AN ANALYSIS OF CHINA'S RESPONSE TOWARDS UIGHUR MUSLIMS IN XINJIANG

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Declaration

I, Tokologo Ramodibe, declare that this Research Report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Masters of Arts in International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

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ABSTRACT

Uighur Muslims in China represent a unique group of Muslims living in China due to the fact that they predominantly receive the bulk of the Chinese government's repressive policy. China's repressive policy towards Uighurs in Xinjiang has not only turned the province into a police and apartheid state, but the repressive policy has grossly violated Uighur Muslims' fundamental human rights. While attempts have been made to explain the cause of China's state response towards Uighurs, this research report is unique in that it posits that there exists more than one single cause of China's state response. Namely, these causes are: islamophobia, ethnicity, terrorism and Chinese state security. Together, these four causes provide some clarity in understanding China's treatment of Uighur Muslims.

Dedication

I dedicate this research report to my mother, Dipuo Ramodibe, and my sister, Motlatsi Ramodibe, both of whom have been a constant source of support and strength during the months leading up to this day. Thank you.

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I am extremely grateful to my supervisor, Prof. Garth Shelton, for not only his guidance throughout this research process but also for his unwavering patience and understanding which only made writing this research report that much easier. Without his contributions, this research report would not have been possible.

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I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, METHODOLOGY AND THE CONCEPTUALISING UIGHUR ETHNIC IDENTITY AND STATE RESPONSE

1. Historical background and Methodology

The 9/11 terrorist attacks of September 2001 were a watershed moment in international relations because soon thereafter the international community as a whole launched a global war on terrorism that was championed chiefly by the United States of America (USA) and supported by a host of other nations including, but not limited to, Israel, members of NATO as well as the People's Republic of China (PRC). What coincided with the global war on terrorism was the rise of islamophobia. According to scholars such as Lopez (2011) after 9/11 and the launch of the global war on terror there has been a rise in the concern with, analysis of and debate around islamophobia due to the fact that there had been a rise in anti-Muslim sentiments, particularly in the West. However this is not to say that there is not and has not been any existence of anti-Muslim sentiments or islamophobia in areas other than the West. Islamophobia is a global phenomenon that is present in countries such as Russia and China. Indeed it is in these areas, specifically China, where the focus of this research lies. This research is interested in analysing Chinese state response towards Uighurs by finding the probabilistic cause or causes thereof.

Chinese state response towards Uighur Muslims is of particular interest because of the unique hardline stance China has assumed regarding Uighur Muslims. Moreover, China's response towards Uighurs is arguably concentrated in just one region of the Asian country, name Xinjiang, and specifically targets one ethnic group of Muslims, Uighurs. The Uighurs are the second largest Muslim population in China behind the Hui and predominantly occupy the northwest region of Xinjiang. The Uighurs have been specifically targeted by the Chinese national and provincial governments in acts that have violated their basic human rights including their freedom of belief, freedom of movement, freedom of religion and freedom of association. Both the national and provincial Chinese governments have justified their treatment of Uighurs with reasons related to terrorism, extremism and separatism (Amnesty International, 2018).

The study of Chinese state response regarding Uighurs is not a new area of research and has been previously covered by the current literature. The literature has focused and touched on the following in terms of China's state response: China's re-education camps (Zenz, 2018); human security (Clarke, 2008a); Uighur

separatism (Clarke, 2008b); and the biopolitics of China's exclusion of Uighurs (Roberts, 2018). The bulk of the literature, therefore, has simply acknowledged that China's state response towards Uighurs is caused by independent issues that revolve around the existence of islamophobia, religion, separatism, terrorism etc. and not the combination of these and other issues. Thus this research will be different in that it will seek to analyse and explain the probabilistic causes of China's state response towards Uighurs. In this sense, this research does not limit the probable causes to just a single and independent cause but rather a combination of probable causes that interdependently explain China's state response. This research hypothesises that China's state response is possibly caused by the following interdependent causes: islamophobia, ethnicity, terrorism and Chinese state security.

In order to explore these probable causes, this research will attempt to adopt an inductive research design. This means that this research will engage in theory development through the explanation of the dependent variable which in this cause is the Chinese state response towards Uighur Muslims. The dependent variable of this research is operationalized mainly through policies undertaken by the Chinese national and provincial governments, for example re-education camps, but it can also be operationalized through official reports released by intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations, press releases, interviews and speeches made by Chinese officials. In analysing the causes of China's state response the research will hope to answer a few research questions. 1. What is or are the causes of China's hardline response towards Uighur Muslims? 2. What role do islamophobia, ethnicity, terrorism and Chinese state security play in explaining Chinese state response? 3. Can these four causes explain China's state response independently and in spite of each other or are they interconnected and interdependent? 4. Whether independent or interdependent are either one of these causes more of a cause than the others? To answer these questions the research will rely on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources will include official reports, press releases, speeches and interviews. The secondary sources will include books, academic journals and articles. These research questions will also assist in achieving the research's broad aim of identifying the probable cause or causes of China's state response towards Uighur Muslims.

Additionally, in order to answer these questions the research will conduct a process tracing method. According to Walden (2012) process tracing is an attempt to identify causal mechanisms that link independent and dependent variables. More specifically, process tracing is ‘a mode of causal inference based on concatenation and not covariation’. Thus process tracing involves linking events within single cases by identifying the causal mechanisms that create the events. In this case, by using process tracing the research will look at the single cause of China and its response towards Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang and then proceed to link the events and facts related to China’s response. This research does understand and acknowledge the limitations of its scope. Due to the fact that it relies on process tracing method the research will rely more on internal validity rather than external validity. That is to say that the explanatory power of the research is very limited and only applicable to China specifically. Therefore this research has no generalisability. But what the research lacks in generalisability it makes up for in terms of parsimony. Because of its reliance on process tracing, this research will be able to create complex and complicated explanations that will explore Chinese state response in a way that has not been extensively done by the current literature.

As aforementioned above, this research believes that islamophobia, terrorism, ethnicity and Chinese state security are the probable causes of the DV, Chinese state response. China's state response towards Uighurs in Xinjiang has been described by scholars such as Clarke (2008), Roberts (2018) and Zenz (2018) as influenced by terrorism, state security, ethnicity and islamophobia. Indeed, this research hypothesises that China’s state response regarding Uighurs can be explained by islamophobia. Islamophobia is a recent term that describes an old concept and because of that there is no consensus on the exact definition of the term. However, this research understands islamophobia to be the fear of Muslims and Islam which is often expressed through negative attitudes and emotions and used as a political weapon. In China islamophobia is an 'understudied phenomenon', according to Luqiu and Yang (2018), which has shaped and continues to shape Chinese treatment of Muslims and Uighurs in particular.

China has consistently maintained that its treatment of Uighur Muslims has been reactionary towards Uighur terrorism. The Chinese government believes that Uighur separatists are responsible for the 'religious extremism' that has occurred in China

(Al Jazeera, 2019). In this sense, China's treatment of Uighurs is explained and caused by Uighur terrorism, at least according to the Chinese government. Thus this research hypothesis China's state response can be explained by terrorism. The ethnicity of Uighur Muslims may also explain Chinese state response towards Uighurs. Uighurs are a Turkic ethnic group which makes them vastly different from the predominant Chinese ethnic group, the Han. Thus China's state response can be explained because Uighurs are not of Han ethnicity and the Chinese government are not of Han ethnicity and the Chinese government are encouraged by their 'ethnocentric ideology' (Turdush, 2018). The last explanation of Chinese state response is a little more nuanced than the abovementioned explanations because it is linked to terrorism, religious extremism and radical Islam. Uighur Muslims have attempted to break the Xinjiang region they predominantly occupy away from China to form their own autonomous state. Fearing that a Uighur breakaway could create a domino effect with other Chinese territories such as Taiwan and Tibet, China has had to react to Uighur separatism. Thus this research hypothesises that China's state response is explained by China's state security.

The research will be divided according to 6 chapters. Chapter 1 will define what state response is as well as provide a background of Uighur presence in Xinjiang, china. Chapters 2-5 will explore the aforementioned causes above. That is to say that chapter 2 will explore the cause of terrorism, chapter 3 will explore the cause of ethnicity, chapter 4 will look at the cause of islamophobia while chapter 5 will attempt to explain Chinese state security as a cause. The final chapter will contain a conclusion as well as the statement of findings.

2. Difficulties surrounding Uighur identity

Understanding the ethnic history of Uighur people, particularly Uighurs of Xinjiang[1], is a process that has been complicated over years past. This is because, firstly, understanding how ethnic identity, let alone Uighur ethnic identity, is shaped and formed creates a great deal of confusion among scholars and secondly the history of

[1] Xinjiang, a territory in which the Uighur people live, is one of China's 5 autonomous regions that is located in the north west of the Far East Asian country. As Map 1 shows, Xinjiang is bordered by 8 different Central Asian countries and thus it takes up the bulk of China's landmass. The region of Xinjiang, which is home to a number of different ethnic groups the majority of whom of Turkic descent, was annexed by China in 1884 and by 1955 it was renamed Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).

Uighurs has significantly been shaped by competing nationalist narratives that have turned Uighur identity into an 'ideological battle' (Tursun, 2008: 87).

Uighurs and their history are strongly tied to Central Asia and as such Uighur identity has been shaped and influenced by Turkish and 'Turco-Islamic traditions' particularly in the last century (Tursun, 2008: 88). In fact, the Uighurs' connection to these traditions has played a significant role in developing their cultural, social and political life. For example, Turco-Islamic traditions exposed Uihgurs to innovative styles of 'education and culture' as well as encouraged Uighurs to study abroad in Turkey which resulted in an increasing number of Uighur intellectuals (Tursun, 2007). Furthermore it was also around this time, according to Tursun (2007), that books pertaining to Islam were introduced to Uighurs.

Notwithstanding the Turks and their influence, Uighur identity has also been greatly influenced by Soviet/Russian tradition due to the Uighurs close ties to Central Asia. Akin to the Turco-Islamic influence, the Soviet's influence on Uighur identity began around the 20th century which marked the start of the competing political narratives that have shaped Uighur identity. Much like the Turkish influence, Soviet influence on the Uighurs culminated in the development of Uighur intellectuals who undertook research projects that revolved around Uighur history and thus ultimately created Uighur nationalism (Tursun, 2008: 89-90). The Soviet Union's influence on Uighur identity was particularly significant during the 1940s due to the fact that:

> The Soviet Union, which supported the ETR [East Turkistan Republic], established special political-military and propaganda organisation in Central Asia to help the liberation movement in Xinjiang. These organisations published journals such as "*Qazaq Eli*" (Kazakh country) and "*Sherq Heqiqiti*" (East Justice) in the Uyghur language and sent them to the ETR and surrounding areas (Milliward and Tursun, 2004: 86).

The Soviet supported and propagated such organisations as a way to oppose and counter the Turkish influence on Uighur identity. To this end the Soviet's overall objective was to 'promote a unique ethnic identity and history of Uyghurs as opposed to a common Turkic history and Turkic identity' (Tursun, 2008: 90-91). By the time the Chinese began influencing the Uighur identity a nationalist movement had been developed with ideas of national liberation, national independence and self-determination becoming a part of the Uighur community (Milliward, 2004: 4).

Map 1: Map of China, its provinces and autonomous regions

(Source: Human Rights Watch, 2018: i)

The late 1940s and the 1950s marked the beginning of Chinese influence on Uighur identity. Whereas the goal for Turkish influence was to promote a Turkic identity for Uighurs and for the Soviets to promote a unique and independent Uighur identity, Chinese influence aimed to challenge and oppose both the Turco-Islamic and Soviet influence by establishing historical ties between the Uighur and the Chinese (Tursun, 2008: 91). According to Boehm (2009: 77) the Chinese's plan had always been about trying to claim that the histories of minorities living in China, including the Uighurs, are a part of one single Chinese history. Bovingdon (2002: 44) shares this opinion as he believes that since 1949 the Chinese have attempted to make the Uighurs 'think of themselves as Chinese'. To this end, the Chinese relied on the use of scholars who were dedicated towards advancing the 'Chinese cause' to conduct research on Uighur history. This resulted in the creation of textbooks used in Uighur schools that propagated that Chinese presence in Xinjiang preceded 'the arrival of the Uighurs' (Boehm, 2009: 77). This distortion of Uighur history was intended to strip Uighurs of their own independent identity and re-align it with Chinese history. Additionally, to further the Chinese nationalist narrative and assimilate the Uighur

into an overall Chinese identity, China has maintained the idea that the area of Xinjiang has always been Chinese territory despite lacking the historic evidence to prove so (Tursun, 2008: 92; Boehm, 2009: 77).

The various influences aforementioned above that shaped Uighur identity, particularly the Chinese influence, have created a great deal of confusion among scholars. This is because all influences mentioned above have had their own political agenda that they tried to push which has ultimately affected how the ethnic identity of Uighurs is to be understood. The Turkish have pushed an agenda that attempted to incorporate Uighur identity into a common Turkic identity under the umbrella of Pan-Turkism. While the Soviets may have tried to influence the Uighurs to assume their own unique identity through the research of their history, it was done 'within a communist ideological frame' which highlights their agenda with regards to the Uighurs. The Chinese propagated an agenda that attempted to assimilate the Uighurs into a common Chinese identity through the use of intellectuals and scholars who distorted Uighur history by claiming that the Chinese occupied Xinjiang before the Uighurs. Despite the fact attempts have been made to submerge the Uighur identity into either a communist framework or even a common Turkish or Chinese identity, Uighurs in recent times have undertaken their own approach which has attempted to promote a history and identity of Uighurs that is unique and independent of other narratives (Bhattacharya, 2003: 362). Thus this shows that Uighur identity is not a static phenomenon as it has constantly been influenced by political, social and cultural circumstances.

In *Uyghur and Uyghur Identity* Dolkun Kamberi (2015) highlights and traces the history and identity of the Uighur people. In the book Kamberi identifies the Uighurs according to their historical, regional and religious identity, among others. According to him (1999: 283) the Uighurs have had their own independent history that is so significant and important that the history of Central Asia as a whole is indelibly connected to Uighur history.

3. Uighurs and Uighur identity

Uighur people are ethnoreligious minority group of Turkic ancestry who historically originate from Central and East Asia despite a predominant number of Uighurs living in Mainland China. According to Kamberi (2015: 18) the Uighur people's history in

Asia can be traced back to the first millennium BCE thus they possess a history that is rich in culture, language, religion, music, art and geopolitics. However, the Chinese government have made numerous attempts to, if not completely eradicate Uighur identity, then to submerge it entirely into a Han Chinese identity (Bhattacharya, 2003: 362). And yet these attempts have ironically created a resurgence within the Uighur community to challenge the government by reviving their identity (Gladney, 1990: 9). Their identity is strongly solidified by their political history, their common religious heritage and their deep connection to the land and region from which they originate. It is through these three factors that the identity of the Uighur people can be conceptualised.

a. Political identity

Before the start of Chinese control, the Uighur people once enjoyed a separate political identity that was characterised by an independent territory that was once known as the Uighur Empire (Bhattacharya, 2003: 359; Kamberi, 2015: 18). The Uighur Empire was located on the famous ancient Silk Road which served as an important route for both economic and cultural trade and exchanges between the Far East and the West (Bhattacharya, 2003: 359). This highlights that the idea propagated by the Chinese that the arrivals of Uighurs in Xinjiang was preceded by Chinese presence in the area is untrue. Such an idea is further dispelled by Lattimore (1940) who states that in the past two millennia China have only recorded effective control of Central Asia for 425 years. Furthermore, at the height of its reign the Uighur Empire often conducted significant economic trade as well as cultural and social exchanges such as marriages with the Chinese[2]. The existence of a Uighur Empire emphasises the fact that Uighur people have always had a political identity as well as political independence from China and Chinese-based dynasties.

b. Regional identity

Uighur people have a strong attachment to the land and region from which their originate due to the fact that both their land and region are not only a source of their history but also the Uighur Empire, which they draw their political identity from,

[2] For more on this see Sinor, D. 1990. The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge and Kamberi, D. 2015. Uyghurs and Uyghur Identity. Radio Free Asia.

emanates from that land and region. Thus the Uighur people have, along with a political identity, a regional identity as well. The Uighur Empire – which is referred to as Uighur-land according to Uighur legend – was split into two distinct geographical areas by the Tangri Mountains: the Yarish Basin and Tarim Basin in the north and south respectively (Bhattacharya, 2003: 360; Kamberi, 2015: 22). Informally the area of Uighur-land is referred to by some, particularly by Uighur separatists, as 'East Turkestan' or Uighuristan[3], however, formally the area has been renamed as Xinjiang since 1884 after China's annexation. What this points out is that the area of Xinjiang only recently became a part of Chinese territory which directly contradicts Chinese propaganda and government assertions that Xinjiang has historical been a Chinese territory.

According to Clarke (2007a: 261) Xinjiang – which means new territory or new dominion – only became a Chinese province in the late 19th century and thus any suggestion that Xinjiang has always been a part of China is parochially focusing on contemporary history while neglecting archaic history. Xinjiang prior to Chinese annexation, and indeed after annexation, has formed a major part of the identity of Uighur people. They are a people who attribute a large part of their identity to their land and region which is evidenced by the separatism and resistance undertaken by Uighurs towards Chinese control of their land. Since China's annexation there have been several efforts made by Uighur separatists to wrestle control of Xinjiang from China through acts of resistance (Milliward, 2004: viii). This form of nationalism and quest for succession and self-determination underline that the region of Xinjiang forms a large part of their identity.

c. Religious identity

As discussed above, Uighur people are referred to as ethnoreligious people due to the fact that their identity is strongly connected to their religion. While Uighurs are widely identified as Muslims, Sinor (1990) and Kamberi (2015) point out that there was a time when they did not adhere to Islam heritage, customs and traditions. Before Islam, Buddhism and Manichaeism were an important part of Uighur culture and history, as Kamberi (2015: 16) explains:

[3] Uighurstan, means 'land of the Uighurs', refers to East Turkestan: the political independent homeland of the Uighurs.

> Historically, Buddhism has shaped and influenced the culture, and thus the values, ideologies, arts and imagination of the medieval Uyghurs… Besides Buddhism, the Uyghurs also believed in Manichaeism, and that is also an important component in the medieval Uyghur cultural development.

The Uighurs only adopted Islam as a religion after the 8th century AD and thereafter an Islamic identity began to develop. Since then the Uighur people are ofttimes referred to as Uighur Muslims to emphasise the strong attachment to the religious ideology (Tillett, 2020; Al Jazeera, 2018; EurAsian Times, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2018; Wang, 2017).

According to Bhattacharya (2003: 361) the Uighurs have a strong connection to Islam because the religion provided them with a 'unifying consciousness' and 'ethnic marker' which differentiated them from other communities within China. While not all Uighurs identify as Muslims, as it depends on 'locale and education', Islam traditions and customs are entrenched in the daily activities of many Uighurs, including the belief system of Sufism[4] (Dwyer, 2005: 3). Uighur people also see themselves as belonging to and having a strong sense of solidarity with the *Umma* or the worldwide Islamic community (Bhattacharya, 2003: 361). Thus for many Uighur people Islam is more than just a faith-based system, Dywer (2005: 3) holds the opinion that Islam is inextricably linked to their identity and serves as a source of the preservation of their traditions and culture.

4. Conceptualising China's state response

Conceptualising state response firstly requires defining what is meant by the terms 'state' and 'response'. The term state refers to an organised political community under a single government where various state actors represent the state, for example politicians, judges or security sector agents. The term response refers to the actions taken by the state towards a group of people within that state. Thus state response refers to the deliberate acts taken by an organised political community under a single government towards a group of people within that state with those acts committed by various state actors on behalf of the state.

[4] Sufism or tasawwuf is a dimension of Islam that is underpinned by mysticism. Alternative definitions of Sufism include, but are not limited to, the following: 'the esoterism of Islam', the experience of mysticism in Islam, 'Islamic mysticism', or 'the inward dimension of Islam' (Muedini, 2010: 8-9; Burckhardt, 1976: 223).

Over the years the Chinese state or organised political community has taken specific actions towards the Uighur people in Xinjiang. These actions are characterised by the policies, laws, rules and regulations created and undertaken by the Chinese state regarding Uighur people in Xinjiang. China has taken numerous acts towards Uighur people that reflect and characterise 5 distinct policies: a repression, language, securitisation, religion and assimilationist policy.

a. Repression Policy

China has a comprehensive and extensive policy of repression. It is a policy that aims, and has aimed, to 'crackdown' on Uighur Muslims and their identity, language, religion and culture (Graham-Harrison and Garside, 2019: Internet). After an increase in ethnic violence in Xinjiang in the 1990s, China officially began its policy of repression against what it has called religious extremism and separatism (Milliward, 2004: 16-17). The extent of China's repression policy of Uighur Muslims is highlighted in the fact that very often Uighur Muslims have been apprehended for merely observing their religion. Graham-Harrison and Garside (2019: Internet) highlight the extent of China's repression policy by positing that a 47-year-old Uighur man was imprisoned for 10 years for encouraging his colleagues and co-workers to practise Islam traditions and beliefs. However, it was not until after 2001 and the September 11 terrorist attacks did China fully expand their repression policy after declaring their own 'war on terror' (Denyer, 2018: Internet). Thus for China all acts taken towards Uighur Muslims have been a war against religious extremism and terrorism, however, Denyer (2018: Internet) believes China is not embarking on a war on terror but instead the Asian country has pursued a policy that has repressed the religion, ethnic language and overall ethnic identity of Uighurs. This is clearly demonstrated by the Strike Hard against Terrorism in Xinjiang.

The Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism in Xinjiang is a state-engineered effort aimed at, according to the Chinese government, curbing, managing and 'pacifying' the acts of violence and terrorism caused by Uighur Muslims and other ethnic minorities in the XUAR. Created in 2014 under the presidency of Xi Jinping, the Chinese government has pursued crackdown campaigns which have been described as 'crime-fighting' measures by Chinese officials (Human Rights Watch, 2018: 11). But while the government and its officials

have purported that the Strike Hard campaign has been created to fight crime, particularly terrorism, the campaign has turned Xinjiang into a police state and has virtually outlawed the practise of Islam in Xinjiang. For instance, the Strike Hard campaign has often targeted Islam by confiscating religious items belonging to Uighurs as well as raiding and policing Uighur neighbourhoods (RFA, 2014: Internet). Clearly the Chinese government has used the latest Strike Hard campaigns not to counter terrorism and religious extremism but to deliberately target Uighurs and their religion of Islam.

Both Uighurs and the practice of Islam have become brutally repressed to such an extent that Uighurs who observe Islamic customs have been arbitrarily arrested and in some cases executed (Human Rights Watch, 2018: 12). The Strike Hard campaigns' deliberate scapegoating of Uighurs and Islam demonstrates a policy of repression and strict controlling under the guise of fighting against terrorism and insurgency, For example, according to Human Rights Watch (2018: 12) Jinping's Strike Hard campaign has become so repressive that Uighur Muslims are scrutinised according to their political loyalty to the Chinese state through the three categories of 'trustworthy', 'average' and 'untrustworthy'. Those found to be politically untrustworthy are subjected to more restrictions on their freedom.

Xi Jinping's Strike Hard campaign, under the umbrella of China's policy of repression, contains various features and elements all of which contribute in severely repressing Uighurs and Islam. One such feature or element of the campaign is the political re-education camps established in Xinjiang. Also referred to as detention or internment camps, China's use of re-education camps demonstrate the extra dimension of China's effective control and repression of Uighurs and other ethnic minorities. Moreover, akin to the overall Strike Hard campaign, the Chinese state has justified the use of re-education camps as a method of combatting religious extremism and separatism. In accordance to the evidence provided by Al Jazeera (2019e), Sudworth (2018), Graham-Harrison and Garside (2019) and Yeung, Bozorgmir and Yu (2019), leaked documents pertaining to the re-education camps in Xinjiang point out that the camps are in actuality prison camps where adherence to a system of strict mental and physical control of the inmates must be maintained. Furthermore in these detention or prison camps Uighur Muslims and other ethnic

minorities are re-educated and made to renounce their ethnic identity, religion and language, which the Chinese government believes is the cause of their extremism.

According to Graham-Harrison and Garside (2019: Internet) the re-education camps consist of two tiers in which the first focuses mainly on ideological and Mandarin-language indoctrination and the second tier is focused on labour training. While China has called the existence of the detention camps 'pure fabrications' due to the fact that the camps are vocational centres which Uighurs and other ethnic minorities can voluntarily attend and leave, the camps in reality demonstrate that they form part of China's overall policy of repression (Al Jazeera, 2019b: Internet).

b. Language Policy

Dwyer (2005) is of the opinion that the Chinese state and its actors have undertaken a language policy towards ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, particularly the Uighurs. This language policy is characterised by both overt and covert elements to it. China's overt language policy is the official language policy that is 'egalitarian and accommodationist', however, its covert policy is the unofficial language policy that attempts to slowly eradicate the Turkic languages spoken by ethnic minorities including the Uighurs' language (Dwyer, 2005: 7). Understanding that language is an important element regarding ethnic identity and ethnic nationalism, China has taken significant strides in creating a language policy towards Uighurs. The 1980s characterised China's egalitarian and accommodationist language policy where the government created university admission quotas to Uighurs 'who went through the Uighur language education system' (Han, 2010: 252-253). However, by the 1990s China's covert and unofficial policy was implemented through the Chinese education system in the hopes of not only 'expanding the Chinese-language curriculum at all levels of education' but also to dilute the identity of minority groups in Xinjiang through language, including the Uighurs (Dwyer, 2005: 6).

Whereas the repression policy is more of a comprehensive policy of repression, China's language policy narrowly and solely represses the language of ethnic minorities, and in particular Uighurs. All of which is done in the hopes of diluting ethnic minority cultures and thus fostering the growth of a Han-dominated monoculture that is characterised by the same language, history and religion. China's idea and promotion of a linguistic nationalism, under the auspices of its

language policy, has been a forceful campaign that has compelled Uighurs to denounce the Uighur language while assuming Mandarin (Han, 2010: 251). By the early 2000s, more steps towards achieving a monocultural and monolinguistic society, particularly in Xinjiang, were taken when the Chinese government decided that university courses in Xinjiang University – Xinjiang's largest university – would no longer be offered in the Uighur language (Dwyer, 2005: 40). This was justified by the reason that many of the non-Chinese speaking students were lagging behind their Han Chinese classmates. But more than anything, this was just a small significant step in moving closer to the overall goal: acculturating the Uighur language into a single monolinguistic Chinese language.

c. Policy of securitisation

In the efforts of maintaining an effective control of not only the region but the Uighurs and ethnic minorities as a whole, the Chinese government has pursued a policy of securitisation of Xinjiang. That is to say that China has turned Xinjiang into a police or security state. The autonomous region is filled with a large percentage of police presence which essentially ensures that the Uighurs and other ethnic minority groups are effectively controlled and surveilled. After the outbreak of ethnic violence and terrorism in the 1990s and 2009 Xinjiang has become the centre of the Chinese government's campaign of securitising and policing any individual who can potentially be guilty of religious separatism and extremism. The entire region is, according to Phillips (2017: Internet) and Clarke (2013: 123), on 'lockdown' with all roads deployed with police, special forces and other security actors which has ultimately turned Xinjiang into the 'perfect police state'.

While there was police presence in Xinjiang the numbers increased after 2009 as 'Beijing's eyes and ears' grew 'sharper' in the region after spates of violence and as a result the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) 'built a multi-tiered security state' that comprised of a 90 000 personnel police force and an increase of 365% in the security budget (Zenz, 2017: 1; Leibold and Zenz, 2016: Internet). Particularly after the 1990s, China has viewed Xinjiang as the epicentre of terrorism in the country and thus it has justified all actions taken in the region, including securitising the XUAR, as a battle against religious extremism and terrorism (Milliward, 2004: 16-17). To maintain the securitisation of Xinjiang, the Chinese government has created and

made use of a system that relies on two distinct features: human police presence and technology and surveillance.

For example, the Chinese government has filled the streets of Xinjiang with checkpoints manned by armed police officers. By law, these officers are authorised to pervasively search through the belongings of Uighur Muslims and any other ethnic minority to search for any signs that point towards the promotion or use of religious extremism (Rajagopalan, 2017: Internet; The Economist, 2018: Internet). This form of securitisation was only implemented after 2009 when police presence was notably increased and expanded through the increased advertisement of police job posts. Ultimately, this resulted in the recruitment of 8000 new police officers in the beginning of 2012 which subsequently allowed Xinjiang authorities to effectively expand police presence throughout XUAR, including rural areas, rather than just concentrating all efforts in the capital city of Umruqi (Zenz, 2017: 5). As a result of this, according to Kuo (2018: Internet), one in five arrests in China originated from Xinjiang. Moreover with the increased police presence, Xinjiang authorities have been able to conduct neighbourhood raids in remote villages as well as place stricter and much harsh restrictions on Islam (RFA, 2017a: Internet).

The use of increased police presence has worked in tandem with the second feature of China's securitisation system: the use of technology and surveillance. The Chinese government has implemented large numbers of technological and surveillance systems that monitor and track the movement and general activities of Uighurs and other ethnic minorities. With what Rajagopalan (2017: Internet) calls 'dystopian technology' Chinese state and Xinjiang authorities are able to retrieve information on an individual living in Xinjiang, ranging from the individual's educational history, to the individual's 'family ties' and even whether the individual has visited an internet café or hotel. According to Zenz (2017: 5) the use of technology and surveillance systems began in 2014 after the Xinjiang authorities installed thousands of security cameras throughout the region. These systems are most frequently used at heavily armed checkpoints and streets, however, the systems have more increasingly been used on the cellular devices of the inhabitants of Xinjiang by eavesdropping and listening to any cellphone conversation had (Buckley and Mozur, 2019: Internet). China's securitisation system of increased police presence and the use of dystopian technology highlight the extreme measures

the country has gone to prevent more cases of extremism and terrorism. These extreme measures, however, further demonstrate that China has effectively turned Xinjiang into a police state where the rights and freedoms of Uighurs and other ethnic minorities have been limited and in some cases completely violated.

While China has made claims that their securitisation policy aims to 'pacify' the extremism in XUAR, Finley (2019) purports that, on the contrary, China's efforts have created more violence due to the fact that China has used state violence to counter the existing extremism in the region. This is to say that China has relied on state terrorism to pacify the region Xinjiang which has ultimate been a failure because violence, on both the Chinese and ethnic minorities part, has only surged. As result this has caused China's response to be more heavily securitised and repressive. China's repressive securitisation of Xinjiang has consistently met the four elements that characterise state terror and violence, which are as follows: 1) 'there must be a deliberate act of violence against civilians'; the actions taken must be taken 'by actors on behalf of' the state; the actions taken must be intended to instil fear in others, particularly those identify with the victim; and the actions taken by actors of the state must force the victim and the 'target audience' to consider changing their behaviour (Finley, 2019: 15). Finley's perspective on China's securitisation policy echoes, although in a different light, the opinions of the other scholars mentioned above. Whether using state terror or an elaborate system that relies on policing and technological surveillance, China's securitisation policy in Xinjiang has not resulted in the pacification of the region but the violation and limitation of the rights of Uighurs and other ethnic minorities.

d. Policy on religion

China is an atheistic country and as a result it has had a very contentious relationship with religion. Since the inception of the People's Republic of China, and indeed prior to that, China's history makes this contentious relationship evident. Since 1949 the PRC has created and enacted numerous laws, which are discussed in the next chapter, that reflect that China has for quite some time had a policy on religion. While the constitution of China does stipulate that religious freedom for all citizens are observed and protected, for Uighurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang that has not been applicable as their religion and religious freedom has

been extremely restricted, controlled and in some cases completely outlawed. Thus this reveals that China's policy on religion, particularly with Islam in Xinjiang, is to bring it to its demise.

For Cox (2007: 374) religion has always been viewed a threat to the overall Chinese state which thus explains why China wants to brig religion to end. What is of extreme importence to China's religion policy is establishing a degree of control over religion, and by extension, determine what is permissible and impermissible. To this end, China's policy on religion has outlawed all but 5 distinct religions that, currently, are and have to be registered in the country: Buddhism, Catholicism, Islam, Protestantism and Taoism (Huanzhong, 2003: 465). It is only through these 5 religions that citizens in China have 'freedom' of religion. But more importantly, by having these 5 religions registered China can exercise its control on religion effectively. Indeed it is perhaps in Xinjiang, and with Islam, where the extent of the Chinese government's control over religion can be seen. In Xinjiang China has fully and brutally exercised its policy on religion by predominantly placing Uighurs and Islam under heavy restrictions. According to the Human Rights Watch (2018: 18) China's policy on religion, particularly Islam and in Xinjiang, is 'among the strictest and most comprehensive in the world.' Greatly assisted by the high police presence and advanced technological and surveillance system, China has been able to control and suppress Uighurs' religious activities. As highlighted above through policing and surveillance, Xinjiang authorities have been able to conduct regular raids on Uighur neighbourhoods, ensuring that the 'extremist religion of Islam is restricted.

China's acts certainly show that it views religion as a threat to its overall state, however, the acts taken towards Uighurs makes evident that Islam is regarded as its biggest threat. Following the violence and unrest in 2009 in the city of Urumqi, there was an upsurge in religion regulations which imposed further restrictions on Islam. In 2014, the Xinjiang Regulations on Religious Affairs[5] was passed, but what followed was a series of rules and regulations that displayed the severity of China's policy on

[5] The Xinjiang Regulations on Religious Affairs, which was first passed in 1994 and amended in 2014, imposes strict restrictions on ethnic Muslim minorities by banning, restricting and outlawing some Islamic practices that include but are not limited to the following: banning the labelling of 'halal' on certain food products; prohibit children from participating in religious activities; ban any form of religion-inspired appearances, including facial hair and clothing; and removing religion from education (Human Rights Watch, 2018: 19-20).

religion. According to Al Jazeera (2015: Internet) China has instituted a rule which bans Uighurs and other ethnic Muslim minorities in Xinjiang from observing Ramadan. China's religion policy has since established numerous rules in Xinjiang that restrict Islam, with many of them being very severe such as banning Islam from education while others being very petty such as banning Islamic names (RFA, 2017a: Internet).

China has sought to justify, particularly in recent years and under Xi Jinping's presidency, its policy on religion through de-extremification. Citing that Islam has extremified many Muslims in China, particularly Uighurs, China has launched efforts to 'de-extremify' or, more accurately, suppress the spread of what it believes to be extremist religious thinking or ideologies. At the heart of China's religious policy of de-extremification are calls championed by Jinping to sinicise religion and in particular Islam (Finley, 2019: 10). Thus China's de-extremification campaign, and overall religious policy, strongly relies on ideological and political indoctrination which forces Uighurs to renounce not only their religion but their ethnic identity in favour of supporting the CCP. But what China believes to be de-extremification and re-educating is really revealing itself to be the violation of the human rights and of Uighurs and other ethnic minorities as well as the securitisation of Islam (Finley, 2019: 10). China has always had great suspicion of religion but its religion policy reflects that China views Islam and Uighur Muslims with even greater suspicion, which is causing the country to pursue drastic measures to deal with the suspicion.

e. Assimilationist policy

The abovementioned policies are their own individual policies, however, they all fall under and work in tandem to achieve China's assimilationist policy which can be regarded as China's general policy regarding not only Uighurs but ethnic minorities as a whole. The goal of China's policy of assimilation is to ethnically cleanse the country's ethnic minorities into an overall single Han-Chinese ethnic group that has the same ethnic, cultural, religious (or lack thereof) and linguistic identity. China's assimilationist policy is reflected in the abovementioned policies, namely the repression, language, securitisation and religious policy. But over and above this, China's policy of assimilation is reflected in numerous other policies and laws

unmentioned such as their cultural and ethnic policy as well as the laws regarding use of language in schools (Human Rights Watch, 2018: 10).

This assimilationist policy relies on a number of propaganda campaigns which attempt to write the history of ethnic minorities, particularly the history of Uighurs. For example, as aforementioned above in this chapter, China has always believed and purported that Xinjiang has been a part of China. It has always been in China's interest to claim that ethnic minorities in China such as the Uighurs share a single Chinese history that makes them as much Chinese as the Han (Bovingdon, 2002: 44). But this was simply to subsume ethnic minorities. To achieve this, the Chinese government created government sponsored propaganda textbooks which were revisionist by nature that attempted to re-align Uighur history with the Chinese.China's policy of assimilation, which Bhattacharya (2003: 363) calls 'the central tenet of Chinese policy on minorities', aims to create chat China believes to be national unity. But China's drive to create national unity is predicated on the subsuming of local ethnic minorities such as the Uighurs ultimately resulting in the extinction of their identities. As Harris (2019: Internet) suggests, China's assimilationist policy is nothing but a 'cultural genocide' that is eradicating 'local languages and cultures' and remoulding 'the region's peoples as secular and patriotic Chinese citizens. Ironically, Chinese efforts at assimilating the ethnic minorities of Xinjiang with the Han have had an opposite effect. According to Boehm (2009: 83) instead of encouraging assimilation, the Chinese government has fuelled and inspired Uighurs and other ethnic minorities to observe, preserve and acknowledge their unique ethnic identities, which has forced the government to pursue the abovementioned policies in the repressive manner shown.

The essential point of the discussions above is to accentuate and explain China's state response towards Uighurs. China's response towards Uighurs is not limited to the 5 identified policies. Other policies can be identified which characterise China's state response, namely a culture policy, ethnic policy and an education policy. However, these policies in more ways than one are correlated and linked with the 5 policies previously mentioned. What is clear about all these policies is that they make evident that China's state response has been and is repressive, oppressive and violates fundamental human rights and freedoms of Uighur Muslims. What is less clear is what the cause of the causes of such state response is. Can

islamophobia, ethnicity, terrorism or Chinese state security individually explain China's state response taken towards Uighurs? Or rather, is it a combination of these causes that best explain China's state response?

II

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN CHINA: RESTRICTION OF RELIGION

1. Conceptualisation of islamophobia

The conceptualisation, and thus acceptance, of the term of islamophobia is strongly contested among, particularly because of the confusion that exists around the term. Among the scholars who have accepted the idea, there exists the inability to agree on the conceptualisation of the term and conversely, those who reject the term accept that the term cannot be conceptualised. Although islamophobia is a new word that describes an old concept, as per Bleich (2011: 1582), it is a term that has come under strong criticism and opposition from those who do not favour the use of the term.

Firstly, islamophobia has been criticised for the confusion that surrounds it. According to Elahi and Khan (2018: 6) the confusion surrounding the idea stems from the phrase 'phobia' in islamophobia which, in some, implies that islamophobia is related to a mental illness or fear'. Secondly, islamophobia is criticised and challenged because it is regarded as a term that is an over-exaggeration of political correctness aimed at shielding Islam from justified criticism. In other words, the term aims to 'condemn any criticism of Islam' and its customs, traditions and practices (Lopez, 2011: 1-2). For Sayyid (2014: 13) islamophobia has been used to prevent any form of constructive debate or free expression and criticism against Islam.

Thirdly, islamophobia has been dismissed as a newly coined term that describes an already existing form of discrimination, namely racism. According to Meer (2008) and Nieuwkerk (2004) islamophobia engenders forms of cultural racism as race and religion are significantly connected to islamophobia. This criticism is supported by Imhoff and Recker (2012: 812) who describe islamophobia as an 'expendable neologism' that in many ways refers to an existing 'phenomenon of prejudice and discrimination against immigrants'. Lastly, islamophobia as a terminology – according to some scholars such as Modood (1997) – can be misleading. The term points towards the idea that the discrimination inherent in islamophobia is predicated on religion, namely Islam. However, as Lopez (2011: 2) questions, are Muslims discriminated against because their religion, their skin colour or their ethnicity? Furthermore, is islamophobia a form religious intolerance, racism or more specifically cultural racism?

Ultimately, islamophobia is a combination of both. It is both a religious intolerance and a cultural racism because inherent in islamophobia is hostility towards Islam as a religion and culture and Muslims as a people. In other words islamophobia is both anti-Islam *and* anti-Muslim. While the scholars enumerated above have dismissed the concept of islamophobia as misleading and confusing due to the phrase 'phobia', islamophobia should be understood in the way homophobia is: discrimination towards people of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community (Elahi and Kahn, 2018: 6). Thus while phobia may refer to an irrational fear, in regards to islamophobia the phrase refers to discrimination towards Islam and Islamic people.

As aforementioned above, critics of the concept of islamophobia have also dismissed it by calling it a concept that describes an already existing discrimination. However, to do this places limitations on the concept. Islamophobia is more than just racism as it is, akin to anti-Semitism, hostility show towards a group of people who adhere to a specific religious belief system. Over and above this, islamophobia is not just hostility shown towards Islam and Muslims but more importantly it is acts taken that display hostility, fear and rejection towards Islam and Muslims (Alshammari, 2013: 177). The concept of islamophobia is, according to Sayyid (2014: 13), a combination of orientalism[6] and racism where Muslims are discriminated against based on their religion (Imhoff and Recker, 2012: 811). It is 'indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Muslims' (Bleich, 2011: 1582). Elahi and Khan (2018: 7) define islamophobia in short as 'unfounded hostility towards Islam'. However, they also provide a more detailed definition as follows:

> Islamophobia is any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field (Elahi and Khan, 2018: 7).

Other than focusing on the definition or theorising of the concept, the literature on islamophobia in the world has often narrowly focused on islamophobia presence in Western countries neglecting other non-Western countries. One country in particular is China where islamophobia is, in the view of Liqiu and Yang (2018), widespread. Of the literature that does draw attention to islamophobia in China, the concept and

[6] See Said, E. 1985. Orientalism. Routledge. London.

phenomenon is erroneously treated as a new trend[7] particularly after the events of the September 11 attacks. But islamophobia has been present in China even prior to 9/11, stretching back as far as the early to mid-20th century (Qian, 2019: 1). What is perhaps more accurate is that islamophobia in China has significantly increased in recent times and more specifically after 9/11 and the Global War on Terror. This is supported by Liqiu and Yang (2018) who conducted a study that revealed Muslim discrimination in China increased after 2001 because: there exists a negative view of Muslims and Islam in Chinese news coverage; non-Muslim Chinese have a negative perception of Muslims and Islam; and as a result Muslim Chinese 'experience discrimination in their everyday lives'.

2. Religion in China

'Freedom of religious belief is not freedom for religion'

- The Xinjiang Daily, 18 May 1996[8]

China's relationship with religions has always been contentious and controversial owing to the fact that China considers itself an irreligious and atheist country. However, while China has always believed itself to be an atheistic nation, and thus has expected and hoped its citizens would assume atheism, the use of violence, coercion and repression on religious people, organisations and religion – as currently seen present in China today – was not always part of the overall plan. In this sense, analysis of China's anti-religion stance, and in particular their islamophobia, can be periodised into three distinct eras: the era from the 1930s until 1976; the mid-1970s until the 2013; and the Xi Jinping era spanning from 2014 to present day. These eras, while different, all display the same characteristics that encapsulate China's stance with religion: ambiguous and riddled with contradictions. China's ambiguous view of religion is highlighted by the quote above written in The Xinjiang Daily in 1996. Thus while in theory China protects and has always protected religious rights,

[7] See Tazamal (2019) and Qian (2019)

[8] According to Amnesty International (1996: 2) the above quote was made by the Xinjiang Daily explaining China's severe restrictions on religious freedom. More specifically, it explains how the Chinese constitution, both then and currently, enshrines religious belief and not freedom of religion which is highlighted by the numerous religious activities prohibited by religious authorities (Amnesty International, 2002: 18).

as Xinping (2009) below shows, in practise China has not always been protective of religion and religious belief.

The Chinese Constitution Outline of 1934 enshrined the equality of all individuals in spite of their differences in ethnicity, sex and religion in particular and this highlighted China's separation of religion and politics (Xinping, 2009: 2). The tradition of enshrining religious freedom, respecting religious association and organisation as well as keeping politics and religious separate was maintained upon the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) which saw the adoption of a document entitled the Common Principle of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Xinping (2009: 2) is of the opinion that this document, 'which had the characteristics of a provisional constitution', laid the foundations for the protection and enshrinement of the fundamental freedoms and rights of all people living in China, including the right to religious belief, association, organisation and demonstration. This document laid the ground for China to adopt constitutions[9], particularly the first and third, that reflected China's 'tolerant perspective on religion' (Potter, 2003: 317).

While Xinping (2009), Potter (2003) and Peng (1996) make mention that China had initially been tolerant, and in some small respect, protective of religious freedoms, scholars such as Carlson (1998), Cox (2007) and Mukherjee (2010) contend that at the least China's tolerance of religion has been disingenuous and at most China has always been opposed to the idea of religion. As Carlson (1998: 567) points out the Chinese government has only been tolerant of religion because it believes religion will eventually come to an end but also at the same time since the start of the Chinese Communist Party's rule of China the government has taken an abundant number of steps to restrict religion and religious activities. That is to say that when laws and policies are enacted, such as the ones elucidated above, they are done so with the belief that by safeguarding religious freedom religion will come to an end eventually. No other Chinese law, policy or official document encapsulates such a

[9] Since 1949 and the founding of the PRC, four Chinese constitutions have been adopted. China's first constitution was enacted in 1954 and in it provisions were made in specific reference to religion where citizens of the PRC could enjoy religious belief (Xinping, 2009: 2). The second constitution was enacted in 1975 but unlike its predecessor, the PRC's second constitution made no specific reference to religious rights, in fact, according to Xinping (2009: 2) religious rights were 'ignored' and not incorporated into the second constitution. The third and fourth constitution, which came into force in 1978 and 1982 respectively, enshrined religious rights by providing citizens with 'the freedom to believe in religion' (Xinping, 2009: 2).

belief more than the PRC's Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question During Our Country's Socialist Period[10] which states that religion is an old phenomenon that is finite in nature and has a period of emergence, development and eventually a 'demise' (Cox, 2007: 376).

Over and above religion's own natural demise, the Chinese government has taken measures to expedite the end of religion through restricting and repressing religious practices, namely Islam. Championed by Mao Zedong, China took on a hardline stance regarding religion during the Maoist era from the 1930s until 1976. Since the 1950s the practice of Islamic customs and beliefs have been severely restricted (Amnesty International, 2002: 20) which points towards the fact that islamophobia in China is not a contemporary trend but rather islamophobia in China has always been present and lingering. According to Mukherjee (2010: 425-426) Muslims in China have always been mistreated which is evidenced by the fact that during the 1960s observances of Islamic traditions, customs and rules were heavily restricted to the extent that most religious practices 'went underground'. These efforts to underground were enforced by Mao's attempts to destroy religion in China as a whole in order to promote a nationwide atheism. According to Milliward (2001: viii) it was during the Great Leap Forward (1959-1961) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) where China experienced religious unrest. Mao's crackdown on religion was at its height during this period, evidenced by the fact that China's second constitution which was enacted in 1975 deliberately ignored making any provisions for the protection of religion 'because of the influence of the "Cultural Revolution" at that time' (Xinping, 2009: 2).

The death of Mao Zedong heralded a new era in China in terms of religion and thus a shift away from the hardline position on religion. After 1976, China's measures to restrict and control religion grew more tolerant, however, the policies, laws and documents that recognised and protected religion and religious practices were still ambiguous. These ambiguous policies and laws highlighted the PRC's contradictions on religion because in some instances religious practices were permissible but in other instances some practices were impressible. Notwithstanding Document 19[11],

[10] Referred to commonly as Document 19, the document was enacted in 1982.
[11] According to Yang (2013: 8-9) Document 19 is a Chinese policy on religion which has provided 'significant freedom of religion' but in practice religious freedom has been extremely

which contains its own religious contradictions, China's policies and laws pertaining to religion would enshrine 'freedom of religious belief' but such freedom would be extremely limited (Yang, 2013: 8). For instance, in 1991 Document 6 was enacted which loosely protected freedom of religious belief but it also provided security actors with the authority to make use of forceful actions on those whose religious activities would possibly threaten the unity of the country (Potter, 2003: 321). Furthermore, Document 6 only permitted those who the Chinese government found 'to be politically reliable, patriotic and law-abiding' to engage in the religious activity of missionary work (Carlson, 1998: 571). Thus citizens of China were afforded some religious freedom but it was extremely conditional, controlled, surveilled and policed.

The ambiguity and contradiction of Chinese religion laws in the era between 1976 and 1997 is highlighted in the nation's 1982 constitution, where article 36 states:

> Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. No state organ, public organisation or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in any religion. The state protects normal religious activities. No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the state. Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination (Potter, 2003: 325).

What is not clear from article 36 is what is regarded as permissible and what is not. However, what is clear is that, particularly from 1976-2013, China tolerated religious beliefs and practices provided that those beliefs and practices met the strict conditions of not interfering or threatening the public order and unity of the state. Yet for the Chinese state, there existed a belief that strictly controlling religion is the same as tolerating it. Such a belief is demonstrated by China's most significant principle regarding religion, which simultaneously tolerated religion but at the same time curtailed the observance and practices of religion through extreme control (Human Rights Watch, 2005: 26). Created in the 2000, China's principle of 'freedom to believe or not believe in religion' encapsulates how China in the era of 1976-2013 equated the toleration of religion with the severe control of it. This is in spite of the fact that China has on numerous occasions denied strictly controlling religion by

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limited. Document 19 also emphasises that while freedom of religious belief may be granted it has to be counterbalanced by the freedom to *not* believe in religion evidenced by the quote in the document: 'What do we mean by freedom of religious belief? We mean that every citizen has the freedom to believe in religion and also the freedom not to believe in religion' (Cox, 2007:379).

citing that the 1982 constitution provides citizens with complete religious freedom (Cox, 2007: 377).

Nevertheless, whether granting citizens religious freedom or just merely tolerating citizens' religious beliefs, China had over time curtailed and narrowed what it classified as 'normal religious activities'. In 2001 an amendment to article 36 of the constitution was made which changed China's stance from protecting normal religious activities to regulating normal religious activities in accordance to the law and adapting religion to the overall socialist society (Human Rights Watch, 2005: 34-35). The amendment demonstrates that China's emphasis during this era was on controlling religion rather than tolerating it or even protecting it. This sort of strict control of religion was no more apparent than in Xinjiang, where Islam is the dominant religion. Chinese authorities have, particularly after the 1990s, imposed strict restrictions on Islam and, according to Human Rights Watch (2018: 18), China's restrictions on Islam have been and continue to be one of the strictest and comprehensive restrictions in the world. For example in 2001 and after the amendment of article 36, authorities in Xinjiang issued an announcement state that the administration and regulation of religious activities would be strengthened and, adhering to the 2001 amendment, religion would be guided to conform to the overall socialist society (Amnesty International, 2002: 22).

Thus if the era of 1976-1997 saw strict controlling of religion, particularly Islam, then the current Chinese era (1997–present day) has not only merely controlled it but it has tried to brutally repress it and returned to the Maoist perspective of trying to end religion. This is no more evident than under the presidency of Xi Jinping. Control of religion, particularly in Xinjiang, under Xi Jinping reached new heights as religion with Jinping further tightening the Chinese state's control on religious practices. According to Buckley (2016: Internet) under the presidency of Jinping has declared that religions in China have to be Sinicised. The sinicisation of religion in China is evidenced by Xi Jinping's 'crackdown' on religion where, predominantly in Xinjiang, Strike Hard campaigns have been initiated. As previously discussed in Chapter I, the Strike Hard campaign has virtually outlawed the practice of Islam in Xinjiang and placed it under heavier scrutiny. Jinping's Strike Hard campaigns deliberately target Uighurs and other ethnic groups including their religious freedom. In this sense China is 'actively' interfering in religion and how it is observed and exercised,

demonstrating a hardline stance on religion akin to that of the Maoist era (Ochua, 2019: Internet). With Xi Jinping calling for the sinicisation of religion and creating more repressive laws on religion, this makes evident that the situation regarding religion in China will only deteriorate until China's ultimate goal of assimilating ethnoreligious minority identities into a single Chinese identity is achieved.

3. Islamophobia in China

Islamophobia in China is widespread to such an extent that news coverage on Muslims is negative and non-Muslim Chinese have a negative view of Muslims. In this sense, the existence of islamophobia in China is undeniable. In fact, as Qian (2019: 1) suggests, the history of Islamophobia dates back to the early to mid-20th century which explains why Islamophobia is so widespread currently in China. The widespread nature of islamophobia also explains China's state response towards Uighurs. That is to say that China's islamophobia, or fear of Muslims and Islam, is a cause of China's repressive state response towards Uighurs. However, to what extent is islamophobia a cause of China's response? This question becomes more important when considering the fact that, while yes China is islamophobic, what China has shown itself to be more than anything is anti-religion. As Buckley (2016), Ochab (2019) and Human Rights Watch (2018) show, China has always and is currently conducting a crackdown on all religions nationwide. China's anti-religion stance makes evident that it is fearful of all and any religion, including Islam. Moreover, unlike the Uighurs the Hui of Fuijan have shown themselves to be more traditionally loyal to the Chinese state and more importantly they have been more relaxed about their Islamic identity, which points to something more than just Islam and islamophobia being a cause of China's state response (Mukherjee, 2010: 425). Lastly, according to Clarke (2013: 110), the Uighurs present more than just a religious challenge towards China: firstly Uighurs have always had a unstable 'historical relationship' with China; secondly, the 'geographic concentration' of Uighurs; and lastly the Uighurs have not acculturated into the Chinese Han society. Therefore, while China is indeed islamophobic, islamophobia alone cannot explain China's state towards Uighur Muslims. Other factors have to be considered and weighed against it.

III

THE UIGHURS AND ETHNICITY IN XINJIANG, CHINA

1. Ethnicity in China

China has had an equally, if not more, contentious and controversial relationship with ethnicity as it has had with religion and islamophobia. Much like religion, China views ethnicity, particularly of those who are vastly different from Han Chinese, as a threat to the Chinese state. Uighur Muslims represent precisely that which China regards as a threat: an ethnically different group of people who do not share any similarities with the Chinese Han group. Whereas Uighurs are of Turkic descent, the Han are of Chinese. Whereas Uighur Muslims are an ethnoreligious peoples, the Han are largely atheist. Whereas the Uighurs speak Uighur and have their own unique culture, the Han speak Chinese and have a unique Han culture. Thus not only are Uighur Muslims ethnically different, but they are also religiously, linguistically, historically and culturally different from the Han. Consequently, this makes them a threat to the territorial integrity and national unity of the Chinese state.

Nevertheless, in this sense the Uighurs are not alone. According to Clarke (2013: 110) China has ’55 officially recognised ethnic groups, including the Uighurs, which are different from the Han. It is easy to think that China is not an ethnically diverse nation due to the majority of the Chinese population being Han but as Rice (2018: 52) points out all countries are ‘multi-ethnic’, including China. While the 55 ethnic minorities make up less than 10% of China’s population, which may seem an insignificant percentage, the 55 ethnic minorities make up 114 million people. Both the large number of ethnic minorities and their population size makes ethnicity a very sensitive issue for the Chinese government. Ethnicity becomes an even bigger issue when considering the fact that of the 114 million ethnic minorities, only 10% are populated within in-land China while the rest of the 90% are populated in China’s border regions, adding a geopolitical and strategic dimension to China’s ethnicity issue (Clarke, 2013: 110). The Uighurs and Xinjiang are at the frontline of this exact issue. As Boehm (2009: 78) illustrates, Xinjiang, which is in the hinterlands of China and thus bordered by 8 different countries[12], is home to numerous ethnicities namely: Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Uzbeks, Russians, Tajiks, Tibetans, Afghans, Dolons, Jews, Mongols, Hui, Kokandi and Uighurs, to name a few.

[12] Xinjiang borders 8 other Asian countries which make ethnicity in Xinjiang an extremely geopolitical and strategic issue. Xinjiang is bordered by Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

2. Uighurs and ethnicity

The Uighurs form one of the largest ethnic minorities in China and are the largest ethnic minority in Xinjiang. As aforementioned previously, in this chapter and the first chapter, Uighurs are ethnically different from Han Chinese particularly because they are an ethnoreligious people of Muslim-Turkic descent. Because of the distinct between the predominant Han group and Uighurs, the Chinese government has taken numerous efforts, including the use of propaganda that lacks historical and genetic evidence, to integrate the Uighurs into the Han ethnic group. Despite the numerous efforts taken by the Chinese government to rewrite Uighurs' ethnic history, Uighur Muslims have remained resolute and strongly connected to their religious, cultural, linguistic and regional history. The Uighurs strong attachment to their ethnic identity has, unlike the Hui (Friedrichs, 2017: 12), made them more recalcitrant and opposed to assimilating into the single Chinese ethnic identity. In this sense, the Uighurs have proven to be stubbornly proud and connected to their identity which explains the various attempts the Chinese government has taken to break the connection. Included in these attempts are a number of policies pertaining to ethnicity that have had a goal of enticing and forcing Uighurs into acculturation.

3. Policies on ethnicity

As highlighted in the first chapter China has a wide range of policies, of which included is an ethnic policy. China's ethnic policy is highlighted by both soft and hard stances which aim to either entice or repressively force ethnic minorities to renounce their identity and remain loyal to the Chinese state above their ethnic identity. The soft stance of China's ethnic policy had been created to specifically benefit minorities to win their loyalty to the CCP. An example of this is the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law of 1984. Some of China's laws regarding their ethnic policy, including the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law of 1984, enshrine and guarantee the beneficial treatment China's soft ethnic policy provides (Shan and Weng, 2010: 59). Israeli (2010: 97) is of the opinion that China's policy has benefitted ethnic minorities, particularly Uighurs of Xinjiang, by providing them with privileges such as exempting them from the one-child policy as well as favourable educational and social welfare programs. Furthermore, Uighurs in Xinjiang have been provided with 'a special quota

system in political representation' and a leniency in the law, which have allowed Uighurs to enjoy political and legal benefits[13].

However, while the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law of 1984 and its ethnic policy show a soft nature and preferential treatment of Uighurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang it is all completely conditional. As Godbole and Goud (2012: 4) show, while the ethnic policy was 'undertaken in the name of development' and helping the minorities it was 'also part of the assimilationist prism'. China had hoped that the creation of a softer ethnic policy would encourage Uighurs to renounce their ethnic identity and assume a loyalty to the CCP. Moreoever China had hoped that the lenient and favourable policy would ease Uighur Muslims' secessionist ideas. Nonetheless, when it was becoming apparent that the Uighurs were not only reluctant to do so but also opposed to the idea, China pursued a more hardline ethnic policy. Both the soft and hardline stances were geared to acculturate all ethnic minorities into a single Chinese ethnic group. But instead, as illustrated by Boehm (2009), Chinese efforts – specifically in the case of Uighurs – have only fuelled and strengthened Uighurs' identification with their ethnicity as well as inspiring their secessionist aspirations.

4. Ethnicity challenges facing China

In spite of China's overt (soft) and covert (hardline) efforts, the state has faced a number of challenges in terms of ethnicity which stem from Han-ethnic minority relations. Apart from posing challenges such as their historical relationship with China, Uighurs have also posed additional challenges such as having a 'recent history of separation from the Chinese state', being primarily concentrated in the region of Xinjiang and being ethnically distinct from Han Chinese which has caused the lack of acculturation with the Han (Clarke, 2013: 110). It is in these ethnicity challenges that the Uighurs pose towards the Chinese state that may explain how ethnicity has been a cause of China's state response towards Uighurs.

In terms of history, Uighurs are vastly different from China and the Han. This is made acutely noticeable by the Uighurs' ethnic history, which includes two distinctive periods of Uighur political separation from the Chinese state. Despite Chinese

[13] The leniency in law is known as the 'two less and one lenient' policy, according to Israeli (2010: 98)

attempts that claim that Uighurs have always been Chinese, especially because Chinese presence in Xinjiang preceded the Uighurs, they have not acquiesced to such claims and have instead been inspired to acknowledge their unique and distinct history that exists separate from the Chinese. In 1933, Uighurs had separated themselves from the Chinese state and established their short-lived, self-proclaimed independent state known as the Islamic East Turkestan Republic (ETR) (Tang and He, 2010: 9). The first ETR, which was overthrown by the Chinese state in 1934, provided Uighurs with the necessary inspiration and drive to form a second ETR. The second ETR was established in 1944 during the Chinese's infighting but much like the first ETR, the second was suppressed by the Chinese in 1949 and incorporated in the newly formed PRC (Tang and He, 2010: 9). Regardless of being incorporated into the PRC's territory there are still many Uighurs who still make calls for the re-creation of the ETR which the Chinese government today refers to as 'splitism' or attempts to bring disharmony to the overall state (Rice, 2018: 51). Furthermore, today a number of Uighurs refer to Xinjiang as either Uighuristan or East Turkestan to emphasise their anti-China attitude and their desire to have their own independent state.

Muslims in China	**Population Size**	**Share of Muslims in China (%)**
Hui	10,586,087	45.7
Uighurs	10,069,346	43.5
Kazakhs	1,462,588	6.3
Dongxiang	621,500	2.7
All others	402,583	1.7
Total	23,142,104	100

Table 1: Population size of Muslims in China (Friedrichs, 2017: 6)

Splitism or not, this attachment to their ethnic history and the continued espousal of an ethnonationalist Uighur state highlight precisely how and why ethnicity has proven to be a challenge to China's goals of integrating and assimilating all of China into a single Chinese nation. Indeed this becomes more apparent when Uighur Muslims are compared to Hui Muslims. As Table 1 illustrates, Uighur Muslims are the second largest Muslims in China, second only to the Hui Muslims who are the outright majority with a population of 10.5 million. But unlike the Uighurs, the Hui do not have

a history of being separate from the Chinese state and thus they have been more relaxed about their ethnic identity and have shown themselves to be more loyal to the Chinese state (Mukherjee, 2010: 425). As such, integrating Hui Muslims, who are referred to as intermediaries between Uighurs and Han, into the overall Chinese state has been much easier for the Chinese government compared to Uighur Muslims who have been more loyal to their own ethnic identity (Rice, 2018: 53).

While China has been pursuing its ethnic policy that has been seemingly favourable to Uighurs and other ethnic minorities, at the same time it has been covertly pursuing another dimension of the ethnic policy: the in-migration of the Han Chinese into Xinjiang. Since the inception of XUAR in 1955, there has been a steady increase in the Han population in Xinjiang. Evidenced by Table 2, the PRC strongly encouraged the migration of Han Chinese into Xinjiang and by the mid-1950s the Han made just 6.1% of the Xinjiang population against the 75% of Uighurs (Kozhirova, Khazhmuratova and Marmontova, 2016: 76). By 2000 the roughly 299 000 Han in Xinjiang grew to approximately 7 489 919, increasing from 6.1% of the autonomous region's population to just about 41%. According to Kozhirova, Khazhmuratova and Marmontova (2016: 76) the in-migration of the Han was motivated by political reasons.

More specifically, the PRC has encouraged the migration into Xinjiang in order to 'dilute' and counter the Uighurs' political and demographic strength in Xinjiang (Clarke, 2013: 117; Clarke, 2007: 280). In other words, in order to ensure that Xinjiang could be effectively controlled, and eventually brought into the overall Chinese state successfully, the Chinese government had counter the Uighur population by engineering a migration of Chinese into the region. This opinion is shared by Israeli (2010: 90) who posits that China wants to 'settle the Han Chinese' in the region 'in order to strengthen' China's foothold in the XUAR. In this sense, China's ethnic policy has overt and covert dimensions. Overtly, China is seemingly shown preferential treatment towards Uighurs and other minorities through favourable educational and social welfare programs. However, covertly China has been pursuing the migration of the Han to dilute Uighur influence in the region. What both dimensions demonstrate is that China aims to acculturate Xinjiang as a region and Uighurs as a people into the overall Chinese state and ethnic identity respectively.

Year	Han (%)	Uyghur (%)	Hui (%)	Total population
1955	299,000 (6.1%)	3,655,500 (75%)	150,000 (3.1%)	4,874,000
2000	7,489,919 (40.5%)	8,345,622 (45.2%)	839,837 (4.55%)	18,459,511
2010	8,824,640 (40.5%)	9,993,120 (45.8%)	983,180 (4.5%)	21,800,000

Table 2: Population of Xinjiang over the years (Toops, 2004: 20; Toops, 2000: 159; Hasmath, 2019: 50; Rice, 2018: 53)

Another factor that makes Uighurs' ethnicity an enormous challenge to China's goals of assimilation and integration is that the Uighurs, who are the second largest Muslim group in China and the 5th largest ethnic minority group, are solely concentrated in the XUAR. Compared to other ethnic groups, who often are spread across the entire country, Uighur Muslims are found predominantly in only one area. The Uighurs are one of only two ethnic minority groups in China who represent the largest percentage of the population in the region which they come from. In both the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) the Uighurs and Tibetans respectively are the largest ethnic group by population. Indeed as table 2 demonstrates despite being an ethnic minority, the Uighurs have been and are the largest ethnic group in Xinjiang. This fact unsettles the Chinese government due to the fact that the Han Chinese are the largest ethnic group in all of China's provinces apart from TAR and Xinjiang. Thus integrating and assimilating Xinjiang into the Chinese state has proven to be a difficult process compared to other provinces in China. This challenge significantly explains why China has actively sought out to 'dilute' the Uighurs' political weight. In doing so, China is effectively binding Xinjiang region and Uighur Muslims 'ever closer to the "multi-ethnic" and "unitary" Chinese state' by any means necessary (Clarke, 2013: 116).

The last, and arguably biggest, challenge to China's goal of integration and assimilation is the distinct ethnic difference between Uighurs and Han Chinese, which has made Uighur acculturation with the Han virtually impossible. Uighur Muslims are a culturally, linguistically, historically and religiously different ethnic group from Han Chinese. Uighur Muslims' strong identification with these factors has not only made China's goal of integration difficult to achieve, but it has also rendered acculturation with Han impossible. The distinct difference between the two ethnic groups was already noticeable between them but the in-migration of Han Chinese into Xinjiang as well as the preferential policies the Chinese government undertook exacerbated 'the rigid intergroup boundary' between them (Han, 2010: 245). As

Clarke (2013: 111) expounds, the ethnic tensions between Uighurs and Han Chinese have been caused or even worsened by the actions of the CCP, namely the actions aforementioned above. China's actions have intensified tensions between the two groups to such an extent that inter-ethnic violence has frequently occurred as evidenced by the 2009 Urumqi violence (Liu and Peters, 2017: 266; Han, 2010: 245; Hasmath, 2019: 46).

Apart from the violence, the in-migration of the Han also brought with it sharpened economic disparities between the two distinctly different ethnic groups. Due to their Han identity, Han Chinese have been preferred over Uighurs and other ethnic minorities in terms of employment thus creating and widening the economic inequality between them, and subsequently, heightening the ethnic tensions (Shan and Weng, 2010: 60). Additionally, the preferential policies created by China to benefit Uighurs and other ethnic minorities has also aided in worsening the ethnic divide as the policies resulted in the unequal distribution of benefits in accordance to their 'ethnic status', creating a political inequality among ethnic minorities and discouraging them from developing a 'Chinese identity' (Shan and Weng, 2010: 60). China's attempts at managing the ethnic challenge the Uighurs pose have not only made the subject of ethnicity a bigger issue, but they have pushed Uighurs to strongly identify with their identity rather than renouncing it. This suggests that the more effort China applies in terms of integrating all ethnic minorities – particularly Uighurs – into a Chinese ethnic identity, the stronger they identify with their identity.

The Chinese state regards ethnicity as a major threat to its state. In this sense, ethnicity can significantly explain China's state response towards Uighurs. Ethnicity has strongly contributed to the Uighurs; espousal of separatism which is something the Chinese government regards as a threat to its overall territorial integrity (Clarke, 2013: 110). Thus ethnicity, particularly Uighur Muslim ethnicity, has provided China with great challenges. More specifically, the Uighurs' ethnicity has presented China with three distinct challenges: the historical relationship between Uighurs and the Chinese state; their unique geographic concentration in Xinjiang and their distinct ethnic difference from the Han which has caused a lack of assimilation with the predominant Han Chinese, predominantly in comparison with other ethnic minorities (Clarke, 2013: 110). Due to these challenges posed to it, the Chinese state has had

to adopt a response to the Uighurs in the manner that it has, which has been repressive and in gross violation of human rights.

IV

TERRORISM AND ETHNIC SEPARATISM IN XINJIANG, CHINA

1. China's relationship with terrorism

'One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter'

- George Galloway

Terrorism in China has existed for quite some time. Despite this, terrorism is still less recognised in China than it is compared to other areas such as the West. Perhaps this is as a result of Deng Xiaoping's idea of keeping China on a low profile on the international stage by preventing the internationalisation of domestic issues. Indeed as Purbrick (2017: 236) states terrorism has been frequently occurring in China since during the Qing Dynasty and more commonly since the 1980s, however, very little attention has been paid to it. Terrorism is a sensitive and strategic issue for China as it believes it is being used as a tool to fragment and disintegrate the country. According to Mukherjee (2010: 426) in relation to the continual occurrences of terrorism, China has even coined the term 'the three evil forces', denoting the ethnic separatism, terrorism and religious extremism which the PRC claims is prevalent in the country. Nonetheless, what is difficult about understanding terrorism in China is that there is a serious lack of objectivity in Chinese media which makes it unclear whether the violence is indeed aimed at merely causing divisions within the Chinese state or if the violence is a reaction to the continued repression that characterises China (Purbrick, 2017: 238). What is clear is that China has a long history of violence, particularly involving majority-minority relations, as evidenced by the annexation of Xinjiang and the relations between the Han and ethnic minorities.

Conceivably, China's history and relationship with terrorism is encapsulated by the aforementioned quote by George Galloway. While China regards many of Xinjiang separatists as terrorists who are threatening the unity of the nation, for many ethnic minorities – and Uighurs to be specific – the Xinjiang separatists are simply freedom fighters who are challenging the Chinese status quo to achieve their freedom and protection of their human rights. While China claims that Xinjiang and Uighur separatists are relying on religious extremism and ethnic separatism, Xinjiang and Uighur separatists conversely claim that they are merely responding to the coercion and repression of their peoples. In this sense it is difficult to understand terrorism in

China because both parties are spurred by their own justifications and ulterior agendas. For the Chinese government perhaps claims of terrorism are often made in order to justify its responds towards the separatists. For the separatists perhaps claims of freedom fighting are made in order to justify their acts of terrorism. Such an opinion is shared by Clarke (2015: 130) who purports that while China has had a long history of 'anti-state violence' it was only after September 11 2001 that the term of terrorism was used to describe the anti-state violence incidences.

Terrorism or anti-state violence, China's history with political violence stretches as far back as before the inception of the PRC. Furthermore China's political violence has mostly been concentrated in and perpetuated by ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. As Milliward (2004: ix) puts forward anti-state violence in Xinjiang began during the Qing period. Thus Xinjiang is responsible for the bulk of China's experience with anti-state violence and terrorism. At the forefront of this political violence and resistance are the Uighur Muslims, whose resistance has been geared towards separating themselves from the Chinese state. In this case, Uighur Muslims resistance has at times been successful after seceding from Chinese rule twice: once in the 1930s and again in the 1940s. It is because of that fact that the PRC authorities and Han citizens are 'genuinely' fearful of Uighurs and Uighur separatism (Milliward, 2004: 2). China values the stability and protection of its territorial integrity more than anything else, but, this is something that the Uighurs have often threatened predominantly in most recent times.

2. Anti-state violence in Xinjiang

According to Purbrick (2017: 238) there has been a growing 'number of violent acts committed by ethnic Uighurs in Xinjiang'. The resistance towards Chinese rule shown by Uighur Muslims has throughout its history inspired by different factors and elements. Certainly, this is an opinion shared by Hyer (2006), Milliward (2004) and Purbrick (2017) who believe that Uighur resistance to Chinese rule throughout the years has been inspired by a plurality of ideologies and factors. Uighur resistance in the early 20th and mid-20th century was characterised by a number of independence and secessionist movements. As discussed in the previous chapter, the most successful of these movements were the 1933 and the 1944 movements which managed to break away from China to form the first and second ETR respectively.

Albeit these two East Turkestan Republics were crushed and suppressed by the Chinese state, they do highlight that Uighur resistance during this period was inspired by the ideology of Islam, as per Milliward (2004: ix). Certainly it was the ideology of Islam that pushed the Uighur resistance during this period to name the newly founded republics as the Islamic East Turkestan Republic. However, notwithstanding the Islamic ideology factor, Uighur resistance during that period was also inspired by Russian influences, especially in the 1940s (Hyer, 2006: 80). Nevertheless, Islam was largely responsible for inspiring Uighur resistance throughout the 20th century.

The ethnoreligious nature of Uighur resistance to Chinese rule had largely been responsible for inspiring the formation of an independent Uighur state. But by the 1980s and predominantly after the Chinese government took measures to ensure the suppression of any secessionist movement, Uighur resistance was inspired by an ethnonationalism that began to create a movement that was 'overtly nationalist' (Mukherjee, 2010: 427). Whereas prior to 1980 Uighur resistance had very little political activism, the 1980s and thereafter saw the start of a Uighur political activism which highlights the 'nationalistic' element of Uighur resistance at this time (Han, 2010: 247). Although political activism during the 1980s was few and far between, Uighur political activism of the late 20th century was underpinned by a Turkic nationalism. According to Hyer (2006: 80) not only has Uighur resistance been receiving support from other Turkic-speaking countries, but the many demonstrations held by Uighurs have shown that nationalism, or more specifically Turkic nationalism, has been the inspiration for the activism.

Moreover, Uighur resistance was inspired by a Turkic nationalism because it coincided with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of many Turkic-speaking nations in Central Asia who fuelled Uighurs' desires to establish their own country independent of China akin to their ethnic brothers who achieved their own independence from Soviet Russia. In spite of this Turkic nationalist-inspired demonstrations, which were often peaceful, were met with brutal repression which explains why by the 1990s Uighur resistance and political activism turned violent. The first act of Uighur violence in the 1990s is discussed in detail by both Han (2010) and Milliward (2004). In April 1990 in the south of Xinjiang, a group of Uighur rebels, who named themselves the Islamic Party of East Turkistan,

conducted a coordinated violent attack on government buildings within the Kashgar region (Milliward, 2004: 14). According to Han (2010: 247) the rebels 'propagated separatist ideologies' highlighting that Uighur resistance was inspired by a Turkic ethnonationalism. The Baren Incident served as a catalyst for many more ethnonationalist-inspired violent political activities which are detailed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: List of some of the major terrorist and separatist incidences, 1990–2014

Date and Location	**Terrorist organisation**	**Action and casualties**
April 5 1990, Baren Country	Islamic Party of East Turkistan	Synchronised attacks on government buildings; casualties: 6 deaths
February 1992-September 1993, Yining, Urumqi and Kashgar	East Turkistan terrorist organisation	Bombings of several public areas; casualties: 2 deaths, 36 injuries
August 24 1993, Yecheng County	East Turkistan terrorists	Attempted assassination; casualties: 1 injury
August 27 1996, Yecheng County	Terrorist	Attack on police and government building; Casualties: 6 deaths
February 25 1997, Urumqi	East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM)	Bus bombing; casualties: 9 deaths, 68 injuries
October 1999, Turkey	East Turkistan Liberation Organisation (ETLO)	Assault on Chinese nationals; casualties: none
July-August 2008	ETIM	Attack on paramilitary troops; casualties: 17 deaths
March 2014, Kunming	ETIM	Knife attack on Chinese train passangers; Casualties: 31 dead, 140+ injured

Source: (Milliward, 2004: 14-22; Clarke, 2008: 284-290; Rice, 2018: 55-56).

If in the 20th century Uighur resistance and opposition to Chines rule was inspired by ethnoreligious and ethnonationalist inspirations, then the 21st century Uighur resistance has often been inspired by a global jihadism. As Tredaniel and Lee (2017: 9-10) put forward, some members of the Uighur nationalist separatists 'have been increasingly associated with Al Qaeda and global jihad'. This demonstrates that there has been a continuance of ethnoreligious inspirations except it has now become a more radicalised inspiration that is often prone to more violent and more radical violent separatist attacks. As table 3 illustrates, the global jihadism inspirations of Uighur resistances coincided with the emergence of more widespread and brutal attacks that featured killings and attempted assassinations. Furthermore, Uighur resistance to Chinese rule in the 21st century has had a growing 'jihadist discourse' evidenced by videos that claimed credit for a number of attacks by making use of jihadist references (Tredaniel and Lee, 2017: 10). Indeed the growing reference of jihadism highlights, along with pro-independence aspirations, Uighur resistance has evolved to include in it an ideology of global jihadism. According to the Chinese government, however, Uighur resistance is merely a vehicle used by Uighur terrorists to advance a cause of disintegrating and splitting up the overall Chinese state. But, interestingly enough the use of the term terrorism has not always been a part of China's response.

3. Chinese response to anti-state violence and separatism

China has had a varying and changing response regarding Uighur resistance. During the 20th century the Chinese government responded by referring to Uighur resistance as merely Xinjiang separatism and creating preferential policies but in the 21st century China's response changed to calling Uighur resistance as terrorism or East Turkestan terrorism and creating a counterterrorism policy that aims to root out 'religious extremism' (Rice, 2018: 56). As state previously, China has for the longest time had an issue of Uighur resistance towards Chinese and it is something that it has been aware of as it has taken numerous measures to eradicate it. China prior to 2001 had chosen to not refer to Uighur political activism and resistance as terrorism. In fact as Potter (2013: 76) demonstrates, China wanted to maintain its image of being a supporter of liberation movements, such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, thus it refrained from referring to Uighur resistance as terrorism. China's reluctance to term Uighur resistance as terrorism is even reflected

in the soft policies it took in relation to Uighurs and their overall resistance. As detailed in the previous chapter, the Chinese government established a number of preferential and favourable policies towards such as the 'two less and one lenient' policy and educational as well as social welfare programs (Israeli, 2010: 98). This was all done with the aim of appealing to Uighurs and the Xinjiang separatists as well as to ease their secessionist and pro-independence ideas.

However, that soon changed in 2001 as the 9/11 terrorist attacks provided China with the opportunity 'to solidify and accelerate its shift to a policy of active opposition' towards Uighur resistance and activism (Potter, 2013: 77). Certainly after September 11 2001, China launched a counterterrorism offensive, under the auspices of the Global War on Terror, which aimed to fight against the 'three forces of evil'. The shift also saw China begin to use the phrase of terrorism to label Uighurs' anti-state resistance and political activism. Moreover, China's shift in response to Uighur resistance is demonstrated by the publication of its first official report on Uighur terrorism in Xinjiang on the 21st January 2002. According to Milliward (2004: 12) any understanding or studying of terrorism or anything terrorism related in China requires taking into account the January 2002 report. This is because the report was China's first publication on Uighur separatism which provides detailed reports on what it calls 'East Turkistan terrorist forces' and the attacks the forces are responsible for (Clarke, 2015: 130). Nevertheless, some parts of the report need to be approached with caution, particularly the report's references on what it calls terrorist organisations. According to Milliward (2004: 13) the report makes use of 'the East Turkistan terrorist organisation' which raises confusion as to which specific group is being referenced. There exist a number of different groups and organisations that are pro-Uighur independence and have actively participated in anti-state violence in and outside of China.

The following are Uighur separatist organisations, who are opposed to Chinese rule of Xinjiang: East Turkistan Liberation Organisation; Uighur Liberation Organisation; East Turkistan terrorists; East Turkistan Islamic Party; the East Turkestan Party of Allah; the Shock Brigade of the Islamic Reformist Party; the East Turkistan Opposition Party; the East Turkestan International Committee; the Islamic Holy Warriors; the United Revolutionary Front of East Turkestan (URFET); and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement. As evidenced by the names of the organisations

named above more than one of the organisations contain ‘East Turkistan’ in the name, thus there exists an ambiguity on whether the report is referring to ‘a specific group know to espouse a separatist line or by unknown perpetrators’ whom the report – ‘without providing evidence’ – claims ‘to be East Turkistan separatist’ (Milliward, 2004: 13). Apart from the report, China’s shift in response and attitude towards Uighur resistance also needs to be treated with caution. This is because the shift appears to be one of political expediency. Due to the fact that China’s previous efforts to ease pro-independence ideas through its soft policy failed, China needed something to help justify its shift and as Potter (2013: 77) posits, the Global War on Terror provided China with that justification. Moreover, the Global War on Terror provided China with an excuse to justify its counterterrorism policy. For Clarke (2015: 130) the Global War on Terror allowed the Chinese government ‘to gain international sympathy and acquiescence so that China can go about its business in Xinjiang’, which has been described by the Human Rights Watch (2018) as repressive and a violation of human rights.

In this sense China has been largely successful as both the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom have heeded the calls of the PRC to designate the ETIM as a terrorist group (Purbrick, 2017: 243). Additionally, China’s ‘war on terror’ and counterterrorism policy, which have empowered Chinese and Xinjiang authorities to respond to Uighurs with repressive coercion and crackdowns, have been implemented with very little international backlash (Al Jazeera, 2019a: Internet). Two of China’s most important elements to its war on terror and counterterrorism policy are the re-education camps and the Strike Hard against Terrorism in Xinjiang campaign. These two elements, which are discussed in detail in chapter I, have allowed China to brutally suppress Uighurs in the hopes of completely eradicating religious extremism and ethnic separatism which the Chinese government believes to be the cause of Uighur terrorism. But China’s counterterrorism policy has evolved to become a policy that represses any expression of Uighur identity, or any non-Han identity, as the government has associated that with extremism, separatism and splitism (Human Rights Watch, 2018; Boehm, 2009).

China’s counterterrorism policy, and in specifically the two elements mentioned above, demonstrate that while overtly the policy may indeed be a counterinsurgency

policy but covertly the policy is showing itself to be, much like China's other policies on ethnic minorities, a policy that aims to dilute, erase and eventually forcibly assimilate Uighurs into the overall Chinese identity. China is demonstrating that it is willing to respond in any manner, shape or capacity to anything that threatens its territorial integrity and it will do anything to bring it to its end. The manner in which the Chinese government has responded towards its perception of Uighur terrorism illustrates that terrorism is a cause of its state response towards Uighur Muslims. However, terrorism alone cannot explain China's state response towards Uighur Muslims.

V

UIGHURS AND CHINESE STATE SECURITY

1. Conceptualisation of state security

While many agree and even suggest that the primary issues at hand in Xinjiang, between the Chinese government and Uighur Muslims, are islamophobia or religion, ethnicity as well as terrorism or ethnic separatism, the issue of state security should not be neglected. State security is as much an issue at hand as the other three issues are. However, before expounding on Chinese state security as a cause of China's state response towards Uighur Muslims, a conceptualisation of security and subsequently state security is necessary. Security is regarded by many scholars such as Williams (2012), Baldwin (1997) and Herington (2012) as a contested concept. Security has always been regarded as a contested concept because, as Herington (2012: 9) makes evident, security 'means different things to many different people.' The diversity of the meaning of security thus makes the concept contested as it is connected to different ad sometimes opposing ideals which evoke different understandings of the word. Additionally the different understandings or interpretations of security have 'emphasised different aspects of' security and have highlighted the different claims of what is most important to security (Herington, 2012: 9).

For example, human security, water security, state security, environmental security and gender security are different interpretations of security that propagate their own claims about what is most important or valuable to security. For human security the protection of individuals and their rights would be most valuable to security which is a contrast to state security which regards the protection and survival of the state as most important. Conversely, water security and environmental security pertain to the protection of water and the environment respectively and regard water and the environment as the most important factor in understanding security. An additional factor which has rendered security a contested subject is the matter of 'whose security' (Baldwin, 1997: 13). In this sense, the concept of security raises a level of analysis issue. In other words from whose perspective should security be analysed from? Who is the security for? Is the security for the individual (first level of analysis), the state (second level of analysis) or the international system (third level of analysis)? The concept of security thus offers a wide range of 'referent objects' that can vary from the lowest level of analysis 'right up to the' highest level being the international system (Williams, 2012: 7; Baldwin, 1997: 13) which adds more

confusion in understanding security. For instance whose security is water security? Is it the individual, the state or the international system? In the end the answers to these questions 'depend on the particular research question to be addressed' (Baldwin, 1997: 13).

According to Williams (2012: 3) the confusion and contestation that the concept of security creates can be addressed through Barry Buzan's framework. Buzan's framework identifies the five different 'sectors' of security which help simplify and categorise security. Additionally, the five sectors affect and shape security in their own way. The five sectors are as follows:

- Military: concerned with the interplay between the armed offensive and defensive capabilities of state and states' perceptions of each other's intentions. Buzan's preference was that the study of military security should be seen as one subset of security studies and referred to as strategic studies in order to avoid unnecessary confusion.
- Political: focused on the organisational stability of states, systems of government and the ideologies that give them their legitimacy.
- Economic: revolved around access to the resources, finance and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power.
- Societal: centred on the sustainability and evolution of traditional patterns of language, culture, and religious and national identity and custom.
- Environmental: concerned with the maintenance of the local and the planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend (Williams, 2012: 3-4).

Thus it is in the political sector of Buzan's framework that state security lies. State security involves the stability of the state, the system of government and the ideology that gives the state its legitimacy (i.e. socialism, communism, etc.). State security as a concept is a commonly used term that is evoked in a plurality of disciplines. In both politics and international relations state security is often used interchangeably with the concept of national security. Both concepts refer to the security of the state or nation and subsequently the protection of it. According to Heywood (2013: 409) state or national security refers to the 'conditions in which the survival and safety of a particular nation or state is secured, usually through the build up of military capacity

to deter aggression.' While traditionally threats and issues to state security have come from states, as Heywood (213: 409) shows, in more recent times threats and issues to a state's national security have come from things other than states. In China's case, especially in reference to Xinjiang, these threats and issues have come from Uighur Muslims. The Chinese state has thus created specific 'conditions' that have secured the survival and safety of China's territorial entity. These conditions relate to three identified factors: geopolitical factors, economic factors and political factors.

2. China's state security

Xinjiang forms an important of China and thus the region is of paramount importance to China's state security. As Israeli (2010: 90) states Xinjiang is crucial to China's state security because of a combination of issues such as the region becoming a site for China's nuclear and space program, the region's border with China's rival in Russia and the potential of Xinjiang's petroleum and gas resources. Thus the crucial nature of Xinjiang to Chinese state security explains why China has responded the way it has towards Uighurs. The understanding of Xinjiang's significance to China's state security and why Uighurs pose a threat to it can be interpreted in terms of three distinct but interlinked factors. These factors also demonstrate why China is not willing to let Xinjiang be seceded from the Republic. As state above, these factors are, but not limited to, geographical factors, economic factors and political factors.

a. Geopolitical factors

Xinjiang is a resource rich area of which the majority of the resources are still untapped and untouched. The region has a 'considerable' amount of energy resources in terms of gas and oil (Davis, 2008: 9). The approximate figures and amounts are illustrated by Purbrick (2017) and Boehm (2009). According to both Purbrick (2017: 250) and Boehm (2009: 72) Xinjiang 'houses up to one third of China's proven oil resources', it contains around 74 billion barrels of oil, 282 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and around 40% of China's coal reserves. Indeed these numbers illustrate the geopolitical importance of Xinjiang to Chinese state security, particularly when considering the fact that China has been trying to lessen its reliance on the Middle East for energy resources. The numbers also demonstrate why China is not willing to let Xinjiang be separated from overall country. Xinjiang's

resources serve as an important source of energy because demand for energy in China is fast increasing as the PRC continues to seek to modernise the country (Boehm, 2009: 72). China's heavy reliance in Xinjiang's natural gas and oil is highlighted by the establishment of a pipeline that links natural gas from Xinjiang to Shanghai (Purbrick, 2017: 251). While there is suggestion that China has over-exaggerated Xinjiang's natural resource reserves (Boehm, 2009: 72) Xinjiang still has 'thrice' the amount of oil reserves as Saudi Arabia, emphasising Xinjiang's significance to Chinese state security (Bhattacharya, 2003: 371).

But Xinjiang's geopolitical significance to China is not just limited to energy resources. Xinjiang is a region that is rich in other sources of natural resources. As Bhattacharya (2003: 371) shows, Xinjiang houses rich sources of wool, copper and gold. In addition, China has also relied on Xinjiang for its cotton production. According to Boehm (2009: 73) the region contains a third of China's cotton production as well as the best quality of cotton in the country. Given the amount of natural resources and its geopolitical significance, Xinjiang is of considerable importance to the survival the Chinese state. Another dimension to Xinjiang's significance to China is the fact that Xinjiang presents China with an opportunity to expand into Central Asia. In what Hyer (2006: 82) Chinese expansionism, Xinjiang proves to be extremely important as it provides China a gateway into Central Asia and its energy resources (Davis, 2008: 9). Xinjiang lies on the western border of China's territory, as the name of the region suggests, Xinjiang is China's new frontier into the greater Central Asian region. To this end, China has established numerous energy co-operations with a number of Central Asian countries. These energy co-operations consist of bilateral, trilateral and multilateral deals that aim to firstly satisfy China's growing domestic energy demands as well as minimise the reliance on importing oil via maritime trade. For example in December 2003 China established a deal with Kyrgyzstan to import hydroelectric power to Xinjiang (Clarke, 2008b: 104). China has increasingly used Xinjiang as a springboard to extract energy resources from Central Asia with countries such as Turkmenistan being targeted. Turkmenistan which has the biggest gas reserves in Central Asia has been used by the Chinese government as a supplier of gas, exemplified by the framework agreement signed between the two countries in 2006 that connected the Xinjiang-Shanghai gas pipline with Turkmenistan (Davis, 2008: 9-10).

The last geopolitical factor that makes Xinjiang significant to China's state security is the fact that the region is bordered by 8 different countries. Because of this Xinjiang is subject to potential influences from these 8 countries. This issue becomes even more salient due to the large population of Muslims that inhabit these 8 countries. Thus Xinjiang is strategically and geopolitically important to China as the region is susceptible to external influences, including influences that could spread and support ideas pertaining to Uighur Separatism. Countries such as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan share the same Turkic identity with Uighurs which increases the likelihood of Uighurs drawing pro-independence and separatist ideas from them. Therefore Xinjiang's proximity to these nations poses a geopolitical and strategic threat to China's security and survival as these countries have established their own independence from Soviet Russia and have at times inspired 'an awakening among Uighurs' (Bhattacharya, 2003: 372). In addition, Xinjiang's proximity to these Turkic-speaking Muslim countries creates a dilemma and a necessity for the PRC to balance its treatment of Uighurs while at the same time establishing stable relationships with these countries who often sympathise with the Uighur cause.

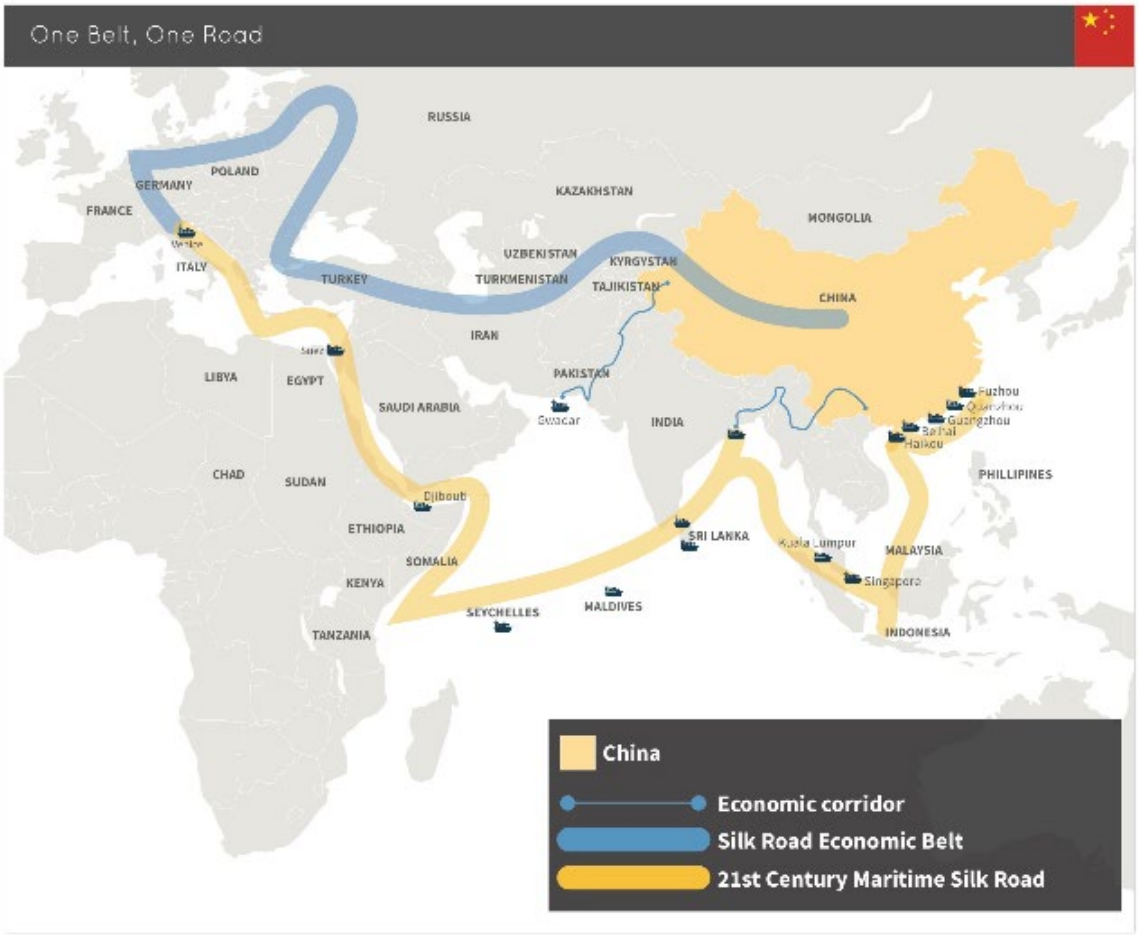
b. Economic factors

China has invested a tremendous amount of both money and effort into Xinjiang, which has made the region important to the country's security. China has invested heavily in Xinjiang because of the potential economic incentives to be gained. In turn, this investment has turned Xinjiang into one of China's most crucial regions within its borders. In the effort to strengthen economic ties with Central Asia, China has increased its Sino-Central Asia trade which is evidenced by the establishment of the 'Continental Eurasian land-bridge' that aims to link the major economies of Europe as well as East and Central Asia (Clarke, 2008b: 102). But China's strengthening of economic ties also ensures that China fulfils some strategic goals. In what Szczudlik-Tatar (2013: 1) calls 'China's New Silk Road Diplomacy', China is establishing and strengthening economic relations with Central Asia because it is motivated by domestic rationales to firstly preserve stability on the Xinjiang-Central Asia borders, to secondly 'secure export markets' and energy resources, to thirdly create inland transport routes rather than maritime routes and to lastly bridge the gap between the developed east of China with the underdeveloped west. Indeed this

highlights Xinjiang's economic and strategic significance to China's security and why China is not willing to let go of the region.

In attempting to establish a Eurasian 'land-bridge' through the use of Silk Road diplomacy, China has used Xinjiang as a springboard to establish trade deals with Central Asian countries as well as to create initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative. According to Brophy (2018: Internet) on the face of it China has used Xinjiang to establish and grow trade with Central Asia with the intention of strengthening economic relations but covertly Chin is also trying to combat the spread of Islamic extremism and Uighur Separatism. Such an opinion is shared by Clarke (2008b: 103) who stresses that China is deliberately creating 'a relationship of economic dependency' in the hopes of negating 'separatist and Islamist' extremism which is a threat to China's interests in Xinjiang. This economic dependency is reflected in the uneven distribution of trade between China and Central Asia. Central Asia accounts for less than 5% of China's foreign trade whereas China accounts for more than 12% of Central Asia's foreign trade (Clarke, 2008b: 103). By doing this, China is ensuring that its regional dominance and influence grows particularly against the wave of Islam which it believes to be a cause of Uighur Separatism in Xinjiang. Thus, in order to achieve this China is using the Xinjiang region to make strong economic and strategic inroads into Central Asia.

Map 2: Illustration of Silk Road Economic Belt.



(Source: Cai, 2017: 2)

This is no more apparent than in China's Belt and Road Initiative. As map 2 shows it is through Xinjiang that China can take advantage of the Silk Road Economic Belt which provides inroads into the economies of Central Asia. That is precisely what the Belt and Road Initiative aims to do. Alternatively referred to as the One Belt, One Road Initiative (OBOR), the Belt and Road Initiative is China's most ambitious economic plan that aims to connect Xinjiang and other border regions with neighbouring Central Asian countries (Finley, 2017: 11). For example the OBOR has already created an 'economic corridor' between China and Pakistan by connecting Xinjiang with the province of Bla. The various initiatives and trade deals China has made only serve to highlight the economic and strategic importance of Xinjiang has for China's state security. Xinjiang is the springboard for China to assert its regional economic influence and leadership on Central Asia, which Kerr and Swinton (2008:

113) call the ascendency of China. Thus for China, Xinjiang is economically vital to its state security.

Along with foreign trade and foreign investment, China has also invested effort and money domestically into Xinjiang. In the hopes of developing Xinjiang and western China, the CCP has created a series of Western Development policies. China's marked investment in and establishment of development policies for Xinjiang began under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, who attempted to develop both east and west China simultaneously. But as Davis (2008: 4) shows, this attempt ultimately failed:

> The Western Development policies were first an economic development strategy to reduce poverty and then an urgent social necessity of Chinese leaders. In the early 1980s, then-leader Deng Xiaoping developed a policy to first develop the eastern coastal regions, which already had a better economic foundation than the western regions, and then second to increase the development of the western regions after the development of the eastern regions reached a certain point. In the following decades the poverty gap between eastern and western China widened. . .

The failure of Xiaoping's development plans ultimately forced the Chinese government to launch the Great Leap West.

According to Liu and Peters (2017: 265) the Great Leap West was an 'ambitious economic undertaking to develop' Xinjiang. The economic initiative was launched in 1999 by former Chinese President Jiang Zemin and while it aimed to develop China's western region, Xinjiang was specifically targeted. Certainly the Great Leap West provided Xinjiang with infrastructural projects and investment in the hopes that the region's untapped resources could be put to good use (Clarke, 2007b: 328). As a result of Beijing's heavy investment Xinjiang has become a more modern province evidenced by the expansion in the 'number or airports, highways, railway lines, telecommunication networks and high voltage electric wires designed to transport electricity' (Liu and Peters, 2017: 267).

But for many Uighurs the supposed benefits that the Great Leap West was meant to provide did not materialise. In fact, the benefits only seemed to reach the Chinese (Liu and Peters, 2017: 267). This resulted in the 2009 Urumqi attacks that reflected the inter-ethnic tensions that were simmering between the Han and the Uighurs. Consequently, the Chinese government developed new developmental and economic policies. As pointed out by Shan and Weng (2010: 62) the Xinjiang Work

Conference of 2010 ushered in China's new policy package in Xinjiang that balanced economic development and regional stability. The new policy package was characterised by the need to create 'leapfrog development' as well as 'long-term stability' (Shan and Weng, 2010: 62). In trying to grow Xinjiang's economy to match that over the country's level, government investment was stipulated to grow to two trillion Yuan while state parastatals were forecasted to invest 992 billion Yuan and other rich Chinese provinces were expected to donate a percentage of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to Xinjiang (Godbole and Goud, 2012: 8). While these efforts, including the Great Leap West, intended to eradicate poverty in Xinjiang (Godbole and Goud, 2012: 8) these efforts show that besides economic motivations the government had strategic motivations as well. Thus the economic importance of Xinjiang to China's state security cannot be underestimated.

c. Political factors

Along with geopolitical and economic factors, there exist political factors or conditions that make Xinjiang important to Chinese state security and subsequently explain why China is not willing to let Xinjiang go. These factors include Han in-migration into Xinjiang, the domino effect of Uighur Separatism in Xinjiang and the use of the Han Chinese as a religious and ethnic buffer to Turkic influence in Central Asia. Undoubtedly, China has economically invested a significant amount in Xinjiang but it has also invested greatly in Xinjiang demographically. That is to say that China has put in a lot of effort into migrating Han Chinese into Xinjiang. As demonstrated in Chapter III, China has always pushed for the migration of Hans into Xinjiang. One could argue that before economic investment, China's investment in Xinjiang began demographically with the in-migration of Han Chinese. Indeed Han in-migration has been existent in Xinjiang since the Qing dynasty 'adopted the strategy of population transfer' into Xinjiang (Bhattacharya, 2003: 376). It was only in the 1950s when Han in-migration was accelerated.

This acceleration began to shift and the affect the demographics of Xinjiang, increasing the Han population in the region from roughly 6% in the 1950s to 40.5% currently. The strategy of population transfer was the PRC's deliberate attempt to strengthen their control of Xinjiang by increasing Chinese presence (Israeli, 2010: 90). The growth of a Chinese population in the XUAR also allowed the CCP to

decrease and dilute Uighur Muslims' demographic and political weight (Clarke, 2013: 117). Ultimately, this political factor increased Xinjiang's significance to China's state security. In addition, China's engineered in-migration of the Han has been and is being used as a religious and ethnic buffer for the CCP. According to Bhattacharya (2003: 376) the Qing dynasty used the migration of the Han to fight off and prevent 'Czarist expansionism'. The PRC has continued with the use of population transfer but instead of preventing a Czarist expansion, the PRC have hoped to prevent the spread of Islam in China. Xinjiang finds itself on the border of many Muslim countries that could and at times have influenced and inspired ethnoreligious aspirations in Uighur Muslims. Thus in an effort to counter that, the PRC has used Han in-migration as a buffer towards Central Asian influence as well as hoping to encourage Uighur assimilation with the Han (Boehm, 2009: 86).

An additional, and arguably biggest, political factor that makes Xinjiang important to Chinese state security and explains why the PRC us not willing to let Xinjiang go is the potential domino effect that Uighur Separatism can have on China's territory. China values its territorial integrity more than anything which is precisely why it has maintained its claim that Xinjiang has always been Chinese territory. In this sense China is no different from any other country. The survival and continuation of a country is the protection, existence and securing of a defined territory. Thus China values its territorial integrity more than anything else because its territorial integrity is, in essence, its national or state security. Without any recognition of a defined territory the survival of China as a country and its state security are threatened. Because of this China has always been swift in responding to anything that threatens or challenges its territorial integrity as evidenced by the suppression of the two East Turkestan Republics in the 20th century.

Uighur Separatism precisely represents the threat mentioned above. But over and above being a threat to Chinese territorial integrity, Uighur Separatism and pro-independence ideals could create a domino effect on the rest of China. Indeed as Bhattacharya (2003: 375-376) demonstrates, the stability and existence of Xinjiang has a significant effect on China's stability. Thus the threat Uighur Separatism is posing on Xinjiang is also a threat to China as a whole. In addition, Uighur Separatism – whether it succeeds in seceding from China or not – presents China with a potential domino effect as this could spill over into other areas of China.

Indeed, separatism in Xinjiang could potentially inspire similar circumstances in Tibet and Hong Kong as well (Purbrick, 2017: 246). China is acutely aware of this which explains why the PRC is not only suppressing separatism in the XUAR but also any news of such suppression. The continued calls of separatism in Xinjiang could spark a 'chain reaction' and lead to the disintegration of China, akin to the disintegration of the Soviet Union (Hyer, 2006: 83). Undoubtedly, these political factors highlight the extreme importance of Xinjiang to China's state security.

The essential point of the discussion above was to highlight how important the XUAR is to the survival and continued existence of the Chinese state geopolitically, economically and politically. These factors mentioned above not only explain Xinjiang's importance to China and why China is not willing to let the region secede from the overall state, but in addition the factors also demonstrate why China has responded in the manner it has towards Uighur Muslims and their pro-independence calls. Thus Chinese state security as a cause of China's state response towards Uighur Muslims should not be neglected or overlooked.

VI

CONCLUSIONS

1. Islamophobia

The studies offered by various scholars such as Qian (2019) and Liqiu and Yang (2018) demonstrate that islamophobia in China is not only present but that it is also widespread. While numerous studies on islamophobia focus on its presence in the West they neglect the fact that islamophobia is present in the Far East, specifically China. The studies that do focus on islamophobia in China, however, approach the phenomenon as a contemporary issue despite evidence of the contrary. Islamophobia in China has its roots in the Qing dynasty era, but, it become more widespread after the September 11 terrorist attacks and the launch of the Global War on Terror. Muslim discrimination in China has even extended itself into news coverage where Islam and Muslims are portrayed negatively. Undoubtedly, the presence of islamophobia has and still continues to inform much of the interactions that occur in China: be it interactions between non-Muslim Chinese citizens and Muslims Chinese or the Chinese state and Muslim Chinese. Because of the existence of this degree of Muslim discrimination islamophobia can be said to be a cause of China's state response towards Uighur Muslims. Muslim discrimination is particularly widespread in Xinjiang where Uighur Muslims specifically are targeted, as demonstrated in Chapter II.

However, perhaps islamophobia is not the most significant or the largest reason for China's state response towards Uighurs. This is because while China does show itself to be islamophobic or anti-Islam the country has had a contentious and controversial relationship with religion in general due to the fact that China is largely an irreligious and atheist country. China's contentious relationship with religion is reflected in the fact that China exhibits a duality when it comes to religion. That is to say that while in theory China observes and protects religious rights, in practice religion and religious rights are, and historically have been, extremely restricted. China has over the years created numerous laws that have provided protection for religion and religious rights, including the constitution. The 1982 Constitution of China provides citizens with the freedom to believe in religion and the right to enjoy freedom of religious belief (Potter, 2003: 325) while other laws that indicate that China, at least, theoretically protects freedom of religion include Document 6 and Document 19. Yet, these laws and documents are not observed nor adhered to in practice as the Chinese government over the years has taken measures that not

only directly contradict the laws of the country but also reveal that China is anti-religion.

Indeed China's anti-religion stance demonstrates that perhaps islamophobia is not the most significant cause of China's state response towards Uighurs. China's anti-religion position has targeted all religions and religious ethnic groups in China which has been described as a crackdown on religion (Human Rights Watch, 2018). In other words while China has actively ensured that Islam is heavily restricted and that Muslims, including Uighurs, have their religious freedoms restricted the PRC has restricted other religions as well. In fact, Chinese efforts to restrict religion are demonstrated by the fact that all religions in China have to be legally registered. China's anti-religion has pushed the country to take up measures that aim to effectively control religion and bring it to its demise. Moreover in recent times and especially under President Xi Jinping, China has tried to suppress religion through what sinicisation. Thus, although the presence of islamophobia in China cannot be denied and is to some extent a cause of China's state response towards Uighurs, islamophobia in China stems more from an anti-religion position than it does from a purely anti-Islam or anti-Muslim position. If this is to be accepted then it is China's anti-religion beliefs that sufficiently explain China's state response towards Uighurs. Nevertheless, Uighur Muslims of Xinjiang present more than just a religious challenge towards the Chinese government which points towards the fact that islamophobia or anti-religion alone cannot effectively explain China's state response.

2. Ethnicity

Much like religion ethnicity is an enormous challenge for the PRC. While China may appear to be an ethnically homogenous, 114 million citizens in China form a part of the 55 ethnic minority groups. The large number of ethnic minorities thus makes ethnicity a sensitive issue for China. Uighur Muslims are one of China's 55 ethnic minorities and are therefore at the frontline of China's ethnicity issue. This is because the Uighurs form one of the largest ethnic minorities in China and the largest ethnic group in the XUAR. Ethnicity and ethnic minorities are issue for the Chinese government because they represent an obstacle for China that blocks the country from becoming a monocultural and monoethnic country. To this end, the Chinese government has taken numerous efforts to ensure that the country becomes

ethnically homogenous. This effort has mainly been to deliberately assimilate all 55 ethnic groups into a single Han Chinese ethnic group.

While some ethnic minorities such as the Hui have somewhat assimilated well into the Han ethnic group, other minorities, specifically the Uighurs, have been more recalcitrant in doing so (Friedrichs, 2017: 12). This is because the Uighurs are vastly and distinctly different ethnic group from the Han. Whereas Uighurs are of Turkic descent, the Han are of Chinese. Whereas Uighur Muslims are an ethnoreligious peoples, the Han are largely atheist. Whereas the Uighurs speak Uighur and have their own unique culture, the Han speak Chinese and have a unique Han culture. Hence, not only are Uighur Muslims ethnically different, but they are also religiously, linguistically, historically and culturally different from the Han. More importantly, Uighur Muslims are strongly attached to these ethnic differences. As a result, the Chinese has had to take extraordinary measures with regards to Uighur Muslims in terms of dealing with the ethnicity issue. In this sense ethnicity is a cause of China's state response towards Uighur Muslims. However, much like islamophobia, the extent of Uighur ethnicity being a cause of China's state response should be exaggerated. Uighur ethnicity does explain Chinese state response but Uighurs are not the only ethnic minority who are strongly attached to their identity and are distinctly different from Han Chinese. As Clarke (2013) demonstrates Tibetans are also strongly attached to their identity and have been opposed to assimilating into the Han culture. Indeed, compared to the Uighurs, Chinese state response towards Tibetans has also been brutally repressive. Both Uighurs and Tibetans have become a brutally repressed group whose freedoms have been restricted and denied. What both groups' experiences with the Chinese state show is that while ethnicity may not be a significant cause of China's repressive state response it is a necessary cause.

3. Terrorism

Terrorism has long been present in China but very little attention has been paid to it. Since the 1980s, however, terrorism has been more frequent in occurrence, especially in the XUAR. It is in this region where the PRC has claimed that the 'three evil forces' have been occurring. By three evil forces, the Chinese government is referring to ethnic separatism, terrorism and religious extremism. The PRC strongly believe that these three forces work in tandem to fragment and disintegrate the unity

of the Chinese state. Certainly, since the 1980s Xinjiang has experienced numerous acts of ethnic separatism, terrorism and religious extremism. Uighur Muslims have largely been responsible for conducting and co-ordinating acts related to the three evil forces. While for the CCP the Uighurs have been making use of the three evil forces to fragment and split the overall country, Uighurs conversely believe that their reason for the engagement and use of the three evil forces is largely as a reaction to China's treatment of Uighurs and because they believe that their regional homeland should be independent from China and renamed as East Turkestan. In this sense, the situation in Xinjiang can be encapsulated by the quote that one man's terrorism is another man's freedom fighter.

Nevertheless, whether indeed Uighur separatists are fragmenting China or just merely reacting to Chinese government response what is clear is that terrorism, Uighur Separatism are at least the perception of them is a cause of China's state response towards Uighur Muslims. Particularly after the 9/11 attacks, China has justified all action taken against Uighurs as a reaction to widespread Uighur separatism, or more accurately, the three evil forces (Mukherjee, 2010: 426). In January of 2002 the PRC published its first report of terrorism occurrences in the country and Xinjiang in particular. Since then China has launched a counterterrorism offensive that has aimed to root out the three evil forces. But more importantly, the PRC has used the occurrences of terrorism to not only gain sympathy from the international community but also to justify state action taken against Uighur Muslims (Clarke, 2015: 130; Potter, 2013: 77). Therefore terrorism in Xinjiang is a sufficient cause of China's state response towards Uighur Muslims.

4. Chinese state security

China regards its territorial integrity as most important above anything else. In this sense China is no different from any other country as all countries regard their territorial integrity as significantly important. This is because territorial integrity is important to a country's state security. As defined in the previous chapter, state security refers to the conditions in which the survival of the state is guaranteed and thus without territorial integrity the survival of the state is severely threatened. Xinjiang forms an important part of China's territory not only because the region forms a large part of the Republic's landmass but also because China has always

claimed the XUAR to be a part of China therefore the area is a significant part of China's territorial integrity and state security. Uighur Muslims, particularly through their actions and ethnic identity, have represented a major threat to China's state security. That is to say that their ethnic identity constituting of their religion and ethnicity as well as their actions which have been characterised as acts of terror and separatist has threatened China's states security, which has informed China's actions taken towards Uighurs. Therefore, China's state security is a cause of China's state response towards Uighur Muslims.

Uighur Muslims represent a threat to Chinese state security or at least the PRC views them as a threat due to the fact that China believes Uighurs to be threatening the country's territorial integrity by trying to split Xinjiang from China. However, China is determined to not let Xinjiang secede from the country's territory and has taken significant measures to secure the security of both Xinjiang and China. For China, Xinjiang contains important conditions that guarantee the country's security and survival. These conditions – which explain why China is not willing to let Xinjiang go – relate to geopolitical, economic and political factors. Geopolitically, China sees Xinjiang as a valuable energy and natural resource region that can provide the country with oil. Additionally, China sees the region as an area that can prevent and stop the wave of Islam. Economically, Xinjiang provides China with a gateway into Central Asia to not only tap into the energy resources of Central Asia but also to establish regional dominance in the area. Politically, China is determined to not let Xinjiang go because of the large Han population in the region that was encouraged to migrate there by the PRC. Additionally, the PRC fears the potential domino effect Xinjiang's secession could have on all of China and finally because of the strategic importance of the Han population in the region which serve as a buffer between China and Central Asia. Certainly, Xinjiang forms important part of China's state security and amid the threat of Xinjiang seceding from China as a result of Uighur Separatism, the PRC has responded towards Uighurs in order to prevent that. Therefore, China's state security is a sufficient and necessary cause of China's response towards Uighur Muslims.

5. Statement of Findings and recommendations

From the discussion above the answers to the following questions, which were posed in Chapter I, can be drawn: 1. What is or are the causes of China's hardline response towards Uighur Muslims? 2. What role do islamophobia, ethnicity, terrorism and Chinese state security play in explaining Chinese state response? 3. Can these four causes explain China's state response independently and in spite of each other or are they interconnected and interdependent? 4. Whether independent or interdependent, are either one of these causes more of a cause than the others? The abovementioned discussion clearly demonstrates that islamophobia, ethnicity, terrorism and Chinese state security play a role in explaining and causing China's state response, which answers the first two research questions. This is because China's state response towards Uighur Muslims is informed by an islamophobia, a controversial relationship between ethnicity and the Chinese state, a long storied history of terrorism in Xinjiang, China and the need for China to protect its state security. In terms of the last two questions, the above discussion has also shown that these four causes cannot independently explain or even cause China's state response. Islamophobia, ethnicity, terrorism or Chinese state security alone do not cause China's state response but instead these causes work in tandem and only together do they necessarily and sufficiently explain China's state response. Lastly, because the causes are interconnected and interdependent the conclusion that either one of the causes is more of an explanation than the other three cannot be made due to the fact that the discussion above highlights that it is the combination of all that explains the Chinese government's actions towards Uighurs in Xinjiang.

The situation in Xinjiang between the Chinese state and Uighur Muslims paints a bleak picture of the future. Both concerning parties do not appear to be relenting in achieving their goals of either completely assimilating the XUAR into China or completely seceding the region from China. Both China and Uighur separatists are unrelenting in their ideals which are reflecting an attitude of hundred-percentism. History continues to show that hundred-percentism in any regard or situation results in the deterioration of a conflict. Hundred-percentism in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resulted in the escalation and worsening of the conflict which according to Clarke (2015) resulted in the partitioning of the Palestine state. The very same could occur in Xinjiang between China and the Uighur ethnic minority. Without doubt what the

Xinjiang conflict shows is that when either group explores particular options the other group responds in retaliation. Since the 1980s both the Chinese state and Uighur separatists and sympathists have explored and pursued the same options. The Chinese state has explored options that revolve around the suppression, restriction and repression of Uighur Muslims while in turn have pursued options that revolve around secessionism, terrorism and religious extremism.

But if both parties do not pursue other options the situation will worsen, it will harden the opposing group's ideals and, as Clarke (2015: 127) points out, it could result in the 'Palestinisation' of Xinjiang. Perhaps the suggestion that Xinjiang could become another Palestine and Wets Bank situation is excessive, but, there is evidence that points towards such a suggestion. Firstly, like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Xinjiang conflict contains increasing political and ethnic tensions. Secondly, akin to the in-migration of the Jews into Palestinian territory there has been a sharp increase in the population of Han Chinese into Uighur territory due to the state-engineered in-migration of the Han. Lastly, there is significant increase of major terrorist attacks conducted by Uighur separatists and extremists. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict contained these same characteristics and so it does not bode well for the future of the Xinjiang situation. Undoubtedly, if the situation in Xinjiang becomes another Palestine or West Bank it may result in an endless conflict with a very bleak future.

If both concerning do not relent in their continued actions or at least take attempts at deescalating the situation it will only result in the hardening of both their resolve and ultimately worsen the conflict. Thus it is recommended that the Chinese state desist with its repressive and restrictive policies. This includes closing all political education camps, stopping the Strike Hard against Violent Terrorism, reducing the high police presence in Xinjiang and respecting Uighur Muslims' rights to freedom of religion, expression, association and assembly. For the Uighurs, it is recommended that extremist actions be done away with. This includes the desisting of all violent acts of terrorism that have no goal except for the instilling of fear in others as well as the ceasing of attacking Chinese government institutions. Finally, it is also recommended that the international community pay closer attention to the occurrences in the Xinjiang conflict for it is only through the internationalisation of this issue that could help turn the bleak future of the conflict into a positive one.

At the current moment, however, the Xinjiang conflict has a bleak and dismal future. China does not show any sign of appeasing Uighur separatist demands. Xinjiang has become too valuable to China geopolitically, economically and politically for the country to let go. Because of this China will do anything to ensure that it maintains Xinjiang under its purview and jurisdiction, including turning Xinjiang into an apartheid state characterised by repression and restriction. Similarly, Uighur separatist show no sign of appeasing China's demands of assimilating into the Han ethnic group. This is because Xinjiang is important to them as it is a source of their religious, ethnic, political and regional identity. Xinjiang is in essence a Uighur homeland that was once a country independent from China. Thus Uighur separatists will do anything to return to such a point, including engaging in acts of separatism, terrorism and religious extremism. Both China and Uighur Muslims have their own sense of belonging and ownership to the region therefore the end to the ensuing conflict can only be reached unless the one party concedes defeat or both parties come together to an amicable resolution.

An amicable resolution can be facilitated by external parties or organisations that can help bring both Uighurs and China to the table. Akin to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict where a number of parties and organisations, including the United Nations (UN), the USA and other Arab nations, have attempted to bring about a resolution, the same can be applied to the situation in Xinjiang. In this case such parties and organisations include the UN, the World Uyghur Congress (WUC), the USA and the Turkic-speaking nations that border Xinjiang. By working together through a consented effort these parties and organisations could help facilitate an amicable resolution between the Chinese government and the Uighurs of Xinjiang. The UN, WUC, USA and Turkic-speaking nations must condemn the unnecessary actions taken by both the Chinese government and Uighur nationalists. The external parties must make continued calls for peace in the region which includes the desisting of the use of repression policies on the Chinese government's part and the desisting of the use of separatism and terrorism on Uighur nationalist's part. Ultimately this can only be achieved if the two concerned parties, namely Uighur nationalists and the Chinese government, have the desire to reach a resolution. It is in both their interests to reach a resolution and cease their violent acts. For China it could risk alienating its relations with the rest of Central Asia through its continued repression

of Uighurs and thus failing to achieve regional leadership in the region. For Uighur nationalists, it is in their interest to desist resorting to violence to achieve their goal of an independent state because the UN, and indeed other countries, very rarely recognise the independence of state that was created as a result of terrorism and violence.

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