

XINJIANG

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XINJIANG

<u>FACT SHEET</u>	
Area	1.6 million km² (China's largest Province and one of its five Autonomous Regions for Ethnic Minorities)
Land Borders	5600 km with eight countries – Mongolia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, India and Gilgit Baltistan which is under the illegal occupation of Pakistan.
Capital City	Urumqi
Administrative Divisions	13 districts, 25 county-level cities, 62 counties, and 6 autonomous counties. (Ten of the county-level cities de facto administered by the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps).
Population	19,250,000 (2000 Census) 24,500,000 (Current Estimates)

Ethnic Groups	Home to 47 different ethnic groups. (Including Uighur, Han, Kazakh, Hui, Mongolian, Kyrgyz, Xibe, Tajik, Uzbek, Manchu, Daur, Tatar and Russian).
Life expectancy :	71.12 years. (Xinjiang cited as one of the four longevity areas in the world by the International Society of Natural Medication. The number of centenarians per million of Xinjiang's population ranks first in China).

Land and Terrain

Five Physiographic Regions

Xinjiang comprises of five distinct geographic regions - the Northern Highlands, the Dzungarian Basin, the Tien Shan ("Celestial Mountains"), the Tarim Basin, and the Kunlun Mountains. These regions run roughly from east to west, the high mountains alternating with large basins.

- (a) The Northern Highlands form a semicircle along the Mongolian border. The major range in this area is the Altai Mountains.
- (b) The triangular-shaped Dzungarian Basin, or Dzungaria, is bordered by the Altai Mountains on the northeast and the Tien Shan to the South.
- (c) The Tien Shan occupies nearly a fourth of Xinjiang's area. They run eastwards from Central Asia through Xinjiang.
- (d) The Tarim Basin lies to the South of the Tien Shan and North of the Kunlun Mountains, occupying nearly half of Xinjiang. It has the Taklamakan desert at the centre with isolated oases. To the northeast of the desert is the Turfan Depression that descends to 154 metres below Mean Sea Level.

- (e) The Kunlun Mountains with its high peaks lie to the South of Xinjiang.

Xinjiang has within its borders (in the suburbs of Urumqi) a location regarded as ‘the centre point of Asia’ that is furthest from the sea in any direction from any coastline.

Rivers

Xinjiang’s major rivers are the Tarim, Yarkant, Ili, Irtysh, Manas, and Hotan.

The Tarim. An endorheic river that historically flowed into the Lop Nur lake but now flows up to the Taitema Lake before drying out. Its basin is home to nearly 10 million Uyghur and other ethnic minorities.

The Yarkand. Originates in the Karakoram range and is historically a tributary of the Tarim River. In recent times however, it drains into the Shangyou Reservoir and exhausts its supply without reaching the Tarim.

The Ili. Rises in the Tian Shan and flows into lake Balkhash in Kazakhstan. It forms a large delta with vast wetland regions of lakes, marshes and vegetation.

The Irtysh. Rises in North Central Xinjiang flows westwards to become the tributary of the Ob river, is the only river whose waters reach the sea. Other rivers and streams, including the Tarim River, arise from the mountains disappear into inland deserts or salt lakes.

The Manas. Another endoheiric river that historically, crossed a section of the Gurbantungut desert and terminated at Lake Manas. It has however not reached the lake since 1960s mainly due to water diversion for irrigation and other needs. As a result, the manas lake has gone dry. There are several reservoirs and canals constructed on the river that form an extensive irrigation system.

The Hotan. Formed by the union of the Yurungkash (White Jade) and Karakash (Black Jade) rivers that rise in the Kunlun Mountains.

It flows north from the Kunlun Mountains into the Taklamakan Desert and empties into the Tarim River. Being fed by waters from melting snow, it carries water only during summer. Prior to construction of the Tarim Desert Highway in 1995, the Hotan river bed provided the only transportation system across the Tarim Basin.

Climate

Xinjiang is remotely located away from oceans and is enclosed by high mountains. Its climate is continental with the Tien Shan separating the dry south from the slightly less arid north. Precipitation is scanty with wide fluctuation.

The reported average annual rainfall is 165 mm.

The Dzungarian basin sees winter temperatures as low as -15 degrees.

The Turfan Depression records temperatures up to 49 deg C.

Major Urban Centres in Present day Xinjiang

Urumqi - Provincial capital, located in the Dzungar basin. Karamay, also in the Dzungar basin and centre of the petroleum industry. Shihezi, a significant agricultural processing centre. Kuldja (Yining) located in the upper Ili River valley.

Kashgar (Kashi) - largest city of the Tarim Basin, is an ancient centre for the manufacture of handicrafts such as textiles, rugs, and tanned leather.

Turfan - petrochemical and cotton textile industries.

Other urban centres - Korla, Yining, Altay and Hami.

Energy Resources

Xinjiang is energy rich and is China's 'power house'. The total reserves of natural gas, coal, and other fossil resources in Xinjiang account for more than 20% of China's energy reserves (1st in China for Fossil Fuels). Oil reserves in Xinjiang total 23.4 bn tons, and gas resources

are roughly 13 tr m³, (23.3% of the entire onshore gas resources in China). Xinjiang's wind power and solar energy resources are the 2nd largest while its Hydropower reserves are the 4th largest in China. There are 24 coal fields in Xinjiang holding estimated reserves over greater than 10 bn tons.

Agriculture

Because of the dry climate, most of the cultivated land in Xinjiang depends entirely on irrigation. Xinjiang is self-sufficient in food grains. About half of the total crop area produces winter and spring wheat. Corn (maize), another important crop, is grown more in the south than in the north. Rice, kaoliang (a variety of grain sorghum), and millet are also produced in large quantities. Cotton is a major cash crop for the region with significant long-staple cotton production in the Turfan Depression and the greater Tarim Basin. Xinjiang is one of China's main fruit-producing regions - Hami melons, seedless Turpan grapes, Korla pears and Ili apples are well known worldwide.

Mineral resources

Deposits of coal, iron, zinc, chrome, nickel, and copper, as well as molybdenum and tungsten (used in strengthening steel). Gold is produced from placer and lode deposits on the southern slopes of the Altai Mountains. Xinjiang's products of national significance include petroleum and natural gas. Since the first oil well was developed at Karamay in 1955. The exploitation of both petroleum and natural gas in the Tarim and Hami basins (the Tu-Ha Oil Field) also has expanded significantly with major fields being developed in both basins. West-east pipelines were built to transport natural gas from Xinjiang to cities on China's east coast.

Industry

Xinjiang's heavy industry includes iron and steel works and a cement factory at Ürümqi and a farm-tool plant at Kashgar. Petrochemical

plants have been established at Karamay, Dushanzi, Ürümqi, Korla (in the northeastern Tarim Basin), and Zepu (at the western edge of the basin). Industries processing agricultural and animal products have been established near the sources of raw materials and include several textile mills and beet sugar mills.

Connectivity

Roads. A system of roads encircles the Tarim Basin along the foothills of the surrounding mountain ranges, and roads run along the northern foothills of the Tien Shan in the Dzungar Basin. The two basins are connected by roads that cross the Tien Shan near Urumqi and to its west.

Airports. Xinjiang has 21 airports (the latest addition, Tumxuk, having opened in Dec 2018). There are 49 Airlines that serve the region and have carries a total of approximately 30 million passengers during 2018. The Capital Urumqi connects to 73 Chinese cities and 17 cities worldwide. There is work in progress on 9 new Airports and capacities at Kashgar, Yining, Aksu, Tacheng, Altay Prefecture and Turpan airports are being increased towards making Xinjiang a hub for China's BRI transportation.

Railways. A railway crosses Xinjiang from Gansu through Hami, Ürümqi, and the Dzungarian Gate and connects with the railway system of Kazakhstan. The northern and southern regions of Xinjiang are linked by a railway constructed across the Tien Shan from Turpan to Korla and further to Aksu and Kashgar. The Southern Xinjiang Nanjiang railway (1446 km) links Turpan to Kashgar. The Southern Xinjiang Nanjiang railway (1446 km) from Turpan to Kashgar. The 435 km Hongnao Railway that opened on 01 Jan 2019 and operated by Guanghai Energy (owns 6.5 billion tonnes of coal reserves in the Naomaohu region) is amongst the longest in China developed using private investment.

Names for the Region through History

The region now known as Xinjiang has been known by several names in the past - Khotan, Khotay, Chinese Tartary, High Tartary, East Chagatay (when part of the Chagatai Khanate), Moghulistan (“land of the Mongols”), Kashgaria, Altishahr (“the six cities” of the Tarim), Little Bokhara and even Serindia (due to Indian cultural influence).

Chinese names. The Han dynasty (2nd century BC - 2nd century CE) referred to the region as Xiyu established the Xiyu Protectorate, primarily to secure the Silk Road. During the Tang Dynasty (7th -10th CE) the region was known as Qixi(Qi = Gobi Desert and Xi = west). The Qings (1636 – 1912 CE) referred to the northern part of the region as Zhunbu and the Tarim Basin as Huijiang(“Muslim Frontier”). They merged both regions and referred to it initially as “Xiyu Xinjiang” - later simply “Xinjiang”.

The Present name. Xinjiang was wholly subsumed into the Peoples’ Republic of China through a ‘Peaceful Liberation’ of the region in 1949. In 1955, it was proposed the region be named as the “Xinjiang Autonomous Region”. However, the first Chairman of Xinjiang at the time, Saifuddin Azizi argued before Mao Zedong that “autonomy is not given to mountains and rivers. It is given to particular nationalities” which resulted in the name being altered to “Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region” (XUAR).

Although Xinjiang as a whole is designated as a “Uyghur Autonomous Region”, since 1955, more than 50% of the land area of the Province are designated autonomous areas for 13 native non-Uyghur groups.

People

Ethno-cultural Diversity

Xinjiang has great geographical and ethnocultural diversity. The region is divided into two distinct parts – Dzungaria to the north and the Tarim basin in the South. People of Dzungaria have close affinities

with Mongols and Kazakhs to their east and west. Those of the Tarim basin have cultural links with Tajiks, Kyrgyz and other peoples of the erstwhile Central Asian Khanates of Kokand and Bukhara, Afghanistan and of Northern India.

The Uighurs

The Uyghurs are one of China's 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities. They are traditionally residents of a series of oases across the Taklamakan Desert comprising the Tarim Basin where an estimated 80% of all Uighurs still live. Uyghurs are the majority in the prefectures of Kashgar, Khotan, Kizilsu, and Aksu and in the Turpan prefecture in eastern Xinjiang. Within Xinjiang, significant Uighur population also resides in Urumqi, the capital city. The largest community of Uyghurs in China outside of Xinjiang is in the Taoyuan County of Hunan.

As per the World Uyghur Congress, there is a Uyghur population outside of China at about 1.0–1.6 million with diasporic communities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan as also in Turkey. Smaller numbers live in Afghanistan, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Canada and the United States

While Uighurs regard themselves as an indigenous group with a distinct culture history and traditions, the Chinese view them as a regional minority in a multi-cultural nation.

Ethnic spread

Amongst other ethnic groups other than the Uighurs, the Kazakhs are mostly concentrated in Ili prefecture in northern Xinjiang and are the majority in the northernmost part of Xinjiang.

Muslim Kyrgyz nomads inhabit the Kizilsu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture (adjoining Kyrgyzstan) and the Muslim Tajiks the Autonomous County of Tashkurghan (adjoining Tajikistan). Mongols reside mainly in Bayangol and Boriala Mongol Autonomous Prefectures. The Han and Hui Chinese mostly live in Dzungaria including the cities of Urumqi, Karamay, Shihezi and the prefectures of Changji, Bayangonil, Ili and Kumul.

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.

These divisions were created during 1954 - a year before province was named as the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

Language Groups

Xinjiang's languages, besides Chinese, group into two major language groups. The Mongolian branch of the Altaic group (in Dzungaria) and the Turkic branch of the Altaic group(spoken by Uighurs, Kazakhs, and Uzbeks).

Mongolian, Uighur, and Kazakh are written languages in everyday use; Mongolian has its own script, while Uighur and Kazakh are written in the Arabic script.

The Tajik language belongs to the Iranian branch of the Indo-European language group.

Religion

As a major passageway for economic and cultural exchanges it is but natural for a number of religions to come to the region as also exist side by side. Before the presently predominant religion of Islam came to Xinjiang, the region had believers in Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Manichaeism and Nestorianism. Some remnant customs and concepts of previous religious denominations still exist.

The Uighurs embraced Islam around the 9th–10th century CE.

Huis and Uighurs

The Hui are also a Muslim community who reside in several provinces of China including Xinjiang to where they have also migrated along with the Hans. The Islam adhered to by the Hui has “incorporated the cultural

elements from various Chinese dynasties” such as “the replacement of religious denomination with menhuan (meaning faction) and the appearance of Taoist architectural features in mosques as well as the exclusive use of Chinese versions of religious texts for preaching”.

Although both share a common religious faith, the Hui have more freedom to openly practice and study it because they have friendlier relations with the government, tend to stay out of politics and are not perceived as threats to national security.

Importantly, the Hui speak Chinese. This enables the better penetration into their grassroots and management of their Imams.

Further, the Hui aren’t concentrated in a strategic location, are less physically distinct from the Han majority and are usually minorities in their communities.

The Uighurs and China

The history of the conflict between the Hans and Uyghurs goes back centuries, as evident from the Timeline of Historical Events below.

<u>Timeline of Major Historical Events</u>	
121 BC	The Hans dynasty establishes four prefectures of Wuwei, Zhangye, Jiuquan and Dunhuang in the region.
101 BC	The Western Han dynasty stations a garrison troops in Luntai and Quli, south of the Tianshan Mountains.
60 BC	The Han Dynasty establishes the Western Regions Frontier Command with headquarters in Urli (in modern Luntai County), to administer the region.
25 – 220 CE	Eastern Han dynasty (25-220) appoint a Frontier Commander, and then a Governor for control of areas both North and South of the Tianshan Mountains.
221 CE	The Kingdom of Wei (of the Three Kingdoms Period) inherit the region.

265-316 CE	The Western Jin dynasty sends an expedition to the Western Regions. Establish the Gaochang Prefecture.
386-534 CE	The Northern Wei dynasty set up Shanshan and Yanqi garrison commands to strengthen its administration of the Western Regions.
608 CE	Troops of the Sui dynasty occupied Yiwu (within the territory of modern Hami) and established the three prefectures of Shanshan, Qiemo and Yiwu.
630 CE	The Tang Dynasty comes to power. A Qixi Military Governorship established to supervise both frontier commands. The Seven cities come under their jurisdiction.
640 CE	The Tang dynasty conducted a series of expeditions against the then Western Turkic Khaganate and set up the Anxi Protectorate (or Protectorate General to Pacify the West).
755 – 766 CE	The An Lushan (or Anxi) Rebellion led to the loss of the Tang empires' western territories. A Uyghur Khaganate takes control of northern Xinjiang and large areas of Central Asia, including Mongolia.
9th Century CE	The Kara-Khanid Khanate (comprising a confederation of Turkic tribes) take control. The Uyghur Khaganate declines in power and remains only in Eastern Xinjiang. <i>Important here that while the Kara-Khanids converted to Islam, the Uyghur state in eastern Xinjiang remained Manichaean and later converted to Buddhism.</i>
1132 – 1216 CE	Remnants of the Liao dynasty from Manchuria entered Xinjiang and established the Qara Khitai Empire (a 'sinicised' Khitan empire that ruled over both the Kara-Khanid-held and Uyghur-held parts of the Tarim Basin over the next century).

1218 CE	Genghis Khan captures the Qara Khitai, who then offer allegiance to the Mongol Empire, pay taxes and send troops to fight for the Mongol imperial effort. In return, the Uyghur rulers retain control of their kingdom.
1271 CE	After the Mongol Empire divides into Khanates, the Yuan dynasty founded by Kublai Khan and based in modern-day Beijing controls Xinjiang. This was followed by the Kaidu–Kublai wars between the Yuan and Chagatai Khanate (led by Kaidu).
1301 CE	Most of Xinjiang was occupied by Chagatai.
About 1620 CE	The Oirats (Western Mongols) united to set up the Dzungarian Empire (the last of the nomadic empires).
1660-70 CE	<p>Naqshbandi Sufi Khojas replace the Chagatai Khans as the ruling authority of the Tarim Basin. (Struggle between two factions of Khojas, the Afaqi (White Mountain) faction and the Ishaqi (Black Mountain) faction. The Ishaqi defeated the Afaqi.</p> <p>The Afaqi Khojas invite the 5th Dalai Lama, the leader of the Tibetans, to intervene on his behalf in 1677.</p>
By 1680 CE	The Dzungars conquer the Tarim Basin and set up Afaqi Khoja as their puppet ruler.
1687–1757 CE	Period of Dzungar–Qing Wars.
1754 CE	The Qings launch a military expedition to take advantage of the internal schism among the Dzungar Mongols. Occupy Ili and go on to conquer the Southern Oases.
1755 CE	Qings capture the Dzungar Khan.
1756-57 CE	Qing armies destroy the remnants of the Dzungar Khanate. An estimated 600,000 killed in the Dzungar Genocide, described by Historian Michael Clarke as “the complete destruction of not only the Dzungar state but of the Dzungars as a people”

1758–1759 CE	Qing campaign against the Āfāqis.
1762 CE	Qing established the post of Ili General to exercise unified military and administrative jurisdiction over both – North and South of the Tianshan Mountains.
1820-26 CE	Qing faced stiff challenges from the former Khwaja Rulers now living in exile in Central Asia, who attack Kashgar and Yarkand.
1826 CE	Jahangir Khwaja, a scion of the AfaqiKhwaja family who was expelled by the Qing, invades and occupies Kashgar.
1839-42 CE	The Opium War put the Qing government in financial crisis. Unrest against Qing Rule arises. Russia occupies the Ili valley.
1864 CE	Formation of an independent Islamic State under the rule of the Khokandi General Yakub Beg. Revolt soon spreads throughout the region leading to the fall of the Qing regime in Xinjiang.
By 1870 CE	Yakub Beg emerges as the victor in the factional fights and assumes control of the entire region including Turfan and Urumqi. Takes the title of ‘Ataliq Ghazi’ (“Fatherly Holy Warrior”). He promotes Islam and the Sharia law, establishes diplomatic relations and signs commercial agreement with the Russian and British governments, and acknowledges the suzerainty of the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire.
1875 CE	The Governor-general of Shaanxi and Gansu provinces appointed by the Qing as Imperial Commissioner to supervise the affairs of Xinjiang.

1877 CE	<p>As Qing troops were approaching to reconquer Xinjiang, Yakub Beg ordered his troops to avoid confronting the Qing military directly, seeks negotiations and even shows intent to acknowledge Qing suzerainty if he was allowed complete control.</p> <p>In April 1877, Yakub Beg dies. Qing troops recover the areas north and south of the Tianshan Mountains occupied by Central Asia's Kokand Khanate.</p>
1881 CE	Qing recovered Ili valley from Russia.
1884 CE	The Qing dynasty formally established a province in the Western Regions and renamed it as Xinjiang (meaning "old territory returned to the motherland").
1911 CE	Revolutionaries set up the New Ili Grand Military Government, marking the end of the political rule of the Qing dynasty in the Ili region.

China's official narrative regarding the land the Uyghurs call home, Xinjiang, is that they (the Uighurs) have no indigenous claim to the area as they migrated from Mongolia and other Central Asian territories. This narrative also identifies the Uyghurs' history in Xinjiang as spanning 3,800-3,900 years, while the Hans, China claims, are one of the earliest people to settle in the territory and hence have a birth right to Xinjiang.

In advancing such a narrative, China looked to assert that Xinjiang is, and always has been an inseparable part of multi-ethnic China since the Han dynasty (206 BCE-24 CE).

Some historians argue that such a narrative is blemished and one-sided as historically Xinjiang was more often than not beyond China's control.

As per Michael Clarke *"China did have intermittent periods of control over the area, but it was only during the Qing dynasty in the mid-eighteenth*

*century that they exerted control for a longer period”.*¹

Jennifer Ang opines that *“the Uyghurs have an ethno-religious identity which has become underscored in contemporary times due to China’s constructed narrative regarding the Uyghurs and Xinjiang”.*²

Origin of the “East Turkistan” Issue

The term “Turkistan” or “the region of the Turks” is used to refer to areas north of the Syr Darya River. With evolution of history, the modern ethnic groups in Central Asia were established one after another. By the 18th century, the geographical concept of “Turkistan” was already very vague, and almost nobody used it again in the historical records of the time. In the early 19th century, with the growing colonial expansion of the imperialist powers into Central Asia, the geographical term “Turkistan” was revived.

It is the Russians who used the term “Turkistan” in diplomatic communications to describe the geographical position of Central Asia and the Tarim Basin. In view of the different histories, languages, customs and political affiliations of the two areas, they called the Tarim Basin, situated to the east of “Turkistan” as “East Turkistan” or “Chinese Turkistan”.

In mid-19th Century, Russia annexed the three Central Asian Khanates of Khiva, Bukhara and Kokand and set up the “Turkistan Governorship” in the Hezhong (Samarkand). The Hezhong area “West Turkistan” or “Russian Turkistan”, and China’s Xinjiang region came to be referred as “East Turkistan”.

1 The Sinicization and Suppression of China’s Muslim Uyghurs By Sarmad Ishfaq | Foreign Policy Journal, Nov 23, 2018, accessed at <https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2018/11/23/the-sinicization-and-suppression-of-chinas-muslim-uyghurs/>

2 “The Sinicization and Suppression of China’s Muslim Uyghurs By Sarmad Ishfaq | Foreign Policy Journal, Nov 23, 2018, accessed at <https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2018/11/23/the-sinicization-and-suppression-of-chinas-muslim-uyghurs/>

In 1829, Nikita Bichurin (better known by the monastic name Hyacinth and as a founding father of Sinology) came up with the idea for the name East Turkestan to replace the term “Chinese Turkestan”. In 1933, amid the turbulence of China’s civil wars, Uighur leaders in the ancient Silk Road city of Kashgar declared a short-lived independent ‘Republic of East Turkestan’. Today, “East Turkestan” is used for the region by diaspora communities. It also forms part of the name for the ‘East Turkestan Islamic Movement’. In November 1933, Sabit Damolla and others founded the “East Turkistan Islamic Republic” in Kashgar but it collapsed being unable to gather requisite support.

In 1944, the “Revolution of the Three Regions”, which was part of Chinese people’s democratic revolutionary movement, broke out against the Kuomintang rule (the three regions referred to Ili, Tacheng and Altay), but separatist Elihan Torae (an Uzbek from the former Soviet Union) usurped the leadership of the revolution in its early days, and founded the so-called “Republic of East Turkistan” in Yining, with himself as its “chairman”.

In June 1946, Ahmatjan Kasimi and Abdukerim Abbasov, leaders of the revolution, dismissed him from that post, and reorganized the “ Republic of East Turkistan” as the Advisory Council of the Ili Subprovincial Administrative Region, dealing a fatal blow at the separatist forces.

Since the peaceful liberation of Xinjiang, the “East Turkistan” forces have never resigned themselves to their defeat.

The tiny group of separatists who had fled abroad from Xinjiang collaborated with those at home, and looked for opportunities to carry out what China calls ‘splittist’ and sabotage activities with the support of international anti-China forces.

Especially in the 1990s, influenced by religious extremism, separatism and international terrorism, part of the “East Turkistan” forces both inside and outside China turned to such ‘splittist’ and sabotage activities with terrorist violence as their chief means. Some “East Turkistan”

organizations openly stated that they would use terrorist and violent means to achieve their purpose of separation.

Sino-Russian Relations after 1877

The Sino-Russian Treaty of St. Petersburg was signed in 1881 in which Russia agreed to return to the Qing most of the Ili Valley (east of the Khorgos River), a territory that it occupied in 1871. Russia also gained the right to trade in major Xinjiang cities, including Ili, Tarbagatai, Kasghar, and Urumchi, duty free and the right to open consulates in Turfan and Jiayuguan Pass in Gansu in addition to existing Consulates at Ili, Tarbagatai, Kulun, and Kashgar.

In 1895, Russia transferred the consulate in Turfan to Uruqi, making the latter the consulate general in Xinjiang. In 1898, there were 3–4 Russian firms and 200 Russian merchants in Urumqi. These numbers grew in 1907 to 30 Russian firms 800 merchants.

Period under the Republic of China

A timeline of major events during the period the Republic of China controlled Xinjiang are as follows:

1912 CE	Qing dynasty replaced by the Republic of China. The last Qing governor of Xinjiang flees. Yang Zengxin, a Han Commander of native Turkic troops, seized control of Xinjiang and was later appointed Governor. He controlled Xinjian until his assassination in 1928. Succeeded by Jin Shuren.
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<p>Upto Nov 1933</p>	<p>The Kumul Rebellion and other rebellions arose against Jln Shuren by Uyghurs, other Turkic groups and Hui (Muslim) Chinese.</p> <p>Jin seeks Russian assistance to crush the revolt.</p> <p>The First East Turkistan Republic was then declared in the areas of the present day Kashgar, Khotan and Aqsu prefectures.</p> <p>Debate on its name being “East Turkestan” or “Uyghuristan”.</p>
<p>1934 CE</p>	<p>Battle of Kashgar. The 36th Division (National Revolutionary Army comprising Chinese Muslim Kuomintang) destroyed the Army of the First East Turkestan Republic.</p>
<p>1937 CE</p>	<p>Soviet invasion of Xinjiang.</p> <p>The entire province brought under control of a Northeast Han warlord Sheng Shicai, who ruled parts of Xinjiang for the next decade with close support from the Soviet Union.</p> <p>A Soviet military base established in Xinjiang and Soviet military and economic advisors deployed.</p>
<p>1943 CE</p>	<p>Sheng Shicai invites a group of Chinese Communists to Xinjiang, including Mao Zedong’s brother Mao Zemin. However, fearing a conspiracy executes them all, including Mao Zemin.</p>
<p>1944 CE</p>	<p>KMT Government informed of Sheng Shicai’s intentions to join the Soviet Union. He is shifted out to Chongqing as the Minister of Agriculture.</p> <p>A short-lived Soviet-backed Second East Turkestan Republic was established, which lasted until 1949 in what is now Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture (Ili, Tarbagatay and Altay Districts).</p>

1946 CE	ETR Disbanded and a coalition of KMT and erstwhile ETR leadership set up.
25 Sep 1949	'Peaceful' liberation of Xinjiang. The People's Liberation Army entered Xinjiang in 1949 to whom the then Kuomintang Commander surrendered. Five ETR leaders who were to negotiate with the Chinese over the ETR's sovereignty died in an air crash in Soviet airspace over the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic later in the year.

Period under the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC)

PRC's Initial Strategic Objectives and Approach to Ethnic Minorities

In the obtaining geopolitical circumstances, China's initial objectives for Xinjiang were:-

- (a) maintaining stability in the region and preservation of its territorial integrity.
- (b) Economic dividends through westward development.
- (c) Diversification of its energy sources.
- (d) Develop Central Asia as a sphere of influence.
- (e) Break out of USSR's strategic "encirclement".

The CCP's Initial Approach to Ethnic Minorities

After establishing the PRC, the CCP adopted five guiding principles for its handling of the ethnic minority issue:-

- (a) No region would be permitted to secede from the PRC;
- (b) Both 'Han chauvinism' (i.e. assertions of Han cultural superiority) and 'local nationalism' (i.e. separatism) would be opposed;

- (c) Autonomous organs of government would be established in regions predominantly populated by minority peoples;
- (d) Equality between nationalities, freedom of religion, and the preservation and development of minority languages and customs would be guaranteed; and
- (e) The central government pledged to aid in the development of ethnic minority regions.

The Great Leap Forward (1958–60) and the Cultural Revolution (1966–76)

Initially, the PRC implemented moderate policies toward the local minorities.

Xinjiang was made an autonomous region in 1955. On the recommendation of the then Governor, Mao personally approved inclusion of the word 'Uighur' into the province's official name.

The Great Leap Forward (1958–60) and the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) caused food shortages in the region. Along with disruption in Sino-Soviet relations, the food shortages sparked a mass exodus of Kazakh people causing political instability and ethnic tensions.

It is only after the Cultural Revolution that political and economic policies were moderated.

Though widespread improvement in the livelihood has since taken place, this progress has come along with as also due to an influx of Han people from other parts of China.

As Han migration into the region increased, the Inequities between the Uighur and Han populations became more pronounced.

Economic disparities, along with ethnic tensions between Uighurs and Han, precipitated Uighur protests and disturbances.

Initially, China followed a liberalised policy of allowing freedom of religion, restoration of old mosques and construction of new mosques. The number of new mosques being built with the help of voluntary donations in various settlements increased and the madrasas attached to various Mosques had considerable impact on society.

The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC)

The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) was founded in 1954 under the orders of Mao Zedong with the objective to develop frontier regions, promote economic development, ensure social stability and ethnic harmony alongside consolidating border defence. The XPCC has built farms, towns, and cities, and provided land and work for disbanded military units. Though abolished in 1975, it was re-established in 1981 amidst fears of Soviet encirclement.

The XPCC is structured into 14 divisions which are subdivided into 185 regiment-level entities (incl. regiments, farms, and ranches). The Nine XPCC-administered cities are nominally listed as “sub-prefectural-level cities” of Xinjiang Uyghur Administrative Region. The governments of these cities are combined entirely with the division that controls them. (Division headquarters is the same entity as the city government, the Division Political Commissar the same person as the City Committee Secretary, the Division Commander the same person as the city’s mayor).

The XPCC handles its own administrative and judicial affairs in areas under its administration as per XUAR Laws. Economic planning under Central Government.

The XPCC currently has eleven subsidiaries: Xinjiang Baihuacun Co (IT); Xinjiang Tianye Co., Ltd (Plastics); Suntime International Economic-Trading Co., Ltd (International Trade); Xinjiang Talimu Agriculture Ltd (Cotton); Xinjiang Yilite Industry Co., Ltd (Alcohol); Xinjiang Chalkis Co., Ltd(Agro products); Xinjiang Tianhong Papermaking Co., Ltd; Xinjiang Tianfu Energy Co., Ltd; Xinjiang Guannong Fruit & Antler Co.,

Ltd; Xinjiang Qingsong Cement Co Ltd and Xinjiang Sayram Modern Agriculture Co., Ltd (Cotton).

The areas and products in which these subsidiaries trade are interesting and of significance.

The XPCC model of administration has lessons for India insofar as forward area management is concerned.

Progress of Han Migration into Xinjiang

In 1950, 75% of Xinjiang’s population lived in the southern Tarim Basin. Migration into Xinjiang was driven by two main factors – manpower to utilise the vast sparsely inhabited areas of Dzungaria and to defend the area against the Soviet Union.

China directed the majority of Han migrants towards the sparsely populated Dzungaria, deliberately keeping them away from the Uyghur populated southern Xinjiang to ensure the existing Uyghur communities are not disturbed. During 1957 – 1967, 2 million Han migrants moved to Dzungaria.

Demographic Profile of Xinjiang

	1945	1982	1996	2008
Total (million)	3.6	13.1	16.8	21.3
Han (percent)	6.2	40.3	41.1	39.2
Uyghur (percent)	82.7	45.7	50.6	46.1
Hui (percent)	2.8	4.3	4.9	4.5
Kazak (percent)	1.1	6.9	8.0	7.1
Other (percent)	7.2	2.8	2.8	3.1

Fall out of Han Migration

The migration of the Hans into the region resulted in increased contact between the peoples of two distinctly different ethnic groups and in labour competition between them. This resulted in ethnic diversification in various sectors, with most natives still working in the primary sector (agriculture etc) as against most of the secondary and tertiary activities being dominated by the Hans.

There have no doubt been some Uyghurs who have gained from the increased economic prosperity but those are the ones who are in the state sector working as managers, administrators, professionals and workers etc. Otherwise, even in Uighur majority centre like Kashgar, the major industries are dominated by Hans with the perception is that the Managers prefer Hans to Uighurs.

Notwithstanding their contributions in Xinjiang's development, Hans are perceived as agents of colonialism, monopolizing local natural resources, and accumulating wealth by exploiting minorities.

The rather open support of the state machinery towards the Hans has not helped in this restoring the balance.

'Sinicisation' – an Incremental Process

In 1949, China undertook the the 'peaceful liberation' of Xinjiang. Although, Mao rejected Han-chauvinism and promoted a multi-ethnic Chinese nation, the 'Sinicization' of Uyghurs began when the Chinese Government laid down an 'inflexible', 'righteous', and 'sinicized' path to follow for all people, minorities with dissent being severely punished. *People are expected to behave a certain way. There is a "state-obligated path" that entails and forces how people should dress, what can and cannot be openly stated, how to worship if at all, which version of history to learn, which language to speak, and which TV channels to watch.* Further, *"although the aim for such an unyielding path is ironically to unify all people as 'Chinese', doing so is ignominious and threatens*

*the culture, language, religion, and identity of ethnic minorities”.*³

The Writings of Turghun Almas

Turghun Almas, an expert on Uighur history and culture wrote three books between 1986 to 1989 in which he describes the Uighurs as “indigenous nation” which was “Independent of China” in the past. Referring to the Great Wall being the national boundary of China, he described the area highlighting the inter-ethnic/racial conflict between Turkic peoples and the Hans to emphasise the case for an “independent state” of all “Turkic people”.

China took the stand that Almas’ works are a “vain attempt to incite racial conflict and fan flames of Xinjiang’s independence” and accused the author of “manipulating history” to incite “secession of Xinjiang from China”.

Early Incidents of Ethnic Discord

Among the earliest incidents of violence was in April 1980, riots occurred in Aksu when Han settlers were beaten up, their homes looted and a factory run by them damaged. Several hundred civilians and soldiers were reported to have been killed or wounded, leading to some Han settlers leaving Xinjiang. In another incident in Oct of the same year, an accident occurred in which an Uighur pedestrian was killed by a Chinese truck driver leading to local protests and unrest and significantly, the Chinese police refusing to carry out the orders of the local court that had sentenced him to death. The sentence was eventually commuted.

3 The Sinicization and Suppression of China’s Muslim Uyghurs By Sarmad Ishfaq | Foreign Policy Journal, Nov 23, 2018, accessed at <https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2018/11/23/the-sinicization-and-suppression-of-chinas-muslim-uyghurs/>

Sequence of Early Violent Incidents

In 1985 and 1986, Uighur students organised public demonstrations in Urumqi demanding ban on nuclear testing in Lop Nor and settlement of Hans in Xinjiang.

In December 1988, Uighur students staged protest march in Beijing against the exhibition of two historical films which they found “disrespectful to their race”. The publication by the Shanghai Cultural House that cast aspersions on their habits caused resentment among the Muslims throughout China and protest marches were organised in Beijing, Lanzhou and in several cities of Xinjiang.

In May 1989, Muslim students in Xinjiang University at Urumqi protested against the application of Chinese policy of birth control to non-Han peoples with slogans like “Han people leave Xinjiang “.

The year 1990 saw a dimension of separatism colour the incidences of violence. On 05 Apr 1990, a group of Uighurs aided and abetted by the “East Turkistan Islamic Party” (ETIM) created a grave terrorist incident in Barin Township, Akto County, Xinjiang. They preached a “holy war”, the “elimination of pagans” and the setting up of an “East Turkistan Republic”. The terrorists tried to put pressure on the government by taking ten persons hostage, demolished two cars at a traffic junction and killed six policemen. They shot at the besieged government functionaries with submachine guns and pistols, and threw explosives and hand-grenades at them.

The following year, on 28 Feb 1991, an incident occurred in which an explosion was engineered by the ETIM at a video theatre of a bus terminal in Kuqa County, Aksu Prefecture which caused the death of one person and injuries to 13 others. On the same day, the terrorists also planted a bomb at a private store in the county seat, which, fortunately, did not explode.

On 05 Feb 1992, ETIM blew up two buses in Urumqi killing three people and injuring 23 others. Two other bombs – one planted at a cinema and the other in a residential building – were discovered before they could explode, and defused.

On 24 Aug 1992, two ETIM cadres stabbed and seriously injured the Imam of the Great Mosque at Kashgar. The period 17 Jun – 05 Sep that year saw the “East Turkistan” terrorist organization carry out ten explosions at department stores, markets, hotels and places for cultural activities in the southern part of Xinjiang, causing two deaths and 36 injuries.

Another major event that took place on 07 Jul 1995 was a riot plotted and roused by ETIM to break into Prefectural Party Committee, government offices and public security bureau at Hotan.

During Ramadan 1997, 30 suspected Uighur separatists were rounded up and executed. The ‘Ghulja incident’ of 05 Feb 97 saw 9 deaths and over a hundred injured in a PLA crackdown. The Urumqi bus bombing incident a few days later on 25 Feb 1997 led to 9 deaths and 68 injured.

The Uighurs retorted by taking the battle into the Chinese heartland, Beijing’s Xidan district where a bus bomb killed two people.

China’s Shift in Strategy

Beginning in the 1980s, Xinjiang witnessed broad-based Islamic revival – visible in projects of community mosque building, widespread adoption of daily prayer, fasting, adopting ‘Islamic’ dress etc. China views these developments as a threat to its stability, development projects and expanding influence.

In response, China’s strategy shifted from cultural accommodation towards a more overt policy of assimilation. As its policy of liberalisation was ineffective, China adopted a new policy of Chinese monoculturalism in the region.

In 1990, the Beijing Language and Culture University developed the HSK (Hanyushuipingkaoshi-"Chinese competence test"), a standardized test for assessing the Chinese competence of non-native speakers. The HSK test has been put to use largely for the assessment and "encouragement" of non-native speakers of Chinese and a minimum score on it is essential for academic promotion.

The Xinjiang Academy of Sciences published the Educational Textbook of Atheism which highlighted the "negative role of religion in the long history of Xinjiang". This however evoked a strong reaction from Muslims in Xinjiang.

Strike Hard Campaign 1996

Eventually, Chinese patience withered and saw the launch of the 'Strike hard' campaign that commenced in 1996 resulting in thousands of arrests, executions, HR violations and Curbs on religious freedom.

The situation in Xinjiang relatively until mid-2006, though ethnic tensions remained.

The Great Western Development (GWD) Strategy 1999

Alongside, a 'soft' approach came by way of the GWD in 1999 which envisaged making Xinjiang as an industrial and agricultural base and a trade and energy corridor for the national economy. Specific targets were set to enhance living conditions and quality of life across Xinjiang. The annual growth rate for the region being set at an ambitious 9% so as to double the GDP of the region in 2000 by 2010.

- (a) The Annual growth of urban residents' disposable income per capita should reach around 7%.
- (b) Farmers' net income per capita to increase by 150 yuan each year.

- (c) Average housing floorage per capita of urban residents should reach 23 sq m.
- (d) Living environment, housing quality and hygienic conditions of rural residents should be greatly improved.

The GWD was however received with scepticism and perceived as a tool to migrate more and more Hans now to the southern cities and dilute Uighur numbers and culture.

Chinese Strategy Post 9/11 ‘War on Terror’

After 9/11 and the war on terror, Chinas impetus on combating the ‘three evils’ of terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism amplified. China has historically stated that foreign anti-state actors have used the Uyghurs to incite problems in the country. Post 9/11, China used it to bandwagon on the ‘Global War on Terror’ to justify their harsh actions against the Uyghurs. *“Under the pretext of terrorism, the Chinese punished the Uyghurs by engaging in hard tactics. This ‘bandwagon’ scheme served two objects: —firstly, to lessen international pressure on how China treats Uyghurs by leveraging the global anxiety over Islamic extremism; and, secondly, to mobilize public support domestically by using a discourse that categorizes any call for autonomy as ‘terrorism’. The ‘bandwagon’ strategy rewarded China with some short-term dividends, as they were able to categorize the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as an international terrorist outfit, but in the long-term they further ostracized the Uyghurs and internationalized their mistreatment of this community”.*

Further, *“by painting the entire Uyghur community with the same brush, it made the already frustrated Uyghurs more susceptible to the grasp of Islamic fundamentalism, and conversely allowed terrorist groups to leverage China’s Islamophobic machinations to radicalize the community”.*⁴

⁴ The Sinicization and Suppression of China’s Muslim Uyghurs By Sarmad Ishfaq | Nov 23, 2018 accessed at <https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2018/11/23/the-sinicization-and-suppression-of-chinas-muslim-uyghurs/>

Another China watcher, Adrien Morin in her article in The Diplomat titled “Is China’s Counterterrorism Policy in Xinjiang Working?” writes that the Chinese “employed a risky strategy in demonizing the Uyghurs as a whole and failed to discern the Uyghur opposition groups’ shift from political objectives (greater autonomy and cultural tolerance) towards Islamic fundamentalism”.⁵

The demolition of old town of Kashgar was seen as a ploy to erode the Uyghur culture which they have preserved through centuries, particularly as the apartments provided to the displaced were in localities where they have to live with Hans who eat pork. Incentives have been introduced for Uighurs to move to other parts of China.

The Urumqi Riots of 2009

The high point of Uighur violence is undoubtedly the Urumqi riots in July 2009 in which over 200 were killed and 1700 injured. The violence was sparked by a rumour floating in Guangdong factory- for which no evidence was found - that two Han women were raped by six Uyghur men, which led to Han workers murdering two of their Uyghur co-workers. The Uyghurs blamed the authorities for not arresting the Hans responsible for the attacks or protecting the murdered workers. This led to a domino effect and in the riots that ensued angry Uyghur community protested and killed some Han people. Two days later, after strengthening the police force, came the turn of armed Han mobs to target Uighurs.

5 Is China’s Counterterrorism Policy in Xinjiang Working? By Adrien Morin, The Diplomat, 23 Feb 2017, accessed at <https://thediplomat.com/2017/02/is-chinas-counterterrorism-policy-in-xinjiang-working/>

Government's First Response to the Unrest

The Urumqi violence saw a sequence of government responses. At first, the Security forces clamped down hard, arresting close to 1500 Uyghur men in connection to the riots and deploying a major police and army presence in Urumqi. The CCP Secretary for Urumqi and the Police Chief were removed and the unrest itself attributed to 'hostile external forces' with Uyghur activist Rebiya Kadeer and the Munich-based World Uyghur Congress (WUC) for orchestrating it.

Importantly, a sizeable compensation was paid to the families of the Han victims in the violence.

Subsequent Actions

China set in a multi-pronged attack to dispel the 'three evils of ' Terrorism, separatism and religious fanaticism

Curbing Islamisation

Mosques were seen as the fountainhead of ills and came under constant surveillance with security personnel making Muslims pass through face-scanning technology before entering mosques. The architecture of mosques saw elements of 'Sinicization' with domes being prohibited and they being required to embody Chinese characteristics. Building of new mosques curbed though number of mosques in Xinjiang inadequate to meet the needs of local Muslims. There is reportedly a shortage of well-educated clerics, Korans and of Islamic publications.

To check cultural and religious extremism, government sources have identified “75 types of behaviour that show religious extremism”. They range from calling for jihad to praying, eating halal, fasting, growing a beard, giving up smoking and drinking, possessing a Quran, or listening to religious media.

- (a) Words like “Inshallah”, “Asalam-u-Alaikum”, and others have been banned. There is also a ban on 22 common Muslim names.

- (b) State-run initiatives like the Islamophobic “Project Beauty” was commenced in 2011 that encourages Muslim women not to veil, but to show off their beauty by adorning themselves with modern and more Han-centric fashion.
- (c) Every day religious activities including eating / selling halal food, using Islamic greetings and even refusing to marry a Han Chinese came to be categorised as “extremist” and declared unlawful.
- (d) Sporting a veil or keeping a beard is still unlawful and so is refusing to watch state television. Private religious schools and private religious instruction banned.
- (e) Shops and restaurants allowed to sell alcohol and cigarettes during Ramadan.
- (f) State approved versions of the Holy Quran have been prescribed and Friday prayers sermons monitored with a pro-China narrative being included in them.

In an isolated incident that took place in the Yangchang Mosque in 2017, Muslims were forced to sing the national anthem under the Chinese flag before Eid al-Fitr prayers.

Persecution of Women

Some reported actions against Uighur women are:

- (a) Forcible change their clothing habits and wearing headscarves.
- (b) Violations of their dignity and individual rights.
- (c) Allegations of forceful sterilizations and abortions.
- (d) Transferring young, unmarried Uyghur women to work in Southern China – where they are in many cases exploited.

Discriminatory Policies

Some other actions in consonance with the Chinese intent of ‘sinicising’ Xinjiang but perceived as discriminatory by the Uyghurs are:

Preference being given to those who conduct business in Mandarin.

Number of Uyghur enterprises in various parts of mainland China closed / destroyed. Uyghur entrepreneurs deported back to Xinjiang.

Uyghurs discriminated against even when travelling on business around China, and from staying in top class hotels.

Local Uyghurs have no control over local resources; no access to information on profits generated by these resources.

Detention Centres of Training Camps

These have been set up across Xinjiang for the purpose of “eradicating ideological viruses” and modelled as vast prison-like compounds, equipped with barbed wire fences, reinforced security doors and windows, surveillance systems, watchtowers and guard rooms.

The ‘re-education’ involves strict regime of marching, singing revolutionary songs, lectures on the dangers of Islam, and quizzes on the thought of Xi Jinping. Forced repetition and self-criticism are central to the “cure” with detainees requiring to apologise repeatedly for “blindly following” Islam or Uyghur nationalism and to criticise their fellow inmates. Those who refuse or fail the tests are punished with solitary confinement, beatings and food deprivation.

These centres are in effect internment camps (which China calls vocational centres) in which Muslim Uyghurs identified as dangerous are given classes on Chinese history, language, and culture.

As per a report in the South China Morning Post datelined 16 Oct 2018, the Xinjiang Governor Shohrat Zakir described the camps as “*professional vocational training institutions*” that focus on “*the*

country's common language, legal knowledge, vocational skills, along with de-extremisation education” adding that “the centres are for “people influenced by terrorism and extremism” who are suspected of minor criminal offences that do not warrant criminal punishment”.

In an article titled “China’s Surveillance Laboratory” authored by Darren Byler and Timothy Grose published by the Dissent magazine, Urumqi is laden with “Convenience Police Stations” equipped with face-recognition cameras standing guard every 200 meters. The authors further mention that the city has become a “police lab” where Muslim minorities are regarded as test subjects in their Islamophobic experiment. Cameras are omnipresent and are especially focused towards mosques. Checkpoints have been increased and metal detectors are present at the entrances of all shopping centres, residential areas etcetera while police numbers have skyrocketed in these past years. The state has even used urban renewal projects in the city which has led to the destruction of lower-class areas which housed many Uyghurs.

A TIME magazine report published on 13 Mar 2019 quoted Shohrat Zakir again, this time addressing a session of the annual National People’s Congress in which he defended the detainment depots and implied they are “a temporary arrangement” and that “In general there will be fewer and fewer students in the centres. If one day our society doesn’t need them, the education and training centres will disappear.”

In the present scenario, opting to follow your true religion and culture could land a Uighur in prison or at a re-education centre. In the words of Byler and Grose, Uighurs are required to “adopt an entirely new set of rules. Instead of Islam, they must follow the 12 secular values of China. The Uyghurs must sinicize their religion, speech, dressing, behaviour, culture, and language in order to compete with Han migrants and that too in their own homeland”.⁶

6 “China’s Surveillance Laboratory” by Darren Byler and Timothy Grose, DISSENT, 31 Oct 2018, accessed at https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/chinas-surveillance-laboratory

Reports based on those detained in such facilities speak of forced political indoctrination, torture, beatings, food deprivation, and solitary confinement, as well as uncertainty as to the length of detention, humiliation, and denial of religious, cultural, and linguistic freedoms, and confirmed that they were told by guards that the only way to secure release was to demonstrate sufficient political loyalty. Poor conditions and lack of medical treatment at such facilities appear to have contributed to the deaths of some detainees, including the elderly and infirm.

Local officials in Xinjiang have used chilling political rhetoric to describe the purpose of government policy including “eradicating tumors” and “spray[ing] chemicals” on crops to kill the “weeds”.

In December 2018 and January 2019, Chinese officials organized visits to “political re-education” camps in Xinjiang for a small group of foreign journalists and diplomats from 12 non-Western countries. In the months preceding these visits, international media reported that officials “worked to remove security features from some “political re-education” facilities and coached detainees and area residents not to make negative comments about the camps. Reports also indicated that officials had transferred large numbers of detainees to detention facilities in other parts of China.

Advanced Surveillance Techniques

China has put in place an overarching regimen of surveillance technologies across Xinjiang. These include:-

- (a) Pervasive, high-tech surveillance across the region, including the arbitrary collection of biodata, including DNA samples from children, without their knowledge or consent.
- (b) Use of QR codes outside homes to gather information on how frequently individuals pray;
- (c) Setting up facial and voice recognition software and “predictive policing” databases;

- (d) Severe restrictions on the freedom of movement across the region.
- (e) Inspection of the content of smartphones held by Uyghurs. Any content showing a mere hint of separatism or sanctioned religious activity can cause an arrest on terrorism charges.
- (f) International phone calls and email communications are heavily monitored.
- (g) Internet regularly shut down following public unrest.

Mass Shootings

There have been reports of mass shootings in Alaqagha (2014), Hanerik (2013), and Sirqbuya (2013), as well as the extrajudicial killings of Abdelbaset Ablimit (2013) and Rozi Osman (2014) for which however Chinese Security Forces have never been held accountable.

Curbing Freedoms

Freedom of movement for Uyghurs became a serious issue in 2014. Checkpoints and roadblocks to monitor movement and whereabouts of Uyghurs. ID cards needed to move from place to place and Green cards to make purchases. Uyghurs also face problems with passport acquisition and travel restrictions.

Incidents of Violence Post 2009

Uighur unrest has continued even after the post-Urumqi unrest incidents and despite the security crackdown. Some major incidents of violent incidents after the Urumqi violence notwithstanding the draconian measures put in place, are as mentioned below:-

<u>2012</u>
Attack in Yecheng County on 28 Feb 2012 in which 24 persons were killed and 18 injured.
Passengers on board a flight bashed two Uyghur hijackers to death on 29 Jun 2012.
<u>2013</u>
Clashes in Bachunear Kashgar between a group of armed men and social workers and police on 24 April 2013 in which 21 people, including 15 police and officials were killed.
Riots in Lukqun Township in Shanshan County on 26 June in which 27 people were killed – 17 killed by rioters and 10 were the alleged assailants who were shot dead by police.
<u>2014</u>
Kunming Railway Station incident of 01 March 2014 in which a group of knife-wielding terrorists attacked killing 31 and injuring 141. Over 380 people arrested in the following crackdown. Three people sentenced to death and one to life in prison for the attack.
Group of 16 ethnic Uyghurs (10 men and 6 women and children) engaged in a shootout with Vietnamese border guards after seizing their guns on 18 Apr 2014. Five Uyghurs and two Vietnamese guards killed in the incident.
Incident at Urumqi train station on 30 Apr 2014 in which 2 attackers stabbed people before detonating their suicide vests. Three persons including the attackers, were killed.
Two suicide car bombings occur on 22 May 2014 in which occupants of a car threw explosives at an Urumqi street market killing 43 persons. Around 90 persons injured.
A gang armed with knives and axes kill 37 civilians were killed by in the towns of Elixku and Huangdi in Shache County on 28 July 2014. The Uyghur American Association claimed that local Uyghurs had been protesting at the time of the attack. Two days later, the moderate imam of China's largest mosque was assassinated in Kashgar after morning prayers.

Series of bomb blasts kill 50 people in Luntai County, southwest of Urumqi on 21 Sep 2014. The dead included 6 civilians, 4 Police officials and 44 rioters.
Uyghurs armed with knives and explosives attacked a farmers' market in Xinjiang on 12 Oct 2014 in which 22 people killed included attackers and police officers.
Attack in Shche County on 29 Nov 2014 in which 15 people were killed and 14 injured. Eleven of the killed were Uyghur militants.
<u>2015</u>
Unidentified group of knife-wielding terrorists attacked sleeping workers at a coalmine and killed 50 people in Aksu on 18 Sep 2015. The TIP claimed responsibility for the attack.
<u>Uighur Related Violence in other Countries</u>
About 2,000 Grey Wolves protesting China's fasting ban in Xinjiang mistakenly attacked South Korean tourists in Istanbul on 04 July 2015. China issued a travel warning to its citizens traveling to Turkey.
Bombing attack inside the Erawan Shrine in Thailand on 17 Aug 2015 suspected to have been carried out by the Grey Wolves, the Turkish terrorist organisation in response to Thailand's deportation of 100 Uyghur asylum-seekers.
Kyrgyzstan Chinese Embassy was struck by a suicide bombing on 30 Aug 2015. The Uighur Suicide bomber was only fatality. No Chinese was wounded.
Police killed 4 militants who carried out a bombing in Karakax County on 28 Dec 2015.
<u>2017</u>
Three knife wielding attackers killed 5 people before being killed by police on 14 Feb 2017.

Allegations of Assault on Uighur Culture and Identity

Uyghur culture and identity sought to be deliberately blended into and with other ethnic groups into a single “state-race”.

Experiments with newly established “Unity Villages” within which locals and Han migrants are given cash incentives to start interethnic families. Children of Uyghur parents deemed ideologically “unsafe” are segregated and raised in state orphanages.

Uyghurs are forced to celebrate Chinese cultural traditions, such as Chinese New Year.

The unique Uyghur culture such as ‘Muqam’ (a musical tradition) and ‘Meshrep’ (traditional cultural gatherings), is facing eradication due to state control over Uyghur cultural heritage, and elimination of the Uyghur language as a medium of instruction in Xinjiang schools and universities.

Uyghurs and Kazakhs, who have now obtained permanent residence or citizenship in other countries, attest to receiving threats and harassment from Chinese officials.

China’s Claims on Preserving / Promoting Diverse Culture

China has mentioned various actions taken by it towards promoting preserving and promoting ethnic diversity. These include:

- (a) People’s Broadcasting Station uses five languages, namely, Uighur, Han, Kazak, Mongolian and Kirgiz.
- (b) Xinjiang Television Station uses the Uighur, Han and Kazak languages.
- (c) The Uighur, Han, Kazak, Kirgiz, Mongolian and Xibe have newspapers, books and magazines available to them in their own languages.
- (d) Ethnic minorities’ folkways and customs are fully respected.

- (e) Ethnic minorities' traditional culture is protected and flourishing.
- (f) Normal religious activities are protected by law. Islamic college specializing in training senior clergymen established.
- (g) Religious personages are guaranteed access to scriptures and other religious publications.

The CPC Position on Religious Extremism

China's Communist Party has hardened its rhetoric on Islam, with top officials making repeated warnings about the spectre of global religious "extremism" seeping into the country, and the need to protect traditional Chinese identity.

Officials from Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, which has an ethnic Hui population that is predominantly Muslim, warned similarly about the perils of "Islamic extremism". "What the Islamic State and extremists push is jihad, terror, violence," Li said. "This is why we see Trump targeting Muslims in a travel ban. "It doesn't matter whether anti-Muslim policy is in the interests of the US or it promotes stability, it's about preventing religious extremism from seeping into all of American culture."

President Xi Jinping has directed the party to "Sinicise" the country's ethnic and religious minorities.

Persecution of Intellectuals

The case of Prof Irham Tohti: Ilham Tohti, a Uyghur economist is a scholar on Uyghur-Han relations and is a vocal advocate for the implementation of regional autonomy laws in China. He also hosted a website named Uighur Online, founded in 2006, which became a platform to discuss Uighur issues. The web site was shut down by authorities in 2008 accusing it of having links with the Uighur diaspora. In an interview with Radio Free Asia held in March 2009, IrhamTohti criticized the Chinese government's policy to allow migrant workers

into Xinjiang and the focus of the Chinese Governor on the stability and security of Xinjiang over that of caring for the Uighur people. He was accused of separatism and detained. He was arrested again on 08 July 2009 after the Urumqi Riots and released on 23 Aug upon pressure from the US Government. In Jan 2014, he was rearrested, his computers seized and he transported to Xinjiang from his home in Beijing. In Sep 2014, after a two-day hearing before the Urumqi People's Intermediate Court, Irham Tohti was found guilty of "separatism" and sentenced him to life imprisonment without any evidence being shown to his defence team. This arrest and imprisonment had come in for criticism across the world with some referring to him as the 'Uighur Mandela'.

The case of Zhao Xinwei. A former editor-in-chief of the official Communist Party publication in Xinjiang, Zhao Xinwei, had highlighted China's ruthless policy of silencing alternative voices. In 2015, he was prosecuted on charges of corruption after he "improperly discussed" and "publicly made comments in opposition" to party views on the region.

Return / Repatriation of Uighurs to China

In violation to the principle of non-refoulement, Uighurs who had sought refuge in several countries have been compelled by China to forcibly return them notwithstanding their well-founded fears of persecution.

Nations that have so acceded to China are : Egypt (2017), the United Arab Emirates (2017), Malaysia (2011, 2013), Thailand (2011, 2015), Laos (2010), Burma (2010), Cambodia (2009), Vietnam (2014), Kazakhstan (1999, 2001, 2003, 2006), Uzbekistan (2007), Tajikistan (2011), Pakistan (2003, 2009, 2011), Nepal (2002), and India (2016). Kazakhstan even deported an asylum-seeker despite his having an offer to settle in Sweden.

Some cases of large-scale deportations are:

From Cambodia: 20 Uyghur asylum-seekers including a woman and children (2009).

From Malaysia : 11 Uighurs (2011).

From Thailand: 100 Uyghurs (2015).

Allegations of State Excesses raised by Human Rights Watch (HRW)

HRW, an independent international human rights organization that monitors human rights developments in more than 90 countries around the world, including in China have raised the following issues with the Chinese Government:

- (a) Detention quotas being set that police officers and other government officials are required to meet for political education camps.
- (b) Teenage children under 18, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and people with mental disabilities being held in these political education camps and children are being detained in boarding schools or orphanages, under terrible and overcrowded conditions, especially once their parents are in political education camps.
- (c) Torture and other ill-treatment in the detention centres.
- (d) lack of access to lawyers of their own choosing?
- (e) A list of “75 behavioural indicators of religious extremism.
- (f) Uyghur women forced to marry Han men and monetary rewards being given for intermarriages between Uyghur or ethnic Kazakh people with Hans.
- (g) Recall of passports from residents across Xinjiang.
- (h) Restrictions of movement particularly of Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang and the need for them to apply before they can travel outside of the area in which their hukous are registered.
- (j) Compulsory collection of DNA samples, fingerprints, iris scans, and blood types of all residents in the region between the age of 12 and 65.

- (k) Predictive policing program based on big data analysis in Xinjiang called the Integrated Joint Operations Platform.

It was for the first time on 13 Aug 2018 that provided a comment before the CERD of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, that *“the Xinjiang Autonomous Region always respects and guarantees the human rights of people of all ethnic groups, and protects the freedom and rights of citizens of all ethnic groups”* and that *“their freedom of religious belief are fully guaranteed”* achieves nothing other than *discrediting Beijing’s voice on the international stage*.⁷

China strongly defended its human rights record before the United Nations Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on 06 Nov 2018, stating that its policies regarding Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, including the ‘Vocational Education and Training Centres’. It sent a 66-member delegation to the UN Human Rights Council headed by the Le Yucheng, the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs who deposed that the *“Vocational Education and Training Centres”* are a *“preventive measure to combat terrorism”*. Le also told Xinhua that China’s perspective on human rights, such as *“no security, no human rights”* and *“development is a primary human right”* have been “widely understood, recognized, and supported” during the UPR.

Are there Uighurs in Xinjiang’s CCP? Uighurs remain a political minority with little penetration into the CCP mainly owing to the fact that religion must be renounced before joining the CCP.

The East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) / Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP)

The East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) also called The Turkestan Islamic Party is a group whose members consisting ethnic Muslim Uyghurs which has since 2001, been affiliated with al-Qaeda.

7 Quoted from <https://www.hrichina.org/en/2018-universal-periodic-review-china>

In 2013, the TIP moved to join the Caliphate, integrating, along with a pair of Uzbek groups, into a faction of Jabhat al-Nusra. According to a 2016 report in the Al Arabiya News there (were) a few thousand Uyghur fighters in Syria, many of whom arrived with their families after a long and treacherous journey from China and Central Asia. In July 2016, it was reported that Abu Muhammad al-Julani, the leader of Jabhat al-Nusra announced that the group would be renamed as Jabhat Fath al-Sham.

The TIP attempts to legitimize its terrorist activities by invoking the name of Allah and appeals to traditionally painful issues for Uyghurs, such as the Chinese birth control policy, expansion of the Han in Xinjiang, and discrimination and persecution of Muslims by China. For the TIP, the armed struggle against China is not a political objective but is the Will of Allah. Its two main objectives are the separation of Xinjiang from China and the establishment of the Islamic state of “East Turkestan”.

Before 2003 the targets of TIP attacks were officials, police, and members of the Chinese security forces. After its integration with al-Qaeda, Uyghur fighters began carrying out attacks in crowded and busy areas. This has led to an increase in “the damaging effect” of attacks and an increasing number of victims. The terrorist attacks in 2013-2014 in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, Urumqi, and the attempt to hijack the aircraft Hotan-Urumqi indicate to this change in targets and places for the attacks. Today ISIS-inspired radicals in Europe repeat the experience of TIP fighters, who massacred Han Chinese at stations in Kunming and Guangzhou using knives, axes, and machetes in 2014.

China is apprehensive on exiled ETIM fighters posing any threat to strategic stability in the Xinjiang region, a concern that underlines its push for a concrete security mechanism with Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

China’s quest to seek a role in the Afghanistan peace dialogue as also in following a ‘forward policy’ in the Wakhan Corridor is motivated by the check the threat of radicalization besides its assessment of the future strategic role Afghanistan can play.

One estimate of the Uighurs in Syria to fight with the Turkestan Islamic Party reaches as high as 5,000 recruits though many of them not religious fundamentalists but simply wishing to leave the conditions in Xinjiang.

As the fighting in Syria and elsewhere draws down, many of these fighters may return to Xinjiang to attempt to continue the battle. China recognizes this, as is evident from President Xi Jinping's statement on the need for a "Great Wall of Iron".

Implications of the China's Harsh Measures

In an article titled "The 'de-extremization' Campaign in Xinjiang: A Cure Worse Than the Disease" published in September 2018, Marc Julienne of the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO) in Paris has argued that *"China's anti-terrorist campaign since 2015 has proved to be efficient since almost no attack in China has occurred since"*.

She further opines that though *"Surveillance is tighter than it has ever been before in China or even elsewhere in the world. Police, assistant police, armed police, and military personnel are constantly watching and patrolling Xinjiang's streets and countryside. While effective on the surface, China's draconian approach 'will have consequences'"*.

In Marc Julienne's perception:

"First, extremism and separatism may grow stronger silently. Under the current security apparatus, terrorist violence seems very unlikely since any attempted act would be repressed immediately. However, religious extremism can only grow stronger in the hearts and minds of people that feel persecuted and suppressed for their cultural identity and religious belief".

"Second, Chinese policy toward the Uyghurs is already galvanizing the Uyghur diaspora and human rights NGOs worldwide to pressure governments and the UN to oppose China on this matter".

“Third, China’s actions will also galvanize militants worldwide. Uyghur separatist organizations exist outside Chinese borders, namely the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) that operates in Afghanistan, Pakistan, as well as in Syria. TIP and other organizations such as the Islamic State are likely to benefit from the resentment against China among the Uyghur and Kazakh populations in South and Central Asia to recruit fighters. China has plenty of infrastructure projects abroad, especially in Central Asia and Pakistan, that could be chosen as targets for terrorists seeking to avenge fellow ethnic and religious groups in Xinjiang”.

Therefore, *“analysing the Xinjiang situation from the perspective of Chinese interests, it is hard to see how China benefits from its massive repression of Muslim populations. There is a highly significant risk that these kinds of policies could exacerbate interethnic resentment, separatism, and extremism at home, harm China’s international image, and make China a target of terrorist organizations abroad. In short, the cure might prove to be worse than the disease”.*⁸

The ‘Stability Paradox’

Stefanie Kam of the National Security College, Australian National University in an article *“Xinjiang and the Stability Paradox”* published in August 2018 writes that *“In China’s view, securitization can be seen as a strategy to crack down on the “three evils” – religious extremism, separatism, and terrorism. Since the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) “peacefully liberated” Xinjiang in 1949, incorporating Xinjiang into the People’s Republic of China, Beijing has sought to bind the region closer to the Chinese nation-state. Strategically and economically, Xinjiang features heavily in China’s global expansionist agenda. This is evidenced by its Belt and Road Initiative, which seeks to revitalize the ancient Silk Road, and its construction of energy and trade routes through Xinjiang”*

8 The ‘De-Extremization’ Campaign in Xinjiang: A Cure Worse Than the Disease’ by Marc Julienne, The Diplomat, 15 September 2018, accessed at <https://thediplomat.com/2018/09/the-de-extremization-campaign-in-xinjiang-a-cure-worse-than-the-disease/>

adding that “fundamentally, for Beijing, the idea of a stable Xinjiang is deeply rooted in the broader domestic narrative encapsulated in Deng Xiaoping’s idea that “stability overrides everything”.

She adds that “the use of stability as a marker in Xinjiang has started to raise questions about the counterproductive effects of maintaining stability at all costs. Beijing’s obsession with stability maintenance in Xinjiang has been criticized as being incommensurate with the actual links between Uyghur separatists and international terrorist groups, raising questions about the capabilities of Uyghur separatists”.⁹

With regards to Uyghur political activism worldwide, Stephanie Kam assesses that *“China has worked to suppress their calls for an East Turkestan Republic and that “Uyghurs have thus far not generated enough momentum to challenge the Chinese regime”. China’s approach to transnational Uyghur activists has been “framing any secessionist attempts in Xinjiang as challenges to Chinese nationalism, blocking certain internet content domestically, and linking nearly all Uyghur movements with secessionist attempts”.¹⁰*

International Voices of the Uighur People

The World Uyghur Congress (WUC): Established on 16 April 2004 in Munich, Germany, after the East Turkestan National Congress and the World Uyghur Youth Congress merged into one united organisation, is an international organisation that represents the collective interest of the Uyghur people both in East Turkestan and abroad. The main objective of WUC is to promote the right of the Uyghur people to determine the political future of East Turkestan. The WUC has played a major role in amalgamating Uyghur diasporas.

9 Kam, S. 2018, 'Xinjiang and the Stability Paradox' by Stephanie Kam, The Diplomat, 16 August 2018, accessed at <https://thediplomat.com/2018/08/xinjiang-and-the-stability-paradox/>

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The Uighur American Association. UAA works to promote the preservation of Uyghur culture, and to support the rights of the Uyghur people living in different parts of the world. The Uyghur Human Rights Project it has commenced in 2004 has been a successful in collating and highlighting the Human Rights situation in Xinjiang.

The Government in Exile of East Turkistan Republic. Is a Washington based organization of Uyghurs, which tries to educate the American public on the history, culture and current political situation of the Uyghurs.

Other Uighur Support Organisations (Past and Present)

Other Organisations set up in support of the Uighur cause are / have been:

- (a) The Eastern Turkestan Cultural and Social Association was established In Munich (Germany) in January 1991 by Erkin Alptekin, son of late Isa Alptekin.
- (b) The International Uighur Union of CIS was set up in early 1992 in Almaty with the objective of protecting human rights and seeking self-determination for Uighurs.
- (c) The Nevada Semipalatinsk Movement set up in Kazakhstan to mobilise opinion against the Lop Nor nuclear tests.
- (d) A Uighur party “For a Free Uighuristan” established in Kyrgyzstan in June 1992 in support of the creation of an Independent State of Eastern Turkestan.

Other Smaller Organisations. East Turkestan Liberation Front, Eastern Turkestan National Revolutionary Front, Eastern Turkestan Charity Fund, Kazakh Turk Peoples’ Charity Fund and The Islamic Party of Eastern Turkestan.

Uighur activists’ state that “Uighurs are under immense pressure to exit China and have been persuaded or tricked into joining a radical Islamic group”.

Seyit Tumor, a known Uighur voice laments in a 2017 interview: ***“We (Uighurs) are losing the de-radicalization battle.”***¹¹

China’s Diplomatic Counter-Measures

The OIC and the Islamic Nations

China has followed a liberal policy towards the Muslim world since 1980s. After the Tiananmen Square Incident, it forged closer cooperation with the Middle East countries and with its neighbouring Muslim countries.

The Central Asian States

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, China worked on developing relations with its newly independent Central Asian neighbours, starting with establishing borders.

Kazakhstan. Was one of the first Central Asian nations with which China developed trade relations. It invested heavily into Kazakhstan’s energy sector to meet its own needs. The two nations had an estimated \$11.07 billion in bilateral trade in 2017. Direct Chinese investment in Kazakhstan, which grew 6.6 percent from 2016 to 2018. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), in which Kazakhstan is a key node will only enhance Chinese investments. According to leaders in both China and Kazakhstan, *“the initiative will benefit Kazakhstan’s economy immensely, in particular by increasing trade with China, attracting Chinese and other investments, establishing logistics hubs, and providing opportunity to jointly oppose currency risks”*.¹² Also, *“the deepening relationship between Kazakhstan and China, rooted in both geostrategic and economic needs, makes domestic Kazakh opposition to China’s policies in Xinjiang exceptionally*

11 China’s Uighurs work to fend off pull of jihad By GERRY SHIH, 29 December 2017, AP News, accessed at <https://www.apnews.com/36513540608242c099580da79c6c2666>

12 Kazakhstan’s Xinjiang Dilemma - China’s crackdown on Muslims in its far west has become a domestic issue for the Kazakh government. By Nazira Kozhanova The Diplomat May 01, 2019 <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/kazakhstans-xinjiang-dilemma/>

*difficult for the Kazakh leadership to manage”.*¹³

Kyrgyzstan. There are an estimated 50,000 Uighurs live in Kyrgyzstan, although some Uygur groups put that number as being much higher. Kyrgyzstan is of strategic importance to China, which has stepped up investment in that country. It resolved its border disputes with the Central Asian States and obtained their assurances for their soil not being used for organising secessionist movements against it as it apprehended the Islamic movement in Central Asia could fuel the Uighurs into a movement of their own, Both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have *“taken a careful and quiet approach to the Xinjiang matter”*. In November 2018, as some in the Kyrgyz parliament pressed for answers and relatives and civil society groups began mustering, the government’s replies were muted. In December, Kyrgyz President Sooronbay Jeenbekov stated

“We are working through diplomatic channels. In this matter, we must bear in mind that we are talking about the citizens of China. How can we interfere with the internal affairs of another country?”

Kazakhstan has developed a similar strategy: Using diplomatic channels to secure the release of Kazakh citizens, but relegating the fate of ethnic Kazakh Chinese citizens to an “internal matter.”

On 28 March 2019, Kazakh Foreign Minister Beibut Atamkulov met with his counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing. According to the Chinese readout of their talks, *“The Kazakh side understands and supports the measures taken in Xinjiang to combat the ‘three forces’ and to ensure regional security and stability.”*

It is clearly evident that both countries *“with deep economic dependence on China and having adopted Chinese narratives about the “three evils” — “terrorism, separatism and religious extremism” - find themselves*

13 Kazakhstan’s Xinjiang Dilemma - China’s crackdown on Muslims in its far west has become a domestic issue for the Kazakh government. By NaziraKozhanova The Diplomat May 01, 2019 <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/kazakhstans-xinjiang-dilemma/>

*lacking any avenues that don't involve bending, ultimately, to Beijing's will."*¹⁴

Tajikistan

Catherine Putz in an article "New Report Claims Chinese Troops Patrol Large Swaths of the Afghan-Tajik Border" features in the Diplomat of 18 Jun 2019 reports that "On June 15, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon agreed to deepen their comprehensive strategic partnership. The Joint Statement issued after the meeting states that *"China and Tajikistan will continue to support each other on issues concerning their core interests, such as national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity, and give priority to the development of bilateral ties in each side's foreign policies."* The two sides, "are committed to boosting security cooperation *"to build a China-Tajikistan community of security step by step."*¹⁵

Sino-Tajik security relations go back a long way. In September 2016 Reuters reported an agreement to be signed between the Tajik State National Security Committee and its Chinese counterparts to provide for the construction of 11 outposts and a training centre. The WSJ claimed that the two countries signed agreements that *"gave Beijing rights to refurbish or build up to 30 to 40 guard posts on the Tajik side of the country's border with Afghanistan."* Under the accords, Chinese border guards have replaced their Tajik counterparts along large swathes of the territory along the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border, where Beijing deems the Tajiks incapable of stopping militants potentially infiltrating

14 On Xinjiang, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan Bend to Beijing's Will By Catherine Putz The Diplomat April 01, 2019. Accessed at <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/on-xinjiang-kazakhstan-and-kyrgyzstan-bend-to-beijings-will/>

15 : New Report Claims Chinese Troops Patrol Large Swaths of the Afghan-Tajik Border By Catherine Putz – The Diplomat, 18 June 2019, accessed at <https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/china-in-tajikistan-new-report-claims-chinese-troops-patrol-large-swaths-of-the-afghan-tajik-border/>

*Tajik territory, the official said. "There are parts of the country where the Chinese have taken over border control completely," the official said. "They patrol on their own, in their own vehicles."*¹⁶

In Catherine Pitz' assessment, *"China has not only exported its security framing to Central Asia i.e. the "three evils" of terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism - but has done considerable work to reinforce the region's authoritarian governments with Chinese technology"*.¹⁷

The Middle East

China has maintained strong relationships with many Middle Eastern countries. It has forged oil deals with Iran and Iraq and maintained ties with the Assad government in Syria.

In regards to ongoing conflict in the Muslim world, "China has steadfastly refused to be sucked into the Syrian conflict," says Dr. Dru Gladney, an anthropologist at Pomona College. *"I think that's given China's Muslims more opportunity to be involved in Sino-Middle Eastern trade opportunities....At one time the Muslim world were very concerned about the status and treatment of Uyghur and they calibrated their policy toward China on that basis. In recent years, drawn by gifts and economic aid and so forth, [Middle Eastern countries] have come largely to ignore the status of Uyghurs."*¹⁸

Turkey is the only predominantly Muslim country that has been critical of China's policies in Xinjiang. It is home to a large number of Uighurs though many of them live there without work permits or legal residency and unable to return to China. Turkey's position

16 China in Tajikistan: New Report Claims Chinese Troops Patrol Large Swaths of the Afghan-Tajik Border

A new WSJ report cites a Tajik official claiming China is much more deeply involved in Tajikistan than it admits' by Catherine Putz, The Diplomat, 18 June 2019, accessed at <https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/china-in-tajikistan-new-report-claims-chinese-troops-patrol-large-swaths-of-the-afghan-tajik-border/>

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18 'Culture Clash: Ethnic Unrest In Xinjiang' by Dru Gladney US-China Institute, 19 September 2016, accessed at <https://china.usc.edu/culture-clash-ethnic-unrest-xinjiang>

has recently also softened with its President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recently stating that Uighurs “actually lead happy lives in China”. This apparent capitulation and about-face is obviously due to the state of the Turkish economy and the need for Foreign investments that can come with a greater economic partnership with China.

Iran

Scott W. Harold, Alireza Nader in a paper of the RAND Corporation detail that “*China and Iran have developed a broad and deep partnership centered on China’s energy needs and Iran’s abundant resources as well as significant non-energy economic ties, arms sales and defense cooperation, and geostrategic balancing against the United States*”

Their key findings are that “*Over the past several years, China has become Iran’s number one oil customer and trading partner; China has provided Iran with the technological know-how to develop its energy resources. Chinese engineers have also built bridges, dams, railroads, and tunnels throughout Iran*”. On *Chinese-Iranian Strategic and Defence Cooperation*, the Authors state that “*China has aided Iran’s efforts to modernize its military hardware and doctrine through the transfer of military technology and sales of small arms and tactical ballistic and antiship cruise missiles*” and has “*assisted in the development of Iran’s nuclear program via the transfer of technology and machinery*”.¹⁹

Chinese-Iranian relations, as per them, “*are rooted in both countries’ having authoritarian regimes and historical narratives that characterize the international system as unjust and dominated by Western powers*” with the Iranian regime viewing China as “*a potential ally against the United States, and Beijing views Iran as a potential partner for limiting U.S. influence in the Middle East*”.²⁰

19 China and Iran - Economic, Political, and Military Relations by Scott W. Harold, Alireza Nader Occasional paper by the RAND Corporation accessed at https://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP351.html

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Iran has not evinced interest over the issue of Uyghur movement in Xinjiang, seeking to balance its concern for Muslims with bilateral relations with China. Also, perhaps for the reason that Uighurs are Sunni.

The OIC

The OIC charter sets out as one of its key objectives to: “safeguard the rights, dignity and religious and cultural identity of Muslim communities and minorities in non-Member States.”

In Dec 2018, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) acknowledged “disturbing reports” of China’s Muslim crackdown. However, several OIC member states are located “near infrastructure projects subsumed under the BRI Initiative”. **Hence, in spite of a heightened awareness of the Uyghur predicament, most OIC nations with a vital stake in maintaining friendly relations with China, have observed silence.**

In a scathing article titled ‘A Missed Opportunity to Protect Muslims in China’ published in The New Arab, Farida Deif, Canada Director of the New Arab writes it is *‘unfathomable’ that Foreign Ministers of the OIC would ignore the plight of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in China’s Xinjiang region, which included ‘locking up as many as a million people without charge in “political education” camps’ and that ‘surely the OIC, the collective voice of Muslim governments around the world, would bring its full weight to bear to condemn these abuses’.*²¹

“But instead the OIC praised China. In a resolution focused on safeguarding the rights of Muslims living in non-Muslim countries, the OIC commended China’s efforts *“in providing care to its Muslim citizens” and looked “forward to further cooperation between the OIC and the People’s Republic of China.”* The resolution did not include a word of criticism or condemnation for Beijing” and places the

²¹ ‘A Missed Opportunity to Protect Muslims in China’, Farida Deif, Canada Director of the New Arab published in The New Arab, 27 March 2019, accessed at <https://lobelog.com/a-missed-opportunity-to-protect-muslims-in-china/>

reason for this stand on “Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s visit to Beijing (in Feb 2019) and his expressed admiration for China’s “anti-terrorism and de-extremism” efforts may have set the groundwork for the OIC’s shameful resolution”.

Hence, the OIC “*applauded a country that has torn down mosques, removed Muslim crescents from burial sites, and confiscated prayer mats and Qurans. The OIC essentially condoned the mass surveillance, forced political indoctrination, arbitrary detention and collective punishment of a Muslim minority population of 13 million people*”.²²This clearly indicates to China’s power, stature and ability to ensure its geopolitical objectives.

Russia

While the erstwhile USSR shared a border with Xinjiang and had geopolitical interests in promoting and sustaining the Uighur cause, the connect to Xinjiang passed on to the Independent Central Asian States of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

In the present-day context, as articulated by an Article titled James Dobbins, Howard J. Shatz and Ali Wyne of the RAND Corporation in an article published in the Diplomat of April 2019, “*China and Russia are more aligned than at any point since the mid-1950s.*” *In July 2017, the two countries’ navies conducted a joint exercise in the Baltic Sea for the first time. In September 2018, China participated in Russia’s annual Vostok military exercise—another first. Russia has also sold China advanced*

military equipment, including an S-400 air defence system and 24 SU-35 fighter aircraft. According to Chinese government data, bilateral trade grew from \$69.6 billion in 2016 to \$84.2 billion in 2017 to \$107.1 billion last year, marking the first time that that figure surpassed \$100 billion. Moreover, despite facing setbacks in diversifying away from the U.S. dollar, Beijing and Moscow are conducting more of that trade, albeit

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*still in small amounts, in their own currencies. Russia became China's largest supplier of crude oil in 2016, displacing Saudi Arabia, and it is contracted to sell China 1.3 trillion feet of cubic gas annually for three decades, beginning this year, through its Power of Siberia pipeline".*²³

The economic gap between China and Russia is significant and growing rapidly. According to the World Bank, China's nominal gross domestic product in 1992 was slightly smaller than Russia's (\$427 billion versus \$460 billion). Just a quarter-century later, in 2017, it was nearly eight times as large (\$12.2 trillion versus \$1.6 trillion). China therefore *"has the capacity to expand its commercial footprint globally, and it can credibly envision a Sinocentric trading and investment zone in Eurasia"*.²⁴

There is no support for the Uighur cause from Russia today, nor any prospect for it. China and Russia are both part of the SCO and Russia looks to Chinese investments for a resurgence of its own economy.

Afghanistan

After Afghan support for Islamic militants in Xinjiang in the 1990s, China made peace with Taliban with the PLA concluding an agreement with Taliban at the end of 1998.

The Taliban government that usurped power in 1998 did not initially support the Uyghurs and promised not to "provide any training to Chinese Muslims in China's Xinjiang province and that it will assist the Chinese authorities maintain places of worship and madrassas as in China".

Afghanistan's Taliban government did not initially support the Uyghurs. The Taliban promised not to "provide any training to Chinese Muslims in China's Xinjiang province and that it will assist the Chinese authorities maintain places of worship and madrassas as in China". After the Hamid Karzai government took over power in Afghanistan, large funding and

23 "A Warming Trend in China-Russia Relations" RAND Blog 18 Apr 2019, accessed at <https://www.rand.org/blog/2019/04/a-warming-trend-in-china-russia-relations.html>

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humanitarian aid provided by China. Afghanistan urged the UN to designate ETIM under UN Security Council Resolutions 1267 and 1390 besides freezing its assets and importantly, kept its silence over the Urumqi riots in July 2009.

In recent years, China has “seen a role for itself in Afghanistan and is seeking to expand its influence even as the US looks to cut down its military presence in Afghanistan. In 2018 alone, there were indications of at least two visits by the Taliban to Beijing. On 10 Jan 2019, Afghanistan’s National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing to discuss how China could assist the “long term stability” of the war-ravaged country”.

For China, strengthening ties with Afghanistan and help stabilize the country would “*permanently block contact between the Taliban and China’s Muslim Uighur militants*”. It is equally driven by its long-time economic interests as it seeks to extend the China Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan.

In her assessment “Can China Drive the Afghan Peace Process?” featuring in the Diplomat of June 2019, Shubhangi Pandey of the ORF assesses the obtaining position in Afghanistan to be: “*the arc of China’s Afghan policy has visibly evolved from calculated indifference to active engagement, as Beijing’s interests in the region are expanding at a fast pace. First, China is wary of the geographical proximity between Afghanistan, home to the Taliban and a number of other transnational terrorist outfits, and its Uyghur Muslim-predominated Xinjiang region, which Chinese authorities claim is the breeding ground for the “three evils” plaguing the country (terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism).*

Second, China fears that the chronic political and strategic instability in Afghanistan may derail the progress of Beijing’s transcontinental infrastructure project, the Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to connect China with the countries of Southeast, South, and Central Asia; the Gulf region; North and East Africa; and Europe.

*Third, China's growing involvement in Afghan issues exemplifies the Chinese aspiration to alter the global perception in favour of China as a powerful regional, and perhaps even a global, player, which has the potential to resolve the problem of the longest-standing insurgency South Asia has ever witnessed".*²⁵

Pakistan

Pakistan has for long been suspected of imparting training, aiding and abetting the Uyghur separatists and being the major source of Islamic literature swarming Xinjiang, which has resulted in the radicalization of Uyghurs. On its part however, the Pakistani government has maintained a sympathetic, but at no time an openly supportive posture toward the Uyghurs and no Pakistani government official has ever met publicly with Uyghur leaders or promoted their cause.

As an all-weather friend of China, Pakistan has taken stern measures like closing the Uyghur settlements within its borders and areas and in GB, arresting and deporting Uyghurs and killing Uyghur terrorist suspects. It has gone further to even shut down Uighur businesses, repeatedly detained Uighur activists residing in the country and closed down schools teaching Uighur language. Dozens of Uighur women married to Pakistani citizens have been separated from their children and held in Xinjiang's detention centres.

In an interview with Turkey's state-run TRT World, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, when asked about China's deplorable treatment of Muslim minorities, chose instead to focus on Beijing's economic benevolence, calling China's growing economic support for Pakistan "*a breath of fresh air*" amid the "*doom and gloom*". Pakistan has chosen to remain silent on China's extensive abuses. This is in stark contrast to its vocal positions on human rights abuses in places such as Palestine, Myanmar and Indian-controlled Kashmir.

²⁵ "Can China Drive the Afghan Peace Process?" by Shubhangi Pandey, The Diplomat, 18 May 2019, accessed at <https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/can-china-drive-the-afghan-peace-process/>

Pakistan's President Arif Alvi went a step further and in a recent interview, expressed full support for Chinese actions vis-a-vis its Muslims while calling the increasing concerns about country's crackdown on Islam a false "bogey" to "pressure China".

Umar Lateef Misgar, a political analyst focusing on Kashmir and the Middle East. His work has appeared in The Independent, Truthout.org, London School of Economics Human Rights Centre blog, and elsewhere states that *"Pakistan's ruling class remains convinced that even the slightest criticism could prove to be disruptive for its special relationship with Beijing, and possibly even derail the flagship CPEC project. The reality, however, presents a far more complex picture.*

For now, Beijing appears to have the upper hand and will likely even get away with its awful treatment of Muslims, but a concerted effort by the international community, and particularly Pakistan, could force China to change tack and alleviate the continued suffering of its Muslim minorities".²⁶

The United States

The US has an expounded policy on all ethnic and territorial conflicts **except on the Uighur issue.**

The National Endowment for Democracy, an independent organization funded by the US Congress has been supporting the Uyghur Human Rights Project, which documents and disseminates information about atrocities on the Uyghurs. The International Religious Freedom Report published under the aegis of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour of the US Department of State, also studies religious repression in Xinjiang.

²⁶ "Pakistan's deafening silence over China's persecution of Uighur Muslims" by Umar Lateef Misgar, The New Arab 23 January 2019, accessed at <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2019/1/23/pakistans-deafening-silence-over-chinas-persecution-of-uighur-muslims>

Post the 9/11 attacks, the US saw China and itself facing a common challenge of international terrorism. The US government not only labelled the separatist Uyghur cadres of East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and the Home of East Turkistan Youth as terrorists, but also urged the UN to designate ETIM as a terrorist organization under UN Security Council Resolutions 1267 and 1390. Uighurs from Xinjiang involved in terrorist activities of Al Qaeda who were captured by the US military in Afghanistan and then sent to Guantanamo Bay prison.

Recent Support Initiatives in the US

In August 2018, A bipartisan group of U.S. senators and congresspeople has called on the United States government to sanction Chinese officials responsible for mass detentions in Xinjiang.

In a letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin, the commissioners of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, along with other members of Congress, urged the use of Global Magnitsky Act sanctions “against senior Chinese Government and Communist Party officials who oversee these repressive policies, including XUAR [Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region] Party Secretary Chen Quanguo.” (Magnitsky sanctions are designed to target individuals for their participation in human rights abuses).

In the same month, the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs appealed to the Trump Administration to take action against “egregious human rights abuses” in western China”, emphasizing that “*The United States must stand up for the oppressed*” and “*make clear to the Chinese government that the situation [in Xinjiang] is a priority for the U.S. Government.*”

China claims that its policy of sending Muslims to so-called “re-education camps” has been an effective means of preventing homegrown terrorism.

On the side of the Uyghurs, their hope is perhaps for a Kosovo-style humanitarian intervention by a US-led military force and while

fructification of that far dream is awaited, pro-Uyghur forces urge the US government not to sacrifice Uyghur human rights in its cooperation with China in the war on terrorism.

The US focus though remains more on Human Rights - not support for the Uighur Movements as such.

The Dalai Lama on the Uighur Situation

The Dalai Lama's Message read out at the First International Conference of the Allied Committee of the Peoples of Eastern Turkestan, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia, New York on 16 October 1998:

"Our ties to the people of Eastern Turkestan are no less than our ties with Mongolia. Our three peoples are tied together by geography and history, and these days unfortunately by the Chinese occupation of our countries. During the last few years we have seen momentous changes come to the world...

...In view of these changes, I remain optimistic that not too far in the future the true aspirations of the peoples of Eastern Turkestan, Inner Mongolia and Tibet will be fulfilled, and I am confident that the people of Eastern Turkestan, Inner Mongolia and Tibet will contribute to peace, prosperity and stability of not only China, but Asia as a whole".

No substantive collaboration / traction between movements in Tibet and Xinjiang

India's Position and Responses to the Uighur and Xinjiang Issues

After its 'Peaceful Liberation' of Xinjiang in 1949, China was concerned on India's position as a few Uyghurs, including two leaders, Mohammad Amin Bughra and Isa Yusuf Alptekin (mentioned earlier), had entered J&K State. They however did not receive any patronage or support and left for Turkey in 1950. Thereafter, till today, the Uighurs have neither sought Indian support nor has India provided them any.

The 'Three Evils' of separatism, religious extremism and terrorism have some similarities with those faced by India in J&K – Islamic radicalisation, resort to violence on ethnic grounds, tacit outside support from non-state groups and from the diaspora. ***On its part, there is no support for the Uighur cause from the Indian side. However, an increasing number of reports relating to Uighur issues have emerged in the Indian media in the recent past.***

Lessons for India?

Indian polity being a democratic one, several of the measures adopted by China are even beyond the pale of consideration, let alone implementation by India. There are yet a few Chinese actions that merit an examination as policy options.

(a) China recognises and leverages the strategic position of the Xinjiang Region as a transit route to Central Asia. It has therefore followed the dual policy of uplifting the economic circumstances of the people at the same time 'averaging' the demography of the region to a level where it is now seemingly improbable for a critical mass of revolt to build up that can free it from Chinese control.

(b) China took requisite steps including settling border issues with its Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and developed peaceful relations with them. It made enormous investments developing rail, road and pipeline projects in these neighbours even before the BRI had been conceived, which effectively muted any sound against any of its harsh measures in quelling unrest in Xinjiang.

(c) China has adopted a largely 'open door policy' for promoting foreign trade through Xinjiang that has helped the province develop as a hub for overland trade and traffic across Central Asia to Russia and on to Europe as also towards Iran and Gulf States.

For India, a parallel example of trade through Northeast States with Southeast Asia has yet to rise to achieve its objectives.

(d) India needs to be pro-actively involved in the SCO's anti-terrorism centre, Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) at Tashkent, to coordinate efforts against terrorism, separatism and extremism in the region.

(e) China is India's largest trading partner today. Even if that numerical position alters, the large mass of population in both nations and the immense demand they generate will ensure that the volumes of trade between them would grow in future.

The aspect to consider is whether the border and trade issues can be 'compartmentalised' and trade routes opened, say from Leh, Yarkand, Kashgar and onwards to the Central Asian Republics, which could also be a welcome CBM.

(f) ***Viability of direct air connectivity from India to Urumqi with onward connections to Ulaanbaatar, Almaty, Bishkek, Tashkent and Dushanbe should be considered.***

Conclusion

In their assessment of the ethnic conflict in Xinjiang, Drs. Imtiyaz and Siddiqui, who study Xinjiang state that *"Uyghurs will not be satisfied with anything less than a substantial expansion of autonomy in Xinjiang, which allows them to get educated in their own language and find jobs that are meaningful to support their families, and allows them a bigger share of the regional administration and economy"*.

They further state that *"China's leaders show no sign of compromise, and in fact, appear to do just the opposite further marginalizing the Uyghurs in their own land in every respect"* and that *"the Uyghurs currently lack military or organizational resources that would facilitate their legitimate struggles for self-determination. The Chinese control appears complete and has succeeded in denying all those tools and resources to reaching*

*the Uyghur separatists. They are also trying to strip Uyghurs of rhetorical weapons”.*²⁷

The future of relations between the Uyghur and China would depend on the course and extent of reform and eventual acceptance of the Uighurs to economic development and real integration. Gladys suggests that China should *“look at what it has been doing in other places with diverse populations, such as Yunnan”* where *“you don’t see the kind of unrest and discontent or huge income gap between the local Han population and the minorities.”*²⁸

Another step could be the preservation and recognition of minority rights. Yang explains that in some cases, ethnic and religious rights have been ignored or sacrificed in order to order to achieve the goal of political unity and stability. There is need to “respect cultural and religious rights to maintain political unity and social harmony”.

27 “China’s Hanification of Xinjiang is Failing” By Habib Siddiqui and A.R.M. Imtiyaz, Asian Tribune Vol. 12 No. 2618 accessed at <http://asiantribune.com/node/73863>

28 Gladys

