected Chinese minorities in general. Since the establishment of the PRC in 1949, Beijing has placed an emphasis on developing China's frontiers and integrating China's western provinces with those in the east. The CCP also feared ethnic unrest in these border provinces and the impact such unrest might have on economic development and political stability. Thus, throughout the history of the PRC, the CCP has emphasized the peaceful development of places like Xinjiang and Tibet. To this end, one of the CCP's most important strategies has been to facilitate the migration of Han workers to minority areas in western China. One effective control tactic used was the establishment of the Xinjiang Production Construction Corps. This institution, whose primary task was to develop infrastructure in western China, provided jobs for primarily Han migrant workers. According to Millward and Tursun, a great deal of Xinjiang's population growth between 1950 and 1970 was due to relocations involving this institution.¹⁰⁶ Similar incentives, provided by the state, led to Han migration in other areas of China including Ningxia, Qinghai, and Gansu provinces, as well as Inner Mongolia. These policies had a major impact on the demographics of minority areas. For example, today Mongols account for only 14 percent of Inner Mongolia's population.¹⁰⁷ Thus, throughout China, Han migration policies have had a

¹⁰⁶ James A. Millward and Nabijan Tursun, "Political History and Strategies of Control, 1884-1978" in S. Fredrick Starr, ed. *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Central-Asia Caucus Institute, New York, 2004), 90.

¹⁰⁷ Dru C. Gladney, "Chinese Program of Development and Control, 1978-2001" in S. Fredrick Starr,

profound impact on the ethnic makeup of minority areas; there are currently relatively few places where minorities make up a majority of the population. However, in the case of China's Muslims (as will be analyzed below), migration policies have been perceived very differently by Uighurs than they have by Hui.

Internal colonialism is often used to describe the social and economic policies used by a state to dominate, pacify, and/or assimilate a fringe population into the broader interests of the host nation. The term internal colonialism stems from Michael Hechter's 1976 history of England, which led many scholars to apply his model to places like South Africa, Thailand, and Bangladesh.¹⁰⁸ As the PRC encouraged Han populations to migrate to minority areas, it simultaneously enacted sets of economic and social policies designed to extract economic wealth while preserving social stability. In order to control these regions, social policies focused on controlling ethnic identity and nationalism. These policies were largely successful, as no religious or ethnic-based separatist movement has succeeded since the establishment of the PRC. However, Beijing's use of internal colonialism has resulted in a number of attempts by groups such as the Tibetans and the Uighurs. The following sections will attempt to outline the impacts that these migration and colonial policies have made on both the Uighurs and the Hui. While Uighurs have generally rebelled against these perceived attempts at assimilation, the Hui have remained more resilient and have primarily reacted by adapting to the new social construct, as well as negotiating in order to accommodate the CCP. Moreover, Beijing's social policies toward the Hui have not been as restrictive as those concerning the Uighurs. This dichotomy of relationships helps to explain the reasons behind Uighur separatism and Hui accommodation.

C. UIGHUR PERCEPTIONS AND REACTIONS TO HAN MIGRATION

Chinese migration into Xinjiang has had a profound social and economic impact on the Uighurs as a whole. Since 1949, Han presence in Xinjiang has only increased. State policies in the 1950s and 1960 resulted in 1.5 million migrants from 1954 to

ed. *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Central-Asia Caucus Institute, New York, 2004), 112.

¹⁰⁸ Dru C. Gladney, "China's Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Internal Colonialism: The Case of the Uyghur Muslim Minority," *Harvard Asia Pacific Review* (Winter 1998-1999): 2.

1961.¹⁰⁹ According to Nicolas Becquelin, at the beginning of the 1990s, Xinjiang's Han population composed 37.5 percent of the total populace, up from six percent in 1949.¹¹⁰ Though Uighurs comprised 80 percent of Xinjiang's population in 1940, in 1990 they represented a mere 47.5 percent.¹¹¹ Xinjiang's ethnic distribution is divided primarily along a north/south divide. While Uighurs are dominant in the southern half of Xinjiang, such as in the Tarim basin, and near the Kashgar area, Han dominate the north, along with Kazakhs.¹¹² The results of 40 years of migration were evident during my fieldwork in Xinjiang. In Urumqi, a city that was once dominated by Uighurs, Han Chinese were clearly the majority ethnic group. However, in Kashgar, the opposite was true, as Uighurs composed of over 80 percent of the population.

Many of Xinjiang's Han migrants came west as a result of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, which had 2.1 million members, as of 1990.¹¹³ The Construction Corps has made a major impact on life in Xinjiang, as its annual revenue of \$2.05 billion funds many aspects of life in Xinjiang including universities, television stations, schools, militias, and prison camps.¹¹⁴ According to deputy commissar Wang Guizhen, of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, "We've made towns and cities where there was nothing but a vast wasteland, blank spots on the map."¹¹⁵ The Corps has also yielded economic results, though the majority of Xinjiang's economic assets are under state control. Beijing's efforts to develop Xinjiang's economy have focused on two pillars, "one black, one white:" oil and cotton.¹¹⁶ Under Beijing's economic policies, Xinjiang has become China's top cotton producer, as it currently supplies 25 percent of the country's cotton.¹¹⁷ However, Uighurs have not necessarily benefited from the extensive economic development that has been brought to Xinjiang.

¹⁰⁹ Stanley W. Toops, "The Demography of Xinjiang," in S. Fredrick Starr, ed. *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Central-Asia Caucus Institute, New York, 2004), 256.

¹¹⁰ Nicolas Becquelin, "Xinjiang in the Nineties," *The China Journal* 44 (July 2000): 68.

¹¹¹ Toops, 247-254.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 254.

¹¹³ Nicolas Becquelin, "Xinjiang," 68.

¹¹⁴ Nader Hasan, "China's forgotten dissenters," *Harvard International Review* (Fall 2000): 3.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹⁶ Nicolas Becquelin, "Xinjiang," 80.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

Of the 2.4 million members of the Construction Corps in 1997, 90 percent of them were Han workers.¹¹⁸ Moreover, the unemployment rate among Uighurs in Xinjiang is around 70 percent, but that of Han Chinese is closer to one percent.¹¹⁹ Uighurs recognize the realities embodied by these statistics and as a result, have predictably mixed feelings about economic development in Xinjiang.

Han migration into Xinjiang has made social impacts as well, as Han-Uighur relations have faced major complications as Han migrants have increased in number. As increasing numbers of Han Chinese have migrated to Xinjiang, Uighurs have grown resentful, despite the economic development that has occurred. Resentment and unrest among Uighurs is widespread and researchers who have spent time in Xinjiang have reported evidence of Uighur dissatisfaction with Han migration policy. Nicolas Becquelin reported that in every township he visited in Xinjiang, “Uighur farmers complained bitterly about the increased scarcity of water created by the influx of Han farmers.”¹²⁰ In urban areas Uighurs are equally bitter. During my fieldwork, one of my informants –I will call him Omar- explained that since the Han came, finding high-paying jobs in urban areas has become more difficult for Uighurs. These high paying jobs include government posts and working for businesses. However, to get hired requires, among other things, an excellent command of Mandarin, a skill which cannot be acquired without years of expensive schooling. Omar informed me that Uighurs in Kashgar feel that between increasingly high living expenses, as well as numerous taxes, it is not feasible to save enough money to go to college or even senior high school. This, they blame on the Han Chinese.¹²¹ In sum, Uighurs are very unhappy with Han migratory policies and have expressed their dissatisfaction in a variety of ways.

Though many Uighurs are simply displeased with the fact that increasing numbers of Han have impacted them economically, there is also evidence that increased migration

¹¹⁸ Nicolas Becquelin, “Xinjiang,” 77.

¹¹⁹ Hasan, 3.

¹²⁰ Nicolas Becquelin, “Xinjiang,” 84.

¹²¹ Omar was a Uighur merchant in his 30s, who was divorced and had one child. I found that many Uighurs agreed with virtually everything he told me, but he was my only informant that explicitly complained about the influx of Han Chinese. Many other informants agreed that finding jobs was difficult and that living expenses were high. However, he informed us that many Uighurs feel these problems are because of increasing numbers of Han Chinese.

is related to increased ethnic tension between Uighurs and Han. Bovingdon recorded that he was frequently told that “Uighurs hate Hans, and it’s getting worse all the time.”¹²² According to Rudelson, mutual group perceptions have fueled ethnic hostility, but more than anything, Han Chinese and Uighurs do not normally associate.¹²³ James Millward’s assessment of Xinjiang argued that “interethnic relations between Uighurs and Han in Xinjiang are more tense today than they were five or ten years ago.”¹²⁴ Also, according to Millward, the 1990 riots in Baren county were motivated by “Chinese migration into Xinjiang and reports that the Chinese government would extend its one-child family planning policy to minority nationalities including Uighurs.”¹²⁵ Thus, based on these accounts, it seems that Han migration has contributed to poor interethnic relations in Xinjiang, based in part on perceived assimilation.

D. INTERNAL COLONIALISM, RELIGIOUS POLICY, AND THE UIGHURS

Han migration has created an extremely tense ethnic environment within Xinjiang; the addition of perceptions of unfair economic treatment and intense, restrictive social policies has led some Uighurs to violent rebellion throughout the past 20 years. In some ways, portions of the Great Western Development Strategy fit the internal colonialism model. For example, the CCP’s approach to extracting Xinjiang’s natural resources has been perceived by Uighurs as being exploitive. As was mentioned before, Xinjiang’s Tarim basin contains the PRC’s largest oil reserve. Additionally, Xinjiang possesses 115 of the 147 varieties of minerals found in China. As China has increasingly come to rely on these precious resources, Beijing has placed a greater emphasis on integrating Xinjiang’s wealth with the broader Chinese economy.¹²⁶ This integration, however, has created a widespread local perception that Beijing is simply exploiting

¹²² Gardner Bovingdon, “The Not-So-Silent Majority: Uyghur Resistance to Han Rule in Xinjiang.” *Modern China* 28, No 1 (January 2002): 52.

¹²³ Justin Jon Rudelson, *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism Along China’s Silk Road* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1997), 63-64.

¹²⁴ James Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment*, East-West Center Washington Policy Studies 6 (2004): 32.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹²⁶ Gaye Christoffersen, “Xinjiang and the Great Islamic Circle: The Impact of Transnational Forces on Chinese Regional Economic Planning,” *The China Quarterly* 133 (March, 1993): 137.

Xinjiang's natural resources in order to fuel the economies of other Chinese provinces.¹²⁷ Xinjiang also supplies China with a great deal of energy. According to the Xinjiang Science and Technology Institute, 79.5 percent of energy resources found in Karamay had been extracted in 30 years.¹²⁸ Xinjiang's cotton industry has also created perceptions of inequality. According to Colin Mackerras, cotton production in Xinjiang rose from 294,700 tons in 1989 to 1,477,000 tons in 2002, which made Xinjiang China's leading cotton producer.¹²⁹ Uighurs, however, do not feel as though they are benefiting from these resources, as many perceive a major wealth gap between their own ethnicity and the Han Chinese.¹³⁰ In reality, there is some truth behind these perceptions. According to Calla Wiemer's study, there is a strong pattern of ethnic economic disparity; Han Chinese in Xinjiang tend to live in relatively wealthy places, but Turkic minorities tend to inhabit the less developed and relatively poor areas.¹³¹ Thus, Uighurs' perceptions of economic inequality, which are true to some extent, may be attributed to Chinese economic colonialism.

Chinese social policies have also created the perception of inequality and unfairness among Uighurs. In fact, Uighurs often refer to the Han as *aka millat* ("the big brother minzu") or *bu aka* ("this big brother").¹³² Perhaps one of the most intense aspects of Han social colonialism has been the CCP's treatment of Muslims in Xinjiang. According to testimony given by Kahar Barat, the majority of Uighur people have forcibly become "separated from Islam¹³³." Such separation has not only occurred as a result of over thirty years of harsh religious policy, but also because of the CCP's current stance toward Uighur Muslims. The CCP's approach to Uighur Muslims has been to

¹²⁷ Christoffersen, 138.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

¹²⁹ Colin Mackerras, "Ethnicity in China: The Case of Xinjiang," *Harvard Asia Quarterly* (Winter 2004) <http://www4.ncsu.edu/~dnschmid/mackerras.htm> (Accessed 2 June 2006).

¹³⁰ Several scholars' fieldwork has indicated this to be true. Examples include Colin Mackerras (2004) and Nicolas Becquelin (2000). Additionally, I have interview notes from my own fieldwork that indicate definite Uighur perceptions of economic inequality between the Han and Uighurs.

¹³¹ Calla Wiemer, "The Economy of Xinjiang," in S. Fredrick Starr, ed. *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Central-Asia Caucus Institute, New York, 2004), 177.

¹³² Bovington, "The Not-So-Silent Majority," 49.

¹³³ "Practicing Islam in Today's China: Differing Realities for the Uighurs and the Hui." Roundtable before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. 108th Congress, Second Session 17 May 2004.

make worshipping and following Islam increasingly difficult, especially in response to the attacks of September 11, 2001. First, for the past two decades, Uighur youth under the age of 18 have been forbidden from attending mosque. This has prevented an entire generation of Uighurs from publicly practicing Islam and has generated the perception that the state wants to separate Uighurs from their religion. Second, Beijing has considerably expanded its definition of “illegal religious activities” to include educating children. This has contributed to the perception that the state does not wish Uighurs to be allowed to practice their faith. Additionally, state discrimination against Muslims in Xinjiang is intense. According to Fuller and Lipman, public sector employees have been forbidden from wearing traditional Islamic garments, growing traditional mustaches, and attending religious services.¹³⁴ Further, it is widely known that government informants attend mosque services in order to monitor not only content, but also the attendance of state employees and other peoples of interest.¹³⁵ Finally, by expanding the definition of “illegal religious activities” (which traditionally only referred to followers of Falun Gong) to include aspects of Islam, Beijing has given local officials *carte blanche* to persecute Muslims.¹³⁶ Such policies have prevented young Uighurs from learning about Islam and older, Islamic Uighurs from holding influential jobs. This intense religious persecution has contributed to Uighur feelings of animosity and inequality.

China’s reaction to the attacks of September 11, 2001 also created the perception that Uighurs are unequal and should be assimilated. In a speech made in Urumqi, on 1 September 2001, Wang Lequan, the Secretary of the XUAR Communist Party Committee said, “Xinjiang is not a place of terror. By no means is Xinjiang a place where violence and terrorist accidents take place very often.”¹³⁷ However, in the weeks that followed, Beijing launched a set of new policy initiatives that further restricted the Uighurs’ ability to practice Islam. These “new security measures” included closing mosques that were considered to be a “bad influence,” scrutinizing Islamic clergy,

¹³⁴ Graham E. Fuller and Jonathan N. Lipman, “Islam in Xinjiang,” in S. Fredrick Starr, ed. *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland* (Central-Asia Caucus Institute, New York, 2004), 324.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 324.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 325.

¹³⁷ Amnesty International, “People’s Republic of China: China’s Anti-Terrorism Legislation and Repression in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.” <http://web.amnesty.org/library/print/ENGASA170102002> (Accessed 3 February 2006).

increasing monitoring of Islamic education programs, and setting new guidelines for practicing Islam in Xinjiang.¹³⁸ Additionally, in southern Xinjiang, security measures grew increasingly intense and repressive. In the months that followed, roving military patrols constantly patrolled the streets of Kashgar, checking vehicles and identification cards.¹³⁹ Arrests and detentions have also increased to levels not seen since the “Strike Hard” Campaign of the late 1990s. Amnesty International estimated that between mid-September 2001 and the end of 2001 at least 3,000 people were arrested for political reasons; at least 20 of those were tried and executed.¹⁴⁰ In sum, China’s reactions to the attacks of 11 September have not helped to defeat Uighur perceptions that assimilation and repression are taking place.

Generally speaking, Uighurs feel as though the Han Chinese do not belong in Xinjiang and that their arrival has brought great a great deal of economic disparity and social suffering. Conversely, Beijing’s approach to its Hui *minzu* has been much more accommodating and this has resulted in far less violence. The next sections will explore the ways in which Han migration and internal colonialism have affected the Hui, as well as the ways in which the Hui have reacted to these phenomenon. Han migration has affected the Hui differently, as the minority was spread throughout China as a result of its history. Without a native homeland, many Hui have not responded to Han migration in the same way that Uighurs have. Also, Beijing has not treated the Hui as harshly as it has treated the Uighurs and this has resulted in increased levels of accommodation, from both sides.

E. HUI PERCEPTIONS AND REACTIONS TO HAN MIGRATION

Chinese migration policies have affected Hui regions of the PRC differently than Uighur regions, as the Hui are spread throughout every province and nearly every county. Ethnic tension as a result of migration has depended on the mutual levels of tolerance between Hui and Han inhabitants. As was mentioned before, resulting tension has not been widespread and has been the result of isolated incidents of intolerance. In some places, coexistence between Hui inhabitants and Han migrants has created problems, due

¹³⁸ Amnesty International.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

to misunderstanding caused by ignorance. The instance cited above of Han Chinese placing the head of a pig on a mosque demonstrates that the migration of Han Chinese into Hui areas has not been entirely without incident. However, in most parts of China, Han migration policies have not resulted in high levels of ethnic tension.

Though migration policies have resulted in low levels of ethnic tension, it is important to recognize that migrations have affected the Hui in very different ways than they have affected the Uighurs. First, the Hui have no homeland or territory which they consider to be “their own.” It is true that there are regions in China, Ningxia province for example, that were predominantly Hui before Chinese migrants began to move west. However, because the Hui do not maintain a specific homeland, their perception of Han migrants has been very different than that of the Uighurs. Hui see Han Chinese as an annoyance at worst and not as a threat to the survival of their national identity. Additionally, while the Uighurs have enjoyed a certain degree of independence from the Han Chinese before the establishment of the PRC, the Hui have been in constant day-to-day interaction with Han Chinese since the introduction of Islam to China, centuries ago. Thus, the Hui are more accustomed to interactions with the Han and have not perceived Han migration as an intrusion (at least not to the same extent as the Uighurs). These key differences help to explain the reasons for relatively low ethnic tension among Hui and Han Chinese.

F. INTERNAL COLONIALISM, RELIGIOUS POLICY, AND THE HUI

Just as Han migration has affected the Hui in different ways than it has affected China’s Uighurs, economic and social policies have not been perceived by the Hui as particularly repressive. Different perceptions have mostly come as a result of different effects of Beijing’s policies at local levels. China’s approach to economic development in the West left Uighurs with feelings of inequality and exploitation; however, in many Hui minority areas, this has not been the case. As a whole, China’s Hui have prospered under China’s reformed economic system, as their stereotyped (but in most cases genuine) flair for entrepreneurship has led many Hui to capitalize on Beijing’s reforms, many of which have affected heavily Hui areas. For example, in rural Na Homestead, located in Ningxia province Hui have embraced the private responsibility system and

free-market reforms, which have led to substantial gains in standards of living.¹⁴¹ Under the new free market reforms, Hui living in Na Homestead operate 70 percent of the restaurants, food stands, and private stalls that have opened in the Yongning County Seat market area since the reform.¹⁴² This is remarkable, as they only constitute 12.6 of the county's population. According to Gladney, this economic prosperity among rural Hui as a result of state policy has led to the unintended consequence of support for religious activity.¹⁴³ Because many Na villagers believe that their good fortune was the result of Allah working through the Chinese government, Beijing's policy of economic reform in Na Homestead seems to have helped revive Islam by encouraging Hui Chinese to attend mosque, pay alms, and support the clergy.¹⁴⁴ In sum, China's approach to economic development in rural Hui areas has allowed minorities, including Hui to profit. This in turn has prevented violence directed at the government.

Beijing's religious policies have also perceived differently by Hui than they have by Uighurs; this difference in perceptions is the result of differences in policy execution by local cadres. Hui Muslims are given a relatively large amount of freedom to practice Islam in China, in part because of China's hope to improve ties with the Middle East. According to Dru Gladney, global Islam has become important to local Hui Islam and this has impressed upon Beijing the importance Middle Eastern governments place on the CCP's treatment of its Islamic minorities.¹⁴⁵ In addition to allowing Hui Muslims some degree of genuine autonomy and leniency to practice, the CCP has substantially increased the numbers of Hui it has sent abroad to study in the Middle East. Unfortunately, China's strong ties with the Middle East have not worked out as well for Muslim minorities on China's borders, including the Uighurs. Despite improving its relations with Muslims in China's interior and urban areas, Beijing has continually increased restrictions on Turkic-speaking Muslims. This has led to perceptions of inequality among Uighurs, among other minority groups.

¹⁴¹ Gladney, *Dislocating*, 292.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 293.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 293.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 294.

¹⁴⁵ Gladney, "Islam in China," 463.

Cadres in Xinjiang have used religious policy as a way of repressing the Uighurs; this has not been the case in Hui areas. According to Gardner Bovingdon, “religious practices permissible among the Hui are forbidden to the Uighurs. That is to say, Muslims in China confront separate and unequal treatment based on region and identity.”¹⁴⁶ Examples of disparities between the treatment of Uighur and Hui Muslims are easy to find. For instance, throughout the reform period in China, Beijing allowed some mosques to be reopened and forced others to remain closed, based on which locations preached the “correct” sorts of messages.¹⁴⁷ In Hui areas, it is normal for minors under 18 to be allowed to attend mosque, but in Uighur areas, as mentioned, youth may not attend. Young Hui are allowed to receive religious education after school and in public, but in Xinjiang, there have been reports of Uighurs arrested for the same types of activity. In Hui areas, the number of imams allowed by the state has remained constant, but in Uighur areas, this number has fluctuated wildly and in many areas, there has been a marked decrease.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, according to Kahar Barat, religious persecution in Xinjiang targets ethnic groups, not religious offenders.¹⁴⁹ Although Amnesty International has reported the imprisonment of thousands of Uighurs on religious charges, similar reports of large scale arrests involving Hui Chinese have not been released. Thus, Beijing’s religious policies have been executed very differently by local cadres; China’s stance toward Islam in Hui areas has not been nearly as repressive as its activity in Uighur areas.

G. CONCLUSIONS

Beijing’s social and economic policies in the reform era have affected its Muslim minorities in very different ways. In some cases, this has been the result of different execution by cadres at local levels. In other instances, however, this has been due to social and/or cultural factors. In any case, the different effects produced by Beijing’s

¹⁴⁶ Gardner Bovingdon in Roundtable before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, 108th Congress, Second Session, “Practicing Islam in Today’s China: Differing Realities for the Uighurs and the Hui” 17 May 2004.

¹⁴⁷ Roundtable before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, 108th Congress, Second Session, “Practicing Islam in Today’s China: Differing Realities for the Uighurs and the Hui” 17 May 2004.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Kahar Barat in Ibid.

policies have created very different perceptions of inequality among Uighurs and Hui, relative to the Han. The Uighurs have perceived themselves as victims of Han attempts to wipe out their culture through migration and assimilative policies. The Hui, on the other hand, have not perceived Han migration, economic reform, and religious policies as attacks on their ethnicity; rather, they have accommodated changes and prospered. Based on the framework provided by the grievances school, these differences in perceptions indicate that the Uighurs are more predisposed to engage in separatism than the Hui. As was demonstrated above, this has been the case, as the Uighurs' responses to the aforementioned policies have included direct attacks at state authority. The Hui, however, have not responded in this way. Therefore, it seems that the grievances school provides at least a partial explanation for the reason that Uighurs have engaged in separatism where the Hui have not.

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III. THE POLITICS OF MINORITY IDENTITY

A. INTRODUCTION

Ethnic identity is a difficult concept to define and compare, especially among peoples in locations where fieldwork is heavily restricted (such as the PRC). Research restrictions aside, the concept of ethnic identity is different among and even within ethnic groups, which can make comparison difficult. Still, through careful analysis, it is possible to outline contemporary Hui/Uighur ethnic identity and compare the extent to which each facilitates resistance in China. This chapter will attempt to highlight the differences between modern Hui and Uighur identity and the ways in which these differences have led to different responses to Han domination in China today. In sum, this chapter will show that because Hui identity is rooted deeply within the PRC, the Hui have been able to successfully integrate with the Han majority. On the other hand, since Uighur identity exists independently from the PRC, the integration of the Uighurs into Han culture has been largely unsuccessful. This difference among China's Muslims has manifested itself in Han-Uighur relations through mutual distrust, misperceptions, and in some cases violence. While it is true that Hui interaction with Han communities has also, at times, led to violence, such a phenomenon is relatively rare; however, Uighur resistance and violence has been much more common.

B. THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

Before addressing the concepts of contemporary Hui and Uighur identity, it is first necessary to clarify the notion of ethnic identity in general. This thesis will use Ralph Premdas's framework for analyzing secessionist movements. Premdas divided the causes of separatism into two different categories: primordial and secondary.¹⁵⁰ This thesis will use these divisions in society to demonstrate the reasons that the Uighurs engage in separatism where the Hui do not. Though Premdas argued that these primordial and secondary factors may all lead to separatism because of the cleavages in society they represent, this thesis will argue differently. This chapter will attempt to demonstrate that the unique combination of primordial factors of which Hui identity is

¹⁵⁰ For a discussion of primary and secondary factors according to Premdas, please see Chapter I.

composed have prevented the outbreak of a major separatist movement. Modern Hui have successfully integrated Han and Islamic primordial factors, which has led to a fairly peaceful Han-Hui relationship. Moreover, the lack of secondary factors in present Hui identity has resulted in a Hui population that is very loyal to the PRC. Conversely, the unsuccessful integration of Uighur primordial factors with Han China has created major rift between Uighurs and Han in Xinjiang today. Additionally, modern Uighur identity is also composed of secondary factors, which have created a Uighur population that is not as loyal to the PRC as the Hui. The result of this difference in Han-Hui and Han-Uighur relations explains, to a certain degree, the differences in CCP-Hui and CCP-Uighur relations and the tendency of Uighurs to use more violence than the Hui.

It is also necessary to briefly discuss the realities of ethnic identity as they apply to Uighurs and Hui. There is currently an intense academic debate regarding the cohesiveness of the identities of both ethnic groups. This chapter will not engage in this debate and will make generalizations with which some scholars would not be happy. Indeed, Uighur identity varies widely and this has led some to question their cohesiveness as an ethnicity. Many Uighurs seem to feel more loyal to their particular oases, but others emphasize a national Uighur identity. Islam is extremely important to some Uighurs, but other Uighurs do not believe in Allah. It is also true that some Uighurs, especially those that are wealthy, have assimilated with the Han and this has created a certain degree of separation in Uighur identity. However, completely assimilated Uighurs are quite rare in China; it is also unlikely that they are actively engaging in separatism. Thus, this chapter will focus on unassimilated Uighurs, who constitute the majority of Xinjiang's minority population.

Hui identity is also very complex. Hui Chinese vary widely in terms of their application of Islamic values and traditions and this has made it necessary to draw conclusions using a certain degree of generalization. Despite these inconsistencies, it is important to recognize that there is disagreement among people of *every* culture as to which values, traditions, and factors create their identity. In the United States, for example, some citizens feel most loyal to their hometown, while others feel most attached to a particular region of the country. Still others consider themselves simply American or in other cases, a blend of American and another culture. For the purposes of

this thesis, I will focus on the primordial factors (race, culture, and ethnicity) which seem to be the most evenly shared among the ethnic groups in question. At certain times, it will be necessary to make distinctions and this chapter will do so. At other times, it will be necessary to generalize and I will, to the best of my ability, attempt to underscore these instances.

C. MAPPING CONTEMPORARY HUI IDENTITY: PRIMORDIAL FACTORS

As was mentioned above, contemporary Hui identity is comprised almost entirely of primordial factors, defined by Ralph Premdas as long-standing divisions and characteristics of society that form the basis for ethnic identity: culture, values, race, and religion, for example.¹⁵¹ The Hui do not share many secondary factors, defined as shared features or experiences. Though Premdas argues that it is more difficult for a host government to accommodate or reconcile primordial factors, the case of the Hui has proved that this is not always the case. Because modern Hui identity combines the primordial factors of their ancestors (Arab-Persian traders) and, to a point, their Han Chinese neighbors, the Hui people possess a strong loyalty toward the Chinese state. In other words, without the concept of China, the Hui identity would not exist in its current state, as the Hui are both Muslim *and* Chinese. This unique identity separates them from other Chinese Muslim minorities, including the Uighurs.

In order to demonstrate the ways in which present Hui identity has discouraged separatism, it is first necessary to explore the primordial factors which comprise the modern Hui ethnicity: race, values, culture, and religion. The first of these factors, race, is essential to understand if one is to gain a true appreciation for modern Hui identity. The Hui race has been portrayed differently by different sources. For instance, according to Dru Gladney, some scholars have cited distinct physical features characteristic of the Hui: “hazel-green eyes, long beards, high-bridged noses, and light, even red hair.”¹⁵² Other scholars, however, such as Colin Mackerras, claim that the Hui are virtually ethnically indistinguishable from the Han and one must resort to other factors in order to

¹⁵¹ Ralph Premdas, “Secessionist Movements in Comparative Perspective,” in Ralph Premdas, ed. *Secessionist Movements in Comparative Perspective* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 22.

¹⁵² Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People’s Republic* (Harvard University Press: Harvard, 1996), 23-24.

distinguish the two ethnic groups.¹⁵³ During my own fieldwork in western China and Beijing, I often asked both Han and minority people, “What is the difference between Han and Hui? The most common answer to this question, I found, was that the Han and Hui are the same except that the Hui believe in Islam and do not eat pork. This answer seems attractive for a number of reasons. First, the Hui do not have their own language; the vast majority of Hui speak Mandarin, while a few others adopt the languages of the minority areas in which they live. Second, China’s Hui live in virtually every major region of China and in 97 percent of China’s counties.¹⁵⁴ Finally, intermarriage between Han and Hui is not entirely uncommon, which, through the centuries, has led to a large amount of racial integration between the Han and Hui.¹⁵⁵ Thus, from a racial standpoint, it is extremely difficult to distinguish the Han from the Hui. Despite this, however, there is one distinction between the Hui and other Chinese on which all parties seem to agree. China’s Hui are indeed the direct descendants of the original Arab-Persian traders who brought Islam to China.¹⁵⁶ Thus, China’s Hui are a racial mixture of Arab-Persian heritage and the Han Chinese, with whom the traders married, hundreds of years ago. This shared heritage, along with shared culture, values, and religion is one of the foundations of modern Hui identity and, because of its inclusion of Han Chinese, has helped the integration of the Hui into the modern social structure of the PRC.

Just as the racial makeup of the Hui demonstrates a blend of Chinese and the Islamic peoples of the Middle East, contemporary Hui values and culture also reflect this combination. The Hui have, over the last several centuries, successfully integrated Islam with Chinese culture, despite some scholars’ arguments that such a combination is impossible.¹⁵⁷ To be sure, there is serious academic debate as to the extent to which the Hui possess a common, unified culture, but the best demonstration of the Hui ability to integrate these cultures is through the Hui idea of *qing zhen*. According to the Oxford

¹⁵³ Colin Mackerras, “Some Issues of Ethnic and Religious Identity among China’s Islamic Peoples,” *Asian Ethnicity* 6, no. 1 (February 2005): 5.

¹⁵⁴ Gladney, *Muslim Chinese*, 27.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 211.

¹⁵⁶ Mi Shoujiang and You Jia, trans. Min Chang, *Islam in China* (China Intercontinental Press: Beijing, 2004), 53.

¹⁵⁷ For a discussion of the ways in which Islam and Chinese culture are supposedly incompatible, please see Raphael Israeli, *Islam in China* Chapter One.

Chinese Dictionary, the words *qing zhen* translate to “pure and true,”¹⁵⁸ but in the PRC, the combination of the two has evolved to mean “Islam.”¹⁵⁹ Throughout China, Hui Chinese have carried this value of “pure and true” into different aspects of their lives, as they have, to differing extents, assimilated into Chinese culture. For example, according to Dru Gladney’s fieldwork, it is very common for Hui Chinese to follow Islam and abstain from pork, especially in the northwest and north central regions of China.¹⁶⁰ On the other hand, in the south, the value of *qing zhen* has manifested itself in different ways. In the southeast, Hui express the value of *qing zhen* through the “preservation of one’s true ancestry and the ability to demonstrate the veracity of that claim,” by honoring the ancient Sufi tombs and temples, built by ancestors.¹⁶¹ Thus, the Hui have managed to integrate this shared value of a “pure and true” life into the realities of living in modern China.

China’s Hui minority has also successfully integrated other cultural values into its identity in order to more effectively preserve their cultural identity. According to Jonathan Lipman, there are three things which all Hui share: “white hats, oil cakes, and common blood.”¹⁶² In his book chapter by the same name, Lipman argues that the Hui are both Chinese and Muslim.¹⁶³ That is, despite their constant interaction with non-Muslims throughout all of China, the Hui have developed customs and habits which have allowed them to maintain separate but prosperous lives under the Chinese system. For example, Hui use Arabic script, white caps, *halal* food, and religious practices in order to maintain a successful combination of Chinese and Islamic life. Though Lipman would argue that this integration has been less unified than Gladney’s fieldwork would suggest, both men seem agree that present Hui identity is composed of both Chinese and Islamic values.

¹⁵⁸ *Oxford Chinese Dictionary* (Oxford University Press: Hong Kong, 2003), 363, 574.

¹⁵⁹ Gladney, *Muslim Chinese*, 7-11.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 11-125.

¹⁶¹ Dru C. Gladney, *Ethnic Identity in China: The Making of a Muslim Minority Nationality*, (Harcourt Brace and Company: Fort Worth, 1998), 155.

¹⁶² Jonathan Lipman, “White Cakes, Oil Cakes, and Common Blood: The Hui in Contemporary China,” in *Governing China’s Multiethnic Frontiers*, ed. Morris Rossabi (University of Washington Press: Seattle, 2004), 22.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 22.

Despite the differences between Hui and Han culture, it is important to examine the ways in which many Hui Chinese have interacted with their Han neighbors. Of China's ten Islamic minorities, the Hui seem to be the most assimilated and are certainly far more integrated than groups such as the Uighur.¹⁶⁴ First, aside from high-concentration areas of Chinese Muslims, most Hui children attend Han schools.¹⁶⁵ Second, the fact that most Hui speak Mandarin as a first language has helped the ethnic group to establish a reputation as very proficient businessmen. Throughout China, Hui merchants have succeeded in establishing prosperous specialty businesses, such as jade carving, butchering, and inn-keeping.¹⁶⁶ Finally, the Hui's unique identity as a minority people with strong Han roots as allowed them to become a sort of cultural "middle-man" between the Han CCP and China's other minorities.¹⁶⁷ This has been accomplished through both business and cultural ties; for instance, in Hangzhou, Hui Muslims have set up a prosperous silk industry by which they cater especially to China's Tibetan populace.¹⁶⁸ Thus, through education and business, the Hui have successfully integrated themselves into Chinese society, especially through modern Chinese values such as prosperity and commerce.

Islam is the final primordial factor with which the Hui most identify. However, this identification as a Muslim ethnic group has not dramatically hindered the Hui's ability to integrate with the Han Chinese. Most Hui consider themselves to be Muslim, regardless of their actual personal practices. There are splits and divisions within this identification with Islam, but most Hui are Sunni. Although the Chinese state is officially secular and prohibits state employees and students from following any religion, the Hui have been able to successfully integrate their culture with modern Chinese society. For example, as was mentioned in Chapter II, there are differences in the ways Uighurs and Hui are allowed to practice Islam; these differences reflect the Hui ability to negotiate with the CCP. Currently, according to testimony given by Kahar Barat, Hui Islam "must

¹⁶⁴ Gladney, "Islam in China," 466.

¹⁶⁵ Michael Dillon, *China's Muslim Hui Community* (Curzon Press: Surrey, 1999), 179.

¹⁶⁶ Jonathan Lipman, "White Cakes, Oil Cakes, and Common Blood: The Hui in Contemporary China," in *Governing China's Multiethnic Frontiers*, ed. Morris Rossabi (University of Washington Press: Seattle, 2004), 32.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

be subject to socialistic guidelines...[and] is allowed only through officially trained imams.”¹⁶⁹ It is also important to understand the ways in which Chinese Muslims, such as the Hui, have adapted Islam to fit with Chinese culture. According to Mi Shoujiang and You Jia, the Chinese interpretation of Islamic doctrine and beliefs reflects integration with Confucian thought, Daoism, and Buddhism.¹⁷⁰ For example, because of Islam’s teaching that one’s supreme loyalty to Allah ran contrary to Confucian thought, Chinese Muslims have adopted the belief that loyalty to Allah, one’s ruler and one’s parents are the three true life virtues.¹⁷¹ Other examples of the ways in which the Hui have adapted Islam to Chinese culture include festivals, holidays, weddings, funerals, and the establishment of the Chinese system of Islamic ethnics.¹⁷² In sum, many Hui identify very strongly with their Islamic faith; however, Chinese Islam has been integrated into the Chinese system and as such, the Hui have been able to remain Islamic *and* Chinese.

D. MAPPING CONTEMPORARY UIGHUR IDENTITY: PRIMORDIAL FACTORS

Uighur identity under the PRC has remained largely independent and this is one of the most overlooked causes of violence in Xinjiang. The Uighurs’ inability to integrate their identity with the realities of contemporary China has contributed to semi-hostile Han-Uighur relations. This section will examine the ways in which primordial factors in Uighur identity have contributed to this unfriendly dynamic.

Before discussing the role of the Uighur in China today, it is first useful to examine the commonalities among the ethnic group; that is, what is it that makes a Uighur a Uighur? The answer to this question is not as simple as one might think. In fact, the term Uighur has only been used in its current sense since 1935.¹⁷³ With this in mind, there are three main categories into which modern Uighur identity may be classified: ethnicity, culture, and religion. Each of these categories can be further

¹⁶⁹ Practicing Islam in Today’s China: Differing Realities for the Uighurs and the Hui.” Roundtable before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. 108th Congress, Second Session 17 May 2004.

¹⁷⁰ Mi Shoujiang and You Jia, trans. Min Chang, *Islam in China* (China Intercontinental Press: Beijing, 2004), 102. Also see Jean A. Berlie, *Islam in China: Hui and Uyghurs between Modernization and Sinicization*, (White Lotus Press: Bangkok, 2004): 7-8.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 95-106

¹⁷³ Rudelson, Justin Jon. *Oasis Identities: Uighur Nationalism and China’s Silk Road*, (Columbia University Press: New York, 1997), 5.

subdivided into a number of different identities, because of internal and external factors. A careful examination of these three categories will provide some insight into the true nature of modern Uighur identity.

Uighur ethnicity seems to be the strongest influence that defines modern Uighur identity. This ethnic identity stems from a number of important identifiers which many Uighurs share: language, history, and lineage. The Uighur ethnic group is comprised of a number of smaller, Turkic ethnic groups, lumped together by the CCP because of the fluidity of ethnicity and the need for cultural simplification.¹⁷⁴ True or not, the majority of Uighurs in Xinjiang believe they are direct descendants of the indigenous inhabitants of the Tarim basin.¹⁷⁵ This belief has created an ethnic identity that is not reliant on the PRC or on any other occupying power. In other words, though the term Uighur may not accurately describe all of those labeled as such, the majority of Uighurs in Xinjiang appear to view their ethnicity as a major identifying characteristic.¹⁷⁶ Other factors have increased the rift between Han and Uighur. For example, Uighurs speak a Turkic-based language that most Han cannot understand. Also, most Uighurs feel an attachment to Xinjiang and see the Han as outsiders or occupiers. Thus, ethnicity acts as a strong uniting influence in Xinjiang today. However, this influence has worked to separate the Uighurs from the Han, rather than to help the Uighurs integrate.

Though ethnicity is a strong, but divisive factor in modern Uighur identity, one must also consider the role of Uighur culture in modern Xinjiang and the ways in which it has exacerbated the split between Uighurs and Han. Modern Uighurs' distinctive cultural identity has served to further separate them from the Han populace, which has contributed to deteriorated Uighur-Han relations. For instance, according to a British expatriate, who I will call Ted, cultural differences have contributed to a general attitude

¹⁷⁴ By the term cultural simplification, I mean that the modern Uighur culture is a large mixture of the cultures of a wide variety of distinct Turkic oasis dwellers. However, the CCP classified 95 percent of Xinjiang's indigenous inhabitants as Uighurs when the minzu policy was created. This step not only simplified things for the CCP, but it also preserved some sense of Turkic identity among modern Uighurs. Rudelson, Justin and Jankowiak, William. "Acculturation and Resistance: Xinjiang Identities in Flux." in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*. Ed. Starr, S. Fredrick. (Central-Asia Caucasus Institute, 2004). 302-303.

¹⁷⁵ Gladney, Dru. "Islam in China: Accommodation or Separatism?" *The China Quarterly*. 451-467 (455).

¹⁷⁶ Colin Mackerras, "Some Issues of Ethnic and Religious Identity among China's Islamic Peoples," *Asian Ethnicity* 6, No 1 (February 2005): 10.

of mutual distrust among Uighurs and Han in Kashgar.¹⁷⁷ Ted noted that in many ways, Chinese and Uighur culture maintain completely opposite values. For example, Uighurs use loud-voices, are very direct, while maintaining piercing eye contact, even with strangers. However, Han Chinese are different. Chinese are subtle, quiet, indirect, and rarely make eye contact. Uighurs also have their own Turkic language, which is largely unintelligible to the Han. These cultural differences, he said, have made Chinese people very uncomfortable with Uighurs, and vice-versa. Ted's assertion that Han Chinese are uncomfortable with Uighurs was confirmed by many Han Chinese, including an informant whom I will call Jialing.¹⁷⁸ According to Jialing, Uighurs are thought of as hypocritical (because they say they don't eat pork, drink, or smoke, but actually many do), shallow, and not trustworthy. Han people are very suspicious of becoming friends with a Uighur because there is a major belief that despite how close you might think you are to a Uighur, "they will betray you if they can." These cultural barriers are exacerbated by a lack of communication between the two ethnic groups, and prejudices such as this seem to perpetuate the cycle. Both of these interviews demonstrate that there is a major cultural gap between the Han and the Uighur, which has contributed to not only distrust, but also a barrier to the Uighurs' ability to integrate into Han society. Such cultural differences do not exist as widely between Han and Hui; therefore, the Han-Hui cultural relationship is clearly different than that of the Uighur/Han.

Islam is the final primordial factor found in contemporary Uighur identity, and it too has contributed to distrustful Han-Uighur relations. Although the Hui have managed, for the most part, to integrate Chinese society into their practice of Islam, this has not been the case among Uighurs in Xinjiang. Rather, Islam has been used by both Uighurs and Chinese as a basis for self-isolation and discrimination, as both groups have used

¹⁷⁷ This informant, Ted, was an expatriate who had lived in Kashgar since 2001. A student of the Uighur language, he worked in an independently-operated travel agency. Probably in part due to his proficiency in Uighur, Ted seemed to be very informed on topics such as Uighur identity and Uighur culture. Many of his insights either confirmed other scholars' field research or provided insight on topics not yet extensively covered by Uighur experts.

¹⁷⁸ Jialing was a Chinese store clerk, of about 24-26 years old. She had migrated to Kashgar seeking work four months before I met her. She came from Guangxi province and was therefore very familiar with minorities and minority cultures. She seemed to be well-informed about Uighurs and their cultural practices; however, she maintained a number of stereotypes, which I found interesting. She is a particularly intriguing source, as she was obviously well-educated but still believed a number of rumors regarding Uighurs which were simply untrue.

religious grounds for justifying their actions. As was covered in Chapter II, according to Graham Fuller and Jonathan Lipman, the discrimination against Uighurs by Han Chinese through religion is severe, and its increase threatens to shape modern Uighur religious and ethnic identity.¹⁷⁹ For example, in the public sector, Uighur employees are subject to strict guidelines, many of which forbid religiously significant clothing (i.e. the *doppa* skullcap for men and the *hijab* scarf for women). Beijing's laws regarding crackdowns on "crime" have translated to a crackdown on Islam.¹⁸⁰ Islam has, therefore, become a way of resisting state power, and religious activity is likely to grow in this role as time goes on.¹⁸¹ According to Colin Mackerras' fieldwork, imams in southern Xinjiang have been known to preach anti-Chinese sermons, encouraging violence against the state.¹⁸² More common resistance to state policy through religious means, however, takes place at far more fundamental levels as well. Though the teaching of Islam to children under 18 is forbidden, it has become increasingly common for Uighurs to teach their children to pray in the home, observe religious holidays, such as Ramadan, and follow Muslim traditions. According to Rudelson, the growth of Islamic tradition at the local level is significant and it has encouraged a variety of responses to Chinese policy, from violent resistance to indifference.¹⁸³ Such secretive teachings have become a strong symbol of identity among Uighurs today and will likely grow in significance as Han migration into Xinjiang continues.¹⁸⁴

Though Islam has contributed to discrimination by the Han against Uighurs in Xinjiang, reverse discrimination, by the Uighurs against the Han has also contributed to the isolation of the Uighurs as an ethnic group. In Xinjiang today, Uighurs have, to a

¹⁷⁹ Graham E. Fuller and Jonathan N. Lipman, "Islam in Xinjiang," in S. Fredrick Starr, ed. *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Central-Asia Caucus Institute, New York, 2004), 324.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 324.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 336.

¹⁸² Colin Mackerras, "Some Issues of Ethnic and Religious Identity among China's Islamic Peoples," *Asian Ethnicity* 6, No. 1 (February 2005): 9.

¹⁸³ Justin Jon Rudelson, *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism Along China's Silk Road*, (Columbia University Press: New York, 1997), 47-48.

¹⁸⁴ According to my fieldwork, as well as a number of secondary sources, some Uighurs feel that observing Islam has become increasingly difficult as Han migration has increased. This, they say, is because increased Han populations have "watered down" the Islamic makeup of Xinjiang, making Islam more difficult to practice correctly and openly. There is also something to be said about the differences of practicing a particular tradition when the majority of one's surroundings is also practicing, versus when one is in a small minority.

certain extent, isolated themselves on the basis of religion and this has strengthened Uighur identity. Such self-isolation has undermined integration between Uighur and Han; this lack of integration highlights the difference between Uighur-Han and Hui-Han relations. For example, it is important to recognize that the Hui and the Uighurs do not necessarily agree on a wide variety of issues. Uighurs will not eat in most Hui households and will very rarely eat meat sold at Hui butchers, as they do not believe it is up to their religious standards. Neither Hui nor Uighur will eat in a Han household, and most Han will not eat in Uighur restaurants.¹⁸⁵ The reasons behind these interactions have more to do with distrust or misunderstanding than actual hostility; however, the social separation of Uighur, Hui, and Han along religious lines is telling. Other examples of this sort of separation abound. According to every Uighur I interviewed, it is “very rare” that a Uighur and a Han could marry. Since Islam mandates that a Muslim woman must marry another Muslim, it is unusual that a Uighur woman will marry a Han, as many Han Chinese are not religious. Moreover, it is equally unlikely for a Uighur man to marry a Han woman. Uighur culture dictates that both sets of parents approve their child’s marriage. According to my informants, it is very unusual for Uighur parents to approve a marriage to a Han Chinese, because they feel strongly about maintaining Islamic values.

In some areas of Xinjiang, Hui and Uighur distrust is widespread, especially along religious lines. For instance, though both ethnic groups are Islamic, they pray in separate mosques, worship revere separate saints, attend separate Islamic schools, and emphasize different Islamic holidays.¹⁸⁶ Unfortunately, this distrust has prevented the Hui from assuming a role as an intermediary ethnic group in Xinjiang. In short, mutual fear and distrust has spread among all three groups; Many Uighurs do not trust Hui because of religious reasons and because Hui speak Mandarin.¹⁸⁷ Some Hui believe Uighurs to be a “backward” people, but are also marginalized by the Han. The majority of Han believe the Uighur to be strange, backward, and violent. Some also feel that the Hui are dishonest and will support the Uighurs due to religious ties. Thus, Islam in Xinjiang has

¹⁸⁵ Rudelson, 63.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 64.

¹⁸⁷ This complicated web of relationships was observed in part during my fieldwork, but is also succinctly summarized in Rudelson, 64.

created a very complex network of misperception and distrust; such a complicated web of interactions has effectively isolated the Uighur ethnic group from maintaining peaceful relations with the Han.

Uighur primordial identity, composed of race, culture, and religion, has not facilitated integration with Han Chinese society; rather, it has had the opposite effect. While the Hui have largely integrated Chinese values with traditional Islam, the Uighurs have not. This difference has resulted in a wide-spread social cleavage between Uighur and Han, which, according to Premdas, is a cause of separatism. In the sections that follow, this thesis will outline the secondary factors found among Hui and Uighur identity and the ways in which these have and have not caused separatism among Chinese Muslims.

E. MAPPING CONTEMPORARY HUI IDENTITY: SECONDARY FACTORS

As demonstrated above, contemporary Hui identity has been strongly shaped by the primordial factors of ethnicity, values/culture, and religion; through these factors, the Hui have managed to develop an identity which has largely allowed them to assimilate into contemporary Chinese society. In order to fully analyze contemporary Hui identity, it is also necessary to investigate the role of secondary factors. These factors, which were also defined in Chapter I, consist of shared experiences and hardships recently endured by a population. Secondary factors, which might include such things as genocide, abuse, or forced assimilation, have been cited by Premdas as a cause of separatist and secessionist movements.¹⁸⁸ This section will argue that the modern Hui identity's lack of secondary factors by the CCP has resulted in a Hui population that feels very loyal to the Chinese state and is not poised to engage in separatism.

As was examined in Chapter II, repression of the Hui by the CCP has been neither as intense, nor as widespread as the repression of the Uighurs. It is also true that such oppression and subsequent resistance has been highly localized in China. According to Lipman, some Hui communities are more volatile and/or prone to resistance than others.¹⁸⁹ Chuah argues that this tendency has a great deal to do with the proportion of

¹⁸⁸ Premdas, 21-23.

¹⁸⁹ Jonathan Lipman, "White Cakes, Oil Cakes, and Common Blood: The Hui in Contemporary China," in *Governing China's Multiethnic Frontiers*, ed. Morris Rossabi (University of Washington Press: Seattle, 2004), 47.

Hui to Han in a given location.¹⁹⁰ In places where Hui tend to be most populous, resistance tends to be more likely, but in cities where the Han dominate, resistance is nearly nonexistent. Similarly, antagonistic behavior among Han cadres and Han residents varies widely by location as well. In large part due to the wide variety of ways in which the Hui have integrated with the Han, there is a great deal of inconsistency of repression, as actions which incite violence tend to stem from lower levels of government. For example, during the 1990s in Shandong province, a riot broke out in response to a group of Han Chinese nailing a pig head to a mosque. This, however, did not incite a nation or even province-wide resistance movement. In any case, there is no evidence of a nation-wide identity based on any degree of mutual repression.

The localization of the Hui also stems from different levels of assimilation; this demonstrates that despite some beliefs that “all Hui under heaven are one family,”¹⁹¹ there is not a prevalent, common attitude of resistance against the CCP. Though there is intense academic debate regarding the cohesiveness of current Hui identity, both sides of the debate seem to agree that no general sentiment of resistance against the CCP exists among Hui Chinese.¹⁹² All sides of the debate also seem to agree that Hui communities are extremely diverse and have assimilated into Chinese society in different ways. In some ways, this assimilation has been relatively smooth, with no violence at all. However, in other places, such a transition has not occurred smoothly.¹⁹³ This disparity in relations has led to the development of hostile secondary factors in specific Hui communities in China, but this attitude has not spread or evolved into a nation-wide movement.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the majority of Hui support the PRC despite varying degrees of disapproval toward Beijing’s religious policies. Without a

¹⁹⁰ Osman Chuah, “Muslims in China: The Social and Economic Situation of the Hui Chinese,” *Journal of Muslim Affairs* 24 no. 1 (April 2004): 156-57.

¹⁹¹ “*tianxia huihui shi yi jia*” is a common expression among Hui communities, according to authors such as Gladney and Lipman. I also heard this expression during my fieldwork in western China.

¹⁹² For more information, please see the Literature Review section of Chapter I and the sources cited. Lipman, Chuah, and Gladney have written extensively on the cohesiveness of Hui identity and without relevant fieldwork of my own, I cannot easily contribute to that particular debate. Thus, this thesis will center primarily on the ways in which local Hui identities have prevented the development of hostile secondary factors in modern Hui identity.

¹⁹³ A brief explanation of the three types of Han/Hui relations may be found in Chapter I, in the Literature Review section.

homeland, like Pakistan or Bangladesh is to Indian Muslims, the Hui can only maintain their distinct identity under the PRC in China proper.¹⁹⁴ This point is underscored by the behavior of overseas Hui. Unlike Uighurs and Tibetans, Hui living overseas have not attempted to set up governments abroad or any sort of resistance group. The Hui clearly feel they maintain a place in the Islamic community, but there has been no strong international movement pushing for Hui liberties or independence. There is also no evidence that the Hui support any separatist movement in China, including that of the Uighurs.¹⁹⁵ Thus, in sum, secondary factors seem to have very little impact on modern Hui identity, as shared experiences of the Hui are far too localized and the Hui as a whole are far too loyal to the PRC to spark any sort of national Hui movement.

F. MAPPING CONTEMPORARY UIGHUR IDENTITY: SECONDARY FACTORS

Though it seems unlikely that contemporary Hui identity has been heavily influenced by secondary factors, there is reason to believe that aspects of modern Uighur identity have been affected by shared experiences of repression. While the Hui Chinese experience has been the result of policies by a government under which they have always lived, the Uighurs' experience has been different. From a Uighur point of view, the CCP is an occupying entity and, to a certain extent, many Uighurs feel that Xinjiang should be at the very least truly autonomous. It also seems likely that this difference has manifested itself, in varying degrees, in a Uighur identity that is hostile to the Chinese presence in Xinjiang. Chapter II covered the repression and grievances of the Uighurs in great detail and so this chapter will not reiterate specific policies. However, it is useful to highlight two examples of how the Uighur identity has been influenced by secondary factors.

First, Chinese religious policy has made a profound impact on Uighur identity. Religious Uighurs live in a perpetual state of fear, as Chinese surveillance and restrictions have made practicing Islamic risky in the eyes of the average Uighur.¹⁹⁶ Uighurs also fear the loss of their cultural and religious identity as a result of these policies. At the same time, however, Chinese religious policies have sharpened the influence of Islam in southern Xinjiang and have contributed to popular desires to maintain an Islamic way of

¹⁹⁴ Lipman, 47.

¹⁹⁵ Dru C. Gladney, "Islam in China."

¹⁹⁶ Graham E. Fuller and Jonathan N. Lipman, "Islam in Xinjiang," 331.

life. From non-religious Uighurs' perspectives, Chinese religious policy has been equally important to identity. Because one must reject Islam and religion in general in order to hold government positions in the PRC, ambitious Uighurs have been forced to abandon traditional Islamic values. Thus, there has been a major split in Uighur identity based on Chinese policy, and this has had broad implications. As a result of Chinese religious policy, Islam has become more than a religion; in some parts of Xinjiang, it is a symbolic means of rejecting the CCP and in turn, Chinese authority.¹⁹⁷

While Chinese religious policy has certainly influenced Uighur tendencies, it is also important to examine the implications of the term "Uighur." According to my British informant in Kashgar, many Uighurs do not feel that the current use of the term Uighur is an accurate description of their ethnic group. Though the term was originally introduced in 744, the use of the word Uighur in the PRC was a generalization used to lump together a large number of peoples from many different backgrounds. By grouping the majority of the Islamic, Turkic, oasis-dwelling people in Xinjiang together as an ethnic group, the CCP effectively drew an ethnic map in which the present-day Uighurs already viewed as "their" territory.¹⁹⁸ Contemporary Uighur identity has been heavily shaped by this grouping. The fact that the new "Uighurs" constituted the majority ethnic group in Xinjiang provided a powerful incentive for accepting the somewhat inaccurate term. This labeling, however, is significant, as many Uighurs still recognize the false labeling for what it is: a Chinese-imposed term. Though the labeling of the Uighurs does not necessarily constitute a cause of ethnic violence in China, its roots do reveal the ways in which secondary factors have shaped contemporary Uighur identity. Present-day Uighurs recognize the fact that the Chinese are occupiers and are not indigenous to Xinjiang, and this constitutes a major difference between the Uighurs and Hui.

G. CONCLUSIONS

Examining the differences between primordial and secondary factors constituting Uighur and Hui identities reveal a number of insights which are useful for analyzing minority relations in China. First, the Hui have been far more successful assimilating into Chinese society than the Uighur, as their race, culture, and religion have integrated

¹⁹⁷ Rudelson, 48.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 7.

both Chinese and Islamic components. On the other hand, the Uighurs remain largely unassimilated, as their primordial factors have not been compatible with those of the Chinese; in fact, attempts at integration have been met with resistance and distrust. Secondary factors have not largely shaped contemporary Hui identity, as Hui experiences under the CCP have been too localized to constitute any sort of national identity shift. The Uighur identity has been profoundly shaped by secondary factors, though, and to some extent, this has come at the cost of CCP-Uighur relations. The underlying reason behind this dichotomy of identities is related to each ethnic group's dependence on the PRC as a state entity. The Hui rely on the PRC as the source of their identity, both legally, as well as traditionally. Hui identity is composed largely of traditional Chinese values (such as Mandarin and Confucianism) and the Hui cannot exist as an ethnicity outside of China. The Uighurs are different in that the traditional source of their identity is independent from the PRC.

Though striking, the differences in identity between the Uighur and Hui do not represent the causes of specific incidents of violence or separatism in Xinjiang today. However, in line with Premdas' framework, they do illustrate a difference in social cleavages, which represent preconditions for separatist movements. That is, the Uighurs' distinct primordial and secondary identity, which sets them apart from the CCP, has left them more susceptible to separatist tendencies than the Hui. This combined with the major differences in socio-economic conditions helps explain the tendency of the Uighurs to use separatism where the Hui do not.

IV. THE FUTURE OF UIGHUR SEPARATISM AND U.S. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

Beijing considers the Uighur issue to be an internal matter and as Chapter IV demonstrated, the CCP possesses the capability to facilitate ethnic peace in western China. Nevertheless, the United States maintains a variety of interests in China and Central Asia; thus, the resolution of the Uighur question is an important security concern. This chapter will explore the realities of Uighur violence and the ways in which the Global War on Terror (GWOT) has affected not only Uighur separatism, but the Uighur population as a whole. Finally, this chapter will outline U.S. interests in Xinjiang and make policy recommendations to facilitate ethnic peace in China. While the PRC has the means to reform and resolve the Uighur issue, the United States' ability to facilitate ethnic peace in China is somewhat limited. Therefore, the United States should approach the Uighur issue by attempting to shape Chinese policy, rather than by directly engaging the Uighurs.

B. UIGHUR SEPARATISM: REALITIES

Before outlining policy recommendations for the United States toward the Uighur issue, it is first vital to take into consideration several realities behind and the future of Uighur separatism. While at times there is a tendency to generalize and classify violence by Islamic militants as the result of Islamic fundamentalism, this thesis has attempted to argue differently. This section will attempt to further dispel this myth by providing a number of details about the nature of the movement (outlined in Chapter II) itself. It will also draw conclusions regarding the future of violent separatism in western China.

One popular myth regarding Islamic militancy in general is that all terrorist organizations are driven by Islamic fundamentalism or other religious motives. Rather, Uighur separatists are driven by nationalism and desires for greater autonomy. According to Nicolas Becquelin, most Uighurs are not extremists and instead desire the ability to maintain their own institutions, preserve their culture, and benefit from Chinese

economic reform.¹⁹⁹ Though the Chinese government has made numerous accusations aimed at portraying Uighur separatists as Islamic fundamentalists, this has not proven to be the case. Aside from a few alleged names of Uighur separatist groups, such as the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), there is very little evidence that Islam has been the driving factor behind Uighur separatism. Moreover, many Uighur communities in exile have set up secular organizations that openly criticize Islamic extremism and its role in facilitating violence.²⁰⁰ However, as Chinese religious repression increases, this may start to change. According to Fuller and Lipman, the increased containment of religious practices has not quelled Islam as the CCP has hoped; rather, it has strengthened the role of Islam in Uighurs' day-to-day lives.²⁰¹ As Islam continues to become increasingly important to Uighurs, some activists may turn to the radical Islamic community for support. This could turn the Uighur issue into an issue of Islamic fundamentalism. Currently, however, radical Islamic doctrine does not seem to play a defining role in the motives behind Uighur violence.

Just as Islamic radicalism does not seem to be a major driving factor behind Uighur separatism, it is also important to recognize that the roles that external factors do and do not play in the separatist movement. Chinese officials have repeatedly claimed that outside actors have provided direct support to Uighur separatists acting in the name of an independent Xinjiang.²⁰² According to the PRC's 2002 report, Hasan Mahsum, the leader of the ETIM, sent dozens of terrorists into China, where they set up training facilities, and weapons depots.²⁰³ Despite these claims, there is little evidence that

¹⁹⁹ Cited in Joshua Kurtlantzick, "Unnecessary Evil," *Washington Monthly* 34, No 12 (December 2002): 3.

²⁰⁰ For an example, please see Umit Oetkur, "The religious dimension of the Uyghur Freedom Movement," East Turkestan National Congress. <http://www.uygur.org/etnc/Oetkur%20The%20religious%20dimension%20of%20the%20Uyghur%20Freedom%20Movement.htm> (Accessed 3 February 2006).

²⁰¹ Graham E. Fuller and Jonathan N. Lipman, "Islam in Xinjiang," in S. Fredrick Starr, ed. *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Central-Asia Caucus Institute, New York, 2004), 344.

²⁰² See Zhao Yongchen's (deputy director of the Public Security Ministry's Anti-Terrorism Bureau) comments in "'East Turkistan,' Major Terrorist Threat to China," Xinhua News Agency 5 September 2005. and Qian Qichen's (head of China's Foreign Ministry) estimates in Pan, Philip. And Pomfret, John. "Bin Laden Networks's China Connection: Beijing Estimates 1,000 Muslims Have Received Training in Al Qaeda Camps." *The Washington Post*, 11 November 2001.

²⁰³ Office of the State Council. "East Turkistan Forces Cannot Get Away With Impunity." 21 January 2002. available at http://english.people.com.cn/200201/21/eng20020121_89078 accessed 24 May 2006. 5

formal terrorist ties between these groups actually exist. It is true that the United States military captured several Uighurs in Afghanistan in the months following the 2001 invasion.²⁰⁴ However, of the Uighurs captured, four were recently found innocent and released; the others are still awaiting their military tribunal. Despite this, the United States designated the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as a terrorist organization with ties to fundamentalist terrorist groups in 2002. In spite of intense pressure from Beijing, the United States has not placed any other known Uighur activist group on its terrorist watch list. Chinese scholars readily acknowledge that regardless of Beijing's rhetoric, Uighur support from Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations is largely insignificant. They concede that only "dozens" of Uighurs have been trained in Afghanistan, despite Beijing's claims to the contrary.²⁰⁵ Additionally, according to Dr. Shang Qianhong of the China Center for Contemporary International Relations, aid supplied by terrorist organizations and other external actors are not a huge problem, because it is so limited in quantity.²⁰⁶ Thus, direct ties between Uighur groups and external actors may exist to a point, but they are largely insignificant.

While direct external influences are quite uncommon, indirect forces have had a major impact on the Uighur separatist movement. Such forces vary widely in terms of their message, level of organization, and level of support. However, these factors continue to fuel anti-Chinese sentiment throughout Xinjiang and the rest of the world.

The first major group of indirect external actors includes nonviolent Uighur exile groups throughout Europe, Central Asia, and North America²⁰⁷. Compared to their Tibetan equivalents, these exile groups lack unity and strength, mainly because there is no Uighur equivalent of the Dalai Lama. Without a charismatic central figure around which to rally support, the Uighur community has been unable to gain world attention in the way that the Tibetans have. However, Uighur exile groups are numerous and their influence in Xinjiang and the rest of the world should not be completely discounted. Exile groups' agendas, rhetoric, and composition vary considerably, depending on the

²⁰⁴ Rosenthal, Elisabeth. "A Nation Challenged: Asian Terror; Beijing Says Chinese Muslims were trained as terrorists with money from Bin Laden." *The New York Times*. 22 January 2002.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Personal Interview. 19 May 2006.

²⁰⁷ For a near-complete listing of such groups, please see http://www.uygur.org/de/adres/uygur_organization.htm

group. For example, the East Turkestan National Congress (ETNC), based in Europe, is primarily focused toward ending China's occupation of East Turkestan. According to an October 2001 resolution, the ETNC uses appeals to the international community, especially the European Union in order to end Chinese repression by opening up a diplomatic dialogue with the PRC.²⁰⁸ Nonviolent resistance groups add important legitimacy to the Uighur cause and they are important nongovernmental organizations. Such groups also perpetuate Uighur resistance by rallying support among foreign governments, other NGO's, and minority communities worldwide. This type of indirect external actor is an important component of Uighur separatism.

In addition to examining external influences, it is important to recognize the role of the internet and its increased importance among Uighur groups today. "Cyber-separatism," as Dru Gladney puts it, is perhaps the most common outlet for expressing Uighur grievances.²⁰⁹ Though the internet has many advantages – ease of access, cost-effectiveness, and less censorship - it also suffers a number of drawbacks, such as the fact that information is impossible to verify and can easily be disputed by Chinese officials. Cyber-separatism has become increasingly common throughout the last ten years and plays an important role for Uighur separatists by disseminating propaganda and raising global awareness. For example, the website <http://www.uighur.org> contains a great deal of information regarding human rights violations, Uighur history, and Uighur-relevant news. These internet websites are maintained by a variety of sponsors, from Uighur expatriates to Chinese citizens against propaganda.²¹⁰ However, it is difficult to evaluate the composition of these sites' audiences, as Beijing maintains careful censorship and internet filters. Though internet access in the United States and Western Europe is widespread, cost restrictions have limited the extent to which Central Asians can log-on. Therefore, the degree to which these websites are accessed by separatists versus scholars and other researchers is unknown. Despite these shortcomings, globalization has made accessing the internet easier than ever and it is reasonable to assume that it will continue

²⁰⁸ Resolution of the East Turkestan National Congress. 17-18 October 2001. <http://www.uighur.org/etnc/Resolution%20adopted.htm>. Accessed 3 February 2006.

²⁰⁹ Dru C. Gladney, "Responses to Chinese Rule: Patterns of Cooperation and Opposition." in S. Fredrick Starr, ed. *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Central-Asia Caucus Institute, New York, 2004), 383.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 386.

to play an important role in the Uighur question. In sum, internet based groups are a significant component of the Uighur separatist movement, however, rather than perpetuating separatism, their current role is spreading information about the plight of the Uighurs throughout the rest of the world.

Finally, it is essential to recognize the realities of Uighur terrorist organizations themselves, such that they are. Although the Chinese government has made numerous accusations of the existence of Uighur separatist groups, the evidence surrounding these groups' participation in separatist activity is sketchy at best. It is extremely difficult to find reliable, accurate information regarding specific Uighur separatist groups and many sources are provided by the PRC.²¹¹ For example, as was noted earlier, the ETIM has been accused of receiving weapons, money, and training from Al Qaeda operatives. However, according to interviews with Hasan Mahsum, the ETIM possesses no ties with transnational terror organizations.²¹² Additionally Hasan Mahsum has been suspected of being a Chinese intelligence agent.²¹³ Despite the accusations, neither China nor the United States has ever specifically accused the ETIM of launching any sort of terrorist attack.²¹⁴ Instead, the bombings, rallies, and protests of the 1990s and early 21st century have not been blamed on or attributed to specific groups. Moreover, with only a handful of exceptions, no group has ever claimed responsibility for launching terrorist attacks in China. According to Dru Gladney, before the PRC's 2002 report was issued, very few people - including Uighur experts and Uighur activists - had ever heard of the ETIM.²¹⁵ Also, the group was not on a report issued by the United States military in 2001.²¹⁶

²¹¹ The PRC has been known to portray the Uighur separatist movement as an organized, transnational terror movement with clear ties to groups like Al Qaeda. In actuality, as was covered, no concrete, open-source evidence has ever been provided to substantiate these allegations. Thus, some scholars do not consider information provided by the PRC to be unbiased and reliable.

²¹² This denial came in an interview with Radio Free Asia in January 2002. Cited in James Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment* (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 23.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 24.

²¹⁴ However, according to the U.S. State Department, two alleged ETIM members planned an attack on the U.S. embassy in Bishkek. Source: U.S. State Department, "Country Reports on Terrorism," 27 April 2005. <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/45394.htm>. (Accessed 20 August 2006).

²¹⁵ Dru C. Gladney, "Responses to Chinese Rule: Patterns of Cooperation and Opposition." in Fredrick S. Starr, ed. *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Central Asia Caucus Institute: New York, 2004), 390.

²¹⁶ Gladney, "Responses," 390.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the United States' decision to place the ETIM on the terror watch list has been criticized as a political decision. One day before Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage's announcement, the PRC said that it would implement special restrictions on weapons sales, a measure that the United States had pressed for months.²¹⁷ It has also been argued that the United States placed the ETIM on the terror list to strengthen Sino-U.S. relations in the context of the Global War on Terror.²¹⁸ These inconsistencies have led some experts to doubt the ETIM's role in Uighur separatism, despite the United States' statements. To be sure, the bombings and other violence demonstrate that there are militant groups at work in Xinjiang; however, in reality, the Uighur separatist movement does not seem to be as organized or as wide-reaching as the PRC has portrayed. Rather, in Millward's words, "claims regarding the existence and activities of Uighur militant groups should be treated with some caution."²¹⁹

C. U.S. INTERESTS IN XINJIANG IN THE POST SEPTEMBER 11 PERIOD

In order to make policy recommendations for the United States regarding the Uighur issue, it is first useful to outline U.S. interests in Xinjiang. As there does not seem to be any official, open-source documentation on these interests, this thesis will seek to predict several broad objectives and interests which are consistent with recent U.S. foreign policy.²²⁰ Globally, the United States has four major interests with regard to Xinjiang: political stability of both the PRC and Xinjiang, minimal Uighur-transnational terrorist ties, a positive U.S. image throughout the Muslim world, and improved human rights.

While each of the four aforementioned interests is important to U.S. and regional security, the political stability of the PRC and especially Xinjiang is the most critical. Currently, the United States and the PRC maintain very strong financial ties, which have

²¹⁷ Joshua Kurtlantzick, "Xinjiang 'terror' crackdown called ploy to foil ethnic group," *Washington Times*, (23 October 2002).

²¹⁸ Dru C. Gladney, "Responses to Chinese Rule: Patterns of Cooperation and Opposition." in Fredrick S. Starr, ed. *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Central Asia Caucus Institute: New York, 2004), 390.

²¹⁹ James Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment* (Washington: East-West Center, 2004), 27.

²²⁰ These interests are the opinion of this author and do not reflect the official policies of the Department of Defense or the United States Air Force.

produced a high degree of economic interdependence. The PRC is also an ally on several regional issues, such as the North Korean nuclear problem. It is true that the Uighur issue probably does not pose a direct threat to regime survival in the PRC. However, if other factors were involved – such as a banking crisis, social unrest, or a war over the Taiwan Strait- the CCP might not be able to survive. If the CCP collapsed, the PRC could fragment or the CCP might be replaced with a regime hostile to the United States. In either case, the result could easily be more dangerous than the current status quo. Thus, political stability and regime survival in China are critical to the current regional security outlook and it is in the United States’ interest to maintain this stability.

Just as political stability in the PRC is consistent with U.S. interests, a stable Xinjiang is vital to Central Asian security. Xinjiang is home to over 30 different ethnic groups, many of whom maintain irredentist populations in neighboring states such as Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. If Uighur violence increased in magnitude, it is conceivable that a large-scale separatist movement could erupt. A major crisis, along with resulting ethnic violence could have spillover effects into other Central Asian states. Such effects are consistent with the region’s history; in the mid-1990s the Tajik civil war spread rapidly throughout Central Asia because of ethnic ties. This led to a major regional crisis and has severely hindered the economic development of Central Asia. Though the United States does not share extremely close economic ties with Central Asia, a major regional crisis involving ethnic violence could lead to state failures, producing havens for terrorist activity. Thus, political stability in Xinjiang, along with Central Asian regional security, is in the interest of the United States.

Though political and regional stability reflect broad interests in the region, there are also more acute U.S. interests. For example, although there is currently little or no evidence (from open-sources) of Uighur separatist-Al Qaeda ties, there is reason to believe that this could change. As Islam becomes increasingly important to Uighurs and as more Uighurs take their practices underground, Islam may continue to become a means of expressing anti-Chinese sentiment. If this happens, the Uighur issue could quickly become religiously charged, leading to extremism. Uighur extremists could seek larger amounts of assistance from groups abroad, including Al Qaeda. Because the

United States does not wish for the global reach of transnational terrorist groups to increase, it is in the United States' interest to minimize Uighur-terror ties.

Related to minimizing Uighur ties with transnational terror groups, it is in the United States' interest to promote and maintain a positive image throughout the Muslim world. While conducting my fieldwork, I was surprised to discover that Chinese Muslims - Uighur and Hui alike - consider themselves to be important members of the Islamic *umma*, despite the fact that they do not live in the Middle East. Traditionally, Uighurs have been known to maintain pro-U.S. sentiments when compared to Muslims in other parts of the world. However, because of the U.S. war in Iraq and Washington's apparent endorsement of Beijing's post-September 11 crackdowns, this collective mindset is beginning to change. During field work in Kashgar, a group of young Uighur men once asked me what country I was from. When I replied that I was from the United States, one of the men made a violent gesture, while the others laughed. During other encounters, I was asked why Washington disliked Muslims and Uighurs. Though I never experienced outright hostility and/or threats from Uighurs, these encounters made me wary and I was careful about with whom I shared my nationality. If the United States hopes to accomplish its military and security objectives in the Muslim world (such as maintaining forward bases from which to fight terrorism), it must maintain a pro-U.S. image in order to maintain legitimacy. Clearly, maintaining Muslim friends and allies throughout the world is in the interest of the United States.

Finally, it is important to mention the U.S. interest of promoting human rights throughout the world. Traditionally, the United States has used rhetoric emphasizing human rights all over the world, including Asia. For example, the United States has maintained a close relationship with the Dalai Lama, despite protests from Beijing. As this thesis has attempted to demonstrate, improved human rights could help to reduce violence throughout western China. Thus, promoting human rights is not only a cornerstone of United States foreign policy; it is also in the United States' interest to improve human rights in Xinjiang.

D. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

Although the Uighur issue is ultimately one that must be reconciled by Beijing, the reasons above demonstrate that the United States has an interest in its resolution.

Certainly, there is little that the United States can do in order to directly prevent further violence in Xinjiang. However, the United States can influence the PRC to change its policy toward its Uighurs. Though recent levels of violence have not been as high as those in the mid-1990s, this does not necessarily reflect Chinese success at cracking down on its Uighurs. Rather, it may indicate that Uighur separatism and resistance has been driven underground and may once again flare up. By taking steps aimed at resolving the Uighur issue, the United States also has the opportunity to improve its image throughout the Muslim world. The following recommendations may help the United States to steer the PRC toward ethnic peace in Xinjiang: engage the PRC on human rights, but from a different angle; acknowledge the difference between transnational terrorists and repressed Muslims; and continue helping Uighurs exonerated from Guantanamo Bay.

First, the United States should continue to engage Beijing on human rights issues, emphasizing religious and social freedoms not only for Han Chinese, but also minorities in general. Over the past few years, the United States has repeatedly praised the PRC for “standing side-by-side” in the current war on terror.²²¹ This rhetoric implies that Washington supports China’s recent crackdowns on Uighurs in western China, which has undermined the U.S. image among Uighurs and other Muslims. Furthermore, by placing the ETIM on the terror watch list, the United States has linked Uighur violence to the GWOT, further emphasizing the legitimacy of Beijing’s approach to Uighurs. Thus, rather than praising the PRC’s continued cooperation, the United States should press Beijing on human rights. There is a logical case (as this thesis has attempted to demonstrate) that reduced freedoms and poor ethnic accommodation fuel ethnic tension and violence. Washington should show Beijing that by repressing the Uighur community, the CCP is not solving their minority problems. Rather, current policy is exacerbating the situation and could lead to intensified violence. Maintaining ethnic peace among China’s Muslims and fighting the GWOT are not conflicting interests. On the contrary, facilitating an improved relationship between the Uighur community and Beijing will prevent violence, extremism, and instability from dominating the region. Washington should help Beijing to see this.

²²¹ Joshua Kurtlantzick, “Unnecessary Evil,” *Washington Monthly* 34, No 12 (December 2002): 3.

Second, in order to not only pacify western China, but also to improve its image throughout the Muslim world, the United States should publicly acknowledge the difference between globally-based Islamic extremists and Muslim peoples pushing for increased autonomy and social freedoms. In its haste to engage terrorists abroad with widespread world support, the United States has endorsed *carte blanche* repression in states with Muslim minorities. Instead, Washington should publicly recognize that although groups like Uighur separatists, Chechen rebels, and Palestinian militants occasionally use violence, their objectives are constrained by local political interests. For example, many Uighurs do not want an independent East Turkistan; rather, they simply want an increased degree of autonomy and improved social rights. By themselves, they do not pose a direct threat to United States national security. However, if the United States continues to lump these minorities into the broader Global War on Terror, it could result in a self-fulfilling prophecy. That is, feeling abandoned by the world community, these groups could attempt to expand their objectives and interests by seeking ties with transnational terror organizations like Al Qaeda. It is imperative that the United States deter such eventualities and in order to do this, Washington must differentiate between politically-based and ideologically-based Islamic movements.

Finally, the United States should continue to facilitate the safe return of Uighurs from Guantanamo Bay, exonerated of illegal combatant charges, to countries providing asylum. For example, during the summer of 2006, Washington spearheaded negotiations with Albania which resulted in the transfer of four Uighur prisoners to refugee camps outside of Tirana. This effort prevented the Uighurs from being returned to China, where they would have likely faced execution. Although China protested the transfer, protecting these four Uighurs sends a powerful message to Uighur exiles and to the broader Islamic world: you are not abandoned. There are still a number of Uighurs in Guantanamo Bay awaiting trials; if they are also found to be innocent, the United States should continue to facilitate their movement to safe havens throughout the world. If no state is willing to accept them, the United States should grant asylum in order to protect their rights. Although Beijing will certainly protest this course of action, the world community will most likely stand by the United States, especially if Washington follows the aforementioned recommendations. By continuing to demonstrate that the Uighurs are

important to the United States, Washington will both improve its image in the Muslim world and improve its relationship with the Uighurs as a whole.

E. CONCLUSIONS

Although it is very difficult to predict the future of Uighur separatism, it is important to understand the realities behind it, especially in the context of the Global War on Terror. Beijing's post September 11, 2001 stance toward its Uighur population has been one of increased repression, which has appeared to quell the violence in the short term. However, it is a mistake to believe that repression is a permanent solution; rather, it is likely that resistance has merely been driven further underground. Thus, it is possible that the situation in Xinjiang may become more violent in the long term as a result of PRC repression. The United States has several interests in the region including the political stability of China, the restriction of transnational terror ties, a positive U.S. world image, and improved human rights. Although future violence cannot be easily prevented through direct U.S. action, there are a number of measures that can be taken. In summary, China needs to find ethnic peace nearly as much as the United States needs Islamic allies. The Uighur problem gives Washington the opportunity to, as the Chinese would say, "*yi jian shuang diao*" - shoot two birds (regional stability and an Islamic ally) with one arrow.

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