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# The Historical Relationship Between the Chinese State and the Uyghur Population

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Introduction
Due to a consistent trend of foreign invasion, migration, and internal conflict, Xinjiang has historically lacked autonomy from domineering exterior influences. Before the Guomindang (GMD), the region was culturally coerced by Turkic Muslims, Russians and the Qing. After the GMD fell and the People's Republic of China (PRC) took control, elements of Xinjiang culture faced state opposition. Beginning with the initial imposition of Islam and continuing on with Qing imperialism, foreign entities have asserted control over the religious, governmental, educational and cultural practices of the western region. The modern Chinese state (post-liberation) has sought to impose its claim on Xinjiang through the implantation of the Han population, stacking of Han leadership and the suppression of the regional population along with its most prominent religion. With the rise of the global counter-terrorism rhetoric, the Chinese state has now been able to push for extreme measures to foster cultural unity and exert its control over the region by framing Uyghur culture as an ideological virus. State-lead attempts to compel the region's adherence to economic and political projects, mirroring previous iterations of similar initiatives, have only further alienated the Uyghur population and fostered dissent.

From the Han Dynasty to the Republican Period: Islam, Foreign Invasions, and the Emergence of Uyghur Nationalism
Xinjiang, largely because of its geographical position, is a region defined by its ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. For millennia, ancient civilizations--both based on nomadic practices and the establishment of permanent settlements--occupied

the region, leaving behind countless artifacts which reveal the presence of flourishing societies. The history of Xinjiang did not begin with the region's incorporation into China, but the event undoubtedly marked the beginning of a new era and has had ongoing ramifications.[1] Preceding the inclusion of Xinjiang as an official territory of the Han Dynasty in 60 BC, jade trading fostered a connection between the region and Central China.[2] When threatened by invading Huns, Xinjiang royalty requested military aid from the Han government. Their successful defense of the region resulted in the appointment of a military viceroy and an increased presence.[3] This event was followed by a succession of differing dynastical claims to Xinjiang and the establishment of independent rulers in the region. Also, the region was further developed an expansion of trade spurred by the Silk Road (which ran through the western region), threatened by the invasion of neighboring forces, and influenced by numerous religions and cultural practices.

One of those religions, which was built upon "pre-existing beliefs and deities" belonging to the region, was Islam.[4] Although the belief in Islam does not exactly correspond to ethnicity, the majority of Uyghurs and Kazakhs adhere to such beliefs; and they make up close to half of Xinjiang's population. However, the population of the region consists of close to forty-six ethnic groups--including Han, Mongolian, Tibetan, and Korean--who follow older religions such as Buddhism, Daoism, and Shamanism, or none at all.[5] Unlike some of the other religions practiced in Xinjiang, Islam was founded thousands of miles away in the Arabian Peninsula.[6] The process of Islamization in Xinjiang was by no

means natural; it was a forceful, century-spanning effort which began in the Qarakhanid empire in the 11th century and continued with the actions of Sufi mystics and Chaghatayid rulers in the 12th and 14th century.[7]

The Qarakhanid empire was composed of Turkic people who, beginning with their leader Suduk Bughran Khan's conversion to Islam in the 10th century, were committed to spreading their religion to the groups they conquered.[8] This included the western portion of what is now Xinjiang. Through the use of military force, successors of the Qarakhanid empire compelled Buddhists and other religious groups to convert to Islam. Over the next two centuries, the religion became generally adopted in the Kashgar area, resulting in the construction of mosques and Islamic shrines. Although the eastward spread of Islam continued into the 12th century, political instability and the invasion of the Mongols led to a break from intensive conversion in the region. It was not until the rise of Tughluq Temür, a prominent Islamic Chaghatayid ruler in the 1340s, that the religion regained power in the region and began to be imposed on other groups of inhabitants.[9] As an example of the violence associated with conversion, a Changhatayid khan claimed that he would have a horseshoe nail driven through the head of Mongols if they failed to wear turbans. During this period, Sufi mystics traveled around the Xinjiang region and offered healing or other services to both Turkic and Mongol peoples in an attempt to spread Islam through humanitarian action.[10] Although these practices were successful in the western and southern portions of the region to a large extent--the religion was eventually adopted by

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1 Even the name "Xinjiang" was a creation of the Han Chinese.
2 Lillian Craig Harris, Xinjiang the Land and the People, (Beijing: New World Press, 1989), 34.
3 Ibid, 37.
4 James A. Millward, Eurasian Crossroads, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 81.
5 Harris, Xinjiang and the People, 188-189..
6 Such as Taoism and Buddhism.
7 Millward, Eurasian Crossroads, 51-80.
8 Ibid, 52.
9 Peter Jackson, The Onset of Islamization: Royal Converts and Muslim Resurgence, (London: Yale University Press, 2017), 359-360.
10 Millward, Eurasian Crossroads, 81-82.

a majority of the Xinjiang population--a hegemonic Islamic state was never established.

In areas inhabited by a Uyghur population--people of Turkic descent who primarily follow Islam--a "mosque could be found at the core of each locality" by the 15th century.[11] Mosques were led by an imam, a person in charge of religious activities, and the structures became important parts of the culture of the region. However, unlike in other Islamic regions, the relationship between religion and politics never permitted the solidification of a single governing entity in Xinjiang. Because of constant invasions, the nomadic existence of much of the population, the lack of ethnic uniformity, and the fragmented authority of rulers, the region remained volatile and vulnerable to foreign dominance. This was the case when the Han claimed the region in the 1st century BC, and upon the arrival of the Qing dynasty in the 18th Century AD defense of the region was further crippled.

The Qing dynasty, led by Manchus from the northeastern region of China, first took control of tribes from Inner Mongolia and proceeded to assume power in Beijing in 1644. At that time, Zunghar forces--a confederation of Oriat tribes located in northern Xinjiang--were in control of the western region and maintained a hostile relationship with the Qing. Localities like Kashgar were forced to pay silver and grain to the Zunghars as tribute; they were also expected to provide women to the tax collectors, defining their relationship as extortionate.[12] Seizing upon turmoil within the Zunghar leadership, Qing armies marched on Zungharia--the northern portion of Xinjiang--in 1755 and overpowered the militarily inferior forces they encountered.[13] Chinese officials, directly after the Qing victory, were opposed to further action because of "the cost of conquering and holding territory they

judged to be 'wasteland,' but the Qianlong emperor was committed to continuing the campaign.[14] The Qianlong emperor was in favor of maintaining Xinjiang for two reasons:it provided improved security for the mainland from western forces and it ended the conflict with the Zunghar, saving money. This decision, like the one made by the  Han dynasty, set a precedent for mainland China's relationship with Xinjiang.

By the mid-nineteenth century, 50,000 Qing troops were stationed in Xinjiang and a multilayered governmental system was put into place. This system was "more sophisticated than any imperial government in the region that had preceded it" because there was a combination of local autonomy and Qing military rule.[15] Instead of forcing the various ethnic groups to assimilate to Qing culture, there was an allowance of diversity in many of the institutions established by the occupational power. However, there was an initiative to encourage Chinese colonists to migrate to Xinjiang with the intention of securing greater control of the region setting historical precedent for future PRC initiatives advocating similar action.

Until 1862, the Qing's hold on Xinjiang was rather uncontested; but, as the empire became more financially unstable and corrupt due to a host of domestic affairs, a set of uprisings ignited within the region. In response to new taxes and forced labor, the Uyghur population rebelled at first out of desperation and later for independence. This set of events, coined the Dungan Revolt, was disunified and caused enough chaos for a western leader from Uzbek, Ya'qub Beg, to take control. Ya'qub Beg, who was the ruler of an empire to the west of Xinjiang, enforced the following of strict Islamic law, outlawing many traditional practices and establishing a religious punitive system.[16] At the same time, Ya'qub

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11 Harris, Xinjiang and the People, 190.
12 Millward, Eurasian Crossroads, 92.
13 Ibid, 95.
14 Ibid, 97.
15 Ibid, 101.
16 Hodong Kim, Holy War in China: The Muslim Rebellion and State in Chinese Central Asian, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 129-131.

Beg received British envoys and signed treaties with the Russians. These were acts which propelled Xinjiang into the realm of European imperialism. Although the Qing were dealing with a collapsing empire, they conducted a campaign to retake Xinjiang. With a force of 40,000 soldiers and careful military planning, the Qing successfully reconquered Xinjiang in 1878.[17] Following the conquest, Xinjiang was officially given provincial status by the Qing court, subjecting the region to further intervention. Unlike the previous Qing occupation, there was no longer the incorporation of minority populations-- Uyghur or Mongolians--into the governmental system; it was solely controlled by Manchus.[18] Assimilation, both in terms of education and language, was also incorporated into the second iteration of Qing governance. New schools taught a traditional Chinese curriculum; one that relied on Confucian teaching, which could only be done in Chinese. Students who attended these schools were given Chinese names and, at more expensive institutions, required to wear Qing dress and their hair in a queue.[19] These new methods were met with complaints and resistance, becoming a major point of conflict between the Uyghurs and the Qing. Along with most parts of China, Xinjiang experienced a revolution against the Qing in 1912. The Qing-appointed ruler, Yang Zengxin, remained in power by siding with the Soviet Union and forcefully suppressing uprisings. Yang was politically ruthless, but he recognized the importance of incorporating members of different ethnic groups into the government. He also directed funds towards modernizing the region's infrastructure and entered a trade relationship with the Soviet Union, treating Xinjiang as independent from the Chinese State.[20] However, when visited by Guomindang officials, despite his declaration of allegiance, Yang was assassinated and replaced in 1928.[21] Jin Shuren, the appointed successor, abandoned the diversification of the government by replacing ethnic minorities with Han and further angered the Muslim population by banning their ability to go on Hajj--a religious pilgrimage mandated by the Quran. Furthermore, Jin appropriated Uyghur land for the use of Han refugees without compensation.[22] This misgovernance resulted in a Uyghur revolt, which ended with the massacre of Muslims in the town of Hami that was ordered by Jin's brigade commander. Once again the people of Xinjiang were subjected to a cruel foreign leader, and once again the people rebelled in 1933. The largest and most historically significant rebellion was that of Uyghurs in Kashgar. Propelled by both Uyghur nationalism and the desire to establish an Islamic state, the Eastern Turkestan Republic emerged in 1933.[23] After centuries of oppression, this separatist movement marked a new direction for the Uyghurs of Xinjiang. Of course, because of their vested political and economic interests in the region, both the Guomindang and the Soviet Union refused to recognize the Eastern Turkestan Republic. Instead, Sheng Shicai, a Han warlord from Manchuria, was given control of Xinjiang and essentially became a puppet for the Soviet Union.[24] In order to remain in power, Sheng purged Uyghur opposition with the assistance of Russian troops. The total amount of dead ranged from 50,000 to 100,000; those killed were even some of his allies. While eliminating any threat to power--besides, of course, the massive nations which supported him--Sheng

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17 Ibid, 167-169.
18 Millward, Eurasian Crossroads, 138.
19 Ibid, 142-145.
20 David Brophy, "Five Races, One Parliament? Xinhai in Xinjiang and the Problem of Minority Representation in the Chinese Republic," Inner Asia 14, no. 2 (2012): 353-356.
21 Millward, Eurasian Crossroads, 188.
22 Ibid, 189-190.
23 Ibid, 201-203.
24 Hsiao-Ting Lin, "From Rimland to Heartland: Nationalist China's Geopolitics and Ethnopolitics in Central Asia, 1937-1952", The International History Review 30, no. 1 (2008): 53-57.

permitted the exploitation of Xinjiang resources by the Soviet Union.[25] Finally, in 1944, Sheng's plot to betray the Nationalists was exposed by the Soviets and he was replaced with another Guomindang leader.

The Guomindang initiative to economically unite Xinjiang with the rest of China was a massive failure and resulted in another wave of rebellion. By printing massive amounts of Xinjiang dollars and then replacing them with Nationalist currency, the economic plan led to massive inflation. This was only worsened by increased taxes on Uyghurs.[26] Rebels organized, took the Nationalist city of Ghulja, massacred the Han Chinese they found and declared the reestablishment of the Eastern Turkestan Republic in 1944.[27] Xinjiang was split between the Guomindang, which controlled the Southern portion, and the Eastern Turkestan Republic, which controlled the Northern tip; the two sides eventually formed a coalition government, ending the conflict in 1945. Built upon regional representatives, mandated diversity in civil service, educational reform, and acceptance of native languages, the coalition government reflected many of the Eastern Turkestan Republic's initiatives.[28] However, by 1947, it was clear to many of the Uyghur groups that these agreements were not being followed. Protests against the Guomindang ignited, but the entity was already approaching its ultimate collapse as a result of the Chinese Communist Party.

Xinjiang's history of external control, forced cultural assimilation, and internal rebellion set a devastating precedent for the region's modern turmoil. The Uyghur separatist movement, although having Islam as one of it core tenants, is--and was--caused by a desire for independence, not a radical Islamic agenda. Although the justification and scope of the modern Han policies regarding Xinjiang are somewhat different from their imperialistic and oppressive predecessors, their assimilatory and extractionary intentions are largely the same. Historically, when the Uyghurs were given cultural autonomy and positions of power in a diverse government, a form of peaceful coexistence was possible; but, when the Uyghurs were disenfranchised and culturally constrained, conflict was eminent.

Xinjiang Post-Liberation through the Early 21st Century

In 1949, during the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) "liberation" of China, Xinjiang was one of the poorest and least populated provinces in the country. Despite the immense wealth of land within Xinjiang's borders (covering approximately 1/6th of China's entire surface area), very little of it was fertile. Farmland irrigation systems were in great need of repair and livestock was sparse, harming economic prosperity. Additionally, Xinjiang had no substantial industry to speak of even in its largest population centers. The region was economically scant and thus had very few public institutions (transportation, medical facilities, etc.) in place to care for the populace.[29]

The official record of the party essentially states that the "liberation" of Xinjiang was a welcomed effort.[30] This sentiment is not a complete fabrication. While Xinjiang might not have embraced the Communist invasion as was suggested by party propaganda, there was no major coordinated opposition. In the past, the region had a pattern of violent acts against authority figures of Han descent. Despite these continued anti-Han sentiments, the people failed to organize. This was in part due to the dissolution of the East Turkestan Republic (ETR). After initial liberation, many top ETR leaders flew to Beijing to negotiate terms with Mao. On their

25 Millward, Eurasian Crossroads, 210.
26 Ibid, 213.
27 Ibid, 215
28 Justin Jon Rudelson, Oasis Identities, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 159-162.
29 Nick Holdstock, China's Forgotten People: Xinjiang, Terror and the Chinese State (London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 2015), 35.
30 Ibid.

way to Beijing, however, their plane crashed under very mysterious circumstances. Historians debate the cause of the crash, specifically Mao's role in its orchestration. Many of the ETR leaders that remained fled to Turkey along with 2000 other Uyghurs seeking political asylum.[31]

The CCP's first initiative to utilize the region was very similar to those of regimes in the past. It set up a network of state-managed agricultural endeavors, resource extraction and factories. These new institutions utilized the manpower of demobilized PLA/GMD troops, convicts and western settlers. Most of these migration initiatives were headed by the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) often referred to as bingtuan (meaning 'the corps'). This was an organization primarily comprised of ex-PLA Han Chinese. Although the primary goal of the XPCC was to organize migration and economic development, it often operated autonomously from the government of Xinjiang and mostly functioned as an authoritative arm loyal to the state. The XPCC had its own militia, court system and police force.[32]

Primary directives for Han migrants included clearing land, building dams and building canals. By the early 1960s Xinjiang's economic output had drastically improved despite generally poor living conditions for the Uyghur population. The amount of land being actively cultivated in the region had tripled. Additionally, northern cities such as Urumqi, Karamay, Kuytun and Shihezi became economic focal points boasting the best commerce, transportation and industry Xinjiang had ever seen. These cities, however, were mostly populated by Han migrants.[33]

The modern iteration of the hukou system was officially implemented nationally in 1958 after the The Regulation on Hukou Registration of the People's Republic of China was enacted. The system sought to create an identification system binding a citizen (and their family) to where such identification was registered. This was enforced through the rigorous regulation of resource distribution in accordance with residential location. Identification documents were registered at birth and primarily detailed where a citizen lived, whether or not he/she is rural or urban, employment, and religion.[34] This system had two purposes--the first was to regulate migration from rural to urban areas; the second, which would prove to be more specifically relevant to Xinjiang, was to create a mass network of demographic data across China. The migratory restrictions semi-permanently restricted the greater Uyghur population to the countryside. By the 1980s, the urban-rural divide had become an issue of ethnic disadvantage, leaving a gargantuan economic gap between Han Chinese and Uyghurs.[35] Additionally, with the immense amount of data now at its disposal, the state had the ability to monitor the activity of certain targeted groups based on their own demographic data collection.[36]

The state's coordinated migration of a major Han population into Xinjiang and suppression of the existing regional ethnic majority was a calculated move; it not only increased economic viability, but also began their own ethnic claim on the territory. In the 1940s, Uyghurs made up 75% of the region's population. The second most numerous population consisted of approximately 326,000 Kazakhs, leaving the Han Chinese as the third most numerous popu-

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31 Ibid.
32 Michael Dillon, Xinjiang-China's Muslim Far Northwest (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 35.
33 Ibid.
34 Fei-ling Wang, "Conflict, Resistance and the Transformation of the Hukou system" in Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 81.
35 Holdstock, China's Forgotten People: Xinjiang, Terror and the Chinese State, 38.
36 The Congressional Executive Commission on China, Special Topic Paper: China's Household Registration System: Sustained Reform Needed to Protect China's Rural Migrants, 2005, https://www.cecc.gov/publications/issue-papers/cecc-special-topic-paper-chinas-household-registration-system-sustained#4

lation at approximately 187,000.[37] At this point, despite the fact that the region was technically claimed as China's during the Qing dynasty, the region (to be known as) Xinjiang was far more influenced by neighboring middle-eastern cultures than by mainland China. Such influence was evident in everything from religion and cuisine to language. While Xinjiang was granted a certain amount of self-governance, the state still sought to assert its power. The state did so by implanting a mass population of Han Chinese from demobilized troops sent by the party to initially take control of the region. Such a population would respond to Beijing as an authority rather than the native Uyghurs who sought their own independence from China. The mass Han migration into Xinjiang was the first major step in crippling the regional population majority's ability to exercise self-governance.

Although Uyghurs and other non-Han population were well-represented in small-scale government at the change of regimes, the real power in the region often remained Han-dominated. An example of such a power structure can be observed in the initial state-appointed provincial government of Xinjiang. Despite the fact that one of the few remaining ETR leaders, Saifuddin Azizi, was the first Chairman of Xinjiang, the real power was held by Governor/Regional Party Secretary Wang Enmou[38] and Wang Zhen, the commander of the PLA units which took control of the region in 1949.[39] Both of these men were Han. Of the two, Wang Enmou had more consistent authority in the region. Despite being underqualified for such a high leadership position (in part due to his lack of education), the governorship was given to him due to his impressive resume as a revolutionary. Wang Enmou was also heavily involved with the PLA and stacked his staff with

mostly (Han) military personnel.[40]

All across China, areas with a high population of ethnic minorities became established as "autonomous prefectures" or "autonomous counties." Called prefectures (the next largest administrative area after province), these autonomous units were established in the name of the dominant ethnic population so that they might become "the masters of their own house."[41] In 1955 (along with the official renaming of Xinjiang as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region) five of these prefectures were established: the Hui were given one, the Kazakhs one, the Kyrgyz one and the Mongols two.[42] While such bodies might resemble a fair process of annexation, there were a litany of flaws associated with their establishment. Often, the designated ethnic group of each prefecture was not, in fact, the majority. Additionally, the plots of land given to each prefecture were not always proportional to the size of the ethnic population occupying them. The autonomous prefecture of Bayinguoleng, spanning approximately a third of Xinjiang's total surface area, was assigned to the Mongols despite the fact that only 35% of the prefecture's population was of Mongol descent.[43] Gardner Bovingdon, professor of Central Eurasian Studies at Indiana University, argues that these Autonomous Prefectures were instituted in a way that divided a united front of Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Mongols and other regional ethnicities muting potential voices of protest.[44]

Based on the repetition of synonymous events, a clear pattern becomes apparent.  . Both the implementation of Han Chinese provincial leaders and the division of the regional native population serve to further the state's clear agenda of asserting its own authority. The official state rhetoric surrounding the rights of ethnic minorities has always been

37 Nick Holdstock, China's Forgotten People: Xinjiang, Terror and the Chinese State. P.40
38 Nick Holdstock, China's Forgotten People: Xinjiang, Terror and the Chinese State. p.39
39 Michael Dillon, Xinjiang- China's Muslim Far Northwest. p.35
40 Nick Holdstock, China's Forgotten People: Xinjiang, Terror and the Chinese State. p.39
41 Nick Holdstock, China's Forgotten People: Xinjiang, Terror and the Chinese State. p.41
42 Michael Dillon, Xinjiang- China's Muslim Far Northwest. p. 35
43 Nick Holdstock, China's Forgotten People: Xinjiang, Terror and the Chinese State. p.41
44 Ibid

of equal legal rights.[45] However, most policy surrounding migration restriction and power structure implemented by the state in Xinjiang since its "liberation" has suppressed the region's native people in order to promote a Han ethnic claim. This systematic suppression became especially prevalent during Mao's Cultural Revolution, when both the provincial government and the non-Han population came under attack by Red Guards and radical Maoists alike.[46]

The Cultural Revolution impacted Xinjiang in a number of ways. There were instances of violence enacted by roving Red Guard factions and provincial leadership changes, but the greatest long standing effect of the Cultural Revolution was the way it shifted the perception of Uyghurs. Jiang Qing, Mao's late wife and core Cultural Revolutionary leader, shared her hatred of non-Han openly.[47] She consistently referred to minorities as "foreign invaders."[48] Jiang's words struck a chord with many Han given the existing Maoist rhetoric surrounding China's "century of humiliation." Han revolutionary groups (such as the infamous Red Guards) began targeting ethnic minorities in Xinjiang as a means of purging China of old foreign influence. In the abolition of the four olds, religion was naturally targeted as a relic of old society. Red Guard groups would travel from city to city destroying religious institutions of all denominations.[49] Naturally this animosity towards organized religion extended to Islam, the dominant religion of Uyghurs and other regional ethnicities alike.

After Mao's death and the end of the Cultural Revolution, the return of Deng Xiaoping would usher in more compromising thought regarding assimilation of non-Han people. This was a necessary relaxation of tensions as radical Maoist thought had led to a complete destruction of regional cultural institutions, both religious and secular, and the general ethnic population had lost faith in the CCP.[50] Despite the fact that the stances of officials like Jiang Qing would not remain a state position after the Cultural Revolution, the presence of state-sponsored Islamophobia and xenophobia would stand the test of time and ultimately become totally entwined, particularly during China's response to the world phenomenon known as "the war on terror." Radical Maoists had forced harsh assimilationist policies onto the Uyghur population during the Cultural Revolution, affecting their ability to freely practice their religion and, ultimately, have a separate cultural identity from the Han. This was in an effort to create a nationalist united front without (what the state perceived as) foreign interference left over from "the century of humiliation".[51] Similarly, after the 2001 World Trade Center terror attacks, the state began to address Turkic separatism as deeply connected with radical Muslim movements.[52] This wasn't exactly a change in dialogue, as the state had been in conflict with Turkic indepen-

45 The Congressional Executive Commission on China, CHINA'S REGIONAL ETHNIC AUTONOMY LAW: DOES IT PROTECT MINORITY RIGHTS? (2005). https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-109hhrg21045/html/CHRG-109hhrg21045.htm
46 Nick Holdstock, China's Forgotten People: Xinjiang, Terror and the Chinese State. P. 44
47 Austin Ramzy, The New York Times, China's Cultural Revolution, Explained. (2016). https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/15/world/asia/china-cultural-revolution-explainer.html
48 Nick Holdstock, China's Forgotten People: Xinjiang, Terror and the Chinese State. P. 45
49 Radio Free Asia, 'The Buddhas were Smashed and Thrown out.' (2016). https://www.rfa.org/english/women/the-buddhas-were-smashed-and-the-pieces-thrown-out-12012016095240.html
50 Michael Clarke, Xinjiang in the "Reform" Era 1978-91: The Political and Economic Dynamics of Dengist Integration. (2007). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/29466874_Xinjiang_in_the_Reform_era_1978-91_The_political_and_economic_dynamics_of_dengist_integration
51 Rian Thum, The Uyghurs in Modern China. (2018). http://oxfordre.com/asianhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277727-e-160
52 Michael Clarke, China's "War on Terror" in Xinjiang: Human Security and the Causes of Violent Uyghur Separatism. (2008). https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09546550801920865

dence movements since liberation, but this is when the perception of such independence movements began to become entangled with the notion of radical Muslim acts of terror. The official state narrative attributes 56 deaths and 362 injured with Xinjiang terrorism citing events such as bombings, assassination attempts, and attacks on public officials. The ETIM (Eastern Turkic Independence Movement) was classified as an international terrorist organization by the Bush administration.[53]

Current Tensions in Xinjiang: The War on Terror Through the appropriation of the rhetoric surrounding counter-terrorism, which became widespread after the 9/11 attacks, the push from the Chinese government to assimilate Uyghurs has framed Uyghur culture and dissent as extremist forces. Influenced by the Century of Humiliation, where China fell prey to foreign powers, national unity and full sovereignty have been directly linked by the state as essential for survival against hostile foreign powers. The presence of the Uyghur minority, which is both culturally and religiously unique from the Han majority, poses a threat to ethnic unity; and in the eyes of the government, leaves the country susceptible to penetration by foreign powers, threatening the security of the state as a whole.[54] The historic link between a cohesive Chinese identity and national security has made stability in Xinjiang of utmost importance to the party.

Stability in the region, however, is currently undermined by frequent Uyghur demonstrations and terrorist attacks. Between the years of 2007 and 2014 alone, approximately 900 people have died in connection with Uyghur protests.[55] One of the first major protests in recent times occurred in July of 2009 in the city of Urumqi. Peaceful protests be-

gan in the People's Square in response to a conflict between Han and Uyghur workers in the province of Guangdong, which resulted in two Uyghur deaths and over 100 injuries. Despite the protest beginning peacefully, it escalated into a confrontation with police, resulting in 137 Han and 64 Uyghur deaths as well as 1600 injured. The violent turn of the protest upset the Han population, which comprises about 40% of the region's population, as they felt the escalation represented the government's failure to anticipate and prevent violence. In response to dissatisfaction in the region, the government shut down the cellphone network and internet usage for 10 months following the riot in an attempt to prevent extremists from communicating and to prevent photos of the incident from sparking further escalations of violence.[56]

While the riots in Urumqi did garner national attention, their localization in the remote region of Xinjiang made them seem relatively unimportant to the daily lives of people living in the rest of China, often thousands of miles away. It was not until a car bombing in 2013 at Tiananmen Square and an attack at a train station in Kunming in 2014, where eight people armed with long knives killed 29 and injured 143, that the threat of Uyghur extremism seemed to be an issue of national proportions.[57] These attacks were used by the Chinese state to justify the use of extensive security measures in Xinjiang, as the threat of Uyghur extremism could be explicitly linked to national safety.

Following the line of securitization, the government framed these demonstrations as a threat requiring emergency measures, justifying actions against the Uyghur population that extended beyond the normal bounds of political procedure, all in the name of preserving social order. With attacks linked

53 Ibid
54 Josh Chin and Clément Bürge, World News: Beijing Puts Pressure on Families of Uighur Exiles, (Wall Street Journal, 2018).
55 Ondřej Klimeš, Advancing "Ethnic Unity" and "De-Extremization": Ideational Governance in Xinjiang under "New Circumstances" (2012–2017), (Journal of Chinese Political Science, 2018).
56 Marie Trédaniel and Pak K. Lee, Explaining the Chinese framing of the "terrorist" violence in Xinjiang: insights from securitization theory, (The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity, 2017).
57 Ibid.

to Uyghur groups occurring on a national scale, it was possible to gain popular support for extending the capacity of state surveillance in Xinjiang, as the issues of the region were no longer localized. Since Islam is the predominant religion amongst Uyghurs, the government was able to frame the attacks through the lens of terrorism by appealing to the global War on Terror, which primarily focuses on actors tied to Islam, and shifting the motivations of the attacks from dissatisfaction with domestic policy to extremist forces abroad penetrating the nation. Framing these attacks as terrorist acts allowed the government to evade the root causes of dissatisfaction and instead point to an ideological virus as the root of violence.[58]

A party document stated that, "anyone infected with an ideological virus must be swiftly sent for residential care of transformation-through-education classes before illness arises."[59] Through this statement, the Chinese government removes itself as the instigator of violence and instead shifts the onus onto the Uyghurs themselves. By blaming an ideological virus for violence, the government can fabricate a narrative which paints the Uyghur population as inherently violent, justifying extreme policing and surveillance measures. The government further attempts to link Uyghur descent with terrorism by waiting to disseminate information about Uyghur attacks until after instances of terrorism abroad. The bombing of a coal mine in Xinjiang, which killed 50, received virtually no coverage by the national government until after the Paris bombings, which occurred two months after the bombing. A French journalist in China, who was later expelled, commented that the government's delay to mention the Xinjiang explosion until after the Paris bombings demonstrated an attempt to appropriate global terrorism to paint a localized explosion of rage as a farflung terrorist plot.[60]

By classifying Uyghur expressions of dissatisfaction as terrorism, the party justified and executed extreme assimilation measures under the guise of quelling a breeding ground for extremism. The Second Xinjiang Work Forum (XJWFII), which convened in May 2014, set forth the long term objectives of permanent order and general stability for the region, which manifested as extreme security measures to ensure ethnic unity, which Xi Jinping claimed was the "lifeline" of China.[61] This statement furthered the link between Uyghur culture and the insecurity of China, which built upon the fear that ensued following the Tiananmen car bombing and Kunming train station attack. To help ensure ethnic unity, the party pushed for a separation of the regional government from religion. While religion was not supposed to interfere with any aspect of government operations, the government inserted itself in local religious practices by installing official party ideology into the Uyghurs' religious operations. The party enforced several waves of broad legislation targeting religious extremism, allowing for authorities to punish Uyghurs who were far from extremist.

In the months following the 2009 riots, the government began reinstating the Internet and cell networks slowly, and established the XUAR Information Promotion Regulations which banned cyber activity that endangered ethnic unity, separatism, or posed a threat to social stability. Following this, in 2011, the party instituted a list of 21 legal activities and 14 legal customs for the Uyghur minority, such as how and where to pray. While this list seemingly provided a legal framework for the protection of certain Uyghur customs, in actuality it had devastating effects on the population;anything that was not outlined under this list of 35 could be labeled as illegal and extremist. The introduction of new legislation stagnated until 2015, following the Kunming attack. Legislation instituted in 2015 offered general directives to regional authorities to allow for the suppression of Uyghur culture. The National Security Law declared that the state would maintain its

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58 Ibid.
59 Chris Buckley, Anti-Islam Detention Camps in China, (New York Times, 2018).
60 Trédaniel and Lee, Explaining the Chinese Framing.
61 Ondřej, Advancing "Ethnic Unity".

direction to develop the Chinese culture in Xinjiang and prevent and resist unhealthy cultural influences to improve cultural strength. This was followed by the Religious Affairs Regulation and the National Counter-Terrorism Law which forced religious organizations to educate their members on patriotism, repressed extremist attire, banned worship by minors, and deemed actions with ideological goals as terrorist. Perhaps most impactful on Uyghurs was the directive to authorities to use all spheres of life, including politics, the economy, culture, and education to prevent terrorism, allowing for virtually all facets of daily life to fall under the scope of government authority.[62]

These directives have been used to justify expenditures on security which amount to nearly $8.5 billion.[63] This money has gone to the development of an extensive network of surveillance cameras, security checkpoints, and re-education camps. Uyghurs are subject to the ever expanding security state on a daily basis, independent of individual religious leanings. checkpoints dot the landscape every hundred yards, phones can be searched at any moment. ID scans and facial recognition software are present at banks, supermarkets, hotels, and malls, and even purchasing gas requires a full facial scan.[64] Authorities have developed further measures to survey specific sects of the population deemed unsafe. Citizens are monitored for signs of religious extremism which include growing a beard, praying in public, or abruptly giving up smoking or drinking. Those who demonstrate these signs are often subjected to cameras being placed in their homes, their travel being restricted, or detainment in a re-education camp.

Initially denied by the Chinese government as lies concocted by Western powers, re-education camps are estimated to currently hold approximately one million Uyghurs.[65] Acts such as visiting relatives abroad, possessing books about religion or Uyghur culture, or even wearing a shirt with a Muslim crescent can be deemed grounds for detention.[66] Reports from those who have escaped camps say that the days are marked by listening to lectures, singing songs which praise the CCP, and writing self-criticism essays where they renounce their "backwards" culture.[67] The degree to which the state is intervening in Uyghur's everyday life demonstrates the extent to which they are attempting to force stabilization in the region, as they forsake their own citizens' privacy and right to religious freedom in an attempt to fabricate a region primed for economic expansion.

Despite the extensive system of surveillance and assimilation enforced by the party, many of their directives have yielded negative effects and have catalysed radicalization. The state- sponsored Han migration, which attempted to aid cultural unity, ended up making tensions worse as the influx of higher-educated Hans dominated well-paying professions and skilled labour markets.[68] Furthermore, while the securitization efforts of the government was effective in creating popular support for increased security measures in Xinjiang, these measures further alienated Uyghurs and led to sentiments which spurred the violence seen in 2014.[69] Instead of recognizing the failure of these policies to address Uyghur dissent, the government simply

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62 Ibid.
63 Buckley, Anti-Islam Detention Camps.
64 Josh Chin and Clément Bürge, Twelve Days in Xinjiang: How China's Surveillance State Overwhelms Daily Life; The government has turned the remote region into a laboratory for its high-tech social controls, (Wall Street Journal, 2017).
65 Nick Bruce-Cumming, At U.N., China Defends Mass Detention of Uighur Muslims, (New York Times, 2018).
66 Buckley, Anti-Islam Detention Camps.
67 Ibid.
68 Josh Chin, China Said to Deploy Big Data for 'Predictive Policing' in Xinjiang; Rights group says it combines feeds from surveillance cameras with personal information, (Wall Street Journal, 2018).
69 Trédaniel and Lee, Explaining the Chinese Framing.

used the recurring violence as proof that measures needed to be taken further, leading to a self-perpetuating cycle where increased security measures fosters anti-government sentiment which leads to outbursts of violence, which is then used to justify further security measures. Additionally, the attempt of the government to frame attacks as instances of terrorism fails to address the true source of Uyghur unrest, which is rooted in an inability to freely participate in society in accordance with religious and cultural customs.[70] The instances of "terrorist" attacks are merely a result of the Uyghurs' inability to openly rebel as they lack a legislative capacity to enforce change.[71] Ultimately, the Chinese attempt to frame Uyghur unrest as an ideological virus has acted as a counter-productive force, as it fails to address the source of tension and perpetuates unrest and exacerbates the lacking sense of cultural unity through the alienating use of extreme security and surveillance measures.

Conclusion

While the method by which recent hardline assimilation policies are enforced by the Chinese state are new to the region, assimilation to foreign cultural standards is hardly a new occurrence. Initially, the region was influenced by both previous Chinese dynastic leadership and Turkic Muslims, which starkly contrast the modern Han population. Turkic influence developed the foundation for what is now known as the Uyghur population but that transition was by no means organic or peaceful. Then, after a brief stint under the Republican regime post-Qing, the PRC imposed their own influence on the region through implanting a Han population in Xinjiang. Policies implemented by the PRC post-liberation often sought to suppress Uyghur leadership and culture, crippling the majority population's control of their own region. Building on top of the divisive historical differences between Xinjiang and the modern Han dominated the Chinese state, and the pressure towards Uyghur assimilation, the

modern counter-terrorism rhetoric was able to frame cultural unity as imperative to China's future and safety. Due to this, the state ratcheted up assimilation policies which brought in additional Han migrants and placed stringent security measures on the Uyghur population to ensure assimilation was on course. The historical push towards assimilation, which has been exacerbated by recent events, has alienated the Uyghur population and forced those with dissenting opinions of local government to channel their dissatisfaction through extreme acts of violence. These acts of violence are interpreted by the state as acts in accordance with extremist Islamic values, thus creating a self-perpetuating cycle of violence and oppression in the region between the two entities.

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70 Ibid.
71 Joshua Tschantret, Repression, opportunity, and innovation: The evolution of terrorism in Xinjiang, China, (Terrorism and Political Violence, 2016).