

Protracted Counterinsurgency Chinese COIN Strategy in Xinjiang

**A Monograph
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Abstract

PROTRACED COUNTERINSURGENCY: CHINESE COIN STRATEGY IN XINJIANG by MAJ J. Scott LaRonde, USA, 95 pages.

In 1949, following the conclusion of its revolutionary war against the Chinese Nationalist forces, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) peacefully occupied China's western most province of Xinjiang. For nearly sixty years, the PLA has conducted a counterinsurgency against several, mostly Uyghur-led, separatist movements. Despite periods of significant violence, particularly in the early 1950s and again in the 1990s, the separatist forces have not gained momentum and remained at a level one insurgency. Mao ZeDeng is revered as a master insurgent and the father of Fourth Generation Warfare. Strategists in armies worldwide study his writings on revolutionary and guerilla warfare. This monograph concludes that Mao, as well as the communist leaders who followed him, was also successful at waging protracted counterinsurgency. For nearly sixty years, separatist movements in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Taiwan have all failed. This monograph analyzes the conflict in Xinjiang and concludes that the Chinese continue to defeat the separatist movement in Xinjiang through a strategy that counters Mao's seven fundamentals of revolutionary warfare.

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Introduction

As a result of operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in 2002 the United States (US) captured twenty-two ethnic Uyghur combatants and transferred them to the military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The Uyghurs, members of a stateless nation of people primarily residing in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (hereinafter referred to as Xinjiang) in western China as well as other central Asian states (CAS), were allegedly participating in training and operations sponsored by Al Qaeda. In 2003, 2005, and again in 2006, Combatant Status Review Tribunals determined that as many as fifteen Uyghur captives were no longer enemy combatants.¹ Five of those were determined never to have been enemy combatants. Those five were sent to Albania for fear that the Chinese would not treat them humanely if returned to their homeland. Seventeen of the Uyghurs remain held in the Guantanamo Bay prison, primarily because the US cannot find another country willing to accept them, is unwilling to release them in the US, and will not return them to China for fear that the Chinese will convict them as separatists and execute them.²

The fact that the Chinese government views the American-held captives as separatists is not without merit. During a hearing at the prison, one detainee claimed, “I went to Afghanistan. The reason is number one: I am scared of the torture from my home country. Second: if I go there I will get some training to fight back against the [deleted] (*Chinese*) Government.”³ Another prisoner claimed, “We have nothing to do with the Taliban or the Arabs. We have nothing to do

¹Boston Globe Editorial, “Pawns in Guantanamo’s Game,” *The Boston Globe*, 11 March 2007, http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/editorials/articles/2007/03/11/pawns_in_guantanamos_game/?page=1 (accessed 12 November 2007); and Robin Wright, “Chinese Detainees are Men Without a Country,” *Washington Post.com*, 25 August 2005, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/23/AR2005082301362_pf.html (Accessed 12 November 2007).

²Boston Globe Editorial.

³Wright.

with the US government or coalition forces. We never thought about fighting with the Americans. I want you to understand what our goal is: just to fight against the [deleted] (*Chinese*) government.”⁴ Each successive leader of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) from Mao Zedong forward has viewed Xinjiang as a volatile, yet valuable, region of China, and an area worth keeping under the control of the central government. The detained Uyghurs’ comments demonstrate clearly that although the PRC has successfully prevented the separatists in Xinjiang from attaining their goal for nearly sixty years, the anti-Chinese separatist movement still lives.

The detained Uyghurs find themselves victims of competing policies of the US government. First, the US government wants to encourage the PRC to improve its human rights record, including how the PRC treats its Uyghur citizens. However, the PRC not only represents a significant trade partner, but also a significant ally in the US-led Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). For the time being, the US has backed off on pressuring the PRC to improve the treatment of its ethnic minorities in order maintain China as an ally and trade partner. Thus, the US remains indecisive as to the future of the Uyghur detainees and what part the US will play in the Uyghur people’s desire for autonomy.

The Uyghurs, like the Tibetans and Chinese Nationalists (Taiwan), attained various levels of autonomy at several points in recent history specifically from 1864 to 1871, briefly in 1933, and again during the Communist Revolution from 1944 to 1949. Since the Communist forces reoccupied Xinjiang in late 1949, periods of separatist violence have occurred throughout the PRC rule. The most recent of which peaked during the mid-1990s. Yet the separatist violence in Xinjiang, led predominately by the Uyghurs, has not expanded past isolated acts of violence. The reason the Xinjiang separatist movement never expanded into open rebellion was due in large part to the successful execution of the counterinsurgency strategy of the PRC.

⁴Ibid.

Since 1949, five men have chaired the Central Military Commission (CMC), which maintains control of the People's Liberation Army (PLA): Mao Zedong (1949 to 1976), Hua Guofeng (1976 to 1981), Deng Xiaoping (1981 to 1989), Jiang Zemin (1989 to 2004/5) and Hu Jintao (2004/5 to present day).⁵ The first leader, Mao, is believed by many to be the father of protracted revolutionary war, which is studied by military scholars and taught throughout the world including the US Army Command and General Staff Course at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.⁶ Mao theorized in the 1936 classic, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, that seven fundamental steps must be met in order to attain the ultimate political goal of an insurgency.⁷ These steps include: (1) arousing and organizing the people; (2) achieving internal unification politically; (3) establishing bases; (4) equipping forces; (5) recovering national strength; (6) destroying the enemy's national strength; and (7) regaining lost territories.⁸ Mao also recognized the value and necessity of protracted warfare, particularly against the occupying Japanese, and the value of a long-term approach to obtaining his goals.⁹ This model was successful in China and was adopted and amended by other insurgent leaders, such as North Vietnam leader, Vo Nguyen Giap, and is alive and well in places like Nepal, today.

⁵The People's Liberation Army was known as the Red Army from 1927-1949. Mao controlled the revolutionary movement from 1935 to 1949. Though Deng did not chair the CMC until 1981, Deng had gained significant influence in the CCP by 1978.

⁶Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (Saint Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2004), 44.

⁷Tse-Tung (Zedong) Mao, *On Guerilla Warfare*, trans. by Samuel B. Griffith II (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2000), <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/1937/guerrilla-warfare/ch01.htm> (15 August 2007).

⁸Mao, *On Guerilla Warfare*.

⁹Mao, *On Guerilla Warfare*; and Tse-Tung (Zedong) Mao, *On Protracted War*, 1938, http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_09.htm (accessed 15 August 2007).

Mao's skill as a counterinsurgent or counter-revolutionary leader has either not been studied in detail or has been ignored by the same military scholars and institutions that revere him for his skill as an insurgent leader.¹⁰ Mao wrote extensively criticizing the Chinese Nationalist's counterinsurgency (counter-revolutionary) strategy. However, either Mao did not write about counterinsurgency, or any writing on the topic has been lost. Yet, Mao and the follow-on PRC leadership have succeeded and are succeeding in defeating distinctly different types of separatist movements in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Taiwan. In February 2007, Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama and exiled leader of the Tibetan people, stated that he would no longer seek independence from the PRC for Tibet, but would focus his efforts only on preserving the culture and way of life of the Tibetan people.¹¹ Similarly, the separatist movement in Taiwan has likewise yet to meet the satisfactory conditions for the re-initiation of violence, although both sides maintain significant stage-three conventional force armies on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. The PRC's counterinsurgency strategy in Xinjiang has been so successful, that at least one western expert on the Uyghurs, Arienne Dwyer, argues that a Uyghur-led separatist movement within Xinjiang as depicted by the PRC in official white papers, does not exist, particularly within the borders of Xinjiang.¹²

¹⁰Dru C. Gladney, Writnet Paper No. 15, "China Prospects for the Uighur People in the Chinese Nation-State History, Cultural Survival, and the Future," UNHCR Center for Documentation and Research, October 1999. However, for the purpose of this paper, the terms separatist, insurgent and revolutionary will be used to avoid confusion. Author's note: The communist leaders in China, including Mao, believe that any movement against the communist led government is counter to the revolution, thus "counter-revolutionary." Thus any uprising against the communist government would be considered a "counter-revolutionary" uprising. In 1998, the National Peoples Congress passed a new criminal law, which redefined "counter-revolutionary" crimes as "crimes against the state."

¹¹Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, "Dalai Lama: Tibet Culture Could Soon End," 8 June 2007, <http://www.dalailama.com/news.133.htm> (accessed 12 November 2007).

¹²Arienne Dwyer, Policy Studies 15, *The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse* (Washington, DC: East-West Center, 2005), X, 91-92, <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS015.pdf> (accessed 15 July 2007).

Dwyer's conclusion runs counter to arguments presented by other western scholars. In particular, Linda Benson, a professor of History at Oakland University, concluded that the central government's policies in Xinjiang "increased local antipathy . . . and foster[ed] nationalism nascent in Chinese Turkestan for nearly a century . . . ultimately driving Han and Moslem farther apart and exacerbating tensions in the region."¹³ However, since the Chinese suppressed the most recent uprising in the mid-1990s, separatist inclinations in Xinjiang appear to be on the decline. PRC arrests of suspected terrorists in January 2007, and again in March 2008, do indicate that the separatist movement remains present.

For nearly sixty years, the PRC has successfully prevented three distinct separatist movements from achieving any significant momentum. The US is currently engaged in fighting counterinsurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan and arguably is only very recently beginning to successfully implement sound counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, the US had a window of opportunity between the conclusion of major combat operations and the escalation of insurgent violence, to possibly prevent insurgent forces from gaining significant momentum, particularly in Iraq. Yet, the US failed to take advantage of this window of opportunity and thus has been forced into conducting long-term or protracted counterinsurgency operations.

The US Army Command and General Staff College, counterinsurgency (COIN) instruction focuses on defeating an insurgency and includes the new FM 3-24 and the writings of Roger Trinquier and David Galula, as well as classic and contemporary theorists and practitioners. The instruction does not focus on "not" preventing one from occurring in the first place nor does it include study of Chinese counterinsurgency (or counter-counter-revolutionary) strategy because no English-written texts are known to exist. Instruction focuses on the writings

¹³Linda Benson, *The Ili Rebellion: The Moslem Challenge to Chinese Authority in Xinjiang, 1944-1949* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1990), 4.

of Roger Trinquier, David Galula, and others, but does not teach Chinese counterinsurgency strategy, despite the PRC's impressive record in conducting counterinsurgency operations.

The purpose of this monograph is to examine China's COIN strategy in Xinjiang from 1949 to present with particular focus on the Uyghur people. In other words, how has an army steeped in the Peoples War tradition fared at conducting counterinsurgency? As previously stated, neither Mao nor the other PRC leaders have written a counterinsurgency strategy. Therefore the research, with some exceptions, will focus on analysis of events rather than reviewing official documents.¹⁴ Thus derived, China's COIN strategy will be analyzed in terms of the US Army's current COIN doctrine, FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, and conclusions made as to the suitability of certain segments of Chinese COIN strategy for US purposes.

The COIN analysis model adopted by the Department of Joint Interagency and Multinational Operations, at the US Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) and used in the A631 elective and core courses will serve as the root model. For this monograph, the first section reviews the geography and history of the Uyghur people and Xinjiang region. The second section reviews the strategic setting in China in 1949 at the end of hostilities on the mainland between the communist and nationalist forces. The third section reviews the conduct of the counterinsurgency and insurgency from 1949 to 2007. The analysis in this section is divided into two periods from 1949 to 1976 and 1978 to 2007. This division represents the end of Mao's reign in 1976 and the subsequent opening up of China to the west in 1978. As Mao did not write on COIN strategy, the key tenets of his revolutionary strategy mentioned previously will be reversed (or countered) and then used as a basis for analysis of the PRC counterinsurgency strategy.

¹⁴Under Jiang's and Hu's leadership, China has demonstrated a greater willingness to publish official strategy papers. For example, since 1998, the PRC releases a bi-annual white paper on national security which for the most part mirrors that of the US's bi-annual National Security Strategy.

Mao's seven fundamentals of insurgency when reversed into the seven fundamentals of COIN read as thus:

1. Deny the people the opportunity to organize and be aroused
2. Preventing the people from unifying politically
3. Denying the people secure bases
4. Denying the people equipment
5. Destroy the peoples' national strength
6. Regain national strength
7. Regain lost territories¹⁵

In the final section, the Chinese protracted COIN strategy will be analyzed and compared to FM 3-24, particularly Logical Lines of Operations (LLOs). The results include lessons learned for current, as well as future, US counterinsurgency efforts. The focus of this section will be the potential impacts on regions where US and Chinese interests may conflict, particularly Africa, where the Chinese are demonstrating increased willingness to deploy PRC troops in support of UN missions and where they will need stability to further their economic activities.

Geography

Xinjiang (meaning New Territories in Mandarin) occupies the northwest corner of China and accounts for one-sixth of the country's land mass (see figure 1). The land-locked region borders eight countries: Mongolia, Russia, and Kazakhstan to the north; Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to the west; and India to the south. The Hindu Kush, Pamirs, and the T'ien Shan mountains isolate Xinjiang from western Asia. The Karakoram, Kunlun, and

¹⁵Steps 5, 6, and 7 are not direct inversions of Mao's fundamentals of insurgency, however, direct inversions are not applicable. However, in some cases, depending on the status of control of land and level of national strength an inversion may apply.

Himalaya mountain ranges isolate it from India and the Gobi Desert from eastern China.¹⁶

Xinjiang also borders on the Chinese regions or provinces of Tibet, Qinghai, and Gansu.

Militarily, Xinjiang serves as a strategic buffer between eastern China and Russia.

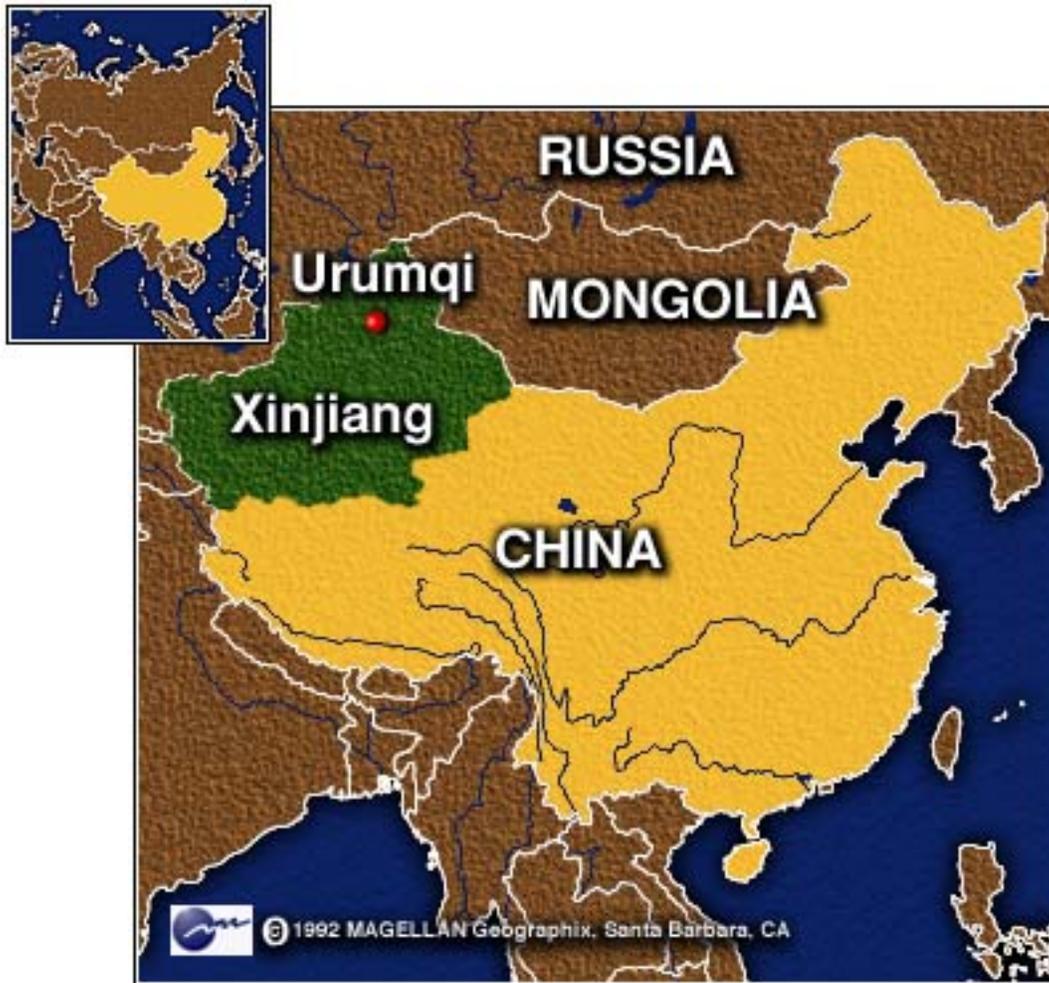


Figure 1. Xinjiang in Relation to the Asian Continent

Source: Business Facilities, The Location Advisor, The Biggest Piece of Coal in China, 31 May 2007, http://www.businessfacilities.com/blog/2007_05_01_archive.html (accessed 18 March 2008).

¹⁶Andrew D. Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims in Chinese Central Asia: A Political History of Republican Sinkiang 1911-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3.

Xinjiang is composed of three basins. The southern basin, called the Tarim Basin, is the largest geographic feature in Xinjiang (see figure 2). The Tarim Basin (Pendi) is bordered by three mountain ranges: the Kunlun Shan, the Pamirs, and the Tian Shan, as well as the Tarim river system. The Taklimakan (Takla Makan) Desert occupies most of the Tarim Basin. The 327,000 square kilometer desert is mostly uninhabitable but oil was recently discovered there.¹⁷ The Taklimakan Desert is surrounded by a series of fertile oases. The other two basins, the Ili (or Yili) Valley and the Zungharian Basins, both lie north of the Tien Shan, with Ili (Yining) in the west and Zungharia in the east. The Ili Valley represents the most fertile area in Xinjiang and is densely populated, and very fertile. The Ili Valley is geographically isolated from the rest of Xinjiang. The steppes in Zungharia are more suitable to a nomadic lifestyle and animal husbandry.

Three strategic passes through the mountains brought trade from the west through Xinjiang along the ancient Silk Road. The passes, through the Kashgar and the Ili Valley lead into Russia and central Asia and the Zhungarian steppes and provide relatively easy access to Mongolia. Only one pass, The Gansu corridor, leading toward eastern China, represents the only non-man made route between Xinjiang and eastern China. Xinjiang thus served as a land bridge between China and the west. However, entering Xinjiang from the west is much easier than from the east. The difficulty of traversing the Gansu corridor, as well as the great distance, caused the people of Xinjiang to more easily orient towards the culture of the nations of central Asia.

¹⁷James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, "Political and Cultural History Throughout the Late 19th Century," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 29-30.

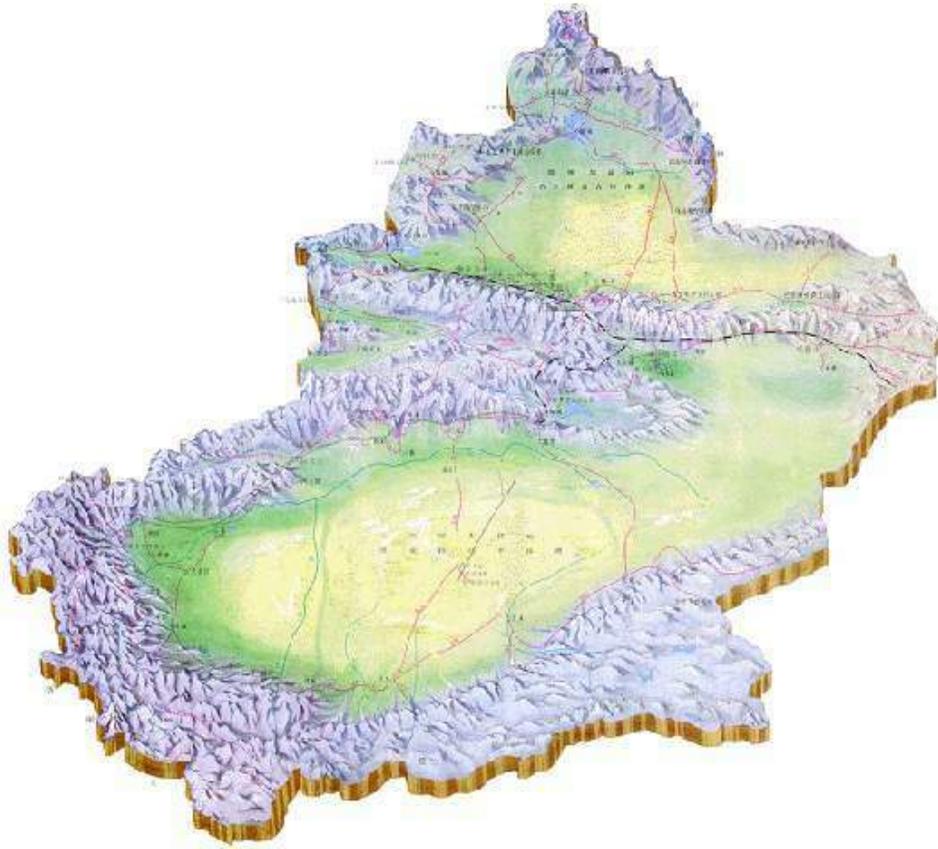


Figure 2. Topographic Map of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

Source: <http://www.chinatrek.cn/index/xinjiang%20map.html> (accessed 15 September 2007).

The major population centers are oriented around oases and along the ancient Silk Road (see figure 3). The largest city, Kashgar (Kashi), is located in the southwest corner of Xinjiang, west of the Tarim Basin. The political center of Xinjiang since 1884, Urumchi (Wulumuchi) is located at the eastern tip of the Tian Shan Mountains near the center of Xinjiang. Urumchi is the eastern-most population center of significance along Xinjiang portion of the Silk Road. Its proximity to the Gansu corridor made Urumchi very important to the Chinese. However, Urumqi

is closer to Baghdad and New Dehli than it is to Beijing.¹⁸ The distance from the capital made routine administrative control over Xinjiang extremely difficult for the Chinese government.



Figure 3. Xinjiang Population Centers

Source: Live Search, Xinjiang, http://search.live.com/images/results.aspx?q=xinjiang+map&form=QB#focal=6ffc0f843cf0d7785d2e3153d1e10770&furl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.jozan.net%2Fmaps%2FMap_Xinjiang.jpg (accessed 18 March 2008).

The population of Xinjiang in 1945 was extremely diverse and relatively small. The four million plus inhabitants represented less than 1 percent of the total population of China. Fourteen different nationalities were present in Xinjiang to include: Uyghur 2,988,528; Kazakh 438, 575; Han 222,401; Hui 99,607; Taranchi 79,296; Kirghiz 69,923; Mongolian 59,686; Russian 19,392;

¹⁸S. Fredrick Starr, ed., *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 3.

Uzbek 10,224; Sibo 10,626; Tajik 8,210; Tatar 5, 614; Solon 2,506; and Manchu 762.¹⁹ Many of the nationalities represented, particularly the Uyghurs, Kazaks, Taranchi, Russian, Uzbeks, and Tajiks all arrived to the region from central Asia, not China. However, Xinjiang was not a melting pot per se, as the nationalities did not significantly intermingle.

Xinjiang, as evidenced by the population, also represents where eastern Chinese culture meets western Arab culture. Xinjiang has hosted numerous religious movements including; Buddhism, Taoism, Manichaeism, and Christianity. However, Islam became the dominant religion in the region when it was introduced in the 9th Century.²⁰ In 1949, at the end of the Communist Revolution, Xinjiang was the only region in China where the majority of the inhabitants were Muslim.

In addition to its proximity to the Silk Road, Xinjiang is an important part of the central Asian economy for other reasons. Xinjiang has always been a source of minerals such as jade, tungsten, iron ore, coal, uranium, and gold. Xinjiang contains 75 percent of China's mineral and key resource deposits.²¹ Before the 1950s, the majority of Xinjiang's natural resources were traded to states within the Soviet Union.²² However, the recent discovery of crude oil has made the development of Xinjiang an integral component in the overall economic development of China. The PRC has invested so much in and so much depends on Xinjiang that the Central

¹⁹Benson, 30. Note: Total 4,015,350 74.4%. Benson cites a Uyghur source: She Lingyun, "Economic Construction in Xinjiang as a Means to Secure Peace," *Tianshan Yuegan* 1 (15 October 1947): 21. Author was unable to locate original source.

²⁰Information Office of the State Council of the Peoples Republic of China, "History and Development of Xinjiang," 2003, <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/20030526/2.htm> (accessed 2 August 2007).

²¹Christian Tyler, *Wild West China: The Taming of Xinjiang* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 209.

²²Benson, 21.

Communist Party (CCP) will do what it must to retain undisputed control over the region.²³ In the mid-1980s, as China's demand for petroleum exceeded its internal supply, Xinjiang became the major focus of on-shore oil exploration and "last hope," for petroleum self-reliance and economic national security.²⁴

In conclusion, the geography of Xinjiang should have favored insurgent operations against a large military force. Only one natural point of entry into Xinjiang from eastern China existed. Whereas, multiple routes led west out of China to potential secure bases, equipment, and sympathetic allies. Likewise, difficult terrain around each of the population centers should have provided staging areas from which to launch insurgent activity. Despite the presence of the Silk Roads, Xinjiang did not possess a significant road infrastructure and mounted cross-country mobility was difficult. The distance from the central government combined with the lack of routes into Xinjiang likewise favored the insurgents. However, the lack of roads within Xinjiang combined with the tendency of ethnic groups to segregate and center on oases allowed the PLA to easily isolate the various ethnic groups and effectively target belligerent leadership. The biggest surprise, however, was that the insurgents were unable to capitalize on their ethnic ties from across the porous and difficult to secure border. The geography may have favored the insurgents, but the Chinese were able to overcome it.

The Uyghur People and History of the Xinjiang Region

In 1945, nearly 75 percent of the population of Xinjiang was Uyghur. At that time, every Uyghur believed that his or her ancestors were the indigenous people of the Tarim Basin, which

²³David Bachman, "Making Xinjiang Safe for the Han? Contradictions and Ironies of Chinese Governance in China's Northwest," in *Governing China's Multiethnic Frontiers*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2005), 157.

²⁴Bachman, 159.

was not considered part of China until the 17th Century.²⁵ The Uyghurs are decidedly not ethnic Han. However, since the 1949, occupation or liberation of Xinjiang by the PLA forces, Uyghurs have increasingly faced difficulty defining their nation's lineage. The CCP has challenged every aspect of Uyghur nationality particularly in terms of history.

Most western historians will agree that a people known as the Uighurs lived on the steppes in central Asia before the eighth century. However, the Uighur people lost their separate identity between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries.²⁶ The link between the modern day Uyghurs and that of the ancient nation is not certain.²⁷ What is certain is that the modern Uyghurs, faced with increased pressure on their history by CCP scholars, have claimed a link based on increased perceived nationalism as opposed to actual biological certainty.²⁸ Despite ethnic division (mentioned previously), the vast majority of non-Han nationalities residing in Xinjiang before 1950 were Turkic Muslims and considered themselves to be distinct from the Han in both race and religion.²⁹ Certainly, Xinjiang's people in terms of race, religion, and culture, prior to 1949, were more closely related to the people of central Asia than the people of China.³⁰

²⁵Dru C. Gladney, "Chinese Program of Development and Control," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 102.

²⁶Gladney, "Chinese Program of Development and Control," 102.

²⁷The different spelling of the ancient Uighurs and the modern Uyghurs is intentional. Although three spellings (Uyghurs, Uighurs, and Ughurs) are routinely found in modern documents referring to the current people. The Uighur spelling is most common form used for the ancient people. For the purpose of this monograph, only the Uyghur spelling is used to describe those who currently maintain the national identity.

²⁸Gardner Bovingdon, "Contested Histories," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 353-354

²⁹Benson, 22.

³⁰*Ibid.*, viii.

CCP and Uyghur scholars maintain drastically different views of the history of the Uyghurs and the Xinjiang region. Each side incorporates their version of Uyghur history to validate self-serving political policy. The CCP historians all profess that Xinjiang has always been a part of China and that the Uyghur people are part of the Chinese nationality.³¹ This view supports the CCP's goal of integrating Xinjiang culturally and economically with the rest of China.³² Uyghur historians emphatically contest both claims. "East Turkistan (Xinjiang) is located beyond the logical boundary of China. . . . Historically and culturally, East Turkistan is part of Central Asia, not of China. The people of East Turkistan are not Chinese; they are Turks of Central Asia."³³ This view supports the end state of separatist Uyghurs.³⁴

Uyghurs and Han both claim over 4,000 years of presence in the Tarim Basin region. In official documents, the PRC claims that Han Chinese have maintained continuous influence over the region since the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to 24 A.D.), claiming "[Xinjiang] has been an inseparable part of the unitary multi-ethnic Chinese nation."³⁵ Another document, released by the same office in 2002, states that since 60 B.C., "the central government has never ceased jurisdiction over Xinjiang."³⁶ Western historians agree that the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to 24 A.D.) did have a presence in the Xinjiang region, but the region was controlled by the

³¹Bovington, "Contested Histories," 359; and Information Office of the State Council, "History and Development in Xinjiang."

³²Bovington, "Contested Histories," 359.

³³World Uyghur Congress, "East Turkestan," 2005, <http://www.uyghurcongress.org/En/AboutET.asp?mid=1107905016> (accessed 17 November 2007).

³⁴Bovington, "Contested Histories," 359.

³⁵Information Office of the State Council, "History and Development in Xinjiang."

³⁶Information Office of the State Council of the Peoples Republic of China, "East Turkestan Forces Cannot Get Away With Impunity," 2002, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2002/Jan/25582.htm> (accessed 17 August 2007).

occupying Xiongnu Mongolian Empire.³⁷ The Chinese did try to take the region by military force in a sixty-year war starting in 120 B.C.³⁸ Despite some military victories, the Han never established control over portions of Xinjiang and for the next 310 years, the region was characterized as immersed in, “an inconclusive tug-of-war.”³⁹

Chinese control over the region as a whole remained sporadic and tenuous until the mid-eighteenth century.⁴⁰ Before then Xinjiang was ruled by a series of invading tribes from both Central Asia and Mongolia, such as the Ruanruan, Hephthalites, Kok Turk, Tibetans, Karakhanids, ancient Uyghurs, Mongols (who ruled Xinjiang as well as China as the Yuan Dynasty from 1271 to 1368), and Moghuls from India. The Chinese experienced some success during this period as both the Western Liao Dynasty (916 to 1125) and Northern Song Dynasty (960 to 1127) established temporary rule in portions of the region.⁴¹ However, throughout the period of Mongol rule, the Uyghur Kings, by paying tributes, maintained local autonomy, even during the occupation and rule of Genghis Khan and Khublai Khan, whose empire encompassed Xinjiang from 1215 to the 1370s.⁴²

PRC scholars claim that during the Ming Dynasty (1368 to 1644), specifically in 1406, a garrison was established in Hami (eastern Xinjiang) for the purpose of keeping, “trade routes to the west open and bring the other areas of the western regions under its control.”⁴³ Several

³⁷Millward and Perdue, 35.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., 36.

⁴⁰Forbes, 9.

⁴¹James A. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), 27.

⁴²Millward and Perdue, 41.

⁴³Information Office of the State Council, “History and Development of Xinjiang.”

western historians disagree with the level of influence the Ming Dynasty had in the region. For example, James A. Millward claims that Chinese scholars, in order to, “enhance China’s historical prestige and claim on Xinjiang, still maintain the fiction that envoys (from Xinjiang) presenting gifts (to the Ming Dynasty emperors) were vassals.”⁴⁴ Furthermore, Millward asserts that the Chinese knowingly overpaid for their goods in return for the prestige of having ostensibly obsequious visitors come to the court to present tribute.”⁴⁵ Another western historian, Morris Rossabi, also cites that the Ming Dynasty did not seek to expand Chinese rule over Xinjiang, opting for a lesser empire of, “traditional territories of China.”⁴⁶ Editors of *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China* define the territory of early fifteenth century China as contained east of the Great Wall and further claims that Chinese emissaries and armies going to Hami described the event as “going out beyond the frontiers.”⁴⁷ An early fifteenth century map in the same volume depicts the land of modern-day Xinjiang as parts of three separate states: Moghulistan in the south and west; Uighurstan in the east; and the Oirat Moghuls controlling northern Xinjiang.⁴⁸ Although the Ming Dynasty would periodically control Hami, much of the remainder of Xinjiang, remained under control of the Mongols, Uighurs, and Moghuls throughout the Ming period.

The significance of Qing Dynasty (1644 to 1911) rule over Xinjiang is, unlike that of preceding dynasties, without dispute. By 1757, the Qing had conquered all the lands in Tibet and

⁴⁴Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 73.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Morris Rossabi, ed., *Governing China’s Multiethnic Frontiers* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2004), 4.

⁴⁷Frederick W. Mote and Denis Twitchett, eds., *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 7, The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, Part 1* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 395.

⁴⁸Ibid., 224.

Xinjiang.⁴⁹ By this period, however, Xinjiang was predominately inhabited by Turkic-speaking Muslims. Qing rule in Xinjiang was routinely challenged from both within and from bordering states. For example, in 1765, 2,350 men were executed and 8,000 women and children were enslaved after a failed uprising in Ush Turfan.⁵⁰ Tungan Hui and the Uyghers likewise rebelled in 1864, and with the help of both Russian and Turkic support, were able to briefly establish a Muslim state led by Ya'qub Beg (a Khoqandi Uzbek) which lasted until Beg's death in 1877.

After the Qing capitulated in 1911, many entities sought to control Xinjiang including local warlords, Chinese Nationalist warlords, the Soviets, and the natives, particularly the Uyghurs. However, the Nationalists did establish military rule over Xinjiang in 1911. The Turkic-Islamic Republic of East Turkistan (TIRET), established in November 1933, attempted to establish a Muslim state under Shari'a law. TIRET barely lasted three months when it was destroyed amid fighting between two rival warlords, Ma and Sheng Shicai.⁵¹ The PRC position today describes the capitulation of TIRET differently, stating that TIRET was destroyed by, "opposition of the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang."⁵² Following the collapse of TIRET, the Soviet Union covertly occupied the Ili Valley and according to one historian, from 1933 to 1941, "Xinjiang was a Soviet satellite much like Outer Mongolia."⁵³

⁴⁹Rossabi, 5; and Information Office of the State Council, "History and Development of Xinjiang."

⁵⁰Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 109.

⁵¹Michael Dillon, *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Far Northwest* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 21.

⁵²Information Office of the State Council, "East Turkestan Forces Cannot Get Away With Impunity."

⁵³James A. Millward and Nabijan Tursun, "Political History and Strategies of Control, 1884-1978," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 79.

In 1944, Kazaks and Uyghurs in the Ili Valley rebelled against the occupying Nationalists.⁵⁴ In 1946, the rebels, with the consent of the Chinese Nationalists, established the Second Eastern Turkestan Republic in the western three districts of Xinjiang. Both the Chinese Nationalists at the time and later the PRC historians blame the Soviet Union as the catalyst for the Ili Rebellion. However, the Soviets did not initiate the rebellion, but seized a strategic opportunity and supplied military arms to the rebels.⁵⁵

Although the Nationalists officially governed the other seven districts, their capability to do so effectively diminished due to continuous uprisings from the non-Han nationalities as well as increasing pressure from the growing communist revolutionaries. Communist pressure eventually led to the defeat of the Nationalist party and military forces, including those in Xinjiang, which surrendered in 1949.

In conclusion, Han Chinese and Uyghurs alike make nationalistic claims to Xinjiang. Yet, neither side's version of history is entirely accurate as both sides manipulate the history of the region to support their strategic objectives. Furthermore, many different nations and empires ruled the Tarim Basin region over the past two thousand years making either side's claim of historic or continuous autonomy unsupportable. However, modern Uyghur separatists cite the three most recent periods of independence; the Muslim state led by Ya'qub Beg from 1864 to 1877, the 1933 TIRET, and the second East Turkestan Republic (ETR) of 1944 to 1949 in their claims for the establishment of a permanent Uyghur state.

Not only is the history of control of the Xinjiang region contested, but the history of the Uyghur nation is contested as well and for similar reasons. A Uighur nation state existed in the Xinjiang region over one thousand years ago. Since then, people of many nations also occupied

⁵⁴Beijing White Paper, 2003. The Ili Rebellion is also known as the known as the, "Revolution of the Three Regions (Ili, Altay and Tachung).

⁵⁵Benson, 39.

and ruled in the Tarim Basin region. These nations brought along their customs, religion, and mixed into the population, diluting the Uighur bloodlines. However, the people of Xinjiang, in terms of race, religion, and culture are more closely related to Central Asia than the Han Chinese.⁵⁶ The non-Han of modern Xinjiang more accurately reflect a blending of the occupying civilizations, not only culturally, but biologically as well, rather than a pure and distinct nationality. Harsh rule under the Qing Dynasty warlords and the Chinese Nationalists spawned great anti-Han sentiment. Anti-Han sentiment, more so than ethnic purity, fueled the desires for independence over the last one hundred fifty years.

Strategic Setting

On 1 October 1949, Mao established the PRC in Beijing. However, the PRC faced several regional and domestic challenges. The Cold War between the Soviet Union and the US was just beginning. The US refused to recognize Mao's communist government and had occupied Japan and Korea. The Soviet Union and the other European communist states recognized the new government within the first week of October 1949.⁵⁷ In February 1950, Mao traveled to Moscow and after heavy deliberation, the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance was signed. Furthermore, in June 1950, President Harry Truman ordered the US Navy's Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Strait in order to prevent cross-strait conflict between the Republic of China (ROC) and the mainland and partially in response to North Korea's attack. The PRC leadership believed that the US would not tolerate a communist government in China and

⁵⁶Ibid., viii.

⁵⁷Keith Buchanan, Charles P. Fitzgerald, and Colin A. Rohan, *China, The Land and The People: The History, The Art and The Science* (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 1990), 388.

assumed hostile intervention.⁵⁸ Therefore, Mao was forced to “lean to one side,” in regards to the Cold War.⁵⁹

Tensions between the US and China did not stop at the US refusal to grant diplomatic recognition. The threat of US intervention complicated the planning for the PLA invasion of Taiwan.⁶⁰ The US Central Intelligence Agency supported Tibetan resistance to PLA occupation. The PRC also felt threatened by the US involvement in Korea. PRC leadership believed that US involvement on the peninsula would lead to an invasion of Manchuria.⁶¹ Chinese leaders likewise believed that General Douglas MacArthur would not stop his forces south of the Yalu River.⁶² Thus, China entered the Korean War in October 1950.

China and Russia’s relations, although peaceful, were strained after centuries of conflict. Four years previously, as World War II came to an end in 1945, the Soviet Union, in an exchange of letters with Mao’s government, recognized Xinjiang as, “Clearly within Chinese territory.”⁶³ However, the Soviet Union had continued to fund the Uyghur rebellion against the nationalists in Xinjiang. The Soviet Union had also replaced Chinese influence in Mongolia. The Qin Empire ruled over Mongolia for three centuries, but Soviet intervention and defeat of Japanese forces in Mongolia during World War II allowed for Mongolian independence. The PRC and Mongolia recognized each other in mid-October 1949, thus ending any hopes for the PRC of reclaiming

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰The PLA also lacked a navy and air force of significance, which also would have made PLA invasion of Taiwan difficult.

⁶¹Buchanan, Fitzgerald, and Rohan, 389.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Benson, 122.

Mongolia. Although the Soviet Union and the PRC established normal relations, tensions between the two countries regarding that region remained strained.

India, which had gained independence from Great Britain in 1947, recognized the PRC in April 1950. Later in 1950, the PLA invaded Tibet and crushed the Tibetan forces within a year. Pakistan became the first Muslim country to recognize China in 1951. India acknowledged PRC sovereignty over Tibet, but requested that they be allowed to continue trade with the Tibetans. Tibet had declared independence from war-torn China in 1912, but both Chinese governments (the ROC and PRC) never acknowledged Tibetan independence. Amid the turmoil of the rise and fall of regional states, the Chinese and Indians could not peacefully delineate their border and in 1962, the two countries went to war.

The PRC's strategic situation at the start of the Cold War, along with the threats around its borders, put the new government in a precarious situation. However, the damage to infrastructure and lack of funds for development after decades of civil war had also left the interior of China in a disastrous state. The economic infrastructure was almost entirely destroyed. Bridges, railroads, and cities were destroyed and rivers used for shipping were no longer navigable.⁶⁴ China's ports were solely used for importing foreign foods, coal, and other essential items and not for export.⁶⁵ The only readily available source of manpower was the PLA and former nationalist forces, which were quickly demobilized and put to work rebuilding the country.⁶⁶ The redirected military diligently repaired bridges, rivers and infrastructure. By 1953, the economy, although not good, was back up to pre-war (1937) levels.⁶⁷

⁶⁴Buchanan, Fitzgerald, and Rohan, 392.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid., 388. According to this source, Nationalist forces were largely forgiven as were those who had supported the Nationalist during the war.

⁶⁷Ibid., 391.

Although pockets of China were already under communist rule, the remainder of the country was leery of the new government. The citizenry, after years of hardship under Nationalist rule, were uncertain what to expect from the new regime. Mao focused significant effort on educating the country about communism. The Chinese people, in large part were simply thankful for the end of violence and welcomed the idea of stability, even under communism, with open arms.⁶⁸

The condition in Xinjiang at the end of the war was more comparable to Tibet than the provinces in eastern China. Like Tibet, the three western districts of Xinjiang composed the ETR and had been independent since 1944. Also, as in Tibet, the PRC received recognition of sovereignty from across the border. Although the Soviet Union agreed to PRC sovereignty over the Xinjiang region in 1945, many Chinese leaders legitimately felt that Xinjiang was still threatened by Soviet expansionism.⁶⁹

Xinjiang was also threatened from within. The ETR still maintained the Ili National Army (INA) of 25,000 troops and the Nationalist forces in Xinjiang totaled 80,000, several brigades of which had not agreed to the surrender.⁷⁰ In addition to the two conventional forces, a band of nationalist-backed guerrillas led by Kazakh Osman Batur were fighting communist forces in northern Xinjiang. Batur was originally aligned with the ETR and defended the Kazakh lands in the Ili Valley. In 1946, for unknown reasons, but possibly due to his strong anti-communist sentiment, the Kazakh changed allegiances and fought against both the communists and the ETR.⁷¹

⁶⁸Ibid., 388, 392.

⁶⁹Millward and Tursun, 86.

⁷⁰Yitzhak Shichor, "The Great Wall of Steel: Military and Strategy," in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 132.

⁷¹Benson, 122.

In Xinjiang, Mao was also forced to address strong anti-Han sentiment, which existed amongst the non-Han majority population. Mao inherited a Nationalist government infrastructure, which was non-existent in Kazakh controlled northern Xinjiang.⁷² Similarly the Nationalists did not control the ETR held Ili Valley, which had acted as an independent state for nearly six years. In addition to the lack of established governance, the communists also lacked a cadre skilled in the local languages. Finally, the Uyghurs anticipated post-civil war self-determination. In 1936, Mao promised self-determination and the right to secede in an open letter to all Muslims in order to gain the Uyghurs support against the nationalists and the Japanese.⁷³ Therefore, in order for Mao to keep the Tarim Basin within the boundaries of China, he would have to go back on his word.

Mao faced many challenges in consolidation of communist rule at the end of the Civil War in 1949. Mao was forced to align the PRC with the Soviet Union, a traditional rival not an ally. Mao faced many threats along the Chinese border, including from British presence and control of Hong Kong, French presence in Indochina, US presence and control in the Philippines, as well as from Korea, India, and the emerging sovereign states in Southeast Asia. The US occupied Japan and had the atomic bomb and would quickly occupy Korea and the Taiwan Strait. Within China, Mao faced a fractured, war-torn economy and destroyed infrastructure. Furthermore, large portions of China, such as Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan, were not united under the communist banner. Mao did not possess an established government and bureaucracy capable of addressing all the issues he faced. Mao did possess several strengths; his skills as a political-military theorist, a cadre of organizers, and an experienced well-led and battle-hardened military.

⁷²Millward and Tursun, 84.

⁷³U.S. Joint Publications Research Service, JPRS 71911-4 1, Collected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (1915-1949) Vols 5-6 (Springfield, VA: National Technical Information Service, 1978). ZeDeng Mao. "Declaration of the Soviet Central Government to the Moslem People," (23 May 1936), 35, http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/classics/mao/cwcia/cwm5_1.pdf (accessed 17 November 2007).

Mao would use his skills as an organizer and rely on his outstanding military leaders, such as Peng Dehuai, Wang Enmao, and Lin Biao, to bring the western states of Tibet and Xinjiang under communist control.

The Conduct of the Counterinsurgency from 1949-1976

In 1949, the Communist forces appeared to be at a decided disadvantage as the Uyghurs possessed six of Mao's seven fundamentals of an insurgency. The Uyghurs held an independent country, which provided secure bases and national strength. They maintained the military backing of the Soviet Union and were conducting a relatively strong, if disjointed, insurgency against the Nationalist government in the remainder of Xinjiang. They even held a promise of autonomy from Mao himself, in the event of a Communist victory over the Nationalists. However, as mentioned previously, Mao had already secured recognition of PRC sovereignty over Xinjiang from the Soviets. He had also already coerced a senior ETR government official, Saifudin, into supporting communist occupation.⁷⁴ By 1954, however, the Communists would turn the tables and gain a decided advantage over the Uyghurs.

Xinjiang consisted of ten districts on 1 October 1949. Three districts were controlled by the former ETR and existed under nominal CCP authority until the mid-1950s. Five districts had been under Nationalist control and the remaining two were disputed and somewhat controlled by the Kazakh rebels under Osman Batur. The 1st Field Army (1st FA) and CCP focused its initial efforts in the five districts previously controlled by the Nationalists. The ETR was an independent

⁷⁴Donald H. McMillen, 1979. *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), 34. In 1948, before the liberation of Xinjiang, Mao invited Saifudin to attend the First CPPCC in Peking, where he was elected as a specially-invited personage to membership on its national committee. In October, one month after the disappearance of the plane and two months before the CCP acknowledged the disappearance Saifudin became a member of the Central People's Government Council (CPGC) chaired by Mao himself.

Muslim state from 1944 to 1950. As such, the Ili districts were not completely reintegrated into the rest of communist occupied Xinjiang until 1951.⁷⁵

The CCP identified five problems in consolidation and socialization of the three districts and the rest of Xinjiang: (1) the local nationalities strong desire for autonomy and independence; (2) the presence of distinct cultures, language, and regions of non-Hans; (3) a strong Soviet-oriented movement in the region; (4) continued resistance from rogue Nationalists and Osman Batur's forces; and (5) the great distance between Xinjiang and Beijing, as well as China's main force locations, combined with inadequate transportation and communication networks.⁷⁶ These factors necessitated slower pace of reforms and more gradual integration policies in Xinjiang as opposed to the rest of China.⁷⁷

Unlike other regions in China where the CCP immediately assumed governmental responsibilities, the CCP elected to occupy and govern Xinjiang militarily then transfer to civilian government control much later. The PLA 1st FA, led by Peng Dehuai entered Xinjiang unopposed in September 1949. Peng, who would later command the PLA forces in Korea and the 1st FA, had not previously operated in Xinjiang and lacked not only knowledge of the region but also the capability to speak the language of the people. Despite their lack of experience in the Xinjiang, the 1st FA was committed to a long-term occupation of the region. The 1st FA was re-designated as the PLA Xinjiang Military District (XJMD) thus confirming that the troops were to remain in Xinjiang. PLA leaders were not exempt from long tours in Xinjiang. For example, Wang Enmao, who was promoted from within the 1st FA, took command of the XJMD in 1952 and held the leading government, party, and military positions until 1966.⁷⁸ He became the single

⁷⁵Benson, 136.

⁷⁶McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang*, 42.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid., 79.

most powerful man in Xinjiang. He and the other senior military leaders' long-term presence in the region facilitated the integration of the area under CCP rule through the development of long-term relationships with the leading non-Hans.⁷⁹

The 1st FA held the majority of government and leadership positions until the late 1950s. However, Wang chose to leave the majority of administrative and local positions filled by the previous occupants, including 17,000 ETR officials who remained in place in the northern three districts.⁸⁰ Wang also allowed both Nationalist leader, Tao Zhiyue, and Ili leader, Saifudin Ezizi (who assumed the role of leader of the ETR after several of its leaders were killed in a plane crash), to not only remain in command of their military forces under the 1st FA, but also provided them senior political positions. Saifudin was the Fourth Secretary of the CCP in Xinjiang until 1956, when he was promoted to the Second Secretary.⁸¹

The transition to local official rule began as early as late 1950. "Han control" was the one theme remained constant throughout the transition to local "autonomy." Non-Hans, although represented in the government, were not assigned positions of leadership or decision-making. Similarly, over the next twenty years, pre-PRC era Turkic leaders were systematically removed from the government. For example, the majority of the former ETR officials and ethnic non-Hans retained their political positions until the Three-Anti Campaign in 1951 when many former nationalists and ETR officials were finally removed from office and imprisoned or reeducated.⁸² Another purge occurred after the Hundred Flowers Movement, during the Great Leap Forward in

⁷⁹Ibid., 82.

⁸⁰Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 238.

⁸¹McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 69.

⁸²The Three Anti-Campaign was a nationwide movement initiated by Mao in order to stamp out the corruption inherent under the Nationalist regime in 1951. The Three Anti's were corruption, waste, and bureaucracy. In Xinjiang the campaign, communists focused on anti-communist sentiment, and separatism.

1958, in 1962 during the drive against “modern-revisionism,” again in 1964, and throughout the political turmoil of the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976) when more purges and changes were instituted.⁸³ Targets of these purges were commonly Uyghurs and Kazakhs who were considered to be outspoken Muslims or “local nationalists.”⁸⁴

By 1953, however, the communists felt the conditions were right to establish local “autonomous” areas at the lowest levels of administration.⁸⁵ In 1954, autonomous regions of non-Uyghur ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, such as Kazak, Kyrgyz, Hui Mongol, Tajiks, and Sibe were established at the county-equivalent level.⁸⁶ Later in 1954, the Kazakhs were given their own autonomous *zhou* (state) and in 1955, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) was formed.⁸⁷ Unlike the other nationalities in Xinjiang, the Uyghurs did not receive autonomous counties or states, despite representing 70 percent of the population.⁸⁸ Leadership of the region remained in the hands of the XJMD and party leaders. By establishing autonomous zones for the other ethnic minorities, the PRC isolated the Uyghurs from potential allies in Xinjiang. Gardner Bovington claims that PRC actions created divisions among the people in Xinjiang, in order to reduce the level of influence of the Uyghur majority and to allow for co-optation by the Chinese state.⁸⁹

⁸³McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 95-100.

⁸⁴Ibid., 95. In 1962, over 17,000 “local Nationalists” were sent to labor camps including Saifudin who later returned to his political positions.

⁸⁵Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 243. Lowest levels of administration included the (*xiang* and *qu*) near equivalents of county governments in the US.

⁸⁶Millward and Tursun, 91.

⁸⁷Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 243.

⁸⁸Millward and Tursun, 91.

⁸⁹Gardner Bovington, “Heteronomy and Its Discontents: Minzu Regional Autonomy in Xinjiang,” in *Governing China’s Multi-Ethnic Frontiers*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2005), 117-118.

Recruitment of local non-Hans into the CCP also began in 1949. Initially, recruitment focused on the urban intellectuals and then spread to the rural areas.⁹⁰ By the middle of 1955, over 17,000 non-Hans were recruited into the CCP, 9,000 of which were Uyghurs.⁹¹ By 1965, the number of non-Han party members reached 106,000, with 85,000 being Uyghurs, and represented nearly one-half the total party membership in Xinjiang. As non-Han party membership increased, so did Han party membership caused by the migration of Han to the region, thus keeping non-Han in the minority. Furthermore, in 1965, only 6,000 non-Hans held leadership positions of any kind within the party, less than 5 percent of the total party membership. Thus, the Uyghurs held very little political power within their “own” XUAR, despite ten years of alleged autonomy. From 1965 to 1975, Uyghur representation in leadership positions dropped 25 percent and Uyghurs lost even more say in their government.⁹²

In terms of military activities in 1949, the 1st FA totaled 110,000 troops when it entered Xinjiang.⁹³ They took control of the seven southern districts facing no resistance. The 1st FA forces moved slowly into northern Xinjiang, reorganized the Ili Army, sent work teams out to the rural nomads, and purged military and political leaders suspected of ethnic separatist sympathies. As early as January 1950, the 1st FA integrated both the ETR’s Ili National Army (INA) and Nationalist forces into their command. The 1st FA also left cooperative military leaders in place in both the INA and Nationalist. However, several leaders of the INA were executed during the Three-Anti Campaign of 1951.⁹⁴ The majority of the Nationalist forces in Xinjiang were assigned to work in the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), also known as Bingtuans.

⁹⁰McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 73.

⁹¹Ibid., 74.

⁹²Millward and Tursun, 97.

⁹³Shichor, “The Great Wall of Steel: Military and Strategy,” 132.

⁹⁴Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 239.

The 80,000 former Nationalist forces in Xinjiang were put to work in the Bingtuans thus preventing the soldiers from taking up other careers but keeping them busy and under direct military control.⁹⁵

The Bingtuans were designed to improve the economy through agricultural and infrastructure development. The Bingtuans “reclaimed” over 70,000 hectares of land for cultivation by 1961, built roads and constructed bridges. Bingtuans also held the additional responsibilities of serving as militia forces in the event of a Soviet invasion, as a police force in the rural communities and for sponsoring hundreds of thousands of Han Chinese migrants from the overgrown eastern cities.⁹⁶

By 1966, the Bingtuans grew from 200,000 to 600,000 members.⁹⁷ Two million young Han Chinese came to work in the Bingtuans during the Great Leap Forward (1958 to 1960) and an additional 1.6 million came to the Bingtuans during the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976), though many of those returned when given the opportunity.⁹⁸ However, by 1975, 450,000 Chinese youth had moved to Xinjiang, thus significantly changing the demography of the region.⁹⁹ Estimated population figures in 1973 represent the effects of this migration. The total population of the XUAR in 1973 stood at almost 10 million; with 5.1 million Uyghurs, 3.5 million Han, 700,000 Kazakhs, 300,000 Hui, 180,000 Mongols/Daurs, 105,000 Kirghiz, and the

⁹⁵Millward and Tursun, 90.

⁹⁶McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 57.

⁹⁷Millward and Tursun, 90.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid.

remainder included Manchus, Sibos, Soluns, Tadzhiks, Uzbeks, Russians, and Tartars.¹⁰⁰ In less than thirty years, Han population increased more than fifteen fold and passed the Kazakhs as the second largest ethnic group in Xinjiang. At that time, the Uyghurs were still the majority in their region; however, the Han Chinese in Xinjiang were gaining.

Although the PLA entry into Xinjiang was unopposed and many of the Nationalist forces had surrendered, the PLA had to conduct combat operations in the region well into 1954. According to one report, over 30,000 “active counterrevolutionaries and local bandits” were killed during that period, including Osman Batur and two Nationalist brigade commanders who had refused to surrender their units in 1949.¹⁰¹ Combat operations proved fairly easy for the 1st FA. Not only were the soldiers experienced from the war with the Nationalists but they were able to turn the terrain to their favor. As the towns centered on oases, they were easily isolated. Furthermore, as more and more non-Han joined the communist party, infiltration of the ethnic population groups became easier and separatists faced increased difficulties hiding. By 1954, the counterinsurgency effort had gone so smoothly that the number of PLA forces in Xinjiang had dropped from 110,000 to 60,000.¹⁰² The PLA did retain the ability to surge forces into Xinjiang. For example, in the early 1960s, as many as 500,000 PLA troops were sent to occupy Xinjiang, when tensions with the Soviet Union rose.¹⁰³ Separatist resistance ended in 1962, at the conclusion of the Ili Incident (discussed in the next section) and the exodus of over 62,000 Uyghurs.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 10. Compiled by McMillen from multiple sources.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 102.

¹⁰²Shichor, “The Great Wall of Steel: Military and Strategy in Xinjiang,” 132.

¹⁰³Ibid., 133.

¹⁰⁴McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 267.

The Communists also attacked the separatist movement through integration of the Xinjiang economy with that of the rest of China. Prior to 1949, Xinjiang and the ETR maintained closer economic ties to the Soviet Union than to China. Trade consisted primarily of exporting livestock for commercial products. The PRC sought to transform the economy of Xinjiang from agriculture based to industrial based. By 1955, the PRC had built 64 new factories in Xinjiang and 60,000 handicraft businesses.¹⁰⁵ In 1958, large-scale oil production started in Xinjiang and mineral and ore extraction increased significantly. Industrial production stagnated briefly during the early years of the Cultural Revolution but rebounded in the 1970s.¹⁰⁶ Industrial production increased more than 1,000 fold, yet the Soviet Union remained Xinjiang's number one trade partner.¹⁰⁷

In order to overcome the westward economic orientation of Xinjiang, the Chinese began to improve the transportation infrastructure eastward. The completion of the Gansu railroad in 1960, which linked Urumchi to the eastern Chinese rail system, the creation of a north-south road system oriented from Urumchi, and the construction of an international air terminal all caused Urumchi to replace Yining and Kasghar as the economic hub of Xinjiang and facilitated the shift in orientation from west to east.¹⁰⁸ An even greater focus on economic integration would occur after 1978.

In addition to integrating the XUAR economy with the remainder of the country, the CCP also took steps to assimilate the Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities not only through replacing Uyghur history with Han history (see the Uyghur People and History of Xinjiang), but also by integrating the language and attacking their religion. The PRC held a decisive advantage on the

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 167.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 267.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 167.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

control of information within China. By 1958, the PRC held a monopoly on media communications in Xinjiang. By holding a monopoly on information, the CCP could accuse and convict Uyghur historians of subversion and declare their writings illegal.¹⁰⁹ The Uyghurs could only claim that the PRC historians spread lies.¹¹⁰ For example, in 1949, after the PLA occupied Xinjiang, Saifudin was forced to agree that the Three Districts (or Ili) Rebellion was an integral part of the Communist Revolution against the Nationalists.¹¹¹ The PRC also attacked Uyghur history through education of youth. Up to 1973, secondary education stressed political indoctrination and the value of labor, as opposed to technical studies and Uyghur history.¹¹² Other attempts to rewrite the history of the region became more apparent after 1979 and are discussed in that section.

In 1958, Wang Enmao made the first overt movement towards assimilation when he claimed the “complete blending of all nationalities,” was the only solution to security and economic development in Xinjiang.¹¹³ Some PRC assimilation policies previously existed. For example, in 1952, the PRC established thirteen nationality universities throughout the country that were designed to provide higher education to non-Han nationalities. The PRC constitution guarantees the preservation of minority language; however, all instruction at the nationality universities was conducted in Mandarin (*pu tong hua*). The message was quite clear, non-Hans could receive a quality education, but not in their native tongue.

¹⁰⁹Bovingdon, “Contested Histories,” 353.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹¹Millward and Tursun, 86.

¹¹²McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 281.

¹¹³Millward and Tursun, 94.

The PRC also directly attacked the Uyghur language. Since the year 1000, Uyghur orthography was an Arabic-based script similar to Farsi and Urdu.¹¹⁴ In 1956, the CCP mandated a change in Uyghur, Kazakh, and Kirghiz orthographies to Cyrillic based orthographies.¹¹⁵ The intent of this change was to allow for the learning of modern science, and erode the influence of Muslim teachings, which were written in Arabic.¹¹⁶ After a rift between the USSR and the PRC, in the early 1960s, the orthographies changed again to Latin-based pinyin orthography.¹¹⁷ Pinyin incorporated Chinese vocabulary into the Uyghur language and would facilitate the anticipated complete transition to a common language.¹¹⁸ The second change not only pulled non-Han youth further away from Arabic-based Muslim scripture but also pushed non-Han youth further towards assimilation, thus making Uyghur nationalism more difficult to pass from generation to generation. The non-Han people were told to eliminate the remaining influence of “old ideas and old customs.”¹¹⁹

By 1966, on the eve of the Cultural Revolution, Wang had accomplished a great deal in the integration of Xinjiang with the rest of China. The Han achieved near numerical parity with the Uyghur population, non-Hans, including independent herdsmen, were integrated into multi-nationality communes, former ETR officials were purged or reeducated, and measures were in

¹¹⁴Millward, *Eurasian Crossroad*, 235.

¹¹⁵McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 116.

¹¹⁶McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 116; and Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 235.

¹¹⁷McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 116; and Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 235. Pinyin uses the Latin alphabet to replicate the sounds of Chinese Mandarin.

¹¹⁸McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 118; and Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 235.

¹¹⁹McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 268.

place to mitigate the influence of Islam, including organized religious activities.¹²⁰ Language reforms were cutting young non-Hans from their Islamic and ethnic traditions, as well as their diaspora in the Soviet Union.¹²¹ Furthermore, 1962 marked the last internal disturbance of significance until 1990. In response to increasing tensions with the Soviet Union, the PLA closed the border in 1962. Approximately 62,000 Uyghurs and other minorities rioted in Ili, attacking the capital building, and forced their way across the border into the Soviet Union.¹²²

The unrest and political instability caused by the Cultural Revolution was not enough to undue Wang's accomplishments in Xinjiang. In Xinjiang, the Cultural Revolution pitted Han loyal to Wang Enmao against Red Guard Han loyal to Mao. In 1967 alone, over 600 clashes occurred in Xinjiang between these two rival factions. Despite the significant level of violence in Xinjiang, none of it was attributed to separatist or anti-Han sentiment, thus confirming that Wang's counterinsurgency strategy had been extremely successful. In 1969, border skirmishes with the Soviet Union became commonplace and some of the 62,000 immigrants may have taken part in the skirmishes, siding with the Soviets.¹²³

In 1968, two years into the Cultural Revolution, Wang was ousted and replaced by another Han, an outsider, Long Shujin.¹²⁴ Long himself was later purged in 1973, as a result of

¹²⁰Ibid., 311.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Felix K. Chang, "China's Central Asian Power and Problems," *Orbis* 41 no. 3 (Summer 1997), <http://lumen.cgscarl.com/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mth&AN=9707172819&site=ehost-live> (accessed 7 January 2008).

¹²³The incident in 1969 is discussed in greater detail in the next section.

¹²⁴McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 230.

the Lin Biao affair, and replaced by the Uyghur Saifudin.¹²⁵ However, seven of the ten positions in the XUAR CCP Committee remained Han, thus significantly limiting Saifudin's power.¹²⁶

Saifudin did not remain in power long. He was removed in 1978 for his wife's connections to the "Gang of Four."¹²⁷ Saifudin's removal did not spark mass objection or disapproval from the non-Han in Xinjiang, for the reasons stated above. Saifudin's removal highlights the level of control the central government still held in Xinjiang, in that it could remove a non-Han and replace him with another Han (Wang Feng).¹²⁸

In conclusion, the conduct of the counterinsurgency from 1949 to 1976 was on the surface a complete success. The goal of the Wang Enmao and the CCP remained that of gradually suppressing the identity of the minorities and thus bringing about their fusion with the Han people.¹²⁹ Wang had largely succeeded. In fact, Wang's COIN strategy worked well enough that little, if any, separatist activity occurred after 1969, despite the political turmoil of the Cultural Revolution and subsequent downfall of the Gang of Four. However, the desire for Uyghur independence was not dead. The resurgence of violence in the 1990s, which is discussed later, indicates that during this period the insurgency was only temporarily suppressed and not eliminated and thus the PRC's COIN strategy was not entirely successful.

Analysis of Mao's "Seven Fundamentals of Counterinsurgency," reveals where Wang and the CCP succeeded and what they missed. In 1978, the Uyghurs within Xinjiang remained

¹²⁵Ibid., 275. McMillen claims that Saifudin's appointment as First Secretary of the XUAR CCP committee did not result in a rise of Uyghur nationalism. Saifudin held no political clout in Xinjiang and had shed his Uyghur identity many years prior. The move was considered safe at the time, because of Saifudin's decades of communist loyalty.

¹²⁶Ibid., 277. The other two committee leaders: Simaiyi Aimaiti and Caodanuofu were both Uyghurs and appointed to the committee after Long's ouster.

¹²⁷Ibid., 301.

¹²⁸Ibid., 294.

¹²⁹Ibid., 120.

unorganized and passive, as demonstrated by the apparent apathy to Saifudin's removal as First Secretary of the XUAR CCP Committee. Saifudin's removal also demonstrates the depth of disorganization of the Uyghur political organization. The absence of military operations after 1962 shows the importance of denying access to military equipment.

Strategic communications were very important to the CCP effort in Xinjiang. The Communists had risen to power in China on the back of the Chinese people and once in power they set out to unify all the Chinese people. The CCP's information operations attacked Uyghur history, culture, language, and religion and were rapidly eroding Uyghur national strength. PRC national strength was on the rise as demonstrated by the same actions, but also abroad, by the PRC's appointment to the United Nations (UN) Security Council in 1971. Most certainly, the "lost" territory of Xinjiang was also firmly under PRC control.

The gap in Wang's and the PRC's COIN strategy was that the Uyghur separatist still maintained a "secure base" in the Soviet Union. By the time the PLA closed the border in 1962 over 300,000 Uyghurs had fled Xinjiang and escaped to the Soviet Union and beyond. The PRC was unable to prevent Uyghur separatists from establishing secure bases outside of their span of control. In the 1990s, this inability would give rise to a new wave of violence.

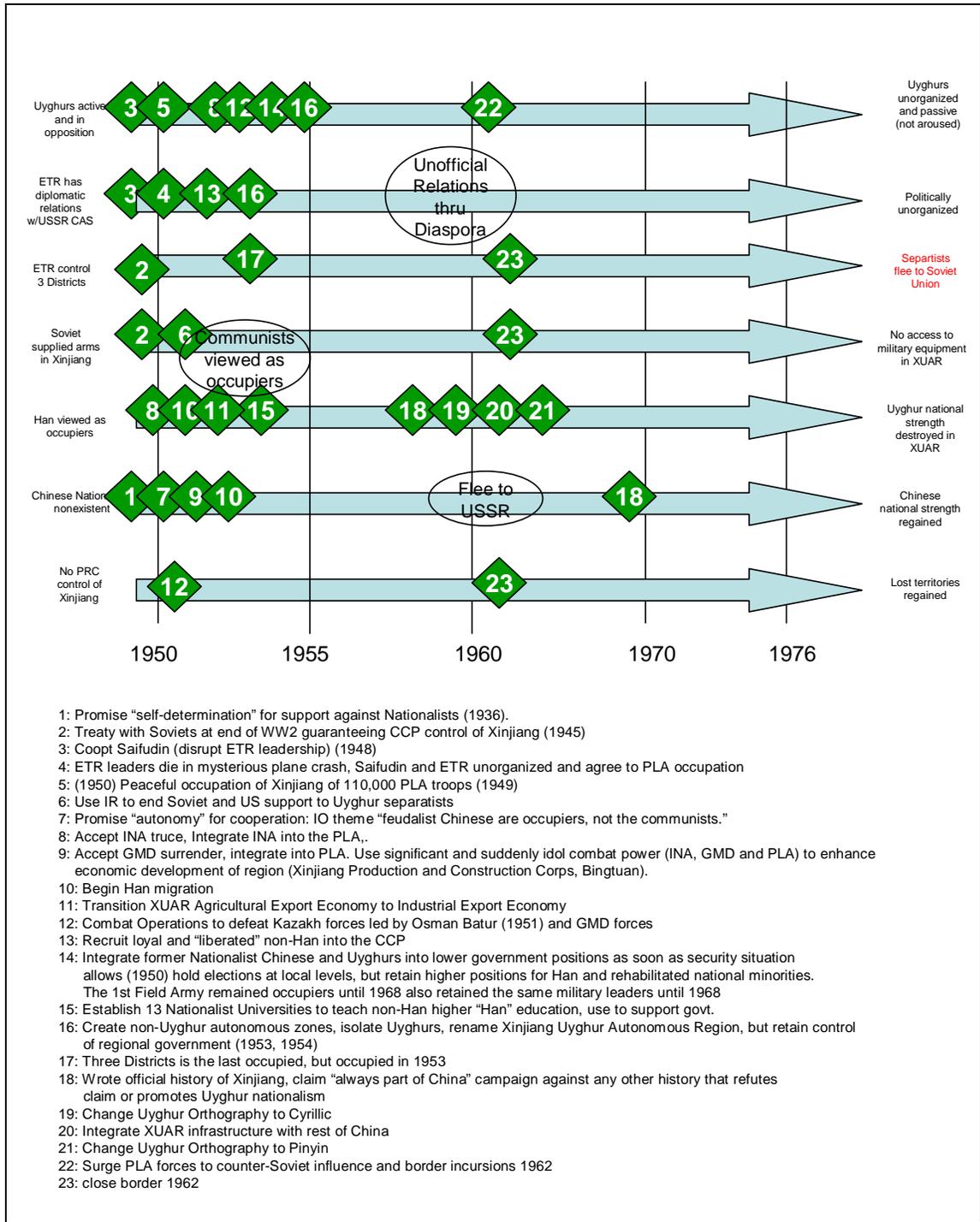


Figure 4. Logical Lines of Operation for COIN in Xinjiang 1949-1976

The Conduct of the Insurgency from 1949-1976

In 1949, the conditions for Uyghur independence appeared to be very well at hand. The INA controlled three districts in Xinjiang and was conducting a successful insurgency against the Nationalist in the remaining seven districts. The INA was well equipped courtesy of the Soviet Union, and national will was very high. Thus in 1949, the Uyghurs attained six of Mao's seven fundamentals of an insurgency. They had aroused and organized people, maintained established bases in the three districts, possessed a well equipped force, were destroying the enemy's (Nationalist's) national strength, and in the process of regaining "lost" territories (the seven remaining districts). They even held a promise from Mao himself, for the right to independence at the conclusion of the Civil War. However, the Uyghurs were not unified politically. The ETR leadership was fractured not only along ethnic lines, but along pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet lines as well. Moreover, the Kazakh leader Yaqub Beg, one of the founding insurgents, left the ETR several years previously and fought against the INA in the northern districts.

The conclusion of the Civil War did not bring independence for the Uyghur people as expected due to a series of unfortunate events. First, in September of 1949, a delegation of Ili leaders including Akhmedjan Kasimi, and three other leaders representing Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and Kyrgyz departed from Yining by plane to meet with CCP leaders in Beijing. The plane never arrived in Beijing and what happened to the plane remains a mystery.¹³⁰ Two weeks later, the Soviet ambassador reported the loss of the plane to Saifudin (Seypidin) Ezizi, who was the senior

¹³⁰Millward and Tursun, 86; and McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 24. McMillen claims the event occurred in August. But the remainder of the story is reported the same in both texts.

ETR leader not on the plane.¹³¹ Saifudin, a pro-Soviet Uyghur, immediately went to Beijing to broker a deal with the PRC. However, Saifudin, in previous dealings with the CCP and Mao in 1948, had secured several important post-civil war positions within the CCP.¹³² Saifudin, his position in the new government secured, cooperated with the CCP and refused to declare independence. Furthermore, Saifudin acknowledged that the Three Districts revolution was a part of the Chinese revolution and, therefore, all of Xinjiang was under control of the PRC.¹³³ Saifudin accepted PLA occupation in what became known as the Peaceful Liberation of Xinjiang.¹³⁴

Xinjiang provincial chairman, Nationalist Burhan Shahidi, and Commander of Nationalist forces in Xinjiang, Tao Zhiyue, agreed to surrender to the PLA in Gansu on 25 September 1949.¹³⁵ Thus at the end of the conflict, 100,000 Nationalist troops stationed in Xinjiang were suddenly unemployed. The ETR crumbled under the combined weight of communist occupation, continued harassment from the Kazakhs, and political situation within the ETR after the disappearance of the plane. Saifudin surrendered the INA to the PLA, which

¹³¹Millward and Tursun, 86; and McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 24. Both sources claim that the CCP did not acknowledge the death of the ETR leaders until December 1949. Conspiracy theories regarding the cause of the crash including both Soviet and CCP tampering have not been substantiated. The CCP did not offer an explanation regarding what happened to the plane. According to Millward and Tursun, Uyghur historians who fled to the USSR, due to post-1991 increased publication freedoms, claim that the Kasimi-led delegation intended to demand independence or true self-determination. An independent Uyghurstan would have upset a previous agreement between Mao and Stalin, which granted the USSR access to Xinjiang's resources in return for a sizable loan to fight the nationalists.

¹³²McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 34-35.

¹³³Millward and Tursun, 86.

¹³⁴Gladney, "Chinese Program of Development and Control," 108.

¹³⁵McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 24.

entered Xinjiang unopposed in late 1949. Over the next fifteen years, as described in the previous section, the Uyghurs lost every fundamental advantage they had held in 1949.

The conduct of the 1st FA in Xinjiang from 1949 to 1954 was such that the Uyghurs could not achieve any level of organization. Any speech which criticized the CCP, the Chinese, or 1st FA resulted in arrests or military operations. Furthermore, the CCP policy of granting autonomous counties or states within Xinjiang to other ethnic minorities isolated the Uyghurs from potential supporters. The one credible insurgent organization in Xinjiang was not even Uyghur, but led by a Kazakh, Osman Batur, who was killed by the PLA in 1951.

In 1954, a religious uprising in the southern district of Khotan also failed to gain momentum. The Amim Group, led by a Muslim named Abdimit, attempted to stir an uprising with the intent of establishing an Islamic state.¹³⁶ The group succeeded in stealing military weapons and vehicles in a series of night raids. However, the Khotan CCP Committee discovered the plot from a loyal Imam and disrupted the group's plan. The Amim Group did successfully take over a labor camp and defended it against police attack. However, with the help of local informants, 210 rebels were captured or surrendered. Abdimit escaped and continued to attempt to incite insurrections, in Luopu in May 1956, and again in Khotan in April 1957.¹³⁷ However, both were easily defeated by the PLA and police forces.

Uyghur separatists did attempt to raise the passions of the people during the Hundred Flowers Movement in 1956 when Mao sought criticism of the CCP. The Hundred Flowers Movement resulted in strong anti-Han speeches and demonstrations throughout Xinjiang. Mao quickly ended the movement and during the subsequent "Anti-Rightist" campaign, 100,000 people were investigated, 830 imprisoned, and 53 executed.¹³⁸

¹³⁶Dillon, 52.

¹³⁷Ibid., 55.

¹³⁸Tyler, 144.

The most significant incident which aroused the Uyghur people occurred in 1962. The PLA closed the border between Xinjiang and the Soviet Union in 1962, due to tensions between the CCP and the Soviet Union. Approximately 62,000 Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities stormed government buildings in Yining (Ili). The rioters' goal was not Uyghur independence, but permission to leave China. The riot was quickly quelled but only after the disgruntled minorities were allowed to cross into the Soviet Union.¹³⁹ In total, between 1953 and 1962, 300,000 Uyghurs left China for Central Asia, or 7.5 percent of the 1945 Xinjiang population. Uyghurs continued to flee until the border was closed militarily in 1962, and remained officially closed until 1981.¹⁴⁰

Uyghurs within Xinjiang remained if not unorganized and un-aroused, then unable to mobilize. Across the border, in the Soviet Union, however, separatists did organize. Members of the 62,000 refugees who ransacked Yining in 1962 formed the Xinjiang Minority Refugee Army (XMRA) allegedly led by Zunin Taibov, a Kazakh. According to Taibov, the XMRA allegedly participated in the 1968 to 1969 border skirmishes between the Soviet Union and China.¹⁴¹ Taibov also allegedly set up radio stations, which broadcast anti-Han messages across the border into Xinjiang.¹⁴² One such radio broadcast claimed that Uyghur, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz girls were being forced to marry Hans on pain of death.¹⁴³ The tensions between the Soviet Union and

¹³⁹McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 47; and Chang, 25.

¹⁴⁰Gladney, "Chinese Program of Development and Control," 108; and McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977*, 123.

¹⁴¹Donald H. McMillen, "The Urumqi Military Region: Defense and Security in China's West," *Asian Survey* 22, no. 8 (August 1982): 711, <http://www.jstor.org/view/00044687/di014392/01p0400s/0?frame=noframe&userID=4335a08e@cgsc.leavenworth.army.mil/01c0a848710050485af&dpi=3&pageJump=1&config=jstor> (accessed 14 January 2008).

¹⁴²McMillen, "The Urumqi Military Region," 712.

¹⁴³Tyler, 148.

China combined with the fighting between pro-Mao and Pro-Wang forces in Xinjiang, left the region in a state of martial law from 1966 to 1969, once again denying Uyghurs the opportunity to organize.

One separatist organization did exist within Xinjiang from 1968 to 1970. The East Turkestan People's Revolutionary Party (ETPRP) succeeded in issuing publications calling for an independent and communist ETR.¹⁴⁴ The ETPRP was considered the largest post-1949 resistance organization in Xinjiang.¹⁴⁵ The ETPRP maintained its own Central Committee, a Political Bureau, and three activist youth organizations.¹⁴⁶ The organization was funded through crime, particularly theft and coerced donations, and accumulated a small sum of 100,000 renminbi (RMB).¹⁴⁷ The ETPRP also collapsed, as a result of information about the organization being leaked to the PLA.

One aspect of the Cultural Revolution did have a lasting effect in Xinjiang. According to Millward and Tursun, the "Leftist" cultural program led by Mao's wife, Jiang Qing who allegedly despised Xinjiang and the non-Han nationalities, fostered attacks on Islam and the customs on the non-Han peoples.¹⁴⁸ From 1966 to 1969, Qur'ans and other religious texts were burned, Islamic leaders publicly humiliated, Islamic sites closed, and Mosques turned into pig-pens.¹⁴⁹ Although the PRC had attacked Islam in Xinjiang previously, the scale of this assault on Islam was much greater. However, even these actions did not move the Uyghurs to great efforts to organize a revolt.

¹⁴⁴Millward and Tursun, 97.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.; and Dillon, 57.

¹⁴⁶Dillon, 57.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 58.

¹⁴⁸Millward and Tursun, 97.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

In conclusion, by 1976, the end of the Mao's era, the Uyghur separatist movement in Xinjiang was thought to be virtually non-existent. The ETR collapsed and all autonomy was lost for the Uyghur people. Han migration to Xinjiang coupled with Uyghur immigration to the Soviet Union dynamically changed the composition of the population of Xinjiang. The insurgent organizations that did exist during this time were unable to overcome infiltration by the CCP cadre. More importantly, the Uyghurs, both in Xinjiang and in the Soviet Union, were unable to capitalize on the chaos caused by the Cultural Revolution and failed to gain enough Soviet support to organize an insurgency. By 1970, groups such as the ETPRP either dispersed or went underground.

The separatist movement in Xinjiang was not dead despite the many success of the multi-pronged PRC effort. The Uyghurs were able to establish a secure base in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the PRC attacks on Islam during the Cultural Revolution would potentially provide a source of motivation for Uyghur Separatists in the future. During the next thirty years, the Uyghur separatists not only used their Muslim faith as an anti-Han rallying cry, but following the collapse of the Soviet Union, used Islam to find new sources of training, equipment, and secure bases.

The next two sections cover the conduct of the counterinsurgency and conduct of the insurgency from 1978 to 2007. This era of the conflict differs from the 1949 to 1976 period in three different ways. First and foremost, the Chinese shifted their strategic goal from internal unification to modernization. Second, the collapse of the Soviet Union sparked a new wave of nationalism in Central Asia. Third, the US initiation of the GWOT also directly impacted the conduct of both sides of the Xinjiang conflict. These three significant factors warrant separate analysis of the conflict in the post-Mao period.

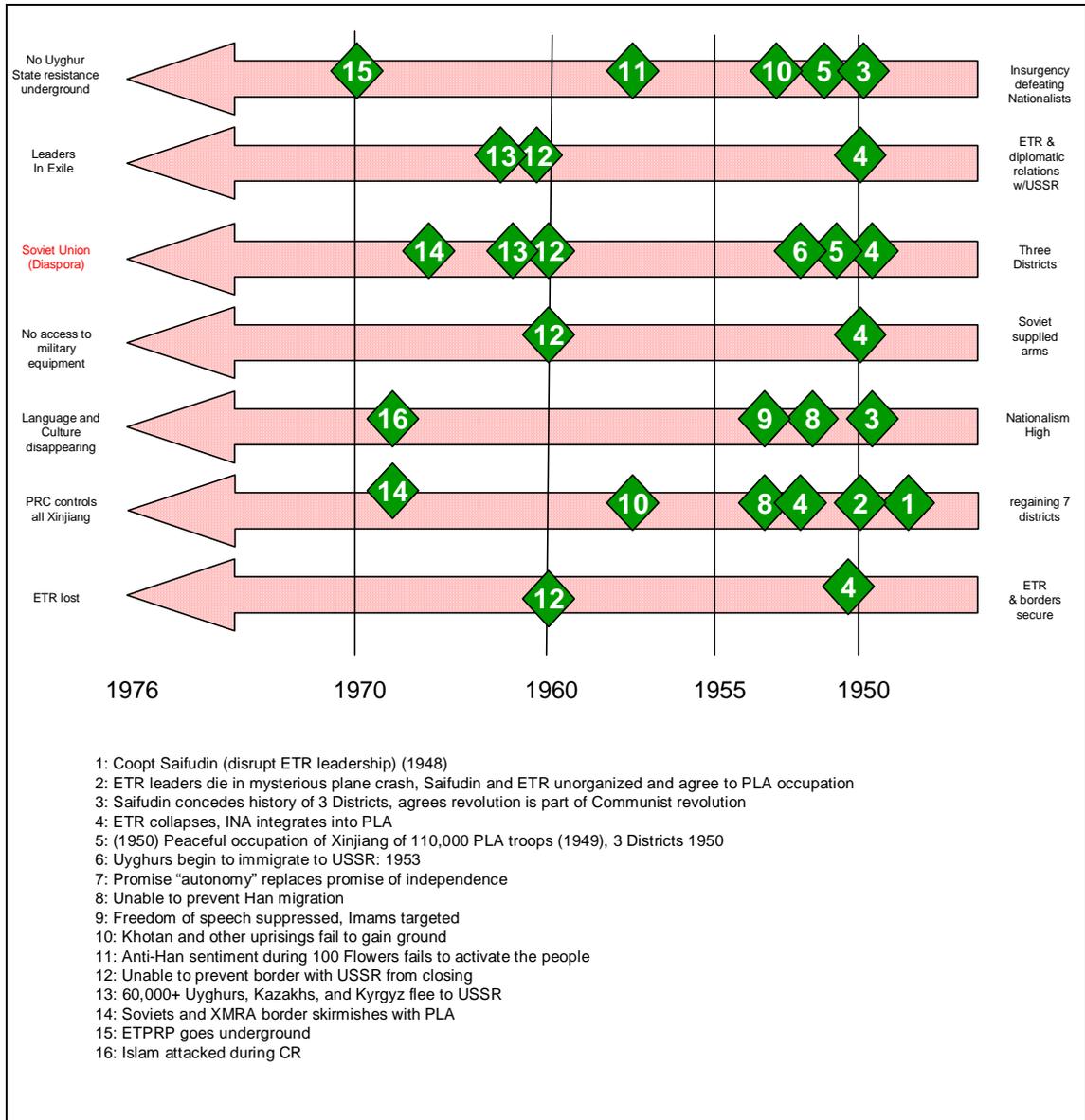


Figure 5. Logical Lines of Operation for Insurgency in Xinjiang 1949-1976

Conduct of the Counterinsurgency from 1978 to 2007

The course of the PRC turned significantly in 1978. After the death of Mao, in 1976, and the downfall of the Gang of Four, Deng Xiaoping emerged as the new leader of the CCP.¹⁵⁰ Deng sought to modernize China along four lines, agriculture, industry, science and technology, and military. The center-point of the Four Modernizations was economic development. Deng recognized that China's place in history would be determined by its economic development.¹⁵¹ Deng also realized that in order to develop China's economy, he would have to open up China to the west. As a result of the path set forth by Deng and executed by his successors over the next three decades, China emerged as one of the leading economies in the world.

The conduct of the counterinsurgency from 1978 differs significantly from previously. During this period, the PRC conducted the counterinsurgency in two distinct areas of operation, within Xinjiang and internationally. Under Mao, the PRC primarily, but not exclusively, focused its effort within the borders of Xinjiang. Deng and his successors, particularly after 1991, focused the COIN efforts beyond China's borders. Furthermore, during this period, China not only effectively reacted to potentially destabilizing global events, but also anticipated insurgent strategy. Only after a new wave of violence in the 1990s did China recognize the influence the Uyghur Diaspora and Islam was (and is) having on the insurgency. By 2007, China successfully adjusted its strategy to mitigate these two effects and deny the insurgents all seven of Mao's fundamentals of an insurgency.

Several significant world events occurred between 1989 and 2002, which either threatened to further destabilize Xinjiang, or presented new challenges for the PRC COIN strategy. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 spawned the Democracy Now Movement

¹⁵⁰Deng did not immediately replace Mao. Hua Guafeng, Deng's mentor first succeeded Mao, but did not hold power for long.

¹⁵¹Maurice Meisner, *The Deng Xiaoping Era, An Inquiry into the Fate of Chinese Socialism 1978-1994* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), 74.

throughout China and culminated in the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989. The worldwide coverage of the incident served notice to the CCP that China had ceased to be immune from the influence of the global media and judgment of the international community. The birth and growth of the Internet also further linked China with the rest of the world, thus making suppression of information more difficult, and exposing Chinese politics to international scrutiny. The break-up of the Soviet Union in 1989, and subsequent independence, the nationalist Central Asia States of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan rekindled Uyghur nationalism. Finally, the initiation of the US-led GWOT in 2002 provided China an opportunity to effect world perceptions of Uyghur separatist activities. All of these global changes also directly impacted the conduct of the insurgency and counterinsurgency in Xinjiang. This section demonstrates how the PRC was able to successfully adapt to or take advantage of each situation in order to continue to successfully repress Uyghur separatism.

Deng, in response to the unrest in 1980, visited Xinjiang in 1981 and received calls of Uyghur “self rule” for his troubles. Deng blamed the local CCP for the uprisings and reinstated Wang Enmao as First Secretary and First Political Commissar of the Urumqi Military Region.¹⁵² In 1982, Wang reinvigorated the XPCC, focusing them on agricultural and industrial development. Uyghurs were allowed to read their own history, and the Roman pinyin was dropped and once again replaced by Arabic script.¹⁵³ Although these actions tended to have a temporary stabilizing effect, in early May 1990, separatists Uyghurs in Xinjiang and abroad still represented the greatest threat to stability in the central Asian region.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵²Dillon, 72.

¹⁵³Tyler, 152.

¹⁵⁴Dillon, 73. Dillon references Tomur Dawamat and Uyghur loyal to the CCP as the primary source of this claim. Tomur was serving as the Chair of the XUAR government when he made this claim.

In the early 1990, China in a series of diplomatic moves effectively isolated the Xinjiang from the Uyghur Diaspora. In January 1992, China recognized all five of the newly formed Central Asian States (CAS) and initiated economic relations with them. China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan initiated a process of annual consultation, border delimitation, and mutual cooperation unprecedented in Chinese Foreign Policy.¹⁵⁵ China also gained agreement of these states not to support independence movements in Xinjiang as well as “hot pursuit” agreements to cross international boundaries to destroy guerillas.¹⁵⁶ The relationship between these states was further solidified in the formation of the Shanghai Five on 26 April 1996. In 2001, the five became six with Uzbekistan. In 2002, the leaders of each nation signed the Chart for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).¹⁵⁷ The SCO Charter, as with previous agreements between the nations, binded members to mutually support each other against terrorism, separatism and extremism, and other activities.¹⁵⁸ Over 300,000 Uyghurs are believed to reside in the Central Asian States. Some of which had organized into effective political parties. The new SCO alliance significantly reduced the level of influence the Uyghur Diaspora held in each of the participating states. Since the SCO’s inception, both Kazakhstan and Kyrgystan have turned suspected Uyghur separatists residing in their countries over to the PRC government.¹⁵⁹

The PRC received additional outside support after the US initiated the GWOT in 2001. On 2 September 2001, Xinjiang Party Secretary Wang Lequan announced that the situation in

¹⁵⁵Bachman, 160.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Declaration by the Heads of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, 7 June 2002, <http://www.in.mid.ru/bl.nsf/900b2c3ac91734634325698f002d9dcf> (accessed 10 January 2008).

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

¹⁵⁹Gladney, “China Prospects for the Uighur People.”

Xinjiang was “better than ever in history.”¹⁶⁰ Two weeks later, after the 11 September attacks in New York and in order to align China with the US, Wang reversed his position, and stressed that terrorism represented a significant threat in Xinjiang.¹⁶¹ Since 11 September, the PRC has consistently emphasized that the Uyghur separatist movement is an Islamic fundamentalist movement intent on establishing a Central Asian caliphate, not a drive for Uyghur self-determination and succeeded in convincing the US that this was indeed the case.¹⁶²

The PRC quickly gave support to the US-led GWOT. This effort was linked to efforts by the PRC government to brand Uyghur organizations, in general, as terrorist and to associate them with the Taliban and Osama bin-Laden.¹⁶³ The PRC’s State Council Information Office released a document titled, “East Turkestan Terrorist Forces Cannot Get Away With Impunity,” and cited that from 1990 to 2001, East Turkestan terrorist forces were responsible for 2,000 terrorist incidents in Xinjiang resulting in the deaths of 162 people and was linked to the Al-Qaeda network.¹⁶⁴ The document was released in January 2002, four months after 11 September. As a result, an organization the PRC claimed was linked to Uyghur separatism, the East Turkestan

¹⁶⁰James A. Millward, Policy Studies 6, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment* (Washington, DC: East-West Center, 2004), 11, <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS006.pdf> (accessed 17 September 2007).

¹⁶¹Ibid.

¹⁶²Ibid., 31.

¹⁶³Bachman, 183.

¹⁶⁴Information Office of the State Council, “East Turkistan’ Forces Cannot Get Away with Impunity.” Many western experts doubt the validity of China’s claim, particularly ETIM’s link to Al Qaeda. Anthropologist Arienne Dwyer, a Uyghur expert and professor at the University of Kansas, doubts the very existence of ETIM and other similar organizations which China claims as terrorist organizations.

Islamic Movement (ETIM), was added to the US and UN Terrorist Watch list.¹⁶⁵ Although the US and UN would not recognize the East Turkestan Liberation Organization (ETLO) and East Turkestan Islamic Party (ETIP) as terrorist organizations, they were (and remain) recognized as such by the SCO.¹⁶⁶ Thus far, the PRC has successfully used the link between Uyghur separatism and the GWOT to balance US and Human Rights Organizations' criticism of ongoing suppression of minority groups.¹⁶⁷

China has also received considerable outside support through its use of economic pressure and incentive. For example, after 11 September, China received a promise from interim Afghan leader Hamid Karzai that Afghanistan would return any Muslim separatists with Chinese citizenship in return for a \$150 million aid package.¹⁶⁸ In 1997, Pakistan, after years of being a haven for and providing training to Uyghur separatists, finally succumbed to Chinese pressure and forcibly deported "scores" of Uyghurs back to China, executed nineteen Uyghurs allegedly receiving military training in Pakistan and closed Uyghur community centers across the country.¹⁶⁹ Pakistan remained an active supporter of the PRC and in 2003, the Pakistan military killed ETIM leader Hasan Mahsum during a raid of a suspected Al-Qaeda hideout in South Waziristan.¹⁷⁰ In 2006, suspected separatist organizer, Muslim Imam, and dual Canadian-Chinese

¹⁶⁵U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Country Reports on Terrorism, 30 April 2007, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/82731.htm> (accessed 19 January 2008). Uyghur Anthropologist Arienne Dwyer doubts the legitimacy to the PRC's claim, citing that suspected ETIM terrorist operations in central Asia, such as the 2004 bombing of the US Embassy in Uzbekistan, run counter to the cause of Uyghur rights.

¹⁶⁶U.S. Department of State.

¹⁶⁷Bachman, 184.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., 183.

¹⁶⁹Shichor, "The Great Wall of Steel Military and Strategy in Xinjiang," 145.

¹⁷⁰BBC News, "Chinese Militant 'Shot Dead'" 23 December 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3343241.stm> (accessed 19 January 2008); and Shichor, "The Great Wall of Steel Military and Strategy in Xinjiang," 145.

citizen Huseyincan Celil was extradited from Uzbekistan and sentenced to life in prison, despite the protest of the Canadian government.¹⁷¹ Increased economic trade with the Middle East, to whom Beijing primarily exports military weaponry in return for oil, has served to keep Islamic pressure regarding Uyghur autonomy at bay.¹⁷²

PRC actions within the borders of China clearly focus on assimilation of not only the Uyghur people but of the Xinjiang region itself. Assimilation may appear to be a very strong word as it implies the extinction of the Uyghur culture. The Constitution of the PRC government clearly preserves the rights of the ethnic minorities of China to preserve their culture and language.¹⁷³ However, integration is too weak a word to describe the policies of the PRC in Xinjiang. The economic integration of Xinjiang with more prosperous and Han dominated eastern China requires a higher level of assimilation. Furthermore, political violence and separatism becomes less likely, the more Xinjiang assimilates or unites with the rest of China.

PRC efforts to assimilate the Xinjiang region are focused in three areas, Han immigration, economic integration, and cultural integration. Although the Han have continuously immigrated to Xinjiang throughout the conflict, immigration prior to 1990 was primarily government mandated and controlled by the XPCC. In 1990, a new wave of Han immigrants arrived in Xinjiang, not from government coercion, but from their own initiative.¹⁷⁴ According to the 2000 census, the total population of Xinjiang was nearly 18.5 million.¹⁷⁵ Uyghurs made up

¹⁷¹CBC News, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, “Canadian in China Sentenced to Life in Prison: A Report,” 19 April 2007, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/toronto/story/2007/04/19/celil-sentence.html> (accessed 15 January 2008).

¹⁷²Gladney, “China Prospects for the Uighur People.”

¹⁷³National People’s Congress, *Constitution of the People’s Republic of China*, 2004, http://english.gov.cn/2005-08/05/content_20813.htm (accessed 15 January 2008).

¹⁷⁴Bovingdon, “Heteronomy and Its Discontents,” 125.

¹⁷⁵Stanley Toops, Working Papers No. 1, *Demographics and Development in Xinjiang After 1949* (Washington, DC: East West Center, 2004), 19.

just over one-half at 8.3 million followed by Han (7.5 million), Kazakh (1.2 million), Hui (839,837), Kirghiz (158,775), with Russians, Tibetans, Zhuang, Daur, and Tatar comprising the remainder.¹⁷⁶ By 2003, the Han population in Xinjiang surpassed the Uyghur population in Xinjiang, making Uyghurs a minority in their own autonomous region.¹⁷⁷ The Han Chinese also have a majority population within the Urumchi, the capital city, with a population over five times greater than the Uyghur.¹⁷⁸ However, Han migration does not explain, by itself, the PRC's assimilation policy.

Like immigration, the PRC has facilitated the economic development of Xinjiang in order to integrate Xinjiang with the rest of China. Successful economic integration of the economy of Xinjiang is a critical component of the PRC plan to assimilate Xinjiang. As one Chinese scholar stated, "Only the development and progress of Xinjiang and the collective prosperity of all *minzu* (minority) can truly weaken the *minzu* consciousness, help strengthen the cohesiveness of China's *minzu*, and aid the unification of the motherland."¹⁷⁹ From 1982 to 1996, the PRC central government's subsidies constituted between 50 and 75 percent of all spending in Xinjiang.¹⁸⁰ In 1994, poverty relief for Xinjiang was increased from 61 million *Renminbi* (RMB, Chinese Dollar) to 165 million RMB and a further 300 million RMB was allocated for the improvement of drinking water in rural areas.¹⁸¹ The most recent economic policy, the 2000 "Go West" initiative

¹⁷⁶Ibid.

¹⁷⁷China Internet Information Center, "Census of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region," *China Through a Lens*, 2003, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/MATERIAL/139224.htm> (accessed 29 January 2008).

¹⁷⁸Toops, 21.

¹⁷⁹Bovingdon, "Heteronomy and its Discontents," 148. Bovingdon cites original source: Yin and Mao, *Xinjiang Minzu*, 254, author was unable to locate original source.

¹⁸⁰Bachman, 158.

¹⁸¹Dillon, 75.

pumped billions of RMB into infrastructural improvements and business ventures in Xinjiang and other western regions in order to attract Han immigrants.¹⁸²

China did not just focus on integrating Xinjiang with the rest of China, but also with the Central Asian States. For example, China National Oil Corporation won a bid to build oil pipeline from Western-Kazakhstan through Xinjiang to the expanding pipeline system within China further linking the economies.¹⁸³ The long-term goal of this project is a land route for oil transport from the Caucasus and the Middle East to China proper.

The assimilation of Uyghur culture has proved to be extremely difficult. The PRC addressed two critical components of national identity, religion and language. The turmoil of the Cultural Revolution and the overt contempt towards the Uyghurs, which Mao's wife displayed, particularly in the 1970s, caused the PRC under Deng to adjust its policy towards Islam. Since that time, the party has sought to balance the influence of Islam on the population of Xinjiang. In the early 1980's, the PRC allowed for the reconstruction of many damaged mosques as well as the construction of new mosques in Xinjiang.¹⁸⁴ However, in 1990, the CCP reversed its relaxed policy towards "illegal religious activities," and halted construction of mosques and defrocked many clerics.¹⁸⁵ In Baren, the PRC closed fifty mosques and canceled construction of 100 more mosques for fear that religion was getting out of control and leading to nationalism.¹⁸⁶ However, in the same year, to compensate for the closing of mosques, Beijing authorized the first chartered

¹⁸²Bovingdon, "Heteronomy and its Discontents," 128.

¹⁸³Bachman, 161,

¹⁸⁴Bovingdon, "Heteronomy and its Discontents," 138.

¹⁸⁵Ibid.

¹⁸⁶Ibid.

flight from Urumqi to Mecca for the Muslim Hajj.¹⁸⁷ By 1999, through state promotion, the number of Uyghurs participating in the pilgrimage increased by 300 percent.¹⁸⁸

The Baren Incident in 1990 triggered yet another shift in PRC strategy towards religion. Since that time, CCP strategy has focused on eliminating the pull of religion on two groups, party members and students, in an attempt to reverse a recent trend of increased religious activity.¹⁸⁹ Religious leaders maintain considerable political influence throughout Islamic nations, with the exception of Xinjiang. The PRC reserved (and still claims) the right to not only appoint all Imams but approve all writings and speeches of those Imams in advance of publication or presentation.¹⁹⁰ Studies in atheism are now mandatory at school campuses and the teaching of religion is forbidden.¹⁹¹ Under the PRC system, freedom of religion exists, however, so do significant limits to those freedoms.

As with religion, the Constitution of the PRC guarantees the right of nationalities to preserve their language. According to anthropologist Arienne Dwyer, the CCP officially encourages Han Chinese migrating to Xinjiang to study Uyghur.¹⁹² Between 1989 and 1993, minority-focused education opportunities increased dramatically through raising the percentage of non-Han nationalities in both primary and undergraduate level schools.¹⁹³ However, Dwyer claims that the CCP not only maintains an overt language policy but a covert language policy

¹⁸⁷Dillon, 74.

¹⁸⁸Gladney, "China Prospects for the Uighur People."

¹⁸⁹Bovingdon, "Heteronomy and its Discontents," 139.

¹⁹⁰Arienne Dwyer, Kansas University Department of Anthropology, interview by author, Lawrence, KS, 10 January 2008.

¹⁹¹Bovingdon, "Heteronomy and its Discontents," 132.

¹⁹²Dwyer, *The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse*, 33-37.

¹⁹³Dillon, 75.

designed for assimilation of the ethnic nationalities, including Uyghurs. For example, a 1999 UNHCR report indicates that by 1990, the education level of Uyghurs was on par with the rest of China in terms of education level.¹⁹⁴ However, as the author notes, the education was distinctly Chinese, not Uyghur.¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, although secondary education is offered in Uyghur, all undergraduate and graduate level instruction is in Mandarin.¹⁹⁶ Modern subjects: math and science must be taught in Chinese, even by Uyghur teachers, while classes in Uyghur only cover literature and language.¹⁹⁷ Instruction in Uyghur history and culture is conducted exclusively at the home while public education centers on Han history, language, and culture, thus furthering assimilation.¹⁹⁸

The CCP also dominates the flow of information within Xinjiang. In November 1990, the CCP took control of the press in Xinjiang, by mandating the receipt of new press credentials for all journalists. The reissue of press credentials served to filter out journalists who did not promote CCP ideas.¹⁹⁹ In addition, Uyghur literature and movies must be first published in Mandarin and approved by Han censors. Then and only then may movies, music, and literature be translated into Uyghur for popular consumption. The results of these overt policies are that not only is anti-CCP as well as objective reporting illegal, but so is the Uyghurs ability to express discontent against the party in any form.

By no means is CCP counterinsurgency strategy void of a military and police component. In fact, PLA and the Public Security Bureau (PSB) activity are quite prevalent in Xinjiang. The

¹⁹⁴Gladney, "China, Prospects for the Uighur People."

¹⁹⁵Ibid.

¹⁹⁶Ibid.

¹⁹⁷Bovingdon, "Heteronomy and its Discontents," 146.

¹⁹⁸Gladney, "China, Prospects for the Uighur People."

¹⁹⁹Dillon, 74.

organization of the PLA in Xinjiang still remains as it did before 1978, with the 1st FA in command.²⁰⁰ However, only the 4th Motorized Division remains activated.²⁰¹ According to analyst, Yitzak Shichor, as of 2004, barely 100,000 PLA forces resided in Xinjiang, which equates to less than 5 percent of the total PLA ground force.²⁰² Shichor furthermore claims that these troops are some of the worst equipped forces in entire PLA.²⁰³ In fact, Shichor concludes that the combined Peoples Armed Police Force (PAPF or PAP) and PLA in Xinjiang, could not only not prevent Xinjiang from being attacked from outside the borders, but also could not secure Xinjiang from within.²⁰⁴ Therefore, the PLA relies on the ability to move additional forces from Lanzhou during crises, such as the US invasion of Afghanistan, when the PLA moved two divisions, with air and other support, to Xinjiang to guard the border against spillover.²⁰⁵

Despite a lack of modern equipment and high numbers of active duty personnel, the Chinese military force in Xinjiang has remained successful in suppressing the separatist movement. The PLA succeeds through a combination of methods; cooperation through neighboring militaries, extreme violence only against specific key individuals, and effective use of human intelligence (HUMINT).

As mentioned previously, the establishment of the SCO in the mid-1990s aligned China, Russia, and the Central Asian States against destabilizing elements such as separatism. The Chinese have since been very proactive in conducting joint counterterrorism training exercises.

²⁰⁰Shichor, “The Great Wall of Steel Military and Strategy in Xinjiang,” 129.

²⁰¹Ibid.

²⁰²Ibid., 123; A full Order of Battle is presented on page 124. Shichor’s numbers do not include the XPCC, PAP or the PSB.

²⁰³Shichor, “The Great Wall of Steel Military and Strategy in Xinjiang,” 125.

²⁰⁴Ibid., 126.

²⁰⁵Ibid., 120.

Between 2000 and 2006, the PLA conducted counterterrorism exercises with Pakistan (twice), Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.²⁰⁶ The training all took place in, or near, the Xinjiang region and were highly publicized displays of force. These joint exercises serve to not only facilitate military-to-military training, but also information sharing. The actions of the Pakistani Army, mentioned previously, serve as good examples of the benefit of these exercises.

The destruction of the Prairie Fire Party in 1981, demonstrated the PLA's ability to integrate extreme violence only against key individuals. The Prairie Fire Party was a short-lived separatist movement in 1981. The PLA and PSB discriminated between types of participants. Armed insurgents, if not killed in combat, were arrested and punished severely. Those who were determined to have been "less significant participants" were shown the error of their ways through visits from police, religious figures, and relatives.²⁰⁷ This tactic contributed to "self-policing" by the populace, increased human intelligence reporting, and potentially reduced the number of casualties. Similarly after the 1990 Baren Incident and subsequent violence, the regional Communist Party leader, Wang Lequan, posted 17,000 additional officials to villages, farms, and workplaces to carry out propaganda and education against splittists.²⁰⁸

Although not directly related to PLA tactics in Xinjiang, the Democracy Now movement in 1989, which ended by military suppression in Tiananmen Square on 4 June, also impacted

²⁰⁶Information Office of the State Council of the Peoples Republic of China, "China's National Defense in 2000," October 2000, <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/2000/index.htm> (accessed 23 August 2007); and Information Office of the State Council of the Peoples Republic of China, "China's National Defense in 2002," December 2002, <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/20021209/index.htm> (accessed 23 August 2007); and Information Office of the State Council of the Peoples Republic of China, "China's National Defense in 2004," December 2004, <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/20041227/index.htm> (accessed 23 August 2007); and Information Office of the State Council of the Peoples Republic of China, "China's National Defense in 2006," December 2006, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/book/194421.htm> (accessed 14 December 2007).

²⁰⁷Dillon, 60.

²⁰⁸Tyler, 171.

events in Xinjiang. A student march, similar to the one in Tiananmen Square, also occurred in Urumchi. CCP authorities initially described the march as orderly but later reports claimed that more than 150 people were injured and that students attacked the party headquarters in Urumchi. It was further revealed that the protest was not democracy based but centered on the publication of a book titled, *Sexual Customs*, which described in detail the sexual life of Chinese Muslims. The demonstration was suppressed, with the help of the televised violence in Beijing, but sparked nearly a decade of violence in the region²⁰⁹

The major military counterinsurgency campaigns during this period originated with the Strike Hard campaigns of 1996 and 1997. Although the campaigns were “nationwide,” in Xinjiang the campaigns were used to destroy the renewed Uyghur separatist movement of the 1990s. The first Strike Hard campaign actually occurred in 1983, but like the later versions, it too targeted Uyghur separatism as part of a greater “anti-crime” campaign.²¹⁰ The second Strike Hard campaign was launched in April 1996. As with the first, the nationwide campaign focused on crime, in Xinjiang, separatism was the primary target.²¹¹ A week later, the PRC linked separatism with “illegal religious activities” and announced that all Islamic publications would require vetting and approval prior to publication.²¹² By 29 April, 1,300 arrests had been made and large quantities of weapons, ammunition, and money confiscated.²¹³ In Ghulja, 3,700 family leaders

²⁰⁹Tyler, 154; and Dillon, 61.

²¹⁰Tyler, 153.

²¹¹Dillon, 84.

²¹²Dillon, 85.

²¹³Dillon, 85. Dillon cites a Xinjiang *Ribao* report FR/2614, 17 May 1996. Author was unable to locate original source.

signed statements that no member of their family would carry out any further activities against the Communist Party.²¹⁴

The third Strike Hard Campaign in Xinjiang was initiated following the 1997 Yining riots. CCP actions during the Yining Riot of 1997 (see next section) included severe and violent repression of the rioters. PAP focused on dispersing the rioters into successively smaller and smaller groupings of people.²¹⁵ Once the violence had abated, the CCP maintained a clear message that it only sought to punish the leaders and that leniency would be offered to those who were merely caught up in the moment.²¹⁶ PAP conducted twenty-four-hour patrols and secured electric stations, waterworks, bridges, television communication and telecommunication sites, as well as government offices.²¹⁷ On the third day, the PLA conducted a significant show of force in Yining, which included helicopter gunships and armored patrols throughout the city.²¹⁸

The targets of the third Strike Hard campaign remained the same with the exception that greater emphasis was placed on escaped criminals, weaponry, and communications all of which centered on the separatist groups who were waging sabotage.²¹⁹ According to a pro-Uyghur publication in Kazakhstan, The PRC allegedly conducted multiple public executions of as many as fifty separatists and relocated tens of thousands of Uyghurs who were arrested, tried, and exiled during the 1997 campaign.²²⁰ Justice was also administered quickly and severely during the 1997 Strike Hard campaign. Amnesty International reported that between 1997 and 1999, 190

²¹⁴Dillon, 88.

²¹⁵Ibid., 97.

²¹⁶Ibid., 98.

²¹⁷Ibid.

²¹⁸Ibid.

²¹⁹Ibid., 102.

²²⁰Ibid., 111.

prisoners, mostly Uyghurs, convicted of political and religious crimes, were executed in Xinjiang.²²¹ Some of these prisoners were extradited from other countries such as Pakistan.

The 1997 Strike Hard campaign continued the effective use of HUMINT, to “not only betray separatist plots, but also to inform on those who express reasonable gripes.”²²² The CCP, through the PSB reportedly has agents as employees in every factory, school, business, and government agency in Xinjiang.²²³ The XPCC launched a campaign to turn the entire population into informants by promising to act on reports, protect the reporter’s identity, provide feedback, and give rewards for accurate reporting. The result was that the XPCC received 8,000 reports annually.²²⁴

Although no uprisings of significance have occurred in Xinjiang since 1997, The PAP remains active in the region. As recent as January 2007, the PAP conducted a raid of a suspected ETIM training camp in southwest Xinjiang, killing eighteen suspected terrorists and arresting seventeen others.²²⁵ The only Uyghur recourse for the PAP action was for Kadir to appeal to the UN, for an impartial investigation.²²⁶ As previously demonstrated numerous times, the CCP is more than willing to stand international scrutiny and not allow interference with its internal matters.

In conclusion, unlike at the end of Mao’s reign in 1976, in 2007 the Chinese appeared to have, at least temporarily denied the Uyghurs all seven of Mao’s fundamentals for insurgency.

²²¹Tyler, 174.

²²²Bovingdon, “Heteronomy and its Discontents,” 147.

²²³Taylor, 174.

²²⁴Dillon, 100.

²²⁵BBC News, Asia Pacific, “China ‘Anti-Terror’ Raid Kills 18,” 8 January 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6241073.stm> (accessed 15 January 2008).

²²⁶The News International, “UN Urged to Probe Killing of Chinese Muslims,” 11 January 2007. http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=38523 (accessed 15 January 2008).

The Uyghurs remain unorganized abroad and within Xinjiang. They are not only unorganized but increasingly apathetic. Although Xinjiang is the Uyghur Autonomous Region, the CCP has prevented the Uyghurs from organizing politically within Xinjiang, but also limited the effectiveness of international Uyghur organizations. Through military force, as well as diplomatic and economic pressures, the CCP are not only denying the Uyghurs secure bases in Xinjiang, but throughout Central Asia and continue to expand their influence through the rest of the world. These same diplomatic and economic pressures have also succeeded in cutting off Uyghur access to military equipment and training. This has forced those still desirous of an independent East Turkestan to solicit training from non-state terrorist organizations, thus significantly decreasing their legitimacy for action in the world community.

Although Uyghur nationalism remains, it is eroding through CCP efforts at cultural and economic assimilation. China's national strength has not been this high since quite possibly the Ming Dynasty. The PRC boasts the largest military and second strongest economy in the world behind the US. In addition, the PRC is gaining increasing influence in international institutions such as the World Bank of which party member Justin Lin is now a Vice-President. Finally the "lost" territory of Xinjiang has been regained and not only remains under the firm control of the CCP but also the international community has little incentive to think otherwise. The Uyghurs in Xinjiang are quickly learning that if they can participate in the process of Chinese governance and economic growth, they will be left alone. If however, they resist, they will be suppressed (and economically ignored).²²⁷

²²⁷Bachman, 182.

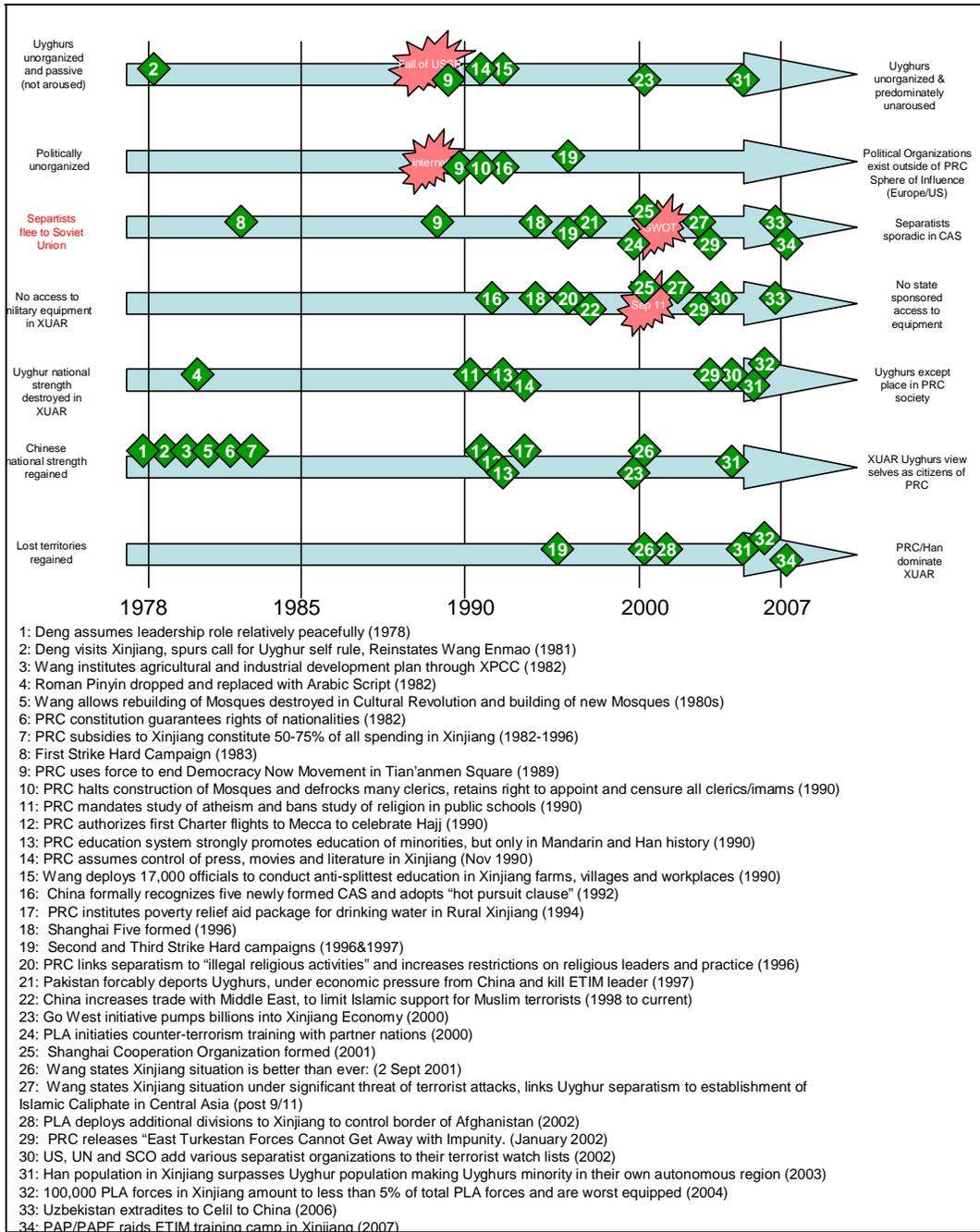


Figure 6. Logical Lines of Operation for COIN in Xinjiang 1978-2007

Conduct of the Insurgency from 1978 to 2007

The conduct of the insurgency from 1978 to 2007 differs from previous conduct in two ways. First, separatists found a new source of nationalism, Islam. PRC suppression of Islam and degradation of mosques, particularly at the end of Mao's reign, recharged Uyghur nationalism. Second, during the 1970s and 1980s, the Soviets demonstrated that they are either unwilling or unable to support a separatist movement in Xinjiang. The Soviets had unilaterally invaded and were subsequently bogged down in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the Soviets had also demonstrated their unwillingness to tangle with China when they failed to come to the aid of Vietnam during the PLA invasion of that country in 1979. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 ended all hope of a Soviet-backed insurgency. The combination of these two events changed the conduct of the insurgency. However, one distinguishing feature of the insurgency remained in place. The Uyghurs remained unable to form a unified opposition to PRC rule.

In 1978, separatist activity in Xinjiang was at best inactive at worst nonexistent. Much of the Uyghur population was drastically poor and unemployment in the region was high.²²⁸ In the 1980s, minor, sporadic incidents of violence received little international attention. However, between 1990 and 1998, violence in Xinjiang reached a scale, which drew international attention, peaking with the Yining (Ghulja) Incident in 1997.²²⁹ Violence, including assassinations of public officials, bombing of infrastructure, sabotage, and other acts of violence continued for more than a year. However, due to the violent response of the PLA, PSB, and PAP, the separatist movement was forced underground and no disturbances on the same scale have occurred since.²³⁰ By late 1999, separatist violence in Xinjiang was reduced significantly and has remained very low during the new millennium. Less than ten years after the end of the 1990's violence, no unified

²²⁸Taylor, 152.

²²⁹This incident is discussed later in the text.

²³⁰Dillon, 110; and Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang*, 2.

opposition to PRC rule exists within Xinjiang. Current separatists in Xinjiang are small in number, poorly equipped, loosely linked, and vastly out-gunned and out-manned by the PLA and PAP.²³¹ Furthermore, local support for separatism in Xinjiang is ambivalent at best.²³² This is due in large part to the successes of PRC COIN strategy as discussed in the previous section, however, not exclusively.

The Uyghurs possess no widely agreed upon leader who is seen internationally as speaking for Uyghurs or Xinjiang the way the Dalai Lama speaks for Tibet.²³³ In 1981, a small group of Uyghurs east of Kashghar established a pro-independence movement named the East Turkestan Prairie Fire Party and vowed to establish an independent republic through armed insurrection.²³⁴ However, the organization was discovered, and its members were forced to flee.

The first reported political organization of Uyghur exiles was established in 1963 in Alma Alta. The Free Eastern Turkestan Movement claimed to control 50,000 troops and was headed by novelist Ziya Samed and Zunun Taipov.²³⁵ The organization may have participated in the Sino-Soviet border conflicts from 1969 to 1970, but made no further contributions to the separatist movement.

After the establishment of CAS, several Uyghur political parties emerged in Kazakhstan, Kyrgistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.²³⁶ These organizations appealed to the UN for immediate action on human rights in Xinjiang.²³⁷ They also campaigned for self-

²³¹Gladney, “China Prospects for the Uighur People.”

²³²Ibid.; and Dwyer, Interview by author.

²³³Bachman, 182.

²³⁴Dillon, 59.

²³⁵Tyler, 233.

²³⁶Dillon, 66.

²³⁷Ibid.

determination and democracy for Uyghurs in Xinjiang.²³⁸ In 1998, after the Gulja riots of 1997, the East Turkestan National Congress (ETNC), which included a fifteen-person governing body and secretariat, emerged from thirteen separate refugee organizations in Munich.²³⁹ However, the congress was unable to establish a leader and deep disagreements over tactics and objectives remained unsolved.²⁴⁰ The ETNC's one claim for success is their ability to use the Internet, which the ETNC has used to verbally attack PRC policies in Xinjiang and promote their cause. They were also able to present a seminar titled, "The Situation in East Turkestan after Half a Century of Chinese Communist Occupation," to the EU in the fall of 2001.²⁴¹

The Uyghurs in exile have failed to develop an effective organization. They remain for the most part dispersed, unorganized, and have fallen very far short of forming anything close to a government in exile.²⁴² By 1999, at five international organizations, whose primary aim was the liberation of East Turkestan, existed in Amsterdam, Munich, Istanbul, Melbourne, and New York.²⁴³ Attempts to unify the international Uyghur organizations, such as the 2001 Assembly of East Turkestan National Congress in Brussels, have experienced only limited success.²⁴⁴

Attempts to gain support outside of Central Asia have in large part failed. In April of 1997, amid the outbreak of violence, the Uyghur Diaspora convinced the European Parliament to

²³⁸Ibid.

²³⁹Tyler, 233.

²⁴⁰Ibid., 234.

²⁴¹Ibid., 236.

²⁴²Ibid., 231.

²⁴³Gladney, "China Prospects for the Uighur People."

²⁴⁴Tyler, 232.

pass a resolution outlining the grievances of Uyghurs and called for the PRC to negotiate a settlement.²⁴⁵ However, the resolution was ignored by PRC leadership.

One of the main reasons for the failure of Uyghurs to organize is that they do not have a unifying leader, such as Tibet's Dalai Lama. Between 1998 and 2001, four exiled Uyghur leaders; Hashir Wahidi, Nigmat Bazakov, Dilbirim Samsakova, and writer Eminjan Osmanov have met violent deaths under suspicious circumstances.²⁴⁶ Uyghur organizations, without proof, claim a Chinese conspiracy. Rabiya Kadir, although not widely or formally acknowledged as such, is considered the current leader of the Uyghur Diaspora.²⁴⁷ Known in Xinjiang as the millionaire businesswoman, Kadir has established herself as the closest thing to a leader of the Uyghur people.²⁴⁸ Until 1998, she was a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee, which allows non-party figures a degree of participation in state affairs.²⁴⁹ Kadir was arrested in 1999, and convicted in March 2000, for passing classified information to foreigners.²⁵⁰ Kadir's husband Sidiq Rouzi, was an academic who fled Xinjiang for the US in 1996 and worked as a journalist to promote Uyghur independence.²⁵¹ Kadir's crime was that she allegedly leaked stories of Uyghur separatist activities, some of which were intercepted by PRC officials in June 1999, to her husband who then published them.²⁵² In 2005, Kadir was released from prison after

²⁴⁵Ibid., 237.

²⁴⁶Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang*.

²⁴⁷Dwyer, Interview by author.

²⁴⁸Dillon, 82

²⁴⁹Ibid.

²⁵⁰Ibid.

²⁵¹Ibid.

²⁵²Ibid.

considerable international pressure and has since become the President of the World Uyghur Congress.²⁵³

Uyghurs still residing in Xinjiang, do not consider Kadir their leader in exile.²⁵⁴ In fact, according to Dwyer, no formal opposition to PRC rule exists within Xinjiang. The Imams are all selected and approved by the CCP. Uyghurs in political positions all have received “Han” educations and do little for Uyghur rights. Furthermore, it is not clear that other minority people in Xinjiang would welcome a Uyghur based state.²⁵⁵ The result is that any separatist movement within Xinjiang remains unorganized, without a leader, and doomed to failure. According to Uyghur anthropologist Arienne Dwyer, the only indications in Xinjiang of Uyghur separatism appear in literature and the arts and those are symbolic and highly censored.²⁵⁶ Such literature is locally referred to as “scar literature.” For example, Turghun Almas, a Uyghur poet, wrote a number of historical books and articles on the Uyghur “nation” and independence during Deng’s “Cultural Exploration” period in the 1980s.²⁵⁷ One of Almas’ books was banned in 1992, and he was placed under house arrest until he died on 11 September 2001.²⁵⁸

Evidence does point to numerous, small separatist movements operating in and out of Xinjiang. A 2002 report released by the Information Office of the State Council of the PRC claims that terrorist forces desiring a separate state of East Turkestan were responsible for over 200 terrorist incidents in Xinjiang from 1990 to 2001, which killed 162 and wounded over 440

²⁵³Unrepresented Peoples Organization (UNPO), Press Release: Uyghur Leadership Seminar, 6 May 2007, <http://www.unpo.org/article.php?id=6700> (accessed 19 January 2008).

²⁵⁴Dwyer, Interview by author.

²⁵⁵Bachman, 182.

²⁵⁶Dwyer, Interview by author.

²⁵⁷Bovingdon, “Heteronomy and its Discontents,” 132.

²⁵⁸Ibid.

people.²⁵⁹ The document claims that the vast majority of the incidents, which it lists in detail, were planned and executed by separatist organizations outside of China in collusion with a “handful of people within Xinjiang.” Furthermore the document claims that, the terrorists received training from within Afghanistan. The document further asserts that various East Turkestan terrorist organizations received funding, arms and ammunition, transportation, telecommunications equipment, and training from Osama bin Laden, the Taliban and Uzbek Islamic Liberation Movement.

A PRC produced television documentary claimed that in early 1990, terrorist-training camps existed in Kashgar, Hotan and Aksu and between 1991 and 1992, sixty-two terrorists, separated into three groups trained at the facilities.²⁶⁰ The document claims that these terrorists targeted rich Hans and their families who were residing in Xinjiang in order to scare other Hans into leaving Xinjiang. The terrorists also targeted influential Uyghurs, members of the communist cadre believed to be collaborators, and the Imam of the Id Kah mosque, one of the most famous mosques in Central Asia. The documentary also cited that East Turkestan terrorist leaders met in Hotan in early 1996, and claimed that PAP forces raided the conference and seized a video of the meetings which contained evidence of a plan to raise money, recruit members, conduct acts of terrorism, to include assassination of prominent Uyghur citizens, and set the conditions for guerrilla warfare by creating safe houses and storehouses.

Several western authors dispute the validity of the PRC claims citing that the PRC fabricated the information in order to gain US and international sympathies.²⁶¹ However, the fact

²⁵⁹Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, “East Turkestan Forces Cannot Get Away With Impunity.”

²⁶⁰Yitzhak Shichor, “Fact and Fiction: A Chinese Documentary on Eastern Turkestan Terrorism,” *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (2006): 89-108.

²⁶¹Dwyer, Interview by author; and Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang*; and Shichor, “Fact and Fiction,” 89-108.

that Uyghurs have been arrested in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Russian Chechnya fighting alongside Taliban and Al Qaeda terrorists tends to support the PRC's claim. Furthermore, the demise of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the SCO made any further separatist backing from the CAS or Russia much more difficult. Uyghur separatists had little or no options for outside funding and sanctuary aside from the Taliban and Al Qaeda.²⁶² Certainly, the outside backing for the insurgents did shift away from the Soviet communists and towards Islamic sources.

Western author, James Millward, analyzed the written PRC document for links between terrorist incidents and terrorist organizations.²⁶³ He identified four East Turkestan organizations, which have resorted to violence; the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), East Turkestan Liberation Organization (ETLO), United Revolutionary Front of East Turkestan (URFET), Uyghur Liberation Organization (ULO), and six other organizations. Millward was unable to discover further information on the other six organizations and noted that the URFET, whose claims of violence are discredited by both him and Uyghur Diaspora merged with the ULO to form the Uyghur Peoples Party in September 2001. Millward concludes that Uyghur separatist groups are consistently unstable and short lived stating that separatist groups frequently change names, lose leaders, and are victims of frequent shifts in membership.²⁶⁴ The ETIM, still listed on the US and UN terrorist watch list, was rendered ineffective through PRC cooperation with Kyrgystan, whose officials arrested several members and PRC cooperation with Pakistan which resulted in the death of ETIM founder Hasan Mahsum who was killed during a Pakistan Army raid of an Al Qaeda camp in December 2003.

²⁶²This is common sense analysis on my part, I do not know if I am allowed to make such a claim.

²⁶³Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang*, 23.

²⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 29.

Millward further concludes that claims of resistance activities of Uyghur militant groups should be treated with caution. Millward also warns that the same caution be given to PRC claims of Uyghur-conducted terrorism. For example, the PRC claims that the ETIM was responsible for targeting the US Embassy in Kyrgyzstan. But both Millward and Dwyer do not believe the accuracy of this claim.²⁶⁵ Bombing the US Embassy in Kyrgyzstan does not contribute to the East Turkestan cause, but to the contrary the action loses a potential ally (the US) and potential sources of outside support.²⁶⁶

The level of separatist violence, which occurred during the 1990s may be disputed, but several incidents were significant enough to receive international press. The two incidents of violence discussed in this section serve to provide a representation of the type and level of violence which occurred during this period, but by no means are the only incidents of violence and uprising during the 1990s.

In April 1990, an uprising occurred in the town of Barmen. Several dozen armed Uyghurs seized a police station and demanded an end to CCP rule in Xinjiang.²⁶⁷ The event centered around the CCP decision to close several mosques and suspend mosque construction. After several weeks of protests, police attempted to break up a crowd of about 200 demonstrators meeting outside government offices. The fighting spread and eventually involved more than 2,000 people, mostly Uyghurs, Hui, and Kyrgyz. The official death toll was twenty-two, but other sources state the numbers were higher.²⁶⁸ In retaliation, thousands of males between the ages of

²⁶⁵Ibid., 30; and Dwyer, Interview by author.

²⁶⁶Arienne Dwyer claims that the US made a strategic blunder in not supporting a Central Asian Muslim nation. Dwyer claims that as recent as 10 years ago Uyghurs saw the United States as a beacon of hope but now Uyghurs regard the US with disdain and blame them for the increased presence of PLA forces in Xinjiang because of US emphasis on the GWOT in Central Asia.

²⁶⁷Bovingdon, "Heteronomy and its Discontents," 132.

²⁶⁸Tyler, 165.

thirteen and sixty were arrested. Other reports claimed that Muslim leaders called for jihad and armed uprising to oust the Han and the establishment of East Turkestan.²⁶⁹ Over 5,900 criminal cases and 7,900 defendants were tried as a result of the incident.²⁷⁰ Further reports state that the event was not reactionary but planned by the Eastern Turkestan Islamic Party led by Zeydin Yusuf who had fabricated rumors that China's birth control policy was intended to destroy the Uyghur nation.²⁷¹ Other reports claimed that Uyghur exiles in Turkey, under Isa Yusuf Alptekin, had provided funding for the uprising.²⁷²

In February 1997, an uprising occurred in Yining, which became the most violent uprising in Xinjiang in several decades. The Yining Incident started with a demonstration calling for the release of religious teachers and demanding jobs for Uyghurs.²⁷³ According to one report, at least ten Han were killed and their bodies burned by the rioters.²⁷⁴ The demonstrators were met by armed police and between 300 and 500 were arrested. By the next day, the entire town was in a state of anarchy. Between 3,000 and 5,000 rioters were arrested. Subsequent claims of torture hit Amnesty International reports, but martial law was imposed and the city sealed off for two weeks.²⁷⁵ The CCP attempted to blame the rioting on, "hooligans and drug addicts," and presented much smaller casualty and arrest numbers.²⁷⁶ Several leaders were tried and executed

²⁶⁹Ibid., 63.

²⁷⁰Ibid., 165; and Dillon, 65.

²⁷¹Tyler, 166; and Dillon, 63. Zeydin was killed during fighting with the police during the riots (Dillon, 64)

²⁷²Dillon, 63.

²⁷³Tyler, 168.

²⁷⁴Dillon, 94.

²⁷⁵Tyler, 168.

²⁷⁶Dillon, 94.

publicly in the following weeks.²⁷⁷ In an attempt to spread the flames of separatism, a few weeks later, bombs went off in Urumchi and Beijing.²⁷⁸ Eight more separatists were arrested and publicly executed for their part in the bombings.²⁷⁹ Exiles report that between February and June of that year, 162 people were shot dead, several hundred were sentenced to death, and 1,600 “participants” are still unaccounted for.²⁸⁰ Other reports, mostly from Uyghur exiles, claim that nearly 100 instigators were tried and shot in public.²⁸¹ The Yining Incident sparked a string of violence, which would last nearly a year.

The two above events demonstrate that the depth of animosity toward the government during that period was sufficient to mobilize large numbers of minorities in Xinjiang and is indicative of “long-brewing” and widespread tensions.²⁸² However, they do not mark the only significant events of violence in the region during this time. Numerous incidents throughout the 1990s such as bombings, assassinations, and other planned acts of violence are one indication of continued political dissatisfaction. However, the size and tactics argue these are the work of small marginal groups. The government’s severe treatment of captured/arrested separatist criminals has deterred others from following their example.²⁸³ One reported organized attack of significance claimed that in August 1998, an army air base was attacked by Uyghurs using a tracked armored

²⁷⁷Tyler, 168.

²⁷⁸Ibid., 171.

²⁷⁹Ibid.

²⁸⁰Ibid., 172.

²⁸¹Dillon, 95.

²⁸²Bovingdon, “Heteronomy and its Discontents.” 144.

²⁸³Ibid.

vehicle and destroyed 24 helicopters and resulted in 150 deaths on both sides.²⁸⁴ After that event, 4,000 students of Islam, were arrested and sent to prison camps in Qinghai.²⁸⁵

Since 1998, however, violence in Xinjiang has diminished significantly. James Millward claims that much of the Uyghur separatist activity since that time has not occurred within the borders of China, but elsewhere.²⁸⁶ Millward states that Uyghurs may have conducted up to five terrorist attacks in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, since the turn of the century, but very little activity within Xinjiang.²⁸⁷

As a result of the violence in the 1990s and the PRC's ability to influence international opinion, Uyghurs enjoy very little sanctuary. Germany is a noted exception. Two Uyghur organizations formed in Germany in 2004, the World Uyghur Congress and the Government of East Turkestan in Exile.²⁸⁸ Both organizations denounce terrorism as an acceptable course of action and despite PRC pressure the German government has refused to interfere in their affairs.²⁸⁹

The state of the Uyghur insurgency in 2007 is poor at best. In 1978, the Uyghurs held only one of Mao's fundamentals for an insurgency, the secure bases in the USSR. They were, however, able to briefly harness the unifying effects of Islam during the 1990s and survive the break-up of the USSR. Despite significant levels of violence in the 1990s, the Uyghurs were unable to motivate the population in Xinjiang to expand the conflict. As the PRC, through

²⁸⁴Tyler, 172.

²⁸⁵Dillon, 87.

²⁸⁶Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang*.

²⁸⁷Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang*.

²⁸⁸The two organizations are unwilling to merge and serve as yet another example of the fractured movement.

²⁸⁹Shichor, "Fact and Fiction," 103.

establishment of the SCO, ended Uyghur security in the CAS, the separatists were further forced to rely on Islam and less than credible organizations, for continued backing.

The benefit the Uyghurs gained in their association with international terrorist organizations (ITO) only provided them a brief advantage. The association, particularly after September 2001, has proven to be a significant strategic blunder. Furthermore, Uyghurs have not been able to rally around either Islam or a political cause.²⁹⁰ As more Uyghur youth continue to succumb to PRC economic stimulus and cultural assimilation, their ability to rally around Islam or a political cause will certainly diminish. Uyghurs likewise have been unable to take full advantage of the “opening up” of China. Despite unprecedented media access, albeit still restrictive, to western China under PRC rule, and the advent of the Internet, Uyghurs have not succeeded in bringing their plight into the international limelight. Certainly without either significant backing from an outside source or a weakening of the PRC state, the separatist movement in Xinjiang will not gain any further ground.

²⁹⁰Gladney, “Chinese Program of Development and Control,” 110.

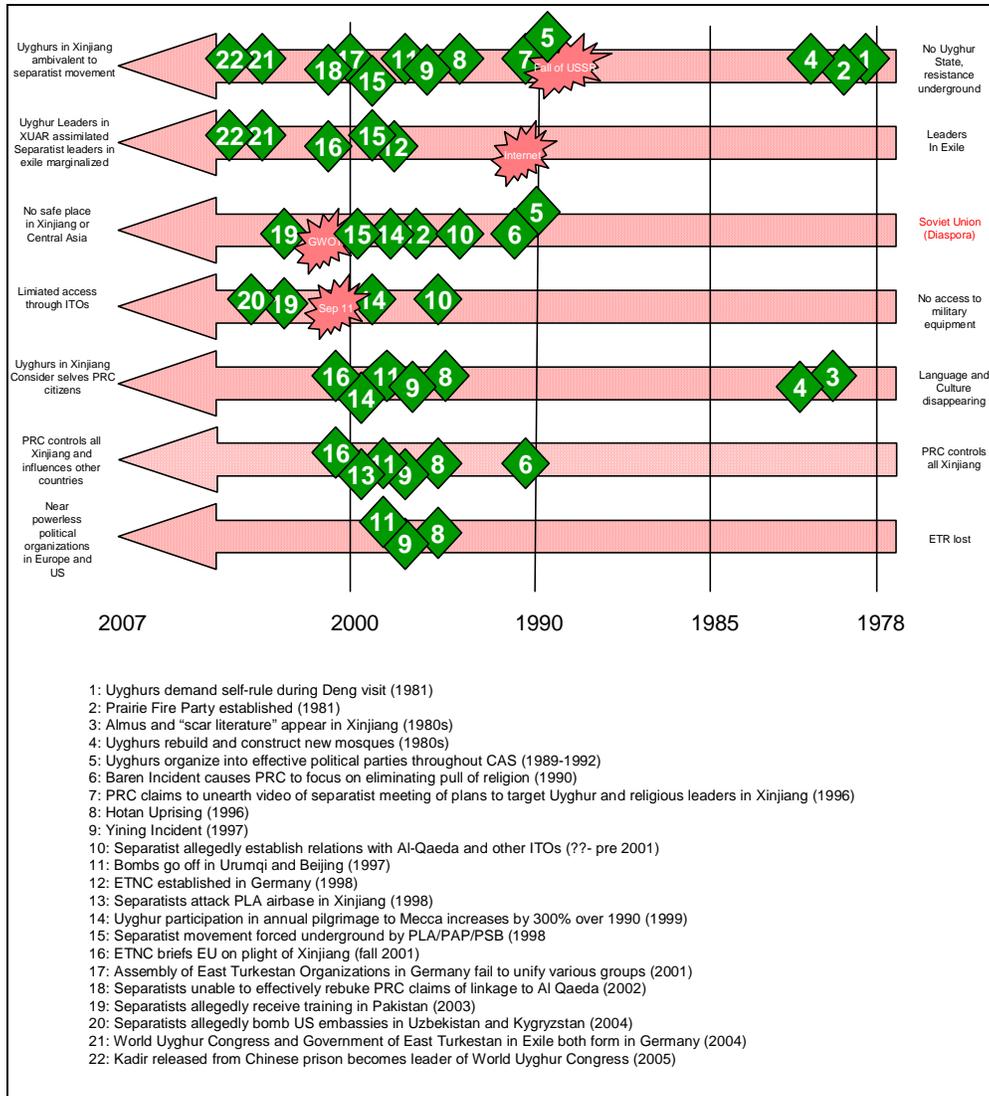


Figure 7. Logical Lines of Operation for Insurgency in Xinjiang 1978-2007

Conclusions

The Future of the Insurgency/Counterinsurgency in Xinjiang

Historian Christian Tyler claims that the separatist movement in Xinjiang is at an impasse and will only be broken if either the separatists become much stronger or the PRC government

becomes much weaker.²⁹¹ Tyler also states that the chance of the separatists becoming stronger is extremely unlikely. Millward concurs with this conclusion, “A new major violent incident or terrorist act in Xinjiang, moreover, would change our understanding of the trend since the late 1990s. Nevertheless, judging from the information currently available, I conclude that the notion of an imminent terrorist threat in Xinjiang or from Uyghur groups is exaggerated.”²⁹² Tyler therefore reasons that in order for the separatist movement to gain any ground the PRC government must become weaker from causes unrelated to the conflict.²⁹³ Other experts conclude that regardless, the Uyghurs would require significant external support to obtain any level of autonomy.²⁹⁴ However, a separatist movement does still exist and opportunities like the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, offer the separatists some chance of staging high profile events, even if discovered and stopped.

Professor Arianne Dwyer has seen the goals of the Uyghur struggle reduced or changed and claims that the Uyghurs, particularly those in Xinjiang, are more concerned with the preservation of their culture and have given up, at least temporarily, the ideas of autonomy and independence.²⁹⁵ Dwyer also claims that PRC policies, such as attempts at assimilation through control of Uyghur language, education, Han immigration, and refusal to grant real autonomy, and others contribute to the unrest between the Uyghurs and the Han.²⁹⁶ However, as long as the PRC continues to deny Mao’s seven fundamentals of an insurgency, the Uyghurs have little chance of

²⁹¹Tyler, 269.

²⁹²Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang*, 32.

²⁹³Tyler, 269; and Chang, 424.

²⁹⁴Chang, 401-426.

²⁹⁵Dwyer, Interview by author.

²⁹⁶Ibid.; and Dwyer, *The Xinjiang Conflict*; and Chien-peng Chung, “China’s ‘War on Terror,’” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2002): 9.

improving their situation in the region. In doing so, the PRC has eliminated virtually all viable options for any existing or potential separatist movement to grow to threaten PRC control.

Analysis of Mao Counterinsurgency Doctrine

Mao wrote *On Guerilla Warfare* in 1937. In that document, he concluded that an insurgency must include seven fundamental steps. Throughout Mao's tenure as leader of China, he maintained that China was still in a state of revolution and any activity that was counter to the CCP was "counter-revolutionary." Therefore, Mao never thought or wrote a counterinsurgency doctrine as such. Mao also understood the validity of a protracted revolutionary strategy. However, Mao's and the CCP's actions in Xinjiang, as well as other parts of China after 1949, reveal that Mao understood not only insurgency but also counterinsurgency. The case study of Xinjiang effectively demonstrates that by inverting Mao's seven fundamentals of an insurgency a successful counterinsurgency strategy is discovered. These seven fundamentals of protracted counterinsurgency strategy have held up well for the PRC in Xinjiang (see Figure 8, Comparison of Fundamentals).

From 1949 to 1978, the CCP, through the PLA, XPCC, and other assets, slowly cut the separatists off from five of the seven fundamentals of Mao's insurgency. By 1976, the PRC had succeeded in all aspects except that they had allowed Uyghur separatists to establish secure bases in the Soviet Union, and had failed to anticipate the shift of Uyghur separatist access to equipment and training away from the Soviet Union to non-state actors such as international terrorist organizations and the Uyghur Diaspora in what became the Central Asian States. Therefore, the Uyghurs were able to consolidate and reorganize for another round of violence in the 1990s. These two 'mistakes' were corrected primarily through the establishment of SCO and linking the Uyghur separatist movement to the GWOT after 2001. By successfully denying all seven fundamentals of Mao's insurgency, the PRC are not only effectively defeating the

separatist movement in Xinjiang but significantly increasing the difficulty of creating new separatist organizations.

Implications for the United States

The US military doctrine identifies three levels of decision-making: strategic, operational, and tactical. The case study of Xinjiang yields lessons for the US at each of these levels. At the strategic level, the CCP set the conditions for entry of military forces into Xinjiang. By design or by providence, the top ETR officials were erased from the picture prior to the PLA entering the region. Mao also sought and gained overt, if not covert, acknowledgement of PRC sovereignty over Xinjiang by the neighboring countries. These two events were not accomplished through military force but diplomacy. Mao also made a long-term commitment to the governance of Xinjiang and he and his successors designed policies of the campaign which focused on achieving extremely long-term results; language, education, and economic development all of which focused on destroying the root cause of the insurgency; Uyghur nationalism. PRC focus on implementing long-term policies is probably the most important strategic lesson. Even under the most ideal conditions, defeating or even bringing the insurgency into a “manageable” level took nearly sixty years. This idea of attacking the root causes of the insurgency, or as in this case study, denying the enemy the opportunity to create national strength, is not without precedent in the US Army. Army Major Mark Kreiger claims that the Center of Gravity of an insurgency is not the people, but its cause.²⁹⁷

The PRC’s international message has remained steadfast throughout the duration of the conflict; the issue of Xinjiang is internal to the government of China and does not require outside interference. The CCP use international governing bodies, economic incentives, and diplomacy to

²⁹⁷Mark P. Krieger, “We the People Are Not the Center of Gravity in an Insurgency,” *Military Review* 87, no. 4 (July-August 2007), 96.

effectively convey this message. Likewise, within Xinjiang, the message is also clear; the inhabitants of Xinjiang have the freedom to participate in the economic and political development and integration of Xinjiang with the rest of China. This message is also supported through both positive and negative policies to ensure that the vast majority of the people of Xinjiang exercise this freedom.

PLA operations in Xinjiang also provide valuable lessons at the operational level. During the initial occupation of Xinjiang, the PLA sequentially occupied the provinces of Xinjiang and began in the most secure areas and then gradually expanded into the more contentious areas of Xinjiang. Those areas which could not be secured through diplomacy, such as the borders which became points of contention several times during the sixty year period, required military security. The 1st FA also demonstrated operational patience and allowed for strategic decision makers to set the conditions for unopposed entry into Xinjiang. Although the US did attempt to kill Iraqi President Saddam Hussein prior to the 2003 ground invasion, the attempt failed. Furthermore, in Afghanistan, both the Taliban and Al-Qaeda are able to conduct operations from secure bases in Pakistan. Until the US can deny the use of Pakistan as a secure base, the US will be unable to truly defeat the insurgents. The same holds true in Iraq, if Iran, Syria, and Saudi Arabia can continue to covertly support Iraqi insurgents.

Finally, the 1st FA entered Xinjiang with the understanding that their station was permanent because the mission required a continuous, long-term presence. In Iraq and Afghanistan, the US military is committed to short-term rotations of military forces. Sixteen-year tours such as that of Wang Enmao may be excessive, however, further review and comparison of other counterinsurgencies could provide proof of the value of increased tour lengths.

When the 1st FA first occupied Xinjiang, they suffered from not only a shortage of linguists, but from a lack of understanding of the culture. However, because of the long-term commitment, the 1st FA was not only able to develop an understanding of all the cultural nuances in Xinjiang, but they were also able to identify how to obtain advantages through the cultural

nuances in Xinjiang. Particularly, the 1st FA was able to isolate and segregate cooperative groupings from uncooperative groupings. The 1st FA by co-opting support of the other nationalities in Xinjiang isolated the most disruptive group, the Uyghurs. The 1st FA also incorporated positive incentives for the other groups to participate in the process. The PLA and CCP also made extremely effective use of human intelligence. The PLA realized that good human intelligence does not come from many human intelligence agents, but from many human intelligence sources.

Some aspects of the PRC's use of violence, such as mass arrests, public executions, and torture are not supportable for adoption by the US military. Mass arrests certainly did not work in Iraq, and torture and public executions are not tolerated by the American people. However, the use of violence in Xinjiang was not random and wanton but swift, severe, and used in conjunction with the strategic and operational message. The PRC discovered that in order to achieve long term results in Xinjiang, education is preferred to violence, but violence is necessary and should be swift and severe and focused.

Suitability of Mao COIN Model to US Military

Certainly, not all PRC actions in Xinjiang are appropriate for adoption by the US. Mao's seven fundamentals do provide a sufficient model for planning counterinsurgency operations. US military experiences attest to the validity of the model. For example, the American Revolution succeeded in part because the patriots were able to gain access to military equipment and training from outside supporters such as France. Likewise, the Confederacy failed in its separatist bid in part because it was unable to gain outside support. In Vietnam, US military forces were not allowed to cross into Cambodia, Laos, and North Vietnam, and thus provided the North Vietnamese Army unlimited access to the Ho Chih Minh Trail and secure bases to operate out of. Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia provide insurgents in Iraq secure basing, access to military equipment and/or training.

Within Iraq until recently, the US allowed the people of Iraq to organize along three groups; Kurds, Sunnis, and Shiites and increase their respective senses of nationalism, while diminishing Iraqi nationalism. In other words, the people did not consider themselves Iraqis first. The American commitment to self-determination runs counter to its desire to maintain a unified Iraq. The PRC, however, made a long-term commitment to unifying the people within the established and internationally accepted borders of China because they recognized that doing so was the only way to preserve the state. The US on the other hand maintains no long-term ambition to govern either Afghanistan or Iraq, which adds the additional requirement of establishing governments capable of respectively securing Iraq and Afghanistan. Furthermore, the US cultural definition of long-term is much shorter than the Chinese definition of long-term. This fact constricts the US from making decisions based on a long-term timeline as defined by the Chinese.

Mao's seven fundamentals do compare with current military doctrine. Figure 8 compares Mao's fundamentals of insurgency and the inverted fundamentals for counterinsurgency with the eight historical principles of COIN listed in FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*.²⁹⁸ Several Army principles of COIN; unity of effort is essential, understand the environment, intelligence drives operations, and prepare for long-term commitment are not reflected in Mao's fundamentals nor are they necessarily unique to counterinsurgency warfare. Regardless, in Xinjiang, the PRC was extremely effective at all four of these principles.

Two major differences exist between Mao's fundamentals and the remaining US Army principles of COIN. First, the sixth principle of COIN, isolate the insurgents from their cause and support, appears in title, to accurately reflect several of Mao's fundamentals (3, 4, 5). However, the text of this principle restricts discussion only to isolating the insurgent from material supports, not from the root cause, which Mao and the PRC clearly address by attacking the sources of

²⁹⁸The 8 principles are listed in order as presented in FM 3-24.

Uyghur nationalism; language, history, culture, religion, and economy.²⁹⁹ Second, two principles, legitimacy is the main effort and establish security and rule under law, listed in US doctrine are not reflected in Mao’s fundamentals. This has been to the detriment of the PRC COIN strategy as their legitimacy to rule in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Taiwan is still being challenged. The Author reserves the right to not comment on how effective the US has been in regards to this principle, as it goes beyond the scope of this monograph.

| Seven Fundamentals Insurgency | Seven Fundamentals Counterinsurgency | FM 3-24 Principles of COIN* |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Arouse and organize the people | 1. Prevent the people from organizing and becoming aroused | 1. Legitimacy is the main objective |
| 2. Achieve internal unification politically | 2. Deny the opposition from unifying politically | 2. Unity of Effort is essential |
| 3. Establish secure bases | 3. Deny opposition access to secure bases | 3. Political Factors are Primary |
| 4. Equip forces | 4. Deny the opposition access to equipment | 4. Understand the environment |
| 5. Recover national strength | 5. Deny the opposition the ability to create national strength | 5. Intelligence drives operations |
| 6. Destroy the enemy's national strength | 6. Increase or regain the government's national strength | 6. Isolate the Insurgents from their cause and support |
| 7. Regain lost territories | 7. Protect sovereign territory or regain lost territories | 7. Establish security and rule under law |
| | | 8. Prepare for long-term commitment |

Figure 8. Comparison of Fundamentals and Principles

Source: Department of the Army, FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), 1-20 to 1-24.

²⁹⁹Department of the Army, FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), 1-23, para. 1-128, 1-129, and 1-130.

Mao's seven fundamentals easily transfer into the US Army's military terminology, through adaptation into seven lines of operation for defeating an insurgency, preventing an insurgency from taking root, and increasing the difficulty of future separatist movements gaining momentum. The US military in Iraq and Afghanistan, are trying to accomplish these three tasks. At the Command and General Staff College, the US military studies of counterinsurgency warfare includes studies on US operations in Vietnam, the French in Algeria, Napoleon in Spain, all of which resulted in insurgent victories. Mao and the communist revolution is also studied, but again only as an insurgent victory. Currently the PRC is conducting three major counterinsurgency operations, Xinjiang, Tibet, and Taiwan. They are arguably winning all three. As this case study demonstrates, further study by the US military of PRC counterinsurgency/counterrevolutionary strategy is warranted.

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