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XINJIANG SPECIAL

CULTURAL HERITAGE OF XINJIANG AND LINKS WITH INDIA

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Shashibala

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CONTRIBUTORS

Sunita Dwivedi is a Silk Road traveller having travelled along the Asian circuit of the Silk Road. She is the author of *Buddhist Heritage sites of India* (2005, reprint 2017), *In Quest of the Buddha- A Journey on the Silk Road* (2009) and *Buddha in Central Asia- a Travelogue* (2014).

Dr. Shashibala is Dean, Centre of Indology, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, New Delhi, India.

Dr. Valery Barmin is Professor and Head, Department of World History, Altai State Pedagogical University, Barnaul, Russia.

Ablet Kamalov, a well known Uyghur scholar, is associated with Turan University, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Dr. K. Warikoo is former Professor at Center for Inner Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.

Dr. Henryk Szadziewski is Director of Research, Uyghur Human Rights Project, Washington.

Dr. Mahesh Ranjan Debata teaches at the Centre for Inner Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.

Dr. Debasish Chaudhuri is associated with Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, India.

Dr. Debasish Nandy is Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Kazi Nazrul University, West Bengal, India

HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES

Xinjiang Special

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Editor's Page

Xinjiang lies in the heart of Asia having along its borders Mongolia in the northeast, Central Asian Republics of Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the west and north, Afghanistan and Jammu and Kashmir in the south and southwest, Tibet in the southeast and mainland China in the east. It covers a vast expanse of land which constitutes about one-sixth of the total area of the People's Republic of China and holds the distinction of being her largest province. Owen Lattimore, the noted American scholar has called it the "pivot of Asia", where the frontiers of China, Tibet, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia approach one another. With the main overland trade routes connecting China with Central and South Asia passing through Xinjiang, it is China's bridge to Central Asia and South Asia. Following the disintegration of former Soviet Union and the independence of Central Asian Republics, China has been assiduously developing Xinjiang as the hub of trans-Asian trade and traffic.

With Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979, Mujahideen resistance in Afghanistan (1979-1994), rise of Taliban (1994-2001), independence of Muslim majority Central Asian Republics on the direct borders of Xinjiang and the emergence of Al Qaeda and now ISIS which provided thrust to the radical Islamic forces in Xinjiang, the religious factor has assumed significance in the ongoing Uyghur separatism and violence. Though the 1980s and 1990s experienced numerous violent incidents in Xinjiang including bomb blasts, arson, racial attacks and hate campaign by the Uyghur separatists against China's rule, past few years have witnessed escalation in such violence and growing Uyghur resistance being spearheaded by East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), World Uyghur Congress etc. The growing Uyghur demand for a separate homeland and violence have brought this region into the focus of national and international attention.

On its part China has been quite conscious of the threat and has been pursuing a strident policy of curbing the 'three evils' of religious extremism, separatism and terrorism. After 2016, China has been adopting stringent counter-terrorism measures including surveillance, de-radicalization, re-education and indoctrination. China has followed a well

calibrated policy of development – railways, roads, telecommunications, buildings, high rise residential apartments, industries, oil refineries, agricultural development etc. in Xinjiang. It has launched a slew of measures to uplift the economically underdeveloped region and being the non-Han minorities into the national mainstream.

On the diplomatic front, China has not only warded off any Islamic criticism of its policies in Xinjiang, but has succeeded in having its position legitimized and endorsed by Muslim countries like Iran, Pakistan, Central Asian Republics and other Middle Eastern countries. The Central Asian countries have even undertaken not to allow any anti-China movement by the Uyghurs living within their respective countries. Through Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), China has persuaded the neighbouring Central Asian Republics, Russia and few other countries to take a common stand against the 'three evils' of separatism, extremism and terrorism. Notwithstanding growing Western criticism over China's hardline measures against the indigenous Muslims of Xinjiang, Beijing has used its political and economic clout to muster support of many countries mostly from Africa and the Middle East including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Russia, which commended China's achievements in the field of human rights. Saudi Arabia, Russia and 35 other countries wrote a joint letter in July 2019 to the UN Human Rights Council supporting China's policies in Xinjiang.

Xinjiang issue is not only complicated, but it is dynamically changing due to the sustained, long term and calibrated policy and administrative measures by China. With Xinjiang becoming the hub of trans-Asian trade and traffic and also due to its rich energy resources, the Muslims of Xinjiang are poised to assert their ethno-political position, thereby posing serious challenge to China in the region. Whether it is China's grand initiatives like OBOR or SCO or China's relations with the adjoining Central Asian countries and also the Muslim world at large, Xinjiang situation needs a constant watch and a multi-layered and comprehensive view.

K. Warikoo

CULTURAL HERITAGE OF XINJIANG AND LINKS WITH INDIA

SUNITA DWIVEDI

ABSTRACT

The road to Xinjiang passed through the green Hexi Corridor. What lay beyond the lush, fertile corridor was the menacing vision of the Gobi and the Taklamakan deserts that struck fear in the hearts of most avid travellers. Not a blade of grass or foliage provided shelter to any living being or soothed the vision of any traveler. Only a tarred, glistening, endless road merging with the sky and running into eternity.

But it was here in the rough deserts of the Taklamakan and the Gobi that the Buddha drew his disciples, both kings and commoners, musicians, dancers, tillers of the soil. It was here that famous Jatakas tales and events from Buddha's life found representation in Xinjiang. We see prince Vessantara's giving away of the royal 'rain-bringing' magical elephant to a drought stricken state, Mahasattvas sacrificing his body to feed a hungry tiger, prince Sudana's charities, king Milinda's conversation with monk Nagasena, rivalry of Devadutt and attacks on Buddha and rare events from Kushinagar of the struggle for the division of Buddha's relics, found expression on the cave walls of Xinjiang. Although the themes of Jatakas and tales from Buddha's life were drawn from Buddhist texts, their representation in Xinjiang were in new light and unique from the soil from where they were drawn.

The oasis cities of Xinjiang became the home of the Buddha. Here tall pagodas with niches holding Buddhist statuary and colossal pedestals of the Reclining Buddha remind one of the Mahaparinirvana of the Buddha at Kushinagar in east India. Here ruins of hundreds of monasteries tell us of the enormous number of monks who lived and studied; Here thousands of wall paintings depict the stories of Bodhisattvas. The caves of Xinjiang are filled with divine music played by apsaras, who dance and swim joyously in the ether, with eloquent gestures of the limbs and in erotic postures, some in nudity listening to the preachings of the Buddha.

The deserts belly the poetic lines of the 8th century Chinese poet Wang Wei that brought out the melancholy of a friend, bidding farewell to a traveller into the forelorn and deserted Gobi:

*No dust is raised on pathways wet with morning rain;
The willows by the tavern look so fresh and green;
I would ask you to drink a cup of wine again;
West of the Sunny Pass no more friends will be seen.'*

(Yuanchong, Xu, *300 Gems of Chinese Classical Poetry*. Peking University Pree. 2004. p. 189.)

It was perhaps the same site from where the legendary and royal emissary Zhang Qian (2nd century BCE), called the Father of the Silk Road, holding the royal standard of the Chinese emperor, left for the Western Regions-through the deserts of Xinjiang. Both Wei and Qian have been commemorated in stone at the desert pass leading into the Gobi.

My own journey into Xinjiang started from Urumqi, 200 kms by road through the Gobi to Turfan, the first stop on the road to Kashgar. The horrifying tales of this desert from the ancient past still lingered in the mind of every traveller. Here, along with men even animals succumbed to thirst and hunger or were killed by bandits who ambushed and looted them. Many a traveller had been shaken by the dry heat of the desert, the piercing, rock storm and the blinding glare of the sun. Many had been driven to their death. According to early writers it was a place where demons lived and humans feared to tread. Where the only path that could be followed by a pilgrim was strewn with bones of travellers who died fighting with nature and spirits and where an exhausted devout pilgrim like Xuanzang faced the most dreadful experience of his travels.

There was hardly any sand in the desert, only dark, rocky soil. No trees in the vast expanse. Only a few dried shrubs and barren mountains. The main desert highway A 312 and 313 run along the foothills of Tian Shan to Turfan, Karashahr, Kucha and other cities of the Silk Road through Xinjiang where the earliest caves were dug as early as the 3rd century AD and continued until 14th century.

The oasis cities of Xinjiang, were not only famed as producers of the best silk, the renowned *Atlass*, the heady wine from its grape gorge of Turfan, the Hamigua of the deepest red from Kashgar, precious jade from the rivers of Khotan, fragrant peaches and pears of Karashahr and the celestial musicians of Kucha, but had also attained renown in the Buddhist world, for their numerous stupas, monasteries, exquisite statuary art, rare mural paintings and important Kharosthi (ancient Indian script used in Gandhara) documents written on wooden tablets found in Niya and Khotan by Sir Aurel Stein.

The enormous wealth of the oasis cities obtained by trade in silk and jade went into building and decorating some of the marvellous monasteries of Xinjiang at Khotan, Kashgar, Kucha, Karashahr and Turfan. The monasteries acted as institutes where brilliant scholars, translators, copyists of the Buddhist world resided and where polyglot libraries provided knowledge to anyone who sought it. We hear of scholars of Kucha, Khotan and Yarkand being invited by China to translate Buddhist texts. We also learn of armed attack on Xinjiang by royal Chinese forces for possession of Buddhist scholars like Kumarajiva. Much state wealth was spent on sponsoring large scale copying and translation work, the holding of quinquennial assemblies, offerings of bales of silk and gold and robes to the monasteries and in employing thousands of painters to embellish the Buddhist caves.

The murals in the caves of Xinjiang have attained fame for their unique representation of Buddhist themes, use of novel techniques of rhombuses to frame stories from Jatakas and presenting uncommon details of the life story of the Buddha. The picture of a Buddhist paradise as conjured in the caves of Kizil, the rare images of the Buddha on a lotus raft preaching the Dhamma to the royal personages at Bezeklik, the portrayal of grieving kings and disciples in the Nirvana scene at both Kizil and Bezeklik, representation of nude and semi-nude men and women as Buddha's worshippers in Kizil, the portrayal of the division of Buddha's relics at Karashahr and the rarest of rare 'Musicians Cave' at Kizil are all marvels of Xinjiang art. Apart from the murals we also come across statuary and stupa art in the oasis cities of Turfan, Korla, Kucha, Kashgar and Khotan lying along foothills of the Tian Shan and the Kunlun mountains on the periphery of the Gobi and the Taklamakan deserts.

XINJIANG'S CONTIGUITY WITH KASHMIR

A map of Xinjiang will tell us that Yarkand and Khotan lying on the northern side of the Himalayas and north of the Kun Lun ranges were the closest region to India and could be reached via land routes from Leh (Ladakh) and across the Karakoram pass linking with the Upper Indus valley. Since the days of yore there has been flourishing trade along Indian routes into the Tarim Basin.

One of the most direct and important routes emanating from Ladakh into Chinese Central Asia, now the Xinjiang region of China, for centuries has been the Leh-Yarkand trade route which has seen the transport of

wool, salt, borax, gold, spices, fruits, vegetables, tea upto recent times. Apart from these, there is evidence of transfer of celebrated Buddhist bronze idols and written manuscripts in Brahmi along this route as far as the Chuy Valley. Caravans not only consisted of traders and explorers but also Buddhist pilgrims, scholars and missionaries as is evident from the numerous monasteries along the route from Leh along the Indus, Zaskar, Shyok and Nubra rivers that form a network of valley routes criss-crossing the entire region of Ladakh.

Various sources inform us about the importance of the Leh-Yarkand route in the trade between India and the Xinjiang region of China. This was due to the strategic position of both Leh and Yarkand on the trade routes converging from and disseminating to the regions of eastern China, neighbouring Tibet, oasis cities along the Tien Shan and Kun Lun ranges, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and further upto Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. It was this route that linked the countries of the Taklamakan and Gobi deserts located to the north of the Himalayan ranges with the regions of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Utrakhnad located in the south of the ranges giving the Leh-Yarkand route a central position on the Asiatic circuit of the Silk Road between Central Asia, China and India.

The route was considered as the 'Great Road' between Kashmir and Xinjiang; the road to Lhasa, via Garo came only next in importance, and the third important road was that which led through Rukshu, Lahul, and Kullu, to the cities of Nurpur, Amritsar, and Ludhiana¹.

There was another commercial line between India and Khotan, which is believed to have been frequented in the time of Shah Jehan. This road ran through Garo and Ruthog/Rudok to Sarikia, half-way between Yarkand and Khotan².

According to Alexander Cunningham, the southern road from Yarkand and Khotan, over the Karakoram mountains and down the Shyok and Nubra rivers led to Leh. The old route followed the Shyok from its source to Sassar, and then either continued down that river, or across the mountains and down the Nubra river to Leh. This was the most frequented of all roads into Ladakh.³ Charles Sherring also charted out the routes into Tibet from the passes of Utrakhnad which could eventually lead a trader into Yarkand along the Rudok-Yarkand road. These included the Mana and the Niti passes leading to the towns of Chaprang and Daba in Tibet.⁴ The road through Niti Pass and onwards through Garo and Rudok led to Yarkand from India. This was in a way the same as the Lhasa to Yarkand route along the valley of the Indus river. Travellers from India

could take the northern foot of the Kunlun mountains to reach Kashgar, the last point on the Silk Road through China. From Kashgar they crossed the snow-covered Pamirs into the Kyrgyz territory via the passes on the Kyrgyz-China border at Torugart or Irkeshtam and reached the Ferghana Valley through the city of Osh.⁵ Cities of the Chuy Valley were directly linked through the Bedel Pass to the Tarim region of Aksu, Kuqa, Kashgar and Yarkand and thence to the Kashmir and Ladakh.

INDIANS IN XINJIANG

Historians have traced India's links with Tarim Basin region of Xinjiang to the 3rd century BC of Mauryan times. Historian B.N.Puri quotes from Tibetan Annals stating that an exiled son of Asoka ultimately established his kingdom in Khotan in Xinjiang⁶, which could be reached through Kashmir or Gandhara. According to the same source, the successor of Vijayasimha, 16th in descent from Kustana allied himself with king Kanishka and helped him in his conquest of eastern India as far as Saketa.⁷ According to the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang, Arhat Vairocana from Kashmir first preached Buddha's doctrines in Khotan and had set up the earliest convent there.⁸

Scores of inscriptions in Brahmi, Kharosthi and Bactrian and engravings of Buddhist images and themes found along the old Karakoram Highway into India indicate the Tarim Basin route into the Indus Valley.⁹ More than ten Chinese inscriptions mentioning names of merchants, pilgrims and royal envoys were found near Gilgit in the upper reaches of the Indus River, the territory directly adjacent to the Pamirs. One inscription mentioned an ambassador Gu Wei Long from the court of the Great Wei (despatched between 443 and 453 AD).¹⁰

Large parts of Central Asia and India were ruled by the Kushans. History informs that Kushan king Kaniska (1st/2nd century AD) opened the way for missions to China after he convened the Fourth Buddhist Council. It was during the Kushan period that Buddhism was taken to the countries of Central Asia and China where missionaries were active by the middle of the 1st century CE. Kanishka ruled over a vast empire from Central Asia to the Gangetic Valley. His empire included Afghanistan, Bactria, Eastern Iran and Central Asia.¹¹ Kanishka's power extended up to the borders of Gobi in Central Asia, informs historian R.C.Majumdar. He is further credited with success in wars against the Chinese, and also with the conquest of three rich provinces belonging to

the latter, viz. Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan. Xuanzang wrote about a Chinese prince taken hostage by Kanishka.¹² According to Sinologist P.C. Bagchi, the ties with India were so close that rulers of Xinjiang traced their lineage from Indian royal families. This was because colonisers from Northwestern India and Kashmir are believed to have set up small colonies in the region of Khotan, Kuci and Kashgar. In Khotan, the regal names were formed with Vijaya as the pre-fix- *Vijayasambhava*, *Vijayakirti* etc.¹³ Kuqa had rulers with Indian names like *Suvarnapuspa*, *Haradeva*, *Suvarnadeva* etc. and Kucheans were conversant with Sanskrit.¹⁴

BUDDHIST HERITAGE OF TURFAN OASIS

Turfan, situated on the southern side of the Tianshan mountains in the eastern part of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China, was considered the gateway to western China through the Hexi corridor. The ancient historical sites in Turfan visited by this traveler include the ruined cities of Gaochang, Jiaohe and caves of Bezeklik where remains of Buddhist statuary and mural art, although much destroyed, can still be seen and appreciated today.

Imperial Temple of Gaochang

Ancient Gaochang city located 30 kms to the east of Turfan served as a defence garrison for the Western Han dynasty. An unpaved road leads through a crowd of rock structures and caves with door and window openings. After walking for a km inside the city, the visitor arrives at the gate of the imperial palace and right in front lies a massive pagoda and the imperial temple. The central pillar of the pagoda has three rows of niches on its three sides. These once held painted images of the Buddha. It is believed that the statues were either stolen by the western explorers or destroyed by the onslaught of Islam. The central pillar held a colossal statue of the Buddha. Behind the pillar is a large courtyard and several rooms that were once occupied by monks of Gaochang.

The 'Stele of Ju Qu An Zhou'¹⁵ found in one temple and dated 445 AD of the Liang dynasty recorded the historical fact of the propagation of Buddhism in Gaochang during the times of King Qu. A wooden statue of Buddha, stone pillar from the Northern dynasty having Buddhas in the niches, a silk painting of Bodhisattva Guayin, clay sculptures and stone carving images of Buddha in different postures found in the city go to show the flourishing state of Buddhism at Gaochang.

In *Si Yu Kiwe* read details of Xuanzang's visit to this city of Gaochang on his way to India. The great monk was conducted to a monastery where senior monks Tun and Kwo-tong-wang came to persuade Xuanzang to remain in the convent and give up his journey to India. To this the monk did not agree and after ten days sought permission of the king to be allowed to continue his journey to India. The king refused permission. Xuanzang seeing that he would be detained by force gave up food and water for three days. On the fourth day the king relented after seeing the condition of the monk. Before Xuanzang left for India he conducted a religious conference at Gaochang which was attended by 300 persons. Everyday the king himself conducted Xuanzang to the pulpit walking with a brazier of incense before him.

Buddhist Pagodas at Jiaohe

The Jiaohe ancient city lies ten kms. from Turfan. At the massive gate a huge board displays the name of the city 'Yarhu Khadim ke Shahre'. The entire city lies on a terrace 1,700 mts. long and 300 mts. wide at the feet of which meet two rivers. A paved road runs past a multitude of rock caves which functioned as administrative offices and leads to a magnificent watch tower used for round the clock vigil against invaders. The road snakes through the city and leads to the ruins of the imperial temple. Here one can see a cone like pagoda resting on four pillars. A flight of stairs leads up the pagoda to the colossal statue of Buddha which is now missing. The square pagoda seemed to be a three storied structure.

The road goes further north towards the Great Monastery. Two huge mounds indicate that the gates must have been massive structures. Inside the gate stretches the vast expanse of the outer courtyard of the monastery. To the right of the courtyard is the ancient well from which monks once drew water. It is totally dilapidated. Stairs lead to the inner precincts of the Buddhist temple, the largest of its kind in the kingdom. It once had a huge Buddha statue on top of a square pagoda. It is a three storied structure. On the second story one can see niches in the wall which once held the images of Bodhisattvas. The ruined foundations of the statues can still be seen. There are also traces of wall paintings. The lower story of the pagoda has large niches and which are believed to have held Buddhist deities. The grooves which supported the huge Buddha image on top of the pagoda is still in place. The pagoda is surrounded by living rooms built of mud and large bricks, toilets with drains and an ancient well for monks as well as the residents of Jiaohe.

Another Buddhist temple lies in the north east. It has a large central hall surrounded by ruined buildings. Further east of this temple lies a forest of pagodas of which the tallest one stands out. The highest pagoda, the most ancient *sarira* stupa could be ascended by a flight of stairs and commands a bird eye view of the whole city. There are altogether 101 stupas.

Bezeklik Caves

On way to the Bezeklik caves one has to pass the Flaming mountains emitting orange flames rising from the purple peaks. The mountain slopes are deeply corrugated. The ten km. wide mountains running for about 100 kms. from east to west east of Turfan city we descend several steps down the hill side to approach the caves which are completely hidden from view as their roof merges with the mountains. The domed roofs appear like small roundels embedded in the rocks. The caves to our left are closed. Only some on our right are open for public viewing.

Several hundred feet below flows the river surrounded by lush greenery of dense poplars. It seems that the monks who cut the caves had chosen this site with great care. All along the barren mountains only this stretch had dense foliage. The monks descended several hundred feet before they could reach the river, which saved from wild animals and intruders in the river valley.

A narrow curving pathway leads to the caves built in a semicircle. Standing at one spot one could see the entire series of caves. A series of dome shaped roofs protrude from the surface of the mountains. Some caves have paved verandahs and stairs leading to other caves on a higher level. The condition of the caves is dilapidated. They have been badly destroyed by explorers like Von le Coq. The paintings have been cut away alongwith several inches of the wall and large craters have been left behind. As if this was not enough, the faces of the deities were also scratched away. It appears as if mud had been rubbed. At some places only gaping holes remain where the marauders cut them away.

The dilapidated walls and empty niches are the only remains of the once beautiful grottoes that weaved the story of splendour and magnificence. There are about 83 caves and 40 of these have murals which are now quite faded. Many of the caves have been closed to the public. Most caves are long and cylindrical and are approached by arched doorway. A special technique of brick laying for constructing a dome is said to have been used in the grottoes. The murals inside some caves give

stories of Buddha's life and teachings. The Thousand Buddha and the Nirvana scenes adorn many caves. However, in most caves the 'Dying Buddha' statue has been cut away from the platform at the backwall of the cave. We know only from the mourners painted on the wall that the lost image was that of the Reclining Buddha.

No. 17 belongs to the Tang period. It is a rectangular cave with arched roof. Here there are remnants of seven damaged statues of Buddha and three images of Amitabha, Avalokiteswara and Bodhisattva. Cave 20 is built in Adobe style. In the center is a main room having a mural of Avalokiteswara. On both sides are painted the donors of the cave, king and queen of Gaochang. There are 15 paintings from the Jataka stories of Buddha in his previous life. Cave 27 is bereft of all images. Statues and paintings have been cut away. There is mud on face of the Thousand Buddhas on the roof and walls. Some of these destructions are attributed to Islamic opposition and the cultural revolution.

Cave 31 belongs to eleventh century and has the Thousand Buddhas painted on roof, painting of *Nirvana Sutra* on the frontal wall and a platform which once held the image of the Reclining Buddha and which has been cut away. Only the *Saro* or the *Sala* tree on the walls proves that the image was that of the reclining Buddha. There are damaged images of Bodhisattvas and eight paintings of Nagas on the right. A prince in mourning is on the left wall. Between them is fire lighting up depicting the Mahaparinirvana and the Holy cremation. There is also an interesting painting depicting the war among eight kings for the holy sarira of Buddha.

Pranidhi Scene

The rare representation of the Buddha is displayed in the *Pranidhi* scene at the Temple number 9 of Bezeklik.. It has been dated to 9th century. Several scenes of the *Pranidhi* paintings were taken away by Von le Coq to Berlin but their copies were however kept in front of Cave 31, 32, 33 where I saw and photographed them. Buddha is unadorned. He wears the Indian dhoti which goes over his left shoulder and covers a part of the right shoulder. His feet are clad in rope like sandals and set on lotuses which seem to be growing on the surface of a river or a stream. The right hand is raised in *abhaya* mudra. Attendant figures numbering six to eight surround the colossal central image of the Buddha. Some of the attendants are bearded and wear a crown over the top knot and adorned in precious jewels, indicating they are royal personages. They are all in the act of worshipping the Buddha or listening to his discourse.

P. Banerji in his *New Light on Central Asian Art and Iconography*¹⁶ points out an important aspect of the painting, viz. Buddha's journey on a raft like boat reminding of his journey from Vaishali across the flooded river Ganga. A mention of the Buddha crossing the river without a boat by the force of his magic we find in Asvaghosa's *Buddhacharita* (Trans. E.H. Johnston canto xxii no. 8-14).

Mourners

Another rare painting of Bezeklik is that of mourners grieving over the 'Great Decease' or passing away of the Buddha. The painting now lies at the National Museum, Delhi. It must have adorned cave 31 of Bezeklik where the *Nirvana Sutra* is painted on the front wall. In a niche below the painting, one can see the cut away platform where once a Reclining Buddha image in Mahaparinirvana lay. A painted Sala tree on the wall indicated that the image which once adorned the niche, was that of the Reclining Buddha.

Ordination of Nanda at Bezeklik

Tonsuring of a royal person at Bezeklik reminds us of the ordination of Nanda (half brother of the Buddha) and Rahul (son of Buddha). It is presented as no. 146 in *The Art in the Caves of Xinjiang*.¹⁷ This brings us to the *Bamboo monastery of Kapilvastu* where Nanda, half-brother of the Buddha, who was lured into joining the *sangha* by the Buddha. Nanda leaves his newly married lovely wife and starts out with the Buddha's begging-bowl in hand, to accompany him to his monastery. His head was shaved and he was ordained into the Order. The scene is depicted in the panel where the barber is in the act of shaving Nanda while the Buddha pours out the ceremonial water.

According to P. Banerji, (*Central Asian Art New Revelations from Xinjiang*) on the third day of the arrival of Buddha at Kapilvastu, he caused Nanda to be made a monk. It is said that Buddha was at Kapilvastu at his father king Suddhodana's invitation and was staying at the Banyan Grove of the Sakyans. He came to his step mother, Mahaprajapati's palace to take his meals along with the company of monks. After the meal was over, Buddha handed over his alms bowl to Nanda and proceeded to his resting place. Nanda, carrying the bowl too followed him. At the end, Buddha, much against Nanda's wish, initiated him to Buddhist faith. It was the day when Nanda was married and his wife Janapada -Kalyani (named Sundari) was anxiously waiting for her husband's return. But

Nanda never returned to family life. Asvaghosa in his *Saundarananda Kavya* has immortalised this poignant story. The manuscript fragment of this *Kavya* has been discovered in Xinjiang¹⁸.

KUSHINAGAR EVENTS AT KARASHAHR

The painting on display at The Hermitage, Petersburg depicting the events at Kushinagar was found at Karashahr oasis on the northern Silk Road in Xinjiang. After the Buddha had been cremated and his ashes and bones stored in golden pitchers were placed in Kusinagara, the city of the Mallas and worshipped with excellent ceremonies. Then there descended on Kusinagara kings and ambassadors from seven countries on their royal chariots driven by horses and elephants to take a share of the relics. But the Mallas refused to surrender them and resolved to fight instead. The kings lay siege to the town 'ready to spring like lions..'. Then learning of the royal fight for the relics, the wise Brahman Drona intervened and brought about a reconciliation pacifying the Mallas to divide the relics into eight parts, keeping one part for themselves. The kings returned to their kingdoms and duly built stupas in their cities for the relics of the Buddha. The Brahman Drona took the pitcher for himself and the ashes were taken by the people named Pippala (vanika) people of Kusinagara¹⁹.

A BUDDHIST PARADISE AT KUCHA

The Kizil caves are among the four groups of grottoes lying within the territory of Kuqa (Kucha) which go by the name of Quici grottoes. They are among the earliest cave temples in China whose digging started in third century. Currently they are 236 in number of which 135 caves are in good condition. However very few are open to the public.

As soon as one enters the cave area, one is greeted by a huge black marble statue of the famous Indian monk Kumarajiva (344 – 413 CE) who was born in Kucha of an Indian father and a Kuchean princess. The famous Buddhologist and translator of scriptures wears a monk's *chivar* and sits on an inverted lotus. His head is shaved. In his youth Kumarajiva lived in Kucha and later went to Changan (Xian) where he translated 300 volumes of Buddhist sutras.

Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang stayed in Kucha for about two months as he had to wait for the snow to melt in the mountain passes. He mentioned in his records that the Kucheans excelled in playing music especially lute

and pipe. They wore garments of embroidered silk and cut their hair and wore a flowing covering. In commerce they used gold, silver and copper coins. Xuanzang mentions in *Si Yu Ki* that there were 100 convents in the country with 5,000 and more disciples, belonging to the Little Vehicle of the school of *Sarvastivadas*²⁰. Their doctrine and the rule of discipline was like that of India.

Sukhavati scenes painted in the caves of Kucha represented the blissful scenes of the Buddhist cities of Xinjiang where the musicians played the heavenly music of Kucha on lute, flute and the drum instruments, where the jade-beauties danced to the accompaniment of heavenly music, the rich streams flowing through the sands of time, where the bare-breasted, half naked *apsaras* twirled in gay abandon in their sweeping scarves of the best Khotanese silk, the flying deities of the heaven showered the preaching Buddha with flowers from above. The scene was a riot of colours and pigments that came from the mountains.

Scenes were drawn from the Buddha's life and preachings, the miracles, the labouring bodhisattvas to guide the laity, the good deeds of Bodhisattvas as in the *Jatakas*. The caves of Kucha were especially decorated with such blissful heavenly scenes, scenes that were dear to the mural painters of Kucha. Such nude paintings are not seen at other caves in Xinjiang.

The beautifully painted cave walls with drawings of human figures, Buddhist deities and *apsaras* in sensuous apparel, some naked, some half-clad appear against a backdrop of beautiful gardens full of flowering trees. Here the deer roam and the birds sing. The picture of paradise is blissful. *Apsaras* dance in gay abandon, female figures with exposed breasts sit listening to the sermons of Bodhisattvas, while blissful lovers play the lute or the pipa in an intimate posture. Life in these ancient caves has not dimmed over the centuries. One becomes a part of the heavenly world drawn across the mud walls. Blue, brown and green rock colours have been used profusely. Red has turned black over the ages.

It is a world where perfect love and harmony existed, a world of Bodhisattvas and *apsaras* showering flowers from their heavenly abode amid divine music of the flute and the *panchshabd* by garland bearing *ganas* peering out their neck from a foliage of acanthus leaves and divine animals performing noble deeds. The arched ceiling of many Kizil caves depicts the heavenly realm of the sun god, moon god, fire god and the wind god. There are many sitting Buddhas. The walls of the cave have high niches in which once stood donors and swordsmen. The back

chamber has a raised platform on which once lay the Nirvana Buddha. On the wall above the platform are painted many Bodhisattvas who were mourning the Great Decease. Half clad devatas wearing crowns are showering flowers on Buddha. To complete the scene of the *Parinirvana* of Buddha a *Salavana* has also been painted in the Nirvana hall.

Jataka stories

On rhombic checks is the unique style of Quici (Kuchean) art. There are about a hundred stories painted in this manner. Cave 17 has interesting wall paintings the theme of which are the Jataka stories or the birth stories of Buddha in his previous life. We have the story of the Monkey Jataka. We also have themes from the life of Buddha, for example the emaciated meditating Buddha being offered sweet *kheer* by Sujata. There is the story of the Sarvadaan- the king who gave away everything in alms; brothers who killed the dragon and saved their country; woodcutter who requited kindness with cruelty and the story of king Milind etc.

Other favourite stories in the caves are the Three Monkeys; the story of the bear and the snow storm; of the elephant lying down, of the Hunter and the bear. On the front wall the Maitreya Buddha preaches in Tusita heaven. Many Bodhisattvas are attending his sermon. The roof carries the entire cosmic order of Buddha. The backwall of the pillar carries the story of the king and the mad elephant representing the story of Devadutta who let loose a mad elephant at Buddha. Cave 32 too has the unique painting depicting the struggle between the Devadutta and Buddha. It shows Devadutta hurling a huge stone at Buddha.

The famous Cave 38 is called the musicians cave. Here a dark half clad devata is playing a musical instrument something like the *veena* and a beautiful, white skinned female *apsara* who is bare breasted and bejewelled plays the lute. It reminds one of the dark Krishna and his beloved Radha playing music in a blissful state. Here again we see *jataka* stories on rhombic backgrounds. There is an interesting tale of the Macaque king or the Monkey Jataka who built a bridge over a river by stretching his body.

Cave 47 is the largest cave temple in Kizil. It is 16.5 mts. high adorned once with a colossal image of a standing Buddha like the Bamiyan Buddha. There is a 10 mts long Reclining Buddha inside. Cave 48 depicts bejewelled devatas on the vaulted ceiling. They are draped in exquisite dress with the upper half of their bodies unclad and seem to be floating in the air. Flying *apsaras* with exquisite wings are bare breasted, full figured and seem to be flying bare footed. They are all in the act of making offering to

the central image of Buddha which has been cut away and stolen from the central pillar of the cave.

Nude art at Kizil

Many wall paintings at Kizil give evidence of nude art prevalent in Kuqa in the third century AD. We see topless female figures covered by transparent clothing listening to the sermons of Buddha and Bodhisattvas. Naked *apsaras* floating in ether, worshipping the devas. Even the male figures are half naked. According to critics the recurrent appearance of the nude female images in Quici murals (like the stone sculptures of Khajuraho temples in India) is to convince believers that only through total detachment from the mundane life and lust can they achieve enlightenment and attain salvation. Two different origins of the art have been traced by Feng Fei, historian and art critic. According to one school the Quici nude art had its origin in India. While the other theory is of Greek origin. A third school of thought traced the art to the Quici people themselves. According to Feng Fei, nude art was already prevalent in China when the Quici caves were cut. This is proved by the discovery of nude terracotta figurines, nude hunting scenes engraved on sacrificial urns, nude stone sculptures on tombs and rocks in various provinces of China²¹. Some murals also involve secular activities like cultivation of crop, playing of musical instrument and dancing (for which Kuqa was famous all over there Silk Road).

Subashi ruins near Kizil grottoes have been identified as the Zhaohuli of Xuanzang. They are the largest group of ruins in the western region with 100 temples. During his stay at Kuqa, Xuanzang visited the Zhaohuli convents. He mentioned that there were two convents close together on the slope of a mountain, but separated by a stream of water both named Chau-huli. Here he saw a statue of Buddha, richly adorned and carved skillfully. In the hall of the western convent, called the Buddha pavilion, there was a yellowish-white jade stone, shaped like a sea-shell and on its surface was traced an eight inches long foot of Buddha which emitted a bright and sparkling light. Two huge images of Buddha, about 90 ft high adorned the western gate of the chief city. In front of the statues the quinquennial assembly was held. The priests assembled from all over the country. The king and all his people, from the highest to the lowest, abstained from public business and observed a religious fast, and listened to sacred teachings of law.

The images of Buddha in all the convents were decorated with

precious substances and covered with silken stuff. On festive occasions these were carried in processions. Another convent called Oshelini, situated across a river had a precious temple having a beautifully carved image of Buddha. French Sinologist Paul Pelliot during his 1907 visit found many coins in the area, about 15 clay and wooden funeral urns which can be seen in the Musee Guimet, Paris. A particularly beautiful urn found here was said to be covered with cherub-like figures dancing and playing musical instruments. The Otani mission had earlier discovered a similar casket covered with cherubic figures on the lid and a complete orchestra of Kuchean musicians (now kept in the Tokyo Museum)²².

OASIS CITIES FROM KASHGAR TO KHOTAN

Any visitor travelling along the southern Silk Road to Kashgar and Khotan will come across only a few stupas important among them being the Mauri Timat, Kashgar and the Rawak in the deserts of Khotan. One may not have the opportunity of visiting the ancient settlements which are either lost or are barred from public viewing. We can have an idea of the numerous ancient settlements, their stupas, monasteries, idols, documents and other treasures obtained from the southern routes of Xinjiang in the *Preliminary Report on a Journey of Archaeological and Topographical Exploration in Chinese Turkestan* by M.A Stein (London, 1901) and at the Urumqi, Turfan and Khotan museums in Xinjiang, National Museum, Delhi and Indian Museum, Kolkata etc.

Aurel Stein not only visited various oasis settlements on the southern Silk Road from Kashgar to Endere, but also excavated several ruins on this route. From his archaeological reports we learn that Kashgar preserves many pre-Islamic ruins, among which Stein mentions the most conspicuous as the 85 ft. high Tim stupa on the Tumen darya about 3 kms from Chini Bagh and the Russian consulate; the 27 ft. high *Kizil-debe* or 'Red Hill stupa on the left banks of the Kizil Su; 28ft high stupa and a vihara a few kms from the ancient settlement called *Hasa Tam*.

25 kms. north-east of Kashgar to the ancient city of Hanoi, 8 kms to the north of *Hasa Tam* and beyond a dry ravine, a visitor will come to a deserted stretch where the road turns towards a dirt track winding deep into the desert. It leads to a ruined city which is believed to be the ancient Hanoi built by the Tang Dynasty in the seventh century. A number of Buddhist stupas have been found near this village which probably was the ancient capital of the Kashgar state, also called the kingdom of Shule.

According to historian Jonathan Tucker the oldest of the stupas found here is the Topa Tim belonging to the first century AD. Another stupa is the Kurghan Tim, shaped like a mound that lies northwest of Kashgar.

Here is the best preserved 36 ft high Mauri Tim stupa. Mauri Tim or the Mor Pagoda lies just north of Hanoi village. We can see the remains of the city walls and the ruins of a monastery. The pagoda, about 12 metre high, has a square base designed in four layers on which stands the Buddhist stupa, oblong in shape and built of clay. This stupa was worshiped by the people of the ancient Shule kingdom. Adjacent to it is another ruined structure with a similar square base arranged in four layers believed to be part of a Buddhist temple once decorated with an image of Buddha. The ground is full of broken pieces of pottery and ancient bricks on huge mounds of earth.

KHOTAN-THE CITY OF JADE, STUPAS AND SUTRAS

Khotan situated along the south-western edge of the Taklamakan desert, was a famous city on the Silk Road widely known for its beautiful jade, its splendid Buddhist images that came as far as Kausambi in east India and from Kashmir. It was known for its 'jade beauties' that found representation in the flying *apsaras* of Kucha and Dunhuang caves. It was famous not only for the Rawa stupa but also for its forest of stupas near the bank of its river Urungkash. Khotan was irrigated by the Karakash and the Urungkash rivers bringing jade from the mountains. It was also famous as a silk manufacturing country of Xinjiang with expertise in sericulture, silk reeling and weaving technique. Because of its trade in silk and jade, it became an early receiver of Buddhism²³.

According to renowned Buddhist scholar Lokesh Chandra, Khotan was in the forefront of the transmission of Sanskrit sutras to China. Zhu Shixing, the first Chinese to leave his country in quest of sutra, chose to journey to Khotan, famous for Sanskrit originals. He undertook the arduous journey in AD 282 and succeeded in locating the Sanskrit text of *Prajnaparamita* in 25,000 verses. He had a copy made at Khotan. In AD 282 he sent his Khotanese disciple Punyadhana together with the Sanskrit manuscript written on birch bark leaves to China²⁴.

In AD 291 the Khotanese Moksala along with the Indian layman Zhu Shulan started its translation. It was given the title *The sutra of the emission of light*. In AD 296 the Khotanese Gitamitra arrived at Changan with a copy of the same scripture²⁵.

Chandra further informs that in the beginning of the 5th century, Zhi Faling found the text of a shorter recension of the *Avatamsaka* sutra at Khotan. In AD 689-91, the Khotanese monk Devaprajna translated six works. Siksanda of Khotan rendered several works of which 16 are found in the *Tripitaka*. Empress Wu (684-705) sent a special envoy to Khotan for the Sanskrit text of *Avatamsaka* and organised its translation. In AD 721 Zhiyan, a son of the king of Khotan, translated four works.

At Khotan, Chinese pilgrim, Xuanzang mentions there were 100 monasteries and about 5,000 priests who mostly studied the Great Vehicle. About the king of Khotan he says that the great ancestor of the king was the eldest son of Asoka raja who dwelt in Taksasila (Taxila). After he was banished from there, he crossed the mountains and came to Khotan looking for grass and water for his animals. He also went to worship in the Vaisravana Deva temple where a miracle took place. The forehead of the god burst open and a male child came forth and he drank the sweet scented water/ milk from the breast of the earth. When he grew up, he succeeded the king of Khotan and the present king was his descendant.

Ancient Settlements of Khotan

We learn about ancient settlements called *Tatis* on the Kashgar- Khotan route. Stein (*Prelim. Report*, p16-62) informs us of a well preserved stupa measuring 41 ft. square at the base, between the small oases of Guma and Moji close to the southern Silk Road to Khotan. Stein noticed other old sites near the oasis of Zanguya, where he found the remains of a large stupa known as Karakir Tim. Moji is believed to have occupied the site of the town of Po-kia-ki, mentioned by Xuanzang where he saw the famous Buddha image brought from Kashmir.

Xuanzang mentions in the *Si Yu Ki* seeing a bejewelled image of the sitting Buddha in a temple on the borders of Khotan. This image had come from Kashmir. There was also a large sangharam near the city built by a former king in honour of arhat Vairochana who had come from Kashmir. He also mentioned seeing the famous sandalwood image of Buddha outside Khotan at Pima which came all the way from Kausambi near Allahabad. It is said that king Udyayana commissioned the image while Buddha was still alive and kept it in a part of the palace. The system of writing had been taken from India. Everywhere the monk went in Khotan, he found Indian influence.

STUPA OF RAWAK

About seven kms on foot through the Taklamakan lies the the famous Rawak Stupa dated to 2nd/3rd century CE. There is a large hollow cave like opening on the surface of the stupa. I was told that the great explorer Stein, had broken into the stupa and caused a gaping hole in its wall so that he and his men could gain entry inside the holy structure and carry away antiquities. The hole was large enough for a person to slide into the stupa base. A high wall surrounding the stupa courtyard is now crumbling. The almost nine meters tall stupa once looked very magnificent, now it is a solitary structure in the vast desert. In 1929, Huang Wenbi, a Chinese archaeologist excavated the stupa and found numerous ceramic fragments, remains of clay Buddha statues and ancient coins. In recent years, the Hetian Cultural Relic Administrative Bureau found a group of statues at Rawak including an elliptical Buddha head. The hair was wavy and tied up in a small bun. The face was round and bulging with large eye sockets and elongated eyebrows. A worshipping female portrait was also found with a partly damaged head and wearing a pleated skirt with a beautiful belt. The figure held an incense holder in the right hand. There were also interesting murals of 'Door-keeper' or *Dwarapala* facing the entrance²⁶.

In 1901 when Stein dug into the stupa walls surrounding the courtyard, he found that it was adorned with rows of colossal statues in stucco representing Buddha and Bodhisattvas with their attending deities. The walls were further decorated with elaborate plaques forming halos above and around the deities. Added to these were lovely fresco paintings²⁷. Stein carried away a considerable number of sculptural pieces to England, while those he could not carry were buried again in the sand.

FOREST OF PAGODAS AT MALIKAWAT

Deserts around Khotan are scattered with remains of abandoned cities. Yotkan ruins which is no longer open to public, is said to be the ancient capital of pre-Islamic kingdom dating from the third to the eighth century. The Malikawat ruins, 35 kms. south of town at the foot of the Kunlun mountains lies on the banks of the Urungkash or the White Jade river. The Malikawat village still exists on the river bank but the ruins lie four kms away. At the Buddhist site where I reached on a donkey cart similar to the one at Gaochang, I found a veritable forest of ruined pagodas indicating that the monastery on the river banks must have been large

with numerous monks. The large Buddhist establishment became deserted as the river changed its course and went further south leaving the site in a vast stretch of sand. It is said that Chinese pilgrim Fa Hien found Malikawat so pleasant that he stayed here for six months. At the village of Yotkan, about 15 kms. west of Khotan small relics in metal and stone with representations of Buddha and Buddhist divinities, coins with Indian legends, and Gandharan sculptures and bits of gold leaves used in decorating and inlaying of sculptures and sacred buildings were found. The small hamlet of Somiya over 2 kms. west of Yotkan has been identified with the convent of *Sa-mo-joh*, mentioned by Xuanzang in his memoirs.

Near the large village of Ujat where the Karakash river debouches into the plains of Khotan on the right bank opposite the village settlement, rises a spur known as *Kohmari*. It contains a deep cave having an upper storey reached by a rough ladder. This spur with high spur with the large cave is believed to have been the Mount. Gosringa mentioned by Xuanzang.

Several old sites were seen by Stein in the Khotan oasis at two *tatis* of evident antiquity, near the villages of Jamada and Chalmakazan. At the latter village was a stupa about 100 ft. in diameter built of river boulders.

INSCRIBED TABLETS AND MANUSCRIPTS

After Khotan we learn of the oasis city of Dandan-Uiliq, visited and excavated by Stein and seen by Dr Sven Hedin on his march to Keriya darya and mentioned by him as the *ancient city of Taklamakan*. At Dandan Uiliq several of the exposed structures revealed frescoes representing Buddha and Bodhisattvas. Here on excavations by Stein and his men revealed two temples richly decorated with wall paintings and stucco images. Twenty small painted tablets which were votive offerings from worshippers representing Buddha and Buddhist deities were recovered from the temples by Stein. Curiously one tablet showed a sacred figure with the head of a rat, writes Stein (*Prelim. Report: p36*).

Stein also recovered at least four Buddhist manuscripts dated 5th/6th century CE from Dandan Uiliq. Oblong fragments of leaves of paper covered with 'old Brahmi characters of Northern India (Gupta) type came to light arranged in bits of *pothis*.

At Keriya to the east of Khotan a *Kone Shahr* or ancient city called Niya- the easternmost of the oases along the Niya river in the midst of the desert, which were included in the Khotan district where Stein obtained wooden tablets bearing Kharosthi writings dated 1st/2nd century CE. Stein

pitched his first camp at a ruined brick stupa from where he obtained about 500 of wedge-shaped and oblong inscribed wooden tablets about 7 to 30 inches long from different rooms of ruinous buildings. About two dozen Kharosthi documents on leather written in black ink. These were originally fastened with clay seals and strings. The subject matter believed to be in early Prakrit concerns private and official correspondence, records of agreements, bonds, religious texts and votive records etc.

At *Kone shahr* or the ancient settlement of Endere was found a ruined stupa and remains of stucco images presumably of the Buddha, informs Stein. At the feet of stucco images were found considerable number of manuscript leaves of a *pothi* on paper. Among these were numerous fragments of a Sanskrit text written in Brahmi dealing with Buddhist worship.

CONCLUSION

From the above we can see the strong Buddhist connection of the oasis cities of Xinjiang where stupas and monasteries marked the landscape of hundreds of villages along the route of the great Silk Road from Dunhuang to Turfan and all the way to Kashgar on the northern route and from Kashgar to Khotan upto Dandan Uiliq and Endere on the southern route.

This was because of Xinjiang's strategic position on the Asian circuit of the Silk Road in contiguity with India and Central Asia. The region was the hub of routes linking Kashmir and the Upper Indus on the one hand and the Chuy Valley, Issyk Kul, Osh and Ferghana regions of Central Asia on the other. Along these routes not only trade flourished, but new thoughts in religion and art took root, flowered and expressed itself through sutric literature of Khotan, murals on the walls of Bezeklik and Kucha, in the statuary art of Gaochang and Jiaohe, in the high rise stupas of Kashgar, in musical compositions of Kucha and in the fragments of *pothis* and tablets of Dandan Uiliq and Endere.

Strangely today Xinjiang seems a remote region for Indians, but only a few decades ago people of Xinjiang were in such proximity that inhabitants of Khotan could climb the Kun Lun mountains and see the lights in Kashmir.



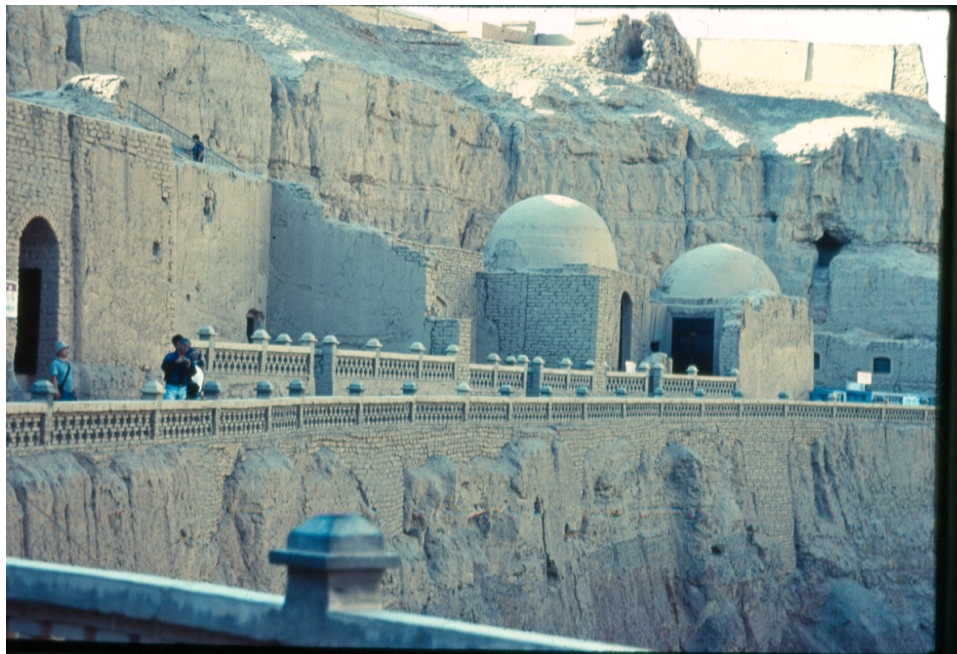
1. Remains of Buddha Images at the Imperial Temple of Gaochang, Turfan



2. Buddhist Pagoda of Jiaohe, Turfan



3. Copy of Lost Paintings at Bezeklik Caves



4. Ruined Caves of Bezeklik



5. Kizil Caves at Kucha



6. Stupa of Rawak at Khotan



7. Mor Pagoda at Kashgar

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KUMĀRAJĪVA: PHILOSOPHER AND SEER

SHASHIBALA

Kumārajīva contributed to the history of humanity in radiance and vigor. His life was unique in every aspect: his parentage, education, journeys, imprisonment, activities and old age. He continues to live in the hearts of the common man in the vast area of East Asia by establishing universal values of Buddhism, transcending cultural differences and affirming peace and harmony preached by Lord Sakyamuni. Generations after generations acknowledge his brilliance. The impact of his works can still be felt in almost all the schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism in East Asia.

Kumārajīva, (*Jiūmóluóshī* in Chinese) was a great philosopher with a long cherished mission—propagation of the true spirit of Buddhism. He broke political, geographical, cultural and linguistic barriers for travelling through barren lands to bequeath a casket of sacred sūtras as the most authoritative presentations by translating them from Sanskrit into Chinese. He created pure, boundless and unthinkable versions of the sūtras.

Three masters stand out by their pre-eminence virtue and by spreading the subtle philosophical systems of Buddhism- Dharmarakṣa, Kumārajīva and Hsīan-tsang. Dharmarakṣa was a Yueh-chih who initiated translation of Sanskrit texts. It found its full flowering in Kumārajīva and culmination in Hsīan-tsang. But Kumārajīva remains central to practical Buddhism in East Asia. He was a Kuchean who were speaking a European language, reading and discussing in an Indian language, as the medium of instruction was Sanskrit, and also conversing and writing in Chinese.

The encyclopedic knowledge of Buddhism and Vedic learning, fluency and proficiency in Sanskrit and Chinese languages and excellence of translations couched in powerful and compelling language made Kumārajīva famous. His sensitivity to both the languages was remarkable. For his comprehension of the words of the Buddha, he is recognized as the most prominent among around 200 great translators of Buddhist

scriptures, who were active from 2nd to 13th century. Fifty-five texts that he translated in a distinctive style possessing a flowing smoothness, run into 6,000-7,000 fascicles. They reflect prioritization of conveying the meaning as opposed to precise literal rendering.

Kumārajīva is seen as a true disciple of the Buddha, a pure mirror, who never made any claim about his special insight. He never offered interpretations bearing shades of his personal bias or polemical judgments. He is compared to a lotus flower in the muddy swamp who was responsible for the great waves of Buddhist thought which flowed across China over a thousand years ago based himself upon the philosophy of Nāgārjuna. His dedication resulted in reverence for sūtras like *Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra* (Lotus Sūtra), *Prajñāpāramitā* (the Great Wisdom Sūtra) and *Vimalakīrttinirdeśa* which are widely studied throughout East Asia.

Some of the texts translated by Kumārajīva, are very extensive, for example, Nāgārjuna's commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitā*. These translations are the outcome of tremendous learning and even more than that, *sādhanā* or realization. To him sūtras were not just words, but something far beyond. He could visualize words in meditation, each word conveying myriad shades in the subtlety of thought.

The *Liang Dynasty Biographies of Eminent Priests* compiled by a monk of the Liang dynasty, named Huijiao (AD 497-554) and Eulogy for the Dharma Teacher Kumārajīva, written by Sengzhao (AD 384-414), a disciple of Kumārajīva and preserved in the collection of Buddhist texts known as *Guang Hongmingji*, are the two sources for a knowledge of Kumārajīva's background and ups and downs of his stormy life. According to the *Liang Dynasty Biographies* he was born in AD 350 and died in 409 but according to the latter he was born in AD 344 and died in 413. He was Indian from his father and European by circumstance of birth.

PARENTAGE

According to Kumarajiva's biography in *Eminent Priests*, he had royal blood from his mother's side. His mother Jīvā, a princess of Kucha was a woman of great talent. She could master a passage just by glancing over. She could repeat anything just by hearing. His father Kumārayāna was a descendant of an honorable line of Prime Ministers of Kashmir. Naturally he was to get the same position but he renounced the noble life and became a monk. No one knows why he embraced that path. May be it was because of a sense of religious mission which compelled him to spread a message

of eternal happiness as far as possible. He strapped a wooden image of Sakyamuni Buddha to his back, set out along the Silk Route across the mighty Pamirs and into the Takla Makan desert and Central Asia. Following the northern route, he reached the devoutly Buddhist kingdom of Kucha on the northern rim of the great Tarim river basin. The journey was exceedingly difficult.

The King of Kucha personally went to the suburbs of the capital to greet Kumārayāna, giving him the honor due to a highly distinguished guest. In recognition of his reputation for being able and eminent, the king made him a trusted advisor and soon elevated him to the position of 'Teacher of the Nation', *Kuo-shih*. The privileged position entailed political as well as cultural duties.

At that time the King of Kucha was in search of a match for his younger sister Jīvā, who had rejected a number of offers by the princes, but was attracted towards Kumārayāna. Being an exceptionally intelligent girl she could realize his inner brilliance by glancing at him and expressed her desire to be his wife. The situation became complicated for Kumārayāna as he had renounced the world to become a *bhikū*. When the king pressed him for marriage, Kumārayāna accepted bowing to the wishes of the generous and devout king, taking up the path of Bodhisattva ideal, held up by the Mahāyāna envisions, leading a more active life, challenging vigorously the ills of the society and labors for emancipation for humankind.

BIRTH, CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

A number of strange things began to happen long before Jīvā became pregnant. She would often visit Ch'iao Li Ta Temple where she would listen to the virtuous masters expounding the *Dharma*. Initially, she did not understand the Indian languages, but strangely enough, when she was pregnant with Kumārajīva, one day at a banquet offered to the *Sangha*, she suddenly understood the Indian speakers and was able to converse with them as well. Not only that, her eloquence became unobstructed and her wisdom increased greatly. Everyone expressed their amazement. At that time, an *Arhat* said, "The child in that woman's womb is not an ordinary child but like Sariputra, whose mother had experienced something similar." Thus when Kumārajīva was still in his mother's womb, he helped his mother to become wise.

In CE 344 Kumārayāna and Jīvā were blessed by a son. Both the

parents gave a part of their names to him: 'Kumāra' from his father and 'Jīvā' from his mother. The offspring of an international marriage was brought up in a state that played an important role in establishing cultural connections between eastern and western Asia. Not long after giving birth to Kumārajīva she expressed a desire to leave the family life in order to become a nun, but her husband would not give his consent. Two or three years later she gave birth to a second son. When she listened to the Dharma Masters expounding the *Dharma*, saying that everything in the world was bound up by suffering, emptiness, and impermanence, and was without a self, she resolved to leave home, no matter what may come. This is because her basic disposition was extremely fine. At this time, Kumārajīva was only seven years old.

She often would take Kumārajīva with her to the Temple. When he saw people bowing to the Buddha, he would do the same. When he saw people lighting incense, he would imitate them. Kumārajīva's mother could clearly recognize the penetrating intelligence of her son and was determined to give him the best available philosophical and spiritual training. Till then young Kumārajīva had already not only learnt the vast literature of the *Abhidharma*, a division of the Buddhist canon consisting of doctrinal commentaries, by heart but could also deeply understand the hidden meaning. He entered the *Saṅgha*. Kumārajīva was just seven when his mother joined the Tsioli nunnery.

When Kumārajīva was nine years old, mother and son undertook an arduous journey to India; crossing the Indus river, they reached the Kashmir kingdom known to the Chinese as Chi-pin, which was his father's native place. Bandhudatta, a renowned Buddhist teacher and cousin of the king, instructed Kumārajīva in the Agamas in the northern tradition of Buddhism and the Nikayas in the southern. He studied *Sarvastivāda* in Kashmir in Sanskrit. During the next two years Kumārajīva mastered these texts and was honoured by the king. Once he defeated several non-Buddhist teachers in a debate held in the presence of the ruler who assigned five full-fledged monks and ten novices to him as disciples on being deeply impressed. From that moment his reputation preceded him wherever he traveled. As a distinguished student Kumārajīva seized the opportunity afforded by his presence in India to study medicine, astronomy and astrology, exegetical and hermeneutical methods of exposition, logic and the applied sciences. In addition to being intelligent, Kumārajīva was also not lazy. Because he was intelligent, he learned the sūtras very fast;

By the time Kumārajīva was twelve, he and his mother set out on the

journey back to Kucha. According to his biography in *Eminent Monks* the pace was leisurely, for every kingdom and principality along the way feted and honoured him, presented him with imposing titles and several urged him to take up residence as a teacher and adviser. But Kumārajīva refused to accept any such honors and proceeded with his mother. As he was making his way through the mountains of the Yueh-chih region, he met an *arhat* who volunteered a prediction to his mother. The Yueh-chih were horse-traders, and they were selling horses to China. They had settlements on the frontiers of China. The Yueh-chih also brought Buddhist sūtras to China. The horses were for the army and hence power, and the sūtras were virtue. This gave rise to the Chinese idea of Power and Virtue. The Yueh-chih impressed the Chinese that they were not barbarians, they had sophisticated sūtras, and were more cultured than them.

In a small town north of Kucha, there was a master of debate who loudly beat the palace drum and announced that if anyone could beat him in a debate, he would chop off his own head and present it to that person as a gift. This, too, was similar to the incident which took place between Shariputra's uncle and the Buddha. As Kumārajīva happened to be through, he questioned the man about two principles. This rendered the man completely speechless. The master of debate bowed to Kumārajīva as his teacher and studied with him. Kumārajīva once again set out for Kucha and was welcomed at the border by the king himself.

As they passed through the northern mountains of Kusana, an *Arhat* seeing Kumārajīva said to Jīvā, "you should take good care of this little novice. If by the time he is thirty-five he has not broken the Precepts, he will be able to cause the Buddhadharma to flourish greatly and will save countless beings, just like the Fourth Patriarch Upagupta of India. If his Precepts are not held intact, this will not be possible and he will just be a highly talented and distinguished Dharma Master". The Fourth Patriarch had lived in a stone cave. He is famous for converting Emperor Asoka to the Buddhist way. Every time he converted someone, he would put a slip of bamboo in his cave. Eventually, the cave was entirely filled with bamboo slips, which proves that he saved hundreds of thousands of people. Though Kumārajīva was forced by circumstances to break one vow of monastic life but he became a great propagator of Buddhism bringing enlightenment to countless people. Thus he met the conditions of the prophecy and fulfilled the prediction.

Kumārajīva left the region of Yueh-chih, with his mother and reached Kashgar, a Buddhist kingdom known for its excellent teachers and libraries.

He stayed there for a year and completed his studies of the *Abhidharma* and the texts revered by the Sarvastivadins. In addition to Buddhist studies during that time he concentrated intently on Vedic literature, the earliest literary works of India and studied the most important systems of chanting the Vedas. Whilst he learnt a great deal about Hindu philosophical schools, he focused upon the power of sound to affect the receptivity of consciousness to transcendental truths. The knowledge he gained later influenced his stirring translations of sūtras and texts into Chinese. He also studied the texts on specialized subjects such as medicine, astronomy, exegetics, technology and logic. It turned to be a good combination of arts and sciences. He expanded his considerable grounding in linguistics, especially gained mastery in Sanskrit and Pali and learnt more of the languages of Central Asia.

On the advice of a monk, the king of Kashgar invited Kumārajīva to take the seat of honour and expound a sūtra to a prestigious assembly which included the king himself. This was an extraordinary event when such an honor was accorded to a young monk in a prestigious religious assembly. The monks of Kashgar were amazed at his profound learning and mastery of languages. They were indirectly impelled to reform their previously lax monastic disciplines. At the same time, the king of Kucha heard of the high esteem in which Kumārajīva was held in Kashgar and sent a delegation to cement friendly relations between the two kingdoms. Thus Kumārajīva became instrumental in establishing harmonious relations. Kashgar was the Kashi of Central Asia. The Chinese still call it Kashi (which is Banaras, near Sarnath where Lord Buddha gave his first sermon).

The next stepping stone in the journey of Kumārajīva was his meeting with Suryasoma, a prince of Yarkand (So-ch'e), another oasis kingdom, who had renounced his royal inheritance with his brother Sheryabadda. He had gone to Kashgar for spiritual training and he was a revered teacher when he took Kumārajīva under his guidance. As a follower of *Sarvastivadin* doctrines, Kumārajīva held that the *dharmas* or ultimate constituents of existence are eternally real, whereas empirical phenomena, which arise out of the momentary confluence of *dharmas* under *karma*, are unreal. Suryasoma adhered to the Mahāyāna view that all *dharmas* are themselves unreal; ontologically, *dharmas* are like empty space and assume distinct existence only in their momentary, ever-changing combinations. Although Kumārajīva initially found such teachings difficult to comprehend, but at that time Kumārajīva was mature enough

to declare that he had been like a person who had no knowledge what gold is, and was taking brass for something wonderful. Suryasoma's more universal application of Buddha's doctrine of impermanence soon won him over to the *Mahāyāna* standpoint.

He learnt the doctrines of *Madhayamaka* schools studying enthusiastically and intensively. He memorized treatises by Nagarjuna and ĩryadeva and rapidly assimilated *Mahāyāna* teachings. By that time Bandhudatta, his first teacher in India, had come to Kashgar. He engaged in friendly but intensive debate with him and eventually Bandhudatta was won over. During this time Sĕryasoma foresaw something of the magnificent work that Kumārajīva would undertake in China.

After spending a memorable year in Kashgar, Kumārajīva and his mother set out for Kucha. They stopped for sometime in the kingdom of Wen-su and then moved on to their home. By the time Kumārajīva reached Kucha, his reputation had gone ahead of him as far as northern China. Monks from all over Central and East Asia gathered in Kucha to learn from him, even though he was only twenty years old and still officially a novice or *shramanera*. Within a year he was made a full monk in the *Sangha*, fully ordained at the king's palace and lived in a new monastery built by the king Po-shun. He proceeded to study the *Pancaviñóati-sāhasrikā-sūtra*. He spent much of his time in teaching and engaging in debates encouraging dialogue with monks coming from various countries. For almost a decade he prepared himself for his mission of going to China which had been prophesied and which was the aim of his life.

Meanwhile, Kumārajīva's mother decided to travel to India. There she was to be certified to the third fruit of Arhatship. Before leaving, she took a look at the causes and conditions and saw that her son's affinities lay in Chung Kuo. She told him. "The profound Vaipulya teachings should be propagated extensively in Chung Kuo. You are the only one with the power to do this. However, it will be most unbeneficial for you personally. I don't know how you feel about this...". Kumārajīva replied, "The way of the Bodhisattva is to benefit others and forget oneself. If I can transmit the great teaching and enlighten the people, I would not even object to being boiled in a cauldron."

Kumārajīva instructed the king's daughter A-kie-ye-mo-ti who had become a nun, in the *Mahāsannipāta* and *Mahāvaiipulya sūtras*. He remained in Kucha for two years studying the *Mahāyāna sūtras*. Then his uncle, the king, had a golden lion throne made for him and asked him to ascend it and speak the *dharma*. But at that time Kumārajīva had something else

on his mind. He wanted to convert his *Hinayana* Master, Bandhudatta who had a number of disciples, and if Kumārajīva could convert him, he would convert many others. Although his uncle had made a lion throne for him, he still intended to leave Kucha for Kashmir where Bandhudatta lived. This greatly upset his uncle. "I have been so gracious as to make you this throne," he said, "and you show me no consideration whatever."

Shortly thereafter, Bandhudatta arrived at the border, seeking entrance into Kucha. When border officials informed the palace, both Kumārajīva and the king went to meet him. The king asked Bandhudatta, "Why have you come from so far?" Bandhudatta replied, "I came first of all because I heard of the great awakening of my disciple, and secondly, because I heard, Great King, of your vast propagation of the Buddhadharma and I wished to meet you". Kumārajīva was delighted to see his teacher and spoke for him a *Mahāyāna* sūtra. When he had finished, his Teacher said, "Just what particular advantages does the *Mahāyāna* have that have caused you to take it up in lieu of the *Hinayana*?" Kumārajīva replied, "The *Mahāyāna* propounds the doctrine that *dharma*s are empty. The *Hinayana* relies upon names and marks." They went on discussing the fundamental principles like emptiness and liberation. Bandhudatta countered, "I have an analogy for the emptiness of the Great Vehicle. Once there was a madman who asked a weaver to weave him a piece of fine silk. The first piece the weaver brought him was not fine enough, and the second was still too coarse. He kept sending the weaver back to his loom until, in exasperation, the weaver finally confronted him with nothing at all, just his empty fist clenched in space and said, "Here it is. This is my finest work! But there's nothing there," the madman said. "This silk is so fine," said the weaver, "that even I, the master weaver, cannot see it. It's so fine it's invisible". The madman was delighted and paid a handsome price for the silk. The other weavers also took up this method and they all cheated the madman who paid out a lot of money for nothing at all. Your exposition of the *Mahāyāna* is exactly like that," said Bandhudatta. "You talk about emptiness and say that within emptiness there is existence, but no one can see it." "No, no, no," said Kumārajīva, and he continued to explain many subtle *Mahāyāna* doctrines to him until finally, after over a month of discussion, he won his Teacher and brought him to a true understanding of the doctrine of True Emptiness and Wonderful Existence.

Then Bandhudatta said, "I want to bow to you as my Master. "Kumārajīva said," You can't do that. I have already bowed to you as my

Master. How can you bow to me as your Master?" Bandhudatta said, "I am your Hinayana Master; you can be my *Mahāyāna* Master. That way, we'll both have our Masters and we'll both have our Vehicles and everyone will be satisfied. It's no big problem." In this way, Kumārajīva received his own Teacher as a disciple.

Lack of peacefulness and prosperity during that period marked earlier years of Kumārajīva. He witnessed steady decline of the Kuchan state and heard reports of the incessant internal struggles, which plagued northern China. Nonetheless, he worked quietly in the conviction that he was destined to go to the East one way or another. His mother, seeing the decline in Kucha's fortunes and believing that she had done all she could for her son, exhorted him to follow unwaveringly the Bodhisattva Path and left to return to India. They never met again. Kumārajīva was thirty-seven years old at that time (according to the Records Concerning Tripitaka, thirty-eight) when he first set his foot on the soil of China.

FIRST FOOT ON THE SOIL OF CHINA

Kumārajīva set his first foot in China as a prisoner. China at that time was in a situation of political instability, ruled by a series of short-lived dynasties founded by non-Chinese people, many of whom patronized Buddhism. Among them Fu-jian (AD 338-85) was the third emperor of the Former Qin dynasty. He had consolidated his power in AD 379 over Northern China. When he attacked and captured the city of Xiang-yang in Hubei, he persuaded the Buddhist monk Daoan and his friend Xi Zuochi, to come to his capital, Ch'ang-an. Daoan settled down at Wuzhongsi temple, began giving religious instructions to several thousand disciples and overseeing translation of Buddhist works into Chinese. That way a large number of monks were trained by him who later became extremely helpful to Kumārajīva.

When Daoan heard of Kumārajīva's spiritual, philosophical and linguistic abilities, he suggested Fu Jian to bring him to Ch'ang-an. The warlord, pleased with the suggestion, dispatched Li Kuang with an army to attack Kucha and seize Kumārajīva in AD 382-83. Kucha fell to Li Kuang and Kumārajīva willingly set out with the conquering general for Ch'ang-an in 383 AD. Then events took a series of strange turns. Tao-an died in 385 AD and six months later the Yao family had attacked and conquered Ch'ang-an and killed Fu Chien. The new dynasty continued many of the policies of the previous emperors, preserving Tao-an's

translation centre, encouraging Buddhist studies and looked forward to welcoming Kumārajīva to the capital. When Lì Kuang heard of the conquest of Ch'ang-an, he halted his return, declared himself independent, and set up a state known as Later Liang, with its centre in the Liangzhou region of present day Gansu, at Ku-tsang/Gusang. Although Lì Kuang was not a Buddhist and cared nothing for spiritual sensibilities, he recognized the political value of Kumārajīva.

Lu Kuang held Kumārajīva in captivity at Guzang, the capital of the state for sixteen years, subjecting him to numerous indignities while also retaining him as a military adviser. What kind of life did he lead during these sixteen years is not made clear in the accounts of his career, one has to rely on conjecture. During this time the emperors of Ch'ang-an alternately fumed and pleaded for his release, but without success. Kumārajīva found this phase of his life both hard and frustrating, because he was taunted for his convictions and practices and was unable to undertake the work he believed he was destined to perform. Lì Kuang subjected Kumārajīva to various indignities, plying him with wine, forcing him to have sexual relations with a princess of the state of Kucha or ordering him to ride oxen or evil-tempered horses in hopes of seeing him fall off. Although the period was full of discontent and hardship but rather than becoming passive or disconsolate, he used this time to learn about China from the rugged soldiers who had marched across much of the country. While quietly gathering texts to take with him to Ch'ang-an, he also thoroughly mastered the Chinese language. He was quietly looking to the east, longing to make his way to Ch'ang-an, the ancient center of traditional Chinese culture where he could carry out his mission transmitting the orthodox line of *Mahāyāna* teachings to the people of China. The period of loss turned to be of gain. Other translators, although being men of highly distinguished positions had little opportunity to become acquainted with various levels of Chinese society. Normally they mingled with almost exclusively to the upper class. Their message was spread more among them than the masses.

The emperor of the Later Qin dynasty, the Yao family was making repeated efforts to bring Kumārajīva to their capital, Ch'ang-an. Lì Kuang kept on refusing to release Kumārajīva. Eventually Yao Hsing, second emperor of the new dynasty at Ch'ang-an, grew wary of fruitless negotiations with Lu Kuang and took a daring risk. In AD 401 his armies attacked and conquered Ku-tsang. Kumārajīva was rescued unharmed, and in AD 402 he was warmly welcomed by the emperors into Ch'ang-

an, realizing a dream he had conceived in his twenties.

When Kumārajīva reached the present Dun-huang City, his white horse got sick and died. In memory of his loyal horse Kumārajīva and local Buddhist followers raised money and had this pagoda built in AD 386. White Horse pagoda is located in Baima (White Horse) Village, Danghe Town, 1 km. (0.62 mile) west of Dun-huang City, Gansu Province. The pagoda has 9 stories, is 12 meters (39.4 feet) in height with an octagonal foundation. Structures resembling up-turned lotus petals surround its central body. On each of the angles of its hexagonal roof hang bells which chime in a breeze. The pagoda is of the lama pagoda style of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 AD). It is evident from the characters engraved on two stones and on a block in the middle of the second story that it was repaired many times by later generations.

CH'ANG-AN: PAVILLION OF LIGHT OF THE WEST

As soon as Kumārajīva entered Ch'ang-an, he responded to the wishes of the emperor by setting up to translation work immediately. Yao Hsing bestowed on him the title of 'Teacher of the Nation'. The fruitful phase of his life, which has profoundly influenced Chinese Buddhist tradition from the moment he entered Ch'ang-an to the present day, began with his arrival and lasted barely a decade. He presided over a team of Chinese specialists before an audience of hundreds of monks. Within six days of taking up residence in his new home, he accepted the suggestion of a monk named Seng-jui, later one of his chief disciples, and began to translate a text on meditation, the *Tso-ch'an san-mei ching*. He found that the translation centre founded by Tao-an had been preserved and supported by Yao Hsing, and he marveled at the quality of the work his predecessor had undertaken. He found himself surrounded by an enormous group of knowledgeable monks who were ready to continue the work of translation under his guidance. He rapidly reorganized the centre so that new translations could be made even while the accomplishments of the previous generation could be reviewed and revised. Within the next few years he translated fifty-five works in about three hundred rolls. The *Collection of Records* gives a somewhat smaller figure: thirty-five works in 294 rolls. Sometimes his answers to the questions of the monks are included in Chinese translations.

Priests from every district of China formed a great religious order under him. It is said that he translated sūtras at a tremendous speed of

two or three a month. His enterprise was a vivid movement of Buddhist study which went far beyond translation. He elucidated the teachings clearly and thoroughly unfolding the true meaning. He used to patiently answer the questions of the people assembled under him until they truly understood the hidden meaning. Buddhist teachings became a part of the lives of the people by virtue of his broad and sensitive approach.

The translation organization headed by Kumārajīva in Ch'ang-an is one of the biggest in Chinese history. It was fully sponsored by the government and the court and marks the beginning of the tradition in establishing a national translation centre. Numerous famous monks and scholars came over to Ch'ang-an from various parts of China to participate in the translation tasks. In addition, some foreign monks from the Central Asian countries also joined the teams there, working under Kumārajīva. It was said that there were as many as 3,000 followers, including assistants and students, of Kumārajīva. All the translation jobs were carried out with the utmost carefulness and seriousness and whenever necessary, with the consultations of specialists from the relevant fields of expertise. The results of the translations were of a high standard.

Translation of *Amitābha-sūtra* was the first attempt by Kumārajīva followed by other Buddhist scriptures. He translated the *Mahāratnakū a-sūtra-upadesa* and the *Īatikā-sāstra*. In the following year, he re-translated the complete *Mahāpraj-āpāramitā-sūtra*, which includes, among many other scriptures, the *Vajracchedikā-sūtra*. The whole translation task actually involved more than 500 monks working as his assistants for verification and editing. Kumārajīva double-checked all texts in the *Mahāpraj-āpāramitā-sūtra*. During the following year AD 404, he translated the majority of the *Sarvastivāda-vinaya* and reworked on the *Satika-Sastra*.

From AD 406 onwards, Kumārajīva settled in the Grand Temple in Ch'ang-an and translated the most important sūtras in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism – the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeā-sūtra*. He also completed translation of *Dvadasamukha-sāstra*. His last translation was the *Satyasiddhi-sāstra*. *Mūlamādhyaṃakākārikā*, *Astāasāhasrikā-praj-āpāramitā-sūtra*, *Mahāpraj-āpāramitopadesa* and the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* are among other important texts translated by Kumārajīva.

Kumārajīva was a genius in language and literature. His commentary on *Vimalakīrtinirdeā-sūtra* had a tremendous impact on the Chinese literature. It identifies *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. As the two are one, a person can be free from ills by a re-evaluation of the world, and not by

withdrawing from it. It depicts the ideal of a lay person, Vimalakirti, who rendered benefit to all beings.

His letters written to Hui-yuan are very interesting. He was also involved in preaching during the intensive routines of the translation jobs. Kumārajīva revised the texts that were translated earlier. Many of his translations are still used in East Asia. Because of political unrest, his disciples were dispersed which helped to spread Buddhism to other parts of China.

Emperor Yao Hsing pressed Kumārajīva to break his vows of celibacy, insisting him to live with ten singing girls so that the brilliant man does not go without descendants. He was set up in luxurious quarters outside the monastery and seemed to suffer from his forced breach of Law saying, when he preached, that his followers should gather the lotus of his sermon and not the mud it grew in.

Lotus Sūtra is the most widely spread, translated into many languages, intensively studied and revered by almost all schools of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. It was first translated by Dharmarakṣa in AD 286, followed by Kumārajīva in 406 and Jānagupta and Dharmagupta in AD 601. Kumārajīva translated the *Lotus Sūtra* at Ch'ang-an under the patronage of the ruling family of Yao. Emperor Yao Hsing was highly impressed by him for being honest, loyal, humane, resourceful, hard-working, self-sacrificing and brilliant. Kumārajīva's version of the *Lotus Sūtra* has seven *chuan* or rolls which represents the cultural strands of Sanskrit, Tokharian and Chinese.

The *Lotus Sūtra* became the central scripture of Japanese Buddhism in the thirteenth century, when Nichiren Daishonin said that only faith in the *Lotus Sūtra* can save the country from chaos. He wrote a treatise in 1260 AD entitled *Rissho Ankoku-ron*. It means: "establish *Dharma* and save the country". The sūtra is a lost ray of light to the world. Nichiren Daishonin wrote in 1275 AD: "the enlightened perceive in each of the letters of the sūtra the golden body of the sublime truth, of the *dharmakāya*".

The oldest manuscript of the *Lotus Sūtra* is the Petrovsky manuscript that originated from Khotan, as attested by its Khotanese colophon. The *Lotus Sūtra* has two Buddhas: Sakyamuni and Prabhūtaratna. Prabhūtaratna was the National Guardian of Khotan, which was known as the *Ratna-janapada Land of Jade*. Export of jade and Buddhist sūtras were the mainstay of Khotan. So Prabhuta-ratna came to symbolise the Buddha who provides abundance of jade, the lifeline of the Khotanese kingdom. Khotan was a centre for the dissemination of Buddhism and its

sūtras to China. Thus the national scripture of Khotan became the guardian sūtra in China.

Today the *Lotus Sūtra* (Taisho No. 262), translated by Tsugunari Kubo and Akira Yuyama from the fifth-century Chinese version by Kumārajīva, is one of the most important and revered texts in East Asian Buddhism. With its vivid descriptions of cosmic events and large cast of characters, it unfolds like a magnificent drama. Its twenty-eight chapters offer a combination of doctrine, teachings, stories and parables, devotional practices, and portraits of the many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that inhabit the world of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Sūtra text presents an emerging *Mahāyāna* vision that affirms the possibility of enlightenment for all.

DISCIPLES OF KUMARAJIVA

Kumārajīva had four main disciples: Tao Seng, Sengzhao, Daorong and Sengrui. Tao Seng (355/60-434) was a Chinese monk and literary scholar. A disciple of Lu-shan Hui-yīn (334-416) on Mt. Lu, he later moved to the capital at Ch'ang-an. At both the places he studied Buddhist philosophy and participated in the translation activities of Indian or central Asian masters; in Ch'ang-an he worked with Kumārajīva (343-413). He was instrumental in helping turn Chinese Buddhism from the essentially negative way of the Perfection of Insight (*Prajñā-pāramitā*) texts to a more positive analysis of reality. In a famous episode, he disagreed with a newly translated scripture called the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* which seemed to assert the doctrine of *icchāntikas*, beings who lack the nature to achieve Buddhahood. He stated that this was wrong, that every being had 'Buddha-nature', and that all therefore had the possibility of attaining Buddhahood. For this, he was forced out of the office he held in his temple in Chien-k'ang. He returned to Mt. Lu. Later, when a newer translation of the same scripture appeared which contained a passage supporting his position, he was vindicated and returned to office, universally admired for his foresight and ability to see the truth behind the text. Sengzhao (384-414), from Jingzhao, was a Buddhist Chinese philosopher and the first and the most brilliant disciple of Kumārajīva who helped him to translate Indian treatises. He also wrote his own essays which are an important source to study early Chinese Mādhyamika Buddhism. He is mentioned in the *Memoirs of Eminent Monks*. Sengzhao criticized earlier Chinese Buddhist schools for believing in being or non-being. He concluded that all *dharma*s are empty. He was also influenced by the Taoists Laozi and Zhuangzi.

Sengrui (371–438 AD) was born in what is now Henan. He became a monk at an age of 18 and began to travel extensively when he was twenty-four years old meeting a number of scholars. He ended up in Ch'ang-an, where he took part in Kumārajīva's translation project. In fact, he is generally seen as Kumārajīva's principal disciple.

NIRVANA OF KUMARAJIVA

According to Kao-seng chuan, Kumārajīva died on September 15, 409, and according to Seng-chao's obituary, Kuang hungming Chi the date was 23rd May, 413, at the age of 71 in the Grand Temple in Ch'ang-an. His last words were that he remembered he had translated about 300 texts in Buddhism and believed that other than the *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya* which had not passed review and editing, he could guarantee that all his translations should be correct and could be used for spreading Buddhism. In order to prove such a statement, he claimed that when his body was incinerated after his death, the tongue would remain intact. It turned out that his claim was true. According to Tang-San-Zang, the complete works of Kumārajīva comprise 55 *Sūtras*, *Vinayas* and *Shastras*.

The pagoda of Kumārajīva, located on North Street of the county town of Wuwei, is said to have been built for keeping the bones of Kumārajīva. Half the pagoda was also destroyed in 1927 during an earthquake, but was rebuilt in 1934. The hollow, octagonal, twelve-storey, brick pagoda is thirty-two meters high. The first, third, fifth and eighth storeys have a door on the east side, and the twelfth storey has a small niche housing a Buddhist statue. The pent roofs do not correspond to the floors inside and they are very narrow. Their four corners bend upward, and bells hang from them. The steeple is an inverted bowl topped by a canopy and a copper vase. The whole pagoda looks imposing and elegant and is a famous historical site in Wuwei.

Kumārajīva Pagoda at Caotang Temple in Huxian County of Shaanxi Province

The pagoda, located at Caotang Temple in Huxian County, thirty kilometers southwest of Xi'an City, was built for keeping the remains of Kumārajīva. The pagoda has a special structure. Although it is a pavilion-style pagoda, but it has a base in the shape of mountains and waves and its Sumeru pedestal is carved with designs of waves. A door and windows with straight lattices are sculptured on its sides. The roof is formed by

four square sections, and under the eaves are skillfully engraved, vivid images of flying *apsarās*. The plain base is carved into huge petals of lotuslike flowers for supporting a huge oblate bead. The whole structure of the pagoda and its carvings are vigorous and graceful. Its main body is carved from jade of eight colours – white, green, black, bright yellow, red, light blue, purple and dark gray – hence it is also known as the Eight-Color Jade Pagoda.



Statue of Kumarajiva in front of the Kizil Caves



Stupa built for the White Horse of Kumarajiva, who got sick and died on reaching Dunhuang in 386 CE.



Pagoda of Kumarajiva at Caotang-si temple in Huxian County, Shanxi Province of China



Inside Pagoda of Kumarajiva at Caotang-si temple in Huxian County, Shanxi Province of China

XINJIANG IN THE SYSTEM OF SOVIET-CHINESE RELATIONS, 1948-1949*

V. BARMIN

ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the complex and insufficiently known problem of the relationship of the Soviet Union with the Kuomintang government of Chiang Kai-shek and the forces of the insurgent movement of the indigenous peoples of Xinjiang during the period of 1948-1949. The formal refusal of the Soviet leadership to support the rebellious East Turkestan Republic, its voluntary dissolution and an unsuccessful attempt to form a coalition government led to a new aggravation of the opposition of the parties. In these circumstances, Moscow, interested in using minerals located on the territory controlled by the insurgents, was forced to find a common language not only with the opposing sides, but at the same time to seek ways to support the forces of the Chinese Communist Party, which in the course of the civil war clearly prevailed over the Kuomintang.

Key words: *Xinjiang, Soviet Union, China, insurgency, East Turkestan Republic, Kuomintang, Soviet-Chinese relations*

In November 1944, in the three north-western districts of China's largest province of Xinjiang, there broke out the national liberation movement of the region's indigenous peoples against the Chinese administration. The main forces of the movement were represented by Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Dungans and a number of other peoples. In addition, Russian

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emigrants took an active part in this movement; most of the emigrants were members of the White Movement, who settled after its defeat in the province. In history, this uprising is better known as the "Revolution of Three Districts".

Having liberated the district of Ili and its capital Kulja from Chinese troops, the rebels formed their government on its territory and announced the creation of an independent East Turkestan Republic (ETR). During the winter and summer of 1944-1945 the detachments of insurgents, and then military units of the army, formed in February 1945 by the ETR government, managed to expel Chinese troops from Tarbagatai and Altai districts, which later also became part of the breakaway republic.

The declassified documents of central Russian archives that have become available to researchers in recent years, convincingly show that both the uprising and the creation of the Republic were largely initiated by the leadership of the Soviet Union and implemented with its active support. However, by August 1945, the political situation on the international scene, which was largely guided by the Soviet government in the creation of ETR, had radically changed. The necessity to support the insurgents disappeared, and Moscow forced the leaders of the unacknowledged Republic who were dependent on it to first enter into peace negotiations with the Chinese authorities, and then announce the dissolution of ETR and join the coalition government of the province created as a result of the talks. At the same time, the irreconcilable contradictions that existed between the rebels and representatives of the Chinese administration led to the fact that in less than a year the peace agreement was disrupted, and the coalition government disintegrated. The atmosphere of hostility verging on the danger of a new war again set in between the autonomous three districts and the Chinese authorities.

The central government of China and the leaders of the province never doubted that the uprising in Xinjiang in 1944-1945 was inspired and supported by the Soviet Union. The chairman of the provincial government, Zhang Zhizhong, repeatedly stated this to the American Consul, referring to both his own observations and concrete facts as evidence of his rightness. Nor did the successor of Zhang Zhizhong - Masud Sabri - doubt this fact. Therefore, after the breakdown of the peace agreement, they had no doubt that the Soviet state pulled strings of the political and military leadership of the liberated districts, and that they would return to the idea of forcibly overthrowing the power existing in the province. This was all the more real in the conditions when the Soviet

Union, in essence, openly supported the Communist Party of China, which was fighting against the Kuomintang government.

The American researcher G. Wei, referring to the August political crisis in Xinjiang, writes in his work *China and Soviet Russia*: "The situation became so critical that the Chinese government had to send weapons and ammunition to Urumqi by airplanes, as there was every reason to expect new uprising"¹. It is clear that in these conditions the proposals for the restoration and development of trade and economic relations with the Soviet Union, which the provincial authorities introduced during this period, were abandoned.

Meanwhile, already in the first half of September 1947, one of the most active leaders of the Kazakh rebels, Ospan Batyr, who had stepped over to the side of the Chinese colonial authorities, attempted to regain control over Altai district, where he had governed until June 1946. He headed the Kazakh detachment of up to 1,600 people, which secretly passed to the outskirts of the capital of Shar-Sume district and in the course of an unexpected attack, occupied it on September 12, 1947. The sitting governor of the district, General Dalelkhan, was forced to flee the city and in the second half of September arrived in the capital of Tarbagatay district of Chuguchak with a request for urgent assistance in the defeat of Ospan Batyr. The civil and military authorities of Tarbagatay district took vigorous measures to provide such assistance. In the second half of October, 1947 regular troops of the national army deployed in Tarbagatay district and completing the formation of part of the volunteers approached Shar-Sume and occupied the city, expelling the Ospan Batyr detachments. In the days that followed, after several defeats, Ospan Batyr and his detachments were forced to retreat to the mountains again.

That the operation to seize control of Altai district was undertaken by Ospan Batyr at the behest of the Chinese provincial authorities was no secret to anyone in Xinjiang². To carry out this operation, he received not only reinforcements, but also assistance with weapons, ammunition, and supply of provisions. Nor did American diplomats in Xinjiang doubted this fact, although, according to Consul Paxston's information, the commander of the Chinese troops in the province, General Sun Xiliang, stated in a conversation with him, that "Ospan-Batyr's troops (so the name in the text of the document is spelt – *V. Barmin*) are not under his control" but act completely independently. However, he admitted at the same time that "... Ospan's campaign was carried out with the help of China's warlike equipment", insisting only that "China did not send troops to

help”³. Sun Xiliang also told Paxton that the operation undertaken by Ospan Batyr was an attempt of this Kazakh leader to return to the position of a specially authorized Xinjiang government, to which he had been appointed by the Chinese authorities and from which he had been illegally “removed” by the leaders of national liberation movement.

It is highly doubtful that Ospan Batyr could undertake a very risky operation without agreement with the civilian and military leadership of the province, all the more under such an unconvincing pretext. If the matter could have been any initiative from the side of Ospan Batyr, then the very initiative might have been based only on the well-known craving for power and vanity of this man.

I. Morrison, the journalist, who met with Ospan-Batyr a year after these events, considered it necessary to give a rather tough and impartial description of both the “social bandit” himself and his relations with the Chinese. In particular, he wrote: “... It is perfectly clear that Osman, despite his high-flown words and statements, is more interested in personal power than in political ideology. It is convenient for China to have such a person on its side, and at the moment it supplies Osman with weapons and money. But China is not inclined to show great trust to a man who changed sides of the front as often as Osman did”⁴.

Ospan felt the Chinese distrusted him and, in order to prove to them his loyalty, began to commit acts that could hardly do him any honor. Thus, he himself asserted that “... in December, last year (1947 – *V. Barmin*), Outer Mongolia sent his emissary to him, who offered him favorable conditions if he came over to their side. Although the emissary was his relative, Osman handed him over to the Chinese authorities, and now he is in prison in Urumqi”⁵.

There is one more fact which proves that the operation undertaken by Ospan Batyr to capture Altai district was carried out on the instructions of the provincial authorities and was a part of a general plan for the destruction of the three liberated districts. Almost simultaneously with Ospan Batyr’s raid, an attempt was made to destabilize the situation in Tarbagatay district. Here the Chinese special services managed Savan Kalibek, who received 9 million Xinjiang dollars, and agreed to lead the population of his county away to the territory controlled by the Kuomintang. However, Kalibek’s attempts to fulfill his promise ended in failure. If immediately after the outbreak of the mutiny, with the help of deception and the gang he had organized, he managed to drive away a part of the population of the county to the territory of Urumqi district,

later he faced both an active opposition of the population itself and the combat power of the units of the national army. As a result, Kalibek fled to Urumqi, and in 1949 emigrated to Pakistan⁶.

The repeated attempts of the Chinese to weaken and, if possible, destroy the liberated districts that continued to remain independent, during which they began to use force, seriously troubled the Soviet leadership. In addition to the fact that the new large-scale military conflict on the territory of the province did not correspond at that time to the political plans of the USSR as a whole, it seriously threatened the economic interests of the Soviet state. The fact that tungsten and tin mines, which worked for the needs of Soviet industry but were located in Altai region, that is, in the zone of military operations with the forces of Ospan Batyr, could be destroyed, was enough to cause alarm and activity of the Soviet leadership.

Immediately after the beginning of combat operations of Ospan Batyr's detachments against the units of the national army in Altai district, the Soviet Consul General in Urumqi, Saveliev announced to the provincial government that this was "... a violation of the peace agreement" and that the Chinese authorities should order Ospan to immediately cease warfare and leave the district". The American Consul Paxton in connection with this statement with frank sarcasm informed his leadership that the speech was apparently about a peace agreement "... concluded in the consul's thoughts, since no special mention had been made of the armistice or the cessation of combat operations"⁷. In response to Saveliev's statement, he was informed that the troops of Ospan are not subject to the Chinese authorities, and they in turn do not render any assistance to him⁸.

It should be noted that during his operations, Ospan Batyr preferred to avoid actions that could involve him in a conflict with the Soviet Union. At least, as it follows from the reports of Chinese military sources and American diplomats, Ospan Batyr, having captured the district and actually controlling its territory, did not venture to attack mines with Soviet personnel and security. However, at the very beginning of his operation to seize Altai district, Ospan-Batyr tried to stop the work of mines and expel Soviet citizens working there from the district, threatening to block the routes and use force. However, after encountering resistance from the Soviet side, he no longer took any action in this direction.

The Minister of the Interior of the USSR, Kruglov, sent a special memorandum to Molotov and Beria in connection with the events in Altai district. He, in particular, reported in this memorandum that "In

accordance with the resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR No. 141-54 from January 22, 1946, the guarding of the objects of trust No. 5 of the Xinjiangolovo concession in Xinjiang is being executed by the maneuvering force of the MIA (Ministry of Internal Affairs) border troops stationed in Kuldja and Kok-Togai (Xinjiang). According to the reports of the commander of the maneuvering group from Kok-Togai, August 30, the equestrian detachment of Ospan Batyr's gang numbering about 500 people, entered the Burchum-Kok-Togai highway and looted 1 aul in 22 km west of Kok-Togai. In the same area, the gang of Ospan Batyr stopped the motor convoy of Trust No. 5 Xinjiangolovo, and offered the escorting convoy to stop traffic along this route, warning that otherwise the cars would be fired.

On September 3, the same year, at 15 o'clock the gang of Ospan Batyr occupies the village Kok-Togai and pursues a detachment of national parts of Xinjiang, which retreated to the mountains northward of Kok-Togai. Ospan Batyr did not touch the base of the expedition of Trust No. 5 "Xinjiangolovo", guarded by our maneuvering group. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR instructed the chief of the group to strongly guard and defend the base of the expedition in Kok-Togai and not to interfere in the military actions of Ospan Batyr with the national units"⁹.

Before the capture of Shar-Sume the Soviet units deployed in Xinjiang were ordered not to interfere in the military actions of Ospan Batyr with national units. Further development of events, which led to the loss of control over the district, undoubtedly caused a change in the position of the Soviet leadership regarding Ospan Batyr. There is evidence that in addition to parts of the national army, which arrived from the Tarbagatay district, Soviet troops also took part in the operation to free the district from bandits.

The American Consul in Urumqi Paxton reported in the telegram dated October 23, which was sent to the US Secretary of State that according to data received from Kazakhs and confirmed by Chinese intelligence, on October 16 about 100 trucks with 3,000 armed people escorted by 6 tanks entered the northern part of Altai District. While not claiming that Soviet troops were introduced into the district, Paxton nonetheless noted that "No any other forces but Russia can be the source of supplying the Ili troops with military equipment, for example, tanks that cannot be attributed to technology captured by the Chinese army during the uprising, since China did not have any military equipment there"¹⁰. Meanwhile, General Sun Xiliang, who in contrast to cautious

Paxton called things by their proper names, bluntly telling the American diplomat that the Red Army troops had invaded this district in order to drive out the detachments of the Kazakhs of Ospan Batyr and return control to the districts, where tungsten mines already operated or were being built¹¹.

The rout and banishment of the Ospan Batyr detachments from Altai District, as well as the failure of the rebellion raised by Kalibek in Savan district of Tarbagatay Okrug, showed that the methods of power confrontation with the liberated districts, which the provincial government began to resort to again, had no further prospects. The measures taken by the Soviet Union – both open, through diplomatic channels, and carefully concealed, of a military nature – also served as the deterrent. The Chinese authorities in Xinjiang, and above all the command of the Kuomintang forces stationed here, seriously feared that the Soviet Union would undertake the seizure of the province, using for this purpose the parts of the national army of the three districts and the troops of the Mongolian People's Republic. According to General Sun Silyan, such an operation, conducted under the leadership and with the help of Russia, would lead to a rapid rout of the Chinese army in the province¹².

It is quite understandable that in this atmosphere the relations between the Soviet Union and Xinjiang continued to deteriorate. The provincial and district societies of Soviet-Chinese cultural ties had practically ceased to function. The repressions unleashed by the provincial authorities throughout the whole of Xinjiang first of all hit at those who collaborated with Soviet organizations and institutions, criticized the anti-Sovietism of the government, and called for the restoration of close friendly relations with the USSR.

The report on the work of the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries in Xinjiang for 1948 contained the following information: "Due to the difficult internal situation - arrests of members of the community, and translators of the publishing department, the Chinese-Soviet cultural community in Urumqi had to reorganize its work, which basically was reduced to the publication of the magazine *Urnek* and exposure exhibitions in the club of the society"¹³. Further, the author of the report notified his leadership that the Consul General of the USSR in Kashgar, Comrade Bikmurzin, declared that it was absolutely impossible to carry out any work to familiarize the local population with the life of the Soviet people in connection with the complex political situation in this district. He also said that "the Provincial Government arrests everyone

who has at least an old issue of the magazine *Kazakh-Eli* or a Soviet newspaper issue." In this regard, the Consul General proposed "... before the situation changes ... to stop all sending of literature, except newspapers and magazines, which are used by the consulate employees when working with the local population. All the materials of the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries are in the Consulate General and cannot be used"¹⁴.

The analytical report *On the Situation in Xinjiang*, prepared for the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Vyshinsky by the USSR Consulate General in Urumqi, stated: "The oppression of Soviet citizens in Xinjiang began.¹⁵ As a result of repression by the Chinese authorities, many Soviet citizens of Kashgar flee to the USSR. More than 20 compatriots were arrested by the Chinese while attempting to flee to the USSR and are held in a Kashgar military prison. There were numerous facts of oppression of Soviet citizens in Urumqi district. The Chinese began to raise all possible difficulties to the Consulate General of the USSR in Kashgar in obtaining food. Under the pressure of military authorities, the employees of the Consulate General from the local population began to refuse to work in the Consulate General"¹⁶.

The degree of frank hostility and fear on the part of the provincial leaders towards the Soviet Union was so high that it sometimes forced them to refuse to the Soviet side even in those requests that were beneficial primarily to the Chinese themselves. Thus, in June 1948, the Soviet government appealed to the authorities of Xinjiang to allow the passing to the provincial territory and the assistance in the work of an aerochemical expedition for locust control. Despite the fact that the locusts inflicted great damage not only on the territory of the Soviet Central Asian Republics, but also on the agriculture of Xinjiang itself, the provincial government flatly refused to admit Soviet aircraft and pilots to its territory, agreeing to accept only entomologists and chauffeurs with cars. However, the struggle with locusts without aircraft in the vast expanses of Xinjiang was impossible. In connection with this, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR Vyshinsky informed the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR Malenkov: "Since the USSR Ministry of Agriculture considers it impossible to send an expedition without planes, the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not object to cancelling the sending of anti-locust expedition".

Meanwhile, the successes of the Communist Party of China and its forces in the struggle against the Kuomintang government became even

more tangible. After the failure of the talks between the CPC and the Kuomintang in 1947 and the beginning of a new stage of the civil war, the situation of the forces headed by Chiang Kai-shek deteriorated so rapidly and irreversibly that even the generous and comprehensive assistance of the United States of America could not save them. During the first half of 1948, the Kuomintang troops suffered several major defeats, which led to the loss of control over a large part of the country. In the areas that remained under the control of the Kuomintang, discontent was growing, and the desertion from the army assumed a mass character. The population of the provinces of Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, Yong'an rebelled against conscription, and supplemented the partisan detachments. The change in the political situation in China began to affect the events in Xinjiang.

The growing mass discontent of the Xinjiang population by the actions of Xinjiang government, led by Masoud Sabri, caused even greater repression as a response from its side. As already noted, the provincial authorities placed anti-Sovietism at the center of the fight against dissent. Proceeding from the premise "All Evil is from Russia", in the summer of 1948 in Urumqi, under the protectorate of the provincial government, the so-called "Committee for the Struggle against the Soviet Union, the CCP and the Revolution of the Three Districts" was created. Fighting detachments were formed under the committee rule. Ospan Batyr was commissioned to command these detachments, and they themselves were staffed mainly by Kazakh nationalists¹⁷. The Committee immediately launched an active campaign against the opposition, for which it was actually organized.

The continuous mass repressions and the continuing deterioration of the material conditions of the population, which led to general impoverishment, had already caused a great flow of refugees since the second half of 1947, which turned in search of a better life on the territory of the neighboring Soviet republics. Reports of crossings of the Soviet-Chinese border in Central Asia by refugees from Xinjiang came to Moscow almost every day. So, on July 24, 1947 Molotov and Beria received an operative certificate signed by the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR Serov informing them that "... on July 22, the border guard of the Turugart outpost (112 km southwest of Naryn Mountain, the Kirghiz USSR) detained the head of the Tuyun Police Station in Xinjiang, Sabithodzhaev, while he, accompanied by the squad leader and four soldiers of this post, his wife and two children (9 people altogether), was

trying to transfer from Xinjiang to the USSR. All the detainees are Uyghurs and Kyrgyz by nationality. Sabithodzhaev showed that the Chinese authorities in southern Xinjiang have recently been repressing Muslims who are loyal to the national liberation movement of the peoples of Xinjiang. Uyghurs are suspended from leading posts and the Chinese are appointed in their place. Sabirkhodzhaev decided to go to the USSR together with five soldiers for fear of being arrested"¹⁸.

In connection with the large number of refugees from Xinjiang, the Minister of the Interior of the USSR, Kruglov, prepared a special memorandum to the Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, V.M. Molotov, in which he informed him that "recently there have been more cases of people crossing the border with Xinjiang in search for better living conditions. ... According to the testimony of the detainees, the reasons that prompted them to transfer to the USSR are: the severe economic situation in Xinjiang, unemployment, especially among the youth, high prices for food and industrial goods, and the desire of youth to study in the USSR. ... In accordance with the decision of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) of May 7, 1943 (according to Xinjiang) the detainees are transferred to the MSS (Ministry for State Security) for further resettlement in the rear areas of the Kazakh SSR"¹⁹.

Along with emigration to the Soviet Union, there was a significant influx of people from the inner regions of Xinjiang into the liberated districts. This was due to the fact that the economic situation here was somewhat better than in the other seven districts of the province, and most importantly there was no permanent danger of being arrested, humiliated or simply looted by Kuomintang soldiers. The provincial authorities tried to block the way to refugees, but their number did not decrease.

Since the beginning of 1948, the leadership of the liberated districts began to implement measures that were supposed to ensure, on the one hand, the security of the borders of the three districts on the part of Urumqi, and on the other, to incorporate the forces of the national liberation movement in the process of the general Chinese revolution, to make this movement one of its components.

In order to fulfill the first task, the leadership of the liberated districts took measures to strengthen the units of the national army, and to additionally equip them with a material and technical base. In the late 1948 - early 1949 the basic units of the troops were transferred to the borders with areas that were controlled by the Kuomintang, to deter

possible offensive by government troops.

Within the framework of the second task, the political leadership of the liberated districts decided to create a single powerful socio-political organization that would unite those representatives of the population of the three constituencies that were at least ready to accept the communist ideology. In the opinion of the founders of this organization, it was to play the role of an avant-garde in the process of joining the national liberation movement of the peoples of Xinjiang to the general Chinese revolution, symbolizing at the same time a certain independence of the goals and tasks this movement faced. Henceforward, this organization was to promote “the solution of the national question in Xinjiang within the framework of the Chinese people’s democratic state”²⁰.

With this purpose, at the initiative of a number of parties and organizations operating in the liberated regions, including the People’s Revolutionary Party, the Union of Revolutionary Youth, the Liberation Society, a conference of representatives of all democratic organizations, groups, associations and public figures of Xinjiang was held in Kulja in July 1948. At this conference, one of the most authoritative leaders of the rebel movement Akhmetzhan Kasimi delivered a great report “On the current situation in China and the tasks of democratic organizations and groups”, after which the conference participants decided to establish the Union for the Protection of Peace and Democracy in Xinjiang, declaring itself a constituent assembly of this Union. The Central Bureau of the Union was headed by Akhmetzhan Kasimi. The Bureau, consisting of 29 people included Abdukarim Abbasov, Iskhakbek Muminov, Dalelkhan Sugirbaev, Sagdulla Sayfullaev and others.

The Constituent Assembly adopted an appeal to the people, in which the goals and objectives of the newly created Union were set out. Immediately after this, was published the program of the Union for the Protection of Peace and Democracy in Xinjiang, consisting of 12 points. The implementation of this program might have been an unquestionable qualitative leap in the political, social and economic development of Xinjiang. The program included among others the following items:

- “1. To ensure genuine freedom of speech, press, assembly, organization and religion.
2. To grant all the peoples of Xinjiang, regardless of nationality, equal rights to hold any position in public institutions.
3. To realize in practice the principle of electing administrative

employees from the local nationality, who have won the confidence of the people.

4. To assist the government and monitor the administration's actions, to elect to the Advisory Council people who are trustworthy and create conditions for their life and work.
5. To give the right and create conditions for the people of Xinjiang to publish newspapers, magazines, textbooks and other literature in their native languages.
6. To increase the number of primary schools teaching in their native language. To establish schools for children from poor families, where they are provided with free of charge training, food and clothing. To create craft schools for training specialists for various branches of Xinjiang national economy; together with this, to open special institutions of higher education, to build theaters, cinema, and equip the province with radio.
7. Judicial proceedings and legal affairs in the province are conducted in the native languages of the peoples of Xinjiang. To strengthen the judiciary and make them independent of state executive bodies"²¹.

Soon enough, the Union really turned into a powerful political organization capable of solving the most serious tasks facing the peoples of Xinjiang. By the middle of 1949, its ranks numbered more than 50,000 people. By this time it had 3 district organizations, 27 county offices, a branch in military units and 755 local cells. The leaders of the Union carried out, in addition, persevering work to eradicate the ideas of pan-Islamism, Pan-Turkism, local nationalism among the population of the province, and tried to consolidate in the public consciousness the principles of internationalism, the necessity and the possibility of the peaceful existence and cooperation of the peoples of Xinjiang and the Han people within one state. It was for this very period that most of the public speeches and written articles of Akhmetzhan Kasimi were created, in which he put forward and upheld the policy of preserving Xinjiang as a part of New China with granting this multi-ethnic province the widest autonomy.

At the same time, the US Consul in Urumqi Paxton in his next message to the US Secretary of State said that he "... received information from two different sources that the dissident areas of Xinjiang are beginning to abandon the name "East Turkestan Republic" in favor of the former name "Xinjiang", change their flag (a white star and the crescent on a green

background) to standard Chinese one and even accompany official documents with duplicates in Chinese." Paxton also noted that, in his opinion, it is impossible to believe that the actions carried out by the Ili leaders "... could have been undertaken without the tacit consent or support of the USSR".²²

In the increasingly deteriorating political and military situation of Kuomintang, the most sensible and far-sighted figures of this party, realizing the inevitability of the coming changes, began to take measures to ensure that the change in the political system in the country would be as bloodless as possible. One of these politicians is undoubtedly one of the highest military and administrative leaders of Kuomintang China, the former chairman of the Xinjiang government, General Zhang Zhizhong, who at one time had done quite a lot to reconcile Kuomintang and the CCP and thereby avoid a civil war. Zhang Zhizhong enjoyed great authority not only in Kuomintang, but also among the leaders of the CCP: Mao Zedong, for example, called him his friend.

After leaving the post of chairman of the coalition government and taking up the post of head of the North-West headquarters of Chiang Kai-shek, Zhang Zhizhong, due to his new job duties, and proceeding from the current political situation, continued to closely monitor the situation in Xinjiang and, as far as possible, influence the developments there.

At the end of 1948, at Zhang Zhizhong's insistence, the Kuomintang government approved his order to recall Song Xiliang, one of the most reactionary Chinese generals in this province, a consistent and implacable enemy of the national liberation movement, from Xinjiang. General Tao Zhiyue was appointed the commander of the Chinese garrison in Urumqi, the post earlier occupied by Song Xiliang. He was a commander who advocated friendly relations with the Soviet Union and was negative about the civil war inside the country. A few days after arriving in the province, Tao Zhiyue took a step that significantly weakened the forces of pan-Islamists and pan-Turkists of Xinjiang. In particular, he abolished the order of his predecessor, according to which the forces of Ospan Batyr and his supporters were included in the Chinese regular army and were accordingly supplied with everything from food to weapons as well as other parts.

Commenting on his actions, he said that "... the order, according to which the Kazakhs were enlisted in the Chinese regular army, was misunderstood by his predecessor, General Sun. The Ili agreement ... gave

the local races the right to recruit their local armed formations. This did not mean that they should be part of the Chinese army. In this case, the weapon must be returned. As for the uniform, if Kazakhs really need such things, then they should get them from the provincial government"²³. In fact, Tao Zhiyue's order meant that the Pan-Islamists and Pan-Turkists could no longer count on the support of the Kuomintang army in the fight against the national liberation movement of the liberated districts.

Following the change of military leadership in Xinjiang, Zhang Zhizhong was able to convince the Nanking government and Chiang Kai-shek himself of the need to displace and replace Masud Sabri. On January 10, 1949, Masud, who in less than a year of his activity as chairman of the government had completely disorganized the internal political and economic situation in the province, was replaced by Burkhan Shahidi.

Burkhan Shahidi, a well-known and authoritative politician in Xinjiang who worked since the establishment of the coalition government as deputy chairman of the government, was the most successful and acceptable candidate in the circumstances. He was known and respected by the population of the province, his appointment to the post of chairman of the government suited most of the political elite of the province, he was fairly loyal to the leaders of the national liberation movement of Xinjiang; finally, this candidature suited the Soviet Union, because he was known to be a consistent supporter of close, friendly relations with the great northern neighbor, and, at the same time, came out for preserving Xinjiang in the composition of China with grant of autonomy to it. This was all the more important, because under Masud, with the growing influence of pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism, the penetration and strengthening of Pakistan's and Afghanistan's positions became noticeable in Xinjiang.

Paxton, in this connection, informed his leadership that the Pan-Islamic elements in Xinjiang were inclined to support closer relations with Pakistan and Afghanistan, which were considered there "as a counterweight to Chinese and Russian pressure". At the same time, Paxton assessed the attitude of the leaders of Pakistan and Afghanistan to the USSR as "mostly anti-Soviet, because they are afraid of this country". And if "The geographic and economic situation of Afghanistan compels it to maintain appropriate diplomatic relations with the USSR, then Pakistan has no diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union"²⁴. Thus, the removal of Masud played into the Soviet leadership's hand, for it relieved it, among other things, from the difficult-to-forecast problems in relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan in this region.

It should be noted that Zhang Zhizhong considered it necessary to inform the Soviet leadership about the planned change of the chairman of the government of Xinjiang. A report sent to the Foreign Ministry from the USSR Consulate General in Urumqi reported that "Before leaving for Nanjing, Zhang Zhi-chung told the Consul General of the USSR in Urumqi, Comrade Saveliev, that he was ready to eliminate Maksud from the post of chairman and appoint Burkhan, "who enjoys the trust of Kuldzhin, and at the same time maintains close contact with the Chinese"²⁵.

At the end of 1948, the situation of forces headed by Chiang Kai-shek became essentially critical. In a report of the US Embassy to the State Department on November 9, 1948, US diplomats considered it their duty to quite frankly tell their leaders that "... no military assistance, except for the actual use of US troops, will save a badly deteriorating situation (Kuomintang troops – *V. Barmin*)". Considering that the use of US troops was impossible, the authors of the report concluded that "... there is no such military measure that China or the United States could undertake in a timely manner to save martial law"²⁶.

The inevitability of defeat of the Kuomintang regime being more and more realized by the majority of politicians, both in China and abroad, put on the agenda the issue of the further fate of this huge country, the strategic course of those forces that would come to the leadership in this country. It was understandable that these questions were also of concern to the Soviet leadership. One of the problems among those to be resolved between the two states after the change of political power was Xinjiang and the fate of the national liberation movement of the peoples inhabiting it.

China's national liberation army, according to the plans of the CCP, was to liberate the province from Kuomintang troops only in 1950. However, the internal political situation in the province and the presence of strong support for the actions of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (CPLA), in case it entered the territory of Xinjiang, represented by the national army of the three liberated regions, made it possible to accelerate the implementation of military plans. At the same time, the CCP, before 1949, did not voice its attitude to the national liberation movement in Xinjiang and did not take any action to establish ties with it.

On the other hand, the leaders of the liberated districts, having expressed (not without obvious pressure from the USSR) the desire to contribute to the Chinese revolution, could not explain to the population what fate was in store for the people of Xinjiang if the Communists came

to power in China. At the party forums of the CPC and the All-China Congress of Soviets that took place in the 1920s and early 1940s, promising decisions were made on the national issue. Thus, in Article 14 of the Provisional Constitution of the Chinese Soviet Republic adopted in January 1934 at the Second All-China Congress of Soviets, it was written: "Soviet power in China proclaims the national freedom of all small peoples and national minorities in China, recognizes the right of self-determination of small peoples up to the state separation from China and the creation of their own states. For example, the Mongols, Hui people (*Muslims*) (*my italics – V.B.*), Tibetans, Miao, Li, Koreans, etc., have the full right to self-determination ..."²⁷. However, by the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s, the CCP began to exclude from its documents the principle of national self-determination, replacing it with the concept of regional-national autonomy²⁸. And although at the VIIth Congress of the CPC in April 1945, in his political report "On the Coalition Government", Mao Zedong reaffirmed that after the victory of the revolution all national minorities would be granted the right to self-determination, and the state in its constitution would be federal²⁹. The leaders of the CCP, including Mao Zedong himself, most likely did little to realize the depth and importance of problems related to the national question, and considered the decisions made in this area as declarative rather than as a guide to action. In this sense, their positions seemed even more unsteady than those of Kuomintang. They also had the vaguest idea about the events in Xinjiang, since they did not have a stable connection with the province and the liberated districts.

In early 1949, Chiang Kai-shek probably made the last attempt to find a peaceful solution to the civil confrontation in China. On January 8, 1949, the Chinese leadership sent notes to the United States of America, Britain, France and the Soviet Union asking them to mediate in the peace negotiations between the government and the Chinese Communist Party. However, in its reply to this note, which was handed to the Chinese Ambassador Fu Binchan on January 18, 1949 the Soviet government, referring to its "unchanging principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries," refused to act as an intermediary³⁰. Following the USSR, other states also refused mediation in the negotiations.

Refusing even the minimal diplomatic assistance to Chiang Kai-shek, the Soviet government concentrated its efforts on expanding and deepening ties with the CCP, which was no doubt considered in Moscow as the guiding force of new China. After the Communists came to power in this

country in the beginning of 1949 one of the influential members of the Soviet government, A.I. Mikoyan, flew to meet with the leaders of the CCP to discuss the accumulated problems and prospects for cooperation between the Soviet Union and China. Mikoyan's mission, held from January 30 to February 8, 1949 was strictly confidential and the content of the talks that were held in its course has become known relatively recently. Among the issues discussed were also problems related to the situation in Xinjiang.

In his report on the trip, Mikoyan noted the following: "Mao Zedong had suspicions about our intentions in Xinjiang. He said that in the Ili district of Xinjiang there is an independence movement that does not subordinate to the Urumqi government and that there is a Communist party there. He said that when he met Bai Chunxi (high-ranking Kuomintang figure – V.B.) in Chongqing in 1945, the latter said that in Ili district the local insurgents had Soviet artillery, tanks and airplanes. I told him clearly that we do not stand for the movement of independence of Xinjiang nationalities and, moreover, do not have any claims to the Xinjiang territory, believing that Xinjiang is and must be part of China"³¹. In a telegram to Stalin dated February 4, 1949, Mikoyan announced that he had handed over to Mao Zedong the recommendations of the Soviet leadership regarding the national policy of the future government of China. In particular, he wrote: "I told Mao Zedong that our Central Committee does not advise the Chinese Communist Party to swing the national question too much by granting independence to national minorities and thereby reducing the territory of the Chinese state in connection with Chinese Communists coming to power. National minorities should be given autonomy, but not independence. Mao Zedong was delighted with this advice; his face expressed it quite clearly that he was not going to give independence to anyone whatever"³².

After clarifying the principled positions of the parties regarding the future fate of Xinjiang, it became much easier to determine tactical actions aimed at its liberation from control of Kuomintang government.

In July 1949, a delegation led by Liu Shaoqi, a member of the Politburo of the CPC Central Committee, arrived in Moscow. During the negotiations of the parties, which concerned state-building in China, the Soviet leaders raised the issue of Xinjiang. The members of the Chinese delegation were familiarized with the situation in this province, after which they were asked to force the CPLA's military operations aimed at liberating the province. The need for vigorous action in this direction was determined,

in the opinion of the Soviet side, by the danger that "... as the Communist Party of China liberates the entire country, the Americans will try to induce five well-known generals of Ma's operating in Northwestern China, to withdraw their troops to Xinjiang and create there an "Islamic state", opposing it to the People's Republic of China and the Communist Party of China"³³.

All the above-mentioned subjects connected with the negotiations between the leadership of the USSR and the CCP testify, among other things, that the Soviet Union not only did not claim Xinjiang, as many Western researchers try to prove, but on the contrary, defended national interests of China in this respect, promoting the desire of its leaders to preserve the territorial integrity of the country.

As a result of Moscow talks between the delegation of the CCP and representatives of the government of the USSR, it was decided to immediately send a representative of the CPC to Xinjiang to contact the national liberation movement and the progressive forces operating in the province. A group of Chinese communists who left for Xinjiang directly from Moscow on August 9 was led by a member of the delegation of the CPC Central Committee at the talks, Dan Liqun. The group also included three assistants of Dan Liqun and a radio operator with a walkie-talkie³⁴.

On August 15, 1949, the group arrived in Kulja, after which, by establishing a radio link with Beijing, Moscow and the headquarters of the first CPLA field army under the command of Peng Dehuai, began negotiations with the leaders of the national liberation movement. During these talks, it was possible to coordinate not only the issues of interaction of the national liberation movement with the CPC and the national army of the three districts with the CPLA units in the liberation of Xinjiang from the Kuomintang troops, but also to resolve the issue of staffing the delegation for the first plenary session of the People's Political Consultative Council of China. This session was to begin its work in September 1949.

The delegation represented the interests of the whole province, therefore, in addition to the head of the delegation Akhmetzhan Kasimi, the generals Iskhak Bek and Dalel Khan, and Abdukarim Abbasov, a representative from the Urumqi district, the executive secretary of the Society of Soviet-Chinese Friendship, the Chinese Luo Zhi was included. After receiving an official invitation signed by Mao Zedong to arrive at the session, the delegation flew from Kulja to Beijing on August 22, on an airplane specially designated for this purpose by the Soviet government. However, on August 27, in Irkutsk region, the plane on which the

delegation was flying, for an unexplained reason so far, crashed, and, to the enormous misfortune of the entire population of Xinjiang, all those on board perished. Somewhat later, in connection with the tragic death of the first delegation, a new delegation led by Sayfutdin Azizov was formed, which took part in the work of the NPCC session.

Meanwhile, the events in Xinjiang continued to develop rapidly. Deng Liqun, after agreeing the main issues with the leadership of the liberated districts, moved to Urumqi. Arriving in the capital of the district, the messenger was not only favorably received by the chairman of the provincial government, Burkhan Shahidi, but, moreover, was settled in the house of Burkhan himself from where he implemented radio communications with Beijing, the PLA troops and Moscow.

It should be noted that Burkhan's activity as chairman of the provincial government left few doubts about his sympathies and antipathies. The reports of the Consulate General of the USSR in Urumqi quite unambiguously said that "Burkhan is oriented in its policy towards the USSR ..." ³⁵. Shortly after Burkhan came to power, the tension between the Soviet Union and Xinjiang began to subside. In this regard, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR considered it even possible to turn to Deputy Chairman of Council of Ministers Beria with a proposal to withdraw from Xinjiang border troops, guarding the enterprises of Trust No. 5 of the Ministry of Non-Ferrous Metallurgy, and replace them with militarized protection operating in the structure of the ministry itself. To tell the truth, the Ministry of Non-Ferrous Metallurgy itself opposed this proposal with sharp objections ³⁶.

Soviet diplomats noted that tension in the relationship between government forces and the liberated districts was somewhat decreasing. In an analytical note sent to Vyshinsky, it was reported that, although "the pressure of the Chinese on the Muslim population is not weakening, however, the situation is not such that could result in the armed clash between the Chinese and Muslims" ³⁷. Burkhan Shahidi writes in his memoirs that on returning in February 1949 from Lanzhou, immediately after his confirmation as chairman of the provincial government, he planned "... a peaceful change of power in the provinces and unification with the Communists" ³⁸.

The attitude of the Soviet side towards the elimination of Masud and the appointment of Burkhan Shahidi in his place, to a certain extent, characterizes the fact that it was at this time that the provincial government received an answer to proposals on restoring the economic

cooperation of the USSR with Xinjiang, suggested by Zhang Zhizhong on November 4, 1946. In a reply given by the Consul General of the USSR in Urumqi to the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Xinjiang on January 24, 1949, the Soviet side expressed its readiness to begin negotiations on the restoration of trade and economic cooperation³⁹. Burhan Shahidi, having discussed the proposal of the USSR with Zhang Zhizhong, instructed the interested departments in their government to draft a resolution on cooperation in the field of trade, culture and health, and on July 15, 1949 such a project was ready.

In the draft, consisting of 8 points, the Chinese side proposed to conclude an equal agreement for a period of 3 years. The points of the agreement stipulated the conditions for the establishment and location of trade missions, the simplification of border formalities, the licensing of goods, etc. However, the project put forward by the Soviet side was not only more radical in content, but also clearly infringed the interests of Xinjiang. The treaty was proposed to be concluded immediately for the period of 50 years; there were stipulated more favorable conditions for the exploration, extraction and exportation of minerals to the USSR. Due to the undisguised divergence of opinions about the terms of the agreement to be negotiated, and also due to sharp changes in the domestic political situation in China in general and in Xinjiang in particular, the agreement was never signed before the fall of the Kuomintang government and the creation of the People's Republic of China⁴⁰.

By the second half of 1949, many facts of the internal political life of the province began to testify that not only Burkhan, but also a large part of the provincial leadership, including the military, was inclined to break off relations with the government of Chiang Kai-shek and start cooperation with the CCP. These sentiments were hardly concealed by the general secretary of the provincial government Liu Minchun, the mayor of Urumqi Qu Yi and some other governmental officials⁴¹. This became especially evident after the first CPLA army occupied Lanzhou in the second half of August, having wiped out General Ma Bufan's military group. When, shortly after the capture of Lanzhou, the first corps of this army under the command of Wang Zheng entered Qinghai and it became clear that the danger of the invasion of Xinjiang by the troops of General Ma had been completely eliminated, the anti-Kuomintang sentiments in the provincial government became even more intense.

However, until the second half of September, Xinjiang formally remained under the control of the Nanking government. The CPLA troops

were thousands of kilometers of hard-to-conquer space from Urumqi, and the national parts of the liberated areas did not have enough facilities to defeat the Kuomintang armies in Xinjiang. The anti-communist figures in the provincial government and the command of the Kuomintang troops, numbering about 100,000 people, still represented quite a serious force. Under these conditions, there was only one acceptable solution to the problem: the search for cooperation with those forces in the Kuomintang camp, which were ready to make contact with the representatives of the CCP in order to avoid bloodshed and civil strife and, if not to shift to the side of the new government, then at least, not to resist it.

According to the memoirs of Dan Liqun, the search for such contacts and a possible compromise with the Kuomintang people was rather problematic because of the inconsistency of the positions of Soviet diplomats working in the consulates of Urumqi and Kulja. If the consulate of Urumqi considered it possible to pay the Kuomintang generals and give them the opportunity to leave the provincial territory, provided that they would transfer all military power to General Tao Zhiyue, then the employees of the consulate in Kulja were against such an option. They believed that the escaped generals, just as the White Guards who had left Russia, would necessarily resume their struggle against the democratic government of China in the future⁴². Nevertheless, in the end, the point of view of the diplomats of the Consulate General of the USSR in Urumqi won, and the plan developed was approved by the Soviet leadership.

As a result of the work carried out by the second half of September it became clear that the absolute majority of opponents of the new government in China would not take any active measures to suppress the open action of the forces supporting the authority in Xinjiang. Under the circumstances, on September 25, 1949, General Tao Zhiyue announced that he and the troops under his command were breaking with the government of Chiang Kai-Shek and moving to the side of the new government headed by the CCP. On September 26, Burhan Shahidi made a similar statement on behalf of the government of Xinjiang. The next day, Tao Zhiyue and Burhan Shahidi received congratulatory telegrams from Mao Zedong and Zhu De.

Thus, in Xinjiang, a peaceful revolution took place, as a result of which the largest territorial province of China passed under the control of the new government. A few days after these events, the CPC Central Committee appealed to the Soviet leadership to assist in the transfer of parts of the CPLA from Qinghai to Xinjiang. The USSR complied with

this request. Soviet transport planes were sent to the areas where the units of the CPLA were deployed, which transferred these units to the already liberated province. In this province, Soviet vehicles, fuel and weapons from arsenals located in the liberated districts were transferred to these units⁴³. On October 20, the CPLA's armored regiment entered Urumqi, and a few days later all the major cities and strategic points of the province were taken under the control of the army.

On December 17, 1949, the Xinjiang Military District and a new government of Xinjiang was formed, which was again headed by Burhan Shahidi. The power of the new government spread to the whole of Xinjiang, in connection with which the three liberated districts ceased to exist as a separate administrative region with an autonomous national economic complex. The national army was transformed into the 5th Corps of the People's Liberation Army of China. The life of Xinjiang entered its new stage.

Thus, the events of 1948-1949 in Xinjiang, culminating in a "peaceful coup" and the transition of the province, like the whole country, under the leadership of the new government, once again confirm that the policy of the Soviet Union with respect to this region was by no means pursuing its goal of seizing it or creation of an independent state on its territory.

There is no doubt that the actions of the Soviet leadership with regard to Xinjiang were aimed at protecting the state interests of their country, for obtaining maximum economic and political benefits from cooperation with this province. It is also quite obvious that at the same time such actions quite often did not comply with the norms of international law. But even in these periods, the Soviet Union, in its relations with China, regardless of what political forces were in the leadership of this country, did not set itself as a goal a violation of its territorial integrity. A striking testimony to this is the position held by the Soviet government towards Xinjiang during the period of 1948-1949.

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UYGHURS IN SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA AND THEIR TRANSFORMATION DURING PERESTROIKA

ABLET KAMALOV

INTRODUCTION

Changes in the social life of the Soviet people during the *perestroika* period concerned its various aspects, ethnic relations being one of the most significant. Transformation of ethnic relations in the Soviet Union included changes in interactions between the center in Moscow and union republics based on the execution of the principle of self-governance. Contradicting interests of ethnic groups exposed by political liberalisation resulted in a series of ethnic conflicts, which included Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict in Karabakh, *pogroms* (slaughter) of Meshketin Turks in Uzbekistan, the Uzbek-Kyrgyz conflict in Osh, southern Kyrgyzstan. Youth unrest in Almaty, a capital city of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic, in 1986 was a political action with ethnic overtone: young Kazakhs protested against the replacement of the First Secretary of the Communist party of Kazakh SSR, a Kazakh D.Kunayev by an ethnic Russian G.Kolbin.

Public debates of the effectiveness of the Soviet national policy concerned not only titular nationalities of Central Asian Republics, but all ethnic groups residing there as well. Mobilization of ethnic groups for social and political changes was an effective way of the implementation of top-down reforms during the *perestroika* period. Therefore, looking at the history of transformation of ethnic minorities during *perestroika* period will allow avoiding construction of one-sided picture of social changes and the ethnic policy of the Soviet Union in the republics and address another dimension of social processes connected with ethnic diversity of the republics. This article examines the transformation in the life of Uyghur communities of Central Asia during the *perestroika* period with special

emphasis on the Uyghurs of Kazakhstan, largest community of the Turkic people, whose historical homeland is Eastern Turkestan [present Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Republic (XUAR) of People's Republic of China]. The study is based mainly on discourse and content analysis of periodicals and other writings in the Uyghur language of the *perestroika* period published in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian republics.

UYGHUR COMMUNITIES IN SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA

The study of a certain ethnic group of Central Asia cannot pretend to depict the diversity of processes of ethnic development in the region. Ethnic minorities of Soviet Central Asian Republics vary in their history of formation, nature of migration towards the region, relations with homeland and specific policy of the Soviet government towards them. Specific traits of development of the Uyghur communities in Soviet Central Asian Republics were connected with international factor, namely relations with China, western province of which – Xinjiang, has been populated mainly by the Uyghurs. Formation of the Uyghur communities in Central Asian Republics goes back to its Russian imperial period of history, when at the end of the 19th century as a result of political cataclysms in Xinjiang, part of Uyghur population of the province (Eastern Turks) had to flee to the Russian Semirech'ye oblast from the neighboring Ili region. Migration of the population of southern Xinjiang (Kashgaria) to the Ferghana Valley has a longer history given frequent movement of people to and from Kashgaria from earliest times, but most recent biggest migration happened after the collapse of the Yaqub Bek's state and restoration of the Qing Empire's rule in southern Xinjiang in 1877.¹

Migration across Soviet-Chinese borders in the 20th century included movement of the Uyghurs in both directions during the early Soviet time and in the period of collectivization especially in 1931, and finally in the early period of deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations in 1950-1960s. The latter was the largest wave of the Uyghurs, which played an important role in the development of Soviet Uyghurs. On the one hand, it led to emergence of two local groups of Soviet Uyghurs: *yarlik* (locals) and *khytayliq* (those from China). These two groups differed from each other in various aspects, including level of mastering the native language, keeping traditional elements of culture, links with historical homeland, loyalty to Soviet state etc. During almost three decades of 'iron curtains' separating the Soviet Union from China, new migrants were adapting to the Soviet

lifestyle and gradual levelling of differences between the two groups. However, with the commencement of *perestroika* period, these differences were still strong enough to be markers of differing priorities and strategic approaches to the further development of the Uyghur ethnicity in Soviet Central Asia. In order to understand these priorities we need to look at the Soviet policy towards the Uyghurs and their place in overall structure of the Soviet population.

Most anthropological studies on Uyghurs usually portray them as a sample of Soviet constructed nationality. Common place in these studies is an acceptance of the name Uyghur at the conference of the representatives of Eastern Turkistanian laborers in Tashkent in 1921. This is very simplistic view of a complex process of introduction of national discourse among Central Asian peoples and dissemination of national idea by the intellectuals of various ethnic groups in the realms of the Russian empire and nation-building policy of the Soviet power in the 1920s. For us it is more important to acknowledge that the Soviet government did not recognize Uyghurs as indigenous people of Russian Central Asia and refused to provide them with any form of autonomy. However non-indigeneness of the Uyghurs was not the main reason, since autonomy was given to Volga Germans (1918-1941), much more serious reason was the support provided by the Taranchi Uyghurs to anti-Soviet Cossack movement in 1918.² The Uyghur autonomy issue was raised later in connection with the necessity to support the Eastern Turkistan Republic (ETR), a pro-Soviet political regime set up on the territory of three northwestern districts of Xinjiang (Ili, Tarbaghatay, Altay) in 1944-1949. In 1947, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan Shayakhmetov submitted a report, initiating the establishment of Uyghur autonomy in south-eastern Kazakhstan, where the Uyghur population lived compactly with the aim to use it for supporting ETR. That plan was never implemented due to the Communist take-over in China and establishment of PRC in 1949.

Today some Uyghur intellectuals accuse the Soviets of unequal treatment of the Uyghur minority.³ While one may not reject such statements in terms of human rights violations in the former Soviet Union, however, it should be noted that these exaggerate the situation and create negative impression of the Uyghurs as oppressed people in the Soviet Union. Such statements seem to show political reverence towards present Kazakhstan authorities. In fact, Uyghurs belong to those ethnic minorities whose life in the former Soviet Union was much better than it is in post-

Soviet independent states. I have already written elsewhere that the Soviets supported the development of language and culture of the Soviet Uyghurs. As a result of governmental support, the Soviet Uyghurs had actual cultural autonomy in Kazakhstan, where they had developed infrastructure of educational and cultural institutions. Uyghurs were the only non-titular ethnic minority of Kazakhstan who had a secondary education system in their own language. Cultural development of the Uyghurs was carried out in accordance with the Soviet national policy, but at the same time they were supported with the aim to demonstrate privileges of the Soviet national policy that allowed Uyghurs achieving great successes in contrast to backwardness of their brethren in neighboring Xinjiang. Achievements and successes of the Soviet Uyghurs acquired special importance as a propaganda tool in ideological war during the Sino-Soviet rivalry in the 1960-1980s.

Most Uyghur educational and cultural institutions were concentrated in Kazakhstan, where, in accordance with the census of 1989, Uyghur population made up 185,000. Number of Uyghurs in other republics comprised 30,000 in Kyrgyzstan, 30,000 – in Uzbekistan, 11,000 – in Turkmenistan. In Kazakhstan they densely populated south-eastern region of the republic, namely Alma-Ata and Tadikurgan oblasts (now both comprise Almaty oblast). Network of Uyghur educational and cultural institutions in Kazakhstan included secondary schools, radio and TV broadcasting, two inter-republican newspapers in Cyrillic (*Kommunizm tugh'i*) and Arabic (*Yengi hayal*), local newspapers published at places with Uyghur population, Uyghur theatre of musical comedy, Uyghur departments in biggest Publishing houses (*Mektep, Kazakhstan, Nauka*), Section of Uyghur studies in Academy of Sciences of Kazakh SSR, Uyghur sections in the Scientific-Research institute of raising qualification, in the Union of Writers of Kazakhstan, Chair of Uyghur philology at Almaty Pedagogical institute (since 1980), Uyghur foreign broadcasting program and Uyghur ensemble of people songs under the Committee of Radio Broadcasting. In early 1980s due to growing interest in China, special TV program in Uyghur was started in the new channel *Alatau*, which broadcasted one hour per day. This channel broadcasted to Almaty and Taldykurgan oblasts neighboring Xinjiang.

In Soviet Central Asia Uyghur press, literature, textbooks propagated a sense of uniqueness of Uyghurs and their successes and cultural achievements in comparison with their Xinjiang brethren, thus shaping the Soviet identity. Pride for 'Soviet Uyghurs' was a key idea of such books

as *Yangliwashtin tugulcan Uycur hālqi* (Uyghur people revived, 1968, 1976) by Mashur Roziyev⁴, *Rastsvet kulturni uygurskogo naroda* (Blossoming of culture of Uyghur people, 1967) by Murat Khamrayev⁵, which testifies that only Soviet Union created conditions for ‘revival and blossoming’ of the Uyghurs. Soviet identity was especially strong among the *yarlik* Uyghurs, to which major part of Uyghur intellectuals of the 1980s belonged.

MOBILIZATION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES DURING THE PERESTROIKA PERIOD

Cultural Centers

During the *perestroika* period, Soviet Uyghurs underwent thorough changes some of which were common for all Soviet peoples, including ethnic minorities, while others were specific for them only. Commonalities concerned liberalization of political life, which meant liberalization for ethnic minorities in the field of cultural development and people’s involvement in public activities.

Like other ethnic groups, Uyghurs were allowed to establish their own public organizations – *cultural centers*. These included setting up of Alma-Ata Uyghur cultural center and similar ones in the town of Panfilov (present Zharkent), in Kaskelen and Talgar districts of Alma-Ata oblast in 1989. Later similar Uyghur cultural centers were set up in all areas where Uyghurs lived compactly in Alma-Ata, Zhambyl and Southern-Kazakhstan. Uyghur cultural centers were opened in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan as well.

Very important stimulus for ethnic minorities’ organizations was provided in the ‘Law on languages of Kazakh SSR’ on 22 September 1989, which for the first time declared the new status of the Kazakh language as a state language, while Russian was declared to be a language of international relations. At the same time, this Law announced freedom of use of other languages of multi-ethnic Kazakhstan locally, at places where ethnic groups lived compactly and comprised majority. Freedom in using languages other than Kazakh and Russian has never been put in practice, nevertheless it gave stimulus to activities aimed at improvement of the position of ethnic minorities’ languages providing them with legislative basis.

These centers organized activities in educational and cultural spheres. They concentrated their efforts on preserving and developing the Uyghur

language: although a network of Uyghur language schools operated in Kazakhstan, however in most neighborhoods where the Uyghurs did not comprise majority, their children attended mostly Russian schools. This concern about losing native language and being acculturated in other linguistic environment was strong mainly in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Cultural centers were in a position to negotiate the necessity of opening groups of Uyghur language instruction with local authorities. As a result, such groups were opened at many places; however, they could not survive later not only due to the lack of teaching staff and textbooks in Uyghur, but also due to the collapse of the USSR and emergence of new nation-states, which had another educational and cultural agenda. Initial stage of development of Uyghur cultural organizations in Central Asian Republics was accomplished by mid-1991 with the establishment of Republican Uyghur cultural centers in almost all Central Asian Republics – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan (we do not have information on Turkmenistan, where small Uyghur community lived in Bairam-Alia area). This was possible only after announcing the Law “On public associations in Kazakh SSR” on 27 July 1991, approved by the Supreme Soviet of Kazakh SSR just on the eve of the Soviet breakup. After the collapse of the USSR, cooperation between Uyghur cultural organizations became urgent. Therefore, on 26 January 1992 the Inter-Republican Association of the Uyghurs was established with headquarter in Almaty.

Repertoire of cultural activities, held by the centers, reflected liberalization of Soviet society, implementation of freedom of word and press: alongside with ‘traditional’ Soviet holidays, the centers celebrated holidays and events banned before by authorities, such as celebration of a holiday *nauruz*, religious feasts etc. Main form of activities held by the Uyghur cultural centers was public celebration of Days of Uyghur culture in Uyghur neighborhoods and villages, which very often diverted attention of the people from more urgent social problems. Warning against such pompous activities Uyghur scholar Anvar Khadjiev wrote in 1991: “When the republic undergoes unprecedented process of national self-consciousness, when all nationalities of our country raise serious national problems and try to resolve them, our people should not miss opportunities offered by history. Therefore, ceasing words and verses, wrapping up peoples with net of apathy... and inaction is crucial issue”.⁶ Serious national problems of the Uyghurs included development of Uyghur languages and Uyghur schools, political representation in local

administrative bodies, improving level of education by providing the youth with access to education etc.

Revising historical past: Uyghurs of Central Asia and Xinjiang

Widening the policy of *glasnost*, which was raised by M.S. Gorbachev at the XXVII Congress of CPSU (March-February 1986), mass media in the Uyghur language got more freedom in presenting information and thematic selection. The Uyghur newspapers *Kommunism tughri* and *Yengi hayat* started publishing materials on the themes, which were before either prohibited or not sounded at all. These included not only Stalin's repressions of the 1930s, but also a dramatic mass massacre of the Taranchi Uyghurs of Semirech'ye in 1918 by Bolsheviks. Despite the fact that there were still eyewitnesses of the mass massacre in late Soviet period, the tragedy called by Uyghurs *Atu päjiüsi* (tragedy of shooting) was concealed by the Soviet historiography or at least not ascribed to Bolsheviks, but to counter-revolutionaries. Discussion of the tragic events in periodicals was followed by erection of a commemorative monument dedicated to the victims of the Red terror in the village Lavar located between Almaty and Chilik village. Revision of the Soviet past concerned the role of Uyghur communist leaders of Semirech'ye such as Abdulla Rozibakiev, Ismail Tairov, Burkhan Kassimov and others who were repressed in the 1930s. In the atmosphere of rehabilitation of victims of repression carried out under the leadership of the Communist government, during the *perestroika* period the local government supported publication of such works on Uyghur communists. For the first time, biography and publications of Abdulla Rozibakiev were published in the book *Uycur hälqining munävvär pärzändi* (Glorious son of the Uyghur people) in 1987.⁷ Of great interest was a volume of papers delivered to the Conference of Soviet Uyghurs held in Almaty in 1937, materials of which were submitted for publication, but was not allowed because most authors were accused and announced to be 'people's enemies'. It is quite interesting that the title of the volume – *Yanglivashtin tugulcan Uycur hälqi* (Uyghur people revival) was later borrowed by Mashur Ruziev for his book published in 1967. The materials of the conference included those devoted to language, history and education, for example, A. Abdulin's paper on the events of 1916, S. Aspandiyarov's discussion of Uyghur history etc.⁸ Publication of some stories on Uyghur intellectuals repressed during the Stalin's purges was continued in the first years after independence. For example, biography and works of Burkhan Kassimov were published in the form of brochure in 1992.⁹

While discussion of the history of Central Asian Uyghurs was very important for the local group of the Uyghurs, immigrants of the 1950-1960s were concerned on the recent history of Eastern Turkestan and the role of the Soviet Union in the repression of Uyghurs in their homeland and suppression of national movement by the Soviet military assistance in the 1930s, as well as Soviet involvement in setting up of the Eastern Turkestan Republic in three districts of Xinjiang. Revision of the Soviet-Chinese relations in Xinjiang was launched for the first time with the publication of two articles in central academic journal *Problemi Dalnego Vostoka* (Issues of Far East) by Yu.N. Gradov 'Caravan on the pass' (*Karavan na perevale*, #2-4, 1990) and by Ya. Gritsenko 'What was that? (Towards events in Xinjiang in 1933-1934)' (*Chto eto bylo? (k sobitiyam v Sintsiane v 1933-1934 gg.*, #5, 1990), in which for the first time information on the Soviet military suppression of the Uyghur uprisings in Kashgaria and Soviet assistance to establishment of power of the governor of Xinjiang Sheng Shi-cai were raised. These publications made the once closed theme open for public debates. While revision of history of Soviet Uyghurs occurred in main Uyghur newspaper in Cyrillic, books and journals, writings on history of Xinjiang were given space on the pages of Arabic script newspaper *Yengi hayot*. Uyghur readers for the first time learned about 'three Afendis' (*uch äpändi*), Uyghur leaders of Xinjiang of the 1930-1940s – Massud Sabri, Mamtimin Bugra, Issa Alptekin who were labelled by the Soviets as pan-Turkists. Publication on these leaders who confronted pro-Soviet leaders of the three districts such as Akhmedjan Kassimi, cooperated with Guomindang authorities and held anti-Soviet position, actually portrayed them very positively thus levelling the contradictions existing between the two struggling fractions of the Uyghur political elite in Xinjiang. These publications eroded the previous political framework and constructed idealized perception of the homogeneity of Uyghur political elite in Xinjiang, which was far from being truth. Publications targeted the role of the Soviet Union in political events in Xinjiang in 1930-1940s, which for the first time was criticized by Uyghur intellectuals for betrayal of the interests of the Uyghurs. Such critical evaluation of the Soviet involvement in Xinjiang was not possible prior to *perestroika* time. Soviet intrigues in Xinjiang were unmasked and illustrated in discussions on kidnapping of the head of ETR government Alikhan Tura by the Soviet KGB in 1946 and his home arrest in Tashkent¹⁰, on the liquidation of all ETR leaders in airplane crash arranged by KGB etc.

Mobilizing for Political Actions

Active discussions on the history of Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang) in Kazakhstan in the late 1980s was possible not only because of availability of Uyghur newspapers which provided space for them, but also because it was Soviet Central Asia, especially Kazakhstan, where many former leaders and activists of the ETR, that is pro-Soviet Uyghur and Kazakh leaders of Xinjiang, settled down in the 1950-1960s. As against this, after the Communist takeover in China, Turkey provided asylum to those leaders who collaborated with Guomindang. Kazakhstan was the residence for such Uyghur leaders as secretary of the ETR government Abdurauf Makhsum, member of Xinjiang provincial government and writer Ziya Samadi, generals of ETR army Zunun Teipov, Magrup Iskhakov, secretary of young communist youth organization of Xinjiang Batur Arshidnov, numerous officers and soldiers of the ETR army and others. These intellectuals not only raised recent historical issues in local mass media, but they led political activities advocating independence of Eastern Turkestan from China. Two wings of this Eastern Turkestan movement set up two unregistered public organizations¹¹. The United National Revolution Front of Eastern Turkistan was set up in 1984 by a group of Uyghur emigres from Xinjiang with Yussupbek Mukhlisov as its head; it aimed at “propagandist activities conducted for awakening patriotic spirit of the Uyghur-Emigrès in Central Asian countries”¹². In 1991 United National Revolutionary front of Eastern Turkistan (UNRFET) was set up on the basis of the previous organization and it declared that it will struggle for independence of Eastern Turkestan. It is worth noting that Yusupbek Muklisov started disseminating his hand-made copies of leaflet *Shārqi Turkistan avazi* (Voice of Eastern Turkestan) long before *perestroika*, since 1979, when copy machines and copying materials were under strict surveillance by KGB meaning that his leaflets agitating against China and advocating independence of Eastern Turkestan were tolerated by the Soviet authorities. During the 1980s, Mukhlisov’s leaflets were supported by Uyghur intellectuals who also starting contributing to its issues.

Another Uyghur emigree-leader Khashir Vakhidi set up his Organization for Liberation of Uyghurstan (OLU) in May 1991. Both organizations were separatist in terms of advocating independence of the homeland of Uyghurs and did not much differ from each other in terms of their goals and strategies, but differed in conceptual approach to the name of the homeland of the Uyghurs, which since 1955 was announced ‘Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region’ (XUAR) of PRC. Both groups

rejected the name 'Xinjiang' as a Chinese and colonial one, but proposed different names instead: Mukhlisov's group justified necessity of calling it 'Eastern Turkestan' with a hope to attract all other Turkic ethnic groups of Xinjiang to their struggle against the Chinese, while Khashir Vakhidi believed that all other Turkic peoples of Xinjiang have their own national polities in Soviet Central Asia and only Uyghurs do not have their national polity, not to mention that Uyghurs comprise indigenous people of Xinjiang and majority of its population. Thus, the first group propagated pan-Turkist ideology and the second one – idea of a Uyghur national territorial unity referring to the wide use of the word 'Uyghurstan' in the first years of Soviet power, especially during the process of demarcation and delimitation in Central Asia. After the demise of the USSR, these two groups intensified their activities and even seriously conflicted with each other. At the same time they represented their history going back to *perestroika* times in accordance with priorities of the Kazakh state. For example, in 2000 Yusupbek Mukhlisov 'confessed' in his publication in the newspaper *Vremia* (Time): "We wish that XUAR turned into possession of Kazakhstan. We, Uyghurs, already in the years of *perestroika* appealed to Mikhail Gorbachev on the problem of Eastern Turkestan. He, on his turn, assigned it to Nursultan Nazarbayev".¹³

Re-thinking links with historical homeland

Policy of 'new thinking' (*novoye myshleniye*) in international relations announced by Mikhail Gorbachev gradually liberalized relations of the Soviet Union with not only western countries and their allies, but other 'problematic' countries with whom relations were non-friendly. These included two key countries having most relations with the Uyghurs: China with Xinjiang, as a historical homeland of the Uyghurs, and Turkey, which hosted a quite large group of Uyghur and Kazakh political emigres from Xinjiang, who were very active in anti-Communist activities targeting both China and Soviet Union. Elimination of 'iron curtains' allowed Central Asians to establish closer relations, mainly cultural, with cultural and educational organizations and Central Asian diaspora in Turkey. Representatives of Uyghur communities of Soviet republics started visiting Turkey and Western European countries establishing contacts with Uyghur diaspora in Turkey and widely in Middle East and Europe.

Improvement of Sino-Soviet relations started in 1983 with re-establishment of trade relations between two countries. Agreement on cross-border trade concluded in 1986 opened trade of Central Asian

republics, Altay and Krasnoyarsk regions and Kemerovo oblast with Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. Exhibition of Chinese and Soviet products and goods was organized in Almaty in 1986. In October 1986, next round of Soviet-Chinese negotiations held in Urmuqi resulted in signing contracts worth 5 to 6 billion roubles.¹⁴ Since 1988 Central Asian republics were given a right for direct trade with XUAR.¹⁵

At the same time by the end of the 1980s, Soviet Union and China allowed their citizens cross-border visits of relatives: immigrants from China for the first time since late 1950s had a chance to visit their relatives living beyond the state border in China and vice-versa. Sino-Soviet cultural and educational exchanges were initiated already on the eve of *perestroika*: in 1983, the first group of Soviet students went to China for language internship and exchange program was offered to the students majoring in Chinese language at Tashkent State University.¹⁶ As for the visits of relatives, in the very beginning only those who had close relatives were eligible for such visits. The number of private visits across the border increased as it was reported in the article 'Road via Khorgos (*Doroga cherez Khorgos*)' in one of central newspapers.¹⁷ In 1990-1991 visiting relatives acquired a mass nature in both directions. People visiting relatives had additional and very important materialistic motivation, since they used their visits for making small trade taking Soviet goods to China and bringing back Chinese manufactures, which were in great shortage in the USSR. Bringing 40 sets of a fake 'Adidas' sport costume was enough to purchase an automobile *Zhiguli* at that time. Thus, Uyghurs and to less extent Kazakhs and other nationalities having relatives in Xinjiang created a basis for the cross-border trade, which very soon, with the collapse of the USSR and establishment of friendly relations between China and Central Asian Republics, started flourishing in frontier regions. Central Asian market began opening for Chinese mass products (*shirpotreb*) in the late *perestroika* years, when the Uyghur (and Dungan) neighborhoods around the biggest market place of the then capital of Kazakhstan – Almaty, became closely involved in cross-border private trade.

Uyghur intelligentsia of Kazakhstan was also involved in exchange of delegations between the Soviet Republics and Xinjiang, especially Uyghur actors, musicians, composers, scholars and scientists. In the latter case, representatives of the Institute of Uyghur Studies in Almaty participated in both the exchange program and official visits between Academies of Science of Kazakh SSR and Xinjiang.

Consequences of re-establishing links at various levels with historical

homeland in the 1980s included exchange of ideas. Flow of printed works across the state border made publications in Uyghur accessible for readers in Soviet republics. Uyghur publications of Soviet Kazakhstan became available for the Uyghurs in Xinjiang and vice versa, although difference in scripts (Cyrillic and Arabic scripts) limited access to mass readers. On the contrary, for older generations of the *khitailiq* group of Uyghurs in Central Asia who attended schools in Xinjiang, Arabic script was much more easier than Cyrillic. Passages of some important books of Xinjiang authors were published in Cyrillic in the Uyghur newspapers. Most popular were publications of the Turkic works of the Karakhanid period *Divan al-lughat at-Turk* by Makhmud al-Kashgari and *Qutadghu bilik* by Yusuf Hass Hajib Balassaguni (both XI c.). But most influential became the book *Uyghurlar* (Uyghurs) by Turgun Almas published in 1989. It was very soon banned in China as a nationalist writing, while its author was put under house arrest. In 1990 the book was reprinted in Cyrillic in Almaty and most of the book was published in the newspaper *Kommunizm tughi* (later: *Uyghur avazi*). Shortly after the break-up of the Soviet Union, in 1993, its translation into Russian was published. Thus dissemination of academic, literary and popular works of the Uyghur authors from Xinjiang became typical phenomenon for the Uyghur periodicals of the perestroika period. At the same time, interest in other side's works was mutual: China evinced interest in Soviet Uyghurs and Central Asian republics, especially on the eve of cardinal political changes in the Soviet Union. Thus, *perestroika* broke the isolation of the Soviet Uyghurs and establishing links with homeland and Uyghur diaspora abroad.

Institute of Uyghur studies of the Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan (1986-1996)

Establishment of the Institute of Uyghur Studies by the Academy of Sciences of Kazakh SSR in 1986 was itself a result of the policy of 'new thinking'. Special groups for the study of Uyghur language, culture and history functioned since 1946 and by the *perestroika* time the section (*otdel*) on Uyghur studies operated within the Institute of Linguistics. Its staff made up 23 researchers led by well-known linguist Gojakhmet Sadvakassov (1929-1991). By the end of 1985, the section was divided into three separate groups (linguistics, literature and history). These groups became the basis for the Institute of Uyghur studies in 1986. This Institute was established by a Soviet government resolution aimed at intensifying research on Xinjiang following the warming of relations with China. Decades of Soviet-

Chinese confrontation and enmity had created a shortage of first-hand information and analysis of the situation in neighboring Xinjiang, and it was hoped that such a gap would be filled by the Institute and its staff of approximately eighty members. The core of the Institute consisted of the 'traditional' divisions of language, literature and art, and history and ethnography, but also included national relations, social relations, the economy of Xinjiang, and the study of adjacent countries. The establishment of the Institute created the most favorable conditions for developing all spheres of Uyghur and Xinjiang studies, so that the Soviet period of the Institute of Uyghur studies was a peak in the development of this academic field¹⁸.

Establishment of the Institute of Uyghur studies resulted in a wide range of publications. The liberalization of the political life on both sides of the Soviet-Chinese border made possible academic exchange between the countries and even the implementation of several joint projects in the field of Uyghur philology. However, historical research remained politicized and contested, and the Chinese government did not encourage any international exchange in that field.

The Institute was supported by central academic institutions in Moscow and Leningrad, which provided assistance in training young scholars and collaborated in running of joint academic projects. The Institute hosted two conferences on Uyghur studies in 1987 and 1991, as well as an International conference on Security in Asia-Pacific Region.¹⁹

During the 1980s the Institute of Uyghur studies established close relations with similar academic institutions in Urumqi, especially with the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences and Committee on Language and Script. It should be noted that the Chinese government set up in the same years similar Institute of Central Asian studies, which studied processes occurring in Soviet Central Asia. Within the framework of exchange programs, many researchers from the Institute of Uyghur Studies had internships in Beijing and Urumqi. Central academic institutions, such as Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow and its Branch in Leningrad as well as the Institutes of linguistics, Ethnology and Far East studies coordinated activities of the Institute of Uyghur Studies, assisting to help cadres and publish academic literature. It was the time when best works on language, history and culture of Uyghurs were published, including *Structure of the Uyghur language (Stroi uyghurskogo yazika)* (1989), 'Brief history of the Uyghurs' (1991), 'History of Soviet Uyghur literature' (1986), *Zhanri uyghurskogo folklore* (Genres of the Uyghur folklore) (1989), 'From

the history of international relations in Central Asia' (*Iz istorii mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii v Tsentralnoi Azii*) (1990), two works of the Russian scholars on the study of Eastern Turkestan by Russian and European travelers (1998, 1990), 'Issues of history and culture of the Uyghurs' (*Voprosi istorii i kultury uygurov*) (1987), conference proceedings etc.

The Institute of Uyghur Studies (1986-1996) during *perestroika* became a real center of intellectual life of the Uyghurs not only of Kazakhstan, but all Soviet Central Asia. This process was reflected in the election of as the director of the Institute G. Sadvakassov as head of the Uyghur cultural center of Kazakhstan. Until his death in late 1991, the Institute hosted all general meetings of the cultural center.

Since the Institute of Uyghur Studies was a project of Moscow, there was strong resistance against it among the local Kazakh intellectuals, who repeatedly appealed for turning the Institute into Institute of Oriental Studies, arguing that Uyghur studies are only part of wider oriental studies so much needed in Kazakhstan. Some Moscow scholars including a Tatar linguist E. Tenishev (who was sent to Alma-Ata to inspect the institute work) lobbied for the same.

With the breakup of the former Soviet Union, the Institute lost its government support, as did other such cultural institutions as Uyghur TV and radio programmes, newspapers and magazines, groups at institutions of higher education and publishing houses, all of which either closed down or were reduced in size. The Institute itself was closed in 1996.

ETHNICITY AND POLITICS: CENTRAL ASIAN AND CHINESE PERSPECTIVES ON THE ORIGIN OF MODERN UYGHURS

Discussion of origin and formation (*etnogenez*) of the Uyghurs became one of the public debates especially during *perestroika* era. It showed two different approaches to the status of the Uyghur minority in Kazakhstan. Formation of the Uyghurs as a modern nationality (ethnic group) was raised for the first time in late 1940s in connection with the necessity to support Eastern Turkestan Republic in Xinjiang, when indigeneness of the Uyghurs of Xinjiang was doubted by the Guomindang government of the province. In 1947 leading Soviet archeologist and Turkologist A.N. Bernshtam in his article 'Problems of ancient history of Eastern Turkistan' in the journal *Vestnik drevney istorii* (Proceedings of ancient history) substantiated the idea that ancient sedentary Uyghurs comprised

ancient ethnic substrata of Eastern Turkestan and in IX century they had merged with nomadic Uyghurs having migrated here from Mongolia.²⁰ Main ideas of that article were elaborated and developed in his book *Essays on ancient and medieval history of the Uyghur people* published in Uyghur language in Arabic script in 1951, but withdrawn from the publishing house due to the changing political situation in China and signing of agreement of friendship between USSR and PRC.²¹ These conceptual frameworks, to which other Soviet scholars namely Turkologist S.E. Malov, historian D. Tikhonov contributed as well, were widely supported by Uyghur intellectuals of Central Asia who identified modern and ancient Uyghurs. Of course, this identification goes back to late 19th century Russian academic works (for example, Ch. Valikhanov) and early Taranchi intellectuals of Semirech'ye who advocated that equation.²²

Revision of the origin of Uyghurs commenced in early 1980s and reached its peak in the years of *perestroika*. The first challenge to this concept was given in the book *Uyghur states in IX-XI cc* by A. Malyavkin, who was himself an emigree from Manchuria and worked for many years in the Institute of History, Ethnography and Archeology of the Academy of Sciences of Kazakh SSR, but later moved to Novosibirsk²³. The book substantiated that the Uyghurs who migrated to Eastern Turkestan from Mongolia after collapse of their Khaghanate in 840 AD were in fact not Uyghurs, but so called *toquz-oghuz* tribes. The book was received well by Uyghur intelligentsia of Central Asia and welcomed by intelligentsia of other peoples, since national narratives of Central Asia started competing with each other and especially for 'nationalization' of common history. Another concept of Uyghur ethnogenesis was proposed by historians from Moscow and Leningrad, who compromised between Turkic and Indo-Iranian roots of the Uyghurs. B.A. Litvinski from Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow initiated a project on a series of volumes on history and culture of ancient Eastern Turkestan. In 1984 and 1988 two volumes of articles entitled *Eastern Turkistan and Central Asia* were published in Moscow, followed by volumes *Eastern Turkistan in ancient and medieval time* (1988, 1992). The main concept of these very valuable academic publications was that 'ethnocultural and historical commonality with Central Asia was a dominant constant feature of the history of Eastern Turkestan from ancient times. "In ancient and medieval times, Central Asian – Eastern Turkestan ethnocultural region existed".²⁴ These publications were appreciated by the Uyghur intelligentsia of Soviet Central Asia as academic contribution, but these were seen as exaggeration

of Indo-Iranian factor in the ethnogenesis of the Uyghurs.

While the problems of origin of the Uyghurs was not openly discussed in the books edited by B.A.Litvinski, it became a special focus of the extended article 'Problems of ethnogenesis of the Uyghurs' published by Uyghur historians G.S.Baratova, G.M. Iskhakov and Kazakh historian N.E.Massanov as a separate brochure in 1986.²⁵ The authors stated the aim of publication as follows: the authors "primarily tried to reveal ethnogenetic links between new Uyghur ethnicity with ethnic units of the ancient Turkic period, while ethnic and cultural processes and mechanisms of ethnogenesis are out of this study. This can be explained, first of all, by desire of absolute majority of researchers to link ethnic history of Turkic sedentary population of Eastern Turkestan of the new time with Uyghurs of ancient Turkic epoch"²⁶. The authors concluded that Uyghurs' "ethnogenesis lies in the type of irrigated sedentary-agricultural economy, on the basis of which homogeneous ethnic traits were accumulated".²⁷ However, *Brief history of the Uyghurs* published by the Institute of Oriental Studies in 1991 still followed the concept of linking the origin of modern Uyghurs with ancient Turks and Uyghurs.²⁸ As its conceptual framework was not contradicting the official Chinese perception of Uyghurs' history, therefore it was translated into Uyghur and published in Urumqi in 1992 (in the translation as usual 'notion of 'Eastern Turkistan' was replaced by 'Xinjiang'). The problem of origin of the Uyghurs during *perestroika* acquired urgency partly because of dissemination in Central Asia of Uyghur publications from Xinjiang which competed with Chinese nationalist interpretation of ethnic minorities history by constructing own vision of the history, the book *Uyghurs* by Turghun Almas mentioned above being an example.

Changes in the intellectual life of the *perestroika* period was reflected in the magazine *Pärvoaz* (Flight), the only magazine in the Uyghur language. For the first time, it was published in 1982 with the support of government. Changes occurring in the life of the Soviet Uyghurs were outlined by its editor-in-chief K.Tokhtämov in the article *Vaqit näpäsini* (Breath of time) in connection with change of its publication format from once per year to twice per year.²⁹ After having praised the Communist party Central Committee for carrying out the policy of *glasnost* (*ashkariliq*) he discussed particular features of this process among the Uyghurs as follows: even though the Constitution gave equal rights to all peoples of the country, but in practice they were in different positions; "in fact minority peoples had more difficulties in publishing books in their languages, development

of language and culture in comparison with other peoples"; under the suppression of the personality cult and stagnation periods the Uyghurs could not openly express their concerns and aspirations. Answering the question 'how do we, Uyghurs, live in the period when all peoples are developing so rapidly?'. He mainly focused on urgent problems of the intellectual life such as decrease in the number of Uyghur schools due to the migration of people from villages to cities, shortage of ethnic cadres and intellectuals, absence of access for Uyghurs to high ranks and positions, absence of right to their heroes and classics. K.Tokhtämöv complained that even though at highest level, good resolutions are passed to improve our life, but these resolutions are not executed on spot, thus reanimating 'belief in a good Tsar' so common in Russia³⁰.

Improvement of Soviet-Chinese relations resulted in re-establishing links between writers of these countries. Therefore, since 1988 the magazine started introducing works of the Uyghur authors from Xinjiang, publishing passages from the novels and verses of Zordun Sabir, Kurban Barat, Mämtimin Hoshur, Arshidin Tatliq, Ahät Turdi, Abäidullam Ibrahim etc.

Voice for autonomy of the Uyghurs

Radical revision of the past and new assessment of the historical events in *perestroika* period inspired ethnic minorities for political actions. For Uyghurs of Central Asia bringing to discussion the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact of 1939 according to which Baltic republics had been annexed by the USSR, became a sample of triumph of fairness. Uyghurs also needed to change unfair treatment by the Bolsheviks, who did not give them any territorial autonomy within the Soviet Republics. Liberalization and freedom of speech seemed to give them a chance to demand autonomy in Semirech'ye. The problems of autonomy of Uyghurs goes back to the times of delimitation and demarcation of borders of modern Central Asian Republics in the 1920s, when the Taranchi Uyghurs as non-indigenous people were not given autonomy, even though they lived densely in Semirech'ye oblast from the end of the 19th century. The issue of Uyghur autonomy was raised in 1948, when the first secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan Shayakhmetov submitted a report arguing for the necessity of organizing autonomy for Uyghurs in Almaty and Taldy-Korgan oblasts in order to support a pro-Soviet regime of Eastern Turkestan Republic (1944-1949) in the three districts of Xinjiang. Even though that project was not supported by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Soviet government supported development of Uyghur culture in

Kazakhstan by creating extended network of cultural institutions. Recent memory of failed actions to give Uyghurs territorial autonomy inspired the Uyghur intellectuals to make another attempt to gain autonomy. In 1987-1988 leading Uyghur historian Malik Kabirov compiled a manuscript *The Uyghurs are autochthonous to Semirech'ye* and submitted it to the Central Committee of the CP of Kazakh SSR arguing that Uyghurs as local people of Semirech'ye need autonomy within Kazakhstan. The manuscript was sent to the Institute of History and Ethnography named after Ch.Valikhanov for expert review. Three reviewers Romanov, K.Pishulina and V.Moiseev negatively assessed Kabirov's writing. The then First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakh SSR G.Kolbin publicly accused Uyghur intellectuals of nationalism. All this evoked indignation of the Kazakh intellectuals. In the first years of independence, M. Kabirov published an article in a private Russian newspaper stressing the necessity of federative system for Kazakhstan. He was viewed as a symbol of Uyghur separatism in the country. Even though there were no public actions of the Uyghurs at that time in favor of political autonomy, but articulation of Malik Kabirov's ideas was strong enough to formulate a public opinion of the Uyghurs regarding their status in the new nation-state. All this became a basis for isolation of the Uyghurs in the public life of the country, which resulted in the closure of many cultural institutions. As I was told in the 1990s, Institute of Strategic Studies under the President of Republic of Kazakhstan, conducted special study of the Russian Cossacks and Uyghurs in Kazakhstan who have been seen as source of national threat for Kazakhstan.

Two different groups of Uyghurs – *yärlik* (local) and *khitailiq* (those from China) expressed different views on the issue of autonomy in Semirech'ye and independence of Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang). While local Uyghurs were more concerned about improving political status in Kazakhstan, *khitailiqs* advocated independence of their homeland – Eastern Turkestan (*Uyghurstan*).

CONCLUSION

For Soviet Uyghurs, especially Uyghur community of Kazakhstan, period of *perestroika* was a period of positive changes. Liberalization of public life accompanied by enduring government support to cultural development and establishing contacts with historical homeland created favorable conditions for growth of ethnic consciousness. Uyghurs more than any

other ethnic groups, especially titular ones, were bearers of a Soviet identity. Sovietness so deeply embedded in the intellectual life of the Uyghurs, was shaken during the *perestroika* times, when they started communicating with their brethren in neighboring Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China and Uyghur diaspora in Turkey and small communities of Europe. These new links with Uyghurs outside Soviet Union created among the Soviet Uyghurs a feeling of belongingness to a big Uyghur nation. Main changes in the public life of the Uyghur communities in Central Asian Republics concerned intensification and diversification of cultural life, which was possible due to the new policy allowing to set up cultural associations. Uyghur cultural associations were established in all Central Asian Republics, but most central of them were located in Kazakhstan, which was really a cultural center of the Soviet Uyghurs. However, activities of the Cultural Association and its branches were concentrated in the field of enlightenment and promotion of the Uyghur language through opening groups in Uyghur languages at schools in the areas where the Uyghurs lived densely. Political activities of the Uyghurs were mainly connected with historical homeland (Xinjiang/Eastern Turkestan) and Soviet Union. Two different groups of Central Asian Uyghurs – *yarlik* and *khitailiq*, exposed different priorities in social and political reforms. Local Uyghurs prioritized establishing Uyghur autonomy in Semirech'ye (Kazakhstan), while descendants of the last wave of Uyghur immigrants emphasized on gaining independence in homeland. Both groups revised historical past of the Uyghurs in Russian Empire/Soviet Union and recent past of Xinjiang. Breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 removed the issue of autonomy in Semirech'ye from the agenda, but intensified political actions for independence of Eastern Turkistan (Uyghurstan). A turn from internal to external issues in the agenda of the Uyghurs was supported by new authorities of independent Kazakhstan, which tolerated anti-Chinese activities of numerous unregistered Uyghur organizations only until 1996, when it joined Shanghai Five organization (now Shanghai Cooperation Organization), in which China has been dominating and dictating rules of game.

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CHINA'S POLICY IN XINJIANG *COMPARISON WITH INDIAN EXPERIENCE IN KASHMIR*

K. WARIKOO

Abutting the borders of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Xinjiang is the strategic frontier of China in its northwest. With the main overland trade routes connecting China with Central and South Asia passing through Xinjiang, it is China's bridge to Central Asia and South Asia. Following the disintegration of former Soviet Union and the independence of Central Asian Republics, China has been assiduously developing Xinjiang as the hub of trans-Asian trade and traffic. Xinjiang is also vital for China's quest for energy security. China views Xinjiang as a continental bridge which "extends China's reach to Central Asia and simultaneously serves as a security buffer to China proper".¹ Besides being used as the site for nuclear testing, Xinjiang is a region of vast unexploited petroleum and mineral reserves and immense agricultural potential. Following the disintegration of USSR, China's position in Central Asia and the Middle East has been enhanced by its possession of Xinjiang.

China has been following the time tested policy of large scale Han settlement in Xinjiang "as a means to work towards regional stability and bring the new Central Asian republics and peoples of Xinjiang closer to China's world view".² However, the main hurdle in achieving China's economic, political and strategic objectives in this region is the ethno-religious resurgence which feeds the Pan-Turkic and Islamic secessionist movement in Xinjiang. Though the 1980s and 1990s experienced numerous violent incidents in Xinjiang including bomb blasts, arson, racial attacks and hate campaign by the Uyghur separatists against China's rule, past few years have witnessed escalation in such campaign and growing Uyghur resistance being spearheaded by East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), World Uyghur Congress etc. Though ETIM was designated as a

terrorist organization by United States and United Nations in 2002, “its members reconstituted as the jihadist Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP)”,³ which has been active in Syria and Afghanistan and seeks to establish an Islamic State in Xinjiang. The growing Uyghur demand for a separate homeland and violence have brought this region into the focus of national and international attention. On its part the Chinese government has been quite conscious of the threat and has been pursuing a strident policy of curbing the three evils of separatism, religious extremism and terrorism. On the other plane, China has launched a slew of measures to uplift the economically underdeveloped region and bring the non-Han minorities into the national mainstream and integrate them in economic, social and economic realms. This chapter, which is largely based on the author’s field study in Xinjiang in June 2010 and June 2011 as well as discussions with the academics in Beijing and Urumqi, makes a study of the administrative, socio-economic and security measures taken by China to ensure its predominant position in the restive north-western frontier region of Xinjiang.

AUTONOMY AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRUCTURING

Following the Soviet Union, which was established as a multi-national federation of various nationalities controlled by Moscow, “China launched a campaign in the 1950s that recognized 56 nationalities having common territory, language, economic mode and culture,”⁴ and established various autonomous regions. However, the China model does not offer the formal right of political secession to its nationalities, as was provided in theory by the Soviet model.⁵ Way back in 1955, China declared Xinjiang as Uyghur Autonomous Region, in cognizance of its main Uyghur Muslim minority. It also established Autonomous Prefectures for Kazakh, Hui, Kyrgyz and Mongol populated areas; and Autonomous Counties for Kazakh, Hui, Mongolian, Tajik and Sibo dominated areas. The regional concentration of various ethnic-religious groups has been consolidated by the Chinese policy of creating separate administrative divisions—Autonomous Prefectures, Autonomous counties and towns within Prefectures, where a particular ethnic or religious group is in majority. In this manner, China has set up necessary administrative mechanisms to take care of other non-Uyghur minority nationalities in Xinjiang. China has successfully followed the policy of Han settlement in Xinjiang as a means towards social and political stability and territorial integrity. The immigration and settlement

of Hans, Huis and others from mainland China, resulted in the increase of the share of the Han population from 6 per cent in 1953 to about 40 per cent in 2007 and sharp reduction of the Uyghur population from 80 per cent in 1941 to about 46 per cent in 2007 (See Tables I,II and III below). Despite several attempts by the local Uyghur Islamic radicals to intimidate and shoo away the Han settlers in Xinjiang, the authorities have not only foiled all such attempts but even reinforced the Han presence in Xinjiang. The problem gets accentuated by the large concentration of Muslim Uyghurs in the southern part of Xinjiang (to the extent of about 90 per cent), whereas they constitute only about 46 per cent of the total population in the entire province.

By such administrative restructuring, China sought to retain and further promote the distinct geo-cultural divisions in Xinjiang. Whereas the lofty mountain ranges of Altyn Tagh, Kuen Lun, Karakoram, Pamirs, Ala Tau and the Altai virtually encircle the region, the great Takla Makan desert to the east cuts it off from the mainland of China. And the Tien Shan range of mountains cuts the region into two distinct but unequal parts, the northern region traditionally dominated by the pastoral nomads and the southern region or the Tarim Basin possessing numerous fertile oasis settlements dominated by the Uyghurs. Different ethnic groups are settled/concentrated in different geographical areas such as Uyghur Muslims dominating southern parts of Xinjiang (*Alty Shahr*), Kyrgyzs settled in Kizilsu Prefecture in the south, Tajiks living in the mountainous Tashkurghan County, and Mongols, Kazakhs and Huis living in their distinct traditional habitats in northern Xinjiang, with the Hans dominating both the northern and eastern parts of Xinjiang. These ethnic groups retain their distinct ethno-cultural identity which has been consolidated by the creation of separate Autonomous Prefectures and Counties for respective ethnic groups in their respective territorial loci, within the overall framework of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. These ethnic groups speak different languages - Uyghur, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Kazakh, Mongol and Chinese Mandarin.

Whereas Muslim Uyghurs are predominant in the southern part of Xinjiang particularly in Kashgar, Khotan, Aksu and Turfan Autonomous Prefectures, the Muslim Kazakhs are concentrated in Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture (adjoining Kazakhstan), Mori Kazakh Autonomous country of the Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture, and Barkol Kazakh Autonomous County of the Hami Prefecture.⁶ Similarly the Muslim Kyrgyzs inhabit the Kizilsu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture

(adjoining Kyrgyzstan) and the Muslim Tajiks have been provided an Autonomous County of Tashkurghan (adjoining Tajikistan) within the Kashgar Prefecture.⁷ Mongols reside mainly in Bayangholin and Bortala Mongol Autonomous Prefectures and Hoboksar Mongol Autonomous County. In fact these divisions were created during 1954 that is more than a year before Xinjiang was declared as the Uyghur Autonomous Region.⁸ Uyghurs are in majority in the southern parts of Xinjiang (Kashgar, Khotan, Aksu) as well as in Turfan, which has turned this region into a centre of separatist forces. Hans are in majority in northern and eastern parts of Xinjiang, mainly concentrated in urban areas. Notwithstanding their intra-ethnic differences, most of the non-Han population of Xinjiang are of Turkic stock and are Muslims by faith sharing their religion, Turkic language and culture with their counterparts in the neighbouring Central Asian countries. Given China's tenuous historical position in this region, any cross-border fraternisation on ethnic-religious grounds between the Muslims of Xinjiang with their Central Asian, Afghan and Pakistani neighbours is a potential source of instability for China in its strategic frontier.

From the cultural and racial point of view, Uyghurs and other Muslim groups like Kazakhs and Kyrgyzs belong to the Turkic Islamic groups and they see Chinese Hans and even Chinese Hui Muslims as alien ethnic group and race. The local Muslims speak Turkic (Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz) languages, whereas Chinese Hans and Huis speak Mandarin. There is a communication gap between the Han Chinese and local Turkic racial groups. All Uyghur, Kazakh and Kyrgyz Muslims in Xinjiang observe local Xinjiang time which is two hours behind the Beijing time. This is in marked contrast to various offices and institutions and the Han Chinese people settled in Xinjiang who observe Beijing time. Few Uyghurs and Kazakhs can speak Chinese and very few Chinese know the local language. There exist separate hostels for Han and Muslim students in universities and institutes as well. Similarly, there are exclusive restaurants for Muslims and Hans. In Muslim restaurants, smoking or drinking are not allowed.

Chinese scholars now advocate reconsideration of Chinese nationalities policy, which they believe is based on the Soviet (Marxist-Leninist) theory of nationalities and which proved a failure with the disintegration of the former USSR.⁹ They argue that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) adopted the Soviet nationalities policy, recognizing various ethnic groups of China as nationalities. Chinese

scholars believe that the special policies and concessions in terms of family planning programmes, university admissions, administrative positions in autonomous areas and dual school system for local minorities favouring ethnic minorities in China, are the roots of ethnic conflicts today as these have only “strengthened and politicized minority group identity”

TABLE I
POPULATION OF MAIN ETHNIC GROUPS IN XINJIANG (1949-2007)*

	1949	1955	1960	1970	1975	1985	1995	2007
Total	43,33,400	51,17,800	68,63,300	97,65,800	1,15,45,300	1,36,11,400	1,66,13,500	2,09,51,900
Uyghur	32,91,100	37,26,500	39,91,200	46,73,300	52,66,400	62,94,400	78,00,000	96,50,600
Hans	2,91,000	5,50,500	19,44,500	38,61,200	47,80,100	53,49,200	63,18,100	82,39,300
Kazakhs	4,43,700	5,08,300	5,41,600	6,16,300	7,51,400	9,87,200	12,37,700	14,83,900
Hui	1,22,500	1,47,900	1,99,600	3,83,300	4,77,100	5,99,600	7,47,600	9,43,000
Kyrgyzs	66,100	68,500	67,300	80,100	94,200	1,23,500	1,57,800	1,81,900
Mongol	52,500	60,500	67,300	88,400	1,00,300	1,23,300	1,52,800	1,77,100
Sibos	11,700	13,800	15,700	20,800	23,900	29,200	38,200	42,400
Russians	19,500	7,800	2,900	700	700	4,300	9,000	11,600
Tajiks	13,500	15,200	15,100	18,300	20,500	28,900	38,200	44,800
Uzbeks	12,200	10,900	7,300	6,500	7,400	9,300	13,300	16,100
Tatar	5,900	3,700	2,500	2,100	2,800	3,300	4,700	4,700
Manchu	1,000	1,200	1,500	2,800	3,500	9,500	19,900	25,600
Daur	1,800	2,100	2,700	3,200	3,700	4,800	6,200	6,700
Others	900	900	4,100	8,800	13,300	44,900	70,000	1,24,200

*Wu Fuhuan (Editor), *Xinjiang Shaoshuminzu Fazhan Bagogao, 1949-2009*. (Xinjiang Minority Nationalities Development Report, 1949-2009) (in Chinese), Urumqi, September 2009. pp. 26-29.

SECURITY MEASURES

The magnitude and intensity of ethnic clashes in the capital Urumqi in July 2009 came as a rude shock to Chinese leadership. China's response to the crisis has been swift, tough and calibrated – taking security measures to control the situation, detaining hundreds of people, summary trials and deterrent punishment to the convicted rioters, restricting internet and telephone communication, controlling the flow of information on the riots to the media and the outside world, taking steps to reassure Han Chinese settlers in Urumqi and reaching out to Muslim countries in Central Asia and South Asia seeking their cooperation. China considers religious

TABLE II
POPULATION OF MAIN ETHNIC GROUPS IN XINJIANG, 2007**

<i>Ethnic Group</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Population</i>
Uyghurs	96,50,600	46.06
Hans	82,39,300	39.33
Kazakhs	14,83,900	7.08
Hui Muslims	9,43,000	4.50
Kyrgyzs	1,81,900	0.87
Mongols	1,77,100	0.85
Tajiks	44,800	0.21
Sibos	42,400	0.20
Manchus	25,600	0.12
Russians	11,600	0.06
Daurs	6,700	0.03
Uzbeks	4,700	0.02
Others	1,24,200	0.59
Total Population	2,09,35,800	99.9%

**Wu Fuhuan (Editor), *Xinjiang Shaoshuminzu Fazhan Bagogao, 1949-2009*. (Xinjiang Minority Nationalities Development Report, 1949-2009) (in Chinese), Urumqi, September 2009. pp. 26-29.

extremism, separatism and terrorism as three evil forces, and has taken a set of elaborate, practical and concrete steps to root out these evils. Southern Xinjiang, which has the majority population of Uyghur Muslims, has been the cause of concern.

Jolted by July 5, 2009 riots in Urumqi, Chinese government has been taking direct and serious interest in Xinjiang affairs. At a high level conference on Xinjiang held on 17-19 May 2010 at Beijing, President Hu Jintao emphasized the importance of social stability and national unity in Xinjiang. China is quite conscious of this threat to its territorial integrity. China has secured its frontiers and neutralized this threat by consolidating its military presence and Han settlement in Xinjiang. China installed 50,000 CCTVs in 2009 in Urumqi alone to monitor the movements of suspected Uyghur activists. On the diplomatic front, China has not only warded off any Islamic criticism of its policies in Xinjiang, but has succeeded in having its position legitimized and endorsed by Muslim countries like Iran, Pakistan, Central Asian Republics and other Middle Eastern countries.

TABLE III
POPULATION OF MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS IN XINJIANG (AREA WISE), 2007***

	Total	Minorities	Uyghurs	Hans	Kazakhs	Hui	Kyrgyzs	Mongol	Sibos	Tajiks
XINJIANG UAR	2,09,51,900	1,27,12,655	96,50,629	82,39,245	14,83,383	9,42,956	1,81,862	1,77,120	42,444	44,824
URUMQI	23,12,964	6,25,172	2,84,058	16,87,792	63,275	2,37,730	1,514	9,088	4,757	3,353
KARAMAY	2,67,174	65,486	40,512	2,01,688	10,684	6,352	133	2,293	868	24
DIRECTLY ADMINISTERED AREAS (XPCC)										
-Shihezi City	6,36,090	35,238	7,648	6,00,852	3,957	16,402	60	838	179	23
-Aral City	1,66,544	11,332	6,719	1,55,212	206	996	33	272	10	6
-Tumushuke City	1,47,804	94,279	93,053	53,525	-	586	-	32	1	-
-Wujiaqu City	72,782	2,433	72	70,349	103	1,475	9	196	14	-
HAMI	5,46,169	1,82,057	1,10,220	3,64,112	49,663	16,226	17	2,452	171	-
Barkol Kazakh Autonomous County	1,01,310	36,445	150	64,865	34,406	290	1	1,424	8	-
CHANGJI HUI AUTONOMOUS PREFECTURE										
Mori Kazakh Autonomous County	13,53,742	3,46,707	61,646	10,07,035	1,32,582	1,30,793	152	6,544	598	7
ILI KAZAKH AUTONOMOUS PREFECTURE	87,229	29,612	4,964	57,617	22,425	821	28	7	7	-
Qapqal Sibos Autonomous County	43,42,166	24,38,415	7,02,219	19,03,751	11,39,293	3,68,474	19,371	72,570	33,884	152
Hoboksar Mongol Autonomous County	1,84,057	1,19,425	48,450	64,632	37,433	9,582	305	511	20,804	1
Altay Prefecture	51,634	33,144	1,034	18,490	14,558	477	23	16,646	55	-
	6,45,057	3,73,747	9,777	2,71,310	3,28,610	22,853	210	5,890	101	1

	Total	Minorities	Uyghurs	Hans	Kazakhs	Hui	Kyrgyzs	Mongol	Sibos
<i>Tajiks</i>									
BAYINGHOLIN MONGOL AUTONOMOUS PREFECTURE	12,24,080	5,20,830	4,00,528	7,03,250	1,197	61,892	216	48,886	191
Yanqi Hui Autonomous County	1,29,897	73,032	39,276	56,865	39	29,570	104	3,171	-
BORTALA MONGOL AUTONOMOUS PREFECTURE	4,72,918	1,54,656	60,149	3,18,262	44,664	17,814	90	27,833	409
KIZILSU KYRGYZ AUTONOMOUS PREFECTURE	5,00,007	4,63,150	3,17,540	36,857	126	594	1,39,042	70	27
KASHGAR	36,94,349	34,23,137	33,67,013	2,71,212	230	5,805	6,438	534	113
Tashkurghan Tajik Autonomous County	34,612	32,553	1,759	2,059	2	17	1,986	3	5
AKSU	22,03,077	17,48,101	17,18,270	4,54,976	190	14,826	9,422	760	107
HOTAN	18,83,894	18,18,716	18,14,785	65,178	82	1,471	795	106	10
TURFAN	6,00,610	4,62,865	4,23,212	1,37,745	270	37,778	1	186	36

***Department of Population, Social, Science and Technology Statistics of the National Bureau of Statistics of China, *Tabulation on Nationalities of 2000 Population Census of China*, Beijing, 2003 (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xinjiang#Demographics>)

The Central Asian countries have even undertaken not to allow any anti-China movement by the Uyghurs living within their respective countries. Chinese scholars and authorities are conscious of the potential threat from the conservative and extremist sections of Uyghurs. Their policy is to isolate the extremist and separatist elements from the general Uyghur population, by removing the economic disparities between Southern Xinjiang and rest of China. Since economic development is accompanied by the ingress of Hans, Huis and other nationalities, plans for changing the face of South Xinjiang have been set in motion.

Another important measure taken is the policy of eliminating the Uyghur Muslim ghettos/clusters, which have been the centres of religious extremism and separatism. Many old houses in Southern Xinjiang have been demolished to create big public spaces, parks, roads and for construction of high rise residential buildings. Then the concerned families are allotted flats in these buildings in a proportionate manner, so that the particular high-rise building has an admixture of various communities, which have equal stake in the safety, security and welfare of their residential complex. Thus this complex remains immune to any riots outside the complex.

In Kashgar old city, about 2,200 Uyghur families (about 10,000 people) still lived (during my visit in June 2010) in old mud houses. As several mud houses have been falling. Government demolished some to create open space and some multi-storeyed residential apartments have already been built, which are being allotted to the Uyghur families in old city. Beijing has plans to develop Kashgar as second Shenzhen (which is the most advanced region in China). The face of South Xinjiang is changing into an-ultra-modern city. This Uyghur dominated region will thus be converted into a modern multi-ethnic territory (like what has been achieved in Urumqi, Korla and other parts of north Xinjiang). More importantly, Uyghur Muslim ghettos/clusters in various cities and towns of South Xinjiang will be eliminated altogether.

A revisit to Idgah mosque in Kashgar in June 2010 (after 16 years) revealed that all old and crowded Uyghur shops and slums around this mosque were cleared. Now it has clean, calm and peaceful surroundings, with new shops/houses and multi-storeyed commercial complexes having been built in a systematic manner. Beijing spent about 1.8 billion yuan in building a big artificial lake and park in Kashgar city. It serves as a place of amusement for the people. To cite yet another example, some Uyghur boys were found picking pockets of pedestrians using an over foot bridge,

opposite National Library in Beijing. The problem persisted in spite of two police personnel being deployed at the two ends of the bridge. This was mainly because many Uyghur families lived in a cluster nearby around Xinjiang Street (near the Central University of Nationalities, Beijing), as this was a cheaper area to live in for Uyghur students and families. The authorities resolved this law and order problem by acquiring land/houses in and around Xinjiang Street and built new multi-storeyed residential buildings, which were expensive and thus out of reach of the Uyghurs to buy or rent. Now Xinjiang Street does not exist anywhere and the problem has been rooted out. According to a well documented report by Australian Strategic Policy Institute, "16,000 mosques have been damaged or destroyed and 8,450 mosques across Xinjiang have been entirely demolished since 2017".¹⁰

China has employed tough measures in Xinjiang to ensure "state security, ethnic unity and social stability", particularly after Xi Jinping came to power in March 2013. In May 2014 China launched its "Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Extremism in Xinjiang". There have been frequent arrests and detention of suspected Muslim separatists and extremists, which has affected the daily life of indigenous people in Xinjiang. About one million Uyghurs and Kazakhs have been put in detention camps for the purpose of their political education, ideological training, Mandarin teaching and Chinese flag raising ceremonies. Biometric data, voice samples and DNA testing of local people have been collected to identify, profile and track the suspected anti-China activists in Xinjiang. Filtration of people is being done on the basis of their profiling. Curbs on religious practices have also been enforced. Though Haj pilgrimage is allowed, the new Administrative Measures for Islamic Haj Affairs introduced in October 2020, stipulate that only government approved Islamic Association of China is authorized to organize Haj for Muslims in accordance with the law.¹¹ The people are asked not to mix religion with education. Parents and teachers have been asked to keep their children away from religious teachings etc. There is strict control over internet to curb propagation of religious fanaticism, radicalism and terrorism. In March 2017, a law was passed in Xinjiang to curb religious extremism, discourage wearing veils and have "abnormal" beards. Text books have been revised to have a "correct understanding of history and reality of Xinjiang, adherence to unified China and to build strong national ideological unity". Uyghur women are encouraged to remove veils and *hijab*, live a modern life and work in factories etc.

Foreign visits of Uyghurs and Kazakhs are monitored and controlled. The police is authorized to scrutinize and control their foreign travel. Uyghur asylum seekers and refugees abroad are particularly being targeted and Chinese authorities seek their return/deportation to Xinjiang. For this purpose China has listed 26 countries as “sensitive”. These countries are: Afghanistan, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Yemen. In July 2017 Egyptian authorities forced 20 Uyghur students to return to China. Thailand, Malaysia and Afghanistan have also deported groups of Uyghurs, as was sought by the Chinese authorities.

In October 2016 “Becoming Family Campaign” was started which involves compulsory home stay programme. Han cadres spend at least 5 days every two months in the homes of Xinjiang residents, particularly in the rural areas to socialize with the Uyghur or Kazakh families. According to the Communist Party’s official newspaper, as of the end of September 2018, 1.1 million government workers were deployed to the minorities’ living rooms, dining areas and Muslim prayer spaces besides weddings etc. under the “Pair up and become Family” programme. In this manner Chinese authorities seek to promote inter-ethnic harmony and social stability¹². But all these measures are seen as intrusive and are thus proving to be counter-productive and further hurting local Muslim sentiments.

Xinjiang Production Construction Corps (XPCC) or *Bingtuan* (meaning in Chinese a military regiment) which was established in 1954, consists of mainly Han cadres. XPCC currently employs 12 per cent of Xinjiang’s population. It also has about 100,000 trained militia, for frontier security. XPCC dominates Xinjiang’s agriculture (including the production of tomatoes, wheat, grapes and cotton), industry, local and urban development. It has established food processing, textile, iron, steel processing, building materials, chemical and coal mining industry.¹³ XPCC has a military structure, a headquarters at Urumqi, 14 Divisions, 176 regiments and a large number of companies, the leaders being called as commanders and commissars.¹⁴ Though nominally being part of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), XPCC conducts its own administrative and economic affairs with the support and under direct control of the central government.¹⁵ The Han chief of XPCC “wields power in the region second only to that of the leader of Xinjiang itself.”¹⁶ China’s President Xi Jinping has emphasized the important role of XPCC in the

security and stability of Xinjiang.

Since 2017, China has been operating 'vocational education and training centres' for the Uyghur and Kazakh Muslims of Xinjiang, with over one million being detained in a network of high security and indoctrination camps for transformation through education and de-radicalisation. Chinese authorities justify such camps/centres claiming that the detainees are provided vocational skills, education on China's anti-terror legal system in Chinese language, so that the region is freed of extremism and terrorism. USA and other western countries have been vocal in their criticism of China's detention centres in Xinjiang. Permanent missions of USA, Germany, Netherlands, Canada and UK organized a high level briefing at the UN Human Rights Council, Geneva on 13 March 2019 to address this issue. Kelley F. Curie, the US Ambassador at Large, who chaired the meeting, accused China of "arbitrarily detaining more than one million individuals under horrific conditions in Xinjiang's internment camps, facing torture, forced labour and death". She alleged that "China is using high-tech surveillance and involuntary collection of personal data including DNA samples".

Notwithstanding growing Western criticism over China's hardline measures against the indigenous Muslims of Xinjiang, Beijing has used its political and economic clout to muster support of many countries mostly from Africa and the Middle East including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Russia, which commended China's achievements in the field of human rights. Saudi Arabia, Russia and 35 other countries wrote a joint letter in July 2019 to the UN Human Rights Council supporting China's policies in Xinjiang. They stated that "faced with the grave challenge of terrorism and extremism, China has undertaken a series of counter-terrorism and de-radicalization measures in Xinjiang, including setting up vocational education and training centres". This was a strong rebuttal to an earlier letter written by 22 mostly Western nations including Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, England urging the UN Human Rights Council to investigate China's human rights violations in Xinjiang. They expressed concern about "credible reports of arbitrary detention" and "widespread surveillance and restrictions" in Xinjiang particularly targeting Uyghurs and other minorities. Brushing aside the condemnation by US, EU and others, Xi Jinping is determined to control Xinjiang through a strategy of political indoctrination, demographic change and stringent security measures. Assimilation of Muslims is the key to China's policy in Xinjiang. And the declining birth rate of Uyghurs is contributing to the Han

consolidation. China's President Xi Jinping, while addressing a gathering of officials from the party, government and Xinjiang on 25-26 September 2020, described his policies in Xinjiang as "totally correct" and successful. This was the first major party conclave since 2014, when Xi Jinping adopted increasingly hardline measures including digital surveillance, mass internment (re-education camps), political indoctrination programmes etc.

CONSOLIDATING CHINESE PRESENCE BY ELABORATE COMMUNICATION NETWORK

Soon after the incorporation of Xinjiang into China in 1949, the outlying periphery was brought close to the mainland by building roads. In fact work on Kashgar-Aksai Chin-Tibet highway was started in 1950s. China has through history been acutely conscious of building large highways to connect cities and towns, this tradition being traced back to Qin emperor (250 BC). Chinese government has invested billions of dollars to upgrade air, rail and road transport infrastructure in Xinjiang and Tibet regions, with a dual purpose of integrating the two peripheral regions with the mainland, reducing both distance and time of travel, speeding up development along the new tracks, and enhancing Peoples Liberation Army (PLA)'s mobility and capacity to bring troops to border areas. PLA has also built a "digital great wall" (a network of fibre optics which would improve the PLA's command and control mechanism and communication) along the borders in Xinjiang and Tibet.

Roads/Highways

Roads and highways are wide and elaborately laid out, with separate provision for pedestrians, cycles, scooters/bikes on each side of the highway. Cameras have been installed along the highways to identify and fine the over-speeding automobiles. The 2,540 kms. long Beijing-Urumqi Expressway, construction on which commenced in September 2012, was fully operational by July 2017. It has shortened the existing road between Beijing and Urumqi by nearly 1,300 kilometers.

Main road from Kashgar airport to the town is wide and well built in a manner that aircraft/planes can land on this road in case of an emergency security situation. The road to Tashkurghan, Pamirs which passes from Kashgar through Kyrgyz district, is well built and under constant repair due to damage caused by landslides, overflowing nullahs or shifting rocks. Big and long trucks (with 22 tyres) ply along this route to ferry ferrous

metallic ore/stones from the mountains towards Kashgar, and also to carry goods towards Taskhurghan.

Another Express Highway connects Kashgar with Aksu, about 500 kms. away. This National Highway which connects Turfan with Khunjerab Pass, is 1,880 kms. long and was completed in 2006. This highway is in excellent state, except for a few rough patches here and there, caused due to desert storms or overflowing water. And it is under constant repair. Entire 500 kms. road from Kashgar to Aksu passes through desert and barren sand mountains.

Another Express Highway about (200 kms) connects Urumqi with Turfan, and it takes only two and a half hours to cover the distance. This highway was built in 1990 with World Bank loan of 150 million US dollars. Parallel to this highway, runs old Urumqi-Turfan road, which is also in use.

Urumqi has been connected to Changji Hui Autonomous District by a 80 kms long express highway, which takes only 30 minutes from Urumqi to reach Changji. It has been done as part of the new Changji – Urumqi Development Zone, created to ensure speedy development of Changji.

Donkey, the traditional mode of transport in vogue earlier in Xinjiang, has given way to motor driven cars/carriages. Bicycles have been replaced by motorcycles, battery run small bikes and cars Foreign brands like Honda, Daewoo, Toyota, Wolkswagon, Mazda, Mitsubishi cars manufactured within China are order of the day. Even in southern Xinjiang, one finds these cars plying the roads.

Airports

Urumqi airport is the most modern and spacious airport, with 3 terminals. Terminal 3 is for international flights. There are direct flights from Urumqi to Islamabad, Tehran, Dushanbe, Tashkent, Baku, Novosibirsk, Moscow and other international destinations. In the domestic sector, there are regular and too many flights from Urumqi to Beijing, Xian, Chengdu, Shanghai, Kunming and almost all destinations in China. Besides, at the provincial level flights operate from Urumqi to Kashgar, Khotan, Aksu, Kuqa, Korla, Ining, Altai etc. The Urumqi airport is full of activity, and provides evidence of easy mobility of Han Chinese to and from various provinces of China into Xinjiang and vice versa. Over 15 flights to Beijing operate per day, and similarly to other destinations in China. Beijing to Urumqi takes 4 hours by flight. The flights are almost full, with Han Chinese constituting about 85 to 90% of the passengers. Air China,

Southern China, Henan Airlines, Shenzhen Airlines run their flights to and from Urumqi. The airport serves flights to and from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates. The airport is a hub for China Southern Airlines, while SF Airlines, Baku-based Silk Way Airlines, and Silk Way West operate freighter service at the airport utilizing 737-300Fs, Ilyushin IL-76s, and 747-400Fs, respectively.

Chinese National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) announced in November 2018 its plans for expansion of Urumqi airport, approving 42.1 billion Yuan (6.1 billion dollars) for this purpose. The expanded airport is expected to be ready by the year 2030. It is planned to handle 63 million passengers and 750,000 tonnes of cargo a year. This will develop Urumqi as the key air-cargo hub of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Kashgar Airport is modern though not newly built. Southern China, Henan Airlines fly from Urumqi to Kashgar about 12 times a day, which reflects the mobility of people. I found the flight being almost full with Hans and non-Hans in equal proportions. Since Kashgar is considered to be a strategic point connecting Xinjiang to South Asia (Pakistan) and Central Asia, the airport has been upgraded. Road leading from the airport to Kashgar city is wide and has been built to serve as a runway for landing of aircraft in emergency situations.

Kuqa and Aksu airports are small, but well organized. So government is planning to build a new modern and big airport at Baicheng, i.e. midway between Kuqa and Aksu. Under new Xinjiang Development plan, six new airports are proposed to be built in Xinjiang. Kuqa to Urumqi takes 1.15 hrs. by air.

That China opened a new high altitude airport at Ngari in Tibet (4,300 metres) claimed to be the highest airport in the world, demonstrates China's determination to integrate and consolidate its physical presence in outlying provinces of Xinjiang and Tibet, by building quick and efficient means of air communication. Flights between Ngari and Lhasa and Southern Xinjiang have started.

Railways

China has linked the mainland with outlying and distant province of Xinjiang through rail link, thus overcoming the huge distance and Taklamakan desert. A rail route connects Beijing, passing through Lanzhou, to Urumqi, and further the railway line goes across the border into Kazakhstan and beyond via Alashankou, which has been developed

as a big port to facilitate cross-border trade. It takes about 34 hours to cover the distance between Urumqi and Beijing by train. Both goods trains (conveying about 40-60 wagons) and passenger trains run on this route. A new express high speed train track costing 21 billion yuan has been built from Urumqi to Lanzhou to connect it onwards with Beijing. It is a giant step towards integrating Xinjiang with the mainland.

Railway line has been extended from Urumqi to Kashgar in southern Xinjiang. Whereas it takes only over one hour from Urumqi to Kashgar by air, it takes 20 hours by train to reach Kashgar from Urumqi. From Kashgar railway station, trains go to Urumqi, Korla, Aksu, Turfan and Daochi (in Shaanxi province). People can change their trains at Urumqi for their onward journey to Beijing, Shanghai etc. Well organized security system is installed at the railway stations. X-ray machines are installed for scanning the baggage, and level hand bags etc. of people, when they go to buy their tickets at the counter. Railway has also been extended from Kashgar to Khotan taking six hours.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/SINIFICATION PROCESS

China has followed a well calibrated policy of development – railways, roads, telecommunications, buildings, high rise residential apartments, industries, oil refineries and so on in Xinjiang. Even though vast deserts intervene between the settled oasis towns and cities, a number of settlements, small industries, hotels, restaurants and other service centres have come up along the railway line and highways (wherever there is some settlement/oasis). Most of these businesses, shops, hotels, services etc. are manned by Han Chinese or even Hui Muslims. Even at the Karakol lake (13,000 ft), there is one restaurant, which is a branch of main restaurant in Beijing, being run by Han Chinese. Many travel agencies and even taxis etc. are also run by Han Chinese. China Mobile, China Telecom, Sinopek, Petro China, major Chinese companies and banks have set up big establishments/high rise buildings in various parts of Xinjiang. And Han Chinese run most of those offices, shops and establishments, with some Chinese and English speaking educated Uyghurs working there. Whereas Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang is highly developed with massive industrialization, Uyghur dominated southern Xinjiang like Kashgar, Khotan etc. are also developed. High rise buildings are seen everywhere. Wide highways, amusement parks, and public facilities have been well built. Kashgar is nearly rebuilt, with old mud houses having given way to

modern high rise residential and commercial buildings. Public transport is very good and cheap. Beijing plans to develop Kashgar as second Shenzhen (which is the most advanced region in China).

After the July 5, 2009 riots in Urumqi, China has taken all round view of the Uyghur unrest, social, educational and economic issues in Xinjiang. Chinese central government held comprehensive high level conference on 17-19 May 2010 at Beijing to assess the socio-economic situation in Xinjiang and finalize the new development plan for Xinjiang. The conference was addressed by President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jia bao. The President stressed the need to reduce gap in GDP growth in Xinjiang and rest of China. He emphasized the importance of social stability and national unity in Xinjiang. He urged the national banks in China to invest in Xinjiang. After the conference, China announced a new development policy for Xinjiang. China has implemented its decision to charge new Resource Tax of 5 per cent on oil and gas produced in Xinjiang, which is expected to boost Xinjiang's physical revenue by 25 per cent (i.e. about 5 billion Yuan) for oil and 2 billion yuan for gas per year, which will be used for development projects in Xinjiang. Total oil produced in Xinjiang is over 27 million tons.

China's largest petroleum company Petro China, operates in Xinjiang. Petro China with a market value of 220 billion US dollars has been ranked 30th in 2018 *Forbes Global 2000*. Chinese government accords priority to social stability and feels that development will come with it. Kashgar is being developed as Special Economic Zone, in order to forge close ties between Kashgar and other regions of China, which in turn will mean settlement of more Hans in Southern Xinjiang. May 2010 Beijing conference on Xinjiang marked a new thrust in China's policy towards Xinjiang, by increasing investment, pace of development, technological innovation, ethnic-religious stability, employment and security.

China opened a new 1,833 kms. long gas pipeline on 14 December 2009 connecting Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan with Xinjiang. This pipeline will deliver 55 billion cum of gas per year, more than half of China's current annual gas consumption, once it reaches full capacity. The gas is pumped from Saman-Depe in Eastern Turkmenistan and delivered all the way to Xinjiang. China's President Hu Jintao and Presidents of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan opened the new pipeline together, by turning a symbolic wheel to open a valve on the pipeline. This gas reaches Shanghai through another pipeline (over 4,500 kms) between Urumqi and Shanghai.

China evolved a 10-year (2011-2020) partner assistance programme of involving 19 affluent regions including coastal and central provinces and big cities to accelerate the socio-economic development of various areas in Xinjiang.¹⁷ For instance, Beijing Municipality is spending 7.26 billion yuan (about 1.06 billion dollars) for housing and protected agriculture in Khotan city, Khotan County, Moyu County and Lop County of Khotan Prefecture over a period of five years. Anhui Province along with Beijing and Tianjin municipalities are investing in the construction of railways, roads, fruit processing and protected agriculture in Khotan. Guangdong Province will spend 9.6 billion yuan (1.41 billion dollars) on infrastructure and public services in Kashgar Prefecture.

Hebei Province is partnering with No. 2 Division of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) and Bayingolin Mongol Autonomous Prefecture with an investment of 1.8 billion yuan (about 263.62 million dollars) in agricultural technologies, housing, employment and education. Hubei Province is also developing agriculture, tourism and education in Bole city, Jinghe and Wenquan Counties of Bortala Mongol Autonomous Prefecture in partnership with No. 5 Division of the XPCC. Jiangxi Province is investing 2.03 billion yuan (303.16 million dollars) in Akto County of Kizilsu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture. The three north-eastern provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning will partner with Tacheng and Altay in northern Xinjiang as they have similar climatic conditions. They will invest in mining, flood preventions, disaster relief and job training.

It means direct involvement of experts, officials and other Hans from mainland China in giving their professional expertise and economic support to develop/implement various projects in Xinjiang. This practice not only enables other provinces/Han experts to acquire direct firsthand knowledge of Xinjiang affairs, but also promotes cross-regional contacts, besides paving the way for Han penetration into the Uyghur dominated areas. That Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) is the local partner/implementing agency in most of these programmes, ensures that the overall Chinese security concerns and objectives are met in the process of execution of such projects in Xinjiang.

Foreign companies investing in Xinjiang get more trade concessions than these can get in Shanghai. Carrefour (a French departmental store chain), which has opened several stores in Beijing and other parts of China, has also opened several stores in Xinjiang. Super 8 Hotel chain, which is one of the world's largest economy lodging operators with almost 2,100

hotels worldwide, has 3 hotels in Xinjiang. Special Economic zones have been created to facilitate the cross-border trade of Xinjiang with adjoining Central Asian Republics and the CIS, in a manner that most of the whole sale business and trade remains in the hands of Chinese. This has also provided economic incentive to sustain the increasing influx of Hans into Xinjiang. Xinjiang is used as a springboard to penetrate and influence Central Asian economy and polity. Chinese consumer and other goods are flooded into Central Asia.

According to a *Xinhua* report (25 September 2019), Xinjiang's GDP soured from 791 million yuan (111 million US Dollars) in 1952 to 1.22 trillion yuan in 2018, which is an increase of about 200 times. Xinjiang's foreign trade rose to 20 billion US dollars in 2018, about 1,481 times of that in 1950, mainly due to increased economic exchanges with the neighboring countries due to Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In the year 2018, Xinjiang received over 150 million tourists from home and abroad, which marks an increase of 40 per cent year on year, Xinjiang produces 70 per cent of all China's tomatoes and China exports 700,000 metric tons of tomatoes every year, mainly to Russia, Italy etc. China produces 20 per cent of world's cotton, most of which comes from Xinjiang. However, in response to the petition by World Uyghur Congress and the Coalition to End Uyghur Forced Labour, the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has recently banned import of all cotton and tomato products produced in Xinjiang.

CULTURAL POLICY

China and its people are acutely conscious of the history, politics and importance of Xinjiang, which has remained embedded in Chinese memory and consciousness since ancient times. Various Chinese annals have recorded numerous episodes of China's forays and feats in this remote north-western outlying border area. Chinese cultural policy in Xinjiang has the following main features:

- i) To preserve, sustain and promote all those objects, historical and cultural sites and episodes in the history of Xinjiang which demonstrate China's administrative and political jurisdiction in this area through history.
- ii) Accordingly numerous sites which have been ascribed cultural and national importance, are appropriated and presented as

treasured part of ancient Chinese civilization and its presence in the region.

- iii) To promote Uyghur shrines and tourist spots as places of cultural tourism, rather than of ethno-religious importance. Many Chinese tourists from the mainland and also from Hong Kong, Taiwan etc, besides the Uyghur pilgrims visit these places.
- iv) Xinhua Book Store in Kashgar and Urumqi are housed in well organized multi-storeyed buildings, with books in Chinese accounting for most of its books. However, books in Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Mongolian and Xibe languages are also available in lesser numbers. These books are mainly translations of Chinese works, literature etc.
- v) Uyghur handicrafts such as brassware, musical instruments, knives, wooden articles, besides dance are tolerated. Typical Central Asian bazaars (local markets) are functioning and cater to the needs of the local people, in every town and city in Xinjiang. The Central Asian bazaars in Kashgar and Urumqi have developed as centres of international trade with adjoining countries in Central Asia and South Asia (Pakistan and Afghanistan).
- vi) Uyghur music and dance is sought to be promoted at the national level, in a bid to showcase it as part of the mainstream and also to create better social and cultural understanding between the Uyghur and Han communities. One Uyghur athlete, Adil, has been performing his rope walk every day, in the National Stadium at Beijing, drawing applause from the audience. Besides, Uyghur girls and boys perform their dance in several forms at intervals at the National Stadium. Even after the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, the National Stadium presents a lively atmosphere every day, with thousands of visitors particularly on holidays.
- vii) Chinese cuisine has been introduced into Xinjiang in a big way. Apart from the Hui Muslim restaurants (which follow Chinese food style), a number of Chinese hotels and restaurants are existing everywhere. Quan Ju De, the famous roast duck restaurant of Beijing, has opened its branch in Urumqi, which is the exact replica of the original one in Beijing. Peking ducks served in the Urumqi restaurant are brought in from Beijing. This is the unique Chinese way of Sinicising the local food.

CONCLUSION

China is quite conscious of the threat to its sovereignty in Xinjiang. China has declared Xinjiang as its core strategic interest, which is non-negotiable. China brooks no external interference in its internal affairs. China sees religious extremism, terrorism and separatism as the main challenges to its security. China is firm in its resolve to maintain its territorial integrity using both its security forces and its economic, political and diplomatic prowess to retain its position in Xinjiang. China continues to encourage the settlement of Han Chinese in Xinjiang.

China has influenced the Muslim countries including Iran, Pakistan, Central Asian Republics, Turkey and also in the Middle East and has succeeded in securing their political support for China's position on Xinjiang. China is Malaysia's top source of foreign investment, buys about a third of Iran's oil exports and about one-tenth of Saudi Arabia's oil exports. Several Muslim leaders and high power delegations from Iran, Pakistan and Central Asian Republics have visited Xinjiang and extended their support to China's policies against terrorism, Islamist extremism, ethnic-religious separatism, drugs and arms trafficking. China has also institutionalized this process of cooperation through the setting of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

China's policy of developing the underdeveloped regions has been accompanied by the migration of Hans from the mainland to the sparsely populated northwest, which brought about structural changes in the region's demographic profile. Race relations between the Hans and the Turkic peoples in Xinjiang have been marked by mutual distrust and hatred. Uyghurs in Xinjiang continue to nourish aspirations of ethno-political independence and have not come closer to the Chinese national mainstream, notwithstanding the economic development due to increased Chinese/foreign investments and flourishing border trade. The large scale Han migration has further contributed to the resentment and discontent among the Uyghurs leading to violence against Hans.

China has been employing coercive methods to curb separatism and incidents of violence, at the same time going for the rapid economic development of the region. By 2002, both the United States and United Nations had listed Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as a terrorist organization, thereby supporting the Chinese view. Encouraged by the international campaign against terrorism after 9/11, China adopted strong counter-terrorism measures and brought the social, cultural and

religious life of the Uyghurs under strict surveillance.

Uyghurs being dispersed across a vast region comprising one-sixth territory of China and their weakness in terms of leadership (unlike in the case of Dalai Lama for Tibetans), lack of international support and China's political determination, economic prowess and international clout, have an uphill task of moving forward in their ethno-political goal of achieving an independent Eastern Turkestan.

After Xi Jinping came to power in 2014, counter-terrorism became the centerpiece of long term securitization strategy in Xinjiang. In 2016, Chen Quanguo, who had overseen the increased securitization of Tibet, was appointed as the new party secretary in Xinjiang. Simultaneously several national security laws were introduced.

The Xinjiang issue is not only complicated, but it is dynamically changing due to the sustained, long term and calibrated policy and administrative measures by China. With Xinjiang becoming the hub of trans-Asian trade and traffic and also due to its rich energy resources, the Muslims of Xinjiang are poised to assert their ethno-political position, thereby posing serious challenge to China in the region. Whether it is China's grand initiatives like OBOR or SCO or China's relations with the adjoining Central Asian countries and also the Muslim world at large, Xinjiang situation needs a constant watch and a multi-layered and comprehensive view.

COMPARISON WITH INDIAN EXPERIENCE IN KASHMIR

Since Xinjiang has close parallels to Kashmir in terms of its geographical and ethnic-religious setting, besides the political history of religious extremism and separatism, it is instructive to make a comparative study of China's policies in Xinjiang with the Indian experience in Kashmir.

1. Due to its geo-strategic location, and abutting the borders of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Xinjiang is the important strategic frontier of China in its northwest. China has declared Xinjiang as its core strategic area, which is non-negotiable. China brooks no international interference in its internal affairs in Xinjiang. In order to ensure tranquility on its strategic frontier, China has resolved outstanding border disputes with the Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, albeit

on its own terms. So China does not have any hostile and belligerent neighbor, which could destabilize Xinjiang. With the main overland trade routes connecting China with Central and South Asia passing through Xinjiang, it is China's bridge to Central Asia and South Asia. Xinjiang is also vital for China's quest for energy security. Peoples Republic of China has ensured that Xinjiang functions as its vibrant bridgehead to Central and South Asia. It even built a highway across the Aksai Chin territory of Ladakh in 1950s to connect Xinjiang with Tibet.

Due to its geo-strategic location, abutting the borders of China, Pakistan and Afghanistan and being in close proximity to Central Asia, Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh is the strategic frontier of India in its north. Ladakh offers India the only overland access to Central Asia. However, independent India lost the opportunity of having direct overland access to Xinjiang and Central Asia after it allowed Pakistan to illegally occupy the vital strategic territory of Gilgit and Baltistan spanning an area of 73,000 sq. kms., in 1947-48. Whereas Aksai Chin with an area of 37,555 sq. kms. in eastern Ladakh is under occupation of China, 5,180 sq. kms. of Shaksgam and Muztagh Valley in north Ladakh was ceded by Pakistan to China in 1963. As such, India has been living with festering disputes with Pakistan and China since 1947, having fought wars in 1947-48, 1962, 1965, 1971 and 1999. And since 1989, Kashmir has been suffering the brunt of Pakistan sponsored cross-border terrorism, religious extremism and secessionism

2. Xinjiang region of China presents a case of geo-cultural diversity. Whereas the lofty mountain ranges of Altyn Tagh, Kuen Lun, Karakoram, Pamirs, Ala Tau and the Altai virtually encircle the region, the great Takla Makan desert to the east cuts it off from the mainland of China. And the Tien Shan range of mountains cuts the region into two distinct but unequal parts, the northern region traditionally dominated by the pastoral nomads and the southern region or the Tarim Basin possessing numerous fertile oasis settlements dominated by the Uyghurs.

Different ethnic groups are settled/concentrated in different geographical areas such as Uyghur Muslims dominating southern parts of Xinjiang (Alty Shahr), Kyrgyz settled in Kyzilsu Prefecture in the south, Tajiks living in the mountainous Tashkurghan county, and Mongols, Kazakhs and Huis living in their distinct traditional

habitats in northern Xinjiang, with the Chinese Hans dominating both the northern and eastern parts of Xinjiang. These ethnic groups retain their distinct ethno-cultural identity which has been consolidated by the creation of separate Autonomous Prefectures, Regions and Counties for respective ethnic groups in their respective territorial loci, within the overall framework of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. These ethnic groups speak different languages - Uyghur, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Kazakh, Mongol and Chinese Mandarin.

From the geo-cultural perspective, the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir State of India presents a heterogeneous mix of geography and ethno-cultural groups. Jammu plains which are an extension of the plains of India, move upwards the Shivalik hills till Pir Panjal range divides the Jammu region from the Valley of Kashmir, which is encapsulated / encircled by various mountain ranges. From the Valley one has to cross the Zojila Pass to enter Kargil and Ladakh. From Kargil and Ladakh, which is bounded by the Karakoram and Kuen Lun mountain ranges, one moves ahead into Baltistan and Gilgit areas. Similarly, the Baramulla gorge and Kishan Ganga river divide the Valley of Kashmir from Muzaffarabad and Mirpur. All these distinct geographical zones are inhabited by distinct ethno-cultural groups like Hindu Dogras in Jammu, nomadic Gujjar tribes in the hills, Kashmiris in the Valley, Baltis (Shia Muslims) in Kargil and Baltistan, Ladakhis (Buddhists) in Ladakh, Dards in Gurais and Dardistan (Gilgit, Hunza etc.), Mirpuris/Potoharis in Muzaffarabad-Mirpur region. Different ethnic groups speak different languages - Dogri, Gojri, Kashmiri, Balti, Ladakhi and Mirpuri/Potohari/Punjabi.

3. From the historical point of view, mainland China has had a tenuous relationship with its distant periphery in Xinjiang. While its Chinese connection dates back more than 2,000 years, Xinjiang remained under the effective control of the imperial China only intermittently for about five centuries. Long distance, intervening Takla Makan desert and lack of adequate means of communication besides the shifting balance of power in the mainland, were the contributory factors for China's weak control over Xinjiang for a considerable period in history. Whenever the centre was strong in China, it exerted its control over Xinjiang. Whenever the centre was weak, local chieftains, Mongol Khans, Khojas, Muslim chiefs

and warlords assumed control over their territorial strongholds. However, the chiefs of Hami and Turfan in eastern part of Xinjiang being in proximity to China, maintained a sort of tributary relationship with the Centre, while retaining their autonomy. But China being conscious of the importance of projecting its historical and civilizational presence in Xinjiang, has been taking steps to preserve, sustain and promote all those objects, historical and cultural sites in Xinjiang, which demonstrate China's historical, administrative and political presence in this remote region.

Kashmir has remained an inalienable part of Indian civilizational and political system since ancient times. Kashmir remained a Hindu kingdom till 14th century and as such was an integral part of Indian/Hindu historical past. In fact, Kashmir acted as the fountainhead of Indian civilization as most of the classical Indian works on art, aesthetics, religion, philosophy, literature, poetics, dramaturgy, history etc. were written and produced in Kashmir. Kashmir has been the main centre of Buddhism and Shaivism. Even after the introduction of Islam, Kashmir produced its indigenous Rishi order synthesizing the local Buddhist and Shaivite traditions with the new Sufi thought brought in by the immigrant Syeds and Sufis from Central Asia and Persia. In medieval times, Kashmir was part of the Mughal empire in India. But in post-independent India, the government and administrative setup of Jammu and Kashmir being controlled by the local Muslim bureaucracy and political elite promoted and projected the Islamic identity and heritage of Jammu and Kashmir, by obliterating the glorious ancient Buddhist and Hindu heritage existent in the form of hundreds of temples, archeological sites, shrines, artefacts etc, which was done to weaken the deep civilizational connect between Kashmir and the rest of India. Over 500 Hindu temples are reported to have been destroyed and over 50,000 kanals (6,250 acres) of land encroached upon by the Islamist extremists and terrorists in Kashmir during the past 30 years.¹⁸ Even the local Kashmiri language spoken by nearly 57 per cent of people, was neglected by declaring Urdu as the official language, even though it was spoken by only 0.16 per cent of the population, as per 2011 census. It is only recently in September 2020, that is after 73 years, that local languages - Kashmiri, Dogri and Hindi have been accorded their due by including them in the list of the

official languages of Jammu and Kashmir, in addition to the existing Urdu and English.¹⁹ Concrete steps are required to be taken by new government of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir to restore the ancient Hindu and Buddhist shrines, temples and monuments to keep the ancient civilizational heritage alive.

4. From the cultural and racial point of view, Uyghurs and other Muslim groups like Kazakhs and Kyrgyzs belong to the Turkic Islamic groups and they see Chinese Hans and even Chinese Hui Muslims as the other/alien ethnic group and race. The local Muslims speak Turkic (Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz) languages, whereas Chinese Hans and Huis speak Mandarin. There is a communication gap between the Han Chinese and local Turkic racial groups. The Han Chinese are seen by the locals as colonialists and even today the local Muslims eat in their own Muslim restaurants/*chaikhana*s, as they abhor pork. Chinese Hans are not uncomfortable in eating at the Chinese Hui Muslim restaurants, as the Huis though Muslim by faith, speak Chinese language and have Chinese cuisine. However, pork and beef are openly sold in the bazaars/markets, though in south Xinjiang (Kashgar etc), one finds lamb meat predominating the cuisine. Over 300,000 Uyghurs and Kazakhs are scattered in mainland China (Beijing, Henan and some other places) working mainly in restaurants, bakeries and labour. They continue to live in ghettos even while staying outside Xinjiang. Some have been found involved in petty crimes and also in extremist and terrorist activities.

From the cultural and racial point of view, except for their religious differences, Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Hindus speak the same Kashmiri language and have had same dress and cuisine. A sizable number of Kashmir Muslims still retain the Kashmiri Pandit surnames like Kaul, Raina, Mattoo, Bhat, Kichloo, Bakshi, Durrani, Wangnoo and so on. However, since the resurgence of Islamic radicalization in the Valley of Kashmir, many Muslims have been adopting more Arabicised names under the influence of radical Wahabi Islamic groups. And after the forced expulsion of over 450,000 Kashmiri Hindu minority population in 1989-90, the Valley has been turned into a mono-ethnic territory with Islamic radicalism ruling the roost. Whereas in the recent past, the local Muslim population abhorred eating beef, in the

same manner as Kashmiri Hindus shunned eating pork, now beef is openly sold in the markets across the Valley, as a symbol of Islamic triumph over the secular and composite ethno-cultural heritage and traditions. Over 450,000 Kashmiri Muslims are living, working/studying in various parts of India particularly, Delhi, Gurgaon, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Kolkata, Chennai, Goa, Kerala, Mumbai and other metropolitan cities doing thriving business in sale/export of handicrafts, travel and tourism, services and other professions. In fact, after the onset of militancy in Kashmir in 1989, Kashmiri Muslim professionals have chosen to work in various places of India, leading to their integration in the Indian mainstream. Vibrant and resurgent economy of India and large number of educational professional institutions coupled with encouraging policies towards the Muslim minorities, offer a big attraction to Kashmiri Muslim youth availing of these avenues. However, some secessionist elements among these floating Kashmiri Muslim population have been found involved in terrorist and anti-state activities in various parts of India.

5. Even before Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region was founded on 1 October 1955, in cognizance of its main Uyghur nationality, China had designated over 50 per cent of Xinjiang land area as Autonomous Prefectures for Kazakh, Hui, Kyrgyz, Khalkas and Mongol nationality areas; Autonomous Counties for Kazakh, Hui, Mongolian, Tajik and Xibo, besides numerous Autonomous townships for other nationalities settled in other minority clusters, in recognition of their distinct ethno-cultural characteristics. In this manner, China set up necessary administrative mechanisms to take care of other non-Uyghur minority nationalities in Xinjiang. China also encouraged the immigration and settlement of Hans, Huis and others from mainland China, which has resulted in the increase of the share of the Han population from 6 per cent in 1953 to 40 per cent in 2000 and sharp reduction of the Uyghur population from 80 per cent in 1941 to 45.2 per cent in 2000. China has successfully followed the policy of Han settlement in Xinjiang as a means towards social and political stability and territorial integrity. Despite several attempts by the local Uyghur Islamic radicals to intimidate and shoe away the Han settlers in Xinjiang, the authorities have not only foiled all such attempts but even reinforced the Han presence in Xinjiang.

Post-independent India accorded a unique autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir State through Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. Jammu and Kashmir also had its own separate constitution. Under Article 370 and Article 35-A, no non-state subject and Kashmiri woman who married outside the state, could buy or own land or any property in Jammu and Kashmir. As such, there has been no immigration from other parts of India into the Jammu and Kashmir State. However, there has been out-migration of Hindu minorities from the Valley to other parts of India due to economic and political deprivation. The population of Hindus in Kashmir province registered only 6.75 per cent decadal growth during 1971-81, as against the growth rate of 27.29 per cent for the Valley as a whole. Notwithstanding the presence of Indian security forces, over 90,000 Kashmiri Hindu minority families comprising over 4,50,000 persons were forced to leave the Valley during and after 1989-90 due to targeted terror strikes and violent hate campaigns. Ironically several hundred Muslim refugees from Tibet and several thousand Afghans (presently clustered in Gotli Bagh, Kashmir) were granted state subjects status by the J&K government/authorities. As such, the Valley turned into a mono-ethnic Islamic stronghold, breeding and sustaining separatism and extremism.

The people of Ladakh and Kargil were granted Leh and Kargil Autonomous Hill Development Councils in 1995 and 2002 respectively, to promote socio-economic development of these remote and backward areas. Besides, Muslim nomadic Gujjars and Bakarwals and the indigenous Buddhist and Balti (Shia Muslims) population in Ladakh and Kargil have been granted Scheduled Tribe status, which provides them enormous opportunities through quotas in admission into colleges, professional institutions and jobs.

It is after over 70 years that the government of India woke up on 5 August 2019, when the Indian parliament Passed the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, 2019, which bifurcated the state and created two Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, each to be administered by the president of India through a Lieutenant Governor. Article 370 granting special status to Jammu and Kashmir was revoked and Article 35-A which allowed the state to define permanent residents and their rights and

privileges, and also to restrict settlement in the state and acquire immovable property, was repealed. In doing so, the government of India met the long standing demand of the people of India for the revocation of Article 370 and 35-A and of Ladakh for a Union Territory status, to enable its people realize their political aspirations and also to preserve and promote their distinct historical, ethnic, linguistic and eco-cultural heritage and identity.

Notwithstanding this major policy correction by the government of India regarding Kashmir, there has been no progress in the return and rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandit displaced persons in their homeland or in the acquisition of property by a non-Kashmiri. Instead, the terrorists began the new year 2021 by gunning down a Punjabi Hindu settler in Kashmir (Satpal Nischal), after he got a domicile certificate and purchased a shop and house in the capital city of Srinagar.²⁰ A terrorist group The Resistance Front (TRF) while claiming responsibility for this attack warned that “everyone other than indigenous Kashmiris would be treated as occupiers, if they acquired property in J&K”.

6. Xinjiang is very rich in oil, gas and mineral resources. It possesses high quality oil reserves which accounts for 30 per cent of China's oil reserves. It has natural gas reserves of trillions of cubic metres, accounting for 34 per cent of China's natural gas reserves. Xinjiang has coal reserves of 2 trillion tons, accounting for 47 per cent of China's coal reserves. Xinjiang ranks second in China's wind energy resources. In 2008, Xinjiang ranked second in China by producing 27.22 million tons of crude oil, and first by producing 24 billion cubic metres of natural gas.²¹ Xinjiang produced 3 million tons of cotton in 2008, ranking first in China.²² Wine making industry is making rapid progress in Xinjiang. Local revenue of Xinjiang crossed 36 billion yuan in 2008.²³ With the revised resource tax of 5 per cent being levied on prices instead of production volume, from mid-2010, CNPC and Sinopec, China's top two oil companies, expected to generate additional 5 billion yuan (732 million US dollars) in annual tax revenue for Xinjiang.²⁴ Per capita income of rural households in Xinjiang was 3,503 yuan in 2008, which was less than the national average of 4,140 yuan. Per capita income of urban residents was 11,432 yuan as compared with the national average of 15,780 yuan. Chinese government has acknowledged the imbalance due to the lower standard of

living in Xinjiang than in other parts of China.

As regards Jammu and Kashmir, no such rich natural resources like oil, gas, minerals etc. have been found there, which coupled with the ban on purchase of land by the non-state subjects are the main causes of lack of major industries in the state. Local economy is mainly based on agriculture, horticulture, handicrafts and tourism sectors. The J&K state has the distinction of receiving largest provincial assistance (90 per cent as grants-in-aid) from the Central government. In 2009-10, J&K received Rs. 13,252 crore from the Centre, which constitutes nearly 60 per cent of the state's total expenditure. During the past two decades of 1989-90 and 2009-10, J&K received grants amounting to Rs. 94,409 crores between, which is much above J&K's share of India's population, which is a mere one per cent.²⁵ Over the 15 year period (2004-2019), J&K State received 10 per cent of federal grants amounting to 2.77 lakh crore rupees (about 40 billion US dollars) despite having only 1 per cent of population of India. The annual budget allocation of the financial year 2020-21 was one hundred thousand crore rupees (150,000 US dollars), which is over and above other central government schemes.²⁶ The income tax revenue in Kashmir was only about 200 crore rupees in the financial year 2009-10.²⁷ The state government employs about 500,000 people making it a ratio of over 50 government employees to every thousand persons. A decade ago, the total bill for salary, pension and other allowances of the State's employees amounts to Rs. 11,525 crore, which was more than three times the state's total annual income of Rs. 3,600 crores.²⁸ Jammu and Kashmir has achieved the distinction of having the lowest rate of poverty in India. Only 3.7 per cent of rural Kashmiris and 1.19 per cent of urban residents in Kashmir live below the poverty line as against 27.09 and 23.02 per cent respectively in the rest of India.²⁹ An average household in the State owns assets worth over one million rupees, which is the highest in India.³⁰

7. Xinjiang, being the only Muslim majority province in China, has been home to ethnic-religious separatist movement for a long time. While the Uyghur resentment against the Han Chinese presence in Xinjiang is increasing, China's sovereignty is also being challenged by Uyghur Muslim separatists. July 5, 2009 riots in Urumqi in which over 150 persons, mostly Hans, were killed, sent

shock-waves across China. Uyghur diaspora settled in USA, Europe, Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries, with the backing of some foreign agencies, keep on raising the issue of the violation of human rights of Uyghurs and the independence of "Eastern Turkestan." The Taliban, *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba*, Pakistan's *Jamaat-e-Islami*, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, *East Turkestan Islamic Movement* (ETIM) and other organizations have been training and funding the Uyghur separatist cadres to wage armed struggle against the Chinese in Xinjiang.

On its part, China is quite conscious of this threat to its territorial integrity. China has secured its frontiers and neutralized this threat by consolidating its military presence and Han settlement in Xinjiang. China has installed tens of thousands of CCTVs in Xinjiang to monitor the movements of suspected Uyghur activists. Earlier, China secured the arrest of 12 Uyghur separatists from Pakistan, who were later tried and awarded death sentence. China secured the extradition of 20 Uyghur suspects from Cambodia. On the diplomatic front, China has not only warded off any Islamic criticism of its policies in Xinjiang, but has succeeded in having its position legitimized and endorsed by Muslim countries like Iran, Pakistan, Central Asian Republics and other Middle Eastern countries. The Central Asian countries have even undertaken not to allow any anti-China movement by the Uyghurs living within their respective countries. China sees religious extremism, international terrorism and separatism as the main challenges to its security. China is firm in its resolve to maintain its territorial integrity by all means – diplomatic, social, economic or political.

8. Jammu and Kashmir is the only Muslim majority province in India. The state has been the focus of national and international attention ever since October 1947 when Pakistani raiders launched an armed attack on the state in 1947. The Kashmir issue remained at the centre stage of UN Security Council debates, particularly due to deep Anglo-US involvement and biased approach against India during the height of Cold War. However, things settled down in 1972 after the creation of Bangladesh and the conclusion of Shimla Agreement between India and Pakistan in 1972. But after 1989-90, Kashmir has witnessed the rise of Islamic extremism, armed insurgency and terrorism bringing the issue once again into the

limelight. Since after 9/11 terrorism and violent religious movement are not accepted by the international community, the new strategy of the separatists is to transform the Kashmiri Muslim separatist movement from the violent Islamist movement to a mass civil disobedience movement. This explained the upsurge in Kashmir with stone throwers coming out in streets across the Valley, as a means to seek international attention and support.

9. In Xinjiang, Uyghur extremists used modern means of communication, internet services etc. to spread anti-Han hate mails and separatist agenda during the course of Urumqi riots in July 2009. Soon after, China snapped all communication links in Xinjiang, which has 7 million internet users, to prevent the expansion and recurrence of violence as the riots were fanned and orchestrated by the Uyghur separatists via internet, text messages and long distance telephone calls. Internet and mobile services were resumed in Xinjiang in May 2010, that is ten months after the July 2009 riots. In China, very few commentators write on Xinjiang affairs, and its reporting is done with official consent. As such, no public discussion or debate of Xinjiang affairs can be seen, except for projection of official position, as was done during the May 2010 Beijing Conference on Xinjiang's Development and also to highlight peaceful anniversary of July 2009 Urumqi riots.

In Kashmir too, internet, mobile text messages and telephone communication have been used by the Muslim separatists to send provocative messages, agendas for agitation and violence. Twelve private channels (11 being run from Pakistan and one from Dubai) have been running openly in Kashmir, through the local cable service network, airing provocative and anti-state programmes. Besides, both the local and national media have been used skillfully by their local correspondents to project the local pro-separatist and more often anti-government reports, thereby feeding and sustaining the secessionist movement. In India, Kashmir issue has become a sort of industry, with every Tom, Dick and Harry commenting, writing and publishing provocative, and often pro-separatist views, without any knowledge of history, language, culture and politics of the region.

10. China allows legitimate and normal religious activities in Xinjiang, which has about 25,000 registered mosques and 29,000 Imams etc. About 3,000 Muslims from Xinjiang go to Haj pilgrimage each

year. However, all religious activities including speeches/sermons of Imams are monitored by the government under its law on "Prescriptions on the Management of Religious Activities in Xinjiang", which stipulates that all religious groups and activities should be undertaken within legal norms, maintaining social stability and the unity and integrity of China. Misuse of Islam for politicization and for interfering in the government, society, administration, judiciary and other activities is not allowed. Xinjiang Islamic Institute has been established to train Imams and religious preachers for various mosques in Xinjiang within the prescribed norms. Haj pilgrimage is allowed but is organized by the state and its approved Islamic Association of China. Since 1996, only 50,000 Muslims of Xinjiang have made the Haj pilgrimage to Mecca.³¹

In the case of Jammu and Kashmir, there exists absolute freedom of religion which has been grossly misused by vested political interests to the detriment of social stability, peace and harmony. The number of mosques, *madrassas* and preachers runs into tens of thousands in the Valley. The number of Kashmiri Muslims making Haj pilgrimage each year is over 6,000 each person receiving government subsidy in travel and other expenses. In fact, Islam in Kashmir is thriving having transformed from a traditional form into a resurgent and radicalized Islam. Ironically, over 600 traditional and local Kashmir Muslim Imams (preachers) of various mosques across the Valley, were gradually and systematically replaced in 1980s by extremist non-Kashmiri Imams who were trained in radicalized Islamic institutes in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, through the network of *Jamaat-e-Islami* mosques, *madrassas* and cadres. This ushered in a process of radicalization of Islam at the grassroots in the Valley leading to the Islamisation of politics in Kashmir, as these Imams have been utilizing the pulpit of the mosques to propagate hate and anti-government venom to their followers. Now open calls for the establishment of *Nizam-e-Mustafa* (Islamic government based on *Sharia*) are made, as was witnessed in the spate of violent demonstrations by the stone pelting mobs. The Islamic radicals have used the Indian democratic system of free press, judiciary and other mechanisms to propagate their radical and separatist ideas freely and without any fear of deterrent punishment by the law and order machinery.

11. As in the case of other provinces, Xinjiang region of China is governed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Though Uyghurs are members of the CCP, the Party Secretary, who wields authority at provincial or the district level has always been a Han. However, the Chairman of the Autonomous Region, the executive of each Autonomous Prefecture and head of each Autonomous County are from the local nationalities. Though Han Chinese are predominant, Uyghur and other minor minority cadres are part of the government and administration. At the centre, Uyghurs have been inducted in the Islamic Council and Council of Nationalities, in Beijing. Besides, there are representatives from Xinjiang in the National People's Congress and also in the regional Peoples' Congress.

Jammu and Kashmir has held elections to 87 member Legislative Assembly every five/six years eleven times since 1951 and 12 times to the Lok Sabha since 1967. Though there have been complaints about rigging of elections in the past, elections of 1977, 2002, 2008 and 2014 have been acclaimed as free, fair and transparent. During the period 1948-2019, the State government was headed by the Chief Minister, who was elected from the party winning majority of seats. Right from 1947-48, State Chief Minister was a Muslim from the Valley, with some of his cabinet ministers representing Jammu and Ladakh provinces. Similarly, the people of Jammu and Kashmir have elected six representatives through ballot, to the Indian Parliament. The Muslim dominated Valley of Kashmir has had a fairly large share of political presence in the central government at Delhi. Heavy weight politicians like Syed Mir Qasim, Mohammad Shafi Quereshi, Mufti Mohammad Syed, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Saifudin Soz, Dr. Farooq Abdullah and his son Omar Abdullah, have held key portfolios of Home Affairs, External Affairs, Tourism, Civil Aviation, Food Supplies, Environment, Renewable Energy etc. in the central government at various points of time. In effect, these Kashmiri politicians successfully moulded Indian government policies in tune with the interests of their constituencies in the Valley. During the period 1948-2019, the Central government catered to the interests of regional satraps from the Valley, rather than dealing with the masses of Jammu and Kashmir covering all ethnic, regional and religious groups, which has been the bane of India's policy in Kashmir.

However, after 5 August 2019, two Union Territories (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh were created, each being administered directly by the federal government though a Lieutenant Governor, which dealt a blow to the regional satraps and their dirty politics. Three-tier system of grassroots level democracy has been established in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir through elections and by devolution of power to Panches and Sarpanches of Panchayats, Block Development Councils (BDC) and District Development Councils, to ensure the empowerment of people and comprehensive development at the grassroots. Elections to 4,483 Panchayats (local bodies at village level) were held in November-December 2018. About 5.8 million voters exercised their right to chose from over 25,000 candidates of Sarpanches of the Panchayats. Election of chairpersons of over 310 Block Development Councils of J&K was held in October 2019, with a record 98.3% polling. Elections to 280 District Development Councils (DDC) were held in November 2020, each Council having 14 members from each district with sufficient powers and funds to supervise, implement and sponsor health, welfare, education, public works and development at the local district level.

12. China treats Xinjiang as its core strategic area, which is non-negotiable and with zero tolerance for terrorism and external interference. China has been firm in its action against extremism, separatism and terrorism in Xinjiang and has been highlighting this menace of 'three evils' to legitimize its increased securitization in Xinjiang including Han settlement, anti-Muslim measures such as restrictions on veils, detentions, speedy trials, electronic surveillance, DNA sampling etc.

India considers Jammu and Kashmir State including its territory under the occupation of Pakistan and China as its integral part. Indian Parliament Resolution of 22 February 1994 firmly declared that "the State of Jammu and Kashmir has been, is and shall be an integral part of India and any attempts to separate it from the rest of the country will be resisted by all necessary means; India has the will and capacity to firmly counter all designs against its unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity." Yet Indian response to extremism, separatism and terrorism in Kashmir has been to manage the situation rather than to root it out. Domestic constraints of a democratic set up, competing interests of political parties and vote bank

politics which is influenced by majority of the Indian Muslims choosing their elected representatives by a collective decision rather than individual choice, have hampered the process of a concerted and full scale onslaught on the separatists and terrorists in Kashmir.

Despite its well known persecution of Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, China has wielded its political and economic muscle to bring most of the Muslim countries on its side. Pakistan, OIC, Turkey, Malaysia which never stop talking about the problems of Indian Muslims particularly in Kashmir, have not only maintained their silence over the sufferings of Muslims in Xinjiang, but have actually supported China's policies and measures to curb separatism and extremism in Xinjiang. Pakistan has been using the good offices of Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and some Muslim countries to drum up support for the Muslim separatist movement in Kashmir.



Kashgar-Aksu Express Highway (Photo by K.Warikoo)



Urumqi-Turfan Express Highway (Photo by K.Warikoo)



A street in Kashgar Town (Photo by K.Warikoo)



Kashgar Railway Station (Photo by K.Warikoo)



A Chinese restaurant at Karakol Lake (13,000 ft) (Photo by K.Warikoo)



Xinjiang Science and Technology Centre, Urumqi (Photo by K.Warikoo)



Some high rise buildings in Urumqi (Photo by K.Warikoo)



New Uyghur house, Kashgar (Photo by K.Warikoo)



Houses in dilapidated state in old Kashgar (Photo by K.Warikoo)



Old houses in old Kashgar town being demolished (Photo by K.Warikoo)



New multi-storeyed apartments in front of old Kashgar town
(Photo by K.Warikoo)



Beautified compound in front of Idqah mosque (Photo by K.Warikoo)



Idqah Mosque, Kashgar (Photo by K.Warikoo)



Carrefour (French Departmental Store), Urumqi (Photo by K.Warikoo)



Police Warning against Uyghur pickpockets at Goutou footbridge near National Library, Beijing (Photo by K.Warikoo)



Chinese inscription describing ancient history of Heaven Lake (Urumqi) (Photo by K.Warikoo)



Wooden Banner at Heaven Lake (Urumqi) (Photo by K.Warikoo)



Ancient Karez (underground water channel, Turfan)
(Photo by K.Warikoo)



Entrance to Grape Valley, Turfan (Photo by K.Warikoo)



Shop in Kashgar selling brass products (Photo by K.Warikoo)



Uyghur Musical Instrument Store, Kashgar (Photo by K.Warikoo)



Uyghur artistes performing at the National Stadium, Beijing
(Photo by K.Warikoo)



Uyghur artistes performing at the National Stadium, Beijing
(Photo by K.Warikoo)



Pillar at Xinjiang-Kazakhstan border (Photo by K. Warikoo)



Author standing at Alashanko Border Pillar



Chinese inscription at Khargos Border (Photo by K. Warikoo)



Beijing Duck restaurant at Urumqi (Photo by K. Warikoo)

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MARGINALIZED IN THEIR HOMELAND
ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION
AMONG UYGHURS IN XINJIANG, 2000 TO 2014

HENRYK SZADZIEWSKI

INTRODUCTION

Economic discrimination does not exist independently from other kinds of marginalization. Why particular groups experience high rates of unemployment or endure lower standards of living is not due to coincidence or lack of volition. States are key arbiters in who can share in wealth, and social marginalization is pivotal to the creation of unfavorable economic conditions. Without a voice in the decision-making processes of economic planning or enforceable laws counteracting prejudicial treatment, minority populations remain vulnerable to exploitation and assimilation.

The case of the Uyghur people is illustrative of the difficulties minority people are presented when the interests of the state and entrenched societal attitudes combine. Uyghurs are a Turkic and Islamic people whose homeland in the northwest of China is a vast region that occupies one sixth of the Chinese landmass. The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), or as many Uyghurs refer to it, East Turkestan, shares frontiers with eight countries, mainly in South and Central Asia, and its strategic importance to the Chinese state is underscored by reserves of natural gas and oil, as well as its geographic location as a conduit for energy supplies from Central Asia.

Xinjiang is administered as an autonomous region of China, but little autonomy from the central government exists. Autonomous administrative sub-divisions, based on ethnicity, that includes Xinjiang's other minority

populations, such as Kazakh and Kyrgyz, reinforce the impression of self-government. The economy of Xinjiang is heavily reliant on the aforementioned natural resources, as well as agriculture (grains, fruit and cotton) – the latter a predominantly Uyghur economic activity.

The region has experienced a contested history. Since the advent of communist administration, periods of unrest between Uyghurs and state authorities have occurred. Between 2013 and 2014, several violent confrontations were recorded.¹ As noted by academic Reza Hasmath: “[A] common state narrative...portrays ethno-religious violence as originating outside China, such as in Pakistan, Turkey and now Syria, and not home-grown. This narrative allows the state to side-step the main causes of ethnic tensions, which are pre-dominantly rooted in religious/cultural repression and increasing economic disparities.”² In *Xinjiang and China's Rise in Central Asia, 1949-2009*, scholar Michael Clarke argued acceptance of Chinese state assertions of an external hand in the violence should be tempered by an understanding of the destabilizing effects of what Clarke calls “developmentalism,” which has “contributed to political, economic and cultural marginalisation of the Uyghur, providing the conditions not only for Uyghur unrest but also inter-ethnic tensions.”³ This paper examines the role of demographics as a cause of Uyghur exclusion in the Xinjiang economy and describes how Uyghurs were marginalized through state-led economic development in the region from 2000-2014. It concludes that the need for genuine and meaningful Uyghur participation in economic development planning is a pressing issue for the Chinese government, especially in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative. However, the intensification of repression in Xinjiang since 2016 through a campaign of mass internment indicates the government has taken a path of forceful assimilation, rather than deliberative inclusion, to quell opposition to exclusionary policies.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The population of Xinjiang according to the last census in 2010 was nearly 22 million; 10 million or 46 percent were Uyghur and nearly 9 million or 40 percent were Han Chinese. These demographic figures did not reveal a steady decline in the proportion of Uyghurs in Xinjiang; when the Chinese Communist Party entered the region in 1949, 75 percent of the population was Uyghur. Han Chinese residents are concentrated in the urban areas of northern Xinjiang, such as the regional capital of Urumqi and the oil

city of Karamay, while most Uyghurs live in oasis cities, towns and villages surrounding the Taklamakan Desert in the south of the region.

The southern Kashgar, Aksu and Hotan Prefectures share similar demographic profiles. As a percentage of their total population, the three prefectures had high proportions of Uyghurs according to 2012 population statistics (see Table 1 below).⁴

TABLE 1
POPULATION BY PREFECTURE AND ETHNICITY 2012

<i>Prefecture</i>	<i>Total population</i>	<i>Uyghur</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Han</i>	<i>% of total</i>
Aksu	2,396,877	1,888,881	79	473,646	20
Altay	663,410	9,685	1	272,494	41
Bayingolin	1,374,726	459,041	33	779,310	57
Bortala	484,491	64,901	13	318,578	66
Hotan	2,123,377	2,044,223	96	74,640	4
Ili	4,628,434	783,489	17	1,955,018	42
Karamay	285,837	44,587	16	213,693	75
Kashgar	4,151,345	3,803,463	92	284,958	7
Kizilsu	560,627	360,792	64	41,764	7
Kumul	592,354	107,667	18	405,918	69
Sanji	1,402,107	68,025	5	1,024,159	73
Tarbagatay	1,047,814	42,087	4	598,338	57
Turpan	625,334	449,774	72	135,586	22
Urumqi	2,578,033	332,620	13	1,871,982	73

In a 2004 monograph published by the East-West Center, demographer Stanley Toops described the effects of increased Han Chinese migration into Xinjiang: “Party leaders in both Beijing and Urumqi have consistently advocated (and engineered) Han immigration to increase stability of the region. Yet further immigration may only exacerbate competition for scarce land and resources.”⁵ This state propelled migration had marginalizing effects on Uyghurs. In a review of scholar Joanne Smith Finley’s 2013 book *The Art of Symbolic Resistance: Uyghur Identities and Uyghur–Han Relations in Contemporary Xinjiang*, Nicholas Bequelin wrote:

‘What catalyzed identity change’ [in the 1990s], Smith Finley writes, ‘stemmed almost exclusively from the ill-conceived policy of Han in-migration to Xinjiang.’

As a consequence, Uyghurs faced 'escalating inequalities in the spheres of language use; education; employment and wealth distribution; accelerated resource exploitation; environmental damage and an absence of true indigenous political representation.' It should be no surprise, the author tells us that 'development minus equality equals conflict.'⁶

In his 2004 monograph, Toops projected that "migration seems to be increasing in recent years, particularly with the addition of the floating population. This migration will ensure a larger percentage of Han in the region."⁷ The demolition of Uyghur neighborhoods, expansion of transportation networks, construction of new cities, as well as government inducements encouraged Han Chinese migrants to expand the scope of settlement toward the Uyghur south of the region.

According to Chinese state figures the number of Han Chinese in Xinjiang grew by 1,222,100 from 2000 to 2012. The figure for Uyghurs is 2,005,300 over the same period. Of Kashgar, Hotan and Aksu Prefectures, the number of Han Chinese increased only in Hotan Prefecture during 2000-12 (18,694 individuals), whereas all three prefectures experienced an increase in the number of Uyghurs.⁸

However, Table 2 illustrates the flows in population by ethnicity in Kashgar, Hotan and Aksu Prefectures between 2011-12 and indicated an increase of Uyghur and a more modest rise in Han Chinese in each prefecture (except Aksu). However, the figures for Aral, a sub-prefecture level city within Aksu Prefecture were not included in prefectural level population data. Han Chinese comprised approximately 91 percent of the population in Aral in 2011 and 2012.⁹

The data indicated a stabilization or slight growth of Han Chinese in the three majority Uyghur prefectures. In a 2014 presentation analyzing the 2010 census, Toops restated the increase in the Han Chinese population in relative and absolute terms but added that new railroads to Kashgar (completed in 1999) and Hotan (completed in 2011) were taking migrants south.¹⁰

TABLE 2
POPULATION FLOWS BY ETHNICITY 2011-12

<i>Prefecture</i>	<i>Uyghur 2011</i>	<i>Uyghur 2012</i>	<i>Difference</i>	<i>Han2011</i>	<i>Han2012</i>	<i>Difference</i>
Aksu	1,873,808	1,888,881	+15,073	483,164	473,646	-9,518
Hotan	1,998,831	2,044,223	+45,392	72,466	74,640	+2,174
Kashgar	3,756,475	3,803,463	+46,988	284,050	284,958	+908

This slow increase in Han Chinese migrants to the south, as well as an absolute increase in the Uyghur population in the south, led to clashes over limited resources.¹¹ In a November 3, 2013 article, Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported Uyghurs were not only complaining of displacement from farming land by Han Chinese settlers, but also of exclusion from the subsidies migrants received to convert unused land for cultivation. The article cited two Uyghur farmers from Aksu Prefecture who described how the state disproportionately distributed land and subsidies along ethnic lines. In Hotan, one Uyghur told RFA: "Uyghurs who own farms near the city are often forced to sell their land which might otherwise be expropriated by the government as part of a 'development policy' without compensation."¹²

WESTERN DEVELOPMENT (2000)

Increasing imbalance in rates of growth since the inception of the reform era between China's booming export-driven eastern region and its less networked western region was cause for alarm among Chinese officials, especially given the history of unrest in ethnic minority regions in the west. As a result, there was an element of foresight on the part of the Chinese government to initiate a large-scale economic intervention in the western regions of China. Western Development, conceived in the opaque processes of the State Council in Beijing, was adopted as government policy in 2000.

The character Western Development assumed in Xinjiang was investment in natural resources extraction and the corresponding infrastructure required to export them. The Chinese government subsidized the regional budget by nearly CNY400 billion (US\$60 billion) from 2000 to 2010, of which nearly CNY111 billion (US\$17 billion) was spent on projects spread across transportation and energy industries. Despite the infusions of capital, by 2008, GDP in China's west was only 17.8 percent of the nation's total, an increase of 0.8 percent from 2004. A report published in 2010 by the Center for Studies of China Western Economic Development at North-west University in Xi'an revealed that in 2007, the average Xinjiang income was estimated at CNY13,775 per year (US\$1,912) against the estimated average Beijing/Shanghai income of CNY55,752 per year (US\$7,740).¹³ However, as Toops outlines in his 2004 analysis, relocation "inducements and incentives" for Han Chinese featured in Western Development policies, as a narrative of untapped "frontier"

opportunities prevailed.¹⁴

Although the above statistics revealed the quest for material equality region-to-region had some way to go, the figures disclosed little about differences in inter-ethnic income. Considering the complex ethnic composition and politics of Xinjiang, inter-ethnic parity appears to be a key cross cutting requirement for prosperity in the region. Nevertheless, research indicated Uyghurs in Xinjiang experienced poverty disproportionately to their Han Chinese counterparts. These inter-ethnic discrepancies were detected early on during Western Development. Writing in 2004, Nicholas Bequelin commented:

...the socio-economic development of ethnic minorities continues to fall behind on all indicators: southern Xinjiang (with a 95 per cent non-Han population has on average per capita income half the provincial average. In the more prosperous Yili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, bordering Kazakhstan, 98 per cent of the officially designed "poor" population are non-Han.¹⁵

After Bequelin made his remarks, other analyses suggested there had been no improvement in conditions. In 2005, a comparative study by Chaudhuri of per capita incomes and population by ethnicity in northern and southern Xinjiang disclosed remarkable disparities. For instance, Karamay in the north with a 78 percent Han Chinese population recorded a per capita GDP of CNY45,033 (US\$7,259), as compared to a per capita GDP of CNY1,977 (US\$319) in Hotan with a 97 percent Uyghur population. The highest per capita GDP of any Uyghur majority prefecture (Turpan) was CNY2,105 (US\$7,740).¹⁶ Research undertaken by Cao on Xinjiang in 2008 concluded there was a high correlation between poverty designated counties and counties with high ethnic minority population densities.¹⁷ In addition, Hopper and Webber's 2009 analysis of Han Chinese and Uyghur migrants to Urumqi found Han Chinese incomes were generally higher than Uyghur ones.¹⁸ This latter conclusion gave rise to the alarming suggestion that inter-ethnic differences in income cannot be solely attributed to an urban-rural or north-south fault line.

The indications of discrimination were replicated in the job hiring process. The Xinjiang authorities do not in general provide ethnically disaggregated statistics for unemployment. However, non-state sources signified discrimination was in evidence. The now imprisoned Uyghur economist, Ilham Tohti believed the number of Uyghurs who were unemployed had been disproportionately large for some years. He told Radio Free Asia in 2010 that according to his research by the time the implementation of Western Development was in process, 1.5 million people

were unemployed in Xinjiang. Tohti implied the majority of these people were in the Uyghur community.¹⁹ Furthermore, inequality in the job market was largely based on ethnicity. In 2008, Grose reported urban Uyghurs were twice as likely to be unemployed compared to their Han Chinese counterparts.²⁰ In their 2004 research, Hopper and Webber surveyed Uyghur and Han Chinese attitudes to employment opportunities. Asked whether employment conditions in Xinjiang were better or worse than ten years earlier, 76.3 percent of Uyghurs stated that the employment situation was worse, while only 48.6 percent of Han Chinese felt the situation had worsened.²¹

According to a Hong Kong based scholar, discriminatory practices in Xinjiang aggravated economic disparities between Uyghurs and Han Chinese.²² The natural resource extraction industry in Xinjiang is dominated by Han Chinese labor and managed in line with central government directives.²³ Research conducted by the Congressional Executive Commission on China spanning six years of Western Development illustrates discrimination against Uyghur candidates for jobs with the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, the civil service, and in the regional education sector.²⁴ Maurer-Fazio's 2012 study of the challenges facing ethnic minority applicants for jobs advertised on the Internet discovered that Uyghur women faced a high degree of discrimination in the labor market.²⁵

An additional aspect to this discrimination was traceable to a perceived majority responsibility to bring "progress" to minority peoples, which can be characterized as a mission to implant the material and cultural benefits of Chinese civilization. The import of Han Chinese human capital to pick up the perceived shortfall of skilled workers in the local labor market and to act as development advisors were representative of such attitudes. The patrician approach to minority region economic development contributed to the Uyghur perception of outsider ownership over state development initiatives and reinforced exclusion from policy formation and implementation. Conversely, many Han Chinese in the region highlighted how state policies discriminated *in favor* of Uyghurs, such as the lower academic requirements for college entrance.

While the Western Development era ushered in a period of increased economic activity, Chinese authorities intensified restrictions on Uyghur freedom of speech. Post 9/11, Chinese officials rebranded Uyghur ma expressions of peaceful dissent as terrorism, and initiated a series of crackdowns and Strike Hard campaigns. Against this backdrop of harsh

punishment for political expression, it became extremely unlikely that Uyghurs at the grassroots would speak out on the negative effects of Western Development. As a result, rates of inequity went largely unchecked and unvoiced frustrations accumulated. Even within the Party framework, meaningful Uyghur representation was non-existent as Han Chinese dominated the decision-making role of Party Secretary at regional, prefectural, municipal and county levels.

FIRST WORK FORUM (2010)

Frustrations reached boiling point in July 2009 when an outbreak of deadly unrest shook the regional capital of Urumqi. The unrest was significant enough to warrant central government attention. In order to attend to the crisis, then-President Hu Jintao cut short his attendance at a G8 summit in Italy to concentrate on the increasing tensions between the Han Chinese and Uyghur communities in Xinjiang. This level of responsiveness was repeated when almost one year later, a Work Forum was convened between 17 and 19 May 2010 in Beijing, which aimed to map out regional strategies to diffuse tensions. All nine members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee attended the Work Forum. The fine point put on economic issues during the meeting signaled the nature of the fault lines underlying the 5 July unrest.

The outcome of the Work Forum was largely disappointing despite a tacit acknowledgement of an economic dimension to Uyghur discontent. The overall conclusion was to continue to infuse the Xinjiang economy with more state money while ignoring the problem of inter-ethnic income disparity and job market discrimination. There was a slight shift from Western Development policies towards a more spatially dispersed investment pattern. However, rates of investment between the natural resources extraction industry and indigenous Uyghur economic activity were slanted toward the former. Given the renewed emphasis, the government failed to act upon discriminatory hiring practices in the natural resources sector. For example, the Work Forum did not initiate a policy that would increase the ratio of Uyghurs employed in the natural resources industries.

A new spin on the familiar pattern of transplanted Han Chinese expertise emerging from the Work Forum was the pairing of 19 prosperous provinces and municipalities from eastern China with 82 impoverished

areas of Xinjiang, an arrangement that expected to transfer financial and human capital. From 2011 to 2020, 0.3–0.6 percent of fiscal revenue from the eastern provincial and municipal governments would be invested in the targeted areas in Xinjiang. However, the absence of civil society oversight mechanisms for the scheme left the question of development ownership unanswered. The lack of monitoring procedures for the pairing initiative, as well as other policies for reinvigorated Western Development through the Work Forum, ensured that grassroots stakeholder input on policy performance was absent and any consequent reassessment and realignment of policy in their interests unlikely.

Nicholas Bequelin argued the state development model in general in Xinjiang was primarily designed to integrate the region with China.²⁶ The pairing assistance program was consistent with this approach and reinforced a top down approach towards development in minority regions.²⁷ The lack of participatory mechanisms in place to ensure development represented local needs as perceived by the target community highlighted a persistent civilizing mission among Chinese officials.²⁸ In relation to the potential success of the regional pairing scheme in considering local development priorities, Stanley Toops commented: “The coordination of all of these projects will be quite difficult particularly since the experts from the east coast may not be very familiar with local conditions in Xinjiang.”²⁹ Nevertheless, “pairing assistance” gave state authorities a renewed developmental platform with which to boost its presence in Uyghur majority areas in the south.

Although an objective assessment of the impact the policies of the first Work Forum had on alleviating Uyghur poverty in the south of Xinjiang cannot be made without fully disaggregated statistics, it is possible to look at the metrics available at the prefectural level, especially for areas where large numbers of Uyghur and Han Chinese live. According to data available in the 2013 *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook*, Kashgar, Hotan and Aksu Prefectures fell into the bottom third of 15 administrative areas surveyed in at least one of three economic measures available (see Table 3).³⁰ Kashgar is in the bottom third in two measures, Hotan in one and Aksu in one. All three prefectures measured in the bottom third in terms of GDP per capita; however, Hotan measured in the top third in terms of average wages and employment. A 2015 *Phoenix Weekly* report showed that the per capita GDP in each of the four southern prefectures (Kashgar, Hotan, Kizilsu and Aksu) in Xinjiang is less than 45 percent of the regional average. In addition, 85 percent of the rural poor and 63 percent of the

unemployed were found in these four prefectures.³¹

Table 3 also demonstrates the correlation between natural resource areas and the regional capital, Urumqi, with higher ranking in economic measures. As illustrated above, Han Chinese populate Karamay and Urumqi in the majority; both administrative units registered in the top third for all three measures. Six of the seven majority populated Han Chinese administrative units ranked at least in the top third for at least one measure. Of the five majority Uyghur administrative units three ranked once in the top third.

TABLE 3
GDP PER CAPITA, AVERAGE WAGES AND EMPLOYMENT RANKED
BY ADMINISTRATIVE AREA 2012

<i>Administrative Unit</i>	<i>Rank in GDP per capita (High to Low)</i>	<i>Rank in Average Wages (High to Low)</i>	<i>Rank in Employment (High to Low)</i>
Aksu	11	9	6
Altay	10	15	7
Bayingolin	2	5	11
Bortala	8	13	14
Hotan	15	4	5
Ili	12	12	10
Karamay	1	1	1
Kashgar	13	10	15
Kizilsu	14	11	4
Kumul	6	6	7
Sanji	5	8	9
Shihezi	3	7	3
Tarbagatay	9	14	2
Turpan	7	3	12
Urumqi	4	2	3

Given evidence of unaddressed ethnic imbalances in economic opportunity and levels of poverty since Western Development and the first Xinjiang Work Forum, the following conclusion made by Vicziany

and Zhang in 2004 could feasibly have been applied to conditions in 2013-14: "The perception is that this development strategy privileges the Han and disadvantages the Uyghur and other minorities. Such perceptions reinforce the negative images of the development process – negative images fed by empirical evidence showing the decline of employment opportunities for Uyghur people in skilled urban jobs and the tertiary sector."³²

SECOND WORK FORUM (2014)

In the context of outbreaks of unrest in Xinjiang, Chinese officials convened the second Xinjiang Work Forum in May 2014, which introduced some measurable benchmarks in terms of boosting employment opportunities for ethnic minorities.³³ However, the Work Forum's central focus on "ethnic mingling," is an indication that the state believes interethnic economic disparities will dissipate as cultural lines are redrawn.³⁴

"Ethnic mingling" reemphasized a commitment to "bilingual" education, as well as encouragement for Uyghurs to move to eastern China for employment and education purposes.³⁵ "Ethnic mingling" also encouraged local officials to implement measures promoting Han Chinese migration to the south. Reports of cash rewards for couples entering mixed marriages in Cherchen and the announcement of a new mixed ethnicity settlement near Hotan were illustrative of the change in approach.³⁶

The policy of "ethnic mingling" did not accommodate those Uyghurs in the south who did not wish to participate. Such Uyghurs, already aware of the north-south axis imbalance in development, could potentially see the encouragement of mixed marriages and mixed communities as further localizing inequity and a threat to distinct Uyghur customs. In a policy environment that incentivized Han Chinese migration to the resource-scarce south and a body of evidence indicating the failure of development to improve Uyghur living standards, it was reasonable to conclude that economic and demographic conditions aggravated tensions in the south. Regarding the role of these two aspects in the violence, Reza Hasmath concluded:

Perhaps the most culpable factor behind current ethnic tensions is socio-economic, such as segmented labour shares and unequal sectoral distribution in occupational categories. This is coupled with growing migration to Xinjiang (most notably, Hans to Urumqi) intensifying economic inequalities between Uyghurs and Hans. Hans earn more than Uyghurs in Xinjiang. They are over-represented in high-status and high-paying occupations (for example,

professional and managerial jobs), in which more than 35 per cent of the Han working population works in comparison to 13 per cent of Uyghurs.³⁷

CONCLUSION

In a speech delivered at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan in 2013, Chinese president Xi Jinping advanced the Silk Road Economic Belt Initiative,³⁸ a trade proposal broader in scale than any before encompassing South Asia, Central Asia, Eurasia, Europe and the Middle East that would augment the role of Xinjiang as China's primary land gateway to Eurasia.³⁹ The Silk Road Economic Belt aimed to integrate these regions through infrastructure and trade with China underwriting the costs of necessary construction.⁴⁰ As Xi explained in his 2013 speech, the Silk Road Economic Belt "boasts a 3-billion population and a market that is unparalleled both in scale and potential."⁴¹

The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road collectively form the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), an ambitious plan to place China at the center of global trade routes and finance. Given the imperative to sustain economic growth, "China has multiple reasons to push these initiatives in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe: geo-strategy, access to raw materials such as oil, and new markets. It also creates jobs."

However, BRI raised familiar questions for the Uyghur; namely, what would be their role in influencing investment and economic policies toward their interests. Previous imposed remedies for economic development in Xinjiang had not been successful in alleviating economic discrimination and inequity among the Uyghur. These top down approaches were in critical need of reform. The necessity of Uyghur input into policy decision-making and implementation on economic development not only would ensure more equitable outcomes but would also endow Uyghur communities with meaningful agency.

Nevertheless, the ideology of power remains the dominant guiding factor in policy formation among Chinese officials. By 2016, Uyghurs had an answer to the question of their role in the BRI. Mass internment, a dramatic jump in prison sentences, and reports of forced labor indicated the Chinese authorities aim to resolve Uyghur integration into China and the economy through force. A circumstance that means, for the foreseeable future, the Uyghurs will continue to be a marginalized a people in their homeland.

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CHINA'S UYGHUR POLICY IN THE POST-COLD WAR PERIOD

MAHESH RANJAN DEBATA

China's Uyghur policy since the establishment of People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 has been well crafted, calculated and assimilationist in nature, and has become more astute, aggressive and assertive in the last few years suiting to her strategic and security interests in Xinjiang, the "northwest frontier"¹, which China considers as its integral part and one of her "core interests."² Since the Uyghurs, the majority ethnic group in Xinjiang, have been demanding a separate homeland (East Turkestan) out of China, Chinese central government vindicates its position on Xinjiang and policy towards the Uyghurs, which has been summarized in a government document: a) Xinjiang is an "inalienable part" of China; b) Xinjiang has never been "East Turkistan" (as claimed by the Uyghurs), c) all nationalities living in the country (including those in Xinjiang) are part of the Chinese nation; d) the Uyghur ethnic group was formed through a long process of migration and integration; e) Xinjiang's ethnic culture is part of the Chinese culture; f) Multiple religions have long coexisted in Xinjiang; and g) Islam is neither an indigenous nor the sole belief system of the Uyghurs.³ It is against this background that this paper discusses China's policy towards Uyghurs in the post-1949 period with a special focus on the three decades of post-Cold War period that have witnessed "violent separatism"⁴, religious extremism and terrorism. Chinese policy in the last seven decades, as analysed in this paper, is a mixture of soft (social, economic, cultural), but mostly hard (military and counterterrorism), keeping in view the needs and demands of time, necessity and situation. This paper deciphers the ineluctable Chinese logic to maintain its stronghold in the troubled Xinjiang region citing internal disturbances and external influences. Since Xinjiang is the lynch-pin to China's 21st century signature strategy Belt and Road Initiative (BRI),

this paper believes, Chinese government makes every possible bid to safeguard her greater national interests in this volatile borderland.

CHINA'S UYGHUR POLICY

The Chinese central government policy towards its 55 minority ethnic groups (or nationalities) in general and towards Uyghurs in particular aims at assimilating them into the national mainstream or the Chinese nation. Chinese policy, as analysed in this paper, is broadly divided into: i) Assimilation policies during the quarter century rule by Mao Tse Tung (1949-1976) and preferential policies during Deng Xiaoping's first decade of rule (1976-1989); ii) policies during the first decade of post-Cold War period (1991-2000); iii) Counter-terrorism policies.

Assimilation through Strictly Maoist Ideals

Mao Tse Tung, the supreme leader of the CCP, understood well the importance and necessity of keeping Xinjiang under Chinese control, by hook or by crook, because he himself was witness to the anti-Chinese separatist moves by the Uyghurs in 1933 and throughout 1940s. After the "liberation of Xinjiang without bloodshed" by People's Liberation Army (PLA) in the year 1949, the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) announced its policy in 1950 for the ethnic minorities (minority nationalities as Chinese call them) of the country that aimed at consolidation of Chinese rule amidst internal subversion and external influence. Ethnic resentment in Xinjiang compelled Mao to devise a policy with direction to implement it strictly and ruthlessly if need be. Externally, it was reported that great powers like USA and the erstwhile Soviet Union, who were at loggerheads then, did not leave any stone unturned to nourish their selfish ends in China's western flank, leading to Chinese fear of both powers playing the Uyghur card. For example, the US attempted to arouse ethnic unrest in Xinjiang and to extend support to establishment of an Islamic republic in China. However, the Chinese smelt greater danger from Joseph Stalin-ruled Russia, which had three-decades long presence and strong influence in Xinjiang on the socio-economic and cultural life of the people of Xinjiang. Further, in the 1950s, Soviet Union carried a propaganda explaining the superiority of the Soviet socialist system that resulted in a bitter ideological rivalry between China and Soviet Union in 1956. To minimise the Soviet threat and tone down the internal issues, CCP's point-man in Xinjiang, Wang Enmao resorted mostly to repressive measures to keep Xinjiang

within the Chinese orbit.⁵ Mao's policy was a faithful reflection and reorientation of the Qing (19th century) policy⁶ that comprised military-civilian administration with PLA as the fountainhead, population (Han) transfer under the slogan "Go West Young Han", and assimilationist cultural, religious and language policies and led to strong Chinese presence in Xinjiang, which critics dub as "Hanification."⁷ Though Mao had promised to confer some amount of autonomy to minorities in Xinjiang (especially Uyghurs) during his famous "Long March" in 1936, the Chinese government continued the policy that suited it the best, except a token gesture, i.e. renaming Xinjiang as Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) on 1st October 1955 and installing an ethnic Uyghur as the Chairman or Provincial Governor of XUAR. Even the People's Republic of China Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law issued by the second session of the sixth National People's Congress on 31 May 1984, which was amended later on 28 February 2001 at the 12th meeting of the Standing Committee of the ninth National People's Congress, could not, perhaps did not, provide the necessary stimulus to what the ethnic minorities had aspired for.

At Mao's insistence, the state-sponsored strong tactics and stringent measures were used during the "Hundred Flowers Bloom" and continued brazenly during the "Great Leap Forward" and even during the "Cultural Revolution". The policies during the "Great Leap Forward", which had a more radical character and based on strictly Maoist ideals, such as launching of communes, abolition of material incentives, curtailment of private plots, virtual closure of rural markets and *bazaars*), added more emphasis on the policy of assimilation or fusion by force. Further, during the Cultural Revolution, the infamous reign of terror by the Red Guards clamped down on those who tried to hide under the cloak of religion and indulged in separatist moves. The most significant of these measures was uninterrupted and targeted religions, particularly Buddhism and Islam. Even though Tibetan minority group was the main target following the Lhasa riots in 1959 and the subsequent incident of the Dalai Lama seeking asylum in India, Uyghurs of Xinjiang were not spared.

In the process of post-1949 "Long March" to maximize socio-economic control over the Uyghurs, the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), "a hybrid of military, bureaucracy and enterprise"⁸, became the flag bearer of Chinese policy. While the XPCC Information Office describes it as a "special social organization with economic planning directly supervised by the State to perform duties of

cultivating and guarding the frontier areas entrusted to it by the Central Government”⁹, the Uyghurs accuse it of playing the role of a “Chinese paramilitary force colonizing East Turkestan.”¹⁰ A Western scholar dubs the XPCC as “a Han organization in a non-Han region”, being evolved as a “fascinating blend of Maoist ideals (self-reliance, self-sufficiency, human struggle and self-sacrifice under arduous conditions) and moderate and pragmatic notions (technological expertise, scientific management and development)”. XPCC became “an important symbol and vehicle of CCP’s efforts to control and integrate the strategic and traditionally non-Han borderlands”.¹¹ The role and functions of XPCC have been summed up justifiably in a White Paper issued by China’s Information State Council in 2014 in the following words:

The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) started from scratch 60 years ago. It has since made strenuous efforts to fulfill faithfully the responsibilities the state has entrusted to it to cultivate and guard the border areas. Despite a harsh natural environment, XPCC workers put down roots in Xinjiang. They have reclaimed ecological oases from the desolate Gobi desert, initiated Xinjiang’s modernization, built large-scale agriculture and industrial and mining enterprises, and established new cities and towns through joining hands with local people of all ethnic groups. Combining the functions of production, administration, and defense, the XPCC has made indelible contributions to the development of Xinjiang, by promoting unity among ethnic groups, maintaining social stability, and strengthening national border defense.¹²

Minority Pacification through Affirmative Action

Post-Cultural Revolution period saw a major shift in China’s domestic policy and a new era of reform, reorientation and reconstruction was ushered in. The CCP made renewed efforts to win the hearts and minds of the minorities by mending the wrongdoings of the previous regime. Deng Xiaoping appeared as the most powerful leader, perhaps one of the smartest Chinese leaders, and visionary to the core, with reforms in mind as the tool to pacify Uyghurs. Two noteworthy things (one internal and another external) can be mentioned here: a) Deng understood well the need for unflinching support of the minority groups for China’s liberalization programme in 1979, which necessitated the abundant natural resources of the western region of China, where more than 90 per cent of the country’s ethnic population lives in; and b) the critical situation in the neighbourhood, because of Great Islamic Revolution in Iran and Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the same year (1979). Under a “broader,

deeper and more variegated"¹³ preferential policy, Deng doled out some largesse in socio-economic and political terms and forms, particularly in "family planning, school admissions, the hiring and promotion, the financing and taxation of businesses, and regional infrastructural support."¹⁴ Important part of this affirmative action that suited the Uyghurs the most was the freedom to profess and practice their religion, Islam. The religious reform package included building of mosques and allowing Haj pilgrimage. However, Deng's policies resulted in, according to a scholar, "contradictory dynamics in Xinjiang that reinvigorated the potential for the convergence of internal unrest and external interference by the end of 1980s, further laying the foundation for the intensification of ethnic minority opposition throughout 1990s."¹⁵

Post-Cold War "Carrot and Stick" Policy

The emergence of five independent republics in Central Asia following the Soviet collapse not only created a peculiar geopolitical and geostrategic situation, but also heralded insurmountable challenges. Inimical forces spread their tentacles and dealt a body blow to regional peace and stability thereby creating a shattered security zone. The states from Mongolia to Iran and provinces from Tibet and Xinjiang to Caucasus region and India's Kashmir all felt the reverberation of instability. Xinjiang became the main geopolitical anchor in the region with all its potential for a possible conflagration in the region. In the meantime, the South and Central Asian region witnessed five major and potentially destabilizing regional conflicts or crises during the 1991-2001 period - Afghan conflict and the rise of Taliban (1996-2001), civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1996), volatile situation in Ferghana Valley and Indo-Pak conflict (Kargil War in 1999). The Chinese believed that Xinjiang's proximity and susceptibility to these external influences would undoubtedly be a potential threat to the authority, unity and territorial integrity of China, and this apprehension came true when Xinjiang witnessed a spate of violent separatist and terrorist attacks. China initially considered the Uyghur separatism as domestic ethnic dissent, as one scholar points out, which eventually snowballed into a larger jihadist movement against China, receiving international jihadist support and attention. And in this process, the pro-Uyghur and anti-Chinese jihadist propaganda in recent times aims at attracting disgruntled Uyghurs as new recruits to wage *jihad* against China.¹⁶

It is imperative here to quote some scholars about the "waves of

terrorism” and “stages of terrorism” in Xinjiang. According to Yanbin and Li, out of four waves of terrorism, during the first wave (1990-1995), with Baren incident of April 1990 as the turning point, terrorists considered themselves capable of grabbing power through arms and thus indulged in a series of explosions and riots. While the second wave (1996-1997) was characterized by chain assassinations culminating in the Ili incident on 5 February 1997, the third wave (end of 1997 to 1999) featured explosions and assassinations commanded by organizations outside China or foreign terrorists. During the fourth wave (second half of 1999 onwards), transnational terrorist organizations (Al Qaeda, Taliban, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) were found in Xinjiang for the first time to develop their networks and set up armed forces and training bases and produce arms and ammunitions within China through their Uyghur cadres.¹⁷ One scholar talks about “six stages” of terrorism in Xinjiang since 1990. During this period, the *East Turkestan Islamic Movement* (ETIM), which later became *Turkestan Islamic Party* (TIP), demonstrated its growing capabilities such as tactics, target selection, geographic reach, and international connections. Further, the Tiananmen Square attack (2013) served as the beginning of the “seventh stage” of Uyghur-linked terrorism, a stage that included attacks outside Xinjiang. On 28 October 2013, an Uyghur drove a jeep packed with explosives and carrying his wife and mother into a crowd in Tiananmen Square, killing two civilians.¹⁸ This horrible state of affairs in Xinjiang in the 1990s created further apprehension in the Chinese decision making circles and thus compelled the Chinese government to amend its “soft policy” towards Uyghurs and initiate a “carrot and stick” policy. Two important segments of this policy taken up by the Chinese government during this period were: a) the Great Western Development Programme; and b) military crackdown as part of counter terrorism strategy. While the former aimed to bring about all round prosperity of Xinjiang through economic development, the latter unleashed crackdown on the separatists, splittists, anti-national and anti-Chinese elements to establish peace and stability. In this context, it is important to note that the “stick” virtually replaced the “carrot”, and “absolutely no mercy policy”¹⁹ or “show no mercy”²⁰ against the militants and terrorists became the order of the day.

The Great Western Development Programme (*xibu da kaifa* in Chinese), a kind of Chinese “soft policy”,²¹ was announced during the Ninth NPC in March 1999 by Chinese Premier Jiang Zemin²² as “a major state project of nation-building directed at the interior provincial-level jurisdictions in

order to encourage endogenous economic growth, to reduce socio-economic inequalities, and to ensure social and political stability in non-Han areas of the PRC²³, especially the western part of the country. The western region comprises the provinces of Sichuan, Gansu, Guizhou, Ningxia, Yunnan, Qinghai, and Shaanxi, the municipality of Chongqing, and the two autonomous regions of Xinjiang and Xizang (Tibet), and makes up more than 56 per cent of China's land mass, with 23 per cent of the country's total population, and having half of the nation's mineral resources.²⁴ The programme that includes a number of "programmes and projects implemented on all levels (from the supra-regional to the household levels), and concerning all different spheres such as economics, infrastructure, environment, social structures, education, inland political control, etc."²⁵ aimed at "Leap Frog Development"²⁶ in the ethnic minorities dominated regions in general and Xinjiang in particular. On the successes of this programme in the first decade of its launching (between 1999 and 2009), the Chinese government, in a White Paper published by the Information State Council, showcased the "remarkable development in Xinjiang benefitting the minority people living there."²⁷ One Chinese scholar supplements to the above view by stating that "because of this Programme, the Xinjiang province, which was once dubbed as western China's economic 'depression' in the past, has become China's 'bridgehead' open to the countries in Central Asia, South Asia and Eastern Europe."²⁸ However, it is argued that "the programme, its policies and legal nuances involved in it may be the latest evolving minority policy of China as this programme is intended as a great step to further and greater integration of ethnic minorities and ultimately assimilation into the process of signification. It is actually an attempt to quell ethnic unrest, solidify the Chinese nation and legitimize the current regime by 'taming the wild west.'²⁹

The persistent violence perpetrated by the Uyghurs in Xinjiang compelled the Chinese authorities to devise a new strategy in the mid-1990s and the offshoot was "Strike Hard, Maximum Pressure Campaign." Though this military measure, in its letter and spirit, aimed at launching a crackdown on criminals in general, it targeted the unofficial anti-government political organizations and particularly the separatists in Tibet, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang. The statement of the Bureau of Public Safety confirmed this when it demanded that "the crackdown should mainly focus on the violent and terrorist cases organized and manipulated by national separatist forces."³⁰ This military crackdown against the Uyghur

separatists was first initiated in 1996 after the violent attacks in the 1990s, further after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in USA, Urumqi riots (5 July 2009) and in 2014. Following the Tiananmen Square attack, Abdullah Mansour, the leader of the Uyghur militant organization, *Turkestan Islamic Party* released a propaganda video praising the plotters and warned of future attacks. The attack carried enormous symbolic significance as it took place near the Great Hall of the People, where a meeting of the plenary session of the Chinese Communist Party was planned.³¹ In return, in May 2014, "Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism" continued with a renewed vigour and missionary zeal to combat against terrorism besides fending off the risks of future terrorist attacks.³²

Counterterrorism Policy

Xinjiang has been a theatre of violent separatist and terrorist activities by Uyghur ethnic group since 1990, the bloodiest being the riots of 5 July 2009 that killed almost 200 people, both Hans and Uyghurs. In order to stave off any challenge from the anti-Chinese forces in Xinjiang, Chinese central government has opted for counterterrorism efforts that predate 9/11 attacks, and have become an integral part of Beijing's new security diplomacy revolving around the transnational threats to Chinese interests,³³ besides being a campaign against the "three evil forces" (terrorism, separatism, and extremism).³⁴ China was among the first few nations which wholeheartedly supported the US "War against Terror," a massive military crackdown against the terrorists after the deadly attack on World Trade Centre and Pentagon in the US on 11 September 2001. Just a day after, Chinese President Jiang Zemin, on 12 September 2001, telephoned President Bush to express his condolences and to offer China's cooperation in the fight against terrorism.³⁵ Immediately within three months or so, China sent a strong and clear-cut message to those Uyghurs, who were engaged in separatist and terrorist activities, through a White Paper 'East Turkistan' Terrorist Forces Cannot Get Away with Impunity on 21 January 2002 warning that the guilty would not be spared and be dealt with iron hand.³⁶ In addition, two important wings of its counterterrorism efforts, National Anti-Terrorism Coordination Group (NATCG) and Anti-Terrorism Bureau, were established to carry out China's anti-terror agenda.³⁷

Following the Kunming attack in 2014, the military crackdown on terrorism had coupled with strict and rapid enforcement of Chinese criminal law. For example, in May 2014, a public mass sentencing of 55

terrorist suspects in a Xinjiang sports stadium attended by thousands of citizens showcased Beijing's resolve to combat terrorism with a firm hand.³⁸ Further, China's National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee adopted the country's first counter-terrorism law on 26 December 2015, which came into force in January 2016, with the primary purpose of addressing terrorism at home and help maintain security and stability. It provides legal support to China's counter-terrorism activities as well as collaboration with the international community. The Chinese central government provides necessary financial support for key regions listed in the country's counter-terrorist plan, whereas the identity and details of professional anti-terrorist forces are established by public security, national security authorities as well as armed forces. A National Intelligence Center (NIC) was established to coordinate inter-departmental and trans-regional efforts on counter-terrorism intelligence and information.³⁹

Chen Quanguo, who became the CCP Secretary in XUAR in mid-2016, after a successful stint in establishing and consolidating Chinese stronghold in Tibet, implemented President Xi Jinping's clarion call to build "great wall of iron" to safeguard national unity, ethnic solidarity and social stability in Xinjiang, an important "security barrier" in northwest China.⁴⁰ Under his leadership, counter-terrorism efforts in Xinjiang included "grid-style social management, a technology-intensive approach to urban governance and intelligence-led policing (as has been seen in cities in China's eastern part since the mid-to-late 2000s)",⁴¹ and establishment of some 7,500 "convenience police stations" in early 2017 and recruitment of a large number of police personnel. This process of stabilizing the important national frontier, which is often criticized as a systematic process of "securitization",⁴² drew largely on a) surveillance network using facial recognition, b) collection of citizens' biometric data, c) GPS tracking of private vehicles, and d) spyware in smart phones of the Uyghurs.⁴³ It has further spruced up China's massive "four-in-one defence" against any anti-Chinese endeavour in Xinjiang, with an estimated 50,000 to 1,00,000 PLA and People's Armed Police (PAP) personnel, 9 to 10 million Han residents and immigrants,⁴⁴ and 2.68 million XPCC cadres⁴⁵ at the helm of affairs.

Policy of De-extremification in Xinjiang

One major component of the Chinese policy post-2014, in addition to "Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism", was the "Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Regulations on De-extremification"

(containing as many as 50 articles) that came into being on 1 April 2017, when the Chinese authorities became aware of two grim facts: a) the religion (Islam) or ideology driven efforts as the crux of anti-Chinese and anti-state activities of the Uyghurs; and b) the report of thousands of Uyghurs joining ISIS in Syria.⁴⁶ The Xinjiang authorities, as clarified in a White Paper released by the Information State Council of China on 17 August 2017, established “vocational education and training centers in accordance with the law to prevent the breeding and spread of terrorism and religious extremism, effectively curbing the frequent terrorist incidents and protecting the rights to life, health, and development of the people of all ethnic groups.”⁴⁷ Whereas the Uyghurs who support the Chinese policy described these centres as “hospitals treating Islam like mental illness”⁴⁸ or “free boarding schools, where trainees enjoy free food and accommodations, learn languages, study laws and acquire skills”⁴⁹, the Uyghur diaspora dubbed the Chinese regulations as “very strict restrictions on Uyghur religious beliefs and practices.”⁵⁰

The Western actors, for example, committees and commissions, government officials of USA, the Western media like the *New York Times*⁵¹ and the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), human rights organizations (the Human Rights Watch) subscribed to the claim that nearly 1.5 million Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims were “extra-judicially interned in political re-education camps” in XUAR as of December 2018.⁵² They accused Chinese government of “mass arbitrary detention, torture, and mistreatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang and systemic and increasingly pervasive controls on daily life there, violating fundamental rights to freedom of expression, religion, and privacy, and protections from torture and unfair trials.”⁵³ While hearing the statements of a Uyghur delegation on “non-discriminatory enjoyment of freedoms and rights in XUAR”, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 30 August 2018 made an eight-point recommendation to China,⁵⁴ to refrain from putting such hardships on Uyghurs.

Amongst the Western countries, the USA led from the front to lambast China on the issue of re-education camps. Firstly, in three congressional hearings⁵⁵ in 2018 and 2019, US legislators expressed concern about the situation in Xinjiang. Secondly, President Donald Trump in October 2019 imposed visa restriction on PRC officials and blacklisted 28 companies and public security bureaus. Besides, top US officials like Secretary of State Michael Pompeo in September 2019 labeled China’s campaign against the Uyghurs an “attempt to erase its own citizens’ Muslim faith and

culture," while China-baiter US Assistant Secretary of Defence, Randall Schriver, went one step further, dubbing the re-education camps as "concentration camps."⁵⁶ Thirdly, in the US House of the Representatives, the "Uighur Intervention and Global Humanitarian Unified Response Act of 2019" or the "UIGHUR Act of 2019" was enacted, despite being criticized by the *Global Times* as a "paper tiger" with no special leverage to affect Xinjiang,⁵⁷ in order "to condemn gross human rights violations of ethnic Turkic Muslims of Xinjiang, and calling for an end to arbitrary detention, torture, and harassment of these communities inside and outside China."⁵⁸

However, China prepared a great wall of defence against these claims and accusations in a couple of ways: a) briefings by top Chinese leaders such as Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi and Chairman of Xinjiang Regional Government, Shohrat Zakir; and b) Mobilisation of international community. According to Wang Yi, "these centers aimed at saving those who were infected by extremist thoughts through education and professional training to uproot extremism and terrorism at the source." Wang added that China's anti-terror campaign in Xinjiang has drawn on the experiences of United States, France, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Describing the Chinese measures as "totally legal, as they are widely recognized as preventive counter-terrorism steps," Wang stated that because of counter-terrorism efforts in Xinjiang, for three years in a row (2017 to 2019), Xinjiang has not witnessed a single terrorist incident. Further, the efforts by the government in Xinjiang, Wang boasts, have not only provided security for local residents, but also protected religious freedom, thus making active and important contributions to global anti-terror cause and de-radicalization efforts. The freedom of religious belief, including Islam, is fully ensured in Xinjiang, where there are over 24,000 mosques, or one for every 530 Muslims, which is a higher ratio than many Islamic countries, Wang noted.⁵⁹ Earlier in March 2019, Shohrat Zakir, on the sidelines of annual National Legislative Session, while deploring the claims by external forces stated that "Xinjiang is a victim of terrorism and extremism, and the education and training centers aim to fundamentally eliminate the environment for terrorism and extremism." Zakir emphasized that Xinjiang in its counter-terrorism and de-extremification effort is not targeting any specific ethnic groups or religions, rather the three evil forces. To him, "the centres protect the students' dignity, prohibit any form of insult against them, and protect their personal freedom."⁶⁰ Further, in response to a bid by 22 countries

(20 European countries, New Zealand and Japan) on 10 July 2019 which issued a Joint Statement urging the UN Human Rights Council to prevent China from arbitrary mass detention, surveillance, and restriction on freedom of movement in Xinjiang, China mobilized a total of 51 countries, including 28 Islamic nations, which signed and sent a joint letter immediately to the United Nations expressing support to China's policies in Xinjiang. Chinese authorities facilitated the visit of more than 70 foreign delegations from 91 countries and regions, or some 1,000 people to Xinjiang, who described China's counter-terrorism and de-radicalization efforts as a role-model for others."⁶¹

CONCLUSION

As analysed above, Xinjiang matters most for China because of its geostrategic importance as well as it being the fulcrum of China's new age military-economic strategy, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China not only believes, but also lets the world community believe that its policy in Xinjiang is apt, timely and suited most to its national interest. And describing this matter as out and out internal, Chinese central government sends the message to the world that no outside or external intervention or influence in Xinjiang can be brooked. China does not at all care what others think about Chinese policy towards Uyghurs and has braved all criticism with a stronger zeal. Since as a nation state, its primary duty and utmost responsibility is to ensure its national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, Chinese logic behind its policy in Xinjiang seems ineluctable. It is a well known fact that the security situation across the globe in the post-Soviet period has been jeopardized because of the rise and growth of non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, religious extremism, transnational drug trafficking, smuggling of arms and military technologies, epidemics such as HIV/AIDS and ecological disaster. Xinjiang is not left untouched by these intimidating forces that have affected peace, progress and stability in South and Central Asian region. China has made efforts at the domestic front and has also mobilized international opinion against any anti-national and anti-Chinese activities on its soil and is hell-bent on continuing its efforts more rigorously and vigorously.

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XINJIANG STUDIES AND ITS RELEVANCE IN INDIA

DEBASISH CHAUDHURI

Xinjiang was never a cradle of any great civilization, rather it was a confluence of all major civilizations of the world. Being situated in the hub of the Silk Road, several migrated populations of Indo-European, Turkic and Mongolian origins, hordes of nomadic people, and caravanserais of traders, warriors, foreign envoys and men of several religions left their footprints in Xinjiang. In the modern period, Xinjiang became a battleground for competing powers – China, Britain, Russia, later Soviet Union, other powers and the Uyghur people. Being located geographically in the fringes of both Chinese and the Muslim world, Xinjiang remained outside the immediate academic concern. As Xinjiang was trapped between two colossal socialist powers for a long time until the Soviet disintegration, it was practically shrouded beyond international gaze, media attention and academic interests.

Xinjiang is known to different people by different names, and similarly the study of Xinjiang has different meanings for researchers from different disciplines and nationalities. In the ancient Chinese sources, the region is referred to as Western Region (*Xiyu*) or Western Countries, and the name is still very much prevalent in the Chinese discourse of the region. In the non-Chinese sources Xinjiang is known as Chinese Central Asia, Chinese Turkestan, Eastern Turkestan, Uyghurstan etc. The term Uyghur ñli, meaning “the country of the Uyghur” is found in a medieval Uyghur manuscripts. Due to the Muslim dominance, south Xinjiang was mentioned as *Huibu* or *Huijiang* (all Muslims were generally known by a common term Hui in China until the PRC period) in the Qing historical records. This part of Xinjiang is also frequently mentioned as Kashgaria or Altishahr which comprises of six principal oasis cities, namely, Khotan, Kashgar, Yarkand, Yangi Hissar, Ush Turfan and Aksu. In 1984, the Qing dynasty began to call the region Xinjiang. In 1955, the PRC government

introduced the contemporary nomenclature of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). All these names have different connotations and are used by scholars with different ideological or academic orientation.

Dr. Nathan Light, a sociologist and anthropologist with thorough knowledge of multiple language sources including Uyghur, in his annotated bibliography notes that most of the brief accounts of travelers and explorers in English language are available in JSTOR database. According to him, search by different geographic terms in JSTOR.com reveals following results: 1583 for Sinkiang, 873 for Xinjiang, 51 for Hsin Chiang; 982 for Chinese Turkestan and 366 for Eastern Turkestan. At least 800 more results can be found if Turkistan, an alternate spelling for Turkestan is used.¹

Research on Xinjiang in China is often considered as a part of borderland history and geography studies and Xinjiang is referred to as northwestern borderland. Some Chinese scholars point out the following three periods in which research on Xinjiang flourished: middle and latter half of nineteenth century; between 1920s and 1940s; and last sixty years since the establishment of new China. The sixty years period is further divided into three phases: between 1949 and 1966 is the first phase of academic research on Xinjiang after liberation, but this phase is not productive enough as far as specialized research is concerned; during 1990s research on northwest improved both qualitatively and quantitatively; and in the first decade of twenty-first century Xinjiang study touched a new height with two special projects on the region under the auspices of Chinese national social science foundation.² According to one Chinese scholar, contribution of the West in Xinjiang research in the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century far exceeded that of Chinese scholars. The entire period has been divided into two phases: prior to 1890 the Western (particularly Russian and the British) scholarly interest was motivated by colonial expansionism; and from 1890s to early nineteenth century Western research on Xinjiang was more of academic significance and became an important constituent of orientalist research, the major feature of which was cultural invasion and plundering of heritage properties.³

According to Rong Xinjiang, a professor of Beijing University, research on Xinjiang in the 1950s was not impressive because firstly, the social turmoil before liberation allowed little preparation and secondly, post-liberation political movements exhausted the strength of researchers. Between 1949 and the beginning of Cultural Revolution in 1966, main focus of researchers were history, archeology and ethnography of Xinjiang.

Some archeological findings during this period were published only after the end of Cultural Revolution in 1976.⁴ Due to tensions between China and the erstwhile USSR and radical politics of Cultural Revolution, research on the region suffered in both the countries. Ablet Kamalov suggests that from 1962 to 1985 Uyghur studies in the Kazakh Academy of Sciences was restricted to research in three main fields – language, history, literature and art.⁵

Lack of serious research on Xinjiang from 1949 to the early 1980s is evident from any annotated bibliography. Raphael Israeli's 1994 book *Islam in China: a Critical Bibliography* contains 33 entries under Sinkiang (Turkestan) section, of which 15 were written before 1949, whereas only three were written during 1960s and 1970s. Many scholars identified early 1980s as period of recovery of Xinjiang study. The above mentioned bibliography compiled by Nathan Light comprises of more than 70 percent of entries covering the period between 1980 and 2005, about 32 percent and 17.5 percent of these works were written in the 1990s and in the first five years of twenty-first century respectively. In fact, mounting interest about the people, language, culture, history, society, economy, politics, art, and literature of Xinjiang is a phenomenon of only last two to three decades. Another important aspect of Xinjiang research in last three decades is that scholars of almost all disciplines have contributed to the study of the region. This paper attempts to capture major trends and branches of vast areas of Xinjiang study. It also discusses state of Xinjiang study in India and addresses its relevance.

EXPLORERS AND TRAVELERS ON THE SILK ROAD AND DUNHUANG STUDIES

The ancient communication network connecting China, India, Persia, Arabian Peninsula, vast Eurasian plain and Europe had been frequented by geographers, travelers, archaeologists and imperial colonialists since early nineteenth century who gathered huge repository of first-hand knowledge about the history, geography, ethnography and socio-political life of Xinjiang. The Western geographers Alexander von Humboldt, Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen, Albert Herrmann, Ellsworth Huntington and later scholar like Owen Lattimore developed various theses on direct connections between historical evolution of Xinjiang and environmental changes of the region. Since the middle of 19th century, Britain and Russia engaged in political rivalry over Xinjiang and one of the most interesting

features of this colonial contest was competition for knowledge about the region. As a collector of manuscripts and data on archeology, zoology, geography and anthropology, Russian explorer Nikolai M. Przhevaski's activities in Xinjiang, Mongolia, Gansu, Qinghai, Tibet and Ningxia between 1870 and 1885 were quite remarkable.⁶ Another group of foreign explorers, mostly from European countries, Sven Hedin, Aurel Stein, Von Le Coq, Paul Pelliot, Albert Grünwedel as well as Sergei Oldenburg of Russia, Langdon Warner of the United States, Otani Kozui of Japan and Chinese explorer Huang Weibi flocked to Xinjiang to collect manuscripts and antiquities in the early part of the twentieth century. Peter Hopkirk's book *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road* has thrown light on such activities during these expeditions in Xinjiang. Many Chinese scholars researched and relooked into the earlier findings by these Western explorers and Chinese archeologists, and in 1990s research on the Silk Road history and Dunhuang study became very popular in China. The Chinese scholars appear to have re-evaluated contributions of the foreign expeditions in Xinjiang in the first half of the last century.⁷

TURKOLOGY AND ALTAIC STUDIES

The first comprehensive work of Turkic language and people of the medieval period is *Diwan ul-Lughat it-Turk* (Dictionary of Turkic Languages) by Mahmud al-Kashgari. Following this tradition, a more scientific approach to Turkology developed in the West through linguistic enquiry into lexical materials of Turkic people. Decipherment and translation of the Orkhan inscription, an important historical source of early history of the Turks, is another breakthrough in this area of scholarship. At the end of the 19th century, Turkology, a new branch of study developed, focusing on linguistics, history, ethnology, archeology, arts and literature of all ancient and modern Turkic groups distributed over vast Eurasian plane. In China, Turkology is considered as area of research on Turkic philology, linguistics, dialectology, and history of language and literature, as well as social and political history, archeology and genetics of Turkic people living within China. But the Chinese Turkology scholars mainly give importance to Turkic language and literature.⁸

The background in which this academic discipline emerged was Western colonialism, and the Tsarist and Qing expansionism. Possibly among all Western powers, the Russians were most interested in exerting their political and cultural influence in Xinjiang. Therefore, Russia felt the

need of understanding the region through translation and research and employed the missionaries of the Orthodox Eastern Church to collect materials related to Xinjiang.⁹ Russia's first Sinologist Nikita Yakovlevich Bichurin also came to Beijing as missionary in the early 19th century and later mastered Chinese, Manchurian, Mongolian and Tibetan languages. Bichurin along with German scholar Julius Klaproth conducted scientific research on ancient Uyghur or Huihe people and laid foundation of Xinjiang research. Some Chinese scholars however see deep political motivation behind their academic activities.¹⁰ As the field of research on the Turkic people developed, many scholars began to look into various aspects from purely academic interests and enriched this branch of scholarship. Geng Shimin has elaborately discussed contributions of world famous Turkologists like Wilhelm Radloff, A. von Gabain, Paul Pelliot, L. Bazin, J. Hamilton, V. Thomson and many other scholars from Russia, Germany, France, Denmark and other European countries who enriched the Xinjiang study.¹¹ The Swedish diplomat and Turkologist Gunnar Jarring's contribution both as researcher of language of common Uyghur workers and caravan men and as a collector of printed and writing materials related to Xinjiang need to be mentioned.¹² Among Chinese scholars, Geng's contribution in historical linguistics of the Uyghur as well as other Turkic people is also remarkable.

Turkology was subjected to political onslaught in the erstwhile Soviet Union because the communist authority had suspected the discipline to be potential unifier of all Turkic people, but research on Uyghur studies possibly flourished under the Soviet rule.¹³ Research on Xinjiang under the discipline of Turkology in the higher academic institute is however a recent but short-lived phenomenon both in China and the Central Asian countries. Uyghur studies in Soviet Central Asia thrived when the Institute of Uyghur Studies was established in 1986 within the Kazakh Academy of Sciences. The institute conducted two conferences on Uyghur studies in 1987 and 1991 respectively. Kazakhstan demonstrated intimacy with the Turkic people across the border in Xinjiang in the first years following its independence, but the institute was closed in 1996 and the official reason given for the closure was economic difficulties, Kamalov, however indicates Chinese pressure as the main reason behind the setback of Uyghur studies.¹⁴ There were similar trends in the discipline of Turkology in China as well. In mid-1980s, the Department of Turkic Languages and Culture (*Tujue yuyan wenhua xi*) was reestablished in the Central Nationalities University, Beijing. From 1993 to 1996, there was Department

of Turkology, and after 1996 the department came to be known as Uyghur-Kazakh Faculty or Two Ethnic Language Faculty (*Minyu er xi*). In 2000, separate Uyghur and Kazakh language and culture departments were created and presently the Central Nationalities University has several tiny departments of languages of Turkic origin.¹⁵ The reason behind segregating academic disciplines is apparently done to discourage any kind of pan-Turkic solidarity.

Xinjiang is also a focus of study by scholars oriented in Altaic Studies, a branch of discipline which deals with several ethnic and linguistic communities distributed in a vast area ranging from northeastern fringe of Europe to Siberia including Central Asia. This vast geographical area of Eurasia is also referred to as Inner Asia that comprises of steppe, mountain, forest and oasis areas. The ethnic element in Xinjiang had been subjected to change due to continuous influx of migrated population from Mongolia and northeast of China, and the Altaic Studies provide more holistic approach to research on Xinjiang. Denis Sinor, one of the most prominent scholars belonging to this academic tradition, produced extensive research on Russian and Chinese Central Asia. Colin Mackerras also studied Uyghur Steppe Empire and Sino-Uyghur diplomatic and trade contacts in the eighth and ninth century mainly on the basis of Chinese historical sources. Prof. Niu Ruji in his book on the Altaic civilization offers an overview of the achievements of Altaic Studies in Xinjiang research during 1990s.¹⁶ It appears that the Altaic Studies is considered to be politically more neutral than Turkology.

WESTERN REGIONS (*Xiyu*) AND RESEARCH ON BORDERLAND

The study on Central Asia is difficult because available relevant manuscripts are written in as many as 17 different languages using some 24 scripts. Because of relatively few documents on ancient history of the region, scholars in this field rely heavily on ancient Chinese sources.¹⁷ Ancient Chinese source on Xinjiang can be categorized into official, non-official as well as historical and non-historical ones. The Han dynasty official history *Records of Grand Historian (Shiji)* by Sima Qian first recorded the nomadic confederation of *Xiongnu* and the visit of Han imperial envoy Zhang Qian to the Western Regions. All subsequent court histories enumerated social, political and economic life of the region and its relations with imperial powers in China.¹⁸ Other major sources of ancient and pre-modern history of Xinjiang are the Buddhist texts and pilgrims' memoirs,

and travel notes of officials, merchants and other individuals, herbal canons, musical records, and literary works.¹⁹ This huge repository has been used by many modern and contemporary scholars to study history of the region.

Research on the Western Regions in the modern sense began as early as in the Qing period. The reasons for emergence of such studies are as follows: the Qing conquest of Xinjiang in the Qianlong reign; fear of eastward expansion of European colonialism; introduction of cartography; and banishment of some court officials and scholars to Xinjiang.²⁰ The Qing court took special interest in historical and geographical study on Xinjiang. Rong Xinjiang has cited two examples of works produced under the imperial order: *Xiyu tuzhi* in fifty-two volumes compiled between 1756 and 1782 and one hundred and sixty volume *Xinjiang tongzhi* between 1909 and 1911. Both the works are collections of information based on field surveys and rich source for future historical research.²¹ The presence of a few hundred exiled disgraced Qing officials in Xinjiang had not only contributed in consolidating imperial power in the region but also inculcated intellectual interests about Xinjiang.²²

From the Chinese perspective, study of Xinjiang is a discipline focusing on China's relations with its Western Regions. It is often treated as a part of frontier study and major thrusts of research are: Xinjiang's relations with China proper and neighboring states; inter-ethnic relations within the region, with trans-border ethnic groups and with the majority Han population; and managing stability and development in Xinjiang. The range of study covers entire historical period and future potential of this resource rich region.²³ Research on borderland history and geography since 1978 focuses on reevaluation and reinterpretation of nationalist discourse on frontier issues by scholars like Gong Zizhen, Wei Yuan and many others in the late Qing period.²⁴ Some of the contemporary Western scholars like James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue cited writings of Gong Zizhen, Wei Yuan and other late Qing literati in their analysis of the Qing conquest of Xinjiang.²⁵

Li Sheng and Jia Jianfei point out that increasing number of Chinese and Western scholars are using multiple language sources including minority language materials in their research on Chinese frontier. In case of research on Xinjiang, Manchu, Mongol and Uyghur language sources are very essential and in recent years foreign scholars are getting more access to these materials. Pamela K. Crossley, Evelyn S. Rawski, Ruth W. Dunnell, James A. Millward, Mark Elliott, Philippe Foret and many other

Western scholars have produced excellent works on the Qing borderland history by using Manchu archives and other minority language documents.²⁶

LAND OF BUDDHISM AND ISLAM

Xinjiang was not only a transit route of Buddhist pilgrims to India, but it was also famous as the second homeland of Buddhism (*Fojiao zhi di er guxiang*) before Turkic peoples of the region embraced Islam. It is also important to note that ancient Uyghurs had practiced several religions like indigenous Shamanism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Nestorian Christianity, and Buddhism. Therefore, scholars of Buddhism and other religions have been fascinated with history of religion and art of Xinjiang and academically they are more akin to the Silk Road and Dunhuang Studies.

The first generation of scholars of Chinese Islam was constituted of Christian missionaries who came to China with the intension of converting marginalized sections of Han dominated Chinese society. They basically misunderstood Muslim minorities to be an easy target for conversion, however as they worked among Chinese Muslim communities they produced valuable research materials for future scholars. From 1949 to 1980, research on Chinese Islam was conducted on the basis of archival materials available abroad as well as in Taiwan. The historical works on the Muslim ethnic groups in China were produced by Joseph Fletcher, Françoise Aubin, Jonathan N. Lipman, A.D.W. Forbes, Raphael Israeli, Daniel Leslie. Their main interest was Islamization process, Naqshbandia Sufi practices and activities and political role of Islam in Xinjiang.²⁷ These scholars have combined Chinese and Islamic studies and also utilized Arabic and Persian sources along with Chinese as well as languages of Turkic origin for their study on Xinjiang. Fletcher was the most outstanding among this generation of Chinese scholars. According to Françoise Aubin, Fletcher's successors can be found among Turkologists like Hamada Masami and some other Japanese scholars working on Xinjiang.²⁸ Ildikó Beller-Hann, who belongs to Turko-Iranian linguistic and historical discipline, has based her research on anthropological data together with works of historians. Her works provide insight about the socio-economic life of the Uyghurs in south Xinjiang since late imperial period to the present time.

Since 1980s, increasing number of Western scholars began to get access

to travel and conduct research in Muslim dominated areas in China. Dru C. Gladney conducted three years of extensive field research on Muslims across China and published his brilliant treatise on *Muslim Chinese – Ethnic Nationalism in the People’s Republic*. This is time when scholars like James Millward, Justin Jon Rudelson, Michael Dillon and many contemporary Xinjiang experts have begun long term historical, linguistic, social and anthropological research among the Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and other Muslim as well as non-Muslim minorities of the region.

The Muslims in China are either perceived as completely separated and potentially rebellious against non-Muslim government or considered to be completely assimilated and indistinguishable from the Han dominated society.²⁹ Between two most populated Muslim ethnic nationalities in China, the Huis are no more viewed as a threat to the state rather considered as an intermediary group and facilitator for pushing government’s minority policy, the Uyghurs however are mostly depicted negatively. Because of the stereotypical representation, researches on separatist activities and terrorism among the Uyghur population in Xinjiang by the Chinese scholars are basically subjective and heavily influenced by official position.

HISTORY OF THE REPUBLICAN PERIOD AND MAO ERA

Besides the observations on sociopolitical scenario of Xinjiang by explorers like Stain, Hedin and Lattimore, the firsthand accounts and memoirs written by many foreign travelers, diplomats, journalists, and missionaries who visited Xinjiang in the republican period are useful sources on Xinjiang history during that time. Since late 1970s, Donald H. McMillen, Jack Chen, Andrew D. W. Forbes, Linda Benson, Ingvar Svanberg produced some important works on the history of republican period and the first thirty years since the communist takeover of the region. Taiwanese experts produced many valuable works of the republican period and most of the researches on Xinjiang under the Han warlords, GMD coalition and PRC rule have been conducted in the reform period by the mainland scholars. David Wang’s article titled ‘Xinjiang of the 20th century in historiography’ is a very useful bibliographic source of the works on Xinjiang of this period published in Taiwan and mainland China.³⁰

ECONOMY, INTEGRATION AND TERRORISM

Central Asia and Xinjiang have experienced unprecedented transformation in last three decades due to Chinese modernization and economic reforms and opening, post-Soviet geo-political upheavals in Central Asia and emergence of five independent states, and unleashing of global anti-terror war after 9-11 incidents and entry of the US in this region. Discovery of huge oil and natural gas resources in Xinjiang and Central Eurasia has made this region the second most important region after West Asia and thus made it more vulnerable to inter-state rivalry along with conflicts between state and non-state actors in the region. The focuses of Xinjiang studies have also changed accordingly.

Many scholars perceive growing power projections by the USA, Russia and China in the oil rich Central Eurasia as reemergence of the old "Great Game" of the nineteenth century in the region and some even view that the changes in Central Asia have created opportunity for China to implement its integrationist policies in Xinjiang more effectively and exert traditional kind of vassal relationship with the newly established Central Asian republics. Lillian Craig Harris argues that China's traditional mindset towards Central Asian people and passive political role allowed the separatist forces in Xinjiang to develop connection with the Islamic world at large.³¹ Michael Clarke, in most of his writings including the latest book titled *Xinjiang and China's Rise in Central Asia - a History*, deals with integration of Xinjiang and China's grand strategic ambition of securing its power status in Central Asia³².

The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute of the Johns Hopkins University initiated "Xinjiang Project" in 1998 with the collaboration of eighteen most competent experts of Xinjiang. *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, a volume edited by Frederick Starr which covers various aspects of Xinjiang studies, is the product of this project. Since the 9-11 incidents interests about Xinjiang is no more confined among the academic researchers, and therefore, writings about contemporary Xinjiang can be found in all sorts of printed as well as electronic media.

The Chinese scholar Pan Zhiping discusses the issue of national security in Xinjiang from geo-political perspective and addresses three new trends in the post-Cold War world, namely, the Western countries' quest for new enemy, resurgence of ethno-national movements and Islamic fundamentalism across the world.³³ Li Sheng, Zhang Yunde and many Chinese authors trace historical roots and nature of Eastern Turkestan

terrorism. Some Chinese authors' writings on terrorism in Xinjiang are merely of propagandist nature. Yitzhak Shichor and many Western scholars express doubts over Chinese claim regarding terrorist activities in Xinjiang.³⁴

CONTESTED HISTORY

Nabijan Tursun, a Uyghur historian rightly points out that "Just as Uyghur regions have been a battleground for competing powers, twentieth-century Uyghur historiography has been the site of an ideological battle between the competing nationalist projects of the Uyghurs and the Chinese states".³⁵ Area of contestation between the two are many – Uyghur ethnography, history of Uyghur state-hood and status of Eastern Turkestan movements in 1940s. In contrast to the huge repository of resources on Xinjiang in Chinese language, the Uyghur nationalist project of interpreting their own history is extremely limited. Some sections of Uyghurs have been recently trying to popularize Uyghurology, a branch of knowledge that throws light on every aspects of Uyghur life. However, like many other efforts by the Uyghur diaspora, this is limited to internet activities.

XINJIANG STUDIES IN INDIA AND ITS RELEVANCE

Prof. P. C. Bagchi, the foremost and pioneering scholar of Chinese studies carried out extensive research on ancient routes to China, various Buddhist centres in China including present day Xinjiang and Sino-Indian interactions in field of trade, art and science. Among Indian scholars of ancient history of South and Central Asia, Prof. A. K. Narain's name needs special mention. Prof. Narain produced some excellent works on ancient Indo-European communities like Tokharian and Yuezhi in Xinjiang and Inner Asia. The works on Buddhism and Buddhist arts in China and Central Asia by Indian scholars have directly or indirectly referred to Xinjiang. Prof. Tan Chung's edited book *Dunhuang Art* is an important contribution to Dunhuang Studies. In this respect, the International Seminar on the Art and Religion of Xinjiang held in Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts in 2001 was an encouraging initiative. Prof. Tansen Sen's book *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade – the Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600 – 1400* is one of the latest contributions in this field of scholarship.

In India, for a long time Xinjiang was considered as an area of concern

for scholars from Central Asian Studies. Prof. Ram Rahul's book *Politics of Central Asia* published in 1973 describes tensions in the region after its so-called liberation by PRC. He mentions about refusal of diplomatic status of R. D. Sathe, the then India's Consul-General in Kashgar by the PRC government after establishing control over Xinjiang. Ram Rahul comments in his book that the liberation of Xinjiang is of great significance in the history of India's connection with Central Asia.³⁶ This is possibly one reason why scholars of Chinese studies remained detached from the affairs of Xinjiang until 1990s.

Prof. K. Warikoo's major works on Xinjiang – socio-economic study of Xinjiang in the 19th century, Migrations from Xinjiang to Kashmir and Qing policy in Xinjiang were published in 1980s. He wrote comprehensive chapters "Ethnic-religious separatism: Challenge to China's Security" in his edited book *Religion and Security in South and Central Asia* (London, Routledge, 2011) and "The Xinjiang Issue: Indian Perspectives on Chinese Strategies in the Far West" in *Mapping Central Asia* edited by Marlene Laruelle and Sebatién Peyrouse (Ashgate, 2011). His article in *Eurasian Studies* is one of the earliest writings that focus on ethno-religious resurgence and separatism in Xinjiang. The article discusses various movements during 1980s and early 1990s and analyzes the main elements of Chinese policies in this minority region.

Among the next generation scholars, Dr. Mahesh Ranjan Debata has been initiated by his teacher and research supervisor Prof. Warikoo in Xinjiang studies. The International Conference on Xinjiang in the 21st Century, organised by Prof. Warikoo in March 2010 at the Central Asian Studies Programme, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi was important because it was not only the first conference on Xinjiang in India, but it was also the first time that Chinese scholars from Beijing and Xinjiang attended a conference along with Indian as well as scholars from other countries in India to discuss one of the sensitive issues of Chinese politics. The quarterly journal *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* edited by Prof. K. Warikoo and brought out by the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation published Xinjiang Special issue (Vol. 14, No. 4, October-December 2010) featuring his lead paper "China's Policy in Xinjiang and India's Experience in Kashmir." The Himalayan Foundation followed it up by organising a major international seminar "Historical, Cultural and Economic Linkages between India and China's Xinjiang Region" in May 2011 at New Delhi, in which well known Indian experts and Chinese specialists including from Xinjiang participated. Besides discussing various

facets of the historico-cultural interface between India and Xinjiang, the seminar also deliberated upon the contemporary issues of separatism, extremism and terrorism challenging the security of the two regions. Prof. K. Warikoo has come out with an edited book *Xinjiang: China's Northwestern Frontier*, published by Routledge, UK in 2016. It has 15 chapters contributed by well known Indian, Chinese, Central Asian and Russian scholars, many of whom had participated in the above stated conference, thus providing a considered third view on Xinjiang. Warikoo has shared his experiences in Xinjiang through three chapters (Chapters 2, 4 and 15), in addition to a brilliant introduction on the state of affairs in Xinjiang.

Dr. Mahesh Ranjan Debata published his book *China's Minorities: Ethnic-Religious Separatism in Xinjiang* (New Delhi: Pentagon, 2007), which is based on his Ph D thesis completed at Jawaharlal Nehru University under Prof. Warikoo's supervision. This author's book *Xinjiang and the Chinese State: Violence in the Reform Era*. (Routledge, 2018) is yet another Indian contribution in the field of Xinjiang studies. The book lets us peep into the evolving Chinese ideological and practical policies on their north western frontier region of Xinjiang and its dominant Muslim minority community of Uyghurs.

The Centre for Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir has Xinjiang as one of the areas of interest. Prof. Warikoo was the first to have defended his M. Phil dissertation on "Chinese Turkestan during the nineteenth century" in 1980 at this Centre. Prof. Mushtaq Kaw has written on trade and commerce on Chinese Central Asia in the colonial period. Among the younger scholars, Dr. Sheikh Talal who did his Ph. D on "China's Policy towards Central Asian Muslims: a case study of Chinese Turkestan (1949-99)" at this centre, wrote a book on Russian Influence in Eastern Turkestan from 19th century to mid-20th century. He also wrote articles on Chinese settlements in Xinjiang and Mao's attitude towards Islam.

Dr. Madhavi Thampi's book on Indian diaspora in China contains a chapter on 'Indians in western China'. The chapter covers history of diplomatic and commercial interactions between Xinjiang and India as well as activities of Indian merchants living there during the colonial period. In 2010, she also wrote an article titled Indian traders in Xinjiang in the 19th and 20th centuries. Another side of history of movements of traders through trans-Karakoram trade has been captured by Dr. Janet Rizvi in two chapters of her book titled *Trans-Himalayan Caravans*.

Dr. Abanti Bhattacharya focuses on Xinjiang and Uyghur separatism

as a part of her long term concern of Chinese nationalism and Chinese minority policy. Bhattacharya traces Uyghur separatism as it developed in the context of Chinese nationalism, but she expresses doubts as to how far Uyghurs and other minorities can maintain their identities. The main published works of Dr. Debasish Chaudhuri fall in the category of political economy of ethnicity with respect to Xinjiang and Uyghur people living in the region. Chaudhuri contextualises Xinjiang problem in regard to economic modernization with limited political reform and his main concern is to explore connections between re-emergence of Uyghur ethno-national movements and social unrests in other parts of China in the reform period.

To sum up, following points need to be highlighted:

Research on Xinjiang within the Central Asian and Chinese studies in India is still a marginal field of study; scope for developing skill of using multiple language sources is extremely limited, and saddest thing is that there is a complete negligence from the part of academic institutions to develop such skill; since the 9/11 incidents, some people became interested about Xinjiang mainly for geo-political and geo-economic reasons. But there is a need to study the region beyond immediate geo-political concern, because: 1. India had age old historical connections with Xinjiang during the heydays of Buddhism, Islam and colonialism. The region has huge tangible, intangible and oral historical source of cultural and material interactions between India and Central Asia and between India and China during the ancient, mediaeval and modern periods. 2. The ethno-national movements in Xinjiang under the communist rule and China's integrationist policies can help us to understand India's performance in dealing similar kind of movements. 3. Better understanding of the internal political, social and economic situation of the region would help India to decide how far it can cooperate with China in the area of anti-terrorism. 4. Knowledge about the region would also help establishing greater economic interactions and as well as re-establish border trade in future if and when border disputes with China resolves.

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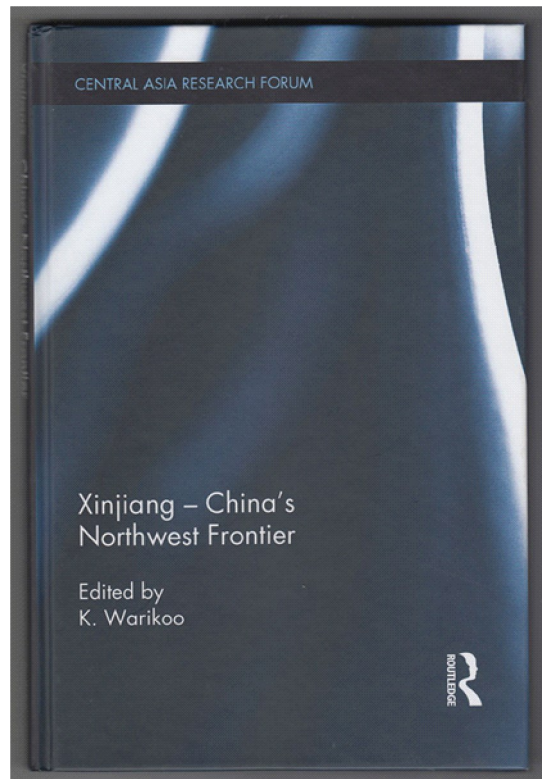
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BOOK REVIEW

K. Warikoo, *Xinjiang-China's Northwest Frontier*. London & New York: Routledge, 2016. 211 pp

Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China, which is commonly known as Xinjiang, is situated on the northwestern part of the country abutting eight nations, three of which are nuclear nations (Russia, India and Pakistan). This region is important for China for its geostrategic and geopolitical significance in addition to being the lynch-pin of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Xinjiang has been in news in recent times because of the reports that over a million Uyghurs, who are in majority of Xinjiang's population, are kept forcibly in camps, which



the West describes as "concentration camps", whereas China claims these as "re-education" or "vocational training camps." The entire gamut of issues related to Xinjiang has been explained through different narratives. There is of course a Chinese narrative, which says Xinjiang has been a "core issue" and an integral part of China since the Han dynasty. The other narrative is the one by the Uyghurs, which delineates that the region Chinese claim as "Xinjiang" is in fact "East Turkestan" and the Uyghurs

are the original inhabitants of the region, with a 6,000-year old rich historical past. Most of the Western scholarship subscribes to the Uyghur narrative. Against this background, the book under review provides a “third view” with a detailed analyses of “ethnic relations, Uyghur resistance, China’s policy in Xinjiang and its economic relations with its Central Asian neighbours in an integrated manner.” This edited volume is an amalgamation of 15 scholarly papers containing the views of eminent academics and area specialists from India, China, Central Asia and Russia. The editor, K. Warikoo, a well known Indian expert and researcher on Xinjiang studies for the last four decades, has shared his experiences in Xinjiang through three chapters (Chapters 2, 4 and 15), in addition to a brilliant introduction on the state of affairs in Xinjiang.

It is a well-known fact that issues like culture, ethnicity, religion and nationalism have been some of the essential features of the Xinjiang problem in modern and contemporary times. In this context, it is imperative to unfold what chapter 2 (by the editor himself) broadly describes. According to him, different cultures have thrived and flourished in Xinjiang from time to time making it a cultural hub on the fabled Silk Route. While highlighting the indigenous cultural heritage with a peculiar physiography, unique ethno-cultural identities in this cultural melting pot, Warikoo stresses on the preservation and promotion of civilisational beauty of the region in order to relive the ethno-cultural aspirations of all ethnic groups living here. Further, three chapters (5, 6 and 16) devoted to ethnic issues seem interesting as 47 ethnic groups live in this northwestern borderland. While Chapter 5, contributed by a Chinese scholar, clarifies various aspects of Chinese perception on the complex issue of ethnicity, besides examining the impact of China’s minority policy in general, and towards Uyghurs in particular. In Chapter 6, an Indian scholar not only situates Uyghurs, the “Islamic face” of China, in the Middle Kingdom’s “ethnic tangle” in the last six decades, but also examines the “policies and practices” of the Chinese Communist Party. Further, Chapter 16 contributed by a Taiwanese scholar dilates upon the rise and growth of nationalism amongst Uyghurs that led to ethnic confrontation and conflict between Hans and Uyghurs.

Since the establishment of China in 1949, the Chinese central government has been devising a carefully crafted policy towards its minority nationalities, who live mostly in the western part of the country. The policy towards minority nationalities suits to, what the Chinese government believes, the national unity and territorial integrity of the

country. Three chapters of this edited volume (4, 7 and 14) discuss Chinese policy towards Uyghurs in the last six decades or so. The credit of sinicizing Xinjiang goes to the Qing rulers, who took complete control of this region in 1880s by renaming it as “new territory” (Xin Jiang). It is widely believed that the Chinese policy in Xinjiang since 1949 is a faithful reflection of Qings’ “calculated policy of military conquest, demographic expansion, political manoeuvring and trade concessions”, adds Chapter 4 contributed by the editor himself. Chapter 7 by another Indian expert introduces Chinese policy in Xinjiang in three phases: a) between 1911 to 1944; b) 1944-1949; and c) 1949-1978, and its resultant effects. His analysis ranges from the cantankerous issue of “self determination to autonomy for national minorities, gradual integration, demographic expansion and the role of a quasi military unit, i.e., Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps”, which have created huge economic inequality and racial segregation amongst Uyghurs. However, a Chinese scholar in his valued paper (Chapter 14) argues that Chinese nationalities policy is in accordance with the grim reality in this troubled northwestern province and is in sync with Chinese central government’s endeavour “to ensure territorial integrity, stability and development of Xinjiang.” It is found that Chinese policy, be it socio-economic, military, cultural or religious, is the single largest cause of resentment amongst Uyghurs in Xinjiang which has further led to a violent form of “ethno-religious” separatism and terrorism, especially in the post-Cold War period. In this context, another chapter by the editor himself (Chapter 15) dubs Xinjiang as “home to ethnic-religious separatism movement for a long time”, where both internal and external factors and internal and external actors play their part. The Chinese response to this critical situation includes both carrot (economic development) and stick (military and security) measures so that Xinjiang does not go out of China’s control.

Despite criticism of China’s policy towards Uyghurs on the home front and by the outside forces, Chinese central government has not left any stone unturned to develop this strategically important frontier, at least from the economic point of view, as argued in two chapters by Chinese scholars (Chapter 12 and 13). While analyzing the social issues and problems associated to these, Chapter 13 boasts that Xinjiang is “an important production base of foodstuffs, cotton, fruits and livestock in addition to the production and reserve base of natural resources (energy and minerals)” because of Chinese economic initiatives. This argument is further taken up in Chapter 14, which states that because of China’s

Western Development Programme, the “economic depression” of yesteryears has metamorphosed into an “important bridgehead” to countries of Central and South Asia and Eastern Europe.

Central Asia could be considered as an important thread to the state of affairs in Xinjiang, firstly because, it has borders with three Central Asian nations – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; secondly, Uyghurs of Xinjiang have affinity with Central Asians on ethnic, cultural and religious fronts; and thirdly, Xinjiang has become the fulcrum of China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Central Asia. This context is analysed in depth in four chapters of this edited book (Chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11). Chapter 9, contributed by a well known Tajik scholar, is a brilliant affirmation of how Xinjiang has become China’s gateway to Central Asia, besides analyzing China’s leading role in the socio-economic and political development of the CARs after their independence. The author has not only highlighted the importance of Xinjiang in the flourishing trade relations between China and the CARs in the last few decades, but also found out various constraints that affect their trade relations. As far as the Xinjiang problem is concerned, the importance of Kazakhstan is ironically felt, as discussed in Chapter 10 by two eminent Kazakh scholars, because Kazakhstan shares the longest border with Xinjiang and there are a substantial number of Uyghurs living in Kazakhstan and Kazakhs in Xinjiang as well. This chapter believes that Xinjiang has become an important factor in overall Kazakhstan-China relations, be it economic or security. Two Russian scholars have contributed chapter 8 and chapter 11. While Chapter 8 examines the role of 1.5 million-strong Kazakh diaspora in Xinjiang, the third most populous group in Xinjiang after Uyghurs and Hans, Chapter 11 explores “the potential and prospects of cross-border interaction between Xinjiang and south Siberia, in pursuit of the big Altai approach.”

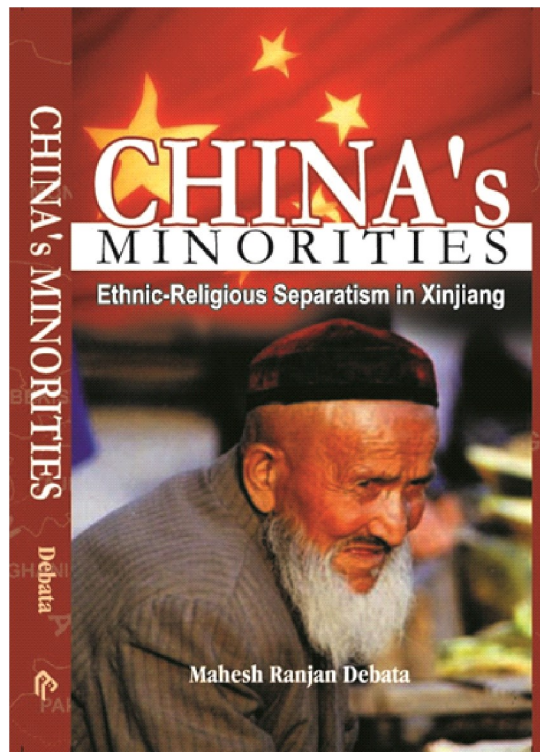
This edited volume is first such attempt to bring out a different perspective on the Xinjiang problem. This book is a must for students, scholars, analysts, strategists and policy makers in India, and other South and Central Asian countries. It appeals mostly to those who study and pursue research on society, culture, economy and politics in Inner, South and Central Asia.

Mahesh Ranjan Debata

BOOK REVIEW

Mahesh Ranjan Debata, *China's Minorities: Ethnic-Religious Separatism in Xinjiang*. New Delhi: Pentagon, 2007. 283pp. Rs. 995/-

Xinjiang is a hot topic these days, especially after the US Senate passed Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act 2020 in May 2020. It is a well-known fact that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is a multi-ethnic country, and "an ethnically pluralistic society with the Hans being in the majority, and 55 officially declared minority nationalities spreading across the country", concentrated mostly in the western part of the country. Uyghurs are one of the ethnic minorities, who are by religion Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi School of Jurisprudence, and are



predominantly found in China's north-western region of Xinjiang (forming the majority of the population) that borders eight countries such as Mongolia, Russia, Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Xinjiang has been witnessing "ethnic, religious and cultural antagonism" between the Han Chinese and Uyghurs, and separatist-cum-terrorist activities since the establishment of PRC in 1949. Against this background, the relevance of

this book under review that comprises six chapters, a map of Xinjiang, in addition to several appendices and bibliography, is timely.

The introductory chapter is based on the conceptual framework of ethnicity, nationalism and religion. While defining the concept ethnicity in broader details, this chapter discusses various approaches to ethnicity and their applicability in case of Xinjiang, where some 47 (out of 56) ethnic groups live. This chapter finds that ethnicity, religion and nationalism are intertwined as found in the case of Xinjiang. Chapter two describes how “the contested” history of Xinjiang has been important in shaping the present and contemporary situation in this troubled borderland. This chapter of the book depicts a detailed and clear picture of claims by Uyghurs of their age-old habitation in Xinjiang being supported by Western scholarship, as well as counterclaims and contestations by China of keeping Xinjiang as an inalienable part of its territory since the Han rule, that is for over 2000 years. The “central thrust” of the book, as delineated in Chapter 3 and 4, is the Chinese policy towards the minority nationalities of the country in general and Uyghurs in particular. While making a thorough assessment of the Chinese minority policy, Chapter 3 discusses how this policy has been dubbed as “anti-Uyghur and anti-minorities” and “systematic sinicization”, and also the main cause of consternation amongst Uyghurs, in addition to highlighting the justification Chinese government gives to keep this strategically important region under its control through a carefully calibrated policy. China reminds the world community that Xinjiang is a “core issue” of China and forms an important part of the 21st Century signature strategy of Belt and Road Initiative that was announced by President Xi Jinping in 2013. Chapter 3 has two sections: a) policies during the Marxist-Leninist period, that is the pre and post-1949 period till Mao’s death in 1976 that include the excesses done during Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, and b) the Reformist era (from 1976 onwards till 2007) initiated by Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang, Jiang Zemin and Hu Zintao. Further, Chapter 4 analyses the Chinese central government’s “Xinjiang mission” to assimilate it into the national mainstream and devised “military-civilian administration, systematic population transfer, economic development, religious and language policies.” The penultimate chapter (Chapter 5) adds that the growth of “political, religious and ethnic overtones” further leading to simmering discontent against Chinese policies resulted in considerable loss of life and public property. For example, “between 1957 and 1981, there were nineteen revolts and 194 cases of separatist activities in Xinjiang.” This chapter

describes major separatist incidents such as Hotan uprising (1954) and Ili crisis (1962) and the rise of a sense of nationalism amongst Uyghurs during this period. However, as discussed in this chapter, the 1990s witnessed violent separatist-cum-terrorist attacks in Xinjiang with Baren uprising (April 1990) as the turning point. The post-Soviet period remained violent because of the emergence of independent Central Asian Republics with whom Uyghurs share ethnic, cultural and religious affinities, and one of the major violent terror attacks in Xinjiang in the post-Cold war period was the bomb blasts in Urumqi on the funeral day of Deng Xiaoping in 1997. The concluding chapter notes this precarious state of affairs in Xinjiang with great details that had prompted the Chinese authorities to step up efforts at the domestic, regional and international level against separatism and terrorism to establish peace and stability in the region. China has been successful in mobilizing the international community against the Uyghurs who have indulged in anti-state, anti-national and anti-Chinese activities. For example, very recently over 30 countries signed a representation asking the Human Rights Council to take cognizance of human rights violation in Xinjiang and detention of Uyghurs in detention centres. In response, China mobilized over 50 countries, including a dozen Islamic countries to provide support to its policies against terrorism in Xinjiang.

This book is the first of its kind by an Indian researcher and scholar on a sensitive issue like Xinjiang, a region which is not only important for India because of its 2,000-year long historical and cultural linkage, but also is an overland route to reach the resource-rich Central Asia. Since many of the educational institutions, research institutes, media and think tanks in India have started doing serious research on Xinjiang at the present juncture, this book could be a good source of information for anybody who is working or interested to work on an important issue like Xinjiang.

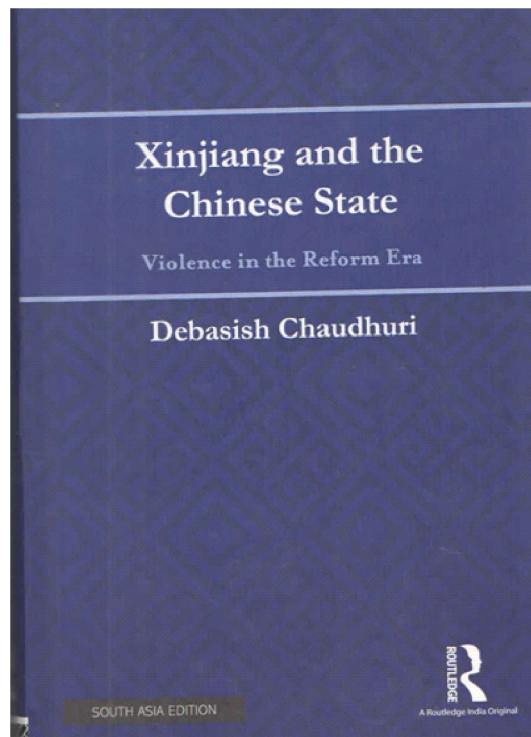
Debasish Nandy

BOOK REVIEW

Debasish Chaudhuri, *Xinjiang and the Chinese State: Violence in the Reform Era*. Routledge, 2018. 330pp

Xinjiang is the 'pivot of Asia', where the frontiers of China, Tibet, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia approach each other. From the historical point of view, mainland China has had a tenuous relationship with its distant periphery in Xinjiang. While its Chinese connection dates back more than 2,000 years, Xinjiang remained under the effective control of imperial China only intermittently for over five centuries. However, China never lost sight of the importance of Xinjiang as a bridge for fostering its contacts with the outlying Central Asian states. The growing Uyghur demand for a separate homeland and continuing violence in Xinjiang have brought this region into the focus of national and international attention. Following the disintegration of former Soviet Union and the independence of Central Asian Republics, China has been assiduously developing Xinjiang as the hub of trans-Asian trade and traffic .

The book under review is an important addition to the existent informed studies on Xinjiang, done by an Indian scholar of China studies



drawing upon both the western and Chinese sources for his study. The book has been well divided into eight chapters providing historical background, theoretical perspective, discussing national question, Uyghur nationalist resurgence, state ethnic policies, regional economy, ethnic resurgence and state response and international dimension. Introductory and the following first chapter discuss the incorporation of Xinjiang into China under imperial, republican and communist regimes, Eastern Turkestan movements and regional politics under the communist rule before the reform period. The author has done well by tracing the state coercion to suppress Uyghur violence to the traditional Chinese practice of 'using violence against violence' (*yibaozhibao*) and also to the Marxist idea that ethnicity is a temporary phenomenon. Here one may point out that after the July 5, 2009 Urumqi riots there has been a rethink among the Chinese intellectuals and public circles about the efficacy of the Soviet 'Policy of Nationalities' which had influenced the policy of the Communist Party of China. As such China's official policies towards national minorities need to be closely watched both in their theoretical and practical dimensions.

Second chapter delves into 'the changing nature of the Chinese state, pattern of behavior of the Chinese society and state policies vis-à-vis Uyghur nationalities in the reform period'. The author has divided the CPC rule in China into four phases (a) pre-reform period (1949-1976) which witnessed radical socialist transformation and integration of minority groups, (b) period of pragmatic reform and economic transformation marked by greater openness (1978-1989), (c) the period after the 1989 Tian'anmen Square student protests and the disintegration of the former USSR, and (d) the period of pragmatic reform with conservatism and rapid economic development (1992 till date). The author rightly points to the two aspects of the 'Xinjiang problem' (*Xinjiang wenti*) – territorial sovereignty (*zhuquan*) over the region and right to rule (*zhiquan*) the region, which need to be considered while looking at the problem.

Chapter three examines the process of state and nation building, besides elucidating the CPC's position on the issue of national self-determination of various minorities and ethno-regional autonomy. The Chinese leadership from Mao onwards found the Soviet federal system unsuitable for China's situation. Instead the central leadership of China formulated a national regional autonomy (*minzu quyue zizhi zhidu*) for the minority areas way back in 1949. At the same time, the PRC leaders 'encouraged redistribution of population and migration to minority areas

from the Han-dominated areas', to transform the demographic profile of the minority areas. This policy of Han settlement in Xinjiang is a continuation of the policies followed during the imperial period.

Fourth chapter explores the resurgence of the Uyghur ethno-national identity as opposed to Chinese nationalism. The concept of unification (*da yitong*) or unity in the whole empire (*yitong tianxia*) had developed well in the pre-Qin period. "Under the influence of Confucianism, unification of the empire became an important guiding ideology and major source of legitimacy" of the rulers in China. This was also reflected in Mao Zedong's call for uniting the whole nation. At the centre of the unified Chinese nation, the Han nationality occupies the centre stage. As against the unifying role of Hans in blending a unified nation, the Uyghur ethno-regional movement is influenced by external pan-Turkic and pan-Islamic movements. Chapter five throws important light on the implementation of state policies of ethno-regional autonomy, political representation of the non-Han minorities, population transfer of Hans to Xinjiang, role of Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), religious, education and language policies and introduction of family planning in Xinjiang. This analysis is well supplemented by inclusion of some data about the political participation of non-Han minorities in Xinjiang, number of regiment farms and their population, number of schools and student enrolment. This is followed by a chapter on 'Regional Economy' which provides insights into the economic situation in the region. It becomes clear that the Han cadres occupy dominant positions in the decision making process and the XPCC enjoys independent existence, which impinge upon the political and economic rights of the non-Han minorities in Xinjiang.

The study progresses to evaluate the nature of protests and violence by Uyghurs and the state response, in its seventh chapter titled 'Ethnic resurgence and state response'. China has been employing coercive methods to curb separatism and incidents of violence, at the same time going for the rapid economic development of the region. Encouraged by the international campaign against terrorism after 9/11, China adopted more repressive policies and brought the social, cultural and religious life of the Uyghurs under strict surveillance. International dimension of the Uyghur movement is examined in chapter eight. It reflects upon China's policies towards the newly independent Central Asian Republics, Muslim countries including Pakistan and the development of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, as well as the sustained campaign against terrorism, to defeat the East Turkestan Movement and also to suppress

the Uyghur separatists.

China has declared Xinjiang as its core strategic area, which is non-negotiable. It brooks no international interference in its internal affairs in Xinjiang. China and the Central Asian Republics have taken a common stand against cross-border terrorism, Islamic extremism, ethnic-religious separatism, drugs and arms trafficking. And China has institutionalized this process of cooperation through the setting up of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Uyghurs being dispersed across a vast region comprising one-sixth territory of China and their weakness in terms of leadership (unlike in the case of Dalai Lama for Tibetans), lack of international support and 'China's political determination, economic prowess and international clout', have an uphill task of moving forward in their ethno-political goal of achieving an independent Eastern Turkestan.

To conclude, the book is well conceived and written utilising Chinese sources, where possible. The book lets us peep into the evolving Chinese ideological and practical policies on their north western frontier region of Xinjiang and its dominant Muslim minority community of Uyghurs. The Xinjiang issue is not only complicated, but it is dynamically changing due to the sustained, long term and calibrated policy and administrative measures by China. Whether it is China's grand initiatives like OBOR or SCO or China's relations with the adjoining Central Asian countries and also the Muslim world at large, Xinjiang situation needs a constant watch and a multi-layered and comprehensive view.

K. Warikoo

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**CONTRIBUTIONS FOR PUBLICATION AND ANY ENQUIRIES
SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO :**

Prof. K. WARIKOO

Editor and Secretary General

Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation

B-6/86, Safdarjung Enclave

New Delhi - 110029 (India)

Tel. : 0091-11-41651969

E-mail: kwarikoo@gmail.com

Website: www.himalayanresearch.org

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HIMALAYAN RESEARCH AND CULTURAL FOUNDATION

B-6/86, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi-110029 (India)

Tele: 0091-11-41651969

E-mail: kwarikoo@gmail.com Website: www.himalayanresearch.org