

“China as a Police State: A Case for Uyghurs”

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to provide a potential insight into Xinjiang, China’s western border province also perceived as East Turkestan, and its perpetual state of turmoil involving its distinct Turkic-Muslim Uyghur populace. It primarily deals with the antagonism revolving around domination of the province for historic, geopolitical and economic purposes in light of Han Chinese diaspora to Xinjiang proliferating separatist activities, China's violent tactics to quell disruption, and deliberate decimation of Muslim-Uyghur culture through discriminatory policies, which have ultimately led to a flamed strife within the region.

Beginning with an introduction to the situation, the paper reflects upon the history of Xinjiang and its relations with China to better understand the roots of this prolonged conflict between the two. Further, it goes on to discuss the Chinese government’s firm retaliatory actions, to protect the territorial integrity of the state against a supposed extremism threat, which has manifested itself into commission of serious human rights violations against the Uyghurs including evasive imprisonments, forced indoctrinations, denial of basic religious freedoms, arbitrary immigration policies as well as life imprisonment and executions for those even remotely suspicious of separatist activity.

PRC’s heavy-handed repression and draconian enactments are then critically analyzed against the backdrop of Uyghur protests and grievances, Islamophobia, China’s claims and official narratives relating to counter terrorism policy and the silence and aloofness of international agents over the matter. Also drawn is a comparison of their struggle to Tibetan quest for greater autonomy. Following which, Chinese actions are discussed in the context of cultural genocide where the plausibility of a more physical extermination is speculated.

The paper finally concludes upon proposals for solutions to facilitate conciliation efforts and ensure peace in the region, with an underlying idea that education, economic equality, political autonomy along with the support of the international community are more likely to change the future of China’s troubled “New Territory” into fructiferous and not a desecrated land oozing blood and poison.

I. INTRODUCTION

Xinjiang or East Turkestan, a strategically located western Chinese province, comprising one-sixth of the total geographical area, is a region beleaguered increasingly since the 1940's. The indigenous tribe of Uyghurs, a Turkic-speaking Muslim ethnic group, with about 11 million in total, is one of the major minorities recognised in the Chinese mainland.¹ The Uyghur populace has a strikingly distinct culture and traditions than the other Chinese minorities. Xinjiang region has been under a boil since the early 1950's due to confrontations between the recently arrived CCP buttressed Han Chinese and the indigenous Uyghurs. The confrontation fundamentally revolves around Uyghur quest for independence from Beijing's hegemony, and the aggressive stratagem deployed for its economic, geo-political and strategic interests in the region. Not only does Xinjiang border eight Asian countries and is rich in natural reserves, but also happens to lie on the strategically important "Silk Route" which bridges the mainland to the western and central Asian economies.²

It is observed that the fount of the tensions in this region is a denouement of suppression and exploitation of political, cultural and economic interests of the Uyghurs aforethought to marginalize them in their own homeland and promote Han colonialism. The pervasiveness of the government of the People's Republic of China and its relentless policies³ such as "Strike Hard" and "The Great Firewall", opposing all actions imperilling the territorial integrity of the state, as well as the degree of force applied to eliminate the supposed threat of separatism⁴ and "terrorism", has led to serious human rights violations, conversion of Xinjiang into a police state against the Uyghurs and violations of their religious, cultural and political liberties.⁵

II. HISTORY OF XINJIANG AND ITS RELATIONS WITH CHINA

Throughout history, Xinjiang province or the East Turkestan has been in consistent clutches of the Chinese imperialist control. The most prominent periods can be perceived as the mid-18th century into early 20th century under the Qing dynasty, and since the 20th century under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). By the end of the 1750s, Qing dynasty forces, under Qianlong's sovereign, marched into Xinjiang for the conquest of the Zunghar Empire, the previous rulers of much of the Xinjiang region since the 17th century. While Chinese officials at the time considered much of the region to be worthless, the takeover was primarily stated for security purposes, contending that troops could be situated there to balance imminent threats from the north of China, neither for forceful population integration nor territorial

¹ <http://factsanddetails.com/china/cat5/sub89/item162.html>.

² Xinjiang, Gateway To Central Asia's Markets, Hong Kong Means Business (November 09, 2012), <https://hkmb.hktdc.com/en/1x09qajn/hktdc-research/xinjiang-gateway-to-central-asia's-markets>.

³ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/policies-04202018140445.html>.

⁴ Angela Poh, Uyghur Terrorism: A Misnomer?, The Diplomat (July 28, 2015), <https://thediplomat.com/2015/07/uyghur-terrorism-a-misnomer/>.

⁵ <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2018/05/31/china-has-turned-xinjiang-into-a-police-state-like-no-other>.

dominion. Amid this stage, Chinese control over the region was not for the means of incorporating the land into mainland China but more so for imperialist generalship. Nonetheless, unrest from within Xinjiang brewed.⁶

Into the 19th century, disruptions occurred from the Turkic-Muslim populace which was not principally Uyghur but from the Central Asian Khoqand occupants, ultimately prompting reforms for Xinjiang. By the mid 1830's, the Qing, under the Daoguang ruler, initiated reforms to broaden Han colonization inclusive of land reforms, socio-political amendments and military operated agriculture, et al. By the 1864, tensions arose, resulting in hostilities and uprisings against Qing discount brought by Tungan, Hui, and Uyghur populace throughout Xinjiang; eventually limiting Qing's sovereignty over it.⁷

Following the rebellions and collapse of the Qing, Ya'qub Beg of Khoquandi descent came up as the sovereign of Xinjiang. During his reign, Ya'qub earned support from Russia and Britain for his policies pertaining to geopolitical balance of power. In 1877, Qing retained control with a new military under General Zuo Zontang, and post 1884 Xinjiang was officially reckoned as a province of China. Constant efforts for full integration of Xinjiang were made by the officials who paved way for various reforms and policies, so as to link Xinjiang to China, leading to first Han immigration to Xinjiang for forced cultural, political and economic transaction, the repercussions of which were to fall upon the future generations.

Even after Qing dynasty's fall in 1911 and the infamous "Republican Era" of Chinese history, Xinjiang region was still perceived to be a part of China. The region was in a perpetual state of turmoil because of historic oppression and contemporary inequities such as unfair labour treatment and taxation policies in comparison to Han intruders. The Uyghur rebellions had been frequent since the Qing's reign but under Yang Zengxin's rule were retaliated with extremity resulting in killing of two leaders of the rebellion and nearly two hundred Uyghurs. This event can be considered as the official inception of Xinjiang's struggle for autonomy on ethnic and cultural bias. Their sense of nationalism was displayed primarily through advancing their religious and cultural education for youth along with modern education, technological and scientific sufficiency symbolizing a sense of self-identity from the Han domination that had suppressed the region for over a century.⁸

Under the premiership of Mao Zedong in 1949, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was established, ending the Republican Era of Chinese history. Chinese communist forces

⁶ Samuel Tuero, The Uighur Conflict in China, The Midnight Minds (January 13, 2018), <https://themidnightminds.org/2018/01/13/the-uighur-conflict-in-china/>.

⁷ Elizabeth Van Wie Davis, Uyghur Muslim Ethnic Separatism in Xinjiang, China, Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies (January 2008), <https://apcss.org/college/publications/uyghur-muslim-ethnic-separatism-in-xinjiang-china/>.

⁸ Devastating Blows: Religious Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang, Uyghur Human Rights Project (April, 2005), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2005/04/11/devastating-blows/religious-repression-uighurs-xinjiang>.

annexed the East Turkestan Republic in 1949 with the support of the Soviet Union followed by a series of public executions and massacres. Countless Uyghurs were executed in communist China's conquest of East Turkestan. While the original name for the region "East Turkestan" was criminalized, another term "Xinjiang", meaning the new territory, was instituted.⁹ A comparatively nascent CCP in regards to the Xinjiang region introduced tactics to integrate it with the rest of the country, working towards diminishing ethnic minority elites by economising the region, promotion of well-qualified Hans in this region leading to influx of the Han population and deliberate degradation of the Uyghurs, thus beginning a more secured integration of Xinjiang into China.

Realising the cultural and linguistic difference of the people of Xinjiang, most substantially the Uyghurs, theoretical autonomy was granted for this region, along with their economic approach. Therefore, Xinjiang was subsequently named as Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in 1955.¹⁰ The nature of this autonomy was rather rhetoric and is seen as a strategy by the Chinese government to distract uprisings by Uyghurs and other minorities to maintain an imperialist grasp on the region while still enforcing harsh policies of the "Great Leap Forward" and the "Cultural Revolution" which called for prohibition on ethnic language, traditional clothing and eating cultural specific food. Additionally, mosques and religious texts were destroyed and religious leaders were violently persecuted, furthermore oppressing religion and ethnic varieties.

Following the end of the harsh culturally repressed Mao era, China, under Deng Xiaoping, went through a phase of considerably lighter cultural controls to lay down new national reform policies. The lift of cultural repression apparently created increase in appeals from Uyghurs and ethnic minorities for political autonomy from the state.¹¹

Following the fall of the Soviet Union and the seething unrest from Uyghurs in 1991, the Chinese authorities grew increasingly uneasy concerning Islamic resurgence in Xinjiang coupled with external factors from Afghanistan and the newly independent Central Asian states. In order to conciliate ethnic tensions and ensure security along borders, the government introduced socio-economic policies both internally and externally. But such policies had an adverse effect, aggravating unrest and violent displays of separatism throughout Xinjiang and Beijing.

⁹Ishaan Tharoor, A Brief History of the Uighurs, Time (July 2009), <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1909416,00.html>.

¹⁰ Alim A Seytoff, China's Uighurs claim cultural 'genocide', Al-Jazeera (June 02, 2014), <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/06/china-uighurs-claim-cultural-gen-20146165946224857.html>.

¹¹Akhilesh Pillalamarri, Troubled Today, China's Xinjiang Has a Long History, The Diplomat (July 30, 2015), <https://thediplomat.com/2015/07/troubled-today-chinas-xinjiang-has-a-long-history/>.

In the 21st century, the government continued with their reforms including “Kashgar Dangerous House Reform” and “Strike Hard”¹² campaigns targeting Uyghur population. The era after 9/11 saw the rise in Islamophobia and its impact on the Uyghur Uprising which was now responded to with iron-fisted policies of surreptitious disappearances, indoctrination and other measures that breach the international norms of human rights accompanied by the US backed international organisations’ ignorance to the spurt in the old wound of Uyghur persecution.¹³

III. VIOLATIONS BY A POLICE STATE: SOCIO-POLITICAL ORDEALS OF THE UYGHURS

The unending tale of violence began with the Chinese communist forces annexing the East Turkestan Republic in 1949 with the support of the Soviet Union, followed by a series of public executions and massacres, ever-growing since.¹⁴ The Uyghur individuals, as other minorities, never enjoyed autonomy in their purported Autonomous Region. Since, all the political, military, police and economic powers remained in the hands of Chinese officials. So as to control the "New Territory", China ruthlessly smothered every insurgence and transferred millions of Hans into East Turkestan, providing them with financial and economic opportunities denied to Uyghurs.¹⁵ Simultaneously, the abundant natural resources and huge reserves of natural gas, oil, gold, uranium, coal and other minerals of East Turkestan were exploited, leaving nothing to the Uyghurs.

The Uyghur resentment towards Chinese rule¹⁶ originates from their loss of independence, Chinese colonial and apartheid rule, ethnicity and religion - fuelled by poverty, unemployment, social disparities, political grievances and the sense of being overwhelmed by millions of Chinese settlers who threatened their very existence as a historic, sovereign, and indigenous majority in their homeland of East Turkestan. This was further added to by the systematic repression of the Uyghur people since 1949 along with the reframing of its extensive policies in the name of "Islamic terrorism" since 9/11.¹⁷

Cultural Genocide

Between 1964 and 1996, China experimented numerous nuclear devices upon the province of East Turkestan, ravaging both environment and population. Furthermore, the draconian “Strike-Hard” campaign was adopted to subdue and retaliate to the uprisings with extra-

¹² <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/strike-hard-01092014172927.html>.

¹³ https://docs.uhrp.org/pdf/MassDetention_of_Uyghurs.pdf.

¹⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-26414014>.

¹⁵ <https://docs.uhrp.org/pdf/ReligionWhitePaper.pdf>.

¹⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34592336>.

¹⁷ https://docs.uhrp.org/pdf/MassDetention_of_Uyghurs.pdf.

judicial and indiscriminate killings of Uyghur population.¹⁸ Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Uyghurs were increasingly being categorised as “Islamic terrorists”, for the Chinese Authorities perceived Islam as a contagious disease termed a “malignant tumor” whose sufferers must be quarantined.¹⁹ Resentment emanating from arrests of significant Uyghur activists, led to violent riots and a retaliatory crackdown, a situation that was tactfully spun as “terrorist threats from Muslim Uyghurs”, to silence international criticism of its subsequent repression. Forced transferring of children, banning national language and cultural activities, destroying schools, religious institutions, separation of families, arbitrary imprisonment and persecution of scholars into re-education camps and further atrocities within are evidence of razing of the Uyghur identity by the Chinese government.²⁰

“Re-education camps”, or training camps, are the vilest pillar of this de-extremification policy.²¹ Around 890,000 Muslim Uyghurs have been incarcerated into political re-education camps redolent of the Mao era. China defends what authorities call “extremism eradication” schools as an imperative to battle against radicals, who it describes as those harbouring “strong religious views” and “politically incorrect”, engendering insurgency and terrorism²². While authorities asserted the centres were about combating terrorism and separatism, they were in certainty intended to brainwash and acclimatize the Uyghurs.²³

At the camps, patriotic measures aimed at making Uyghurs docile towards the Chinese government. Biased Pro-Chinese thought, implementation of discriminatory policies - ranging from restricting of certain Muslim names, religious practises such as maintaining beards, prohibition of annual holy pilgrimage of Hajj, shakedown followed by detention of relatives of the Uyghurs in foreign countries, to chilling reports of psychological and physical torture along with political indoctrination – were put in force.²⁴

Xinjiang Virtual Cage

Chinese State censors the use of internet which is seen as a vehicle for empowerment and freedom.²⁵ Uyghurs experience censorship, restricted access along with anti-Uyghur propaganda and lies, fearing that an open online environment in Xinjiang will expose human rights abuses committed against the Uyghur people under Chinese administration.

¹⁸ Devastating Blows: Religious Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang, Uyghur Human Rights Project (April 11, 2005), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2005/04/11/devastating-blows/religious-repression-uighurs-xinjiang>.

¹⁹ K.C. Furman, China Has Chosen Cultural Genocide in Xinjiang—For Now, *The Foreign policy* (Sept 19, 2018, 11:57 AM), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/09/19/china-has-chosen-cultural-genocide-in-xinjiang-for-now/>.

²⁰ <https://www.economist.com/china/2017/05/04/the-extraordinary-ways-in-which-china-humiliates-muslims>.

²¹ Jen Kirby, China’s Brutal Crackdown On The Uighur Muslim Minority, Explained, *The Vox* (Aug 30, 2018, 1:10pm EDT), <https://www.vox.com/2018/8/15/17684226/uighur-china-camps-united-nations>.

²² <https://docs.uhrp.org/pdf/ReligionWhitePaper.pdf>.

²³ Scott Devary, The Approaching Xinjiang Crisis Point, *The Diplomat* (October 02, 2014), <https://thediplomat.com/2014/10/the-approaching-xinjiang-crisis-point/>.

²⁴ Michael Clarke, China and the Uyghurs: The “Palestinization” of Xinjiang, Middle East Policy Council (October 30, 2018), <https://mepc.org/china-and-uyghurs-palestinization-xinjiang>.

²⁵ Omer Kanat, China’s Abuse of Uighurs, *The New York Times* (Sept. 28, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/28/opinion/china-uighurs.html>.

Rigid Media, Judiciary and Public Services

In Xinjiang, denial of justice for the Uyghur victims of state oppression include dehumanizing wiles of public despoiling of traditional costumes, arbitrary detentions, mass disappearances, inhumane violent punishments and incarcerations. The media is rigid with censorship, involving no approval of press and speech by Uyghurs and an arrant proscription of freedom.²⁶

Apart from central, provincial and local policies are also tramped with armed police and large-scale anti-terror exercises.²⁷ Increased surveillance and police presence, including grid management and biometric policing system, fractionates cities to scrutinize every individual and their movements.²⁸ The population is under a constant scrutiny and surveillance despite the lack of evidence demonstrating an organized threat.

IV. CHINA IN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURAL GENOCIDE - AN ANALYSIS

China has had a long history of human rights violations owing to the political stronghold of the Chinese Communist Party. Given the CCP's stringent censorship over press and dissemination of facts relating to on ground realities, it inevitably has a monopoly over the perception that it creates on the outside world. The Republic functions much like a prison and the only window into it is regulated by the CCP. The onlooker can only see as much as the CCP allows it to see.²⁹ Perhaps that's why the cause of the Uyghurs has failed to garner as much international attention as it rightly should – that and the significant diplomatic leverage on the World Stage that China holds.

Throughout history, China has distrusted its Uyghur population's loyalty for ethnic, nationalist and religious reasons. These troubled waters only took a turn for the worse in 2009, when Uyghur protests led to violent riots and a retaliatory crackdown. A handful of deadly attacks outside Xinjiang since have been capitalised upon by the state to justify its arbitrary restrictions on the group's rights and freedoms.³⁰ However, the Uyghur people cannot be boxed into any one category. While some may desire a separate state, some wish to maintain cultural distinction within an autonomous relationship, and others are very well

²⁶ Carol Wickenkamp, Uyghurs 'Caged' By Internet Restrictions, Charges Report, Epoch Times (June 16, 2014), https://www.theepochtimes.com/uhygurs-caged-by-internet-restrictions-charges-report_740885.html.

²⁷ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/china-and-tibet>.

²⁸ China: Minority Region Collects DNA from Millions, Human Rights Watch (December 13, 2017, 10:48AM EST), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/12/13/china-minority-region-collects-dna-millions>.

²⁹ Enver Tohti, Conflict in Xinjiang: The Uighurs and the Chinese Regime, Gino Germani Institute for Social Sciences and Strategic Studies (2015).

³⁰ Kate Cronin-Furman, China Has Chosen Cultural Genocide in Xinjiang—For Now, Foreign Policy (Sept. 19, 2018, 11:57 AM), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/09/19/china-has-chosen-cultural-genocide-in-xinjiang-for-now/>.

integrating into the Chinese system.³¹ Protests that were held in defiance of oppressive policies, began peacefully, and only took up a more violent character when faced by excessive Chinese forces. Yet China sees its Uyghurs as a threatening and reluctant lot and is therefore opting for unconventional tactics to “re-educate” its populace in an effort to turn it into a more compliant and integrated one.³² But so far, increasing oppression has only been met with further resistance, and the possibility that an entire generation of Uyghurs will grow up to greater resentment towards the state, thereby jeopardising any future conciliation prospects.

Around 60% of China’s territory comprises of ethnic minorities which are culturally and linguistically different from the dominant Han Chinese, among these are the Uyghurs and Tibetans who have been granted regional autonomy as provincial entities. But their territorial unity remains a major concern for Beijing, which is bent on keeping an iron grip on these two regions given their strategic locations and natural resource reserves.³³ Thus, what is happening in Xinjiang today is no new a task for the Chinese authorities, who have employed similar restrictions on religious freedom, speech, movement and assembly in Tibet as well.³⁴ An interesting development within this timeline of events however, was the appellation of the “radical Islamic terrorist” being incessantly proffered upon the average Uyghur, particularly post the 9/11 attacks. This propensity to equate religious belief with terrorism is a feature that distinguishes the Uyghur cause from that of the Tibetan Buddhists whose plight was covered extensively worldwide as victims of injustice. China’s treatment of Islam as a mental illness that needs to be exterminated from the minds of its Uyghur citizenry goes on to highlight the religious affiliations of ethnic movements and the deep shades of Islamophobia that the Chinese authorities seem to be hued in. This trend has consistently made its presence felt in the contemporary times. It stems not merely from the idea of stripping religious identity for national cohesion but rather China’s long found campaign of promoting a state-approved, state-sanctioned, “modern” expression of the Islamic faith.³⁵

The official state narrative has been the conventional authoritarian rhetoric of counter terrorism policy, though the fact remains, that around one million innocent Uyghurs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, having nothing to do with extremist ideology, are forcefully held in internment camps, undergoing indoctrination, and denied basic religious

³¹ Elizabeth Van Wie Davis, Uyghur Muslim Ethnic Separatism in Xinjiang, China, Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (Jan., 2008), <https://apcss.org/college/publications/uyghur-muslim-ethnic-separatism-in-xinjiang-china/>.

³² Kate Cronin-Furman, China Has Chosen Cultural Genocide in Xinjiang—For Now, Foreign Policy (Sept. 19, 2018, 11:57 AM), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/09/19/china-has-chosen-cultural-genocide-in-xinjiang-for-now/>.

³³ Amine Ertürk, Similarities and Differences: A Comparison of China's Ethnicity Policies in Xinjiang and Tibet, iNSAMER.

³⁴ China – Events of 2017, HRW Report (2018), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/china-and-tibet>.

³⁵ Matt Schrader, Censorship, Geopolitical Time Bombs, and China’s Islamophobia Problem, The Jamestown Foundation (Jul. 25, 2018, 7:00 AM), <https://jamestown.org/program/censorship-geopolitical-time-bombs-and-chinas-islamophobia-problem/>.

freedoms, blatantly outside the framework of international law. When put against the collective population of 11 million, this number accounts for about one in every ten. Though, China's claims of Uyghur links to Islamic terrorist organisations abroad remain largely without evidence. Yet astonishingly enough, the statistics haven't sparked as much outrage as Israel's subjugation of the Palestinians, Myanmar's ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya, or even Tibet's demands for greater autonomy for that matter – a situation with strikingly similar dynamics to the Uyghur struggle.³⁶

The streams of human rights violations pouring out of Xinjiang so far seem akin to the horrors of a police state than an Orwellian novel. And while China may not have systematically employed lethal violence to exterminate its Uyghur population yet, it has certainly not shied away from the use of repressive, and often violent, means. It appears that China is committing abuse not entirely as a physical but rather cultural genocide. Cultural genocide refers to the elimination of a group's identity through measures such as restricting the use of a national language, forcibly transferring children away from their families, banning cultural activities, or destroying schools, religious institutions and memory sites. It may be noted, although cultural genocide isn't a defined crime in international law per se, but the absence of it hasn't created much vacuum in practise. For the acts that qualify as cultural genocide, often take birth either alongside their violent counterparts or as precursors to it.³⁷

There can be no greater testimony serving to corroborate China's stance on ethnic cleansing than its backing of what Myanmar views as a legitimate counter-insurgency operation in the Rakhine State. Beijing, in line with its close relations with Myanmar, has also helped block a resolution on the crisis at the U.N. Security Council. Further, as the United Nations ventured to set up a body to prepare evidence of human rights abuses in Myanmar, China's State Councillor Wang Yi said that the issue was historical in nature, and should not be complicated, expanded or 'internationalised'.³⁸ Somewhere it knows well, that if the Rohingya genocide is properly pursued by the U.N. body so established, its treatment towards the Uyghurs may also follow a similar mechanism of accountability.

Though Xinjiang's finances are straining under the burden of large-scale monitoring and surveillance, China is willing to walk the extra mile to eradicate the supposed threat that Uyghur identity poses to state security. The reason being, it's much easier to conceal and obfuscate than an outright bloodbath given China's reputation as a high-capacity international actor. Arbitrary detentions and incidental torture are much more likely to pass off as over-

³⁶ Mehdi Hasan, One Million Muslim Uighurs Have Been Detained by China, the U.N. Says. Where's the Global Outrage?, *The Intercept* (Aug. 14 2018, 1:34 AM), <https://theintercept.com/2018/08/13/china-muslims-uighur-detention/>.

³⁷ Kate Cronin-Furman, China Has Chosen Cultural Genocide in Xinjiang—For Now, *Foreign Policy* (Sept. 19, 2018, 11:57 AM), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/09/19/china-has-chosen-cultural-genocide-in-xinjiang-for-now/>.

³⁸ Ben Blanchard, China Says Rohingya Issue Should Not Be "Internationalised", *Reuters* (Sept. 28, 2018, 8:34 AM), <https://in.reuters.com/article/myanmar-rohingya-china/china-says-rohingya-issue-should-not-be-internationalised-idINKCN1M807X>.

enthusiastic counterterrorism efforts in lieu of mass graves and tell-tale manifestations of death and decay. But it's certainly no situation to be taken lightly, for when the State finds its resources and capacities flailing, it often resorts to more conventional means of obliterating its target identity – and almost always with fatal consequences.³⁹

V. SOLUTIONS TO THE XINJIANG PROBLEM – CONCLUSION

Keeping all the points above in mind, it can be deduced that the systematic influx of the Han Chinese into Xinjiang, accompanied by repressive measures against the Uyghurs are two of the major reasons presently causing conflict in the region. It is incumbent upon the Chinese government to understand that East Turkestan cannot serve as a land of opportunity and prosperity solely for the colonising Chinese settlers at the cost of its indigenous Uyghur people.

China is now faced with the choice to either concede to Uyghur demands for greater autonomy in order to curb their discontentment which then translates into unrest, or ensure better economic opportunities for the Uyghur people. It's unlikely that Beijing could ensure political stability or ethnic harmony in East Turkestan by means of forced homogenisation. Else, the Uyghur people will simply continue to reject China's colonial rule in their homeland as loyalty cannot be elicited without addressing their legitimate grievances. Economic measures on the other hand are more likely to help marginalized sections integrate into the mainstream, and put an end to China's concerns of supposed extremism.

It would serve China well to give room to the provincial and sub-provincial governments in Xinjiang to deliver benefits of development to the Uyghur people by diverting the flow of public spending into sectors in which the region has advantage, and within which the Uyghurs can be adequately integrated. In the short-run, affirmative action through implementation of quotas and campaigns in employment, healthcare and education will be more efficient than forced assimilation and indoctrination in this regard.⁴⁰

As for addressing the present unjust treatment of Uyghurs, the international community, particularly the predominantly Muslim countries, could help by holding accountable and exerting pressure on China to reconsider its actions, by dint of their diplomatic leverage over it. Increased communication and transportation links with Turkey, a Turkic nation, could also help bridge the isolation of the Uyghurs from the rest of the world. Given the prolonged and historical nature of this conflict, any conciliation efforts will no doubt take their time in getting things to resolve. But, if Beijing could set aside its prejudices and acknowledge the

³⁹ Kate Cronin-Furman, China Has Chosen Cultural Genocide in Xinjiang—For Now, *Foreign Policy* (Sept. 19, 2018, 11:57 AM), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/09/19/china-has-chosen-cultural-genocide-in-xinjiang-for-now/>.

⁴⁰ Emre Tunc Sakaoglu, Ethnic Conflict in China's Xinjiang: Reasons Behind It and Proposals for Solution, *Foreign Policy News* (Aug. 24, 2014), <http://foreignpolicynews.org/2014/08/24/ethnic-conflict-chinas-xinjiang-reasons-behind-proposals-solution/>.

faults within its current policy of treating the Uyghurs, there will be better prospects of peace in the region. For as the saying goes, a fault confessed is half redressed.⁴¹

⁴¹ Emre Tunc Sakaoglu, Ethnic Conflict in China's Xinjiang: Reasons Behind It and Proposals for Solution, Foreign Policy News (Aug. 24, 2014), <http://foreignpolicynews.org/2014/08/24/ethnic-conflict-chinas-xinjiang-reasons-behind-proposals-solution/>.