

Writing Insecurity: The PRC's Push to Modernize China and the Politics of Uighur Identity

SCOTT FOGDEN

"Writing Insecurity" puts forward a framework for looking at identity politics in Xinjiang. This framework posits that the PRC's modernization program is in conflict with the interests of the Uighur nationality, rendering insecure both the people of Xinjiang and the state's integrity. The PRC's push to modernize China comprises a blend of material and ideational developments, especially dynamic in the post-Mao era. For Xinjiang's Uighur minority, development has relocated much of the region's resource wealth to urban centers in the east and permitted a massive influx of Han Chinese migration. Furthermore, and despite rising tides of Chinese nationalism, development has not exclusively consolidated Chinese national sentiments. Revitalizing the Silk Road has also re-established cultural ties between Muslim minorities and Central Asian, Turkic, and Middle Eastern centers. Perhaps the most oft cited security-political dynamic of the contemporary era is the concurrent dilution and multiplication of competing cultural loyalties. This article seeks to contribute to a body of literature that criticizes accepted notions of identity and culture, while exploring these as a motivating force in the case of Uighur resistance to China's modernization project.

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Three routes make up the Silk Road that once linked Europe with Asia. The middle one, along the Tarim River (塔里木河)—just north of the Taklimakan Desert (塔克拉玛干大沙漠) and running through the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR, 新疆维吾尔自治区)—is home to many of China's infamous labor reform (勞改, *laogai*) and prison camps.¹ A potent conflation of discipline, economy, and identity thereby intersects at this historical crossroads, and distinguishes this as a place where those valorized spatial configurations of modern state sovereignty have never come naturally. Indeed, one of the most important political initiatives of the modern era has been the determination of the state to transform social life into *objects* of knowledge, control, and management so that it may successfully manage the violence of identity-driven politics.² In the People's Republic of China (PRC), navigating identity politics plays into often tense negotiations within the state's hierarchical structure of political and religious obligations, leaving this keenly multinational state prone to fits and starts in its dealings with minority nationalities.

Much of the political scholarship on China has portrayed a high degree of ethnic homogeneity—such as Eric Hobsbawm's declaration that "China ... [is] indeed among the extremely rare examples of historic states composed of a population that is ethnically almost or entirely homogeneous."³ In fact, however, in addition to forty-six recognized nationalities, there are ten official Muslim nationalities in China, comprising 20,320,580 people.⁴ However, within this bureaucratic ascription lies interplay be-

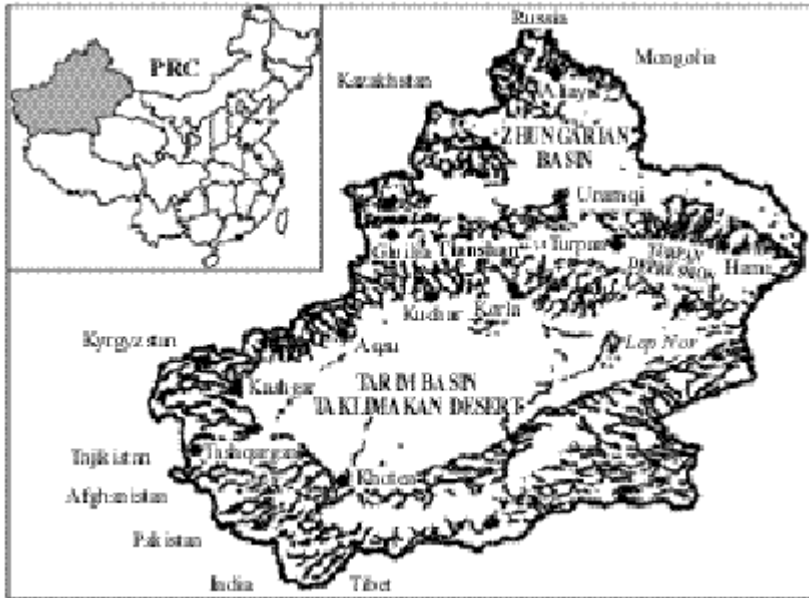
¹Harry Wu, *Troublemaker: One Man's Crusade Against China's Cruelty* (London: Vintage, 1997), 158-59.

²Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 66.

⁴According to the 2000 census. See *Zhongguo tongji nianjian* (China statistical yearbook) (Beijing: Zhongguo tongji chubanshe, 2002), 97.

Map 1
Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region



Source: Adapted from Justin Jon Rudelson, *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism Along China's Silk Road* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 18.

tween Islam the *official religion* and Islam as *ethnic identifier*, exposing some of the tenuous ground upon which the management of identity is based. Furthermore, recent decades—since Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平) opened the Chinese economy to international capital flows as well as transnational religious and cultural influence—have initiated a repositioning of the state vis-à-vis society. Centralized, single-party authority must reassert unity among increasing regional, economic, and social disparity.

Especially in the northwestern Xinjiang region of China (see Map 1), where over 8 million Turkic-Muslim Uighurs⁵ have been engaging in a struggle for cultural survival, particularly since the establishment and im-

⁵The 2000 census counted 8,399,393 Uyghurs. Ibid.

position of PRC rule in the region in 1949, "identity politics" are dangerous and vulnerable to swaying conceptions of legitimate political claims, actions, and actors. Notions of security in this context are informed by socially embedded forms of violence integral to both the radical economic and social modernization being undertaken by the PRC, as well as the active struggle to win Uighur self-governance.⁶ This article aims to explore the nature of these socially embedded forms of violence in order to highlight specific challenges to the security of the Uighur minority. While the term "security" is composed of a particularly illusive set of meanings, this paper will follow some of the assertions apparent in the work of David Campbell and other critical security theorists. In particular, the construction of nation and identity in relation to security is seen as bound to the articulation of danger and interpretation of threats. For Xinjiang, it will become evident that politics are increasingly polarized due to oppositional or exclusive identity formations. As these formations come to be interpreted according to the language of *threat* and *danger*, their assertions impel mutual insecurity.

In this context, the PRC's push to modernize China comprises a blend of material and ideational developments not only since 1949 and the accession of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), but more strikingly since 1979 and Deng Xiaoping's restructuring of the Chinese economy. By material "modernization" I am referring to the massive investment in creating a competitive national economy whereby the development of industry and infrastructure has proceeded at a torrent pace. Transportation and communication networks are being constructed in order to permit an ease of capital transfer within and beyond the PRC. For Xinjiang and the Uighur minority, this development has also assisted the relocation of the region's resource wealth to urban centers in the east and eased the massive influx of Han Chinese migration (from 5 percent of Xinjiang's population

⁶Without getting lost in the intricacies of self-government theory, this article loosely relates the term "self-governance" to ideas and structures of recognition, rights, and administrative authority based on principles of national self-determination such as those laid out in the United Nations Charter.

in 1940 to 38 percent in 1990).⁷ Alongside such material developments has come the reinvigoration of Chinese nationalism (particularly Han nationalism), especially visible in the 1990s, in response to the new position of China within the world economy and international institutions of power, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). However, development has not exclusively consolidated Chinese national sentiments. The state's revitalization of the Silk Road through rail and road networks not only links China to Central Asian oil or mineral industries and European markets, but also re-establishes cultural ties between Muslim minorities and Central Asian, Turkic, and Middle Eastern centers.

The following will highlight the re-articulation of identities in light of these emerging conditions of economic-cultural and state-society interaction. In many ways the PRC embodies the most acute form of the modern identity predicament: as a state continuing to pay homage to Marxist-Leninist ideology, its nationality policies are forthright, if inconsistent, and not buried within the obfuscations of the liberal-democratic political project.⁸ By linking together a number of theoretical and empirical strands, the following analysis endeavors to realize a framework for looking at how identities have been shaped and are mobilized in Xinjiang, and to some extent wherever discord hinges on politics of identity. With this in mind, it will firstly be necessary to overview the formulation and objectification of Uighur identity, making way for a discussion of the subsequent consolidation of the label-as-nation and its realignment under the auspices of transnational ethno-religious authority. Furthermore, it is impossible to regard recent relations between the nations of the PRC without highlighting the aforementioned resurgence of Chinese nationalism especially evident in

⁷Dru C. Gladney, "Internal Colonialism and China's Uyghur Muslim Minority," in *International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) Newsletter* (Leiden University), available online at <<http://isim.leidenuniv.nl/newsletter/1/regional/01AC23.html>>.

⁸The PRC's State Commission for Nationality Affairs (SCNA, 國家民族事務委員會) and the Central Institute for Nationalities (中央民族學院; now Central University for Nationalities, 中央民族大學) provide a highly centralized political/philosophical structure with regard to state-minority relations allowing for some degree of policy clarity, in opposition to the diffuse nature of U.S.-First Nations or France-Bretagne relations, for example.

the 1990s. Here, linkages between the state's economic program and a fortified ideology of patriotism blend to distinguish the latest wave of the PRC's great "modernizing" projects, the imposition of which has magnified many of the tensions already present in Xinjiang. This discussion will be followed by remarks on the resonance of Uighur cultural arguments that articulate resistance both within the PRC and internationally.

In contrast to the Tibetan cause for freedom that has gained a high profile in the West, the Uighur struggle has progressed largely unnoticed. I will not attempt to exhaust the multitude of economic and geostrategic factors involved or their ramifications. I will instead offer the contrasting case of Uighuristan as nation (in the light of modern philosophical aspirations of freedom and self-determination) versus the militancy of Uighur cultural insurrection reliant on a strategy of representing authority based on certain notions of "pastness" or tradition and another type of modern ideal, the "artifice of the archaic."⁹ While Western and Chinese intelligence has stressed the terrorist elements of Uighur nationalism—Uighurs have been linked to violent struggles in Chechnya as well as with *al-Qaeda* and other pan-Islamic and pan-Turkic militant forces, this piece will cast the net further in order to put forward a more complete depiction of the mobilization of Uighur nationalism.

This framework provides a tool for navigating security politics in Xinjiang; conflict in this region is shown to revolve around contests for the land, people, and social capital. As such, cultural integrity has become a primary lens for interpreting threats to security in this region with demographic, economic, and political dynamics filtered through the "cultural lens." A vital part of the PRC's modernizing project entails securing and capitalizing on the vast resources of Xinjiang. This inevitably invokes culturalist expressions of resistance, given the prevailing ideology of "nationalism" (as opposed to the ideal or official multinational "patriotism") in China. Once culture becomes a primary referent in the debate, the PRC's modernizing project gives rise to the central security dilemma: rather than

⁹Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 35.

securing Xinjiang—the periphery, the PRC is alienating the Uighur people and consolidating a new center of resistance. In this way, the PRC's policies not only fail to pacify the region, but instead ensure an insecure future for the Uighur minority and the state.

The politics of identity in Xinjiang reflect an essential conflict between the particularity of national identity and the universal aspirations of sovereign statehood, exposing the dysfunctions of such conceptions of identity and subjectivity. Perhaps the most vital and oft cited security/political dynamic of the contemporary era is the dilution and multiplication of competing cultural loyalties and the resultant shift in the political technologies that mediate state and social, ethnic, or religious interests. This article aims to contribute to a growing body of literature within Security Studies that criticizes accepted notions of identity while exploring it as a motivating force in the case of Uighur resistance to the "modernization" of China.

Formulation and Objectification of Identity in Xinjiang, China

Even if we separate off the other two layers of ideology—ideology as distortion and as the legitimation of a system of order or power—the integrative function ... of preserving an identity remains. It may be that our regressive analysis can go no further, because no group and no individual are possible without this integrative function.

—Paul Ricoeur¹⁰

Arguing against a primordial lineage for modern nations, Ernest Gellner stated, "the world was created round about the end of the eighteenth century, and nothing before that makes the slightest difference to the issues we face."¹¹ Depriving nations of any immutable or ahistorical character opens a number of analytical avenues: it becomes most important to con-

¹⁰Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 258.

¹¹Ernest Gellner, "The Warwick Debates on Nationalism," *Nations and Nationalism* (London) 2, no. 3 (1996): 357-70.

sider what kinds of conditions are required to legitimize modern configurations and political technologies that justify an oppositional, national identification. This article thereby illustrates an oppositional dynamic that has developed, and is evolving, between Uighurs at the margin and the PRC's centralized authority structures. Under these conditions, security and threats to security are interpreted through a cultural lens, impelled by modern ideals of nationhood. The first step, then, is to draw some historical context for the development of the Uighur nation and national configurations in the PRC as a whole.

In a series of lectures, the revered republican Dr. Sun Yat-sen (孫逸仙) established the importance of the census (i.e., counting and *categorizing* the people) for national success in the early days of the modern Chinese state after the fall of the Qing dynasty (清朝).¹² He thereby helped to usher in an era of pan-Chinese, multinational ideology whereby the state presides over societal divisions/cohesions via the application of national categories. Ethnic and national relations in this era have been characterized by what Pierre Bourdieu terms the governing of "sacred frontiers" with the "nomothetic or law-giving power of decreeing union and separation" enjoyed by the state.¹³ The sacred nature of this "secular" practice cannot be understated since its logic, the logic of sovereignty, builds shrines to commemorate difference and is ultimately bound to the maintenance of thresholds separating order and chaos, political life and "bare life."¹⁴

However, these thresholds are products of contestation, and other identities have paralleled the Chinese government's espoused "pan-People's Republicanism." In fact, the Uighur identity has galvanized around a dialogical relationship with the PRC so that its development takes the form of a social-political conversation with Beijing. Justin Jon Rudelson has pinned the formation of a pan-Uighur identity to the aspirations of

¹²Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University East Asian Monographs, 1996), 17.

¹³Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 227.

¹⁴Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998).

the "intellectual class" of Xinjiang's oasis cities and villages. Although often fractured, falling back on entrenched differences between various oases, a common interest has emerged in the form of cultural values that are distinguished from those of greater China.¹⁵

In order to put this in a historical context, it is necessary to briefly outline the development of "Uighur" as a label. In fact, "as they are presently defined, Uighurs have only existed since 1935."¹⁶ Although most scholars have consistently traced their ethnic origin to the Uighur Empire (744-840 C.E.) of Northwestern Mongolia, the Kuomintang government was to provide their modern ascription as "oasis-dwelling Muslims of Xinjiang's Tarim Basin."¹⁷ Prior to 1935, moreover, the name was not associated with Islam and throughout the nearly five hundred preceding years (from 1450 C.E.) "Uighur" had ceased to be used as an ethnic label. Rudelson's research charts its evolution:

From 744-840 C.E. the Uighur name was affixed to a Turkic steppe, nomadic, shamanistic, and Manichean society in Mongolia... In the period from 844-932 C.E. it was characterized by a sedentary, oasis, Buddhist, Manichean, and Nestorian Christian society centered in Turpan [吐魯番]... Following this (932-1450 C.E.), it became the referent for an elite, primarily Buddhist, Turkic society centered in the Turpan oasis which during this period was known as Uighuristan. In this case, the term was used to distinguish the society from the Islamic Turks living to the West. The term fell into disuse for five hundred years after the Buddhist Uighurs converted to Islam in the 15th century.¹⁸

Despite lying mostly dormant during this time, Uighur identity became a "historical undercurrent, part of a symbolic repertoire"¹⁹ mobilized under specific conditions. To this end,

... when Chinese government officials attempted to manipulate the hereditary leadership in the Eastern Xinjiang oasis of Hami [哈密], [the region was] plunged into ethnic turmoil. The violence set the local Turkic population, to-

¹⁵Justin Jon Rudelson, *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism Along China's Silk Road* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 4.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 7.

day defined as Uighurs, in opposition to the Han Chinese and Tungsans (known as Chinese Muslims or Hui 回族), a non-Turkic people.²⁰

Following a particularly violent set of cultural encounters, in 1933 the Turkic Muslims set up an independent government called the Turkish Islamic Republic of East Turkestan (TIRET). Lasting less than one year before being overthrown—with help from the Soviet Union and the Tungsans—by Xinjiang's Chinese military leader, Sheng Shicai (盛世才), the TIRET government was made up of some of the "most extreme and radically conservative" members of the Turkish-speaking Muslims from the separatist movement.²¹ Despite sharing the Islamic faith, the Tungan alliance with both the Soviets and Han Chinese "helped Turkic Muslims envision themselves as a single group."²² From this point on, the historic-cultural symbols of the Uighurs have been mobilized according to these divisions; like the biographies of all nations, "Uighur" came to represent a narrative of purposeful and collective remembrance/forgetting.²³

More starkly, the institutionalization of "Uighur" as identity was to become entrenched after the CCP takeover and the establishment of the PRC in 1949. The state undertook the ambitious task of identifying and recognizing minority nationalities whose qualification rested on a number of *objective* criteria. The preeminent Chinese social anthropologist Fei Xiaotong (費孝通) recorded that, "by 1955, over 400 minority groups had registered names for themselves and applied for recognition."²⁴ The PRC's ethnic classification system relied heavily on Stalin's precedent in the Soviet Union to distinguish those minorities that would become real: by his criteria, a nationality required "common language, common territory, a common economic life, and a common psychological make-up manifested

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Andrew D.W. Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims in Chinese Central Asia: A Political History of Republican Sinkiang, 1911-1949* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 232.

²²Ibid., 67.

²³Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 204-6.

²⁴Gladney, *Muslim Chinese*, 66.

in common specific features of national culture."²⁵ The Uighur ethnicity met these criteria, with Xinjiang's ethnic tensions aiding and abetting its ascendancy. Indeed, ethnic counter-distinctions played a significant role with other groups acting as "operational sorting devices."²⁶ Keeping in mind scores of recent literature establishing identity as "constituted in relation to difference,"²⁷ the officialization of identities in the PRC enshrined such difference. The State Commission for Nationality Affairs (SCNA) authorized a massive research project entitled "*minzu shibie*" (民族識別)²⁸ to identify those living in the border areas, resulting finally in the creation of fifty-six official nationalities or *minzu* (民族)—a term introduced by Sun Yat-sen from the Japanese *minzoku*.²⁹

Nationality markers stamped on the identity cards of all citizens of the PRC operationalize these distinctions. As a daily reminder of ethnographic difference, these markers certify the performance of "perceived distinction"³⁰ and are fulfilled in the *demonstration* of practical constraints on or allowances for such things as education, state benefits, even reproduction.³¹

This section has briefly documented the dialogic nature behind identity constructions in Xinjiang. Under these conditions, "social relations of power become the focus,"³² as illustrated by the Uighur-Han, Uighur-

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., 76.

²⁷David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 9.

²⁸Ralph Litzinger, "Reimagining the State in Post-Mao China," in *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities, and the Production of Danger*, ed. Jutta Welde, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson, and Raymond Duvall (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 295.

²⁹The first census conducted by the PRC in 1953 actually registered only forty-one nationalities. By 1964 there were fifty-three. It was not until 1982, however, that all fifty-six (fifty-five minority nationalities as well as that of the Han) were recognized. It is worthy of mention that the 1990 census revealed 749,341 individuals of "unidentified ethnicity." See Gladney, *Muslim Chinese*, 66.

³⁰Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 224.

³¹Almost all of the minorities are exempt from the single-child-per-couple rule introduced in the 1980s. See Colin Mackerras, *The New Cambridge Handbook of Contemporary China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 251-66.

³²Gladney, *Muslim Chinese*, 76-77.

Tungan constitutive discourse.³³ The following section will discuss the remolding of identity and authority under subsequent, shifting power relations.

Convergence of Identity/Divergence of Authority: Transnational Ethno-religious Identity within the PRC

The signature invents the signer.

—Jacques Derrida³⁴

The assertion of ethnicity in China, so far characterized as artificial or imposed, demands more dynamic interpretations of identity. At one level the conditions that make it possible to speak of a modern Uighur identity are enmeshed in the constitutive discourses addressed earlier. Thus, Uighur identity converges around the "contours of power relations ... defined by the state." As such, deviance/accordance have become its central tension.³⁵ Moreover, instituting the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region has gone a long way toward consolidating marked variance within the Uighur community. Institutions and practices engaging a single Uighur political body (as opposed to a plurality of oases, for example) make it possible to interpret political meaning and action likewise.

If anything, however, the previous section adds to a growing body of literature denying the immutability of fixed or stable conceptions of identity—the sort that have dominated traditional international relations literature.³⁶ By historicizing the objects of the PRC's nationality fetish, cracks

³³For a colorful rendering of this discourse (originally written in 1940), see Aitchen K. Wu, *Turkistan Tumult* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1984), 273.

³⁴Jacques Derrida, "Declarations of Independence," *New Political Science* 15 (Summer 1986): 14.

³⁵Gladney, *Muslim Chinese*, 21.

³⁶For reviews of IR's evolving treatment of identity, see Marysia Zalewski and Cynthia Enloe, "Questions about Identity in International Relations," in *International Relations Theory Today*, ed. Ken Booth and Steve Smith (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), 279-305; and David Campbell, "Violent Performances: Identity, Sovereignty, Responsibility," in *The*

appear in the ordering logic. Nevertheless, even the identity-as-process permits some notion of its trajectory if power *relations* become the focus. Derrida's line above alludes to the authority invested in identity's logos, especially when people take on characters in service of these logos. In this way, political agency relates back to the stamps on identity cards—not the other way around. Signing up for the PRC's nationality project has initiated a center-periphery dialectic where relations with Beijing are the pivotal point: "assimilation or secession [become] the only options from this view."³⁷ Amid this context, China has witnessed a remarkable resurgence in sub-national movements. Far beyond natural increases, population growth among minority nationalities has been the result of people re-registering—namely, renouncing their Han nationality for status as a minority.³⁸ While this may reflect well on many of the progressive policies toward minority nationalities, it flies in the face of a Marxist-Leninist heritage whereby states like China and Russia felt Sinicization or Russification campaigns would eventually wipe away ethnic difference as "manifestations of feudal class distinctions."³⁹ In fact, the intention of Soviet Central Asian nationality policies was the creation of "a plurality of Turkic ethnicities that would help prevent pan-Turkic unification."⁴⁰ However, results in China have been the opposite; increasingly China's far west is linked to multiple Turkic and Muslim centers further west. In the push and pull of PRC policy formation there is, therefore, a tendency to write into history *insecurities*, which take the form of local antagonists flying in the face of China's modern and strictly disciplined multinationalist policies.

James Piscatori takes this into consideration when he asserts that "[a]s regards China ... Uighurs and Kazakhs look to Islam for solidarity

Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory, ed. Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 163-80.

³⁷Gladney, *Muslim Chinese*, 22.

³⁸Colin Mackerras, Pradeep Taneja, and Graham Young, *China Since 1978: Reform, Modernization and "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics"* (Singapore: Longman Cheshire, 1994), 198.

³⁹Gladney, *Muslim Chinese*, 78.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 302.

against the Han people."⁴¹ Coupled with a government policy that utilized Chinese Muslims to promote amicable relations with Muslim neighbors, Uighurs—who were increasingly defined ethnically and nationally by their adherence to Islam—found more to identify with in the new, formerly Soviet republics. Consequently, "they have also grown more conscious of their membership in an international Muslim community."⁴² This trend, no matter how much of a concern to the central government, is difficult to reverse. The PRC's drive to advance their economic interests in the region requires the advantages brought about by this new openness; neither denying Islam as one of China's five acknowledged "systematized religions"⁴³ nor revoking Xinjiang's status as the Uighur Autonomous Region would be acceptable or workable.

Efforts to consolidate an Islamic political identity, however, have been thwarted by hitherto polycentric political and economic configurations.⁴⁴ Looking away from Beijing, Uighurs have multiple centers to turn to in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Turkey. Whereas diplomatic relations between China and the formerly Soviet, Central Asian republics have sought a coalescence of regional interests around security and economic issues,⁴⁵ with the liberalization of western border controls Uighurs have built stronger, unofficial cultural ties.⁴⁶ More have taken the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca), establishing links with southern Middle Eastern re-

⁴¹James P. Piscatori, *Islam in a World of Nation-States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 35.

⁴²Don Baker, "World Religions and National States: Competing Claims in East Asia," in *Transnational Religion and Fading States*, ed. Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997), 161.

⁴³Alongside Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, and Daoism.

⁴⁴Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 310-11.

⁴⁵The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has been the most prominent of the attempts to cooperate on security issues in the region. In 1996, China founded the regional alliance known then as the Shanghai Five, consisting of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The group specifically focused on terrorist threats emanating from various actors in Central Asia, and Afghanistan in particular. In June 2001, Uzbekistan was invited to join, and the group was officially named the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

⁴⁶John Anderson, *The International Politics of Central Asia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 196.

ligious organizations; others have sought secular political affiliation in Turkey. Linguistic and historical connections to Turkey are decidedly strong, with the Uighur "intellectual class" provoking historical awareness of these links (for further discussion see the section on "Identity Resistance/Resonance"). As with pan-Islamic movements, however, the viability of pan-Turkic mobilization has so far been hindered by conflicting ethnic allegiances in the region.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the PRC's encouragement of Uighur folk customs has strengthened traditionally strong identification within individual oases. All of these factors point to a multiplicity of influences upon Uighur identity. Given its convergence around relations with the PRC, "the opening of Xinjiang's borders to outside countries has radically changed Uighur worldviews and notions of what constitutes Uighur ethnic identity" so that a variety of political leanings are played out.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, as influences from beyond the PRC's borders become progressively stronger and multidirectional, Uighur identity-as-minority remains its most salient political referent.

Nationalism as the New Ideology

Zhongguo keyi shuo bu (中國可以說不)
China can say "no."⁴⁹

At this level, China's minorities are increasingly confronted by a swelling wave of Chinese, Han-centered nationalism. Jiang Zemin (江澤民) himself has made significant "efforts to promote Chinese nationalism as a 'unifying ideology' that will prove more attractive than communism and more manageable than capitalism."⁵⁰ While the 1980s were character-

⁴⁷Mehrdad Haghighi, *Islam and Politics in Central Asia* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 166.

⁴⁸Rudelson, *Oasis Identities*, 167.

⁴⁹Title of a book by Song Qiang, Zhang Zangzang, and Qiao Bian expressing revival of popular Chinese nationalist sentiments: *Zhongguo keyi shuo bu* (China can say "no") (Beijing: Zhongguo gongshang lianhe chubanshe, 1996).

⁵⁰Dru Gladney, "Ethnic Separatism in China: Threat or Smoke?" *The Wall Street Journal*

ized by what newspapers termed a "crisis of faith" brought on by the failures of Maoist ideology, communism in the USSR, and a deflated myth of national supremacy, the 1990s witnessed a tide change—pessimism, giving way to optimism.⁵¹ Some scholars have suggested that China's "long, wrenching 'identity crisis' makes contemporary Chinese nationalism unusually intense, becoming in the resolution of the crisis something like the religion of modern China."⁵² Aside from filling the state's ideological vacuum, however, what has been dubbed "Confucian-nationalism" is largely a reflection of China's desire to reassume its historical role as a world power after centuries of foreign domination. China has for some time looked back on what is perceived as more than a century of humiliation at the hands of Western powers. Evocative claims such as Deng Xiaoping's proclamation in 1993 that "China will never submit to the United States' global strategy" have been effective amid a widely spread, emerging confidence.⁵³ There is good reason for reassurance given China's rise in prominence within international economic and political institutions (for example, winning membership in the WTO and the right to hold the 2008 Olympics in Beijing), unprecedented economic success over the past two decades, and the 1997 reunification with Hong Kong. As these factors mingle with both popular anti-Western sentiments (mostly directed at the United States) and resentment toward Japan for its brutal colonial legacy, an emphasis on "traditional" Chinese values and conventions has been brought to the fore.⁵⁴

Interactive Edition, July 9, 1996, available online at <http://www.innermongolia.org/english/ethnic_threat_in_china.htm>. See also Joseph Fewsmith, "Neoconservatism and the End of the Dengist Era," *Asian Survey* 35, no. 7 (July 1995): 635-51.

⁵¹Guo Yingjie, "Patriotic Villains and Patriotic Heroes," in *Nationalism and Ethnoregional Identities in China*, ed. William Safran (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 164.

⁵²James Townsend's characterization of the "Culturalism to Nationalism" thesis in "Chinese Nationalism," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 27 (January 1992): 102.

⁵³Yi Xiaoxiong, "China's U.S. Policy Conundrum: Balancing Autonomy and Interdependence," *Asian Survey* 34, no. 8 (August 1994): 684.

⁵⁴For instance, the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by the Americans during their military operation in Yugoslavia was an important point in this movement. The government was very clever about inciting nationalism without actually telling citizens to protest. In 1996, for the fiftieth anniversary of the defeat of Japan, Chinese TV broadcast

Without delving into the nuances of "nationalism" as a theory or concept, however, it is useful to note that a variety of nationalistic and patriotic political movements in China are occurring at various levels (e.g., economic nationalism, popular nationalism, and official patriotism). Gunter Schubert provides an evocative delineation of one of the principal forms of Chinese nationalism: "[a]s an instrument of the state, nationalism aims at the transformation of a community into a nation and at directing this nation to modernization."⁵⁵ Again, nation-directed approaches to modernization are increasingly filling the ideological void left by exiting socialist and communist doctrines. Forms of populist and official nationalism in China point to many of the dangerous and problematic aspects of "nation," especially for minority nationalities.

With this in mind, broad-based expressions of nationalistic enthusiasm have come in the form of popular music, film, and books. Most notably, the 1996 book *Zhongguo keyi shuo bu* (China can say "no") was a major-selling will to power. Its theme—that China must actively extinguish centuries of embarrassment at the hands of foreign domination in order to attain recognition as a world power—has been very popular. In fact this book has a strong following of disciples known as "The Say No Club" who are constructing an intellectual framework for the new Chinese nationalism.⁵⁶ However, their aspiration to rejuvenate Chinese civilization shares the superficial logic of Samuel Huntington-inspired fault lines (i.e., the *Clash of Civilizations*) and is a worrying trend. As James Townsend submits, the "mobilization of popular support against foreign threats often appeals to Han history and symbols and we may assume that much of the Chinese response sees the nation defended as Han, not as the multinational community portrayed in state nationalism."⁵⁷

several hours of programming per night on Japanese atrocities (e.g., Rape of Nanjing) and heroic Chinese resistance (information drawn from personal correspondence with Dr. Richard King, Department of Pacific & Asian Studies, University of Victoria).

⁵⁵Gunter Schubert, "Nationalism and National Identity in Contemporary China: Assessing the Debate," *Issues & Studies* 37, no. 5 (September/October 2001): 133 n. 6.

⁵⁶Susan Lawrence, "The Say No Club," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 13, 2000.

⁵⁷Townsend, "Chinese Nationalism," 120.

To this end, the PRC government has been cautious in its encouragement of such populist expressions of Chinese nationalism; official doctrines have preferred "patriotism" (愛國主義, *aiguo zhuyi*). From the beginning, communist theory has held a deep distrust for nationalist causes, and the breakup of the Soviet Union into a multitude of national splinters has illuminated its inherent dangers. The CCP views disintegration, democracy, and disorder as nationalism's unsavory offspring. Official *patriotism* attempts to construct identity "not in the context of the relations between the Han majority and minorities, but in the context of the relations between Chinese civilization and other civilizations."⁵⁸ Since this rhetoric delineates "civilization" according to the PRC's current borders, healthy patriotic fervor is encouraged so as to maintain allegiance to the multi-ethnic, pan-Chinese state. Jiang Zemin launched his patriotic campaign in a speech entitled "Carry on and Develop the Tradition of Patriotism in New Historical Circumstances." Subsequently, "hundreds and thousands of seminars, public lectures, concerts, and exhibitions were organized throughout the country to drum up patriotic enthusiasm."⁵⁹

Nevertheless, it will be increasingly hard to suppress the waves of *popular* nationalism that color PRC-minority relations especially in regions such as Xinjiang where there are conflicting "civilizational" allegiances. In fact, Xinjiang has always been cast in the role of frontier with all of the discursive baggage that comes with such a distinction. Xinjiang (新疆, translated variously as "new boundary" or "new region") is part of a symbolic repertoire obliging and furnishing the pioneer elements of Han identity and PRC expansionism. As part of China's vast western frontier (西部, *xibu*), Xinjiang embodies remoteness, both physically and culturally.⁶⁰ Despite Uighur insistence that their own heritage dates back as far as that of the Han (fascinating politics of archaeology surround this

⁵⁸Yongnian Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity and International Relations* (Hong Kong: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 70.

⁵⁹Guo, "Patriotic Villains and Patriotic Heroes," 167.

⁶⁰Abigail Sines, "Civilizing the Middle Kingdom's Wild West," *Central Asian Survey* 21, no. 1 (2002): 6.

debate),⁶¹ in establishing the inferiority of the peripheral the PRC includes Uighurs as "brothers and sisters, but obviously [as] junior partners."⁶² The "Middle Kingdom culture" that some scholars suggest supports a drive for regional if not world supremacy, banishes Xinjiang and Central Asia's own illustrious history to the cultural and political hinterland.⁶³ This chauvinism motivated W.J.F Jenner to include the following in his polemic: "History as a cultural invention has helped to keep today's Han Chinese in the trap of imperialism, the imperialism of the mind that finds self-affirmation in the subjection of others."⁶⁴

At the level of national interaction, specifically between the center and the periphery, the PRC's ideological courting of nationalism is a dangerous will to power for sub-national movements. Usually as populist expressions, but in many cases as a policy instrument, this kind of "civilization"-centered state-nation dynamic will only reinforce tumult, discord, and insecurity in Xinjiang. Gunter Schubert notes the consensus among historians is that "in China the relationship between state and nation was precarious from the very beginning,"⁶⁵ such that China is usually conceived as a *state-nation*. While a number of nationalist and patriotic strains have evolved in China, the surge in efforts to consolidate the nation in terms of Han-ness, to a great extent, makes identity contests in Xinjiang a zero-sum game.

Imposition of PRC Interests in Xinjiang

We say China is a country vast in territory, rich in resources and large in population; as a matter of fact, it is the Han nationality whose population is

⁶¹Rudelson, *Oasis Identities*, 137-40.

⁶²Sines, "Civilizing the Middle Kingdom's Wild West," 9.

⁶³Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 228.

⁶⁴W.J.F. Jenner, *Tyranny of History: The Roots of China's Crisis* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 4.

⁶⁵Schubert, "Nationalism and National Identity in Contemporary China," 134.

large and the minority nationalities whose territory is vast and whose resources are rich.

—Mao Zedong⁶⁶

The material consequences of the relationship detailed above are far-reaching and suitably exploitative. Paralleling successful economic experiments along China's east coast, such as the Special Economic Zones (SEZs, 經濟特區),⁶⁷ the PRC has undertaken several campaigns to modernize the western region (easily one-third of China's territory). The Great Western Development Program (西部大開發, *Xibu da kaifa*) is the most recent large-scale incarnation of several initiatives designed to bring wealth to the region. However, such initiatives have also brought many adverse effects for the Uighur minority. The overriding aim of the government's recent investment in the region, states Nicolas Becquelin, "has been to bind Xinjiang more closely to the rest of the PRC."⁶⁸ Of course, westward expansion has long been a preoccupation of the Chinese state. "Sending settlers and reclaiming 'wasteland' is a tested method for both internal consolidation and resisting external aggressors."⁶⁹ Nevertheless, recent "modernization" campaigns have been particularly fierce, including some of the largest migrations and most ambitious construction projects in human history. Infrastructure investment in the region rose from 7.3 billion *yuan* in 1991 to 16.5 billion in 1994.⁷⁰ Moreover, "in January 2000, the region launched a ¥70 billion investment plan involving thirty key construction projects"⁷¹ primarily for the development of irrigation and agriculture, elec-

⁶⁶*Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, vol. 5 (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1977), 295-96.

⁶⁷SEZs—set up throughout the 1980s and 1990s in various southern coastal areas and more recently in northern centers—are regions designated to stimulate foreign capital inflow and economic development mirroring similar successful projects in Taiwan and South Korea. See Jung-Dong Park, *The Special Economic Zones of China and Their Impact on Its Economic Development* (London: Praeger, 1997).

⁶⁸Nicolas Becquelin, "Xinjiang in the Nineties," *The China Journal*, no. 44 (July 2000): 67.

⁶⁹Sines, "Civilizing the Middle Kingdom's Wild West," 8.

⁷⁰See note 68 above.

⁷¹Mackerras, *The New Cambridge Handbook of Contemporary China*, 235. See also BBC World News: "The Future Shines for China's Silk Road," available online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/business/newsid_33000/33624.stm>.

tric power, oil, coal mining, and transportation networks. The aims of this endeavor are threefold: to capitalize on and sustain the economic leaps that much of the country has taken, to ensure the viability and equality of all regions, and to ameliorate ethnic distinctions (again relying on Marxist-Leninist logic of economic determinism).

While the coastal SEZs have been important shipping ports, Xinjiang continues to facilitate westerly trade and is the gateway for the Eurasian Continental Bridge, a rail line that stretches from Jiangsu province (江蘇省), across Russia, and all the way to Europe.⁷² Indeed the construction of rail lines has been one of the most vigorous and controversial areas of western development (see "Demographics" section below). In addition, the PRC has great interest in tapping into the oil reserves of Central Asia, including those of Xinjiang. On July 4, 2002, a major deal was struck between Shell and Petrochina to construct a massive US\$20 billion cross-country pipeline from Xinjiang to Shanghai (4,000 km).⁷³ The BBC reported that this represents "one of the biggest engineering feats in China's history." To be completed by 2004, the pipeline will pump 12 billion cubic liters of gas annually.⁷⁴ Already the primary source for coal, as well as other minerals and precious metals, Xinjiang will continue to supply China's material base and power the PRC's push to modernize China.

Demographics

The Uighur minority is dwarfed, however, by the immensity of China's development campaign. The influx of Han people and political power to perpetrate this project has exacerbated tensions already present in the region. Government incentives encourage Han settlement in Xinjiang,

⁷²Sines, "Civilizing the Middle Kingdom's Wild West," 11.

⁷³Petrochina is partly owned by British Petroleum (BP) and will take a 50 percent stake in the project, with consortium members Shell, U.S.-based ExxonMobil, and Russia's Gazprom taking 15 percent each. The remaining 5 percent will go to the China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation (Sinopec), China's main indigenous oil firm. BBC World News: "Trans-China Pipeline Deal Signed," available online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/asia-pacific/newsid_337000/337927.stm>.

⁷⁴Ibid.

with new railway lines easing their movement,⁷⁵ seasonal workers flood into the region, working long hours in the booming agricultural and construction industry. Beijing's strategy to speed up Han migration to the region is colloquially known as "mixing sand" or *chan shazi* (掺沙子).⁷⁶ As reported above, in 1990 estimates pinned the Han percentage of the Uighur Autonomous Region's population at 38 percent—up from 5 percent in 1940.⁷⁷ The *Far Eastern Economic Review* recently cited estimates as high as 41 percent, with many commentators predicting a Han majority in the near future.⁷⁸ Of all the five autonomous regions, the Han population has spiked most in the UAR.⁷⁹ Han immigrants are sent to revolutionize this hinterland, performing the role of economic vanguard.

One organization in particular has embodied this goal: namely, the quasi-military/business conglomerate Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC, 新疆生產建設兵團, known colloquially as "*bingtuan*" 兵團). Originally composed of decommissioned People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops who remained as part of the "Xinjiang Wilderness Reclamation Army" after 1949, this force has grown in ranks to approximately 2.4 million people.⁸⁰ The XPCC, thereby, represents around one-seventh of Xinjiang's population and is 90 percent Han.⁸¹ "In particular, the XPCC contributed significantly to the policy of resettling Han people in Xinjiang from further East."⁸² With their own schools, hospitals, courts, and prisons, they make up a huge segment of the province's population and economy,

⁷⁵BBC World News: "China's Ambitious Railway," available online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/asia-pacific/newsid_1468000/1468282.stm>; and "Asia-Pacific Rail Link Opens China's Far West," available online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/asia-pacific/newsid_337000/337927.stm>.

⁷⁶Becquelin, "Xinjiang in the Nineties," 74.

⁷⁷See note 7 above.

⁷⁸Bruce Gilley, "Uighurs Need Not Apply," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 23, 2001.

⁷⁹Colin Mackerras, *China's Minorities: Integration and Modernization in the Twentieth Century* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1994), 250.

⁸⁰Sines, "Civilizing the Middle Kingdom's Wild West," 12.

⁸¹Becquelin, "Xinjiang in the Nineties," 77.

⁸²Mackerras, *China's Minorities*, 170.

and produce an estimated one-fifth of Xinjiang's economic output.⁸³ However and perhaps more importantly, they are also called upon to maintain social stability in Xinjiang. An expressed purpose of the XPCC is to "crack down on national separatists, illegal religious activities," and a number of other criminal offences.⁸⁴ Harry Wu's Laogai Research Foundation in the United States has attempted to expose the repressive military and penal functions of the XPCC, documenting its participation in quelling rebellions and firing on protestors. Notably he has also alleged World Bank complicity, with large sums of money granted to the XPCC's agricultural development projects.⁸⁵ Nicolas Becquelin recounts, "the Corps has separate security organs: an armed police corps (*wujing*) [武警] and a militia (*min-bing*) [民兵] officially numbering over 100,000 members ... [and] manages most of the prisons in Xinjiang."⁸⁶

In general, the PRC encourages Han migration to Xinjiang and the other minority regions because "for all the rhetoric about the united family of nationalities [Beijing] no doubt feels more trust and confidence in the loyalty of Han people than in the commitment of Uighurs, Kazaks, Tibetans, Mongols, Dai, or even Koreans."⁸⁷ Nonetheless, resentment intensifies with each trainload of economic migrants. Feelings of alienation from Beijing deepen especially with the widely held impression that Chinese migrants are enriched more by the development scheme than are Uighurs. Most new projects are earmarked for the Han-dominated state industries and hiring practices discriminate against Uighurs. "The result is that while Xinjiang's per-capita GDP at \$900 last year was slightly above the national average, the picture changes dramatically outside the Han-dominated cities. The two-thirds of the population living in rural areas,

⁸³Sines, "Civilizing the Middle Kingdom's Wild West," 12.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Wu, *Troublemaker*, 298-303. According to Nicolas Becquelin, between 1990 and 1997, bank loans to the XPCC (including the money from the World Bank) amounted to 20 billion yuan. See Becquelin, "Xinjiang in the Nineties," 80.

⁸⁶Becquelin, "Xinjiang in the Nineties," 78.

⁸⁷Mackerras, *China's Minorities*, 257.

mostly from ethnic groups, earned just \$195 per person last year."⁸⁸

Overall, the Uighur community has seen increases in their standard of living. Nevertheless, relative poverty and cultural displacement often result in more acute forms of conflict than absolute poverty. National divisions solidify around such disparity so that they can be interpreted as threats to security. There is a legacy of colonial expansion doomed to these kinds of dilemmas; "regardless of whether there is any real trickle down ... what stands out in people's minds is the emotional impact of occupation, [not] whether that presence is doing positive things for the economy."⁸⁹

Environment

Blending these demographic concerns with the environmentally suspect nature of the PRC's modernizing scheme, further inward migration is due to occur as an additional 50,000 to 100,000 Han, displaced by the Three Gorges Dam (三峡大坝) project, will be relocated to Xinjiang; the XPCC is known to be recruiting these environmental refugees.⁹⁰ The grand scale of this project is on par with the ambitions of China's leaders. During his reign, Deng Xiaoping pursued a simple and impressive goal for the national macro-economy: to quadruple China's gross national product (GNP) during the last two decades of the twentieth century. However, those assessing the environmental costs left in his wake wonder if this plan was not exceedingly reckless.⁹¹ There are a number of environmental costs relating to the PRC's push to modernize China exacted within Xinjiang itself. Most obvious is the Lop Nor (羅布泊) nuclear test site. Although reliable information is difficult to obtain and some say purposefully not collected, radioactive fallout and waste have reportedly contributed to the deterioration in

⁸⁸Gilley, "Uighurs Need Not Apply," 27.

⁸⁹Professor James Millward, quoted in *ibid.*

⁹⁰Becquelin, "Xinjiang in the Nineties," 76. See also Jasper Becker, "Rural Peasants Cast Adrift on Flood Tide," *South China Morning Post*, February 14, 1999; and Canadian Council for International Cooperation, "China: Country Profile (1999)," available online at <http://www.ccic.ca/archives/devpol/1999/ap5_china_country_profile.htm>.

⁹¹Vaclav Smil, *China's Environmental Crisis: An Inquiry into the Limits of National Development* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 69.

health of humans, animals, and habitat. The Eastern Turkestan Union in Europe has reported shocking increases in cancer, deformities, and other maladies as a direct result of more than thirty years of testing at the site.⁹² Despite this, the successful first test in 1964 remains a triumph in China's modernization project.

Criticism has been compounded by the heavily polluting nature of resource extraction that comes with expanding the oil, mineral, and coal mining industries. As is the case for most developing countries, technologies to reduce emissions and improve safety are prohibitively expensive.

Furthermore, soil erosion has increased the rate of both desertification as a result of intensive irrigation and fertilizing methods, and deforestation. Part of the PRC's development plan for Xinjiang is to transform the region into a national cotton base. Given the prohibitive terrain and general state of the cotton economy, however, Nicolas Becquelin notes that this plan "seems to make no sense unless the rationale is to encourage the immigration of Han through massive land reclamation, and to facilitate the expansion of the [XPCC] Corps."⁹³

According to reports from China's Department of Environmental Protection, "desertification has progressed in 53 of the 87 districts of Xinjiang.... Many lakes are drying up, especially around the Tarim River." Another study noted that whereas some 40,000 square kilometers of desert was converted into cultivable land, during the same period the desert areas increased by 50,000 square kilometers.⁹⁴

Sand storms and flooding have consequently become more frequent despite the best efforts of the central government's massive Green Great Wall Project—"a 7,000 kilometer long protective green belt extending from Heilongjiang province [黑龍江省] in the northeast to Xinjiang."⁹⁵ It

⁹²Eastern Turkestan Union in Europe, "The Consequences of Nuclear Tests in Eastern Turkestan," reproduced at <<http://www.caccp.org/et/cnt.html>>. See also Michael Dillon, *Xinjiang: Ethnicity, Separatism, and Control in Chinese Central Asia* (Durham: University of Durham, 1995), 26.

⁹³Becquelin, "Xinjiang in the Nineties," 84.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*

⁹⁵Between 1978 and 1985, 6.05 million hectares were planted with trees. See Mackerras, *China Since 1978*, 163.

remains the case that economic objectives take precedence over environmental repercussions. A prevailing view, of little consolation for those whose suffering is caused by environmental negligence, is that "when China becomes rich it will be time to deal with the pollution problem."⁹⁶ In conjunction with the above-mentioned demographic and economic impositions, bearing a disproportionate amount of the environmental costs of modernization strengthens the case for resisting the PRC.

Identity Resistance/Resonance

Why is your statue raised up here
When we lie silent under the ground?
—"Häykäl" (Statue)⁹⁷

Without question, Uighur "splittism" or *fenlie zhuyi* (分裂主義) is perceived as a major threat to the security of China's vast western economic interests. Over the past five decades, separatist movements—while sporadic—have garnered significant attention from the central government. Public protests violently quashed by state forces, executions and arrests on a grand scale, and cultural infringement such as restrictions on the construction of mosques are only some of the features that have characterized Beijing's close monitoring of the region. Especially over the past twenty years, relations have been considerably strained. In the late 1970s, as Deng Xiaoping began to reform and negate many of the dictates of the Cultural Revolution, expressions of national consciousness were no longer outlawed and ethnicity ceased to be a political taboo.⁹⁸ Alongside the increasingly weighty burdens of Han-dominated modernization discussed above, this

⁹⁶Mackerras, *The New Cambridge Handbook of Contemporary China*, 189.

⁹⁷From a song banned in Xinjiang; quoted in Rachel Harris, "Cassettes, Bazaars, and Saving the Nation: The Uyghur Music Industry in Xinjiang, China," in *Global Goes Local: Popular Culture in Asia*, ed. Timothy J. Craig and Richard King (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 265. The lyrics were provided to Rachel Harris by the author-composer of the song.

⁹⁸The Third Plenum of the Eleventh CCP Central Committee (December 1978) ushered in "the period of reform *par excellence* in China." See Mackerras, *China Since 1978*, 19-25.

meant that resistance expressed through ethnic identity became progressively more viable. It seems that both in practice and as a discipline, politics has increasingly been infused with the mobilization of ethnicity. Marcus Banks states this clearly when he writes, "ethnicity is a concept that in its own right has a curious double life. As its salience in anthropological discourse has declined, its importance to the political world has increased."⁹⁹ The 1990s witnessed the assertion of identity in many parts of the world—from the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia to Rwanda. Likewise, Xinjiang incurred a sharp rise in violent expressions of cultural insurrection throughout this decade.

Violent Struggle—the 1990s

Such expressions took on a number of guises throughout the 1990s, becoming more active than the increasingly celebrated Tibetan secessionist movement. Abdulahat Abdurixit (阿不來提·阿不都熱西提), Xinjiang's provincial governor, noted that "since the start of the 1990s, if you count explosions, assassinations, and other terrorist activities, it comes to a few thousand incidents."¹⁰⁰ April 1990 signaled the beginning of a tumultuous decade with major disturbances erupting in Akto County (阿克陶, near Kashgar 喀什). According to official television sources, an "armed counter-revolutionary rebellion" was carried out by the Islamic Party of East Turkestan but was successfully subdued by the People's Armed Police, resulting in twenty-two deaths (including that of the rebellion's leader).¹⁰¹ In 1995, PRC security forces reportedly found "a stowaway clutch of some 4,000 sticks of dynamite, 600 guns with ammunition, and 3,000 kilograms of explosives," arresting more than 1,700 suspected terrorists over the following year.¹⁰² In May of 1996, a high-ranking official of the Xinjiang

⁹⁹Quoted in David Campbell, *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity, and Justice in Bosnia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 88.

¹⁰⁰Becquelin, "Xinjiang in the Nineties," 87, citing Agence France Presse (Hong Kong), "Governor Says Xinjiang Suffering Separatist Violence," March 11, 1999.

¹⁰¹Mackerras, *The New Cambridge Handbook of Contemporary China*, 38.

¹⁰²Dewardic L. McNeal, "China's Relations with Central Asian States and Problems with Terrorism," U.S. Department of State, Congressional Research Service Report for Con-

People's Political Consultative Conference was assassinated.¹⁰³

The largest reported insurrection, however, occurred in February 1997, in Gulja (庫車). A series of repressive measures, including the banning of revived traditional social gatherings or "*meshrep*" (largely taking the form of community youth advocacy groups) as well as heavy police presence throughout the holy month of Ramadan led to heightened tensions.¹⁰⁴ February 5th saw demonstrations and sporadic rioting occurred during the following two days. Also on February 5th, a fight at a mosque between police—attempting to arrest two "*talibs*" (religious students)—and several interveners resulted in the deaths of police and civilians, as well as numerous arrests. Amnesty International's 1999 Country Report on the PRC recounted the subsequent events as follows:

By 6 February, a large number of anti-riot squads and troops had been brought into the city. They reportedly went through the streets arresting and beating people, including children. In some areas, protesters reportedly attacked police or Chinese residents and shops and set fire to some vehicles, while the security forces reportedly opened fire on protesters and bystanders. Many people were killed or injured.... Soon after, more troops were brought into the city, a curfew was imposed, the airport and the railway station were closed and the city was sealed off for two weeks.... Unofficial estimates of the number of arrests during these two weeks vary from 3,000 to over 5,000.¹⁰⁵

In the immediate aftermath of the violence in Gulja, three bombs exploded in Xinjiang's capital Urumqi (烏魯木齊), causing civilian casualties; eight Uighurs were executed three months later for allegedly carrying out the bombings.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, August of 1998 saw a group known as the East Turkestan People's Liberation Front attack an army base, resulting in thirty casualties and the destruction of five military planes.¹⁰⁷ Insurrec-

gress, December 17, 2001, available online at <<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/7945.pdf>>.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Amnesty International 1999 Country Report: "People's Republic of China: Gross Violations of Human Rights in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region," available online at <<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/engASA170181999>>.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Mackerras, *The New Cambridge Handbook of Contemporary China*, 38.

tion has also spilled beyond Xinjiang, with bombings in Beijing (北京), Wuhan (武漢), Guangzhou (廣州), and Sichuan Province (四川省) having been attributed to Uighur separatists. Active resistance throughout China has broadened the actual and symbolic battleground while expanding the movement's public profile.

There are a number of groups within China and in neighboring states identified as Uighur terrorist organizations. Noting that "Western" organizations have begun to take more interest in the Uighur separatist movement since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the U.S. State Department has recently compiled a report providing a list of Uighur insurgent elements; these are summarized in table 1.

The report also cites a number of links to nebulous groups operating in the Middle East and Central Asia. These include reference to training from *al-Qaeda*, the Taliban, *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* (Islamic Revival), and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Training camps in Pakistan, it is also reported, were used by Chechens, Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Uighurs. Finally, the report indicates that Uighur separatists may have links to *Tableeghi Jamaat*—a Pakistani Islamic missionary organization believed to have supplied Uighurs with arms.

Knights of Freedom:

Diaspora and International Resistance

If, as I have argued above, modern configurations based on nationality are dependent on a universal/parochial dialectic pitting principled demands for freedom and toleration against the constraints of difference, these insurgent groups make up the most blunt expression of the *parochial* interests of a particular society.¹⁰⁸ Michael Ignatieff presents this paradox effectively when he states "[t]o think well of oneself, at least in this century, it is necessary to believe in moral universals; to protect oneself, on the other hand, it may be necessary to hate and legitimize this hatred with

¹⁰⁸R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 16.

Table 1
Uighur Insurgent Groups

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thirty armed units, including expert bomb makers. • Mukhlisi boasts of having "twenty-two million Uighurs" ready to conduct armed struggle against the PRC. • Claims to have ties to several groups across the border in Kazakhstan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reportedly responsible for assassinations of Uighurs viewed as "collaborators" with the PRC and Central Asian governments. • Dispersed throughout the region: in Tajikistan, China, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and the Russian Republic of Chechnya.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claimed responsibility for a number of train bombings and for several assassinations. • Home city of Lop Nor is the site of one of China's largest nuclear test sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led April 1990 uprising in Baren, Xinjiang. PRC officials report 22 people were killed. • Weapons used in the Baren uprising may have come from Afghan Mujahadeen.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branded as Xinjiang's Hamas. • Reports 2,000 members; may have undergone explosives training in camps inside Afghanistan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed to armed struggle against Chinese "occupation" of the "Uighur homeland."

Source: Adapted from Dewardic L. McNeal, "China's Relations with Central Asian States and Problems with Terrorism," U.S. Department of State, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, December 17, 2001, available online at <<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/7945.pdf>>.

intense forms of moral particularism."¹⁰⁹ Correspondingly, there are also many alternate expressions of the Uighur struggle that adhere to enlightened, principled rules of engagement. In these cases, symbols of Uighur

¹⁰⁹This statement furthers his claim that "abstract humanism can happily coexist with loathing for actual human beings." See Michael Ignatieff, *Warrior's Honour: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (London: Vintage, 1998), 55.

identity are modified. For Tibet, gaining support from "Western" lobbies and NGOs has proved invaluable for their plight, often over-determining PRC policies in the region.¹¹⁰ Clearly "Western-friendly" cultural and political symbols (or symbolic action) are crucial strategic resources in the fight for recognition.

With this in mind, Erkin Alptekin has been an important figurehead representing the Uighur cause around the world. Many term him the leader of the Uighurs in exile—drawing obvious parallels with his personal friend, Tibet's Dalai Lama. Described as an "urban polyglot" and "the most eloquent advocate for the ethnic groups living in China's northwest territory," Alptekin was elected chairman of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) in 1996.¹¹¹ The UNPO represents client nations before the United Nations boasting a membership of "100 million people in 50 stateless nations."¹¹² Fittingly, his name means "Knight of Freedom" inheriting a commitment to the Uighur cause from his father, Isa Yusuf Alptekin, who first represented East Turkestan for the Kuomintang government before spending seventy years in exile.

Equally determined and perhaps even heroic is the figure of Wuerkaixi (吾爾開希), or Uerkesh Daolet (by his Uighur name). The 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations brought this young Uighur student at Beijing Normal University (北京師範大學) to the fore as one of the principal leaders of the student movement. On May 18, 1989 following the prolonged student hunger strike, PRC Premier Li Peng (李鵬) was cajoled into a televised meeting with Wuerkaixi and the other student leaders.¹¹³ Boldly standing up to the Premier, neither made any concessions in this lead-up to the massacres in Beijing on June 4th. Wuerkaixi fled following the fallout of the June 4th incident, becoming vice-chairman of the Federation for Democracy in China when it was set up in Paris in

¹¹⁰Nathan and Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress*, 184-86.

¹¹¹Edgar Emmett, "The Knight of Freedom," *The Uighur-L Archive*, 1997, available online at <http://www.taklamakan.org/uighur-l/archive/5_21_1.html>.

¹¹²*Ibid.*

¹¹³Mackerras, *The New Cambridge Handbook of Contemporary China*, 34.

September 1989.¹¹⁴ Many Uighurs continue to take pride in the fact that "of all the hundreds and thousands of people involved in the demonstrations, it was a Uighur who led the movement"; one intellectual told Justin Jon Rudelson, "Uerkesh is our only hero."¹¹⁵

Despite a surprisingly large expatriate community dispersed around the globe, the movement remains relatively unknown. According to some reports, there are an additional 500,000 Uighurs in Western Turkestan (which includes Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan) and another estimated 150,000 Uighurs in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Western Europe, Turkey, and the United States.¹¹⁶ Moreover, a number of moderate political organizations and media sources are dedicated to publicizing the situation in Xinjiang: the Uighur American Association and the East Turkestan National Congress (a federation of Uighur associations) are two such political entities, while the *Eastern Turkestan Information Bulletin*—published by the Eastern Turkestani Union in Europe (ETUE), of Munich—is a prominent media outlet.

Among the myriad of Uighur national advocates, these groups propel an image worthy of the espoused, universal virtues of freedom and self-determination. They struggle for recognition through international networks that are recognized as the guardians of certain ethical norms. In itself this is laudable, but such representations never occur in a vacuum. Among the relations of identity politics, even these representations require the necessarily hostile inventory of symbols bred in nationalist causes. Certain notions of tradition and "the past" are inherent in their claims drawing upon a selective biography of cohesion and incursion. While by no means overtly offensive, they do maneuver within the language of separation, marketing an image above the divisions "on the ground." As such, their fight remains problematic, acting upon a loftier stage not only for freedom but also for division.

¹¹⁴Mackerras, *China Since 1978*, 55.

¹¹⁵Rudelson, *Oasis Identities*, 131-32.

¹¹⁶McNeal, "China's Relations with Central Asian States and Problems with Terrorism," 9-10.

The "Strike Hard" Campaigns

Whether by means of moderate advocacy or violent struggle, resistance occurs as a reaction to the PRC's stifling of religious, cultural, and political expression in Xinjiang. Probably the most outright realizations of government repression in the region have been the "strike hard" (嚴打, *yanda*) campaigns carried out in order to combat ethnic "splittism" and illegal religious activities. These campaigns have cropped up throughout the 1990s as justification for draconian measures such as arbitrary arrests and detention, summary executions, and forced re-education programs.¹¹⁷ Moreover, China's participation in the "global war on terror" has added to the vigor of the latest clampdown. Newspapers in Xinjiang have reported figures varying between 120 and 180 arrests for "separatism" in the months following September 2001. Among those arrested was a man sentenced at a public rally on November 11, 2001 to twenty years in prison after translating the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" into Uighur.¹¹⁸ Independent sources estimate that the campaign has led to thousands of arrests and several hundred executions in the region since 1996.¹¹⁹ The BBC reported that by the end of 2001, eight thousand imams had been "trained" by the authorities to give them "a clearer understanding of the party's ethnic and religious policies" and that "school pupils and officials have been pressured not to fast during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan."¹²⁰ Both human rights organizations like Amnesty International and the UN's former High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson have deplored any PRC crackdowns which may occur on the shoulders of the "war on terror." U.S. President George W. Bush, during the APEC summit in Shanghai, also maintained that "war on terrorism must never be an excuse to persecute minorities" while the U.S. Congress has continued to press for the release of prominent Uighur businesswoman Rebiya Kadeer (arrested in

¹¹⁷Amnesty International 1999 Country Report: "People's Republic of China," 2-5.

¹¹⁸Leyli Yakob, "Recent Developments in Xinjiang," *Uighur-L Archive*, available online at <<http://www.taklamakan.org/uighur-l/archive/>>.

¹¹⁹Harris, "Cassettes, Bazaars, and Saving the Nation," 265.

¹²⁰BBC News, "China 'Cracks Down on Muslims'," March 22, 2002, available online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/asia-pacific/newsid_1887000/1887335.stm>.

2000 for "threatening national security" after sending Xinjiang newspapers to her activist husband in the United States).¹²¹

In addition to the imam "training" programs, religious expression deemed contrary to the political obligations of the state have been curtailed. Again, Amnesty International has detailed this process:

In July 1997, the head of the Xinjiang Regional Communist Party Committee, Wang Lequan [王樂泉], called for renewed efforts in the campaign ... indicating that 17,000 officials had already been sent to carry out "propaganda and education" in key villages, work units and military farms.... Since then, many mosques and Koranic schools have been closed down, the use of the Arabic script has been stopped, tight controls have been imposed on the Islamic clergy, and religious leaders who are deemed to be too independent or "subversive" have been dismissed or arrested. Muslims working in government offices and other official institutions are prohibited from practicing their religion, failing which they lose their jobs.... In recent years, 98 religious party members (in Turpan prefecture) have been dealt with. In June 1997, the [official newspaper *Xinjiang Daily*] reported ... that 40 "core participants in illegal religious activities" had been arrested, 35 communist party leaders in villages and towns and 19 village mayors or factory owners had been sacked, and the unauthorized construction or renovation of 133 mosques had been stopped in the area.¹²²

Despite the PRC's obvious intent to dissuade any threats to the economic, border, or ethnic integrity of China, it is more likely that this clampdown will only consolidate the apparent validity of claims to Uighur self-identification based in opposition to Beijing. Within the context of this dialogic relationship and with a view toward the increasingly intimate ties to cultural points westward, it appears that the PRC's clenched-fist policies toward Xinjiang ensure their own failure. Certainly there is no predicted dissolution of the PRC on the horizon; however, "striking hard" in Xinjiang only ensures long-term insecurity for both the people there and the PRC.

Global War on Terrorism:

Who are the Uighurs after September 11th?

As alluded to, a debate has been taken up in the international diplomatic arena regarding the nature of Xinjiang's political turmoil. There is

¹²¹Mackerras, *The New Cambridge Handbook of Contemporary China*, 261.

¹²²Amnesty International 1999 Country Report: "People's Republic of China," 10-11.

considerable fear that the kind of horse-trading required to create the oft cited "unprecedented alliance against global terror" will leave marginalized peoples stranded. Many analysts are concerned that in order to bring China onside, the United States may have to trade in their patronage of the Uighur cause. Of course, this has not escaped the attention of human rights activists and NGOs who are well aware of the possible consequences brought on by such a scenario. Erkin Alptekin insists that joining the fight against global terror is partly an excuse for the PRC to continue terrorizing the people of Xinjiang and that, in fact, it is these campaigns that are driving Uighurs to extremism. "They say we will die anyway in the coming decades. Do you want us to die like a hero, standing up, or do you want us to die like a coward, sleeping in bed?"¹²³

Prior to the September 11th attacks, Washington-Beijing relations were considerably strained.¹²⁴ Common ground expanded drastically in their wake, however, with a mutual interest in curtailing Central Asian radicalism. Appealing to this common ground, previously suppressed information about separatist violence in Xinjiang is now openly termed "global terrorism."¹²⁵ Following a September 21, 2001 meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan (唐家璇) stated that Sino-U.S. cooperation against terrorism had already started and would continue in the future. The *Washington Post* reported, however, that in return "China wants U.S. support and understanding in their fight against terrorism and separatists."¹²⁶ These negotiations are predicated on the U.S. and China's respective interpretations of the differ-

¹²³Lucy Ash, "China's Fearful Muslim Minority," BBC News Asia-Pacific, January 8, 2002, available online at <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1748801.stm>>.

¹²⁴This can be attributed to a number of events including the 1998-99 allegations of Chinese nuclear espionage, the accidental U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in May 1999, and the collision between a U.S. reconnaissance plane and a Chinese fighter in April 2001.

¹²⁵See note 123 above.

¹²⁶The PRC Foreign Ministry has denied, however, any linkage between Chinese cooperation against terrorism and a change of U.S. policy toward Xinjiang, Tibet, and Taiwan. John Pomfret (*Washington Post*), quoted in Jing-dong Yuan, "The War on Terrorism: China's Opportunities and Dilemmas," available online at <www.nautilus.org/fora/Special-Policy-Forum>.

ence between fighting for recognition and terrorism. Nonetheless, all too often, necessities of the immediate geopolitical context derail any serious consideration of such phantom concepts. It appears that the fate of Uighurs may rest on their ability to manipulate cultural symbols in order to prop up the universalizing virtues of Uighur self-determination.

Resonance

This debate—staging Uighur-as-terrorist vs. Uighur-as-victim (or freedom fighter)—deals in facile understandings of the culture and the community as a whole, and is a continuation of the modern preoccupation with categorizing and objectifying the social world. In relation to the bureaucratism of modernity already discussed, this so-called late modern (or even postmodern) context, currently dominated by global contests over terror, is drawing even less sophisticated boundaries around what constitutes a terrorist/terrorism. To counter this obfuscation, we must not forget that a diverse range of elements constitutes the Uighur community and identity. To this end, current religious beliefs and practices relate to a plurality of influences. Rather than exhibiting strict or fundamental adherence to Islam, local customs are often colored by Buddhist, pre-Islamic, and Shi'a traditions despite the fact that Uighurs are predominantly Sunni Muslims; this is especially true in the case of *mazar* festivals (pilgrimages to tombs of saints that are scattered around the deserts and towns of Xinjiang).¹²⁷ Meanwhile, according to the PRC's religious dictates, Islam is acknowledged as one of the five "systematized religions"—but "illegal religious activities" (非法宗教活動, *feifa zongjiao huodong*) and "feudal superstition" (封建迷信, *fengjian mixin*) are not to be tolerated. This can be problematic in rural areas especially as "many popular Islamic ritual practices ... fall between classification as 'feudal superstition' and the politically neutral category of local 'folk customs' (民俗, *minsù*)."¹²⁸ Even

¹²⁷Rachel Harris and Rahilā Dawut, "Mazar Festivals of the Uyghurs: Music, Islam and the Chinese State," *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 11, no. 1 (2002): 101-19.

¹²⁸From Ildiko Beller-Hann, "Making the Oil Fragrant: Dealings with the Supernatural Among the Uyghurs in Xinjiang," *Asian Ethnicity* 2, no. 1 (2001): 9-23.

the *mazar* festivals are condemned by PRC authorities for being linked to "fundamentalism" or "Wahabbism,"¹²⁹ despite their practice being opposed by orthodox Muslims as corruptive.

Furthermore, many of the intellectuals that have been influential in the development of Uighur historiographies and encouraged the development of a pan-Uighur identity are themselves "secular, virulently anti-Islamic, pan-Turkic nationalists."¹³⁰ They resent the Han influx and have actively pursued strategies to take advantage of newly opened borders to the West in an attempt to strengthen the pan-Turkic elements of Uighur identity. Their attempts have not been as successful as hoped,¹³¹ but they have added to a vital dynamic of varied Uighur identities. Indeed, for the silent majority of Uighurs who exhibit a plurality of identifying allegiances, there is a refusal to be drawn into such convenient quarantines as terrorist or freedom fighter, Muslim or folkloric, pan-Turk or pan-Chinese: "... despite the official rhetoric blaming 'religious extremists,' Islam in Xinjiang should not be considered as a source of unrest but rather as a vehicle for the expression of increased social and political frustrations."¹³²

Conclusion

The struggle for recognition is an inherently sticky contest since it requires first acknowledgment of political inferiority, and second the will to join the ranks of the subjugators. Narratives which express Uighur identity must give it a "presence in both space and time" in order to validate it as a

¹²⁹"Wahabbi" is the Central Asian catchall term for orthodox Muslims. The term is derived from the Wahabbi cult of Saudi Arabia but is generally used in a rather loose way equivalent to the Western use of the term "fundamentalist." See *ibid*.

¹³⁰Rudelson, *Oasis Identities*, 168. In fact, Professor Rudelson testified before a U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China (June 10, 2002) that "almost all [Uighur] militants are secular nationalists, seeking independence from China, whose struggle has no connection with Islam."

¹³¹Rudelson, *Oasis Identities*, 122.

¹³²Becquelin, "Xinjiang in the Nineties," 89.

"real" nation; this requires subscription not only from those within but from the assembly of other, already recognized members of this high society.¹³³ To use Partha Chatterjee's words, the subjected must "produce a discourse in which, even as it challenges the colonial claim to political domination ... also accepts the very intellectual premises of 'modernity' on which colonial domination is based."¹³⁴ In Xinjiang there are *two* paralleling assertions in conflict: the PRC struggling to preserve and propel its claim to pan-Chinese, socialist, capitalist, and civilizational integrity; and Uighurs fighting to be heard above all that. What goes into this conflict involves the use of strategies on the ground (the interpersonal), as well as at the structural and symbolic levels with considerable overlap and interplay.¹³⁵

As stated at the outset, the intent of this article is limited to the creation of a framework for looking at expressions of identity in Xinjiang in order to consider the way it is molded and mobilized through power relations. There is therefore considerable room for further and more detailed inquiry. Prescriptive demands on this thesis are limited to broad ruminations on the danger of instituting mutually exclusive identifying allegiances: just as Uighur identity is defined in the shadow of the PRC's imperial foil, Chinese identity needs to draw upon a self-styled physical and cultural hinterland. Meanwhile, certain harsh realities face Uighurs daily as China perseveres with its goal to modernize the country. For one, the impending HIV/AIDS crisis in the region threatens further social corrosion. China has only begun to recognize this ballooning health threat—increasing especially in the recent decades of economic liberalization. Justin Jon Rudelson in his address to the U.S. Congress stated, "besides alcohol, HIV/AIDS has brought the most devastating threat to Uighur survival as a people."¹³⁶ Since heroin began to enter the region from Burma

¹³³Erik Ringmar, *Identity, Interest, and Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 176-77.

¹³⁴Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World—A Derivative Discourse* (Avon: Zed Books/United Nations University, 1986), 30.

¹³⁵Manning Nash, *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 115.

¹³⁶"Xinjiang's Uyghers in the Ensuing U.S.-China Partnership," Congressional-Executive

in the mid-1990s and used intravenously, Xinjiang has emerged as China's most seriously afflicted region, with Uighurs rapidly becoming the most affected of all of China's peoples. The outlook is rather grim as the health system is poorly equipped to deal with such an epidemic. Testing for the disease is prohibitively expensive and Xinjiang still has no hospital capable of treating full-blown AIDS cases.¹³⁷ The emergence of this health crisis will serve to further highlight the stratified nature of society in Xinjiang underlining the perception of Uighur insecurity at an individual level and social divisions on a national level. It is vital that the impacts of this dilemma are studied further, and also ironic that the PRC's willingness and ability to bring modern social and scientific technologies to the region may be the only salvation.

Politics of Identity

In considering what some security analysts have called "societal security," the "referent object of security is not the state—as either a government or a territorial entity—but the shared identity which constitutes a common social 'we'."¹³⁸ Security threats are thereby posed in the form of "whatever puts its 'we' into jeopardy."¹³⁹ In line with David Campbell's *Writing Security* thesis, however, it is in the production of threats that the state or society finds its purpose and is ultimately constituted. The Chinese state, as illustrated above, has played a large role in the institution of the Uighur nationality/threat both via its "nomothetic" role and subsequent policies in Xinjiang. For the PRC, Uighurs have furnished a margin of Chinese identity obliging its need for sub-national adversity. Benedict Anderson struck on a similar chord when he submitted the following lines:

Commission on China, Uygher Panel, June 10, 2002, available online at <<http://www.cecc.gov/pages/roundtables/061002/rudelsonStatement.php3>>.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Michael C. Williams' formulation of the Copenhagen School perspective in "Modernity, Identity and Security: A Comment on the 'Copenhagen Controversy'," *Review of International Studies* 24 (1998): 437.

¹³⁹Ibid.

... the state imagined its local adversaries as in an ominous prophetic dream, well before they came into historical existence. To the forming of this imagining, the census's abstract quantification/serialization of persons, the map's eventual logoization of political space, and the museum's "ecumenical," profane genealogizing made interlinked contributions.¹⁴⁰

Likewise, Ralph Litzinger argues that for China "the ethnic minority is a legal fiction, emerging into national visibility through the classificatory act of a state identification project."¹⁴¹ These claims are not meant to downgrade the importance of Uighur cultural heritage, however, since I agree with Stephen May's assertion that "clearly the 'cultural stuff' of ethnicity—ancestry, culture, and language—does matter."¹⁴² Yet it is only when these become threatened or mobilized according to power relations that they enter the politics of security. Since self-identity is not fixed and is "negotiated, open, shifting, [and] ambiguous,"¹⁴³ the "we" referred to earlier does not serve a political purpose until the group is threatened.

Writing Insecurity

Clearly the PRC's efforts to develop China's economy have been remarkable, quadrupling the 1980 national income in fifteen years.¹⁴⁴ Yet, despite growing prosperity, urban-rural and periphery-center disparities have widened. An immense population movement from rural areas to pulsulating cities in all parts of the country characterizes what is often regarded as the largest migration in human history. In Xinjiang, disparities are grafted to widening cultural divisions, evoking some of the worst prejudices of imperial power. It has long been established that colonial rule is about more than economic and political domination since it is also a force

¹⁴⁰Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, xiv.

¹⁴¹Litzinger, "Reimagining the State in Post-Mao China," 298.

¹⁴²Stephen May, *Language and Minority Rights: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Politics of Language* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), 25.

¹⁴³Owen M. Lynch, "Contesting and Contested Identities: Mathura's Chaubes," in *Narratives of Agency: Self-Making in China, India, and Japan*, ed. Wimal Dissanayake (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 75.

¹⁴⁴Robert Benewick and Paul Wingrove, *China in the 1990's* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 256.

ingraining itself in the construction of subjects and agency.¹⁴⁵ As such, the imposition of PRC interests in Xinjiang serves to affirm Uighur self-identification and a commitment to struggle while cementing beliefs in perceived distinction on both sides.

These are the beliefs that favor insecurity for both Uighurs and the PRC. Similar to other marginalized peoples throughout the world, the task at hand for Uighur identity construction is monumental and paradoxical. How is an identity—defined largely in subjugation—freed without denying its central animus? The task is nothing short of "renegotiating its subjectivity through the absence of itself, and in the presence of another it feels itself not to be."¹⁴⁶ It may be possible, given that identities are constantly being renegotiated, that Uighurs' emerging links to societies outside of the PRC will present a plurality of alternatives. With expanding economic interests in the region, however, leniency from the PRC does not look to be forthcoming. The state's quest to placate the region is embedded in its modernization program. As such, stability in Xinjiang is a prerequisite both for maintaining the resource base that powers the country's economic progress and for consolidating authority in China's physical and ethnic borderlands. However, its oppressive political technologies belie any unifying vision. In fact, PRC policy in Xinjiang embodies the most devastating form of modern domination. Uighurs, ever more displaced within the UAR, will increasingly find this alienation from and domination by the PRC unacceptable, threatening the unity that their domination was meant to preserve. China must not take for granted that its size and growing strength will silence dissent in Xinjiang. As James Clifford has stated:

Throughout the world indigenous populations have had to reckon with the forces of "progress" and "national" unification. The results have been both destructive and inventive. Many traditions, languages, cosmologies, and values

¹⁴⁵See Ashis Nandy for a pioneering study of colonial rule's psychological ramifications: *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983).

¹⁴⁶Jean Fisher, "Unsettled Accounts of Indians and Others," in *Myth of Primitivism*, ed. Susan Hiller (London: Routledge, 1991), 284.

are lost, some literally murdered; but much has simultaneously been invented and revived in complex oppositional contexts. If the victims of progress and empire are weak, they are seldom passive.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 16.