CHINA AND MUSLIM SEPARATISM:
THE CASE OF XINJIANG UIGHUR
AUTONOMOUS REGION

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A thesis submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts with Honours of the University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia

September 1998
I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being currently submitted for any other degree.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Signature
Acknowledgement

Many people have helped me over the last two years during the period of preparation and completion of this thesis.

First and foremost, I extend my thanks to my supervisors, Associate Professor Howard Brasted and Dr. Denis Wright, who provided encouragement and constructive criticism. Their insights, patience and enthusiasm for my work were ongoing sources of inspiration throughout my candidature. In addition, I really appreciate for the assistance and advice Howard and Denis have provided, especially to the non-English speaking background student like me. This has been a period considerable learning under their supervision, and they have given generously of their time and interests. Without their valuable help, this thesis would not have existed.

Special thanks are also due to Professor Colin Mackerras of Griffith University and Dr. Graham Young from School of Social Science of University of New England. Their professional guidance has assisted me in stimulating interest in the area of Muslim separatism in China, offering the use of personal reference material and commenting on the research proposal. In addition, Dr. Graham Young provided assistance and encouragement, particularly by the way of employment and field research opportunity in China during the early stage of my candidature.

I would also like to give my special thanks to my friends and colleges in the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences and other organisations in China. Their friendship, encouragement, useful ideas and thoughtful criticisms helped make writing this thesis.
They provided valuable assistance in accessing government documents, internal reports and other relevant information. For various reasons, I am not being able to list these people’s names here. Without their assistance, this thesis would not have ‘come to life’ for me in the way it did.

My appreciation is also extended to many individuals: Assoc. Prof. Geoff Quaife, Head of Department of History, who, on behalf of Department assisted me for permission to use Department’s funds, facilities, internal research grant during my candidature.

Dr. Kathy Jacques read my first chapter and made valuable comments.

Dr. Bruce Watson provided some useful references.

Dr. Jeffrey Gunther, former senior lecture of Department of English, read each chapter and made the corrections on my English expressions.

Ms. Barbara Diehl did the professional proofreading for my thesis.

Ms Robyn Muldoon of Academic Skill Office organised the proofreading of my thesis.

In addition, I would like to express my thanks to the present and former staff of the School of Classics and History, University of New England, in particular, Ms Trish Cluley, Ms. Madeleine Hyson, Ms Sally Macfarlane.

My daughter Delinna was born during the writing of the chapter 3 of this thesis and has given me constant enjoyment, hope and love.

My mother Mrs. Tan Jianfei helped me enormously in looking after my daughter during the final stage of thesis writing.

Finally, this thesis could not have been completed without the positive and unceasing support of Peiyi, my husband and best friend.
Abstract

Today, confrontations and conflicts between different ethnic groups have become a major issue in many countries, which has been threatening the stability and unity of these countries. These issues have been highlighted in Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia and Central Asia, by the destabilization of these states through a process of bloody disintegration. In consequence, many ethnic groups in multinational countries demand self-determination or secession from the dominant states by using violent action, therefore, there are many small independent states, which have emerged suddenly around the world.

Since ethnic issues can be used against a country’s interests, the stability of a country to a great extent depends on the degree of the relationship among its different peoples. Among these issues, ethnic conflict is considered as one of the main sources of a series of localized, international confrontations. For this reason, the issue of ethnic conflict is likely to become a big concern for the state authorities and regional government.

China, composed of fifty-five nationalities, is a unified and multinational country. Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region is one of the largest provincial regions with the majority of its population being Muslim. In the last hundred years, several nationalities, including Uighur, Kazak and Kirghiz, have continually tried to secede Xinjiang from China. Meanwhile, violent incidents between Han Chinese and Muslims have frequently happened throughout the history of Xinjiang. Since 1949, the demands for the independence of Xinjiang from the ethnic groups of Xinjiang have become stronger. Since the early 1980s, the growth and characteristics of
Muslim separatist activities have been the major themes in China that this study will focus on.

This case study of Xinjiang Muslim separatism addresses the question of why the ethnic conflicts and confrontations between Muslim and Han Chinese have proliferated since the early 1980s. It also examines the impact that Muslim separatist movements have had on the unity of China, the power of the central Chinese authority, the Muslim-Han relationship, and the relationship between China and neighboring states. As a result, how the Chinese government responded to the Muslim separatist challenge will be analyzed.

Discussion of several violent riots occurring in Xinjiang in recent years and the major reasons for these both in domestic and international aspects, emphasizes the importance of government policies on the relationship between different nationalities, the stability of the society and the security of the region. In order to assist in understanding the national issue effectively, it attempts to identify some rules applicable to this case and discusses the constraints, which may influence the implementation and effectiveness of government policies towards ethnic groups.

This study examines the developing trends of Xinjiang Muslim separatism, explores the origin, characteristics, organizational structure of Muslim separatism, and foreshadows the uncertain future of the Xinjiang Muslim separatist activities. The conclusion is that there is no hope for the Xinjiang Muslim separatist claim for independence of Xinjiang, except in the event of the disintegration of the entity of China. Analysis the history experience suggests that sporadic and small-scale riots
instigated by Muslim separatists would continue and take place regularly in the future. The aim of this research is to provide a better understanding of Chinese Muslims, ethnic issues and the mystic region of Xinjiang. It also provides an example to other states, which may have the same problem as China.
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