UYGHURS OF CHINA: ASSIMILATION AND RESISTANCE

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Abstract

Historically, Chinese civilization state emphasized the importance of "civilizing barbarians" that took form of modernization of minorities and their assimilation today. Since the conquest of Xinjiang by Qing Empire two main approaches has been dominating the policy toward Uyghur minority there. Those are assimilation and autonomy. After the launch of the reforms by Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s Uyghur minority faced rise in nationalism and separatism that strengthened Uyghur identity among the peoples of most of parts of Xinjiang. Fearing secession and inter-ethnic conflicts, the Communist Party of China returned to the assimilationist approach after small shift in the 1980s. Chinese mainly promote language policy with Mandarin domination, Han immigration, the economic development and modernization program, and different types of repressions in order to better integrate and assimilate the periphery with the Chinese cultural core. But pushing more for assimilation, China faces further resistance of Uyghur minority that may lead to escalation of conflicts and the rise of separatism.

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List of Abbreviations

CCP – Chinese Communist Party

CCPPD – Chinese Communist Party Propaganda Department

GWDP – Great Western Development Program

HRIC – Human Rights In China organization

IMAR – Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region

PLA – People's Liberation Army

PRC – People's Republic of China

SCO – Shanghai Cooperation Organization

USSR – Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics

XPCC – Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps

XUAR – Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

Contents

Introduction

Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region or just Xinjiang is located in the Northwest of China and borders eight countries: Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. It possesses China's largest gas and oil reserves as well as many other important minerals. It is important strategic position for Chinese and has been the buffer zone between China and other Eurasian Empires. It holds China's only nuclear testing facilities and largest number of troops than any other region. Xinjiang is currently goes through on of the most active periods in terms of trade and development in its history. Due to the opening of borders in the late 1980s, large liberalization of economy during Deng Xiaoping's reforms, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Xinjiang has become the bridge that unites Chinese production capacities and Eurasian markets. And, what is more important, Xinjiang keeps China's largest Muslim community and China's second largest minority group – Uyghur. Due to such complex situation and its far location from Beijing, it has become a hot spot for Chinese authorities who do all their best to keep controlling the region.

Historically, Xinjiang was the epicenter of cultural and technological exchange in Eurasia. The Silk Road was established through Xinjiang and the region contained great medieval cities. It is through Xinjiang Buddhism firstly achieved China and gunpowder went to Europe. And it is exactly the pivotal place where the Great Game between Russia, Britain, and Qing Empire took place.

Xinjiang was conquered by Qing Empire in the mid-18th century. It immediately became a problematic region for Chinese due to its vulnerabilities and diversity. For two centuries Chinese government has tried to control it and assimilate its population but none of these goals has been achieved so far. More Chinese

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government pushes for national unity and assimilation of minorities into one family avoiding pluralistic approaches, the more conscious of their own identity Uyghurs become and more resistance to Chinese government emerges.

Today Uyghurs are underrepresented in politics, especially on the high positions.[1] Moreover, the supposed autonomy of XUAR does not actually exist in reality because all major decisions are taken in Beijing.[2] Uyghurs have reasons to fear assimilation and the loss of their culture and identity, especially, taking into account what have happened to Inner Mongolia and Mongolian minority there. Since the establishment of the PRC the Mongol population of Inner Mongolia has fallen from about 50% to less than 20% while the traditional nomadic ways of life were restricted and they were re-settled with confiscation of their livestock. Their traditions and culture are now serving only touristic purposes while the language is widely replaced by Putonghua.[3] Sounds very like the fate of Central Asian republics under the rule of the Soviet Union, however, while Central Asia gained independence in 1991 and now is reviving its traditions and cultures (or inventing them, see primordial versus constructivist), Mongols in Inner Mongolia will probably disappear in several generations. The Uyghurs of Xinjiang are stronger in comparison to Mongols in IMAR but in the long-term perspective even they are threatened by expanding homogenization of the Chinese state. Fearing the loss of culture, religion, language, and identity, Uyghurs, as well as other minorities in China, started to resist assimilation.

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[1] Bovingdon, Gardner, *Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 62-65.

[2] 4. Dru C. Gladney, "Chinese Program of Development and Control, 1978-2001," in ed. Frederick S. Starr (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2004), 118.

[3] 13. Graham E, Fuller and Jonathan N. Lipman, "Islam in Xinjiang," in ed. Frederick S. Starr (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2004), 345.

With the independence of Central Asian republics, the desires for their own independence among Uyghurs dramatically increased that fed further separatist attempts.[4] However, Chinese government forecasted the results of independence of Central Asian republics appropriately and directed a lot of afford to improve the relations with new neighbors that resulted in the creation of Shanghai Five organization (that later transformed to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization) that stressed the struggle with separatism as the main goal.[5] Both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan went further deporting several Uyghurs to China accusing them of separatist activities. Uyghurs feel betrayed by Central Asian brothers.

Not only Uyghurs struggle for independence, Tibetans are also very eager to separate from China, but unlike Tibetans with their English-speaking establishment outside of China, Uyghurs have to rely mostly on themselves having only smaller and not united emigrant associations and diasporas spread all over the world and being not treated on the same level as Dalai Lama and his exile administration in India especially after the beginning of the 'war on terror'.[6] The main goal of Chinese government, after all, is to assimilate minorities into Chinese culture and build one solid identity of Chinese citizen, and both goals are aimed to avoid possible secession of Xinjiang from China and prevent inter-ethnic clashes.

This research is focused on the last turn to more assimilationist approach taken in the early 1990s with the increase of censorships and control over Xinjiang and later with the start of "Strike Hard, Maximum Pressure" and "Great Western Development" campaigns that both are aimed to undermine common Uyghur identity, prevent separatism and inter-ethnic conflicts, and, in more long-term

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[4] 8. Sean Roberts, "A "Land of Borderlands"," in ed. Frederick S. Starr (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2004), 229.
[5] *Ibid* 232-233.
[6] Gloria Chou. "Autonomy in Xinjiang: Institutional Dilemmas and the Rise of Uighur Ethno-Nationalism," *Josef Korbel Journal of Advanced International Studies*, Vol. 4 (2012): 3.

perspective, assimilate Uyghurs into Chinese culture. In the first chapter, it briefly explains how Xinjiang became Chinese and what the major trends in China's rule over Eastern Turkestan were. The second chapter will look closer at the nature of Chinese state and modern discourse of homogenization and civilization in China with the description of Chinese emphasis on 'national unity' concept. The third chapter will than look closer at Uyghur identity creation. It will argue that it is in fact Chinese themselves who constructed common Uyghur identity among different ethnic groups of Xinjiang. And while currently Chinese authorities are trying to diminish this identity and sense of belonging to one nation, the identity only strengthens in such context. The last fourth chapter will consider four main assimilation policies, which are currently implemented in Xinjiang. Those are the language policy, the Han immigration policy, the economic development policy, and hard policies of repressions.

Chapter 1. Historical Background

The history of Xinjiang is the first phase where Uyghur and Chinese visions clash into contestation and conflict. There are two official versions of what happened to Xinjiang but there are also independent attempts taken by outsiders who try to analyze the history of Xinjiang. The work is not the easy one taking into account the scale of mass propaganda in modern Chinese state. David Shambaugh[7] in his article *China's Propaganda System: Institutions, Processes and Efficacy* stresses the point that although China has been rapidly liberalizing its economy since the start of Deng Xiaoping's reforms, the CCP is still does its best in maintaining control over the society and politics within China. He argues that Chinese Communist Party Propaganda Department remains "effective in controlling most of the information

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[7] Professor of political science at George Washington University in Washington D.C.

that reaches the Chinese public and officialdom."[8] The scope of modern propaganda includes not only the media resources like Internet, radio or newspapers, but also social institutions like universities, schools, and training centers, as well as the cultural institutions like museums, theatres, film production companies, literature and art.

Shambaugh further explains that the modern world of "technological modernization, social pluralization, economic marketization and globalization"[9] certainly does not allow CCPPD to maintain absolute control over the society so the government has to accept the fact that some information will be distributed among the population in any case but the goal of the CCP is to minimize the scale of information spread so still every media resource and every producer or publisher has to go through the censorship procedures in CCPPD in order to publicize information. However, the author explains that censorship is not the only important issue. The proactive propaganda programs that seek to promote the ideas and information that the government believes should be promoted are highly financed and supported from above. Nevertheless, Chinese themselves do not consider propaganda to be negative phenomenon but it brings positive results in the purpose of educating the masses.[10]

He Qinglian[11] in her *The Fog of Censorship* greatly shows the scale and gravity of media control in China where it is supposed media to belong to society while in fact it belongs to the CCP. Censorship is applied to all media resources and

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[8] David Shambaugh. "China's Propaganda System: Institutions, Processes and Efficacy," *The China Journal* No. 57 (2007): 25.

[9] *Ibid* 55.

[10] According to the White Paper of the Chinese government on *The Internet in China* the freedom of speech is guaranteed for all citizens and the White Paper even claims all Internet users enjoy this freedom (http://www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/2010-06/08/content_20207994.htm). The article *How Censorship in China is Allowed Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression* written by Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts argues that the censorship is not aimed at the prevention of the appearance of the comments or posts with criticism of the government, but it is aimed at the prevention of the messages that would mobilize the people to act. Thus the main purpose of censorship in the modern days is the prevention of collective actions against the regime.

[11] Senior researcher at Human Rights in China (HRIC) organization.

literature. Millions of messages and conversations are checked every day. She argues that the message sent by Laozi, the ancient Chinese philosopher and commander, claiming that "the people should have empty hearts but full stomachs,"[12] was taking into full consideration by contemporary party leaders. The public opinion is highly manipulated and directed according to the interests of the CCP. Even though there were some attempts to liberalize media sphere within China done by Deng, the Tiananmen protests set back most of them persuading party leaders in the necessity of stricter control over society in order to escape the scenario of the Soviet Union.

The intensification of censorship does not only prevents the social problems to be discussed publicly but it also denies all alternative views of Chinese history coming from minorities' intellectuals or Chinese scholars. Many disasters are intentionally forgotten and not mentioned either in the media or in publications and art. Those who try to speak out and criticize the government for misinformation of people are blamed to be traitors or threats to the well-being and security of China. Many of them were either put under house arrest or imprisoned while few lucky ones could manage to leave the PRC. The huge Chinese autocratic machine is working on hiding the information that may vilify the regime and providing people with information that is considered to be safe and beneficial for the CCP.

There are many more research papers and reports on propaganda and media control in China, however, the message is common and clear in all of them – the history and information in general is highly manipulated. Moreover, they are highly manipulated not only by Chinese authorities but by the regional nationalists, intellectuals and officials too. Gardner Bovingdon in his work *The Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land* emphasizes the contestation of history that he calls

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[12] He, Qinglian. "The Fog of Censorship: The Media Control in China." New York, Hong Kong, and Brussels: Human Rights in China Report, 2008, 2.

"politicized history"[13] looking deeper into the Uyghur topic in China. Bovingdon writes "virtually every text concerning Xinjiang published in China since 1959 begins with the obligatory statement that "Xinjiang has since ancient times been an inseparable part of China," and some texts claim the relationship dates back five thousand years."[14] Furthermore, Chinese historians write in all Communist historiographies that Uyghurs belong to Chinese family of nations thus Xinjiang belongs to China. This is done intentionally to fight separatism and nationalism. Chinese further assert Han people lived in Xinjiang for centuries trying to diminish territorial claims of Uyghurs on this land. Uyghurs are often referred as "backward" and inferior to Chinese.[15] Williams explains that Chinese do not consider "self-determination" to be applicable within China because the main discourse claims the CCP "liberalized" minorities in 1949 from colonial rule of bourgeois while it is applicable to all those still "colonized" nations in the world.[16]

On the other hand, Uyghur nationalists declare Eastern Turkestan was independent for up to six thousand years[17] with many great independent kingdoms emerged and disappeared in the sand of Tarim basin and that modern Uyghurs are the direct descendants of those kingdoms. Moreover, the authors like Turghun Almas claim Uyghurs has always been superior to Chinese and has been living in the lands

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[13] Bovingdon, Gardner, *Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*, 23.

[14] *Ibid* 25.

[15] 14. Gardner Bovingdon. "Contested Histories," in ed. Frederick S. Starr (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2004), 355.

[16] Erin Elizabeth Williams, "Ethnic Minorities and the State in China: Conflict, Assimilation, or a 'Third Way'?" *Canadian Political Science Association Conference*, 2008, 10.

[17] Turghun Almas, famous Uyghur poet and writer, created a work called "Uyghurlar" in 1989 in China, which provided an alternative vision of Uyghur history where he claims Uyghurs to be one of the oldest and greatest nations in the world. Like many nationalists, Almas emphasized the historical attachment of Uyghurs to the land of Xinjiang claiming they are the original inhabitants of that territory. After the public resonance and accusations of separatism, the book was banned in 1992 and he was put under house arrest until he died in September 11, 2001. He was 76 years old, the real reason of his death is unknown. For more information about him see Bovingdon "Contested Histories" in Starr, 363-368.

of Xinjiang for thousands of years so have the rightful claim for it.[18] In addition, Uyghur nationalists deny their belonging to Chinese family and stress their Turkic origins. Nevertheless, Uyghurs call Chinese historians propagandists and liars while Chinese accuse Uyghur writers of far right nationalism, separatism, and populism.[19]

The idea that Xinjiang has always been an integral part of China appeared in the late 19th century at the Qing court.[20][21] Qing authorities started to promote the idea of Xinjiang being inalienable and inseparable part of China and that it has been so for millennia. Kuomintang later continued the emphasis that Xinjiang has been the integral part of China for millennia but also created the idea of one unified Chinese nation being "one family"[22][23] thus constructing the basis for future attempts of the CCP to build civic nationalism in China. According to Chiang Kai-shek all China's ethnic groups combined one Chinese race. This promotion of such "imagined community" as Benedict Anderson called it was, on the other hand, not very successful because Central Asian ethnicities were built on the Stalin's ideas that better reflect ethnic nationalism. The Uyghur nation, as well as many other Central Asian nations, was built on the ideas closer to ethnic nationalism so it is harder to reverse this development.

The more objective historiography in English was written by James Millward. In reality, it was the Han dynasty[24] that first conquered most of current territory of Xinjiang and forced all smaller tribal confederations and states to pay

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[18] 14. Gardner Bovingdon. "Contested Histories," 354-355.
[19] *Ibid* 353.
[20] 2. James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, "Political and Cultural History through the Late 19th Century," in ed. Frederick S. Starr (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2004), 63.
[21] Bovingdon, Gardner, *Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*, 33.
[22] Gloria Chou. "Autonomy in Xinjiang: Institutional Dilemmas and the Rise of Uighur Ethno-Nationalism," 5.
[23] Bovingdon, Gardner, *Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*, 22.
[24] 206 BCE – 220 CE. During the long war with steppe confederation of the Xiongnu, Han eventually defeated them in the first century BCE thus expanding its rule up to the Tarim basin creating a strong system of vassal tributaries.

tribute to Chinese. [25] Later, in the seventh century the Tang dynasty tried to regain domination in Central Asia through the system of tribute missions and martial alliances, and they even moved further up to Transoxiania but were defeated by the Arabs and local Turkic tribes in the battle near Talas River in 752 CE.[26] Since those times Chinese generally lost control over Inner Asia being able to submit only smaller states next to their borders. Inner Asia started to be considered useless and wasteful for Chinese authorities who had no interest in rebuilding their influence there.[27] The Yuan dynasty only claimed Inner Asia to be under Chinese rule but in practice Chinese could not control the lands of modern Xinjiang or even collect taxes and tributes from there.[28]

The Uyghurs are mentioned at those times for the first time. In the 8th century Uyghurs controlled vast lands of modern Mongolia and Southern Siberia but after the defeat by the Kyrgyz tribes in 840 CE they had to migrate to the Southwest where, in the modern Eastern part of Xinjiang, they settled up but disappeared from historical chronicles soon. Uyghurs were of Turkic origin but practiced different religions including Buddhism and Nestorian Christianity. The Tarim basin, the modern cultural core of most of the Uyghurs, was populated by Indo-European

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[25]Bovingdon, Gardner, *Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*, 26.

[26] Millward argues that the main reason for Chinese to set back from Central Asia was not the defeat near Talas River but the rebellion in Central China organized by general An Lushan who proclaimed himself an emperor of China. The rebellion continued even after the death of An Lushan being one of the longest revolts in Chinese history covering the reigns of at least three Tang emperors. Millward explains that Chinese were not willing to spend affords and finances to continue expensive campaigns outside of their mainland while their own subjects rebel.

[27] In fact, Chinese dynasties did not possess enough resources to control strategic positions along the Silk Road after the defeat near Talas River. Further conquests of China by Mongols and Manchurians, and eternal inner conflicts and the rebels of warlords did not allow China to concentrate on outer lands until the Qing times. Chinese intellectuals who promoted the isolationist policies considered China to be the center of the universe (*Zhong* Guo) thus being superior to other civilizations. This ideology raised no interests in outer world and dominated the Ming times. The example of such lack of interest in colonization or imperialism was Zheng He's expeditions to East Africa that were abandoned by Xuande Emperor in 1430.

[28] 2. James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, "Political and Cultural History Through the Late 19th Century," 46.

groups of people. But those people also disappeared soon due to the "Turkization"[29] of Inner Asia. Approximately in the 10th century, with the conquests of Qarakhanids in the Tarim basin, Islam came to Xinjiang.[30] Thus three events of the migration of Uyghurs to Xinjiang from Siberia, the "Turkization" of Inner Asia, and the spread of Islam that replaced most of local beliefs largely influenced the future of Uyghurs in Xinjiang.[31]

While there is no information on Uyghurs since the 14th century, the history of Xinjiang is well described by Millward. Xinjiang survived the Mongol invasion and later was conquered by Jungars.[32] In the early 18th century Jungars started war with Qing Empire, the Chinese empire ruled by Manchu dynasty. After long period of instability and massacres Jungars were finally defeated by Qing in 1758. Chinese authorities immediately established Chinese-style civil and military administrations over these lands, started to promote trade and stability, however, eliminating all attempts of local Turks[33] to rebel and determine their own future. For about a century Qing tried to control Xinjiang holding the biggest amount of troops there but the borders still stayed vague[34] and vulnerable to foreign invasions[35] like Yaqub Beg's invasion in 1864 and Russian invasion in the 1870s. The early policies were very flexible giving much autonomy to local authorities and ethnic groups.

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[29] Rahul, Ram. *Central Asia: The Outline History*. India: Concept Publishing Company, 1997, 16.
[30] Sufi missionaries first came to Xinjiang with the Qarakhanids; Sufi travelers became powerful enough to establish strong Sufi orders in most of Tarim oases and influence the politics of the region for the next millennium.
[31] 2. James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, "Political and Cultural History through the Late 19th Century," 40.
[32] Jungars were Mongol kingdom who practiced Tibetan Lamaism being close allies of Tibet (Millward Chapter 2 in Starr, 49-53.
[33] By the mid-18th century, the "Turkization" of Xinjiang was almost accomplished so the majority of population were of Turkic ethnicity.
[34] Kashgar survived two Kokand's invasions in the 1820s and 1840s. The Kokand's troops actually met sympathy from local oases dwellers who identified themselves with Muslims not Chinese and who considered Kokand's war with the Qing state as a liberation. The Muslim army was twice defeated by the Qing troops who regain the control over Kashgar in the 1840s.
[35] 2. James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, "Political and Cultural History through the Late 19th Century," 57-63.

Qing administration enjoyed power within the Han communities but did not interfere into the affairs of other ethnicities preferring to rely on local elites (*begs*), warlords and religious leaders, and to collect taxes. The main goal was to integrate Xinjiang with China Proper economically but not necessarily culturally. However, the borders were still vague and unprotected that led Qing general Zuo Zongtang, who defeated Yaqub Beg in 1874, to persuade Qing emperor to transform the status of Xinjiang into a province, to impose Chinese-style administration all over Xinjiang, and to increase immigration of the Hans to secure Qing rule there.[36]

In the later 19th century Qing authorities decided to switch to more assimilationist approach toward minorities in Xinjiang. This approach meant no more support for local elites and warlords, the development of strong Confucian-style administration that would solidly rule Xinjiang, larger support for Han immigration and the cultural assimilation of local inhabitants.[37] However, this new approach would require huge investments into Xinjiang during the times when Qing lost the wars to the British and French and rebellions were occurring in central China with high frequency. Many of the imperial advisors opposed further financial support of Xinjiang and even suggested to abandon the region arguing that it was a waste of resources.[38] This clearly shows that Xinjiang was still considered to be a colony of Qing Empire rather than an inseparable part. One of the first decisions that served the assimilationist goal was the opening of Confucian schools in many urban centers of Xinjiang where Muslim children would study Chinese classics and language for free. However, already this first step met large resistance from local Muslims and especially from local religious leaders and leaders of religious schools who saw the

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[36] 2. James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, "Political and Cultural History through the Late 19th Century," 61-62.
[37] *Ibid* 63.
[38] 3. James A. Millward and Nabijan Tursun, "Political History and Strategies of Control, 1884-1978," in ed. Frederick S. Starr (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2004), 65.

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threat for their authority and religious values in new Confucian schools.[39] Another policy of Qing was the resettlement of Turkic and Han families in the same places creating the mixed villages. And again, the conflicts arose in such settlements more frequently than where Muslims lived separately from the Hans.[40]

In 1912 China became republic after bloody revolution. To keep Xinjiang under Chinese control new government started to send republican generals there but central government could not effectively control those generals in Xinjiang allowing the creation of three autocratic regimes that existed from 1912 till 1949. The period is characterized by changing strategies and lack of development. Three generals implement different approaches toward minorities of Xinjiang. Yang tried to keep full control of Xinjiang destroying any opposition to his rule but promoting non-interference to local affairs. Jin started active assimilationist policy that was underpinned by chauvinism towards minorities. He was rapidly removed from power and replaced by Sheng who returned to more non-interfering approach. Generally, for over a century since 1884 to 1949 the rulers of Xinjiang implemented periodically two main approaches towards the region[41]: firstly, pluralistic approach of cooperation with local inhabitants, and secondly, assimilationist approach that aimed to create truly Chinese province within Xinjiang and secure it for future rule.[42]

During the rule of Republican generals in Xinjiang, Turkic peoples attempted to secede from China twice by establishing two countries. The first one was established in 1933 and was called the First Eastern Turkestan Republic with the

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[39] 3. James A. Millward and Nabijan Tursun, "Political History and Strategies of Control, 1884-1978," 66.

[40] *Ibid* 67.

[41] James Millward opposed two approaches as "tight central control versus local autonomy; cultural assimilation versus tolerance of local ways; the desire, on the one hand, for a strong military presence and aggressive land colonization programs, versus, on the other hand, the high cost of and negative local reactions to the military presence and these settlement programs." 2. James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, "Political and Cultural History through the Late 19th Century," 65.

[42] 3. James A. Millward and Nabijan Tursun, "Political History and Strategies of Control, 1884-1978," 64.

capital in Kashgar.[43] It was soon eliminated and the revolt was violently suppressed but modern Uyghurs still remember the short period of independence. The second Eastern Turkestan Republic was established in 1944 with the help of the Soviet Union and was in fact the puppet state. It had close ties with the USSR but was returned under Chinese control in 1949 as the gift from Stalin to Mao Zedong and his newly established Communist regime in China.[44]

Historically, we may define five turning points of policies towards Uyghurs under Communist control:

1. The first years of autonomy from 1949 to 1957 – the Communist control over Xinjiang was still weak and party leaders had to rely on local elites to maintain control over the region so they promoted pluralism and development of nationalities.[45] Moreover, this period is marked by good relations with the USSR who provided training and support for Chinese officials in Xinjiang. The standardization of Turkic languages and classification of nations was done at this period.

2. The period of Mao's campaigns from 1957 to 1977 – worsening relations with the Soviet Union and the growing cult of personality of Mao Zedong along with his mass mobilization campaigns that caused millions of deaths and impoverished Chinese economy negatively affected all minorities and especially Uyghurs. Religion was abandoned and minority cultures faced hardships due to their "backwardness."

3. The start of reforms by Deng Xiaoping – the return towards the autonomy approach and great liberalization of life in all China and Xinjiang. At this time Uyghurs gained relative freedom to write alternative historiographies like one of

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[43] 3. James A. Millward and Nabijan Tursun, "Political History and Strategies of Control, 1884-1978," 77-78.

[44] *Ibid* 82-84.

[45] Graham E. Fuller and S. Frederick Starr, *The Xinjiang Problem,* Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 13.

Turghun Almas, which became crucial for strengthening of common Uyghur identity and which were later banned and caused much resonance in China.[46]

4. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the Tiananmen protests shocked Chinese authorities who realized they needed to expand the control over society in order to keep their regime and prevent the split of Chinese state. The large shift toward more assimilationist approach was taken after two events.[47]

5. The 'War on Terror' started by the United States in 2001[48] – if before 2001 Uyghurs had big support from the international community and the US especially and were considered to be victims of the authoritarian regime in China, after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 Uyghurs generally lost the most of previous support and solidarity.[49] Several Uyghurs were brought to Guantanamo and the image of Uyghurs as terrorists who fight on the side of Al-Qaeda, particularly raised by Chinese government, negatively influenced further life of Uyghurs in Xinjiang.[50]

Chapter 2. National Unity

Before trying to understand the reasons behind Chinese attempts to assimilate its minorities, it would be better to understand the nature of the Chinese state as Chinese themselves see it. The dominant historical discourse that has been reborn in modern China is the discourse of civilization. Samuel Huntington in his *The Clash of Civilizations* talked about the new world order where not nation-states or ideologies but civilizations will dominate international discourse. He mentions that China and some other smaller states share unique Confucian culture with its own

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[46] Thierry Kellner, *China: The Uighur Situation From Independence for the Central Asian Republics to the Post 11 September Era*, Translated by Carolyn Norris (UNHCR WriteNet Paper No. 2, 2002), 7.
[47] Arienne M. Dwyer, *The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse* (Washington: East-West Center, 2005), 14.
[48] Bovingdon, Gardner, *Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land,* Introduction.
[49] Raphael Israeli, "China's Uyghur Problem," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2010), 5.
[50] Bovingdon, Gardner, *Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*, 22-23.

traditions, values, and identity that may challenge other civilizations. In fact, though his ideas were criticized due to the oversimplification of the world affairs, he provides important image of China that many Chinese themselves enthusiastically accepted. His work started the discussion about the nature of Chinese state and the difference in the views of the West and China. Later, Martin Jacques, the journalist and author of *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*, assumed that according to the Western discourse the world consists of nation-states that compete with each other. This Eurocentric view of the world does not allow Western scholars to see the real nature of Chinese state that is indeed the civilization-state and has been so for centuries. He argues that the identity and culture of China is largely shaped by this civilization-state.

The main idea behind civilization-state is that it is not ethnicity, language, race, or anything but culture that determines who Chinese used to be and who they are today. At the core of Chinese culture lies Confucianism, which emphasizes "cultural universalism" rather than ethnic distinction.[51] The cultural core of Chinese civilization was based around the great rivers of Yangtze and Huanghe that was considered by Chinese to be the most advanced and high culture while everything outside of this zone was considered to be "backward" and "barbarian." Whether there were tribes from the hills or the nomads from the North, or even the "hairy" sailors from far Europe, all of them were inferior to Chinese civilization. The difference in cultures, behavior, and systems distinguished "barbarians" from "civilization."[5253] Even today they idea of "backwardness" of those living outside of Chinese cultural core is dominating Chinese view of its minorities. Chinese big cities

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[51] Wenfang Tang and Gaochao He, *Separate but Loyal: Ethnicity and Nationalism in China* (Washington: East-West Center, 2010), 3.
[52] Abanti Bhattacharya, "Conceptualizing Uyghur Separatism in Chinese Nationalism," Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (July-September 2003), 363.
[53] Bovingdon, Gardner, *Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*, 51.

and growing economy are the symbols of modernized and advanced culture while more traditional societies at the periphery of the Chinese state are called "primitive" and thus inferior to Han culture. This idea has been important for the discourse of Chinese academia and has become the main paradigm in Chinese attempts to modernize its Western frontier.[54]

In practice the idea of "backwardness" of minorities may be found in art, official political speeches and official research works. Dru Glandney argues that massive exoticization and even eroticization of minorities in Chinese films, TV programs, books, and art leads to the strengthening of the common perception of minorities to be "backward" and "uncivilized" while the Hans being the modern and dominant group in China that leads minorities.[55] For instance, Islam is represented as very conservative and "primitive" form of beliefs and customs in Chinese films.[56] Louisa Schein in her *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics* points out that not only early Chinese researchers and travelers tended to exoticize minorities and eroticize minority's females but even today it is common for Chinese anthropologists to look at minorities through the prism of exoticization.

Moreover, "Han continue to view their role in the periphery of their state as a *mission civilizatrice*"[57] as Harrell called it. "The civilizing center draws its ideological rationale from the belief that the process of domination is one of helping the dominated to attain or at least approach the superior cultural, religious, and moral qualities characteristic of the center itself."[58] In the older discourses "to civilize"

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[54] Erin Elizabeth Williams, "Ethnic Minorities and the State in China: Conflict, Assimilation, or a 'Third Way'?" 1-4.

[55] Dru C. Gladney, "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (February 1994), 93-95.

[56] *Ibid* 104.

[57] Chris Hann, "Smith in Beijing, Stalin in Urumchi: Ethnicity, Political Economy, and Violence in Xinjiang, 1759-2009," *Focaal-Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, Vol. 60 (2011), 114.

[58] Stevan Harrell, "Introduction," in *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 4.

meant to absorb outer "barbaric" cultures by the dominant culture of the Hans. In fact, this process of assimilation has been taking place in China for centuries with many different ethnic groups to disappear on the borders with Chinese civilization-state and being sacked by it. Those are Mongol and Manchu conquers of China who, by accepting Chinese culture and Confucian values, were absorbed by Chinese nationalism though were of different race. Moreover, according to Confucianism itself the relations within a family where younger brothers obey their elder brothers should also be applied to all other spheres of life. Thus other cultures outside should obey to their more advanced and superior brother, the Han culture.[59] Confucius admitted that "all people around the four seas are brothers"[60] thus should be treated equally without discrimination in race or customs, but he also believed that "all people would suddenly accept his ideas and then the world would reach the stage of 'great harmony.'"[61] One of the main ideas of Confucianism has been that "barbarians" can become the "members" of Chinese civilization when they accept and practice Chinese culture.[62]

During the Communist rule in China the main discourse was not forgotten in fact. Marxism claimed different stages of development among different peoples of the world so it supported the idea that minorities, who were practicing customs and religions, were still underdeveloped or "backward" thus needed modernization and development to reach the level of the Chinese culture that, supposedly, had overthrown the previous capitalist and feudalist stages on their way to socialism. The CCP and Mao also understood the need "to civilize" China's

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[59] Thierry Kellner, *China: The Uighur Situation From Independence for the Central Asian Republics to the Post 11 September Era*, 9.
[60] Ma Rong, "Ethnic Relations in Contemporary China: Cultural Traditions and Ethnic Policies since 1949," *Policy and Society*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2006), 3.
[61] *Ibid* 3.
[62] *Ibid* 2.

minorities but in quiet different sense – the modernization and the destruction of traditional ways of life were the keys. Moreover, during the communist rule the emphasis was directed towards the homogenization of society and assimilation of minorities. But the line between civilizing minorities, modernizing minorities, and assimilating minorities has become very blurry.[63]

The Age of Globalization, among others, is characterized by the trend of cultural homogenization. However, while the world talks about Westernization of the world and the spread of American culture, Arjun Appadourai argues that "for polities of smaller scale, there is always a fear of cultural absorption by polities of larger scale, especially those that are nearby."[64] In the Age of Globalization the cultural homogenization is taking place locally too on the smaller scale, Appadourai suggests, and the bigger fear for smaller cultures is to be absorbed by the nearest cultural giants. Especially this is true for minorities within the authoritarian regimes like the Chinese one that may mobilize lots of resources to reach any particular goal, especially, if this goal will secure this regime from internal threats. The feature of Chinese state is that due to its authoritarian nature, the cultural homogenization is occurring artificially because of the assimilationist policies Chinese government implements toward its minority groups from above.

The idea of homogenization was culminated into Chinese principle of *ningjuhua* which meaning is very close to assimilation. Chinese government assumes that through "maintaining high level of Han immigration, constraints to linguistic and educational options"[65] open to minorities, and "transformation of economic

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[63] Erin Elizabeth Williams, "Ethnic Minorities and the State in China: Conflict, Assimilation, or a 'Third Way'?" 11-12.
[64] Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo, eds, *The Anthropology of Globalization: A Reader*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackpowell Publishing, 2008), 51.
[65] Chris Hann, "Smith in Beijing, Stalin in Urumchi: Ethnicity, Political Economy, and Violence in Xinjiang, 1759-2009," 114.

relations" would lead to submerging of local identities of minorities and strengthen 'national unity.'[66] The reason the state wants to homogenize its subject is clear – monoculture will not allow the country to split and will prevent further conflicts based on differences of peoples. Trying to preserve territorial integrity, the CCP always stresses the idea of 'national unity' and 'harmony' within the Chinese society. Both of these ideas are emphasized in all White Papers of the CCP.

The recent program of "Great Western Development" launched in 2001 emphasizes the economic development and modernization of West as one of the main points to assimilate and integrate minorities. Development was called to be the "key solution of all problems" the Western autonomous regions are faced with.[67] The program was adopted to decrease the economic gap between more advanced Eastern region of China and less advanced, more backward Western part. One of the key proposals of this program is to better link East and West through infrastructure.[68] However, many Uyghurs criticize this program because, as they suppose, it was started to protect only growing Han population of Xinjiang that was vulnerable to Uyghur attacks in the 1990s.[69]

The attempts to build 'national unity' are underpinned by two concerns – the desire to build civic nationalism to secure China from separation, and the desire to assimilate minorities into Chinese culture in order to homogenize society and prevent inter-ethnic clashes. But before considering how current Chinese regime is trying to assimilate minorities and build 'national unity' among all the peoples of

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[66] Abanti Bhattacharya, "Conceptualizing Uyghur Separatism in Chinese Nationalism," 362.
[67] Elena Barabantseva, "Development as Exclusion: Ethnic Minorities in China's Western Development Project," *BICC Working Paper Series*, No. 7 (October 2007), 4.
[68] *Ibid* 8.
[69] 6. Calla Wiemer, "The Economy of Xinjiang" in ed. Frederick S. Starr (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2004), 164.

China, we should understand the roots of Uyghur resistance and how their identity has been constructed in opposition of Chinese state.

Chapter 3. Uyghur Identity

As Millward and many other scholars pointed out there was no evidence of existence of strong "Uyghur" identity among the peoples of today's Xinjiang until the early 20th century as well as there was no united Xinjiang region with current borders until the re-conquest of the region by People's Liberation Army in 1949.[70] The dominant identities of modern Uyghurs used to be Pan-Turkism, Islam, and local geographical identities. Pan-Turkism dominated early twentieth century and there was few of Uyghur nationalism.[71] But with losing ties, "iron curtain" and the outflow of most of Pan-Turkic ideologists like Muhammad Imin and Alptekin to Turkey in 1949, Uyghur intellectuals and nationalists switched to more narrow approach. In fact, the Uyghur identity, as Millward explains, was promoted by highly educated intellectuals of Xinjiang who used both terms "Uyghur" and "Turk" interchangeably.[72] In the early years of the PRC's rule in Xinjiang, the region faced a lot of autonomy so important progress in the rise of Uyghur awareness of their ethnicity was done but all of these efforts were revoked by Mao's campaigns and the escape of many Uyghur intellectuals and writers to the Soviet Union due to the deterioration of relations between two countries.

The Uyghur nation's birth (or re-birth, according to most of Uyghur nationalists and supporters of primordial approach) happened in 1921 during the Tashkent Conference where "Soviet officials had revived the historical term Uyghur

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[70] 2. James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, "Political and Cultural History through the Late 19th Century," 27-31, 41-42, 46-48.

[71] Linda Benson, "Education and Social Mobility among Minority Populations," in ed. Frederick S. Starr (New York, M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2004), 192.

[72] 2. James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, "Political and Cultural History through the Late 19th Century," 56-57.

when they divided Turkic-speaking Central Asians into various "national" groups to ward off the threat of a Pan-Turkist revolt."[73] "Uyghurs were identified on the basis of their language. Thus, the classification allowed the Uyghurs to rediscover themselves as an ethnic group."[74] Most of the Chinese Communists and Turkic intellectuals of Xinjiang enthusiastically accepted this new identification and started to promote it in their own purposes. However, the dominant Stalin's approach toward nation-building was far not perfect one. While Stalin wrote that to be a nation, group of people should have common territory, language, economic relations and psychological understanding of belonging to one group of people, this approach did not allow many other ethnic groups to become a nation and led to simplification of nations instead of "indigenization" of nationality.[75]

In fact, in 1921 the group of people called "Taranchi" was distinguished and separated from other Uyghurs and was considered to be another ethnicity and potential nationality. Taranchi are the Uyghurs who live in the Ili region and around Gulja city. They spoke another dialect of Uyghur language. The same was with Lopliks and Dolans who spoke very different Turkic dialects than their "relatives" from Kashgar, Qumul, or Turfan.[76] All three and many other indigenous ethnic groups like Keriyaliks, Abdals, and Eastern Uyghurs were classified as one Uyghur nation in 1949 by Chinese Communist anthropologists and historiographers.

The primary identification of Uyghurs was of family, clan, or oasis where a person lived.[77] The oases themselves were very isolated due to the geographical conditions so the clans were not interdependent much and protective of their

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[73] Gardner Bovingdon, *Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*, 28.
[74] Abanti Bhattacharya, "Conceptualizing Uyghur Separatism in Chinese Nationalism," 361.
[75] *Ibid* 364.
[76] 12. Justin Rudelson and William Jankowiak, "Acculturation and Resistance: Identities in Flux," in ed. Frederick S. Starr (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2004), 303.
[77] 12. Justin Rudelson and William Jankowiak, "Acculturation and Resistance: Identities in Flux," 303.

distinctiveness. Moreover, every oasis developed its own distinction as the reaction to external threat. While Kashgar dwellers consider Islam to be their primary source of identity, Eastern Uyghurs of Turpan and Qumul apply for Turkic nationalism and ancient Uyghur kingdoms more than for religion.[78] And for long time Chinese effectively used those distinctions and isolationism of oases to keep the rise of massive Uyghur movement.[79] In fact, all uprisings before the recent decades were very regional and did not spread to all of Xinjiang with the exceptions of the riots during invasions from outside. It is largely the last thirty years when Uyghurs started to identify themselves with one big nation and this is clearly the result of the Communist policy of nation-building in Xinjiang. And it has been greatly solidified as the response to the most recent assimilationist turn of China.[80]

Why did it happen in the last years? Because it was the last three decades when Uyghurs generally understood that they have chances to become independent after the liberalization of China and the collapse of the Soviet Union.[81] Two different field researches showed that during the 1990s the role of local identity was reducing with the increase of the role of being Uyghur and being citizen of China.[82] Moreover, the same researches showed that younger generations of Uyghurs are more nationalistic in their views than their elderly ones who still remember the terror of the Maoist times and more appreciate stability and peace.[83]

There are many versions why Chinese would abandon previous Sun Yat-sen's ideology that distinguished only 5 nationalities and would accept Soviet approach that distinguished 56 nationalities. First of all, Chinese Communists needed

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[78] *Ibid* 303.
[79] *Ibid* 304.
[80] *Ibid* 310.
[81] *Ibid* 314.
[82] Thierry Kellner, *China: The Uighur Situation From Independence for the Central Asian Republics to the Post 11 September Era*, 6.
[83] 4. Dru C. Gladney, "Chinese Program of Development and Control, 1978-2001," 104.

support from minorities in the civil war and by promising them self-determination and autonomies, they gained that support. On the other hand, minority groups also desired greater self-rule so they enthusiastically accepted the proposal of Communists to establish autonomous regions and prefectures. At the same time, Communists were seeking for opportunity to eliminate big movements like Pan-Turkism in Xinjiang and promoted the idea of nationalities thus following the principle of "divide and conquer." While previously Turkic nations of Xinjiang had theoretical opportunity to unite under religion or common ethnicity and successfully resist Chinese rule, now these national divisions negatively affected inter-ethnical relations of Turks in Xinjiang.[84][85]

Gladney wrote that "the roots of the Chinese government's current problems over separatism must be traced directly back to its own early policies of recognizing ethnic aspirations. These policies contributed to, and indeed encouraged, the ethnicization of local peoples to the extent that, today, Uyghurs insist not only that their historical claims to Xinjiang are valid but also that the Communist government itself had recognized and legalized their ethnicity."[86] In other words, Chinese themselves built and strengthened common Uyghur identity and helped to legitimize Uyghur claims to Xinjiang. On the other hand, today Chinese authorities understood their "mistake" and now working on the possibilities to diminish this Uyghur identity through the policy of assimilation and 'national unity' strengthening. The paradox here is that more Chinese promote assimilationist approach, more resistance they meet in Xinjiang. In fact, Chinese assimilationism partly helps to

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[84] Abanti Bhattacharya, "Conceptualizing Uyghur Separatism in Chinese Nationalism," 366.
[85] 12. Justin Rudelson and William Jankowiak, "Acculturation and Resistance: Identities in Flux," 300.
[86] 4. Dru C. Gladney, "Chinese Program of Development and Control, 1978-2001," 106.

strengthen Uyghur identity and legitimizes resistance in the eyes of Uyghurs and international community.

Islam was highly restricted during Mao's times and especially during his campaigns when the mosques and many other religious buildings were destroyed and religious institutions were repressed and eliminated all over China. However, Deng's reforms brought the basis for the revival of Islam among the Uyghurs that was later fueled by the reopening of borders and trade with Pakistan and the construction of the Karakorum Highway that connected the Tarim basin with Islamabad. In fact, the reopening of trade with Pakistan has played massive role in the re-strengthening of Uyghur Muslim identity because traders from Pakistan brought the forgotten Islamic knowledge, symbols and goods, and even opened first Muslim schools in Xinjiang that were then taken by Uyghurs themselves who trained in Pakistan.[87] The permission for hajj further increased re-Islamization process of Xinjiang and created the basis for many Muslim interest groups to emerge.[88]

Sean Roberts in his *A Land of Borderlands* wrote that "from Pakistan and Afghanistan, the cultural flow has been largely religious and includes exposure to various political movements now popular in the Islamic world. From the independent states of Central Asia, by contrast, the cultural influence has been more Western, secular, and nationalist in character, emerging from the legacy of the Soviet rule in those countries and the recent impact of Western development there."[89] "While these often contradictory cultural influences have spread throughout Xinjiang, the North has been more influenced by contact with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and their neighbors while the South has been more influenced by ties with Pakistan."[90] This

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[87] 8. Sean Roberts, "A "Land of Borderlands"," 226.
[88] 13. Graham E, Fuller and Jonathan N. Lipman, "Islam in Xinjiang," 330.
[89] 8. Sean Roberts, "A "Land of Borderlands"," 225.
[90] 8. Sean Roberts, "A "Land of Borderlands"," 225.

trend created division among Uyghurs with the North being more secular and more oriented towards Chinese attempts to modernization while the South has become more religious and conservative thus more resistant to the changes Chinese government tries to bring. The same division may be seen in the dominant ideas of independence among the Uyghurs of two parts of Xinjiang – in the North people would prefer to create a strong secular republic with the respect for human rights while the emphasis on the South is on the Islamic values.[91]

Sean Roberts explains another paradox of Chinese politics in Xinjiang that is "while opening of borders to commerce is critical to the economic development and, thus, to the strengthening of states, it also opens these states up to external influences that can undermine their authority."[92] However, the author asserts that Chinese believe that economic development and political control over the region will undermine external influences and the sentiments within Xinjiang.[93]

Modern transnational ties of Uyghurs with their compatriots in the USA, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and other countries also strengthen Uyghur identity through the raise of international consciousness of being Uyghur and through the emphasis of Chinese assimilationist strategy towards its minority.[94] Internet has become a powerful force in modern world and in Xinjiang it plays big role in informing Uyghurs of their support from abroad.[95] The banned in the 1990s literature and other books and alternative historiographies if Uyghurs reach illegally Xinjiang through Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.[96]

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[91] *Ibid* 230.
[92] *Ibid* 235.
[93] *Ibid* 236.
[94] Thierry Kellner, *China: The Uighur Situation From Independence for the Central Asian Republics to the Post 11 September Era*, 3.
[95] Raphael Israeli, "China's Uyghur Problem," 10.
[96] 8. Sean Roberts, "A "Land of Borderlands"," 231.

But despite the fact that Uyghurs gained much recognition among themselves in the last fifty years, they still remain highly divided due to geographic conditions that may not be easily overcome. Moreover, the evidence shows that Uyghurs compete with each other too and sometimes this competition leads to terrorist attacks like the one at the Imam of the Idgah Mosque in Kashgar n 1997.[97] At the same time, the distinction between North and South increases because Northern Uyghurs in the Ili region and around Urumqi, Hami and Qumul cities predominantly are more willing to accept acculturation.

In fact, many peoples of Xinjiang as well as many Uyghurs celebrated the start of GWDP and mentioned positive expectations of this campaign. But most of those Uyghurs, who enthusiastically accepted the launch of GWDP, live in the Northern and Eastern part of Xinjiang that is highly populated by the Hans. Moreover, the urban Uyghurs of those regions are considered to be the most successfully assimilated part of Uyghur community who benefit the most from the development projects. On the other hand, the South of Xinjiang is still largely agricultural and impoverished. The GWDP slightly touched southern rural areas where most of Uyghurs live thus the biggest discontent may be seen there.[98][99]

Chapter 4. Assimilation

The recent polls show that when comparing the dominant Han population and minorities in China, the latter tend to be less happy, less trustful of the government, feel more economically disadvantaged, and less like to identify

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[97] 4. Dru C. Gladney, "Chinese Program of Development and Control, 1978-2001," 109-110.
[98] Erin Elizabeth Williams, "Ethnic Minorities and the State in China: Conflict, Assimilation, or a 'Third Way'?" 4.
[99] Gloria Chou. "Autonomy in Xinjiang: Institutional Dilemmas and the Rise of Uighur Ethno-Nationalism," 17.

themselves as "Chinese."[100] At the same time, two largest minority groups in the Western China, Tibetans and Uyghurs, are more capable of resistance and more willing to separate from China than any other minority.[101] The growing Uyghur identity and the rise of separatist movements in Xinjiang in the mid-1980s brought the sense of insecurity to Chinese authorities who fear further escalations of inter-ethnic conflicts in their largest autonomous region and the secession of it. Those fears and the desire to keep Xinjiang under strict control of the CCP revived the assimilationist approach towards the Uyghurs.

"Assimilation is a process in which formerly distinct and separate groups come to share a common culture and merge together socially. As a society undergoes assimilation, differences among groups decrease."[102] Milton Gordon, an American sociologist, identifies seven stages of assimilation of immigrants or minority groups (we will talk about four the most relevant ones since):

1. Acculturation – the adoption of language, culture, norms and values;

2. Integration – minorities enter public institutions like schools and university, find friends and join clubs of the dominant cultures;

3. Intermarriage between different groups;

4. Identification – minorities start to identify themselves with the dominant cultures.

Since it is not common and not widely accepted for Muslims to marry non-Muslims, especially those out of the Abrahamic branch of religions, and there is no evidence that in Xinjiang there are trends for Uyghurs and the Hans to intermarry,

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[100] Wei Shan, "Comparing Ethnic Minorities and Han Chinese in China: Life Satisfaction, Economic Well Being and Political Attitudes," *East Asian Policy*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2010), 13-16

[101] *Ibid* 14

[102] Joseph F. Healey, *Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Class: The Sociology of Group Conflict and Change*, 6th ed. (New York: Sage, 2011), 43.

the third stage is probably not going to be realized in the near future.[103] Even more difficult is to imagine the fourth stage to happen when Uyghurs generally tend to identify themselves with their own nationality but not the Chinese state. Let's than concentrate on the issues of acculturation and integration of Xinjiang into Chinese culture; in this chapter the main policies of the CPP will be discussed to assimilate Uyghur minority, those are language and education policy, Han immigration policy, repression and "Strike Hard, Maximum Pressure" policy, and economic development program.

While the general level of literacy and education has risen since the 1980s, Uyghurs continue to show displeasure with assimilationist policies of the CCP. One of those policies that Uyghurs consider to be a threat for Uyghur culture and identity is language policy. Ma Rong, on the contrary, in his *The Development of Minority Education and the Practice of Bilingual Education in XUAR* writes that since the start of the reforms in the 1980s Xinjiang has developed a good educational basis with high enrollment rates and the spread of minority-schools where the language of instruction is local e.g. Uyghur or Mongol. He emphasizes the general growth of literacy among the minority groups and the development of infrastructure that positively impacts the education in the region. At the same time, he mentions the increase in the number of bilingual schools in Xinjiang that improve integration of minorities.

While Ma Rong, Han Chinese himself, remains enthusiastic about the efforts of the government to spread education within Xinjiang[104], the article

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[103] Wenfang Tang and Gaochao He, *Separate but Loyal: Ethnicity and Nationalism in China* 29-31.
[104] While immediately after the establishment of the PRC minorities were given many rights including that the language of instruction at schools should have been local and the curriculum should have been chosen by school administrations, since the start of Mao's large campaigns minority languages were discouraged to be used while minority schools started to disappear. After the start of Deng's reforms minorities schools started to emerge again, but there is still much less of them than ever before

Educating Xinjiang's Uyghurs: Achieving Success or Creating Unrest written by Timothy A. Grose shows that there is still large dissatisfaction among the Uyghurs regarding the education policy that is mostly covering urban centers of the Northeast of Xinjiang where the majority of population is Han and ignoring the development of the poorer Southern regions and rural areas where most of Uyghurs live. Among many complaints from Uyghurs, the most significant ones are too high cost of education[105], the unfairness of language policy, and the hardships for minorities to obtain jobs.

However, the main fear of Uyghurs represented in Timothy Grose's study is the absorption of Uyghur culture by Chinese culture through education. Though there are many middle schools with local language of instruction, there are few higher level education institutions that would provide education in other languages except Chinese and probably English though the right to study in one's language is protected by Constitution of the PRC. Many Uyghurs complain they have no choice but to give their children to Chinese-speaking schools where younger generations lose their culture and forget their traditions become Sinicized and losing Uyghur language.[106] Moreover, children in the public schools are not allowed to wear religious clothes that further disappoints Uyghurs and persuade them that Chinese are trying to exterminate their culture and identity.[107]

In another article of Timothy A. Grose called *The Xinjiang Class: Education, Integration, and the Uyghurs* the author describes the program started in

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(Timothy A. Grose, "Educating Xinjiang's Uyghurs: Achieving Success or Creating Unrest," *The Virginia Review of Asian Studies*, Vol. 8 (2008), 5-6).

[105] The percentage of Uyghurs studying in higher education institutions remains low even though minorities are given preferences when admitted to universities. The main reason for it is the high cost of education, especially the higher one (Timothy A. Grose, "Educating Xinjiang's Uyghurs: Achieving Success or Creating Unrest," *The Virginia Review of Asian Studies*, Vol. 8 (2008), 8-9).

[106] *Timothy A. Grose, "Educating Xinjiang's Uyghurs: Achieving Success or Creating Unrest," The Virginia Review of Asian Studies, Vol. 8 (2008),* 10-11.

[107] Timothy A. Grose*, "Educating Xinjiang's Uyghurs: Achieving Success or Creating Unrest,"* 12.

2000 by Chinese government to finance the middle-aged Uyghurs from poor families to attend Chinese-speaking schools and receive Han education as the reaction to the challenges Uyghurs meet. The Xinjiang Class concentrates its efforts on the poor students from rural areas of Xinjiang but it is aimed also to educate those Uyghurs with Chinese values and influence their views by state-driven propaganda that is common to all public schools. Grose explains that the interviews with local teachers show that teachers are expected to "cultivate nationalism among students"[108] thus serving the goal of building national unity with one homogenized identity. At the same time, this program promotes the respect for local cultures thus providing students with *halal* food and organizing festivals during Muslim holidays. On the other hand, there is little interaction between minority students and the Hans because, as the author explains, both the rules of the program are not written well and teachers themselves discourage interaction to avoid potential conflict. Moreover, many students still resist to use Chinese language out of school so the results of the program are not successful in reality as stated in the governmental mass media. Grose argues that in many ways, this program further strengthens Uyghur identity among students and increase the level of resistance.

Uyghur Human Rights Report further explains that the so called "bilingual" schools represent no equality in terms of curriculum where students have to learn Chinese propaganda and in terms of languages because most of classes are taught in Mandarin anyway. The report argues that the ultimate goal of the creation of these schools is the smooth adaption of Uyghurs of Chinese language and the elimination of Uyghur as a language of instruction by the time. It is already clear that Chinese language classes are gaining more class hours every year while in the

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[108] Grose, Timothy A., "The Xinjiang Class: Education, Integration, and the Uyghurs," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2010), 102.

Xinjiang Class program it is already generally prohibited to use Uyghur at schools. Moreover, because children have to study in their secondary language, they generally perform worse and feel less motivated to study according to recent researches.[109]

Another issue of Uyghur concern is increasing Han immigration to Xinjiang from China Proper that is highly encouraged by Chinese government. Today eight out of fifteen prefectures and cities of Xinjiang have more than half of their populations to be Han Chinese, while only three have less than ten percent of Han population, which are the Southern prefectures of Khotan, Kashgan, and Kizilsu.[110] At the same time, most of the Uyghur population is concentrated in the Southern oases that are relatively isolated from the rest of China thus have less inter-ethnic communications. Moreover, the villages and rural areas of Xinjiang are largely populated by Turkic minorities while the majority of Han population lives in the cities.[111] While in 1949 Han population only consisted about 7% of Xinjiang's population, the 2002 census revealed that more than 40% of population is now Han. Uyghur's proportion by the time reduced from 75% to 47%.[112]

There may be distinguished several waves of massive Han immigration to Xinjiang:

1. Qing sponsored migration in the 19th century – migrants were provided with tax free lands, instruments and livestock so many Chinese migrated to Xinjiang in the late 19th century despite the risk of uprisings. Most of them settled down in the Ilim region and around Urumqi[113];

[109] Uyghur Human Rights Project. *Uyghur Language Under Attack: The Myth of "Bilingual" Education in the People's Republic of China*. July 24, 2007, 1-7.

[110] Ma Rong, "The Development of Minority Education and the Practice of Bilingual Education in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region," Translated by Zhang Lin, *Front. Education in China*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2009), 192.

[111] *Ibid* 193

[112] Abanti Bhattacharya, "Conceptualizing Uyghur Separatism in Chinese Nationalism," 368.

[113] 3. James A. Millward and Nabijan Tursun, "Political History and Strategies of Control, 1884-1978," 63-70.

2. The demobilization of XPCC - In 1949 reaching Xinjiang, "General Wang Zhen demobilized thousands of soldiers and redeployed them on a network of paramilitary farms throughout the province, subsequently naming them the [Xinjiang] Production and Construction Corps"[114] or just *bingtuan*.[115]

3. Great Leap Forward Campaign in 1957-1962 – many Chinese were forced to migrate to Xinjiang involuntarily and as the part of program of massive collectivization. During this period about 2 million Hans were forced to migrate to Xinjiang and most of them had to stay there for long time.[116]

4. Cultural Revolution – the forced migration again was imposed from above and even led to massive protests in the early 1980s. The government responded by announcing a multi-million program to develop the region where those Chinese lived and started the special program for employment of jobless youth in several cities of Xinjiang. In addition, authorities implement a huge propaganda campaign to emphasize the importance of the youth in development of Xinjiang. However, only few of the immigrants possessing necessary "qualification" were allowed to return to their homes in the East.[117]

5. From 1980s to present – the migration is encouraged but not through previous forcing or financial instruments, but rather through opportunities and market competition. The feature of this migration is that it is widely seasonal that includes

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[114] Gardner Bovingdon, *Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*, 50.

[115] The analogue of *bingtuan* may be found in Ancient Chinese practice of *tuntian* during the Han dynasty period. Those used to be the forts with Han troops located in strategically important places of Inner Asia where they would supply themselves and live promoting agriculture. During the Qing times the practice was revived as the whole villages where Qing soldiers lived were established all over Xinjiang. Soldiers would come from China Proper with their families and spend most of their time in agriculture but, if needed, they would always take part in the suppression of revolts or helping the local police institutions.

[116] 12. Justin Rudelson and William Jankowiak, "Acculturation and Resistance: Identities in Flux," 306.

[117] Gardner Bovingdon, *Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*, 55-56.

huge Chinese 'floating population.' More than one million Hans has migrated to Xinjiang and still live there.[118]

Han immigration is commonly accepted to be the primary strategy of China to assimilate and integrate its minority regions since the Qing times.[119] State-supported Han immigration has been happening in Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Xinjiang.[120] Officially Chinese government justifies the immigration of the Hans to Xinjiang by their development needs. In order to boost the economy and development of Xinjiang, Chinese authorities need labor and human capital.[121] Today the large Han immigration is considered to be the part of ongoing "GWDP".

The "GWDP" is supposed to provide better employment opportunities for minority groups of China but so far it has been benefiting Han migrant workers who come from the Eastern part of China. Moreover, it is official claimed that this large inflow of Han professionals would boost the development of Xinjiang and spread knowledge among Uyghurs and other minorities but the problem today is that the vast majority of Han migrants are not qualified workers with no high education who, nevertheless, get better jobs than local Uyghurs.[122] Chinese companies that operate in Xinjiang usually bring Han workers from China Proper instead of hiring local population.[123] The example of China Petroleum Company shows that the whole townships are built especially for those Han workers brought to Xinjiang from outside while Uyghurs and other minorities are left marginalized. Such tendency

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[118] Graham E. Fuller and Frederick S. Starr, *The Xinjiang Problem*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 8.
[119] 13. Graham E, Fuller and Jonathan N. Lipman, "Islam in Xinjiang," 339.
[120] 4. Dru C. Gladney, "Chinese Program of Development and Control, 1978-2001," 112.
[121] Gardner Bovingdon, *Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*, 54.
[122] Elena Barabantseva, "Development as Exclusion: Ethnic Minorities in China's Western Development Project," .9
[123] Abanti Bhattacharya, "Conceptualizing Uyghur Separatism in Chinese Nationalism," 369.

exists because "the Han-dominated work unit and companies prefer to hire employees fluent in the Chinese language."[124]

"The notion that "minority nationalities" are inherently less intelligent, more backward, and less hardworking than Han, and that this is due in part to their practice of Islam, has great currency in China – to the point that even some prominent leaders of those same "minority nationalities" repeat it."[125] Many Uyghurs are thus discriminated on the basis of their "backwardness." Muslims are generally rejected of jobs in Han firms. "The income gap between the Hans and the Uyghurs – the existing economy strongly favors Han Chinese, who fill approximately four fifths of all jobs in manufacturing, the oil and gas industries, transport, communications, and science and technology, and fully nine-tenths of jobs in the burgeoning field of construction."[126] The only sphere where Uyghurs may find job without competition with the Hans is the sector. But here the problem is the further exoticization of minorities who are presented as inferior and "backward" to general Han public thus gaining even less opportunities for higher qualified job.[127] Barabantseva argues that by exoticizing minorities the Chinese government excludes them from the GWDP, or at least does not promote equal terms in this program though it is created particularly to help minorities.[128]

Generally, some scholars argue that Chinese just want to buy the stability by this program because due to the current process of homogenization, the next generations of Uyghurs who are be raised in "bilingual" schools, will be more

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[124] *Ibid* 370
[125] 13. Graham E, Fuller and Jonathan N. Lipman, "Islam in Xinjiang," 325.
[126] Graham E. Fuller and Frederick S. Starr, *The Xinjiang Problem*, 23.
[127] Elena Barabantseva, "Development as Exclusion: Ethnic Minorities in China's Western Development Project," 10.
[128] Elena Barabantseva, "Development as Exclusion: Ethnic Minorities in China's Western Development Project," 25.

incorporated to Chinese "one family" structure.[129] Interestingly, the infrastructure of Xinjiang is built such a way to connect Xinjiang with the rest of China and Han migrants usually settle near these new infrastructure. This process shows that Chinese government wants to better integrate Xinjiang to China Proper but also that the main benefits from infrastructure go to Han Chinese.[130] However, Chinese goals has not been reached so far because both economic development and intensified migration of the Hans raised tensions dramatically.[131]

Another important way for Chinese to assimilate minorities is to use repressions and force that, however, largely discriminates Uyghurs. Repressions have always been the way Chinese authorities tried to eliminate alternative to Chinese identities and prevent separation of the region. During the Hundred Flowers campaign many Uyghur intellectuals and CCP party members were either imprisoned or killed because of their criticism and desire for greater autonomy for Xinjiang.[132] The Cultural Revolution was another violent period when Uyghurs were highly repressed and Uyghur culture was persecuted. At this time all religious activities were prohibited and mosques as well as religious sites and literature were destroyed by pro-Maoist youth.

During the Deng's reforms and the revival of Uyghur identity, the first separatist groups and terrorists financed from abroad appeared.[133] With growing nationalism and Islamization of Xinjiang's Uyghur community, more violent conflicts and incidents began occurring. The largest happened in Baren in April 1990 when a crowd of Uyghurs attacked governmental buildings due to the tensions

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[129] Raphael Israeli, "China's Uyghur Problem," 9.
[130] Erin Elizabeth Williams, "Ethnic Minorities and the State in China: Conflict, Assimilation, or a 'Third Way'?" 4.
[131] Raphael Israeli, "China's Uyghur Problem," 9.
[132] 12. Justin Rudelson and William Jankowiak, "Acculturation and Resistance: Identities in Flux," 307.
[133] Abanti Bhattacharya, "Conceptualizing Uyghur Separatism in Chinese Nationalism," 373.

between Uyghurs and the Hans. The conflict resulted in 50 dead Uyghurs and thousands of arrested ones.[134] Another major incident happened in Gulja in 1997. Those riots were accompanied by several terrorist attacks and bombings. All these and many other rebellions led to the adoption by the government of the "Strike Hard, Maximum Pressure" campaign in 1997[135] that aimed to prevent further inter-ethnic clashes and riots by surveillance of all potential threatening citizens and organizations. Chinese police still conducts many programs on surveillance of religious professionals and institutions, but also nationalists.[136] Many Uyghurs even fear to visit mosques because they believe all mosques are checked and all Muslims are suspected by the police.[137] At the same time, "Strike Hard" campaign promotes executions of terrorists and separatists, or what the government decides who those people are. Since then Xinjiang today has had the highest number of executions, averaging 1.8 per week, most of them Uyghur.[138]

The repressions increased after the terrorist attack in the US in 2001. The immediate reaction to 9/11 events was very supportive from Chinese side. The terrorist attack united the whole world but Chinese authorities also saw opportunity in coming 'War on Terror' started by Bush administration. The 'War on Terror' became a perfect justification and legitimization for Chinese repressions in Xinjiang and their fight with separatism. Chinese official speeches and reports began to emphasize that separatists in Xinjiang had close ties with terrorist groups in Afghanistan and that Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups provided separatists with

[134] http://www.dukenex.us/the-war-in-the-west.html
[135] Erin Elizabeth Williams, "Ethnic Minorities and the State in China: Conflict, Assimilation, or a 'Third Way'?" 8-9.
[136] 13. Graham E, Fuller and Jonathan N. Lipman, "Islam in Xinjiang," 325.
[137] Ibid 331.
[138] Dru C. Gladney, "China's Minorities: The Case of Xinjiang and The Uyghur People," Commission on Human Rights, Working Group on Minorities, Ninth Session (May 2003), 1.

equipment and weapons.[139] Unfortunately for Uyghurs, "China makes little distinctions between separatists, terrorists, and civil rights activists. One person's terrorist may be another's freedom fighter."[140] While repressions has become successful in preventing many inter-ethnic conflicts and the elimination of radicalism and extremism in Xinjiang, it obviously failed to undermine Uyghur identity and solidarity.

Conclusion

Historically, Chinese civilization state emphasized the importance of "civilizing barbarians" that took form of modernization of minorities and their assimilation today. Since the conquest of Xinjiang by Qing Empire two main approaches has been dominating the policy toward Uyghur minority there. Those are assimilation and autonomy. After the launch of the reforms by Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s Uyghur minority faced rise in nationalism and separatism that strengthened Uyghur identity among the peoples of most of parts of Xinjiang. Fearing secession and inter-ethnic conflicts, the Communist Party of China returned to the assimilationist approach after small shift in the 1980s. Chinese mainly promote language policy with Mandarin domination, Han immigration, the economic development and modernization program, and different types of repressions in order to better integrate and assimilate the periphery with the Chinese cultural core. But pushing more for assimilation, China faces further resistance of Uyghur minority that may lead to escalation of conflicts and the rise of separatism.

Analyzing the potential assimilation and acculturation of Uyghurs in China, it would be great to see how well another Muslim group is assimilated. The *Hui* or Chinese Muslims emerged as the descendants of Persians who reached China

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[139] Yitzhak Shichor, "The Great Wall of Steel: Military and Strategy in Xinjiang," in ed. Frederick S. Starr (New York, E.M. Sharpe, Inc., 2004), 120-122.

[140] Dru C. Gladney, "China's Minorities: The Case of Xinjiang and The Uyghur People," 1.

in the 7th century and intermarried with local Chinese. For long time they were not accepted by Chinese state and only during the period the Tang dynasty they were allowed to live in China. However, it took Hui about 700 years to fully be acculturated into Chinese society because Islamic tradition usually overwhelmed their Chinese ethnicity.[141] The same may happen to Uyghurs.

Uyghurs in modern China are still considered to be "backward" and needed to be "civilized." This discourse is seen in every small detail. For instance, HIV/AIDS has become to be known as "Uyghur disease" in China because Uyghurs have the highest percentage of contaminated people. Such trend reflects the general poverty that has been dominating Uyghurs.[142] Still "Han Chinese tend to be concentrated in more economically developed areas whereas Turkic peoples predominate in poorer regions."[143]

Interesting thing that "China's nine other official Muslim minorities do not in general support Uyghur separatism. Few Hui support an independent Xinjiang, and one million Kazakh in Xinjiang would have very little to say in an independent "Uyghuristan."[144] Uyghurs remain isolated in their struggle for independence so most of them have switched away from this radical view to more compromise one of demand for greater autonomy and equal rights. Uyghurs today switch from violent and radical forms of resistance to more non-violent ones like everyday resistance when they do not speak Chinese and do not eat in Chinese restaurants.

Suggestions for Further Research

While the vast amount of literature has been written on Uyghur, other minority groups are certainly understudied. There are several books written about

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[141] 13. Graham E, Fuller and Jonathan N. Lipman, "Islam in Xinjiang," 312.
[142] *Ibid* 318.
[143] 6. Calla Wiemer, "The Economy of Xinjiang" 177.
[144] Dru C. Gladney, "China's Minorities: The Case of Xinjiang and The Uyghur People," 18.

Kazaks in the Ilim region of Xinjiang, but very little is mentioned in academic sphere about Kyrgyz, Mongols, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Pamiris, and other smaller minorities in Xinjiang. Moreover, another important issue for Xinjiang is assimilation of even smaller minorities into one Uyghur nation. Uyghur language has become a lingua franca among the minorities of Xinjiang that includes Tajiks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and sub-Uyghur ethnic groups who used to not be involved into Uyghur nation like Loplyk and Taranchi. Because there are mostly choices only between Putonghua and Uyghur language, all these minorities have less opportunities to attend schools with their own languages thus being absorbed by dominant cultures too.[145]

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[145] Chris Hann, "Smith in Beijing, Stalin in Urumchi: Ethnicity, Political Economy, and Violence in Xinjiang, 1759-2009," 112.

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