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# UYGHUR CULTURE FACED WITH ENDLESS CAMPAIGNS

**By D. T.**

*D.T. provides his observations on policy trends and the growing number of political campaigns targeting Uyghurs since 2002.*

Officially, nothing has changed in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). The region continues to be extolled as a paradise for tourists and investors, both from abroad and other regions in China, a place to enjoy pristine landscapes, bountiful fruits and vegetables and exotic performances by “ethnic minorities.” Nonetheless, as the years go by, the CPC (Communist Party of China) continues to reinforce and adapt its strategy to ensure that the XUAR remains politically welded to the rest of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). As everywhere in China, “thought work” remains the preferred tool; nonetheless the promotion of its ideology is equally underpinned by stringent enforcement of selected laws and regulations (including a reportedly higher rate of capital punishment), that creates resentment among Uyghur and other “minority” (non-Han) populations in specific ways that differ from political dissent in “central” areas. Based on informal talks with a number of Uyghur, Kazakh, Hui, and Han Chinese individuals in the XUAR,<sup>1</sup> this piece is an attempt to assess the latest policy trends and the reactions they have provoked. Rather than a shift in paradigm, continued adaptations on behalf of the central government suggest that its objectives in the XUAR remain largely unchanged by shifts in the regional and international environment. Rather, the successive launching of the Western Development Strategy (Xibu da kaifa) campaign<sup>2</sup> in early 2000, and the new “antiterrorist strategy” as formulated in a January 2002 report by the State Council, have simply provided new and more sophisticated tools for the ongoing policy of integrating the XUAR into the political framework constituted by the CPC, into the dynamics of all-out economic growth, and into a form of cultural homo-

geneity associated with Chinese state culture that has been developed since 1949.

## **Religion and culture**

The primary target of campaigns remains Uyghur cultural specificities, in particular religion. While there seem to be no major changes to the framework constituted by the “Regulations on Religious Affairs” issued by the State Council in 2004,<sup>3</sup> the government continues to single out specific areas for new action—for example, pilgrimage has received special attention in 2007. While pilgrimage to Mecca (the Hajj), one of the “five pillars” of Sunni Islam, already fell under the 2004 Regulations,<sup>4</sup> control has increased markedly. In June, XUAR Party Secretary Wang Lequan, citing “new situations” and “new problems,” called to “step up the control of pilgrimages, severely attack the organizers of illegal pilgrimages, take forceful measures to put a stop to dispersed pilgrimages, and protect the personal interests of the masses from every ethnic group.”<sup>5</sup> Slogans coined from these catchwords cover the walls in southern XUAR, proclaiming: “Absolutely refuse dispersed pilgrimage, take the road of organized and planned pilgrimage!”; “Dispersed pilgrimage is an illegal religious activity!”; and “Resolutely attack the ‘snake heads’ organizing dispersed pilgrimages!”<sup>6</sup>

Uyghur individuals voiced specific complaints about the organization of the Hajj. Several sources indicated that only around 200 people each year from the XUAR are selected to take part in travel organized by official Muslim associations. One person stated that only men between the ages of 50 and 70 were eligible to apply. One young man in his twenties, who had received religious material from Pakistan, said that he felt if he did not permanently emigrate from China he would never be able to see Mecca. Another man mentioned an inci-

dent in which he believed Rebiya Kadeer had personally traveled to Pakistan to intervene in favor of a large group of Uyghurs applying for a visa to Saudi Arabia.<sup>7</sup>

In June 2007, as confirmed by three interviewees, one of whom is an employee in a state administration and a Hui Muslim, work units (or neighborhood committees) all over the XUAR began recalling the passports of all non-Han (i.e., all Muslim) passport holders.<sup>8</sup> There is some debate as to whether Han Chinese citizens' passports were also confiscated; one female Han interviewee stated that her work unit had announced that her passport would also be held. Routinely, it appears that work units inform passport holders that they may apply to retrieve them at local police stations in case they plan to travel abroad. The Hui interviewee felt that the government was, in this way, "going one step further in purposely conflating the 'three evil forces' [terrorism, separatism and extremism] with Islam in general," compelling many Hui people into a form of solidarity with Uyghurs, although their religious institutions

(mosques, associations) remain strictly separate. The equation of Islam with terrorism (unfortunately not unknown elsewhere in the world) seems to provide a justification for the Chinese authorities to target separatism (an entirely separate political agenda), no doubt because feelings of unease about Islam are both shared by local Han populations in Xinjiang and tolerated by the international community. For Hui communities, however, who have historically served as a go-between for Han and Uyghurs, it makes no sense.

Other obstacles to the free practice of religion continue to be ingeniously reinforced: according to two school employees, during the summer vacation of 2007, school-aged children were asked to attend mandatory classes at schools every Friday, effectively preventing them from attending Friday prayer at the mosque. Religious education remains forbidden to minors under 18, and can therefore only be provided to children in private study groups that continue to meet in secret, according to one Uyghur young man. He added that although he

**Children run outside the Sunday Market in Kashgar, XUAR, in July 2007. Courtesy of Sarah McKune.**



had studied medicine, he was not interested in practicing or teaching it as he would, in this case, have to submit to the ban on religious practice for state employees. Two secondary school teachers confirmed that they could not practice Islam. As a consequence, observers quoted by the U.S. State Department estimate that “fewer than half of the [23,900 XUAR] mosques were authorized to hold Friday prayer and holiday services.”<sup>9</sup> One may well wonder whether these types of repressive tactics may not end up creating exactly the sort of crystallization around the letter of Islamic doctrine that the authorities are trying to prevent.

But the denial of religious rights is only one of several ways in which traditional Uyghur culture is targeted by the government. The reconstruction of historic town centers is another obvious one. In Kashgar and Karghlik, the areas of old streets lined with mud brick houses surrounding the main mosque, as well as the squares on which the mosques are situated, are being largely rebuilt. Mud architecture is being replaced by brick buildings, and Id Kah square in Kashgar is now surrounded by modern buildings in “Muslim style,” effectively clearing the square of its small vendors of fruit, vegetables, and cooked food, who have been relocated to a covered area specifically built to accommodate them. These renovations largely resemble redevelopment in most Chinese cities, but local residents are particularly upset about the construction of a giant television screen on the cleared square, just in front of the mosque, which according to them interferes with prayers because television programs in Chinese can be heard inside the mosque (depending on the wind).

More generally, the rising numbers of tourists this “modernization” is supposed to accommodate have not brought many benefits to local populations. Chinese tourists from central areas travel in large groups with their own Chinese guides (sometimes showing little sensitivity to cultural differences), stay in Chinese-run hotels, and are toured around a set of historic sites in which the “inextricable” historical ties of the XUAR to China are routinely highlighted. A Uyghur tour guide underlined that there was very little trickledown from tourism to the local population:<sup>10</sup> although there are some home stays in Kyrgyz yurts at Karakul Lake, the XUAR government is basically implementing a policy

of sedentarization of Kyrgyz nomads in this area. (Several ghost towns, built on the fringes of the Taklamakan desert and as yet uninhabited, can be observed along the road between Kashgar and Hetan; local residents believe the towns are destined for resettlement of Kyrgyz nomads.) At the same time, a limited set of customs is singled out and subjected to “folklorization,” i.e., removed from its original context and cut off from its broader cultural signification (religious, for example). The submission by the Chinese government to UNESCO and subsequent proclamation of the 12 Kashgar Muqam as a “masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage” is a case in point, while popular festivals such as the Meshrep are tightly controlled or banned outright.<sup>11</sup> Conversely, any uncontrolled creative activity in Uyghur is strictly monitored: a writer based in Urumqi underlined that since the arrest of Nurmemet Yasin in late 2004, control of Uyghur-language press and publishing companies has become such that many Uyghur writers prefer to refrain from publishing any of their writings at all.<sup>12</sup>

### Stepping up development and assimilation?

While the authorities sometimes recognize that modernization can negatively impact traditional culture, they routinely extol its benefits for local inhabitants. They pride themselves on implementing ambitious projects, to build infrastructure (rail, road, airports), subsidize industrialization, and “train talents.” While the Western Development Strategy is mocked by average Han Chinese and Uyghurs alike as a new means for corrupt officials to increase their kickbacks, it has more deep-reaching implications for the Uyghurs in terms of cultural identity. A speech by Wang Lequan illustrates the incompatibility the government seeks to establish between economic development and “unproductive” traditional beliefs: “We must resolutely implement unwavering long-term educational measures aimed at patiently and meticulously rallying the larger masses that hold religious beliefs, so that they devote themselves to working hard in order to become rich, improve their lives, [and] build a beautiful homeland.”<sup>13</sup>

The regional government continues to use a two-pronged strategy, targeting education and labor migration of young Uyghurs. In the area of education,

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authorities initiated China's equivalent of busing, the transfer of the best Uyghur students to so-called "Xinjiang neidi ban" (classes reserved for Uyghurs in Chinese schools in the central provinces), in September 2000, and the number of students has been continually expanding since then.<sup>14</sup> Xinhua News Agency reported in August 2006 that the number of students beginning studies in "Xinjiang classes" in senior high schools (*gaozhong*) in central China in September of that year would increase by almost 30 percent to 3,990 students.<sup>15</sup> Several Uyghurs living in the almost exclusively Uyghur-speaking Kashgar area confirmed that they were eager to send their children to such schools because they would learn Chinese and thus be able to find better jobs. For similar reasons, all-Chinese language primary and secondary schools in the XUAR, a policy implemented since 2004,<sup>16</sup> have met with a measure of success: a couple of schoolteachers in Karghilik who did not speak Chinese were both proud to show off that their children had learned fluent Chinese since being enrolled in a Chinese primary school. This conditional support for the extension of Chinese language training underscores that by emphasizing economic necessities, the government has successfully created a situation in which there is no perceived short-term alternative to integrating into the Chinese system. While almost all Uyghurs in the XUAR lament the loss of cultural identity that government policies in education (and other areas) have entailed, in a context in which China is the dominant power in the XUAR and increasingly in Central Asia, university education and professional opportunities are expected to be closely linked to the mastery of the Chinese language. While it does not violate the Chinese government's obligations under domestic and international law (as long as meaningful access to Uyghur-language education is guaranteed), this policy nevertheless remains inconsistent with incentives given by China's Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy to encourage teaching in "minority languages" at primary level.<sup>17</sup>

In an international environment in which regional *linguae francae* have gained momentum worldwide (Russian in Central Asia, English in Europe, Mandarin all around China),<sup>18</sup> it is therefore probably not so much the prominence of Chinese itself as the fact that the Uyghur population has no say in the organization of its

educational system, in particular in the choice of its language, that appears unacceptable by international standards. For example, the right to "establish and control their educational systems" is reaffirmed in Article 14 of the recently adopted UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples.<sup>19</sup> More broadly, Article 4 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, lays down progressive obligations for states to create "favorable conditions" for persons belonging to minorities to express their culture.<sup>20</sup> The Chinese government has in this way effectively created a situation in which choosing an exclusively Uyghur-language education means drastically limiting intellectual and professional opportunities—at least within China.<sup>21</sup> A measure of cultural assimilation becomes the "price to pay" to benefit from the opportunities offered by China's development.

The second aspect of this policy is government-encouraged/initiated labor migration, which is presented as a form of "affirmative action" (*youhui zhitaengce*) in favor of minorities. In July 2007, the Xinjiang Labor and Social Security Bureau announced that it planned to extend its labor migration policy to 330,000 rural laborers in Xinjiang.<sup>22</sup> Residents in villages around Karghilik and Yengisar spoke of a campaign initiated in 2007 in their districts, under which representatives of factory owners in coastal areas of Eastern China toured the villages, accompanied by representatives of local governments, showing photographs of their factories to the families in order to persuade them to send their children to work there for several years. Families were promised monthly salaries of approximately 800 yuan, technical and Chinese language training before departure, and travel costs to be provided by local governments. They specifically mentioned bag and textile factories for Uyghur young women and shoe factories for young men, all situated in Tianjin. A local government official in Kashgar asserted that the policy was part of a larger scheme in which the companies from coastal areas, having trained a Uyghur workforce, would ultimately relocate their factories to Xinjiang, with local governments providing land at reduced rates or for free.

This policy is being implemented county by county, with Payzawat (Jiashi) and Puskam (Zepu) counties in

Kashgar Prefecture initiating the first round of recruitment in the spring of 2006, followed by a second round in 2007. It has so far met with a mixed response: mainland media have published rosy reports of happy Uyghur girls in Tianjin, integrated into the “great socialist family” of the motherland, with no mention of how these migrant female workers were able or allowed to practice their religion, but instead emphasized the “singing and dancing” that comes “naturally” to ethnic minorities.<sup>23</sup> Conversely, coerced relocation by local officials has been denounced by Radio Free Asia and other organizations.<sup>24</sup> According to the local government, Kashgar Prefecture has been investing large sums of money to train prospective migrant laborers, increasing its spending from 11 million *yuan* in 2004 to 18 million in 2006 and 28 million for the first four months of 2007 alone.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, in a context of widespread child trafficking in the autonomous region,<sup>26</sup> and given past practices in organized labor migration elsewhere in China, abuses by local officials seem inevitable, even though local residents are reluctant to talk about them or have not personally heard of any.

But the real issue, just as in the case of “Xinjiang classes,” is cultural assimilation: the Chinese government has responded to criticism regarding the lack of trickledown of economic benefits to Uyghurs by creating a system which defines a binary choice between cultural assimilation within the Chinese system, or underdevelopment and isolation.<sup>27</sup> By tolerating the exercise of cultural rights such as schooling in Uyghur language, traditional religious practice, and the rural lifestyle with which it is interwoven, and at the same time fighting poverty and illiteracy only through assimilation into mainstream Chinese culture (as opposed to community-based development strategies), the government creates a double bind for local populations: the



Uyghurs attend afternoon prayers at the Id Kah Mosque on October 15, 2006, in Kashgar, XUAR. Photo credits: Guang Niu/Getty Images.

public exercise of cultural rights obstructs their access to higher education, economic opportunities, and ultimately political representation. In a UN working paper, Dru Gladney concludes: “To an extent never seen before, the continued incorporation of Xinjiang into China has become inexorable, and perhaps irreversible.”<sup>28</sup> To an extent, the situation resembles that of local culture and dialects in ethnically Chinese areas of the PRC; nonetheless, this reduction of Uyghur language, religion, and cultural traditions to a “local brand” of Chinese culture is precisely what most Uyghurs in the XUAR do not accept.

Once again, rather than the policy as such, it is the lack of political participation of the Uyghur population, and the resulting feeling of disenfranchisement, that is problematic. The question is ultimately one of political legitimacy: not so much whether it is a good idea to

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integrate the XUAR into the Chinese economic and cultural influence zone, but whether this is a trade-off that local populations have a say in.<sup>29</sup> The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities affirms this right to political participation: “Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in decisions on the national and, where appropriate, regional level concerning the minority to which they belong or the regions in which they live, in a manner not incompatible with national legislation.”<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Article 23 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples specifically stresses the right of indigenous peoples to administer development programs “through their own institutions.” The spirit of these declarations is in fact enshrined in China’s regional autonomy law, as recognized by the State Council White Paper on the XUAR: “According to the provisions of China’s Constitution and the ‘Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy,’ ethnic autonomous areas enjoy extensive autonomy. While exercising the functions and powers of local state organs, they shall have the power of legislation; the power to flexibly carry out or decide not to carry out decisions from higher-level state organs that are not suited to the actual conditions of the ethnic autonomous areas; the power to develop their own economy; the power to manage their own financial affairs; the power to train and use ethnic-minority cadres; and the power to develop education and ethnic cultures.” Unfortunately, these provision remain largely theoretical.<sup>31</sup>

### **“Border policy,” terrorism and state security**

One of the XUAR’s enduring specificities is its status as a “border region.” When Wen Jiabao toured the XUAR in August 2007, he underscored the importance of “special measures to accelerate the development of the three prefectures in South Xinjiang.” However, he also reaffirmed that the XUAR should “consolidate and strengthen national unity, maintain the harmony and stability of the frontier, and promote economic, political, cultural and social progress in ethnic minority areas,”<sup>32</sup> a task which he explicitly tied in with the role of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC or *bingtuan*).<sup>33</sup> The *bingtuan*, who report directly to the Center at the same time as to the regional

Party secretary, have maintained an unchallenged presence in Xinjiang, underscoring the region’s importance in the Center’s policies as a buffer, and as a both strategic and economic outpost in Central Asia (much in the same way as Eastern Europe was for the Soviet Union).<sup>34</sup> In the State Council white paper on “China’s National Defense in 2006,” minority policy is explicitly linked with the border question: “The Chinese government attaches great importance to work related to ethnic minorities and economic development in border areas; it has formulated a series of policies and adopted many strategic measures in this regard.”<sup>35</sup>

China’s antiterrorism strategy, insofar as it justifies a high level of military presence and pressure, fits into this framework. While the government had previously focused on ETIM (East Turkestan Islamic Movement or Dong Tujisilan Yundong)—the organized existence of which continues to be questioned by Western experts and academics—the year 2007 marked a shift towards targeting Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Yisilan jiefang dang) in government campaigns. Tolerated in Pakistan, Hizb-ut-Tahrir has been singled out as a terrorist organization in other Central Asian countries and within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). At this year’s SCO meeting on August 16 in Bishkek, Human Rights Watch reported that heads of state agreed on “a list of religious organizations deemed ‘extremist’ and that are banned in the SCO.”<sup>36</sup> According to the same report, Kyrgyz authorities have recently stepped up their enforcement of the ban on Hizb-ut-Tahrir, deporting a suspected member to Uzbekistan and pressing charges for “simple possession of Hizb-ut-Tahrir leaflets.”<sup>37</sup>

While no public reference to ETIM has been made recently in China, slogans in southern XUAR read, “Hizb-ut-Tahrir is a violent terrorist organization,” and “Severely attack Hizb-ut-Tahrir, strongly maintain social order.”<sup>38</sup> In May 2007, a cadre-education campaign took place in all administrative divisions of the XUAR with the slogan, “Rub your eyes clear and recognize the reactionary nature of Hizb-ut-Tahrir.” Study meetings subsequently took place in all townships and counties of the region, the “results” of which are posted proudly on their websites. Finally, on June 23–26, 2007, China convened a “Special SCO Member States Law



A general view shows the PetroChina's Karamay oil field in the XUAR. Photo credits: Stringer Shanghai / Reuters.

Enforcement and Security Ministry study conference on curtailing and attacking Hizb-ut-Tahrir” in Urumchi.<sup>39</sup> Despite the public nature of the campaign, most people do not know or admit they know the name of the party, and little is known about its presence in China, although suspected members have been sporadically arrested, most recently in 2001. Few facts seem to confirm its implantation in the XUAR, raising questions about whether this shift is not simply designed to ensure Central Asian cooperation in persecuting and extraditing political (notably Uyghur) activists—for example, Huseyin Celil in 2006.

Ongoing anti-terrorist campaigns seek to maintain a high-pitched mood of paranoia and justify generalized police surveillance, particularly in the Kashgar area, where ethnic Uyghurs make up over 90 percent of the population. Several English-speaking young Uyghur men in the southern XUAR confirmed that they were targeted by the “spy agency” or plainclothes police. These men had been interrogated for several hours (in one case repeatedly) after speaking with foreigners or, in another

case, after receiving a parcel with books from abroad. Interrogation did not always take place in official settings; hotels or tourist spots were also used. While no physical violence was exerted in these routine cases, pressure was intense and police carried out questioning in a repetitive way over several hours, combined with threats against relatives or threats of retaliation in case of further “suspicious behavior.” A tourist café was recently closed in Kashgar because it was allegedly run by missionaries suspected of spying for foreign governments.

According to several sources, police routinely offer rewards for transmitting information; 200 *yuan* is the usual fee for volunteers. Disenfranchisement among young Uyghur men makes many vulnerable to these offers. In Kashgar, a saying goes that if three people are talking together, one is probably a spy. Regular collaborators often tend to be Uyghurs who speak Chinese: in one case, a young Uyghur man surreptitiously attempting to eavesdrop on a conversation turned out to speak good Chinese, having spent several years working in a hotel in eastern China before returning to the XUAR,

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only to be forced into a socially stigmatizing (in a Muslim context) and underpaid job in a wine factory.

Yet the reality of terrorist organizations remains disputed. In January of 2007, the XUAR government claimed to have raided and destroyed a terrorist training camp in Kosrap District, Akto County, Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture. Officially, 17 terrorists were killed, 18 were taken prisoner, and one Chinese People's Armed Police (PAP) member was killed. A Hong Kong reporter tried to access the area in the following days, but was stopped before reaching the village, while a reporter from the Southern Metropolis wrote that there was nothing to be seen in A'ertaxun Township (Uyghur name unknown) apart from a few herders and a coal mine.<sup>40</sup> Other accounts provided by Uyghur activists abroad suggest that terrorism was only a pretext to hide a dispute over the coal mine: local Uyghurs once collected coal for their private use until the land was taken over by a Han Chinese manager who tried to lock the mine, causing an uprising by Uyghur employees which was ultimately crushed by the PAP.<sup>41</sup> Pending further confirmation of these rumors, it is interesting to note that both Chinese journalists who traveled to the area mention the presence of a mine in the village in which the events—whatever their nature—took place.

## Conclusion

State security measures billed as anti-terrorism and ongoing campaigns targeting religion, economic development and cultural assimilation raise the question of the evolution of CPC policy in the XUAR. In his historical analysis of political forces in Xinjiang, Rémi Castets suggests that the recognition of rights of Han Chinese settlers displaced during the Cultural Revolution to return to eastern China generated hopes for “decolonization” in the 1980s. However, these hopes faded when the close succession of the Tiananmen crackdown, the Barin uprising in 1990, and the breakup of the USSR in 1991 triggered strong persecution of anti-Chinese elements in the 1990s, notably during the “Strike Hard” campaigns.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the events of 9/11 gave rise to a new readiness on behalf of the central government to recognize the existence of Uyghur opposition to Chinese administration in order to justify repression in the name of antiterrorism.

Hu Jintao offered a revealing outline of his opinions on ethnic minorities in a May 2005 speech to the State Ethnic Affairs Commission.<sup>43</sup> His arguments revolve around three basic ideas: 1) giving absolute priority to economic development, portrayed as the “key to solving all China’s problems” and the most important task that justifies the CPC’s exercise of power; 2) reaffirming the importance of socialism with Chinese characteristics and the rule of the party in minority areas; and 3) consolidating ethnic cohesion (the “three inseparables”) to ensure the “great revival of the Chinese nation” (*Zhonghua minzu de weida fuxing*). In this speech, Hu Jintao called for the government to enhance and strengthen freedom of religion and the regional autonomy system through better enforcement and dissemination of knowledge of China’s regional autonomy law. However, these calls have seemingly gone unheeded. There is certainly a will in the CPC to stress the absence of a specific bias inside the Party against religious or ethnic minorities: Hu Jintao reaffirmed the obligation of Han cadres to learn the language of their place of posting, and called for the adoption of ethnic quotas among local cadres and better recognition of their contribution to governance.<sup>44</sup> However, one wonders how these quotas can be met in areas of strong religious practice as long as atheism is a precondition for Party membership.

Nonetheless, the concluding part of Hu Jintao’s speech remains strongly political and appears to contradict his calls for enforcing autonomy. There, Hu recommends that officials “strengthen and improve the Party’s leadership in ethnic affairs” following four main courses of action: recruiting cadres, reinforcing political theory (i.e., stepping up propaganda and patriotic education), strengthening grassroots-level Party organizations in minority areas, and finally, using pragmatism to implement policy. The inherent contradiction raises issues of political and civil rights that China also faces on the national level—and to an extent, the XUAR’s difficulties may indeed stem from its status as a “border region” and a vital component in the strategy of the “great revival of the Chinese nation” as much as or more than its ethnic and religious differences. Nonetheless, the United Front<sup>45</sup> tactics of co-opting a measure of dissent and local leadership in order to better isolate any fundamental questioning of the CPC’s presence in the



XUAR has more deep-reaching consequences in terms of cultural rights than in most other areas of China.

## Notes

1. Specific details about interviewees have been withheld for their safety.
2. This is also referred to in English as the “Great Opening of the West.”
3. See Human Rights in China & Human Rights Watch, *Devastating Blows: Religious Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang* (Human Rights Watch, 2005).
4. “Dishiyi Tiao Xinyang Yisilanjiao de Zhongguo Gongmin Qianwang Guowai Chaojing, You Yisilanjiao Quanguoxing Zhongjiao Tuanti Fuze Zuzhi” [Regulation No. 11: Travel abroad on pilgrimage by Chinese citizens who believe in Islam is organized under the responsibility of a national-level Muslim organization], Xinhua News Agency, September 9, 2007, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/zhengfu/2004-12/20/content\\_2356626.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/zhengfu/2004-12/20/content_2356626.htm).
5. “Wang Lequan: Jiaqiang Chaojin Guanli Weihu Qunzhong Liyi” [Strengthening Hajj Regulations for the Benefit of the Public], Xinjiang Ribao [Xinjiang Daily], June 19, 2007.
6. “Dujue lingsan chaojin, zou you zuzhi you jihua chaojin zhilu” [Absolutely refuse dispersed pilgrimage, take the road of organized and planned pilgrimage!]; “Lingsan chaojin shi feifa zongjiao huodong” [Dispersed pilgrimage is an illegal religious activity!]; “Jianjue daji zuzhi lingsan chaojin de ‘shetou,’” [Resolutely attack the ‘snake heads’ organizing dispersed pilgrimages!].
7. See also Alim Seytoff, “Pride, prejudice, protest and progress,” *China Rights Forum* 4 (2006): 61. The U.S. Department of State notes that the Islamic Association of China (IAC) is the only organization legally authorized to conduct Hajj tours, and reports that some Uyghurs complain of having to profess loyalty to the CPC in order to apply. Quoting IAC figures, it estimates the number of Chinese Muslims participants in the 2006–07 pilgrimage at approximately 9,700. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *China* (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)—*International Religious Freedom Report 2007* (September 9, 2007), <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90133.htm>.
8. “China Confiscates Muslims’ Passports,” Radio Free Asia, June 27, 2007, [http://www.rfa.org/english/uyghur/2007/06/27/uyghur\\_passports](http://www.rfa.org/english/uyghur/2007/06/27/uyghur_passports).
9. U.S. Department of State, *International Religious Freedom Report 2007*, op. cit.
10. This situation sharply contrasts with Kyrgyzstan, for example, where increasing numbers of travelers are channeled to home stays and sustainable or community-based tourism rather than being used to justify real estate or infrastructure developments and the “modernization” of traditional habitat.
11. For the ban on Meshrep, see, e.g., “China: Human Rights Concerns in Xinjiang,” Human Rights Watch Backgrounder, October 2001, <http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/asia/china-bck1017.htm>. On Muqam, see “Proclamation 2005: ‘The Uyghur Muqam of Xinjiang,’” UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, October 24, 2007, <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?topic=mp&cp=CN#TOC3>.
12. On N. Yasin, see Nurmuhemmet Yasin, “Wild Pigeon,” *Kashgar Literature Magazine* 5 (2004). Translation available at Nurmuhemmet Yasin, “Wild Pigeon,” Radio Free Asia, June 27, 2005, [http://www.rfa.org/english/uyghur/2005/06/27/wild\\_pigeon](http://www.rfa.org/english/uyghur/2005/06/27/wild_pigeon).
13. “Wang Lequan: Jiaqiang Chaojin Guanli Weihu Qunzhong Liyi” [Wang Lequan: Strengthening Hajj Regulations for the Benefit of the Public], Xinjiang Ribao [Xinjiang Daily], June 19, 2007. The implicit assumption, often heard in the XUAR, is that “the Chinese work; the Uyghurs pray.”
14. This policy seems to have initiated in Tibet in the 1990s before being extended to Xinjiang. See Human Rights In China, *China: Minority Exclusion, Marginalization and Rising Tensions* (Minority Rights Group International, 2007), 29; “Jiaoyubu Ying Fa ‘Guanyu Neidi Youguan Chengshi Kaiban Xinjiang Gaozhong Ban de Shishi Yijian de Tongzhi’” [Ministry of Education Notification on distributing ‘Opinions regarding the implementation of creating Xinjiang senior high school classes in relevant cities in central areas’], January 24, 2000, [http://www.jyb.cn/jyzl/jyzc/mzjy/ndxjb/t20060509\\_17134.htm](http://www.jyb.cn/jyzl/jyzc/mzjy/ndxjb/t20060509_17134.htm).
15. “Jinnian Neidi Xinjiang Ban Luqu 3990 Ren, Shaoshu Minzu Zhan 90%” [This year Inland Xinjiang Classes Recruit 3990 Students, 90% from Minority Populations], Xinhua News Agency, August 21, 2006, [http://www.jyb.cn/xwzx/mzjy/t20060821\\_30544.htm](http://www.jyb.cn/xwzx/mzjy/t20060821_30544.htm).
16. “China Imposes Chinese Language on Uyghur Schools,” Radio Free Asia, March 16, 2004, [www.rfa.org/english/news/social/2004/03/16/130822](http://www.rfa.org/english/news/social/2004/03/16/130822).
17. Article 37 of the revised Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy states that schools that “have the means” (you tiaojian de) should use teaching materials in “minority” languages, while progressively introducing Chinese classes between the end of primary school and the beginning of secondary school. National People’s Congress, *Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy* [*Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Mingzu*

- Quyū Zizhi Fa.*], as revised 2001, Art. 37, available at [http://www.gov.cn/test/2005-07/29/content\\_18338.htm](http://www.gov.cn/test/2005-07/29/content_18338.htm).
18. In neighboring and democratic Kyrgyzstan, for example, after a period of revival of the Kyrgyz language (related to Uyghur) following independence in 1991, virtually all University-level teaching has reverted to Russian, for reasons related to greater economic and scientific opportunities in Russia.
  19. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Art. 14, G.A. Res. 61/295, U.N. Doc. A/Res/61/295 (Sept. 13, 2007).
  20. Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, Art. 4, G.A. Res. 47/135, U.N. Doc. A/Res/47/135 (Dec. 18, 1992).
  21. Independent central Asian nations offer new opportunities to an extent; nonetheless, mastering Russian remains indispensable in all the countries except possibly Uzbekistan.
  22. “XJ to Implement Skill Training Project,” Tianshannet, July 20, 2007, [http://www.aboutxinjiang.com/news/content/2007-07/20/content\\_2087367.htm](http://www.aboutxinjiang.com/news/content/2007-07/20/content_2087367.htm).
  23. “Weiwu’erzhu Nongcun Guniang Zai Tianjin” [Uyghur Farm Girls in Tianjin], Tianshannet, May 14, 2007, [http://www.tianshannet.com.cn/news/content/2007-05/14/content\\_1859911.htm](http://www.tianshannet.com.cn/news/content/2007-05/14/content_1859911.htm). In this article, a Uyghur journalist visits three model factories in Tianjin, two textile factories (Shanlan Clothing and Tianxiang Textile), and a plastic film company (Lanqi). The journalist praises the living conditions as better than those she encountered when she went to university, and repeatedly emphasizes that the factory managers treat the migrant Uyghur laborers as their own children.
  24. See “Uyghur Girls Forced Into Labor Far From Home By Local Chinese Officials,” Radio Free Asia, July 11, 2007, [http://www.rfa.org/english/uyghur/2007/07/11/uyghur\\_labor](http://www.rfa.org/english/uyghur/2007/07/11/uyghur_labor). Abuses reportedly took place in Kachung no. 8 Village, Yarkand County, Kashgar Prefecture.
  25. “Youhui Zhengce Rang Mingong Tashi” [Preferential Policies Allow Practical Training for Migrant Workers], China Xinjiang Web, June 20, 2007, [http://www.chinaxinjiang.cn/news/tpxw/t20070620\\_255795.htm](http://www.chinaxinjiang.cn/news/tpxw/t20070620_255795.htm).
  26. Phoenix Weekly (Hong Kong) reported that 3,660 children, originally abducted and sold (for 1000 to 5000 yuan) into pickpocket gangs were brought back to Xinjiang between 2003 and 2005, of which more than 90 percent were Uyghurs from the Kashgar area. The number of abducted children would naturally be much higher. “Minzu zhengce cheng heibang ‘baohusan’: Weizu Ertong Bei Heishehui Daliang Bangjia Dao Neidi Dang Xiaotou” [Ethnic Policies Act as a Shield: Large Scale Abductions of Uyghur Children Taken to China’s Interior to be Thieves], Fenghuang Zhoukan [Phoenix Weekly], July 26, 2007.
  27. Nicolas Becquelin underscores that, for example, in Yili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, 98 percent of the official designated “poor” population is non-Han. Nicolas Becquelin, “Staged Development in Xinjiang,” *China Quarterly* no. 178 (June 2004): 372.
  28. Dru Gladney, “China’s Minorities: the Case of Xinjiang and the Uyghur People,” UN Commission on Human Rights, Sub-Commission on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Working Group on Minorities, 9th Session, 12–16 May 2003, UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2003/WP.16.
  29. It is revealing to note that the official CPC website is available in simplified and traditional Chinese, Tibetan, Korean, Mongolian, English, Japanese and Russian, but not in Uyghur, the fifth-largest “minority” in the PRC (after the Zhuang, Manchu, Hui and Miao). See “News of the Communist Party of China,” September 23, 2007, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/>. The Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy stipulates that cadres in autonomous regions are to learn the language of the region, which, judging by empirical evidence, is far from the case in the XUAR. N. Becquelin, based on an analysis of the Xinjiang Yearbook 2000, notes that all 124 first Party secretaries in the XUAR at prefecture, municipal and county levels are Han. Becquelin, *op.cit.*, p. 363. Politburo member Wang Lequan, who has held the position of provincial secretary for 12 years (16 counting his years as acting vice-secretary), is a case in point.
  30. Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, Art. 2, G.A. Res. 47/135, U.N. Doc. A/Res/47/135 (Dec. 18, 1992), available at [http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/d\\_minori.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/d_minori.htm). As a Declaration, it is, of course, non-binding.
  31. See Information Office of the State Council, “History and Development of Xinjiang,” May 2003, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/zhengfu/2003-06/12/content\\_916306.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/zhengfu/2003-06/12/content_916306.htm). For a critique of the implementation of the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy, see Human Rights in China, China: Minority Exclusion, Marginalization and Rising Tensions, *op. cit.*
  32. “Wen Jiabao Made Important Speech in XJ,” Xinhua News Agency, August 23, 2007, [http://www.xinjiang.gov.cn/1\\$002/1\\$002\\$013/352.jsp?articleid=2007-8-23-0008](http://www.xinjiang.gov.cn/1$002/1$002$013/352.jsp?articleid=2007-8-23-0008).
  33. Tianshannet gives the 2003 population figure of the XPCC as 2,542,000 (13 percent of the population of the XUAR), of which 88 percent are Han Chinese. It is comprised of 14 divisions, directly administers five municipalities, runs two universities, a TV channel, a daily newspaper and has 11 publicly traded subsidiaries. The website candidly

- describes it as follows: “In its 50-year history, the XPCC has built farms, towns, and cities, and settled millions of migrants, mainly Han Chinese, into Xinjiang. As such, the XPCC is lauded in China as a cornerstone of stability and prosperity in an otherwise troubled region, and characterized as a vehicle of colonization and sinicization among supporters of East Turkistan independence.” “China Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region,” Xianshannet, September 25, 2007, <http://www.aboutxinjiang.com/index.htm>. The XPCC also plays a notable role in administration of labor camps in Xinjiang. See Richard Anderson, James Seymour & Fan Sidong, *New Ghosts, Old Ghosts: Prisons and Labor Reform Camps in China* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 44–127.
34. Border areas (including Tibet) also remain a preferred location for nuclear facilities, as they were in the Soviet Union. A series of unverifiable and unlikely rumors circulated in Kashgar in 2007 about suspect dust clouds coming from the Taklamakan desert. In this respect, the recognition in Article 30 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that “Military activities shall not take place in the lands or territories of indigenous peoples, unless justified by a relevant public interest or otherwise freely agreed with or requested by the indigenous peoples concerned” is worth highlighting as a milestone. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, *op. cit.*, art. 30.
  35. Information Office of the State Council, “China’s National Defense 2006,” December 29, 2006 [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-12/29/content\\_5425025.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-12/29/content_5425025.htm).
  36. “SCO Summit: Crackdown Highlights Failings on Human Rights,” Human Rights Watch, August 16, 2007, <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/08/16/kyrgyz16698.htm>.
  37. *Ibid.*
  38. “Yanli daji ‘Yisilan jiefang dang’ quanli weihu shehui zhi’an”; “Chaliang yanjing, renqing ‘Yisilan jiefang dang’ de fandong benzhi”; “‘Yisilan jiefang dang’ shi yige baoli kongbu zuzhi.” Slogans observed in Southern Xinjiang, August 2007.
  39. “Shanghai Hezuozhuzi Chenyuanguo Zifa Anquan Bumen Fangfan Daji ‘Yisilan Jiefang Dang’ Yantaohui zai Jiang Zhaokai” [Shanghai Cooperation Organization Members Security Division To Combat Islamic Liberation Front], Tianshannet, September 17, 2007, [http://www.tianshannet.com.cn/gov/content/2007-06/28/content\\_2026385.htm](http://www.tianshannet.com.cn/gov/content/2007-06/28/content_2026385.htm).
  40. Xiang Letian, “Xinjiang tongdu liangjian jingwai cantou anzhan,” *Yazhou Zhoukan* [Asia Weekly], January 28, 2007; Yu Jian, “Jizhe Tanfang Xinjiang Fankong Xianchang: Zhishengji Sousuo Dongtu Fenzi” [Reporter visits site of anti-terrorist operation in Xinjiang], *Nanfang dushibao* [Southern Metropolis News], January 17, 2007, <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2007-01-17/091412059808.shtml>. It is unclear whether the second reporter visited the site.
  41. See also Andrew McGregor, “Chinese Counter-terrorist Strike in Xinjiang,” Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, March 7, 2007, [http://www.cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=4735](http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=4735).
  42. Rémi Castets, “Opposition politique, nationalisme et Islam chez les Ouighours du Xinjiang,” CERI Working Papers No. 110, October 2004.
  43. “Hu Jintao zai Zhongyang minzu gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua” [Hu Jintao’s Speech at the Central Nationalities Working Committee], May 27, 2005, <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1024/3423605.html>.
  44. *Ibid.*
  45. The United Front Office is one of the five organs directly under the Central Committee of the CPC. It is active in all areas in which the Party is confronted with forces which are not directly subordinated to its administrative authority, particularly Hong Kong, Taiwan and “ethnic minority work.”

### Editor’s Note

China’s official news agency reported in November 2007 that the Kashgar Intermediate People’s Court sentenced four Uyghurs to death, and another two to life imprisonment, in relation to the January 2007 incident mentioned by the author. Two of the men received death sentences with two years’ reprieve. They were charged with “separatist activities,” “training at a terrorist camp,” and “illegally making explosives.”