

CHINESE NATIONAL IDENTITY AND MINORITY POPULATIONS: THE CASE OF  
THE UIGHURS

A Thesis  
by  
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## **Abstract**

### **CHINESE NATIONAL IDENTITY AND MINORITY POPULATIONS: THE CASE OF THE UIGHURS**

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Chinese national identity can be understood in three periods: socialist China (1949-1975), post socialist China (1975-2010), and China post-Deng (2010-2019). Policies towards Uighurs in the Xinjiang region can be compared over these three periods, demonstrating the continuities and discontinuities in Chinese national identity over time. These periods frame the response of the Uighurs to Chinese policy. Mao, Zedong Deng Xiaoping, and Xi Jinping are key elite figures in shaping Chinese national identity. The various Constitutions of China and white papers are used to understand how the elite in China view Chinese national identity. Chinese policies towards Uighurs have shifted in accordance to Chinese national identity and Chinese national identity has changed since 1949 to the present.

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**DEDICATION**

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This project focuses on understanding the development of Chinese national identity since the PRC takeover in 1949 to the present. The case of the Uighurs in Xinjiang is used to understand the continuities and discontinuities in Chinese policies and elite viewpoints. Furthermore, this project separates Chinese state's development into three periods. Chapter two, focuses on the socialist period of China (1949-1975); chapter three, the post-socialist period (1975-2010); and chapter four, focuses on China post-Deng (2010-2019).<sup>1</sup> Chapter five focuses on unifying the previous three chapters to better demonstrate how Chinese national identity impacts Chinese policy towards Uighurs and implications this has for how China legitimizes its rule and how China understands itself. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the importance of Chinese national identity to the Xinjiang region and ethnic minorities in China. Likewise, this chapter will define Chinese national identity and the considerations therein. The fall of the nationalist party and the 1919 May fourth movement left China open to three major revolutions that can be traced along with the rise of the PRC in

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<sup>1</sup> See among others, John, Fitzgerald "The Nationless State: The Search for a Nation in Modern Chinese Nationalism." In *Chinese Nationalism*, 56-85. New York: Armonk, 1996. Daniel F, Vukovich. *China and Orientalism: Western Knowledge Production and the P.R.C.* London: Taylor and Francis, 2013. Lucian W, Pye. "How China's Nationalism Was Shanghaied." In *Chinese Nationalism*, 86-112. New York: Armonk, 1996. Andre Gunder, Frank. "The World Economic System in Asia before European Hegemony." *The Historian* 56, no. 2 (1994): 259-76. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6563.1994.tb01307. x. Mayfair, Yang Mei-hui. *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China.* Cornell University Press, 1994. Cary, Fraser. "An American Dilemma Race and Realpolitik in the American Response to the Bandung Conference, 1955." *Ebsco Publishing Appalachian*, 2016. R. Baogang, He. and Mark E. Warren. "Authoritarian Deliberation: The Deliberative Turn in Chinese Political Development." In *Essential readings in comparative politics. Perspectives on Politics* 9, no. 02 (2011): 269-89. doi:10.1017/s1537592711000892. Wang Hui and Hutters Theodore. *Chinas New Order: Society, Politics, and Economy in Transition.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006..

China.<sup>2</sup> Mao's philosophy of constant revolution and cult of personality was used to help consolidate China and establish sweeping reforms in China focused on central control of China, politically and economically.<sup>3</sup> Mao viewed foreign thought as dangerous for China's development.<sup>4</sup> Deng's revolution in China focused on pragmatism and embraced elements of capitalist practice.<sup>5</sup> This still maintained China centric values and outlooks; the central government of China was viewed more as an overseer, instead of directly controlling China's economy.<sup>6</sup> Lastly, Xi's revolution focuses on the advancement of China as a hegemonic power in Asia and a leader on the global stage by focusing on centralization of power; the Chinese government focused on increased unity and assimilationist policy to strengthen central control of China.<sup>7</sup> This emphasis on Xi, as opposed to collective control by the CCP, has damaged the legitimacy of control in areas of China, such as Xinjiang, where Chinese national identity doesn't have strong roots. The case of the Uighurs illustrates the tension between Uighur ethno-cultural identity and Chinese national identity. When the PRC took control of the Xinjiang region they were faced with a vastly different and diverse Uighur culture from their own.<sup>8</sup> Islamic thought was the central factor unifying Uighur identity in the Xinjiang region.<sup>9</sup> Uighurs became increasingly consolidated politically when faced with pressure from the PRC. The Uighurs have resisted Chinese rule in each period, but the method and intensity of Uighur resistance is framed by Chinese national identity.

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<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth C. Economy. "China's New Revolution." *Foreign Affairs*. March 06, 2019. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-04-17/chinas-new-revolution>. (Accessed April 08, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Bosely, Corey *The Ethnic Minority Policies of the People's Republic of China: Patronage and Prejudice*, 8 *Rutgers Race & L. Rev.* 291 (2007).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

### **Ethnic minorities in China**

China has 55 ethnic groups that are officially recognized.<sup>10</sup> These groups were selected out of over four hundred responses to a census put forward by the PRC in 1953.<sup>11</sup> The ethnic classification project carried out by the PRC has had lasting impacts on ethnic groups in China.<sup>12</sup> China is a multiethnic nation.<sup>13</sup> The Han Chinese are the majority ethnic group in China. The Han dominant nature in China takes the form of recognizing ethnic diversity but also adopting a posture that the non-Han population in China must embrace a Chinese national identity.<sup>14</sup> Sinicizing, making ethnic groups more Chinese, is the method the PRC has employed to promote a Chinese national identity. Chinese national identity isn't a static term. The process of othering in China is an ongoing process with deep historical roots.<sup>15</sup> While minorities have been characterized by the PRC as backwards, feminine, and animalistic in China they have also served as bastions of authenticity for China during the 1966-1976 Cultural Revolution.<sup>16</sup> What it means to be Chinese has changed several times throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. If China considered ethnic groups to be Chinese or if they needed to be assimilated into the Han to be considered Chinese is a point of variance over each period of Chinese national identity. China today has been the focus of international attention both regarding its policies towards minorities and its emerging global power. The impact of Chinese national identity can be highlighted in the case of Uighurs in Xinjiang. It is important to not neglect the sheer size of China and the impact this has on Chinese politics.

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas, Mullaney. *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification and Scientific Statecraft in Modern China, 1928-1954*. University of California Press, 2006. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Jennifer, Ang. "Sinicizing the Uyghurs." *Peace Review* 28, no. 4 (2016): 399-406.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 399.

<sup>15</sup> Schein Louisa and Luo Yu "Representations of Chinese Minorities" In *Handbook on Ethnic Minorities in China*, 263-290. Cheltenham, Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 264.

The diversity and number of people in China means the construction of a coherent identity is a consistent challenge. This is where the process of China engaging in assimilation policies can be seen as an effort to assert control over the various ethnicities in China.

Many of the Uighurs in Xinjiang today are pushing for self-representation. Self-representation, in ethnic groups, means having the ability to articulate an understanding of history and culture of their own ethnicity.<sup>17</sup> In this way ethnic groups are able to frame their own identity, often as a counter to outside frames that label them as backwards or subservient.<sup>18</sup> It is important when considering Chinese national identity that attention should be paid to Han Chauvinism.<sup>19</sup> This is the belief that Han are culturally superior to other ethnic groups. Historically, Han chauvinism was heavily criticized by Mao Zedong as well as Zhou Enlai in 1950s.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Xinjiang region**

Elmer identifies four reasons why China is involved in the Xinjiang Region. The territorial unity of China is a major factor driving China's interest in the Xinjiang region.<sup>21</sup> This is in line with Chinese national identity in that China was weakened considerably in the past when it lost territorial control over regions of China, such as what occurred in the Qing dynasty.<sup>22</sup> This relates to Elmer's second reason for China's interest of history and development.<sup>23</sup> There is a humiliation narrative in China. This is because China faced severe

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<sup>17</sup> Barry, Sautman. "Self-representation and Ethnic Minority Rights in China." *Asian Ethnicity* 15, no. 2 (2014): 174-96. doi:10.1080/14631369.2014.880588.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Franziska, Elmer (2011) "Tibet and Xinjiang: Their fourfold value to China," *Culture Mandala: The bulletin of the Centre for East-West Cultural and economic studies*: Vol. 9: Iss 2, Article 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

violations of its sovereignty at the hands of Western powers.<sup>24</sup> The third reason is resource security.<sup>25</sup> Xinjiang has served as a major route for raw resources that China needs for development.<sup>26</sup> The last reason is geopolitics.<sup>27</sup> Geopolitical issues relate the most directly to Chinese national identity. Increased conflicts in the Xinjiang region in recent years highlights the importance of understanding Chinese political action. China has millions in reeducation camps and a history of mass executions of Uighurs. Reeducation in China was an effort to force minorities to adopt an ideology in line with Chinese national identity. The way in which this was achieved varied as in response to the elite redefinition of Chinese national identity. Likewise, the methods employed to achieve reeducation varied. Mao emphasized reeducation through hard labor. Deng's reeducation, ostensibly, meant a reeducation of how minority and Han identity could be compatible, ideally in a classroom setting. Lastly, reeducation under Xi has meant full assimilation with pro-China sentiments; forcing Muslim groups to eat pork or sing the praises of the CCP are some of the methods employed under Xi.<sup>28</sup> China's rise to power economically and politically means that there is more attention being placed on its treatment of minorities and its practices. It is important not to underestimate the differences historically and culturally between China and the rest of the world. The conflict between the Uighurs and Han goes back to before the 1800s and isn't the result of China's government today simply being repressive. China has reacted to the increased violence in Xinjiang with increasingly repressive measures designed assimilate Uighur populations. This impacts China's broader policies towards minorities and, in

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>28</sup> Gerry, Shih. "Muslims Forced to Drink Alcohol and Eat Pork in China's 're-education' Camps, Former Inmate Claims." The Independent. May 19, 2018. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/china-re-education-muslims-ramadan-xinjiang-eat-pork-alcohol-communist-xi-jinping-a8357966.html> (Accessed April 15, 2019).

contemporary terms, affects its relations with other surrounding countries concerned that China will subsume their country under repressive policies. The Xinjiang region is a frontier for China and is important for China strategically and economically. Furthermore, the Uighur's identity is problematic for China's control of the region as Uighurs question the legitimacy of Chinese rule of Xinjiang. Therefore, China has a vested interest in projecting Chinese national identity into the Xinjiang region to help establish legitimacy. The case of the Uighurs in Xinjiang is an area where Chinese national identity is expressed clearly. By examining the case of the Uighurs since 1949 this case study can demonstrate the variance between Chinese national identity and policy towards Uighurs over three periods.

### **Defining national identity**

The term Chinese national identity needs to be defined. Chinese national identity can be understood under many different frames, not all of which have to do with the national character of China. National identity in this context is the “distinctive set of ideals, myths, symbols, and values that can serve as the inspiration for a nation-state.”<sup>29</sup> The relative weight of these factors can change over time. This is separate from ethnic, racial, and cultural identities in China. Nationalism is distinct from these other factors, in this case, because it defines the roles of leaders in China.<sup>30</sup> The rise of the PRC in 1949 changed the way in which national identity was understood. The fall of the nationalists in China left a void in how China understood Chinese national identity. As national identity shifted, the elite in the CCP had the ability to drastically alter the way in which Chinese national identity was understood via the introduction of various new constitutions in China and white papers. This analysis is

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<sup>29</sup> Pye, "How China's Nationalism Was Shanghaied." In *Chinese Nationalism*, 186.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

limited to understanding Chinese nationalism in the context of the People's Republic of China, which gained control of China in 1949 and has maintained that control until the present. Likewise, cultural elements are introduced into this analysis of Chinese national identity using insights from Matten Andre's work.<sup>31</sup> Most notably, this analysis will expand upon elements of Chinese national identity as seen in the various Constitutions of China as well as the Chinese white papers, which are legal documents in China. The Chinese Constitution provides a way of measuring Chinese national identity as expressed by the elite members of the CCP. This will be contrasted with the policies put into effect in these periods that effected Uighurs in the Xinjiang region and the Uighur responses to these policies. Policies in each period of China are considered both when Uighurs are explicitly the target of the policy or if the policy had a wider effect on minorities in China. The role of the elites in the PRC suggests the importance of several key individuals over the three periods. Socialist China was dramatically impacted by Mao Zedong. Deng Xiaoping had a large degree of influence over China's development in the post socialist period of China. Lastly, Xi Jinping adopted the centralization of power that Mao had institutionalized and Chinese national identity began to assume a more authoritarian and Han centric focus.

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<sup>31</sup> Marc Andre, Matten. *Places of Memory in Modern China: History, Politics, and Identity*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

## CHAPTER 2: SOCIALIST CHINA: COMMUNISM AND CONSTANT REVOLUTION

When discussing identity in the Socialist period of Chinese rule it is first important to understand the demonization of Mao in Western discourse and the effect this has had on understanding Chinese identity. Mao Zedong was born in 1893 in Shaoshan Hunan China. Vukovich refers to Mao as a specter that haunts how people view the PRC today.<sup>32</sup> Zhikai Dong's work focuses on how Mao helped lift China out of poverty and established the infrastructure for China's development.<sup>33</sup> Other authors focus on how China was devastated by the great leap forward in the late 1950s, which led to the death of millions of Chinese from starvation.<sup>34</sup> Vukovich highlights how this event was used to discredit Chinese citizens as being backwards, gullible, unworthy, and having blind faith in Mao.<sup>35</sup> What Vukovich highlights is that this perceived truth of Mao's terrible leadership has led to its widespread acceptance among Western scholars eager to point out the flaws of China and ignoring any potential positives. This discourse is premised on the dismissal of Mao and a Chinese understanding of Mao.<sup>36</sup> What Mao espoused was a widespread form of mass democracy for the people of China to work together in unity regardless of ethnicity.<sup>37</sup> Very little effort is given to understand where Mao failed and where he succeeded in his management of China in a systematic way.<sup>38</sup> Mao's major revolution for China was implementing a policy of

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<sup>32</sup> Vukovich, *China and Orientalism: Western Knowledge Production and the P.R.C.*, 78.

<sup>33</sup> Dong Zhikai. 2014. "Mao Zedong and the Independent and Comprehensive Industrial System and the Modernization of New China." *World Review of Political Economy* 5 (4): 472–87.

<sup>34</sup> Vukovich, *China and Orientalism: Western Knowledge Production and the P.R.C.*, 49.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.



constant revolution focused on radically changing class relations throughout China.<sup>39</sup>

Keeping China in a state of flux helped ensure that it wouldn't fall prey to outside forces that could hamper China's development.<sup>40</sup>

Han Suyin was born in 1912 and died in 2012 making her a contemporary of Mao and Deng Xiaoping. Han Suyin's maiden name was Rosalie Chou but she adopted a Chinese pseudonym Han Suyin. She was best known for her sentimental semi-autobiographical novel *A Many-Splendoured Thing*.<sup>41</sup> What makes this figure important for understanding Chinese identity during this time is that her work connected elements of Europe and China from both a Han standpoint and a Hakka Chinese standpoint.<sup>42</sup> The Hakka Chinese are an ethnic group in China that has migrated extensively in and outside of China.<sup>43</sup> Hakka Chinese have robust connections in China, the United States, and Taiwan.<sup>44</sup> This makes them uniquely positioned as an ethnic group being both an insider and outsider to Chinese identity.<sup>45</sup> Han Suyin's positive comments on Mao Zedong's rule and in particular the importance of self-reliance and avoiding a victim mentality helped shaped discourse in China regarding ethnic minorities.<sup>46</sup> One of the major critiques Han Suyin had of Western opinions of China was the view in the West that certain ethnic groups had less intelligence and capacity than Europeans.<sup>47</sup> Mao Zedong was not a flawless leader in China but the premise of needing

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Florence Kuek and Fan Pik Wah. 2014. "Rosalie or Not Rosalie: Han Suyin's Ethical Identity and Ethical Choices in the *Crippled Tree Series*." *Forum for World Literature Studies* 6 (2): 200–217.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>43</sup> Shu-ju Chi, Ann and Wei-An Chang. 2018. "Hakka American Associations and Their Online Discourses: A Case Study of the Taiwan Council Global Website." *Chinese America: History & Perspectives*, January 81–90.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>46</sup> Kuek and Wah, "Rosalie or Not Rosalie: Han Suyin's Ethical Identity and Ethical Choices in the *Crippled Tree Series*," 204.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 207.

revolution from all people, in particular the importance of the agricultural sector and ethnic minorities, in China struck a chord with the people of China.<sup>48</sup>

### **Chinese national identity from 1945-1975: the socialist period**

The PRC in 1949 considered nationality policy to be of the utmost importance.<sup>49</sup> A central goal of the CCP was to establish legitimacy through the use of constant revolution as a way of reforming China and increasing state capacity. The takeover by the PRC in China in 1949 provides a starting point for the shifts brought about in the 1954 Constitution of China.<sup>50</sup> Chinese national identity under the CCP has prioritized the role of the party as the final determinant of national identity. It is important to note that the Uighur populations in Xinjiang were not monolithic in belief and many had differing views of how citizens should relate to government.<sup>51</sup> China's conception of self was counter to the Muslim groups in Xinjiang that enjoyed brief independence in the 1940s.<sup>52</sup> However, the 1954 Constitution of China expressed relatively positive sentiments towards minority groups. Article three shows the spirit of acceptance clearly.

**Article 3** The People's Republic of China is a single multi-national state.

All the nationalities are equal. Discrimination against, or oppression of, any nationality, and acts which undermine the unity of the nationalities are prohibited.

All the nationalities have freedom to use and foster the growth of their spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own customs or ways.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>49</sup> Xiaohui.Wu "From Assimilation to Autonomy: Realizing Ethnic Minority Rights in Chinas National Autonomous Regions." Chinese Journal of International Law13, no. 1 (2014): 55-90. doi:10.1093/chinesejil/jmu006.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> "Xinjiang Territory Profile." BBC News. October 12, 2018. Accessed March 25, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16860974>.

Regional autonomy applies in areas where people of national minorities in compact communities. National autonomous areas are inalienable parts of the People's Republic of China.<sup>53</sup>

What this shows is that the Chinese Constitution had broad reaching rights. However, this understanding should be tempered with the knowledge that China also considered the coming together of ethnic groups as a natural result of Stalin-Leninist principles.<sup>54</sup> China during this time was widely tolerant of minority groups in China.<sup>55</sup> In 2011 the Han nationality in China comprised around 91.51 percent of the Chinese population with ethnic minorities making up around 8.49 percent.<sup>56</sup>

Dreyer's work regarding the CCP suggests that the reason for the easier integration of minorities into the constitution of the CCP was due to need of the support of the working class in China.<sup>57</sup> This is a factor highlighted in the Constitution of China (1954) in articles one and two.

**Article 1** The People's Republic of China is a people's democratic state led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants.

**Article 2** All power in the People's Republic of China belongs to the people. The Organs through which the people exercise power are the National People's Congress and the local people's congresses.<sup>58</sup>

The National People's Congress, the local people's congresses and other organs of state practice democratic centralism.

It is important to note that the tone of optimism and that the people could work together to right the wrongs in the world was pervasive in China at this time. The specter of Han domination was still keen in the mind of minority groups and offsetting this fear was a

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<sup>53</sup> The Constitution of the People's Republic of China (1954), Henceforth referred to as the 1954 Constitution.

<sup>54</sup> Wu, "*From Assimilation to Autonomy: Realizing Ethnic Minority Rights in Chinas National Autonomous Regions*," 65.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>58</sup> 1954 Constitution

major goal of the CCP.<sup>59</sup> Socialist China valued Leninist nationality policy which supported the right of minorities to secede.<sup>60</sup> However, this focus shifted with the rise of Mao Zedong in the CCP in 1935, who focused more on a united front where minorities had a right to self-govern within a unified state.

Protections for minority groups were forefront in Chinese law during the socialist period of CCP rule. While the strength of the commitment is commendable, this doesn't necessarily mean that the situation on the ground reflected these values. The protections of minorities in China were still extensive. The Common Programme promulgated in 1949 disavowed discrimination against ethnicities and splitting unity among them. This was particularly evident in articles 51, 52, and 53.

**Article 50** All nationalities within the boundaries of the People's Republic of China are equal. They shall establish unity and mutual aid among themselves, and shall oppose imperialism and their own public enemies, so that the People's Republic of China will become a big fraternal and co-operative family composed of all its nationalities.<sup>61</sup>

Greater Nationalism and chauvinism shall be opposed. Acts involving discrimination, oppression and splitting of the unity of the various nationalities shall be prohibited.<sup>62</sup>

**Article 51** Regional autonomy shall be exercised in areas where national minorities are concentrated, and various kinds of autonomy organizations of the different nationalities shall be set up according to the size of the respective populations and regions. In places where different nationalities live together and in the autonomous areas of the national minorities, the different nationalities shall each have an appropriate number of representatives in the local organs of political power.<sup>63</sup>

**Article 53.** All national minorities shall have freedom to develop their dialects and languages, to preserve or reform their traditions, customs and religious beliefs. The People's Government shall assist the masses of the people of all national minorities to develop their political, economic, cultural and educational construction work.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Wu, "From Assimilation to Autonomy: Realizing Ethnic Minority Rights in China's National Autonomous Regions," 63.

<sup>61</sup> The Common Programme 1949.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

This provided legal protections for ethnic minorities regarding ethnicity and language. One of the major architects of including this change into the Common Programme of China was Li Weihan.<sup>65</sup> This type of autonomy was best characterized as limited administrative autonomy.<sup>66</sup> The General Programme for the Implementation of Regional Autonomy stipulated that the autonomous regions in China needed to be approved by the central government of China.<sup>67</sup> This did allow for local security forces in these regions and that minority groups should be the primary members of the government in these regions as well.<sup>68</sup> This provided rather comprehensive protections for minorities in that it lays out very particular ways in which the protections should be translated into practice. From 1955 to 1965, in addition to Inner Mongolia, there were other autonomous regions set up.<sup>69</sup> Some of the more notable today are the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous region and the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.<sup>70</sup> By the end of 1965, there were a total of 29 autonomous prefectures and 64 autonomous counties or leagues and 35 different ethnicities had their own autonomous region.<sup>71</sup> What this suggests is that China during its socialist period translated its legal protections for minorities into reality. While there were doubtless cases of Han Chauvinism in China during this time, the commitment of China to helping ameliorate these issues was more than just rhetoric. However, it could be questioned as to what extent the autonomous regions of China during this time reflected the values it espoused. To better understand this, the example of the autonomous region of Xinjiang and the Uighur populations therein can be examined.

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<sup>65</sup> Hongyi, Lai. "Ethnic Autonomous Regions and the Unitary Multi-ethnic Nation-state." In *Handbook on Ethnic Minorities in China*, 138-64. Cheltenham, Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

## Uighur response to policies in socialist China

While the period from 1949 to 1975 is considered legally as one in which minorities were relatively tolerated in China there could be a question to how this translated into reality.<sup>72</sup> There was a relative sensitivity to issues as China reaffirmed its commitment to minority issues. The People's Republic of China took control of the Xinjiang region in 1949. While the communist party and Mao Zedong decried the Han centric view of Xinjiang, the narratives of the local Uighurs and their historic control over the Xinjiang Region were subsumed within a Chinese narrative that highlights China's right to control the region.<sup>73</sup> It is important to note that the Xinjiang region lies on the Northwestern border of China and makes up relatively 1,600,000 square kilometers of China.<sup>74</sup> In addition, Xinjiang has borders with Mongolia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.<sup>75</sup> In 1955, Xinjiang was declared to be an autonomous region showing China's commitment to respecting minority rights.<sup>76</sup> Russia's conquest of the bordering states of Kokand and Bukhara made China more concerned about losing influence in the Xinjiang region.<sup>77</sup> The Soviet Union supported a Uighur led separatist movement in 1944-1949 leading to the establishment of the East Turkestan Republic.<sup>78</sup> This historical independence of the region from China and its proximity to Mongolia helped push China's efforts to establish a strategy for control of the region. The Uighurs response to China's policies of constant revolution was

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<sup>72</sup> Vukovich, *China and Orientalism: Western Knowledge Production and the P.R.C*, 24.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>73</sup> Ang, "*Sinicizing the Uyghurs*," 400.

<sup>74</sup> Michael Dillon "Xinjiang and the Uyghurs" In *Handbook on Ethnic Minorities in China*, 60-82 Cheltenham, Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> "Xinjiang Territory Profile." BBC News.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

increasing violence as rules were increasingly applied arbitrarily towards minorities during the Cultural Revolution in 1966-1976.<sup>79</sup>



Source: "Xinjiang Territory Profile." BBC News.

The peaceful liberation of the region in 1949 by the PRC was contested by its mostly Muslim Uighur population as a hostile takeover by a communist power.<sup>80</sup> China's control of the region historically has been marred by conflict with the local Uighur populations. The Uighur narrative of events differs in key areas from the PRC's account in that China's control of the Xinjiang region was only tentative and the legitimacy of which has been called into question. It is important to understand that while Chinese policy may have had several key protections for the Uighurs in Xinjiang it never questioned China's right to sovereignty over the Xinjiang region. A key point of contention is that Chinese scholarly narratives suggest that the Uighurs have only 3800-3900 years of history in the region. This can be contrasted with the view from Uighur scholars that suggest instead that they have a 6400-

<sup>79</sup> Dillon, "Xinjiang and the Uyghurs," 62.

<sup>80</sup> Vukovich, *China and Orientalism: Western Knowledge Production and the P.R.C.*, 25.

year history.<sup>81</sup> A key point to China legitimizing its takeover in 1949 was that the Han were indigenous to the region and Uighurs arrived later from Mongolia. Uighur historian Turgun Almas has traced the history of the Uighurs back to the Xinjiang region arguing it was always the Uighur homeland. Other Uighur historians go even further connecting Uighurs with Turkish roots such as what was suggested by Muhemmed Imin Bughra and that the Uighurs have a 9000-year history in the region.<sup>82</sup> These different accounts are of key importance when considering Chinese national identity during the socialist period as espoused by Mao Zedong. There was a respect for diversity, but this was predicated on the idea of a united front, which the Uighurs ethno-religious claims to political power in the region threatened.<sup>83</sup> Books in 1949 that spread this view of history were banned in China and the Chinese language Mandarin was used to replace local Uighur dialects as the language in regional administrations.<sup>84</sup> In an interesting twist of understanding, by tying the historical control of the region to Han Chinese that were displaced from the region by the Uighurs China managed to uphold most of its constitutional wording on respecting minority rights by reestablishing control of the region. In many ways, Han-Centrism and bringing prosperity to the region during the socialist period were in line with each other.<sup>85</sup>

The violent resistance of the Xinjiang region to the PRC takeover in 1949 was not surprising as many Uighurs felt their own right to self-govern had been coopted by Chinese rule. Part of this was due to perceived religious persecution. The number of Mosques in 1949 is estimated to be around 29,545 and this number fell to around 14,119 at the start of the Cultural Revolution, which was roughly from 1966-76. To further characterize Chinese rule

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 402.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.



of the Xinjiang region over time it is important to understand how this led to the mass exodus of the people of Xinjiang to the Soviet Union. To better visualize what this meant for the population of Xinjiang and the conflict between the Han and Uighur groups in Xinjiang it is useful to look at the percent of different ethnic groups in the Xinjiang region.

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

Source: Howell, Fan, Migration and Inequality in Xinjiang,

What this shows is that the number of Uighurs in the Xinjiang region dropped drastically after the PRC took power in 1949. This was due in part to policies that encouraged Han migration to the Xinjiang region as well as policies that encouraged Uighurs to leave the Xinjiang region. This leads to the apparent contradiction in Chinese policy towards the Uighurs where at the same time ethnic diversity is encouraged and supported constitutionally the Uighur ethnic identity was being neutered by migration and Chinese control. Uighur's have had mixed reactions to China's efforts during the socialist period. This was a time of reform in China, where minorities received more rights, but also a time in

which Mao Zedong established the reeducation through hard labor programs in China.<sup>86</sup> The intention in Xinjiang was political indoctrination, as opposed to extermination, but many Uighurs violently resisted China's efforts to assimilate Uighurs.<sup>87</sup> Likewise, many of the mass mobilization programs, such as the Great Leap Forward, ended up effecting the lives of minorities in Xinjiang.<sup>88</sup> However, the popularity of Mao helped offset these policies and allow for time for China to correct.<sup>89</sup> These policies did increase Uighur resistance to Chinese rule, although this resistance was mostly nonviolent.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Adrian, Zenz. "Reeducation Returns to China." *Foreign Affairs*. January 02, 2019. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-06-20/reeducation-returns-china>. (Accessed April 08, 2019).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Eric X, Li. "The Life of the Party." *Foreign Affairs*. May 19, 2014. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2012-12-03/life-party>. (Accessed April 08, 2019).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

### CHAPTER 3: POST SOCIALIST CHINA: CHARTING A NEW COURSE

Deng Xiaoping was born in 1904 in Paifang, Guang'an County, Sichuan.<sup>91</sup> Deng Xiaoping travelled to France in 1920 for work.<sup>92</sup> Likewise, Deng joined a youth Chinese communist party in 1923 where Zhou Enlai was the party secretary.<sup>93</sup> The rise of Deng Xiaoping is a key factor to understanding politics in post socialist China. Vukovich argues that the rise of Deng in the late 1970s led to the “de-maoification” of China.<sup>94</sup> This was due in part to outside pressure to make China appear more willing to deal with its Western counterparts. The conception of China by Western sources at the time of Deng's rise to power was that China was becoming like the West and adopting models of civil society.<sup>95</sup> The concept of modernity was used to suggest that China was following along the path of the United States. What Deng learned abroad was that European industrialists were humiliating China.<sup>96</sup> Deng later protested that British forces had fired on Chinese student demonstrators which later made him a target for arrest for organizing workers in China.<sup>97</sup> In 1969, Deng was sent to be reeducated with hard labor to better understand Mao Zedong's thought.<sup>98</sup> Deng's rise to power later in the 1970s was due in part to his connections to Zhou Enlai who held a powerful position in the CCP.<sup>99</sup> Deng focused heavily on consolidating power in

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<sup>91</sup> Ezra F, Vogel. *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Vukovich, *China and Orientalism: Western Knowledge Production and the P.R.C*, 24.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>96</sup> Vogel, *Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, 20.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

China both militarily and for its citizens.<sup>100</sup> A major factor here was the removal of overlapping jurisdictions that stood in the way of railway development.<sup>101</sup> Deng was uniquely positioned in that he had faced persecution from Western sources and from Mao as well. Deng's powerful connections in the CCP and his willingness to embrace diaspora populations of China showed a level of intergenerational thinking necessary to bolster China's long term development.<sup>102</sup>

Mao stated during the Cultural Revolution that it was supposed to bring about "great chaos leading to great rule," but instead it served to invalidate many of the laws surrounding minority rights.<sup>103</sup> This was attributed to the "Gang of Four," a group of four ultra-leftists in the CCP that were primarily blamed for the Cultural Revolution.<sup>104</sup> The subsequent trials and execution of the Gang of Four helped pave the way for the rise of Deng in China.<sup>105</sup> This left the CCP in crisis and many of the ideological underpinnings of the CCP were losing favor with the elite.<sup>106</sup> The leftist thinking in China was replaced by an understanding of the limitations of Mao's rule. What this meant for China was a drastic reimagining of the role the CCP. First and foremost was an emphasis on equality before the law.<sup>107</sup> Likewise, foreigners were no longer the enemy.<sup>108</sup> Deng said that Mao was 70 percent right and 30 percent wrong.<sup>109</sup> The absence of Mao has allowed increased regional assertiveness as the CCP no

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>103</sup> Terrill, Ross. "China Enters the 1980s." *Foreign Affairs*. February 10, 2009. Accessed April 08, 2019. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/1980-03-01/china-enters-1980s>.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

longer will blame a region for getting ahead of the rest of the country.<sup>110</sup> The death of Mao left a void in Chinese leadership.<sup>111</sup> After Mao's death, many high-level Chinese officials went on foreign tours to study methods of governance.<sup>112</sup> Deng believed that the need for unity and strength in China called for a strong hand and a willingness to do what needed to be done. The Tiananmen Square incident in 1989 highlights this point.<sup>113</sup> Deng had set up a new leadership structure for China prior to the worst of the violence breaking out in Tiananmen as well as picking officials who would be the least associated with the violence to be put into positions of authority.<sup>114</sup> Deng believed that the West would forget the violence in the region and that economic programs based on freedom would still be expanded.<sup>115</sup> What this shows for Chinese identity is that Deng was willing to engage in extreme measures to enact change in China. As Deng distanced China more and more from Marxist-Leninist thought China began to develop a governance style of its own. Ethnic minorities and diaspora groups were useful for China in so far as they helped inform Chinese governance and reinterpreted the unity of the party and country. Deng's modernizations in China were tempered with the centrality of the CCP in mind.

The political process in China had begun to take on a post-ideological flavor.<sup>116</sup> 1979 was the first year, since the liberation in 1949, in which there was no class-related political campaign ongoing in China. Mao's constant revolution was replaced in China by more stable

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Vogel, Xiaoping and the Transformation of China, 208.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 616.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 623.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 616.

<sup>116</sup> Ross, "China Enters the 1980s."

rules.<sup>117</sup> Terrill Ross provides a succinct summary of the major changes in post socialist china.

“First, people high and low see economic growth as China's highest priority. In the factories the slogans are about output, product quality and competitions between teams of workers: the conversations in the canteens are about pay packets and what to spend them on. Some private enterprise is returning to the cities, to provide much desired special products and services, and to alleviate an increasingly serious unemployment problem. The spirit of industry has been galvanized by the assertion from on high that profit and market response are the only valid measures of industrial performance.”

If Mao was an example of constant revolution and attention focused on disenfranchised groups, then Deng was an excellent example of pragmatism with a focus on economic transformation, which was the strategy that informed Deng's rise. As Mao kept losing sway with the Chinese political elite Chinese national identity began shifting to ideas espoused by Deng Xiaoping. China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001 helping further demonstrate its increased connection to the global community. Deng reformed China and helped open it up to the rest of the world.

### **Chinese national identity from 1975-2010: the post socialist period**

Chinese national identity shifts in the post socialist period. National identity is often understood in political terms. Ernest Gellner argues that social ties connected to the division of labor is what leads to the bureaucratic state.<sup>118</sup> Hobsbawm suggests that nature of states are fragile and in flux.<sup>119</sup> As national identity reaches into myths and symbols of society it is also impacted by economics.<sup>120</sup> In the case of China, this becomes clear when considering Deng Xiaoping's famous quote suggesting that it doesn't matter what the color of the cat is

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> George Crane, "Special thing in Special Ways: National Identity and China's Special Economic Zones." In *Chinese Nationalism*, 148-168. New York: Armonk, 1996.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

as long as it catches mice. Economic identity didn't entail becoming like the West but instead becoming a powerful communist country that employed some capitalist practices.<sup>121</sup>

The 1975 Constitution of China helps demonstrate how Chinese national identity shifted during this period.

#### **Article 4**

The People's Republic of China is a unitary Multi-national state. The areas where regional national autonomy is exercised are all inalienable parts of the People's Republic of China. All the Nationalities are equal. Big-nationality chauvinism and local - nationality chauvinism must be opposed. All the Nationalities have the freedom to use their own spoken and written languages.<sup>122</sup>

This constitution was further amended in 1978 with the advent of the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CCP.<sup>123</sup> While this may have seemed very similar to the prior constitution, this version removed several minority rights. For example, regional autonomy was severely curtailed.<sup>124</sup> Likewise, the use of minority languages was no longer fostered and grown inside of the autonomous regions. This trend shifted as Chinese national identity became more pragmatic.<sup>125</sup> In 1979 autonomous regions with a sizable minority population were required to set up Ethnic Affairs Commissions.<sup>126</sup> However, it is important to note that this change had multiple effects on minority populations in China. As the changes in China were more pragmatic in nature, they did have positive effects for minorities. There was an increased effort to educate minority groups as well as engage minorities in governance. China had started to create an additional economic element to Chinese national identity.<sup>127</sup> George T. Crane highlights this point helping trace how the

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>122</sup> The Constitution of the People's Republic of China (1975), Henceforth referred to as the 1975 Constitution.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Lai, "Ethnic Autonomous Regions and the Unitary Multi-ethnic Nation-state." 149.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Crane, "Special thing in Special Ways: National Identity and China's Special Economic Zones," 149.

demise of Mao and the rise of Deng in China helped change the way in which China viewed itself.<sup>128</sup> Mao's utopian rhetoric was replaced with a colder view of the realities in China, even more so in the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward in China.<sup>129</sup> Special economic zones were developed to open society. China implemented special economic zones, but this required a shift in identity for socialist China.<sup>130</sup> The Marxist-Leninist practices of China and redefining of China by Deng Xiaoping helped shape Chinese national identity.<sup>131</sup> The policies put forward from China during this time were not a complete departure from how Chinese national identity was understood in the past. The factors that influence national identity are multifaceted and rooted in history and Mao's understanding of socialist China was not entirely abandoned.<sup>132</sup> What this means is that Chinese identity is informed by the historic elements of China as well as the economic realities during the 1970s.

This highlights the Chinese mentality of this time as it incorporates Western advances with a Chinese heart.<sup>133</sup> Sometimes referred to as the policy of walking on two legs, one Western and one Chinese, this shift in identity can be seen in the Chinese constitution. Articles three through five of the 1982 Constitution highlight this point.

### **Article 3**

The State organs of the People's Republic of China apply the principle of democratic centralism.

The National People's Congress and the local people's congresses at various levels are constituted through democratic elections. They are responsible to the people and subject to their supervision.

All administrative, judicial and procedural organs of the State are created by the people's congresses to which they are responsible and by which they are supervised.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 153.



The division of functions and powers between the central and local State organs is guided by the principle of giving full scope to the initiative and enthusiasm of the local authorities under the unified leadership of the central authorities.

#### **Article 4**

All nationalities in the people's republic of china are equal. the state protects the lawful rights and interests of the minority nationalities and upholds and develops a relationship of equality, unity and mutual assistance among all of china's nationalities. discrimination against and oppression of any nationality are prohibited; any act which undermines the unity of the nationalities or instigates division is prohibited.

The state assists areas inhabited by minority nationalities in accelerating their economic and cultural development according to the characteristics and needs of the various minority nationalities.

Regional autonomy is practiced in areas where people of minority nationalities live in concentrated communities; in these areas organs of self-government are established to exercise the power of autonomy. all national autonomous areas are integral parts of the people's republic of china.

All nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own folkways and customs.

#### **Article 5**

the people's republic of china governs the country according to law and makes it a socialist country under rule of law.

The state upholds the uniformity and dignity of the socialist legal system.

No laws or administrative or local regulations may contravene the constitution.

all state organs, the armed forces, all political parties and public organizations and all enterprises and institutions must abide by the constitution and other laws. all acts in violation of the Constitution or other laws must be investigated.

As can be seen, many of the protections for minorities were reinstated in 1982. In many ways, this even expanded previous protections as well.<sup>134</sup> However, it did take some time for many of these ideas to be formalized in China. Many autonomous regions in China didn't have their own regulations on ethnic groups until 1991.<sup>135</sup> Ethnic groups had certain

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<sup>134</sup> Lai, "Ethnic Autonomous Regions and the Unitary Multi-ethnic Nation-state," 149.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 150.

taxes waived and the number of ethnic minorities in the national legislature changed from 9.4 percent to 14.9 percent in 1988. This could be considered one of the most tolerant times for ethnic minorities in China. Hu Yaobang the General Secretary of the CCP in 1980-1994 espoused the view was that it was only with genuine autonomy that the unity of China could be achieved.<sup>136</sup> The 1984 Law on National Regional Autonomy granted further rights to minority groups.<sup>137</sup>

However, it is important to understand that the goal of unity was the primary aim. The failures of Mao impacted how China viewed itself.<sup>138</sup> Chinese policies during these times were not a concession to Capitalism but a reinvention of China on its own terms to help combat the failures and fear of domination by outside powers.<sup>139</sup> Much of this even built off the previous socialist period as the constant revolution espoused by Mao was reinvented in an evolving picture of how China viewed itself.<sup>140</sup> What this suggests is that understanding China as it did itself during this period provides other insights to understanding Chinese political action. The symbols and myths in China evolved over time. Making China into something unique to China was a dominating theme of the post socialist period.<sup>141</sup>

### **Uighur response to policies in post socialist China**

Economic policies regarding Uighurs reflected Chinese national identity. Ethnic minorities were not limited by the same one child policy in China and likewise received favorable treatment from the government over Han groups to preserve ethnic unity.<sup>142</sup> The Anti-Poverty plans of 1994-1996 had multiple effects on the autonomous regions of China.

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid. 151.

<sup>137</sup> Wu, "From Assimilation to Autonomy: Realizing Ethnic Minority Rights in Chinas National Autonomous Regions," 71.

<sup>138</sup> Crane, "Special thing in Special Ways: National Identity and China's Special Economic Zones," 156.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>142</sup> Lai, "Ethnic Autonomous Regions and the Unitary Multi-ethnic Nation-state," 149.

They helped develop the regions more rapidly leading to growth but also increased tensions in the region due to the influx of massive amounts of Han into autonomous regions.<sup>143</sup> This also saw the removal of many of the rights granted to these regions.<sup>144</sup> The Western Developmental Programme launched in 2000 was aimed at assisting the development of minority regions.<sup>145</sup> Uighur resistance to these programs was based on the fact they elevated Han Chinese over Uighurs.<sup>146</sup> The Uighurs lacked much of the development that the Eastern regions of China had. Therefore, the rapid industrialization of Xinjiang was accompanied by an influx of Han Chinese that served as overseers for the development in the region.<sup>147</sup> This led to an intensification of Uighur violence towards Han Chinese.

The Strike Hard campaign started in 1996 and was a response to ethnic violence in Xinjiang.<sup>148</sup> This led to the mass arrest and execution of Uighurs and some sources believe that there were secret trials and executions of Uighurs deemed dangerous.<sup>149</sup> The streets of Yining became extremely violent in 1997 with the Chinese government attempting to disperse riots in the area.<sup>150</sup> China officially places the deaths at 200 by the police and military and claim it was an effort to prevent violence against Han Chinese in the area. However, some eyewitness reports place the number of casualties much higher in the 1000s.<sup>151</sup> This led to retaliation bombings in Urumqi several days later by separatist groups in Xinjiang.<sup>152</sup> These increased tensions soured the relations of Han and Uighurs even further. Likewise, Uighur education started to become increasingly defined by the promotion

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>148</sup> Dillon, "Xinjiang and the Uyghurs," 71.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

of a pro-China narrative.<sup>153</sup> The State Administration for Religious Affairs, established in 1998, explicitly forced all Muslim organizations to register with the government.<sup>154</sup>

The Xinjiang Class was a Uighur reeducation program designed to increase the education level of Uighurs in Xinjiang established in the 2000s. This program demonstrates the failures in China to put the revised Constitution of China in 1982 into practice. This program provided economic aid for Uighurs seeking higher education. Notably, education levels of Uighurs have gone up since 1982 with an increase in attendance of Uighurs in primary school from 37 to 43 percent from 1982-1990.<sup>155</sup> Illiteracy dropped from 45 to 26.6 percent during the same time.<sup>156</sup> China implemented several other policies including lowering the entrance exam requirements for Uighurs as well as introducing quotas for the number of Uighurs in higher education in Xinjiang.<sup>157</sup> The curriculum of the class was designed to foster pro-China sentiments among students as Article one and ten of the Xinjiang class states.

### **Article One**

in order for Xinjiang to train qualified high school graduates who support the Chinese Communist Party's leaders, love China, love socialism, defend the unity of China, maintain unity of the people ... and will bring forth new a spirit, realize ability, and are determined to offer one's self for socialist modernization construction, the Xinjiang Class must fully carry out the national education and ethnic group policies [and] carry out quality education.

### **Article Ten**

Xinjiang Class schools will adhere to socialist principles; emphasize moral education work, Marxism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiao Ping Theory and the Party's theory on ethnic problems as a guide ... [and]special attention [will be] placed on strengthening support for the Chinese Communist Party, love for the socialist motherland,

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Timothy, Grose. "The Xinjiang Class: Education, Integration, and the Uyghurs." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 30, No. 1 2010.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 101.

upholding the unity of China's Nationalist education, to strengthen education of the unity of peoples—i.e. Han are inseparable from ethnic minorities, ethnic minorities are inseparable from Han, and every ethnic minority is inseparable from each other.<sup>158</sup>

What each of these articles articulates is that this program is an excellent example of how Chinese national identity was translated into policies for minorities during this time. It demonstrates a combination of the practicality of educating minorities but also a mindfulness of the centrality of China and the lack of respect for minority groups as China often outright banned the use of minority languages.<sup>159</sup> This reflects the policies of segregation that China has put into place. The reality of the interaction between Uighur and Han students was limited, as often ethnic lines created a social boundary among the students.<sup>160</sup> What this demonstrates is that there was shift in Chinese identity during this time that led to the lessening of Maoist policies in China. The disillusionment of China with the charismatic rule of Mao combined with the rise of capitalist practices lessened Chinese legitimacy in the Xinjiang region. To counteract this, China implemented policies such as the Xinjiang class to help indoctrinate Uighurs in pro China sentiments. This was widely unsuccessful as the case of the Xinjiang class demonstrates. This is because China's increased scrutiny over the region helped solidify Uighur dissent to Chinese rule against a common enemy. The influx of Han into Xinjiang also helped increase Uighur dissent to Chinese rule.<sup>161</sup> Uighur's blamed the Han for increased unemployment.<sup>162</sup> Deng's modernizations in China helped usher in

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>161</sup> Anthony Howell, and Cindy Fan. "Migration and Inequality in Xinjiang: A Survey of Han and Uyghur Migrants in Urumqi" *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 2011, 52, No. 1 (2011) <http://www.bing.com/cr?IG=128BFA35C55445E9BCCD2892494FBF44&CID=3A40055562AE6AFC0AD20E0463016BE5&rd=1&h=w8u5F48e1Dk9gwFbOP3N32u4BXtQqrTfDBCS4CDMN8&v=1&r=http%3a%2f%2fwww.geog.ucla.edu%2fsites%2fdefault%2ffiles%2fusrs%2ffan%2f403.pdf&p=DevEx,5062.1>. (Accessed June 6, 2017).

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 137.

new developmental programs but many of these were run by Han Chinese.<sup>163</sup> This led to periodic attacks of Hans by Uighurs in the Xinjiang region and helped justify some of the Chinese government's later more repressive policies.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

#### CHAPTER 4: CHINA POST-DENG: XI'S GLOBILIZED CHINA

Xi Jinping took power in 2013 in China replacing Hu Jintao who was the defacto leader in China from 2003-2013. It was during this time from the early 2000s to Xi taking power that much of the narrative surrounding minorities changed in China. There was a shift towards coercive assimilation. It was during this transition when much of the discussion surrounding China from Western sources changed.<sup>165</sup> The new narrative was of assertiveness in China and increased repression and human rights violations.<sup>166</sup> Alastair Johnston finds two major issues with this narrative. Firstly, it ignores the past policies China has had regarding sovereignty and territory, and secondly it misreads many of the issues in China today.<sup>167</sup> A major issue is that there is no accepted typology for assertiveness from which China can be compared going into Xi's rule as opposed to before.<sup>168</sup> Johnston's work goes on to suggest that it was the expansion of the U.S activities into China that forced them to define hard lines.<sup>169</sup> Furthermore, North Korea's increased activity during 2010 and onward only served to highlight China's default stance on the issue.<sup>170</sup> The increased interaction with North Korea, by the global community, has given China more chances to interact with North Korea. This can be seen in the recent nuclear power programs created in North Korea inciting international concern.

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<sup>165</sup> Alastair Iain, Johnston. "How New and Assertive Is Chinas New Assertiveness?" *International Security* 37, no. 4 (2013): 7-48. doi:10.1162/isec\_a\_00115.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

Xi launched what he referred to as the “third revolution” in China.<sup>171</sup> While Mao has brought about a communist revolution and Deng an economic revolution, Xi is attempting to usher in an era of regional hegemony for China.<sup>172</sup> China is an illiberal state seeking leadership in a liberal world system.<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, Xi’s centralization of power has undermined the collective leadership style in Deng’s era and instead promoted the centrality of Xi to decision making in China.<sup>174</sup> Elizabeth C. Economy highlights this point succinctly.

“Xi has matched the dramatic growth of his personal power with an equally dramatic intensification of the CCP’s power in society and the economy. The China scholar David Shambaugh once noted, “If one of the hallmarks of the Maoist state was the penetration of society, then the Dengist state was noticeable for its withdrawal.” Now, under Xi, the pendulum has swung back toward a greater role for the party. No element of political and economic life has remained untouched.”

What this demonstrates is that Xi is accelerating efforts during the later parts of Hu Jintao’s rule in that China is now actively seeking to impact global norms and values; systematically inserting itself on the global stage.<sup>175</sup>

### **Chinese national identity from 2010-2019: China post-Deng**

Chinese national identity shifted under Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping. Hu Jintao oversaw a period where party oversight was loosened, and China was increasingly placed on the global stage as a more dynamic China. Most notably, China has been strengthening its central government and the removal of term limits for the president suggests a connection between Mao’s self-aggrandizement and Xi today.

China has attempted to increase its regional power in Asia. This has been done through an increased emphasis on the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank as an

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<sup>171</sup> Economy, "China's New Revolution."

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.



alternative to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.<sup>176</sup> Furthermore, China's New Belt and New Road initiative is also being used to promote China as a leader in trade.<sup>177</sup> The Xinjiang region is vital for the development of this initiative as well as helping increase the economic development of Western regions of China. The Uighur situation in Xinjiang reflects the changing nature of Chinese national identity from post socialist to a post-Deng era. While the Chinese constitution didn't shift there was the distribution of a secret document to top Chinese officials. Known as "document NO. 7," it was promulgated in China in 1996 but was put into effect mostly during the later parts of Hu Jintao's rule and later by Xi Jinping. The effects of this document supersede the Constitution of China and it provides a window to understand how elite viewpoint of Chinese national identity shifted post-Deng. This document offered an ominous view of the Xinjiang region, as excerpts from the first section show.

1. Ideological unity, consciousness-raising, leadership strengthening, and a clear sense of duty are necessary... we have to bear in mind that national separatism and illegal religious activity are the main threats to the stability of Xinjiang. The main problem is that international counter-revolutionary forces led by the United States of America are openly supporting the separatist activities inside and outside of Xinjiang. The outside national separatist organizations are joining hands and strengthening the infiltration of Xinjiang sabotage activities with each passing day. Within our national borders, illegal religious activities are widespread; sabotaging activities such as the instigation of problematic situations, the breaking-and entering of party government offices and explosions and terrorism are occurring sporadically. Some of these activities have changed from completely hidden to semi-open activities, even to the degree of openly challenging the government's authority... On every level party committees and the people's government and concerned branches have to adhere to Deng Xiaoping's theory of building China-style socialism and the Party's basic principles and guiding policy; foresee possible dangers; dam the river before the floods come; correctly handle the relationship between reform, development and stability. On every level party and government leaders need to create a responsible order in defending ethnic unity and social stability and perfect it while holding high the banner of defending ethnic unity and honor of the law with great political sensitivity and pride, unify to the greatest level the cadres and people of every

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<sup>176</sup> Economy, "China's New Revolution."

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

nationality and depend on them to alienate as much as possible the very small number of ethnic separatists and criminals who commit serious crimes and strike hard against them, thus reinforcing the work of defending stability in all fields.

This assessment shows that the CCP in China was focused upon ensuring that state authority would assist itself against any “flood” of opposition. Likewise, it viewed separatist elements in China as a real and present danger to stability in China. Deng’s pragmatism isn’t abandoned here but takes on a darker tone. This was referred to in China as the method of “dam the river before the floods come.” The United States ignored human rights in abuses in China after the 2001 terror attack in the United States made them accepting of extreme measures to fight terror.<sup>178</sup> The United States assisted China with problematic Uighurs as a report on the Subcommittee on International Organization, Human rights, and Oversight in the United States showed. 17 Uighurs were held in Guantanamo bay by the United States. This support was premised on helping fight terrorism globally and was in response to the 2001 September 11<sup>th</sup> terror attack in the United States.<sup>179</sup> Document NO.7 demonstrates the major fears of the CCP and the issue of religion in the Xinjiang region. The rise of terrorism worldwide made the Chinese elite particularly cognizant of the danger of Muslim belief in Xinjiang and its ability to connect with outside extremist groups. Likewise, this document explicitly undid many of the protections for minority, groups giving regional power structures in China approval to discriminate against minorities deemed threatening to Chinese national identity.

Some explanations of this increased repression are hinged upon the idea of hyper nationalism becoming the norm in China today. Johnston’s work suggests that this rising

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<sup>178</sup> Shaoying, Zhang, and Derek McGhee. *Social Policies and Ethnic Conflict in China: Lessons from Xinjiang*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

<sup>179</sup> *The Uighurs: A History of Persecution: Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, One Hundred Eleventh Congress, First Session, June 10, 2009*. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 2009.

nationalism in China isn't new. His work uses a time series survey dataset from Beijing to show that the level of nationalism in China isn't rising and instead the youth of China have less nationalistic tendencies than the older generations.<sup>180</sup> Johnston makes use of five different tests. These tests measure the level of pride in nation and blind support for the state, identity differences with Japanese and Americans, if extreme views are becoming more common, hostility to other major powers, and the connection between nationalism and age.<sup>181</sup> Johnson adapts these tests for the Chinese context. The results of these surveys suggest that there hasn't been a radical increase in nationalistic tendencies in China.<sup>182</sup> What this means for this understanding is that China's policies towards minorities are not fueled by a blind belief in Han superiority or hyper national sentiments. This is an important factor to consider as this is contrary to conventional wisdom regarding China that its oppressive policies are simply a result of nationalism getting out of hand.<sup>183</sup>

This was tested by Johnston in a survey carried out in Beijing using the traditional method of BAS, Beijing Area Study, to ensure random sampling as well as survey questions designed to get at nationalist sentiment.<sup>184</sup> Likewise, this was survey was conducted multiple times starting from 1998, 2000, and 2007 and compared with census data in China to verify variables, such as the education level of participants in the survey.<sup>185</sup> The key takeaway from this Johnston's work, in this case, is to show that the recent trend of Chinese policies towards minorities is likely not fueled by a nationalist sentiment in China growing out of control. What this implies is that Chinese national identity is impacted more from elite views of

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<sup>180</sup> Alastair Iain, Johnston. "Is Chinese Nationalism Rising? Evidence from Beijing." *International Security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 7-43. doi:10.1162/isec\_a\_00265.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

Chinese national identity as opposed to rising nationalist sentiments of the Chinese population or elite.

### **Uighur response to policies in post-Deng China**

China has been seen to have rewritten the history books of the Uighurs promoting the idea of Zhonghuaminzu, which subsumes the identity of minorities in China into a Han narrative.<sup>186</sup> There have been increased efforts on China's part to subsume the culture and erode ethnic identities in China deemed undesirable.<sup>187</sup> The 2003 white paper, which is a Chinese policy, denied that Uighurs had a historical tie to the Xinjiang region.<sup>188</sup> In contemporary terms China has had increased ties to foreign countries that are Muslim, such as Turkey, while also actively seeking to undermine the culture and language of Muslim groups in China.<sup>189</sup> China has gone from policies supporting minority groups to policies designed to target them. There have been increasingly violent clashes between the Uighurs and Chinese authorities in the Xinjiang region since the 1990s.<sup>190</sup> Chinese government workers have been prohibited from attending prayer services and practicing religion openly.<sup>191</sup> China in contemporary terms has couched this conflict in terms of terrorism where Uighur actions are seen as acts of terror, often the response from the government being group executions or reeducation camps.<sup>192</sup> China doesn't see these actions as discrimination against Uighurs, but rather a strategy for integrating them into Chinese national identity.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Ang, *Sinicizing the Uyghurs*, 399.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 400

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 402.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 403.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 404.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 405.

There is an issue of inequality in China today. The Gini coefficient in 2012 measures inequality ranging from 0-1 with zero being complete equality and 1 complete inequality. In China, the Gini coefficient has risen from .38 in 1988 to .47 in 2012.<sup>194</sup> Most of this is commonly attributed in the Western media to ethnic differences.<sup>195</sup> However, much of the inequality in China stems from the Han being primarily in urban areas as compared to other ethnic groups.<sup>196</sup> Likewise, Uighur high school and college attendance rates are comparable to Han in Western China suggesting that the issue is geographic as opposed to bias and discrimination.<sup>197</sup>

In 2007 a Chinese raid on a training camp in Xinjiang resulted in the death of 18 suspected terrorists and one policeman.<sup>198</sup> This also resulted in the capture of 17 more Uighurs suspected of terrorist activities<sup>199</sup> This event was used as a launching off point for increased repressive policies in the Xinjiang region due to the perceived connection of Uighurs to international terror groups. Davis ties these more recent trends of China to the rise of the PRC in China and in repressive policies put into place in the mid-1990s.<sup>200</sup> Davis analyzes how states protections for minorities were extensive on paper, but actual policy/practice has shifted towards repression since the 1990s.<sup>201</sup> China held large scale military exercises in the Xinjiang region explicitly to flex its military muscle and to reiterate the narrative of China's liberation of the region.<sup>202</sup> This continues into the early 2000s with Hu Jintao placing a larger emphasis on the economic development of the Xinjiang region in

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<sup>194</sup> Sautman, "Self-representation and Ethnic Minority Rights in China, 173.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Elizabeth Van Wie, Davis. "Uyghur Muslim Ethnic Separatism in Xinjiang, China." 2008.

doi:10.21236/ada493744.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 18.

order to promote peace with minority groups. By the mid-2000s however, this narrative of economic reform lost traction among the Chinese elite and instead becomes increasingly focused on the need to go on the offensive to combat the three evils of “separatism”, “extremism”, and “terrorism”.<sup>203</sup> Zhang Xiuming, deputy secretary of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, who is also Han, is quoted during this time as saying “We need to take the Initiative and go on the offensive, crack down on gangs as soon as they surface and strike the first blow.”<sup>204</sup> What this suggests is that when China perceives its identity being threatened by foreign influences it reacts violently to it. The PRC places a large emphasis upon assimilation policies to maintain the territorial integrity of the country. In effect, the PRC perceives repression as key to resolving the problem of resistance to assimilation.

The suspicion of the three evils, terrorism, extremism, and separatism isn't new in China. There have been violent protests to China's rule in the Xinjiang region starting from the beginning of the PRC's control of the region in 1949 and escalating in intensity in the 1990s. China has denounced the rise of extremism in this region and has engaged in increasingly extreme measures to stop it. However, this hasn't been entirely effective as violent resistance to Chinese rule of Xinjiang is becoming more cohesive due to repression in Xinjiang. Likewise, the increased NGO presence in Xinjiang threatens the Chinese narrative of events in the region. Uighurs have been reaching out more NGOs and to the United Nations to highlight Chinese abuses of human rights.

Uighurs have responded to repressive policies in China by increasing the number of terrorist attacks in Xinjiang. The July 2009 terror attacks in Xinjiang resulted in 200 dead and

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.,

1700 injured. China viewed this attack as a result of the growth of separatist tendencies in Xinjiang and due to the fact minorities were not adopting a Chinese “national” identity. Human Rights Watch (HRW) found that China’s Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism started in 2016 and has been used to effectively arrest Uighurs who have a disparaging view of China. This has also led to the creation of political reeducation camps in Xinjiang explicitly for the purpose of helping foster a Chinese national identity in line with the elite in the PRC.<sup>205</sup> China characterizes these camps as a vocational education and employment training centers for criminals involved in minor offenses. These facilities are designed to encourage Chinese national identity through forced activities such as singing the praises the CCP, learning Mandarin, and what the Human Rights Watch has referred to as political indoctrination meetings.<sup>206</sup>

China has also banned naming babies certain names associated with Uighur backgrounds in 2017.<sup>207</sup> This was done under the idea that the names could promote religious fervor.<sup>208</sup> This is also after some officials in Xinjiang were reprimanded for not daring to smoke in front of religious buildings as this didn’t express the correct political stance China wishes to convey.<sup>209</sup> What these types of policies suggest is that China is codifying its conception of national identity in increasingly stringent terms to combat a threat to national unity. China also in the same year banned abnormal beards or veils in public places and

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<sup>205</sup> "Eradicating Ideological Viruses" | China's Campaign of Repression Against Xinjiang's Muslims." Human Rights Watch. October 19, 2018. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/09/eradicating-ideological-viruses/chinas-campaign-repression-against-xinjiangs>. (Accessed February 23, 2019).

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Richardson, Sophie "China Bans Many Muslim Baby Names in Xinjiang." Human Rights Watch. May 12, 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/24/china-bans-many-muslim-baby-names-xinjiang>. (accessed March 31, 2019).

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

imposed various punishments for refusing to watch state TV or radio programs.<sup>210</sup> These policies in the Xinjiang region are all an effort to entrench an “official” version of Chinese national identity in the Xinjiang region. This suggests that China has become increasingly rigid in both affirming a singular “national” and in the employment of coercive policies and actions towards “dissidents.”

The Uighur resistance to policies in Xinjiang has increased drastically as Chinese policies have become more repressive.<sup>211</sup> While this has gained some international attention, very little is being done to correct the human rights abuses in the Xinjiang region.<sup>212</sup> Likewise, China’s promises to remove reeducation centers and reeducation through labor programs have not been upheld.<sup>213</sup> Uighurs are still faced with highly repressive policies despite Xi’s promise to “put power in a cage,” meaning that China will be beholden unto the rule of law.<sup>214</sup> This has led to the rise of extremism in Xinjiang as it becomes increasingly apparent that China is willing to abridge the human rights of Uighurs.

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> "China: Free Xinjiang 'Political Education' Detainees." Human Rights Watch. September 19, 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/10/china-free-xinjiang-political-education-detainees>. (Accessed December 03, 2017).

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> "China: Abolish Secret Detention But Ensure Rights Protections." Human Rights Watch. October 18, 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/10/18/china-abolish-secret-detention-ensure-rights-protections>. (Accessed December 03, 2017.)

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.



## CHAPTER 5: UNIFYING CHINESE POLITICS AND CHINESE NATIONAL IDENTITY

Chinese national identity has gone through three major periods since 1949. These were the socialist period (1945-1975), the post socialist period (1975-2010), and China post-Deng (2010-2019). This allows for an analysis of Chinese national identity and the continuities and discontinuities towards Uighurs in the Xinjiang region. This has several implications for the importance of Chinese national identity for policies to minorities overall.

Mao's constant revolution narrative, in addition to Mao's later persecution of minority groups, had ramifications for Chinese state policy towards Uighurs. Mao brought about major reforms in China regarding property rights and the construction of autonomous regions. These autonomous regions reflected the Chinese Constitution's requirements to preserve the unity of minorities. Likewise, the Uighurs received protections regarding language and even received several protections regarding control of the Xinjiang regions government and security forces. Chinese national identity was reflected in the policies towards Uighurs during this time. However, as this narrative subsumed the history of Uighurs under the Han, there was violent resistance to China's control of the region. The protections and rights given helped offset this violence, instead leading to a scholarly dispute between Hans and Uighurs regarding Xinjiang's history.

Deng's emphasis on pragmatism and development allowed for a period of minority rights to flourish in China. Lessened control of the CCP and more encouragement for all the people of China to contribute, regardless of if they were a foreigner or a minority, helped alter Chinese policy towards the Uighurs in Xinjiang. However, many of these rights were

not reflected in the realities in Xinjiang. This is due to the massive influx of Han into the Xinjiang region and the developmental programs tendency to promote a pro-China narrative. The Xinjiang Class provides a good example of this failure. While it provided easier access to higher education, it didn't live up to its promises regarding treatment of Uighurs as equals. This increased Han presence in Xinjiang increased the level of violence in the region. The Uighurs response to this reflected the perceived unfairness of the situation as rights were expressed for them in the Chinese constitution but were not upheld in practice.

Xi's revolution in China bringing about a new era of Chinese leadership on the global stage and the need for more control in Asia has in turn increased repressive policies towards minorities. The process of China reforming and opening themselves up to trade is being replaced in China with policies to set themselves up as a leader in the international system.<sup>215</sup> Reeducation and the establishment of Chinese national identity as a way of proposing counter values to the world stage is increasingly important to China's efforts to set themselves up as a global leader. Chinese national identity, as expressed in document NO. 7, highlighted how protections for minorities were secondary to a pro Chinese narrative. Policies put into China during this time reflected Chinese national identity. This document expressed the explicit fear of rising terrorism in Xinjiang and the fear they would use connections outside of China to further their aims. The Uighur response to increased repression has been in line with this fear. The incidence of terrorism in Xinjiang has increased as well as increased international attention to the Xinjiang region regarding human rights. Likewise, the increased militancy of the Islamic movements globally has empowered Uighurs to resist Chinese rule.

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

Considering these three periods overall suggests that Chinese national identity in each period builds from the previous period. A factor that demonstrates this clearly is that there is a certain level of blending between each period; policies regarding minorities didn't suddenly change but instead shifted over time as each period went on. In addition, the shifts in the Chinese Constitution and white papers in China were not complete departures from the prior Constitutions in China. However, subtle changes in these documents opened new ways in which Uighurs were understood. Mao's utopian rhetoric highlighted the importance of diversity inside of a unitary state. National identity in Xinjiang conflicted with Uighurs along this narrative of a unitary state of China having a right to rule Xinjiang. Deng's pragmatism caused unequal development to occur in China, which advantaged the Han over the Uighurs. Likewise, the emphasis on pragmatism over ideology meant that the Xinjiang region adopted policies that may have ostensibly lauded equality but in practice advantaged a pro-China message over Uighur rights. Furthermore, the violence in a post-Deng era removed most of the pretense of equality rights for Uighurs and doubled down on repressive policies towards Uighurs. This may or may not result in the assimilation of Uighurs, but what is known is that it currently has resulted in the increased resistance of Uighurs to Chinese rule.

Chinese policies toward Uighurs in Xinjiang reflect elite viewpoints in each period. However, the period towards the end of the socialist period and throughout post socialist period suggests that Chinese national identity wasn't upheld for the case of the Uighurs. What this could suggest was the increased flexibility during the changes implemented by Deng left Chinese national identity more in flux than the socialist or post-Deng period. China post-Deng has seen a reemergence of a coherent narrative regarding Chinese national identity. Chinese national identity and repressive policies towards Uighurs are in alignment.

It is possible that this is a particularity brought about by the implementation of Capitalist practices in China. However, more study would be necessary to demonstrate this fact. What this case study does demonstrate is that Chinese national identity changed several times since 1949. These changes were widely reflected in the case of the Uighurs suggesting the importance of Chinese national identity in china's control of the Xinjiang region.

Furthermore, it demonstrates that there was the least amount of violence in the Xinjiang region when the Uighurs were treated with autonomy. The development of the Xinjiang region has offset the peace in the region and unified the Uighurs against a common enemy. China's elites have seemingly brought about a self-fulfilling prophecy as resistance to Chinese rule intensified when faced with increased repressive policies. China has engaged in a policy of cooption and cooperation with minority groups in each period to further the conception of Chinese national identity. The Uighur populations in Xinjiang have been somewhat dispersed but their resistance to China has increased drastically since 1949.

### **Implications of Chinese national identity on legitimacy**

One of the major points made by Lum is that there could be a legitimacy crisis looming in China threatening to radically change the Chinese political landscape.<sup>216</sup> The case of Xinjiang and the policies advanced therein suggests that China is actively taking steps to ensure its population maintains a state defined Chinese national identity in line with the CCP policy. Kingdon's work on policy in the United States suggests that should something have a large policy legacy then it is much harder to alter or ignore the policy. In the case of China, policies designed to maintain Chinese national identity have a long legacy that makes it very difficult to dismantle. China has drastically increased its oversight of social management

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<sup>216</sup> Thomas Lum. "Human rights in China and U.S Foreign Policy Issues For the 113th Congress." In *Human Rights in China: Selected Examinations*, 1-48. New York: Nova Publishers, 2014.

programs in China which are involved with local elections and imposed an increased security presence in locations such as Tibet or Xinjiang.<sup>217</sup>

The socialist period of Chinese rule used Mao as a beacon of legitimacy of CCP rule. The cult of personality that formed around Mao allowed for the CCP to mobilize large portions of population towards policy aims. The post socialist period of Chinese identity attempts to balance tradition and modernity. China actively looked outside of itself to introduce better governance in China. This was done in almost purely pragmatic terms by Deng who had experienced the persecution of both Western sources and from Chinese officials. Deng was faced with a Western world deep in the cold war and heavily biased against non-Western lines of thinking. This was a time period where the shape of your head or the color of skin was a sign of your intelligence. Vukovich highlighted how this was only prominent in Western epistemology and that China developed its own understanding of ethnicity separate from a Western model. Post-Deng China has faced increased scrutiny from international sources, such as NGOs or other states, as it has attempted to increase its global standing. This is reflected in China's bold policy goals such as the New Belt New Road Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank.

### **Conceptual gaps in understanding Chinese national identity**

There could be an issue in how Chinese national identity is understood because of a Western bias. Pan Zhongyi's work in 2012 highlights how China interprets concepts is different than the European Union.<sup>218</sup> A conceptual gap is defined as the distance between how two individuals understand, define, and interpret a concept.<sup>219</sup> The reason for this gap is

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>218</sup> Zhongqi, Pan. *Conceptual Gaps in China-EU Relations: Global Governance, Human Rights and Strategic Partnerships*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 2.

that China has a different culture and understanding than the EU and this has impacted how policy has been put into effect. Debrah Stone highlights this in her work *Policy Paradox* in 1997. Stone highlights how concepts such as freedom, equality, and power can have different meanings depending on how you understand the concept. For example, equality can be drastically different if your focus is on equality of outcome as opposed to equality of opportunity. Seeking a solution to a problem can vary drastically depending on what someone values and how they measure success. What Stone's work demonstrates most of all is that politics cannot be removed from analytical approaches. China values human rights but sees stability as the key for achieving lasting human rights in China.<sup>220</sup> The importance of sovereignty to China to maintain human rights is contrasted with Europe's view that sovereignty is secondary to ensuring abuses don't occur.<sup>221</sup> What this demonstrates is that Europe and China both place a large emphasis on history, culture and socioeconomic development but that these things being different in cultural contexts can lead to a gap between how each country understands the paths to achieve their goals.<sup>222</sup> It is important to be mindful of the conceptual gap between the West and the East in that it can lead to different understandings and the development of competing epistemologies. Putting one above the other as the better way of doing something could prove to be tone deaf in dealing with another country on an equal footing. What this means is that this project's understanding of Chinese national identity could be biased towards a Western lens.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Looking into each period of Chinese identity helps demonstrate the tension between Uighurs and Chinese national identity in the Xinjiang region. This tension is framed by the

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 10.

changes in Chinese national identity. Assimilation has always been the goal in the Xinjiang region but how China related this to the Uighurs changed over time. The socialist period in China highlights the importance of creating harmony between different viewpoints and the exploration of what China could be, focused on embracing different identities in China. Deng furthered this aim and embraced elements of liberal economic theory. The need to ensure party supremacy incited violence in the Xinjiang region. China's response to this was to enforce assimilation policies in the region. Post-Deng China becomes increasingly globalized as the threat of Uighurs gathering support from the Islamic world and the rise of terrorism increased China's need to establish legitimacy in the Xinjiang region. Forced assimilation via mass reeducation is the result of China's efforts to establish Chinese national identity in Xinjiang; it hasn't yet proven to be effective at preventing violence and could in fact unify Uighurs against China.

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