

# Xinjiang

"Merchants from this country travel to all parts of the world," wrote 13th-century adventurer Marco Polo, one of the first Europeans to reach the famed oasis cities of what is today the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. "Everything necessary for human life is here in the greatest plenty... cotton, flat hemp, grain, wine, and other articles." The powerful khans that flourished along the Silk Road beginning in the second century B.C. have faded into myth or obscurity, but their cosmopolitan legacy lives on. Great Hellenism, Indian Buddhism, and, later, Middle Eastern Islam all trickled through the deserts and wind-chiseled mountains of Xinjiang, spread by wandering armies, pilgrims, and caravans.

Today a mosaic of ethnic groups—the largest of them the Uygurs—composes the bulk of the population. Han Chinese immigration is growing, however, and with it local Muslim resentment. Anti-Chinese riots occasionally erupt in some cities where Han Chinese reap the most benefit from economic development—oil exploration, coal mining, and tourism.

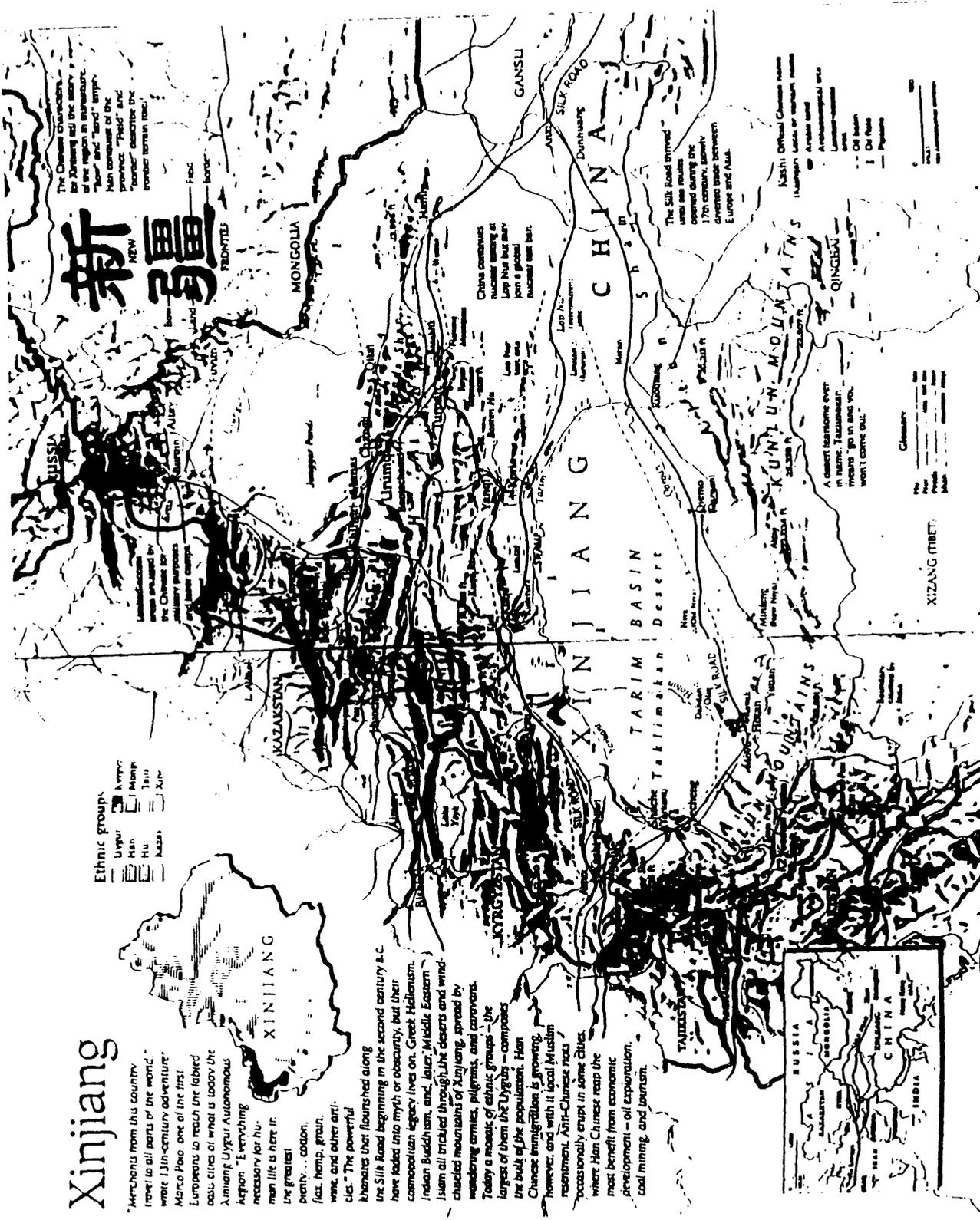
The Chinese government, in drawing up the map of the region in antiquity, "Han" and "land" territory. Han conquest of the province, "Peking" and "border" describe the border terrain too.

**Ethnic groups**

- Uygur
- Han
- Hui
- Kazak
- Korak
- Mongol
- Tajik
- Xibe

# 新疆

NEW FRONTIERS



Source: National Geography, American Geography Association, July 1996, p. 7.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

In recent years, internecine conflicts between different ethnic groups within a state have become a worldwide phenomenon. It threatens the existence of those states through a process of bloody disintegration. The problems of ethnic minorities and their inherent potential for conflict are the important factors in the numerous international conflicts taking place against the backdrop of national conflicts. Since national minorities can be used or exploited against a country's interests, in multinational states, the stability of a country generally depends on the system of relations woven among its different nationalities.<sup>1</sup>

Ethnic problems and conflicts have been highlighted today in many countries. The best known case is that of the ongoing battles between Serbs, Croats and Muslims in the Yugoslavia countries in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In a very short time, 200,000 Bosnia Muslims and hundreds of thousands Bosnia Croats were brutally killed.<sup>2</sup> Again, recently in America, the acquittal of former football hero O.J.Simpson on murder charges highlights the depth and feeling of America's racial divisions. The biggest civil rights rally in United States history as a consequence spurred President Clinton to deliver the strongest speech on race relations, urging Americans to "clean our house of racism", and calling on blacks and whites to start a new social dialogue on race problems.<sup>3</sup> Major ethnic problems also exist for China's Asian neighbors. In Burma, the Shan and Karens have been carrying on a struggle for autonomy for years. The Burmese government, which has engaged itself militarily against these peoples, has steadfastly refused to give them greater self-determination.<sup>4</sup> The spectre of Muslim

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<sup>1</sup> T.Heberer, *China and Its Minorities: Autonomy or Assimilation?*, M.E.Sharpe, In., 1989, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> M.Mohamad, 'Bosina and the West', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 7 September 1995, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> P.Wilson, 'Racism's Pall Mars March of Triumph by America's Blacks', *The Australian*, 18 October 1995.

<sup>4</sup> M.F.Heidhues, *Politik in Sudostasien*, Hamburg, 1983, p. 145.

rebellion again looms large in the Philippines. Muslim rebel groups are threatening to declare war against the Philippines government.<sup>5</sup> These examples are evidence that confrontation and conflict between different ethnic groups are the critical and destabilizing factors in international politics. The end of the Cold War has not transformed the traditional enmity between the East and the West into a peaceful relationship with cooperation. Instead, it has led to an extreme nationalism, which threatens peace through a series of localized internal confrontations. Maintaining the integrity of states, particularly those made up of distinct ethnic groups, is one of the major challenges for political leadership of those multinational states.

The People's Republic of China is a unified and multinational country. Ethnic minorities inhabit 50-60 percent of Chinese territory, principally the outlying border regions, which are important not only for their rich natural deposits and raw materials but also for their strategic positions. China's internal stability and its defense capacity are, to a large degree, dependent on the behavior of its ethnic minority peoples.

Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, with 47 minority nationalities, is one of the largest provincial regions in China. Over 60 percent of the population is Muslim, and the majority of the 15 million citizens in Xinjiang share ethnic ties with Central Asia. Known as the 'Western Region' in ancient times, Xinjiang was the communication hub of the ancient Silk Road, facilitating the flow of culture between Asia and Europe. It also has a 5,000 kilometer boundary line with borders touching Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. It is also well known as a 'granary', 'meat storehouse', 'oil basin', 'coal beach', 'homeland of fruits and melons' and 'the treasure land'.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> R.Tiglao, 'Under the Gun', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 24 August 1995, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Chen Dajun, *Xinjiang Today*, Xinjiang Renmin chubanshe, Urumqi, 1992, pp. 8-15.

In the last hundred years, several ethnic groups, including Uighurs, Kazaks and Kirghiz, have been trying to secede from China. In particular, since 1949 the demands for Xinjiang's independence from Muslim separatists have become much stronger. The 1980s and the 1990s are even worse. The escalation of these demands since the early 1980s is due to both domestic and global reasons. Domestically, the relaxation of regulations concerning birth control and religious belief, and the high speed of economic development provided a better chance for Muslim minorities to ask for their political rights. They have repeatedly rioted in recent years in protest against heavy-handed Chinese rule. Globally, the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the consequent emergence of Central Asian independence, and the upsurge of international Islam, provided some successful models outside China for the Xinjiang's Muslim.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the 1980s and the 1990s can be considered as a special stage for the Muslim separatists movement in China and outside China.

The Chinese central authorities and Xinjiang local government are increasingly sensitive about the rise of Muslim separatism in Xinjiang and unrest among its Islamic minorities, and are especially concerned about the infiltration of Muslim fundamentalism from former Soviet republics across the border. Li Ruihuan, a senior member of China's politburo, said recently that "the turmoil, disintegration and separation in some countries was closely related to the issue of nationality". He warned that "China would be plunged into chaos and would be no longer the same country without unity between the different nationalities".<sup>8</sup> Wang Enmao, the former Party Secretary of Xinjiang also pointed out that "these separatist tendencies are the greatest danger for Xinjiang".<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Y.H.Shichor, 'Separatism: Sino-Muslim Conflict in Xinjiang', *Pacifica Review*, vol.6, 2 (1994), pp. 71-82.

<sup>8</sup> Li Rihuan, 'zai minzu tuanjie biao Zhang dahui shang de jianghua', the *People's Daily*, 22 May 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Wang Enmao, 'zai zizhiq dangwei sanjie shiwuci quanwei kuoda huiyi shang de jianghua', *Xinjiang Ribao (Xinjiang Daily)*, 25 July 1990.

While there has been much research about the resurgence of Islamic religion, ethnic movements and Muslim separatism in Central Asia, Southeast and Southwest Asia, there is little discussion about similar processes in China. There is some literature concerning the early history, political development and ethnic identity of Xinjiang, but there are very few in-depth studies of the ethnic situation in contemporary Xinjiang, and in particular, of Muslim separatist activities. For some reason, non-Chinese analyses lack relevant archival materials, most of them consisting solely of newspaper speculation. That is the reason why the contemporary ethnic conflicts, manifestations of Islamic revivalism and examples of Muslim rebellions of Xinjiang have either been missed or received the most cursory of examinations in these analyses. In China, as a 'forbidden zone', the sensitive topic of Xinjiang Muslim separatism has not been seriously touched by Chinese scholars, who are handicapped by having to obtain special permission from the authorities to publish their articles. Therefore, there has been no chance for them to public articles on this issue while in Xinjiang. Now as a postgraduate student of the University of New England, I take this opportunity of presenting an overview of Muslim separatism in Xinjiang.

This research clarifies Muslim separatism in China, specifically in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. It focuses on the features and development of the Muslim separatist movement in Xinjiang during the 1980s and the 1990s, in order to assess its significance to China and neighboring Muslim states. Based on ten years of research on Muslim communities in Xinjiang, it addresses the question of why the ethnic conflicts and confrontations between Muslim and Han Chinese have proliferated from the early 1980s to the 1990s; explores the reasons both in domestically and internationally; and examines the impact of Muslim separatist movements on the unity

of China, the power of Chinese authority, the Muslim-Han relationship and on China- neighboring state relations; in order to show how the Chinese government responded to the Muslim separatist challenge and foreshadow the future trend of the Muslim separatist movement in Xinjiang.

The thesis contains seven chapters. Chapter 1 highlights the significance and objectives of the research, and outlines the nature, extent and structure of the thesis. It also gives a brief literature review on Xinjiang's ethnic issues both in China and overseas. In order to avoid confusion about some terms which are used in this thesis, the exact meanings of these terms are delineated in this chapter. The second chapter sketches the landscape of Xinjiang, its history, culture, nationalities and its relationship with the central authorities both in the past and at present. It also briefly analyses three important Muslim uprisings in the history of Xinjiang. The third chapter describes the serious situation of Islamic revivalism and Muslim separatist activities in Xinjiang from the early 1980s to the middle 1990s through several key incidents, and provides some details regarding the attempts of Xinjiang Muslim separatists to secede from China. The chapter also evaluates the characters, purposes, progress, organizational structures and demands of the Xinjiang Muslim separatists' movement during the 1980s and the 1990s. Chapters 4 and 5 analyze the causes of the emergence of Islamic revivalism and Muslim separatism in Xinjiang from both domestic and international viewpoints. Chapter 6 focuses on the reactions of the Chinese central authorities and the Xinjiang regional government to Muslim separatism and its related activities. It also examines the government policies towards Muslim student protesters, Muslim separatists, religious extremists and other ethnic minorities. The last chapter presents broad conclusions derived from the preceding

discussions and describes the future prospects of the Xinjiang Muslim separatist movement. It also summaries the overall findings of the study, and presents the prospects and problems concerning the further study of the Muslim separatism movement in China and elsewhere.

This research is a departure in several ways from most previous studies on Xinjiang Muslim uprisings. Firstly, it emphasizes the current progress of the Muslim separatist movement in Xinjiang. No prominence will be given to studying the previous Muslim secession movements in Xinjiang, either those during the last century or the early part of this century. In this field, some significant studies of the 1933 uprising and the 1944 Yili Rebellion have already been undertaken by academics in China and overseas, which include: Zhang Dajun's *The Xinjiang Yining Incident: the Establishment of the Puppet East Turkestan Government and Its Failure*,<sup>10</sup> Bao Erhan's *Xinjiang under Yang Zengxin's Rule, and Historical Materials on Xinjiang's Three Districts Revolution*,<sup>11</sup> and Saifudin's *Tianshan Storm-History of the Three Districts Revolution*.<sup>12</sup> In English scholarship, Benson,<sup>13</sup> Forbes,<sup>14</sup> and Hasiotis<sup>15</sup> focus upon the Muslim rebellions and politics in the early history of Xinjiang.

Secondly, this study undertakes a survey and critical assessment of Muslim separatism in contemporary Xinjiang. Although there is some literature about the historical, social and economic background of Xinjiang, there is a lack of in-depth examination

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<sup>10</sup> Zhang Dajun, 'The Xinjiang Yining Incident: the Establishment of the Puppet East Turkestan Government and its Failure', see D.Wang, 'Xinjiang of the 20th century in historiography', *Central Asian Survey*, vol.14, 2 (1995), p. 266.

<sup>11</sup> D.Wang, 1995, p. 273.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 277.

<sup>13</sup> L.Benson, *The Ili Rebellion: The Moslem Challenge to Chinese Authority in Xinjiang, 1944-1949*, Armonk: M.E.Sharpe, 1990.

<sup>14</sup> A.D.W.Forbes, *Warlords and Muslim in Chinese Central Asia: A Political History of Republican Sinkiang 1911-1949*, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

<sup>15</sup> A.C.Jr.Hasiotis, *Soviet Political, Economic and Military Involvement in Sinkiang from 1928 to 1949*, London, 1987.

of these cases. Thus, it obviates the need to traverse ground already trodden by Liu Zhixiao,<sup>16</sup> Gu Bao,<sup>17</sup> Qian Boquan and Wang Binhua,<sup>18</sup> and *Xinjiang Jianshi* (A Concise History of Xinjiang, 4 volumes) in China;<sup>19</sup> and by Lattimore,<sup>20</sup> Dreyer,<sup>21</sup> Moseley,<sup>22</sup> Christoffersen,<sup>23</sup> Harris,<sup>24</sup> McMillen,<sup>25</sup> and Mackerras<sup>26</sup> outside China.

Thirdly, the significant differences between this study and previous studies are also presented in the following aspects. No particular ethnic group will be singled out for specific study. Instead, a comprehensive view of Muslim community as a whole will be taken. Chinese scholars, such as Gu Bao,<sup>27</sup> Liu Zhixiao,<sup>28</sup> Su Beihai,<sup>29</sup> Jiahop Mirjahan,<sup>30</sup> Xiren Kurban,<sup>31</sup> and scholars outside China, such as Dreyer,<sup>32</sup> Winters,<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Liu Zhixiao, *Weiwuer zu lishi (part I)*, Xinjiang Renmin chubanshe, Urumqi, 1990.

<sup>17</sup> Gu Bao, *minzu yanjiu wengxuan*, Xinjiang Renmin chubanshe, Urumqi, 1991.

<sup>18</sup> Qian Boquan and Wang Binhua, *tongsu Xinjiang shi*, Xinjiang Renmin chubanshe, Urumqi, 1987.

<sup>19</sup> *Xinjiang Jianshi*, 4 vols, Xinjiang Renmin chubanshe, Urumqi, 1990.

<sup>20</sup> O.Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia: Sinkiang and the Inner Asian Frontiers of China and Russia*, Little Boston, Mass., 1950.

<sup>21</sup> J.T.Dreyer, *China's Forty Millions: Minority Nationalities and National Integration in the People's Republic of China*, Cambridge, Mass., 1976.

<sup>22</sup> G.Moseley, *A Sino-Soviet Cultural Frontier: The Ili Kazakh Autonomous Chou*, Cambridge, Mass., 1966.

<sup>23</sup> G.Christoffersen, 'Xinjiang and the Great Islamic Circle: The Impact of Transnational Forces on Chinese Regional Economic Planning', *The China Quarterly*, 133 (1993), pp. 131-151.

<sup>24</sup> L.C.Harris, 'Xinjiang, Central Asia and the Implications for China's Policy in the Islamic World', *The China Quarterly*, 133 (1993), pp. 111-129.

<sup>25</sup> D.H.McMillen, 'Xinjiang and Wang Enmao: new directions in power, policy and integration?', *The China Quarterly*, 99 (1984), pp. 569-593.

<sup>26</sup> C.Mackerras, *China's Minorities: Integration and Modernization in the Twentieth Century*, Hong Kong, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1994.

<sup>27</sup> Gu Bao, 'Weiwuer zu jinxi', *minzu yanjiu wengxuan*, Xinjiang Renmin chubanshe, Urumqi, 1991, pp. 191-201.

<sup>28</sup> Liu Zhixiao, 1990.

<sup>29</sup> Su Beihai, *Hasak zu tongshi*, Xinjiang Renmin chubanshe, Urumqi, 1995, and *Hasak zu wenhua shi*, Xinjiang Renmin chubanshe, Urumqi, 1989.

<sup>30</sup> Jiahop Mirjahan, *Hasak zu*, Minzu chubanshe, Beijing, 1989.

<sup>31</sup> Xiren Kurban, *Zhongguo Tajik*, Xinjiang daxue chubanshe, Urumqi, 1994.

<sup>32</sup> J.T.Dreyer, 'The Kasakhs in China' in A.Suhrke and L.G.Noble (eds), *Ethnic Conflict in International Relations*, New York, 1977, pp. 146-177.

<sup>33</sup> C.A.Winters, *Mao or Muhammad: Islam in the People's Republic of China*, Asian Research Service, Hong Kong, 1979.

Benson and Svanbery,<sup>34</sup> and Gladney,<sup>35</sup> have already published numerous articles and books on each particular ethnic nationality, including Uighur, Kazak, Tajik and Hui.

Fourthly, in undertaking research about the issue of Xinjiang's Muslim separatism, it is impossible to avoid touching upon the movements of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism, which have been greatly influenced by Turkey, Central Asia, the Middle East countries, as well as Xinjiang in the early part of this century. With the exception of Landau<sup>36</sup> and Zenkovsky,<sup>37</sup> who studied these two movements systematically both in Turkey and in the former Soviet Union, not many scholars are involved in this theme, in particular, in Xinjiang's Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism movements. This study explores the origin, dissemination and implications of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism and their relationship with Muslim separatism in Xinjiang, and teases out the characters, forms, and prospects of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism in contemporary Xinjiang. In the context of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism in Xinjiang, a few Chinese scholars such as Ji Dachun,<sup>38</sup> Gu Bao,<sup>39</sup> Chen Chao,<sup>40</sup> Chen Yanqi,<sup>41</sup> Liu Bin and Han Lin<sup>42</sup> have undertaken some research on these topics. However,

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<sup>34</sup> L. Benson and I. Svanberg (eds), *The Kazaks of China: Essays on an Ethnic Minority*, Uppsala, 1988.

<sup>35</sup> D.C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic*, Council of East Asian Studies, Cambridge and London, 1991.

<sup>36</sup> J.M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism in Turkey: A study of Irredentism*, London, 1981, and *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organisation*, Oxford, 1990.

<sup>37</sup> S.A. Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia*, New York, 1967.

<sup>38</sup> Ji Dachun, 'Fan Yisilan zhuyi he Fan Tujue zhuyi de chansheng jiqi dui Xinjiang de shentou yu pochao', *Xinjiang shehui kexue yanjiu*, 2 (1990), pp. 11-20; 'Guchui Fan Tujue zhuyi jiushi xiueyang minzu fenlie zhuyi', *Xiyu yanjiu*, 1991, Special Issue, pp. 60-67; and 'Fan Yisilan zhuyi, Fan Tujue zhuyi dui Xinjiang de weihai', *Shishi qiushi*, 3 (1992), pp. 29-33.

<sup>39</sup> Gu Bao, 'wei shenmo buneng ba Xinjiang chengzuo "dong Tujuesitan"', *Xinjiang shehui kexue*, 2 (1990), p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> Chen Chao, 'Fan Yisilan zhuyi he Fan Tujue zhuyi zai Xinjiang de zaoqi chuanbo', *Xiyu yanjiu*, 1 (1994), pp. 70-75.

<sup>41</sup> Chen Yanqi, 'shilun Fan Yisilan zhuyi he Yisilan fuxing yundong jiqi dui Xinjiang de yingxiang', *internal publication*, Xinjiang shehui kexueyuan, 1991, pp. 64-85.

<sup>42</sup> Liu Bin, Han Lin and Liqi, *wenghua Fan Tujue zhuyi yanjiu*, a research report published by Xinjiang shehui kexueyuan (Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences), Urumqi, 1990.

most of these publications have been prepared with the constraint of having to fall within the Chinese official requirements.

Apart from Chinese sources, there is a growing literature in English on the current situation of Xinjiang and its minority nationalities, which either mainly concentrates on the general history of Xinjiang or touches briefly on Muslim minority practices for certain periods in question. There are a few articles which relate wholly to contemporary Xinjiang. Christoffersen's *Xinjiang and the Great Islamic Circle: the Impact of Transnational Forces on Chinese Regional Economic Planning*,<sup>43</sup> and Harris's *Xinjiang, Central Asia and the Implications for China's Policy in the Islamic World*<sup>44</sup> are two examples of the study of economic development of Xinjiang and its relationship with Central Asian republics and the Islamic World. Dreyer's *The PLA and Regionalism in Xinjiang*,<sup>45</sup> McMillen's *Xinjiang and Wang Enmao: new directions in power, policy and integration?*<sup>46</sup> and Shichor's *Separatism: Sino-Muslim Conflict in Xinjiang*,<sup>47</sup> also provide useful political insights on the issue of Xinjiang's nationalism and independence.

So far, most doctoral dissertations in English concentrate on the diplomatic relations of Xinjiang with foreign powers, especially with the Soviet Union or Russia in the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as Ch'i-yu Wu's *China, Russia, and Central Asia*,<sup>48</sup> Edward Shou-tus Su's *Sino-Russian Relations in Sinkiang: A Comparison of International*

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<sup>43</sup> G.Christoffersen, 1993.

<sup>44</sup> L.C.Harris, 1993.

<sup>45</sup> J.T.Dreyer, 'The PLA and Regionalism in Xinjiang', *The China Quarterly*, 133 (1993), pp. 41-55.

<sup>46</sup> D.H.McMillen, 1984.

<sup>47</sup> Y.H.Shichor, 1994.

<sup>48</sup> See D.Wang's 'Xinjiang of the 20th century in historiography', *Central Asian Survey*, vol.14, 2 (1995), p. 280.

*Relationships Outside and Inside the Communist System*,<sup>49</sup> Franklin's *The Chinese Response to British and Russian Encroachment in north-west China*,<sup>50</sup> David Wang's *Under the Soviet Shadow: the Yili Rebellion of 1944-1949 in Xinjiang*,<sup>51</sup> and Newby's *The Rise of Nationalism in Eastern Turkestan 1930-1950*.<sup>52</sup>

The above research acknowledges that there is greater potential in the research are relating to Xinjiang ethnic separatism, than to the same research areas regarding India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Central Asian republics. In focusing on the study of ethnic separatism in China, particular on Xinjiang, this research tries to make a comprehensive study on Xinjiang's Muslim separatist movement, to investigate the political, economic and social reasons which are causing Xinjiang ethnic conflicts, to explore effective measures which can be used to reduce or stop the threat of violent activities from Muslims separatists and secession process in China, and to increase overall understanding in dealing with ethnic issues.

There have been few examples for studying Xinjiang Muslim separatism in the context of China's ethnic minority issue. This research is an attempt to rectify this situation. The strength and weakness of existing approaches for monitoring and assessing the policies to the Muslims separatist activities in Xinjiang will also be identified. This research should provide an understanding of Xinjiang Muslims' current situation, demonstrate the importance of balance between different ethnic

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<sup>49</sup> See D.Wang's 'Xinjiang of the 20th century in historiography', *Central Asian Survey*, vol.14, 2 (1995), p. 280.

<sup>50</sup> L.A.Franklin, *The Chinese Response to British and Russian Encroachment in north-west China*, see D.Wang, 1995, p. 281.

<sup>51</sup> D.Wang, *Under the Soviet Shadow: the Yili Rebellion of 1944-1949 in Xinjiang*, Tasmania, 1994.

<sup>52</sup> L.J.Newby, *The Rise of Nationalism in Eastern Turkestan, 1930-1950*, Oxford, 1986.

groups, and increase understanding about the national identities and traditional culture of different ethnic nationalities and about Chinese authorities' policies towards ethnic groups.

The research base of the thesis is derived from existing studies, interviews, field data collection and analysis. Having been involved in several research projects in Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences, the author has established a close connection with government officials, related academics and people from non-government organizations. From the field research, the author has collected much first-hand material in related areas. Because most of the literature and data used in the research are in the Chinese language, the standard Chinese *Pinyin* system is adopted for personal names, place names and the name of Chinese publications. This study incorporates the writings of leading intellectuals, influential political individuals, social scientists, journalists, and periodicals, as well as government documents, government leaders' speeches, reports of research projects, and articles for conferences and newspapers, of which some are not openly published. It should be noted that, for confidential and personal reasons, some sources are not identified.

The limitations of this study should be pointed out here. It is important to be aware of the limitations of the topic itself. As the main theme of the topic is Muslim separatism in Xinjiang, some aspects of minority nationalities are not amenable to inclusion in this research scope. Since the topic is so sensitive to the Chinese authority, confidentiality considerations limited access to relevant documents generated by government organizations. Furthermore, it is very difficult to get enough first-hand

materials from the local people who might fear government suppression. This can also lead to relatively insufficient testimony.

In order to avoid confusion about some important terms, definitions of these terms are given below. As used in this thesis, 'Minority Nationality' means: an ethnic group that is relatively small in number compared with the largest nationality; and is distinguished from society at large and from the Han by certain specific national characteristics.<sup>53</sup>

According to Esman, "Ethnic Separatist Movement is a movement to achieve or regain effective political, cultural and often economic control over their homeland. Their strategy is to struggle within the rules of the system where possible, by civil disobedience and violence where necessary, for autonomy from the political center ranging from federal or quasi-federal status to separation and independence".<sup>54</sup> In the view of Chinese authorities, 'Ethnic Separatism' refers to a political force and a reactionary ideology that foments ethnic splits, undermines the unity of the country, advocates the independence of Xinjiang and attempts to subvert the socialist system under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>55</sup>

There are several interpretations of the name 'Xinjiang'. For example, the word 'Xiyu' was used in the history of Xinjiang; and 'Eastern Turkestan', and 'Chinese Turkestan' were used by Muslim separatists, some local minorities and foreigners. In this thesis, the term 'Xinjiang' refers to 'Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region', which is one of the provincial level regions of China today.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Fifty-Six Nationalities*, New Star Publishers, Beijing, 1992, pp. 2-4; Heberer, 1989, p. 22.

<sup>54</sup> M.J.Esman, 'Two Dimension of Ethnic Politics', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.8, 3 (1985), pp. 438-440.

<sup>55</sup> Yang Faren, 'minzu fenlie zhuyi shi dui Makesi zhuyi minzuguan de fandong', *Xinjiang shehui kexue yanjiu*, 2 (1990), p. 21. See more explains in the speech of Tomul Dawamat, *Xinjiang Ribao*, 29 July 1990.

<sup>56</sup> Gu Bao, 1991, p. 150. See more in Ji Dachun, 1990, p. 20.

'Pan-Turkism' refers to the political movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries which politically aims to unite all of the Turkish-speaking peoples in the Ottoman Empire, Russia, China, Iran and Afghanistan. The movement, which began among the Turks in the Crimea and on the Volga, initially sought to unite the Turks of the Ottoman and Russian empires against the growing Russian tsarist domination.<sup>57</sup>

'Pan-Islamism' refers to a movement aimed at the union of the Muslim peoples on the basis of their common religion. Pan-Islamism remained little more than an idea until it was vivified by Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, a fiery champion of the Muslim peoples against the growing hegemony of the West.<sup>58</sup>

It is necessary to examine varied sources from containing very different viewpoints, in order to contribute to a better understanding of the ethnic problem, which has long been and will continue to be controversial. It is the author's hope that through this study, people, particularly those outside China, will come to a better understanding of Xinjiang and the problems of the Muslim minority within it.

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<sup>57</sup> *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol.9, Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc, 1992, p. 105.

<sup>58</sup> *Chambers's Encyclopedia*, vol.10, Pergamon Press, 1996, p. 413.

## Chapter 2

### Brief History of Xinjiang and Its Nationalities

The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region is situated in northwest China. As the largest administrative area at the provincial level, it covers more than 1.6 million square kilometers, and is the largest among 31 provinces and regions in China, comprising one-sixth of China's total territory. Being located in the hinterland of Eurasia, Xinjiang is far from the ocean. The broad Tianshan Mountains span the middle of Xinjiang from the west to the east, naturally dividing the region into two parts, southern Xinjiang and northern Xinjiang. Xinjiang abounds natural wealth, which gives it wide ranging possibilities for the development of local industry, agriculture and animal husbandry. It is well known, as a 'treasure land' for it is rich in oil, coal, animal husbandry and mineral resources.<sup>1</sup> The importance of Xinjiang is not only for the natural resources but also for its strategic position. Xinjiang's boundary line is about 5,000 kilometers. It borders Outer Mongolia in the northeast; the former Soviet Union (today Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kirghizstan) in the northwest; and Afghanistan, Pakistan and India in the southwest. Two thousand years ago Xinjiang was a link between China and Central Asia, West Asia and Europe. Both the south and north routes of the legendary Silk Road passed through it.

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<sup>1</sup> Chen Dajun, p. 12.

Xinjiang is a multinational region, where 47 nationalities live, of which the principal thirteen nationalities are Uighur, Han, Kazak, Hui, Mongol, Kirghiz, Tajik, Xibe, Uzbek, Manchu, Daur, Tatar and Russian. Among these nationalities, ten are Muslim, which account for 62 per cent of the more than 15 million regional populations (see Table 2.1). These Muslims are speakers of Turkic languages, with the exception of the Tajiks, whose language belongs to the Persian branch of the Indo-European family.

**Table 2.1: Muslim Minorities in Xinjiang; Population, Ethnicity and Language**

<b>Muslim Minorities</b>	<b>Population (1990)</b>	<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Linguistic Group</b>
Uighur	7,194,675	Turkic	Chaghatay branch
Kazak	1,106,989	Turkic	Tatar branch
Hui	681,527	Chinese	Chinese
Kirghiz	139,781	Turkic	Tatar branch
Uzbek	14,456	Turkic	Chaghatay branch
Tajik	33,512	Indo-European	Iranian
Tatar	4,821	Turkic	Tatar branch
Dongxiang		Mongoloid	Mongolian
Bonan	9,026	Mongoloid	Mongolian
Salar		Turkic	Chaghatay branch

Sources: *Fifty-six Nationalities*, Beijing, 1992, pp. 2-3; Chen Dajun, *Xinjiang Today*, Urumqi, 1992, p. 1; Andrew D.W. Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims in Chinese Central Asia*, Cambridge, 1986, pp. 7.

Among the various indigenous ethnic groups in Xinjiang, the largest and the most powerful in politics is the Uighurs who are the primarily sedentary agricultural people scattered throughout Xinjiang. The second largest Muslim group is the Kazaks who is distributing mainly around the Yili Valley and highland regions of Zungharia. Small numbers of Kazaks have settled down to agricultural production, the large majorities of Kazaks shifting their pasturelands seasonally and living a nomadic life style. The

Kazak people in China are mainly tribes of the Ula Yuzi and Ertu Yuzi.<sup>2</sup> The majority of the Kazaks now lives in Kazakhstan, which is one of the newly independent Muslim states of the Central Asian Republics and borders Xinjiang. Another Muslim group mainly Hui resides in the north and the south of the Tianshan Mountains, which is a group of Chinese-speaking Muslims known by the Turkic name 'Tungan'. All Hui are Muslims and are divided into several sects. Like Kazaks, the Kirghiz people in Xinjiang also belong to the Turkic-speaking nomadic nationality and they inhabit the upland pasture regions of the Tianshan and Pamirs. Other Muslims who are settled in Xinjiang include a small group of Iranian-speaking 'Mountain' Tajiks, who live mainly in compact communities along the border with Pakistan. The rest are scattered in the towns. For many centuries, Tajiks have lived in valleys approximately 3,000 meters above sea level, leading to their semi-nomadic and semi-settled life. Uzbeks live in many cities and larger oasis towns in the north and the south of the Tianshan Mountains. They support themselves mostly through trade and handicraft industries, but some of them work in agricultural production and livestock breeding. The last group that should be mentioned is the Tatar people who live mainly in Urumqi, which is the capital city of Xinjiang, and in the Yining and Tacheng districts along the former Soviet frontier with Xinjiang. Generally, Tatar people speak the Uighur and Kazak languages. Their culture and education levels are comparatively higher than other ethnic groups.

Religion is an important factor, which affects the ethnic groups of Xinjiang. Because of many different nationalities, Xinjiang is a region with varied religious beliefs,

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<sup>2</sup> L. Bensen and I. Svanberg, p. 5.

which include Islam, Lamaism (Tibetan Buddhism), Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and Shamanism. Among these religions, Islam is the predominant one, the believers being nearly 10 million. Islam plays the most important role in the political and social life of Xinjiang. From a historical point of view, the Xinjiang Muslims, in particular the Uighurs, are uniformly Sunni followers of the orthodox Hanafi school, with the exception of the Isma'ili Tajiks. However, Sufism was also very popular and widely spread in southern Xinjiang from the eighteenth century, and it was known in Xinjiang as 'Yishan' among the Uighurs and 'Menhuan' in the Hui communities.<sup>3</sup>

Ahungs (religious leaders of Muslims equivalent to the Arabic word mullahs) play a great role in the Xinjiang Muslim communities. They supervise the Koranic schools and universities where Arabic is taught, and also take care of routine matters in mosques like circumcisions, marriages, funeral rites and prayers. One specific phenomenon, which should be mentioned here, is that of 'Mazar (tomb) Worship'. It is a typical religious activity in Xinjiang and is becoming the most important part of Muslim religious life. 'Mazar' are the tombs of Muslim heroes or elite or famous families, which are large in numbers and widely scattered. Muslims worship those 'Mazars' just as they worship in the mosques.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sang Rong, 'Xinjiang Yisilan jiao yanjiu zongshu 1982-1989', *Xinjiang zongjiao yanjiu ziliao*, 17 (1990), p. 107. About Xinjiang Islamic schools see more in Xinjiang scholars' articles, such as Du Shaoyuan, 'Kashi, Shache he Hetian diqu Yisilan jiaopai qinkuang diaocha', *Zongjiao*, 1 (1987); Wang Shukai, 'Weiwuer zu Yisilan jiao Yishan pai zhong de Saman jiao yingxiang chutan', *Zhongyang minzu xueyuan xuebao*, 4 (1987); Chen Guoguang, 'Zhongya Nahexibandi jiaotuan yu woguo Xinjiang Hoja, xibei Menhuan', *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu*, 1 (1988); Fuyu and Tan Wutie, 'Xinjiang Hui zu Zhehelinyie Menhuan lishi de diaocha baogao', *Xinjiang shehui kexue*, 2 (1986).

<sup>4</sup> Mehmet Salam and Ma Pinyan, 'Xinjiang de Mazar ji Mazar chongbai', *shijie zongjiao yanjiu*, 4 (1986), p. 68.

## **History of Xinjiang Focus**

The history of Xinjiang has always been a contentious topic both in China and overseas. Completely different views and opinions have existed between China and overseas for a long time. The controversial issues include: whether Xinjiang was an integral part of China or an independent state before Xinjiang province was incorporated into the Qing Dynasty; the origin and meaning of Xinjiang; and why Xinjiang was popularly known as 'Eastern Turkestan' in the Western media rather than Xinjiang itself. However, the answers to these questions are really outside the parameters of this research. In relation to the topic of Xinjiang Muslim separatism, the introduction of Xinjiang history basically focuses on Chinese historical records and official publications rather than on other sources.

## **Early History of Xinjiang**

According to the Chinese sources, the earliest historical record of Xinjiang can be traced back to the Warring States period (475 BC-221 BC) when Xinjiang was known as the Western Region (Xiyu). Information about Xiyu can be found in many history books in China, such as in the *Annals from Bamboo Books*, *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, *Memoirs of King Mu*, and *Lushi Chunqiu*. The contents of all these books

are related to the geography, products and various legends about the Western Region (Xiyu).<sup>5</sup>

According to *Hanshu Xiyizhuan* and *Houhanshu Xiyuzhuan*, during the period of the Qin and Han Dynasties (221 BC-AD 220), the Hsiung-nu (Huns) in the northern part of China became very powerful and began to harass the people living in the central plains, subsequently dominating the states of the Western Region (Xiyu). After the establishment of the Western Han Dynasty, in order to make a peaceful deal with the Hsiung-nu (Huns), a man named Zhang Qian was dispatched by the Western Han Emperor to the Western Region and two princesses from the Western Han were married to the King of Usun at Chigu (southeast of Issuk Lake of the former Soviet Union). In 101 BC, the Emperor of Western Han sent officials to Luntai and Quli (today's Korla) to take charge of land reclamation by soldiers. In 60 BC, the Western Han government established a supervisory office at Lei (today's Dongcedaya in Luntai County) in the Western Region.<sup>6</sup> In AD 74, the Eastern Han government restored the military Viceroy's office in the Western Region, and moved it to the city of Taqian in Qiuci in the southwest of today's Xinhe County. The jurisdiction of the military Viceroy's office covered both the north and south of the Tianshan Mountain range and extended as far as Usun and the Congling mountains (today's Pamirs). The setting up of the military Viceroy's office in the Western Region signified its formal annexation

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<sup>5</sup> Qian Bequan and Wang Binhua, p. 21. More can see *Xinjiang jianshi*, 1990.

<sup>6</sup> Ma Yong, 'cong Xinjiang lishi wengwu kan handai zai Xiyu de zhengzhi cuoshi he jingji jianshe', *Xiyu yanjiu*, 1991, Special Issue, pp. 77-83. More can see *Xinjiang jianshi*, 1990; Qian Boquan and Wang Binhua, 1987; a translated work *Xiyu wenghua shi*, translated by Geng Shiming, Xinjiang Renmin chubanshe, Urumqi, 1984.

to China. Since then, the Western Region has been an integral part of China, in spite of some changes caused by separation and unification.<sup>7</sup>

After the toppling of the Eastern Han in AD 220, China was a divided country for more than 300 years. The Wei, Jin and Liang courts all set up official organs in the Western Region. During this period, the Kingdom of Gaochang (near today's Turfan) arose, headed by a Han named 'Qu' in collaboration with the nationalities in this area. Afterwards prefectures and counties were set up in the Kingdom. The Gaochang Kingdom presented tributes to Northern Wei court (368-534) and later accepted rule by the Sui and Tang Dynasties.<sup>8</sup>

During the Sui-Tang period (581-907), economic prosperity prevailed. The connections between the Tang Dynasty and the Western Region (Xiyu) were much closer than before. Tang established two supervisory offices in the Western Region, the Anoxia and Beiting military Viceroy's offices, one being in Anxi (today's Kuche) and another in Bishbali (today's Jimsar).<sup>9</sup> Following the establishment of the authority of the Qidan (Khitans) and Liao Dynasty (916-1125), their ruling areas were extended to the Western Region. Both the Qidan and the Liao Dynasty set up official positions, which were filled by Ouigours (Uighur) and Khitans in the Western Region. The local administrative bodies were also established, such as the Asalan Ouigour (Uighur) Grand Principality, Gaochang Grand Principality and Yutian (Khotan) Principality.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Cheng Suoluo, 'Wudai, Song, Liao Jin shiqi Xinjiang Uighur renmin he zuguo gedi de jingji lianxi', *Xiyu yanjiu*, 1991, Special Issue, pp. 84-89. See more in *Xinjiang jianshi*, *Tongsu Xinjiang shi*, *Xiyu Wenghua shi*, and V.V.Bartholid's work, translated by Geng Shimin as *Zhongya jianshi*, Xinjiang Renmin chubanshe, 1976.

<sup>9</sup> Ji Dachun, 1991, p. 64.

After the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and the latter years of the Liao Dynasty, three regimes appeared and became much stronger in the Western Region. They were the Yutian (Khotan) Kingdom, the Xizhou Ouigour (Uighur) Kingdom and the Qarakhanid. They assured the Liao Dynasty of their subordination and paid their tributes to Liao. Three regimes set up their capitals at Gaochang, Balasagun (today's Tokmak in the former Soviet Union) and Kashgar. Many khans of the Qarakhanid even placed Chinese characters before their names, signifying their titles as Chinese khans.<sup>10</sup> During the eleventh century, the Qarakhanid (see Map 2.1) controlled most parts of the Western Region and vast areas of Russia.<sup>11</sup>

After unifying the whole Mongol tribes, Genghis Khan sent his army to the Western Region (Xiyu), where the various political regimes came under his rule. Then he appointed local officials to govern Bishbali (today's Jimsar), Alimali (today's Korgas) and Chishar (today's Kashi). In 1251, the Executive Chancery was established at Bishbali, which was considered, as the first demarcation of its kind in the whole Western Region. When the Yuan Dynasty was inaugurated in 1271, it set up an Executive Secretariat at Alimali and created several official positions at Bishbali and other places. Since then, the whole Western Region first under the control of Mongolia. (See Map 2.2).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>11</sup> Cheng Suoluo, 1991, pp. 85-89. See more in *Zhongya jianshi*, 1976.

<sup>12</sup> Guo Yunhua, 'fayang Xinjiang gezu renmin zai weihu zuguo tongyizhong tuanjie zhandou de lishi chuantong', *Xiyu yanjiu*, 1991, Special Issue, p. 92. See more in *Xinjiang jianshi*, *Tongsu Xinjiang shi* and *Zhongya jianshi*.

When the Ming Dynasty came to power in 1368, the majority of the Western Region was still under the rule of a descendant of Chaghatay Khan, the second son of Genghis Khan. The Mongolians first stationed themselves at Bishbali and then moved to Yilubali (today's Yining county and its vicinity). Some other regimes continued to pay their tributes to the Ming Dynasty. When the Hami King sought protection from the Ming Dynasty, he was awarded the title of Prince of 'Zhongshun (Loyalty and Submission). In 1406, the Hami Garrison was established. Later Bishbali, Yutian and Turfan all offered tribute to the Ming Dynasty.<sup>13</sup>

Altai was the pastureland of the West Mongol Waci (Oyrat). The leader of Oyrat Mongol was also given the title of prince by the Ming Dynasty. In the first half of the seventeenth century, it was divided into four parts under the control of four tribes: the Junggar, Durbat, Torgut and Hoshote. Their pastoral activities covered Ili, Ertix, Tarbahatai and Urumqi. With the expansion of the Junggar, the Torgut tribe migrated to the Ejle River (today's Volga River in the former Soviet Union) valley and the Hoshote tribe moved to Qinghai and Tibet. The north part of Tianshan Mountain came under the control of the Junggar tribe (see Map 2.3).<sup>14</sup>

## **Modern History of Xinjiang**

### **The Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)**

After the establishment of the Qing Dynasty, the governor-generals' posts for Ili and other places (briefly known as the Ili General) were set up by the court in the city of

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Huiyuan (south of today's Khorgus) to exercise rule over the region of Xinjiang. The system of prefectures and counties was introduced into the areas from Zhenxi (today's Barkol) to Dihua (today's Urumqi). In northern Xinjiang, the Zasad principality enforced laws in the Mongol pasturing area. In Hami and Turfan, the Uighur leaders who rendered meritorious service in the course of the unification of Xinjiang by the Qing army also kept law and order in the Zasad principality. Later in southern Xinjiang, ministerial posts were created in the vast agricultural areas in which the majority of the Uighur population settled. In civil affairs, the Qing court appointed the regional leaders of the Uighur communities and abolished traditional hereditary rule.<sup>15</sup>

By the nineteenth century, however, the Qing's control of Xinjiang was weakened. The strategic importance of the region began to decline after Western maritime powers forcibly 'opened' coastal China in the 1840s. Nevertheless, Xinjiang continued to be a cockpit for political intrigue, competition, and conflict. Both the Russians and the British competed actively for expansion of their influence in Xinjiang. Russia expanded eastward from Central Asia (and Siberia); British expanded north from India where the British repeatedly instigated and supported descendants of Bulanition who were living in Kohan, to create disturbances in southern Xinjiang.<sup>16</sup>

The western Muslim region of China was described as the "most rebellion territory" in the Qing Dynasty in the nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup> One of the most important rebellions

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<sup>15</sup> Bao Erhan, 'guanyu Xinjiang lishi de ruogan wenti', *Xinjiang shehui kexue yanjiu*, 2 (1990), pp. 32-35. See more in *Xinjiang jianshi* and *Tongsu Xinjiang shi*.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> J.F.Fletcher, 'Ching Inner Asia, c.1800', in J.K.Faibank (ed.), *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol 10, part I, Cambridge, 1978, pp. 35-106.

was led by a Muslim named Yakub Beg, who threatened the Xinjiang and other Muslim regions of China from the mid-1860s until the 1870s. With the support of Britain and Russia, Yakub Beg occupied half the region of Xinjiang, and proclaimed himself 'Emir of Kashgaria' in 1867 with his court in Yarkant, but simultaneously, the Russians took advantage of the situation and sent troops to occupy the Ili area in the northwest of Xinjiang. It took many years for the Chinese authority to reassert control.<sup>18</sup> In 1880 the Qing forces under the command of Zuo Zhongtang defeated the troops of Yakub Beg and recovered the Ili region from the Russians. Consequently, the Qing court converted Xinjiang into a regular province in 1884 and incorporated it into the Chinese administrative system.<sup>19</sup>

Some historical rationale is necessary to explain why the Western Region (Xiyu) of China was renamed Xinjiang after the Qing court converted the Western Region into a province. Before the Western Region was raised to the status of a province by the Qing court, it was known by several names, including 'Western Region', 'Xijiang', 'Xichui' and 'Xinjiang', all of which can be found in government documents and historical books, for instance, in *Xiyu Tuzhi*, *Xichui Yaolue*, and *Xinjiang Shilue*. According to Chinese scholars, after Qing unified the whole China, it named several areas under its jurisdiction as 'Xinjiang'. These included the Wumeng area in Yunan, the Guzhou and Anshun areas in Guizhou, and the Xiao Jinchuan areas in Sichuan and Xiyu.<sup>20</sup> In 1820, Gong Zizhen, a famous scholar of the Qing Dynasty, wrote an article which proposed that the Western Region should be made into a province. In

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<sup>18</sup> Bao Erhan, 1990, p. 34.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. See more in *Xinjiang jianshi* and *Tongsu Xinjiang shi*.

<sup>20</sup> Xiao Zhixing, 'Qing dai de jige Xinjiang', *Lishi yanjiu*, 8 (1978). More can see Qi Qingshun, 'da xiao jingchuan diqu yieceng bei chengwei Xinjiang', *Xinjiang shixue*, 1 (1980).

1882, Zuo Zhongtang presented a memorial to the Qing government in which he described the Western Region as a place where “once other countries and nationalities had approached, now the lost territory has been recovered”.<sup>21</sup> Finally, the Qing court made a decision that the Western Region was formally to be named ‘Xinjiang’ and it became a province in China on 17 November 1884. The word Xinjiang is a composite of 2 words, ‘Xin’ meaning, ‘resume’ and ‘Jiang’ meaning ‘the lost territory’.<sup>22</sup>

### **Period of the Republican Era (1912-1949)**

During the period of the Republican era, the central government control of Xinjiang was weakened. Power was shifted frequently between the regional warlords of Han and Muslim. In April 1933, Jin Shuren, a Han Chinese from Guomintang government (GMT) was overthrown by a coup and a new warlord Sheng Shicai emerged as the leader of Xinjiang province. Late in 1933, a 'Turkish-Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan' (TIRET) was established among the Uighurs in Kashgar. The domestic policy of the TIRET was thus directed towards the establishment of a radical Islamic system, based on the Shari'a but encompassing certain educational, economic and social reforms, whilst its foreign policy was as staunchly anti-Soviet as it was anti-Tungan and anti-Han. The aims of TIRET were to form an independent Muslim state; to seek freedom from the 'Soviet stranglehold'; to seek friendly relations with the British government and to obtain its aid as far as was possible; and to restore peace and put down lawlessness. In the early of 1930s, there was a large revolt led by Ma Zhongying, a Gansu Hui leader, who came to the assistance of Xinjiang's Hami

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<sup>21</sup> See *Zuo Wen Xianggong Qiuhanji*, Zou Gao, vol 59.

<sup>22</sup> Gu Bao, 'Qing chao weishime jiang Xiyu gaicheng Xinjiang', *minzu yanjiu wenxuan*, Xinjiang Renmin chubanshe, Urumqi, 1991, pp. 148-152.

rebellion. His involvement actively stirred up a Muslim rebellion against Sheng Shicai and the TIRET with the support of the Japanese. With the assistance of the Soviet Union, Sheng Shicai defeated Ma and the Muslim rebels and established himself as the highest authority in Xinjiang.<sup>23</sup>

The Turkish-Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan was short lived. As Forbes said: "In effect, the TIRET was doomed from the moment of its inception, for, having adopted an uncompromisingly 'Turkic-Islamic' stance, it had deprived itself of effective allies whilst ensuring the enmity of the three most powerful forces in Xinjiang -the Tungans, the provincial authorities, and the Soviet Union".<sup>24</sup>

Ten years later, history repeated itself. In November 1944, Turkic Muslim and white Russians in Yili rebelled against the Guomintang government. They proclaimed the inauguration of the 'Eastern Turkestan Republic' (ETR) and the formation of an interim government with their capital in Kuldja (Yining) under the titular presidency of Alihan Ture (an Uzbek). It was soon to become apparent, however, that the real power behind the ETR lay in the hands of the Soviet advisers. The Soviet military had firm control over the actual army command. The interim government of ETR pledged to the people that it would struggle for the creation of a free independent republic and aims to control the whole of 'Eastern Turkestan'. However, the territory that the ETR actually controlled was only 3 of Xinjiang's 10 administrative districts in the far northwest of Xinjiang, Yili, Tacheng and Altai. Therefore, this revolt was also called

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<sup>23</sup> Cai Jinsong, 'Erbai yunian lai Xinjiang de fenlie yu fan fenlie douzheng', *Xinjiang shehui kexue yanjiu*, 2 (1990), pp. 39-46. See more in *Xinjiang jianshi* and *Tongsu Xinjiang shi*.

<sup>24</sup> A.D.W.Forbes, 1986, p. 116.

'Sanqu Geming' (Revolution of Three Districts) which had a very important position in the history of Xinjiang. One of the young leaders of the ETR, Ahmetjiang, later replaced Alihan Ture as the representative for negotiating with the Guomintang government. They finally gave up the independence of Xinjiang and the name of 'Eastern Turkestan', allowing Xinjiang to remain as one of the provinces in China. Ahmetjiang once explained: "Eastern Turkestan is only a geographical name, which can not be used as a ground of political activities. If somebody who uses it, he would be the enemy of the whole people of Xinjiang".<sup>25</sup> Descriptions were also showed in the historical documents of regional government that "Xinjiang is one of the provinces of China. Three districts (Yili, Tacheng and Altai) are one of the parts of Xinjiang. China is our motherland and our hometown".<sup>26</sup>

On October 1949, the KMT army in Xinjiang peacefully surrendered to the Peoples Liberation Army after the provincial government had proclaimed allegiance to the Communist regime of mainland China. It was then announced to the world that the three districts had rejoined China. The ill-fated and short-lived Eastern Turkestan Republic thus ceased to exist in December 1949. In the same year, the Xinjiang people's government was established. In 1954, five autonomous prefectures, six autonomous counties and sixteen national townships (now forty-two) were founded in accordance with the Communist Party's policy of regional national autonomy. The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region came into being on October 1st, 1955.

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<sup>25</sup> Zhang Zhizhong, *gao quanjiang gezu tongbao shu*, 25 August Minguo 35; *wo de zhenshi de jieda he yanzheng de quangao*, 30 October Minguo.

<sup>26</sup> *Sanqu geminshi: da shiji (taolun gao)*, Zhonggong Yili Kazak zizhizhou dangwei *Sanqu geminshi bianxiezhu*.

## **Conclusion**

Xinjiang is an unusual area with its unique historical experience. Since Zhang Qian opened the route to the Western Region (Xiyu) in the Western Han Dynasty, the political, economic and cultural relationship between the Central Plains and the Western Region has never been broken by any other power even when it applied force. Many court officials and soldiers were sent to the Western Region and the military Viceroys' offices were set up in various places of the region, which all signified the Western Region's formal annexation to China. There is no denying that indigenous ethnic groups once had the opportunity to set up their own kingdoms in a certain period in the history of Xinjiang. Unfortunately, there was no one indigenous ethnic group that occupied the whole Western Region and all these kingdoms never lasted long in the history of Xinjiang.

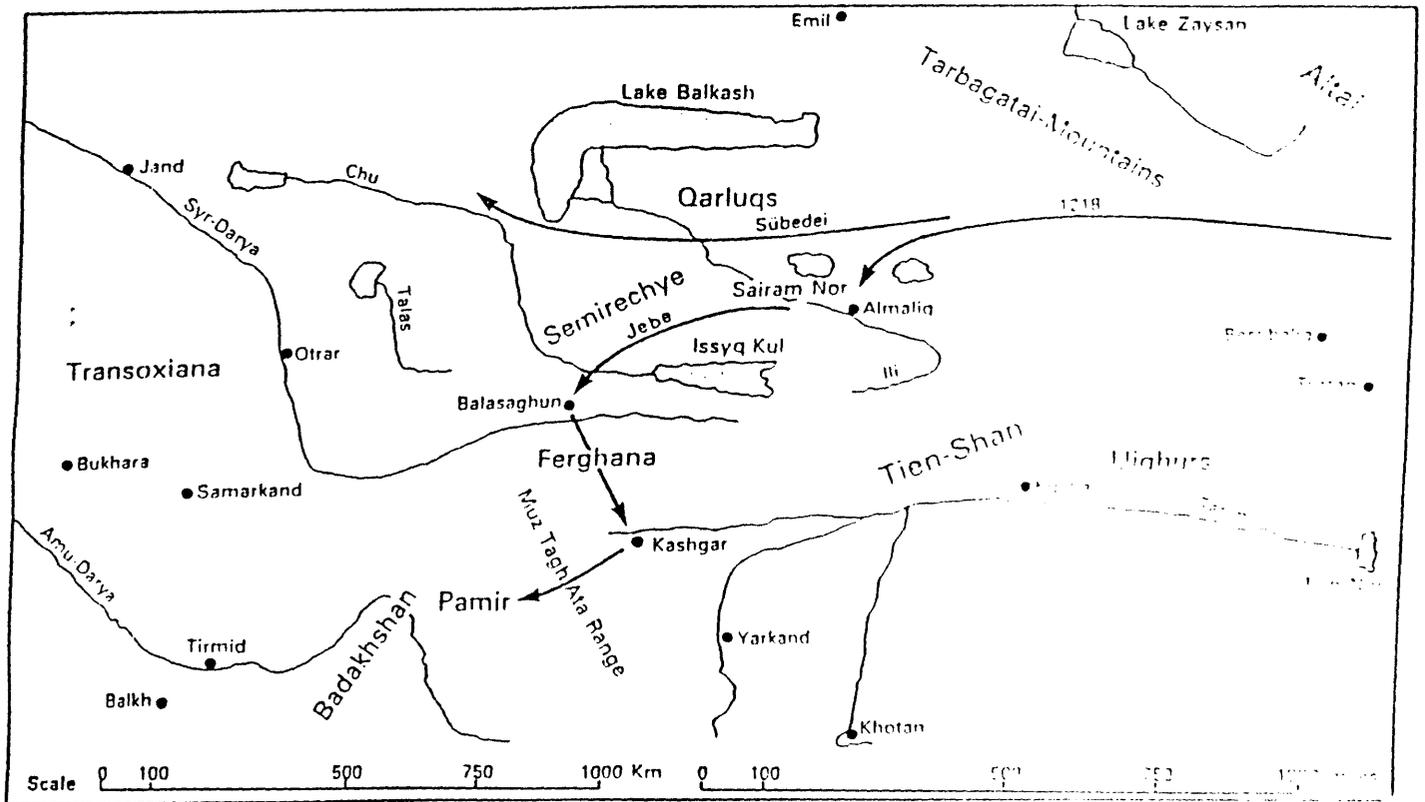
Through a thousand years, continuous disintegration and amalgamation made the numerous ethnic entities gradually develop into the present 13 main nationalities in Xinjiang. Each of them had created its own culture, language and religious beliefs. For most of the time, different ethnic groups lived together peacefully and showed respect for the others. However, it has to be acknowledged that wars, confrontations and conflicts between different ethnic groups existed in the history of Xinjiang, which became an important reason for the later ethnic separatists claiming the independence of Xinjiang.

In the long history of China, the strategic position of Xinjiang was the important factor for almost every dynasty and central government. It was seen as the bridge connecting the West and the Central Plain. Most of the ethnic groups in Xinjiang had close ethnic links with the neighboring countries. For these reasons, it is not surprising that many uprisings, rebellions and events, which were happening in Xinjiang for centuries, sought support from outside the region. It seems that Xinjiang and Muslim rebels could not gain independence according to their wishes without support from outside. However, the fact is that most of this support from the other countries was always combined with conditions and also had to benefit their interests. For example, the ETR leadership relied on Soviet backing to gain independence or full autonomy, but as subsequent events were to show, the Soviet power wanted only to manipulate them as puppets in the 'big game' of international power politics.<sup>27</sup> In other words, Xinjiang was a place where powerful states wanted to play the 'great games' and competed actively for their influence in the region.

The Muslim rebellions in the nineteenth century, the establishment of the Turkish-Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan in 1933 and the Eastern Turkestan Republic in 1944 were only the initial stage compared with the ethnic conflicts that happened in the 1980s and the 1990s. The impacts of Muslim separatist activities in recent decades are even more significant.

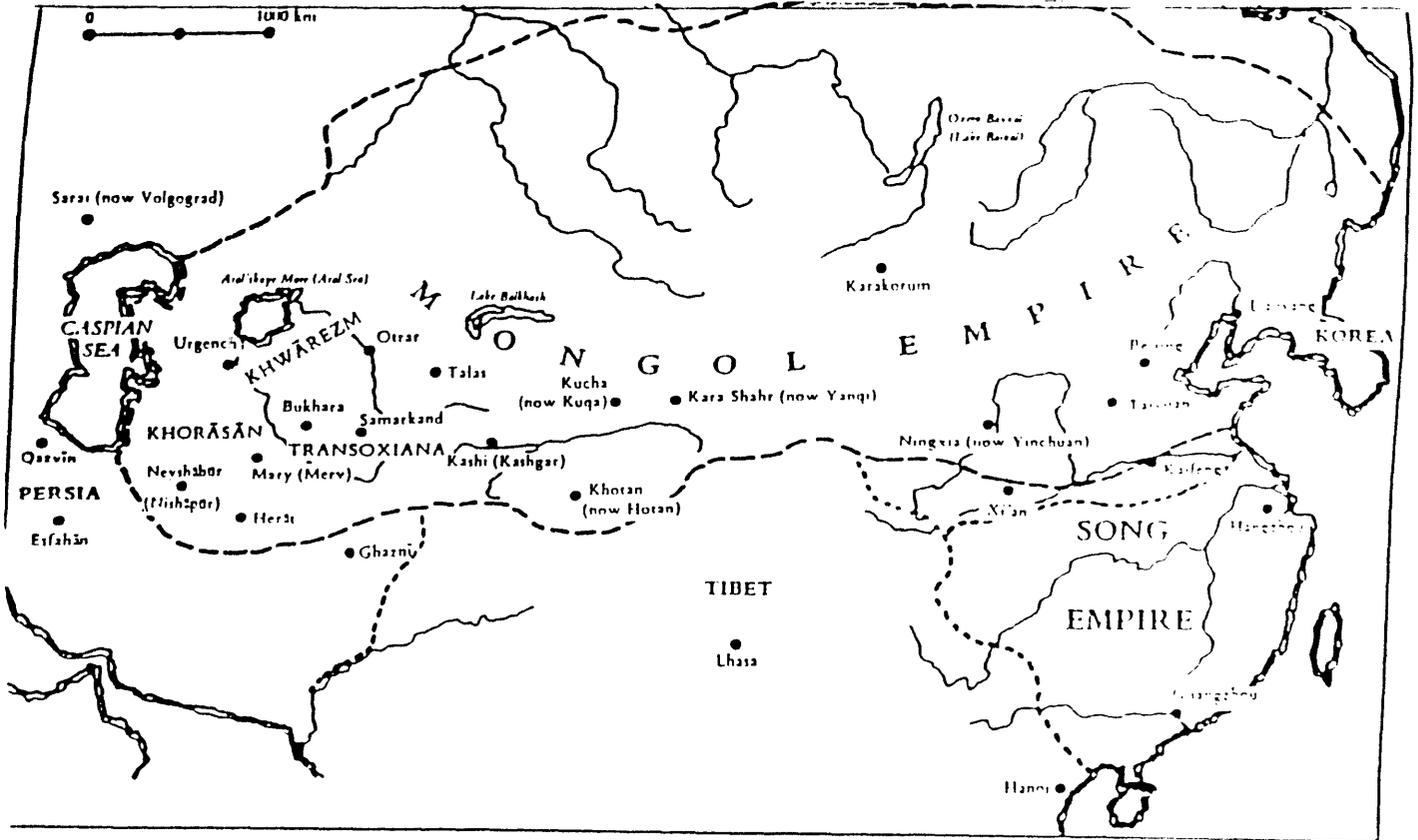
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<sup>27</sup> R.Sadri, 'The Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan: A Commemorative Review', *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol.5, 2 (1984), p. 256.

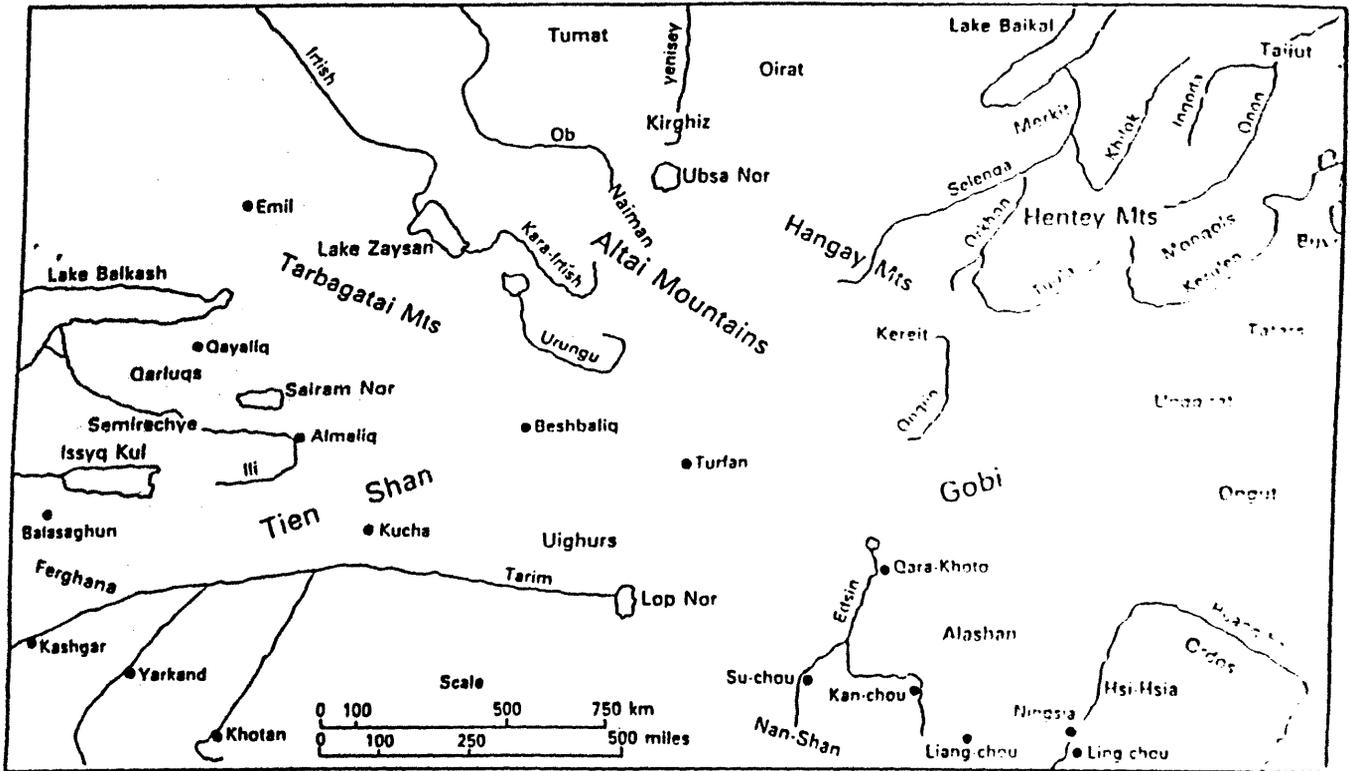


Map 2.1: The Qara Khitai Kingdom (1135-1218)

Source: provided by Pu Kafu, Central Asian Institute, Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences



Map 2.2: The Mongol Empire at the Time of Genghis Khan's Death (1227)  
 Source: provided by Pu Kafu, Central Asian Institute, Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences.



Map 2.3: Central Asia at the End of the Twelfth Century

Source: provided by Pu Kafu, Central Asian Institute, Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Islamic Revival in Xinjiang during the 1980s and 1990s**

#### **Introduction**

Although the Muslim rebellions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were quelled by the Qing Dynasty, recent history of Xinjiang strongly indicates that the Muslims never abandoned their separate identity and craving for independence. With the establishment of the Turkish-Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan (TIRET) in 1933 and the re-establishment of Eastern Turkestan Republic (ETR) in 1944, the Muslim uprisings seemed to approach a culmination. Then Muslims in Xinjiang were quiet for nearly forty years, until the storm of the Islamic resurgence swept over the world in the early 1980s.

The 1980s and 1990s have to be seen as a period of great social upheaval in terms of the ethnic separatist movement in China because of a series of sudden changes in the global political environment and the domestic situation. Due to these special circumstances, Muslim rebellions in Xinjiang occurred again and became part of the global Islamic resurgence. The eruption of these rebellions was based on three significant factors: the Islamic resurgence from the Islamic World and Soviet Central Asia in the early 1980s; the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the new Muslim Republics of Central Asia in 1992; and the Chinese government opening its doors to the outside world from the 1980s. What happened in the Islamic world and Central Asia from the early 1980s has demonstrated successful examples to the Muslim minorities in Xinjiang. These examples awoke and precipitated the

resurgence of Xinjiang's Muslim identity, the revival of the Islamic religion and resurrection of the unabated ideology of independence. The Chinese new policies, reforming and opening to the outside world, also provided the opportunities for the Muslim separatists to fulfil their wishes.

By giving examples of ethnic separatist activities and several incidents in Xinjiang, this chapter examines the Muslim separatist unrest in the early 1980s and the sustained violent uprising developed in the middle of the 1990s.

### **Confrontations in the Early 1980s**

Since 1949, Muslims of Xinjiang have kept silent for the most part and have not taken influential actions around the region, despite sporadic revolts occurring against the Chinese Communists. Tensions between Chinese authorities and ethnic groups have been particularly high during the 1980s in Xinjiang. Following Deng Xiaoping's return to power in 1978, increased freedom of expression and contact with the outside world provided a better chance than previously for Muslims to voice their grievances in various forms.

Generally speaking, serious tensions between ethnic groups and Han Chinese often started from small incidents rather than for national or religious reasons, but later these small incidents escalated into demonstrations, violent attacks and major political confrontations. As the consequence, things happened out of control and usually ended in casualties on all sides. These incidents forced the Chinese government reluctantly

to become involved in order to provide the stability and security to Xinjiang and its people, even by force. For example, the first serious conflict between Muslims and Han Chinese occurred in 1980 at Yie Cheng County in the Kashgar district of southern Xinjiang. It was known as the 'Gao Xu Incident', because the person concerned was named Gao Xu, a PLA soldier of the South Xinjiang Military District. Local media and other sources recounted that the accident occurred when Gao Xu drove a military truck full of ammunition and ran over a donkey belonging to an Uighur. Instead of calling for the police, a crowd of Uighur people attempted to snatch the military ammunition from the truck. In order to stop the Uighur people and frighten them away from the truck, Gao Xu opened fire but shot into the air. During the riot, one Uighur person was shot dead and a number of people wounded including army soldiers and ethnic people. In the next few days, thousands of Uighur Muslims held a demonstration by carrying the dead body. Hoping to placate the Uighurs' rapidly rising wrath, Gao Xu was sentenced to death by the military court. However, this raised a disturbance in his military unit based on feelings of unfairness and he appealed to the central government. Consequently, the relationship between the local military and the Uighurs was like an active volcano, which could erupt at any time. After consultation with Beijing, the sentence was rescinded, presumably because the disturbance of the military outweighed the prospect of a Muslim revolt.

In 1981, anti-Han sentiments ran strong, and even minor incidents could trigger serious unrest among Muslims. A riot erupted in Kashgar City after a Han shopkeeper killed an Uighur by accident. The Uighur had parked a donkey cart full of manure outside his shop. Thousands of Muslims held a demonstration through the center of the city carrying the dead body of the Uighur. In the following days, more than ten

thousand Muslims directed their wrath indiscriminately at any Han Chinese they could find. Meanwhile, Muslim peasants raided a military armory and attacked Han with stolen weapons, iron and wooden sticks. The Muslim insurgents destroyed the houses, damaged the shops, hotels and hospitals, robbed as many properties as they could, and raped Han girls. The frightened Han people had to ask the local military for protection and some stayed at their workplace where people kept watch in turns every night <sup>1</sup>.

The seriousness of such events alarmed the central government which sent Wang Zhen, the former top Party and PLA leader in Xinjiang and later politburo member to Xinjiang in the following months. Warned of the dangerous implications of continuing unrest, both Wang and Tomur Dawamat, governor of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region spoke of the necessity for unity and stability in Xinjiang's national relations <sup>2</sup>.

In late October, Wang Enmao was sent back to Urumqi to resume the posts of first secretary of the regional Party Committee and of political commissar of the Urumqi Military Command. Shortly after his return to Urumqi, he emphasized six tasks requiring immediate attention. On the key issue of unity, he stressed that a very serious problem still existed in maintaining and promoting unity and stability among the region's nationalities.<sup>3</sup> The *People's Daily* of 17<sup>th</sup> October 1982 reported: "Since Wang's return to Urumqi, the problem of national unity had been treated as a matter of prime importance at every meeting of the regional Party Committee. Wang pointed

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<sup>1</sup> Sources from local news and unpublished references.

<sup>2</sup> *Xinjiang Ribao*, 5 October 1980; 3 November 1981.

<sup>3</sup> *Urumqi Radio*, 6 January 1982.

out that opposing both Han chauvinism and local nationalism should be continued by resolute struggles against internal and external enemies, who were attempting to undermine unity and progress. <sup>4</sup>

### **Demonstration of Muslim Intellectuals in 1985**

The measures that Wang Enmao adopted had really quelled the riots and there was relative calm for three years in Xinjiang. Yet, in 1985, riots resumed. In December 1985, official documents reported that a number of 'reactionary wall posters' were found at different places on the campus of Xinjiang University, on which statements were made against the Han, the Chinese government and nuclear test issues. Moreover, an open letter including nine items of Muslim demands was sent to the Secretary-General of the UN in the name of 'colonised Muslim minorities in Eastern Turkestan'. To prevent the situation from becoming more serious, an investigation group including public security officers was sent to the university,<sup>5</sup> but the situation was still very intense.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> December 1985, more than two thousand Uighur students from seven universities demonstrated in Urumqi. The demonstrations lasted for several days until December 19th, hundreds of students attending a sit-in demonstration in front of the provincial government buildings, and more than three thousand students taking part in the protest. Protesters' demands included: an end to the nuclear testing in Xinjiang (on

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<sup>4</sup> *Renmin Ribao*, 17 October 1982.

<sup>5</sup> Source from unpublished internal report, 1986, p. 5

the fringes of Lop Nor close to the border of Kazakhstan); replacement of the Han officials assigned to Xinjiang by Beijing with democratically-elected minority candidates; an end to coercive family planning; an increase of opportunities for Muslim minority education at home and abroad; an end to the practice of sending Han immigrants to Xinjiang; and an end to the preference of placing Han Chinese in official appointments.<sup>6</sup> Student demonstrations were also held outside Urumqi, in Khotan, Aksu and Burtala. A few days later, there were more minority students' demonstrations in Beijing, Shanghai and Nanjing in support of Xinjiang's student movement.

The Party Committee of the Autonomous Region and the Xinjiang government were shocked by the incident and held an emergency meeting afterwards. Wang Enmao made an important speech at this meeting. He stated that the advent of minority students' demonstrating exposed Xinjiang local nationalists.<sup>7</sup> He claimed that this student movement was a well-organized and deliberate political action with the support of local nationalists. It was the first time that Muslims used posters and letters openly to demand political self-rule and vengeance against Chinese policies towards ethnic minorities. Also, it had never happened before that protesters rejected the personal arrangements in Xinjiang's high level leadership made by Beijing.<sup>8</sup> The official media alleged that the student demonstration in Xinjiang was not an isolated and spontaneous event, because it was greatly influenced by a demonstration against nuclear test movements in Alma-Ata, the capital city of Kazakhstan, which occurred

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Wang Enmao, 'xiang zizhiqu dangwei changweihui de huibao', 29 January 1986, in *guanche minzu zhengce wengjian xubian*, Xinjiang Renmin chubanshe, Urumqi, 1990, p. 42.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

just before. There was a report indicating that thousands of Uighur separatists were active in Alma-Ata to make a protest march regarding the Chinese nuclear test site Lop Nor.<sup>9</sup>

Officials assumed that the student demonstration received support from exiled Xinjiang Muslim separatists. The evidence was the public letter to the UN send by students. It was simultaneously published in the journal of the *Voice of the Eastern Turkestan* (Vol 9, 1986), which was sponsored by the exiled Muslim separatist organization 'Eastern Turkestan Charity Funds' in Turkey. Reports from the government confirmed that several exiled Uighurs were sent back from Turkey to Xinjiang for attempting to contact the movement organizers and the student leaders before the incident started.<sup>10</sup>

The Xinjiang government could hardly remain ignorant of these destabilizing effects while the country passed through a period of transition in its leadership and economy, and a wave of fundamentalist Islamic resurgence and Soviet intervention swept through the region adjacent to Xinjiang. Their response was largely designed to improve living conditions and to cater, to some extent, to the cultural and religious beliefs of the non-Han people. This relaxation of policy amounted to an attempt to encourage stability and steady development through a controlled revivalism in religious and national affairs, and to improve economic prosperity for all sectors sponsored and closely managed by the government. However, toleration and guarded

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<sup>9</sup> Source from unpublished internal report, 1986.

<sup>10</sup> Cheng Guanglian, 'fantujue zhuyi fengzi Mehmet Emin he Isa Alptekin de minzu fenlie huodong jiqi yingxiang', *Internal Publication*, Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences, vol.1, 1991, p. 4.

liberalization can lead to danger once they are set in motion. They can spark a flood of demands for further freedoms and greater autonomy by the local Muslims whose feelings of nationalism have long been frustrated by central Chinese regimes.<sup>11</sup>

### **Riot in 1989**

1989 was the unforgettable year for the Chinese people and the world due to the events of Tiananmen Square. It was almost unnoticed beyond China that a violent riot began in Urumqi, the capital city of Xinjiang, just before martial law was declared in Beijing. The origin of this riot was a book, *Sexual Customs*, published by Shanghai Cultural House. It is alleged that this book described Muslims going to Mecca for the purpose of sexual indulgence, and also gave a sexual interpretation of the design of the mosques and other Muslim architecture. Muslims declared that the book seriously besmirched Islam and harmed the religious feelings of all Muslims. They aroused strong resentment against Han Chinese in several regions within China.<sup>12</sup>

In early May 1989, several Hui Muslims from Gansu province travelled to Xinjiang and contacted the minority students of Xinjiang University in relation to the book, *Sexual Customs*. They came to get support from Xinjiang Muslims against the Chinese government for permitting publication of this book. Their action whipped up

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<sup>11</sup> D.H.McMillen, 'Xinjiang and Wang Enmao: new directions in power, policy and integration?', *The China Quarterly*, 99 (1984), p. 579.

<sup>12</sup> E.Alptekin, 'Chinese Policy in Eastern Turkestan', *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol.XIII, 1 (1992), p. 161.

racial sentiments among the minority students of Xinjiang University.<sup>13</sup> On 19<sup>th</sup> May, while more than 2000 students from Xinjiang University and other colleges marched to Party Headquarters to show their sympathy for the hunger strikers in Tiananmen Square, other groups of people joined in, including Muslims students from the Xinjiang Institute of Islamic Theology, and several thousand of their supporters, as well as vagrants. These groups of people had a totally different agenda from the other students. They protested against the publication of *Sexual Customs*. They attacked and stormed the building of the Regional Party Committee, Advisory Committee, and the Discipline Inspection Committee, creating a grave disturbance rarely seen since the Chinese Communist Party came to Xinjiang.<sup>14</sup> According to an official account, 40 vehicles were overturned and burned, more than 150 security forces, police and government officers were injured, and 140 ruffians were arrested, of which over 30 were sentenced to more than 10 years' imprisonment after the riot. A few days later, the book *Sexual Customs* was banned by the central government.<sup>15</sup> The Shanghai Cultural Press was fined and went out of business, while the editor and two authors were arrested and charged in the law courts. The case was finally concluded in 1991.

The riot in Xinjiang caused a chain reaction. It was reported that following the incident in Xinjiang, Muslim unrest also occurred simultaneously in Gansu and Qinghai as well as in Ninxia where most of the population were Muslims. The Chinese government condemned the 'small handful' of Muslim ruffians who were inciting public opinion against the Communist Party, the government and the People's

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<sup>13</sup> Source from unpublished internal references, 1991, p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> Y.H.Shichor, p. 73.

<sup>15</sup> *Xinjiang Ribao*, 2 June 1989.

Liberation Army, attacking trains, and causing several disruptions to service on the Gansu-Qinghai line.<sup>16</sup>

The crisis occurred at the same time that the student movement in Tiananmen Square reached its height. The central government was more worried about the underlying discontent that had unleashed this rage than about reactions to the book.<sup>17</sup> The whole series of events had shown that the power of the Muslims could exert quite extraordinary political muscle in China. Through this event, it has been seen that religion had achieved not only social power but also political power in the ethnic minority areas. Muslims can use it as a great impetus against the Chinese government. The Chinese government, in dealing with the publication of the book *Sexual Customs*, had shown that the customs and habits of the minority nationalities should be respected by others, as had been written in the Chinese Constitution in 1954, 1975, 1978, and especially in 1982. It was also a warning to those who might try to undermine the unity of the nationalities, that the same result would occur no matter what nationality they were.

A mullah in the main Yinchuan mosque said in 1990 that compared with the British government's handling of the Rushdie affair, the Chinese government showed there was more freedom of religion in China than in England. For the Chinese government, the controversy over the book was a mere sideshow. As Mackerras said: "It was an ideal opportunity to keep the minority nationalities happy and in support of the

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<sup>16</sup> *Beijing Radio*, June, 1989.

<sup>17</sup> J.T.Dreyer, 1994, p. 48.

government. Freedom of publication was not an important or even relevant principle".<sup>18</sup>

### **'Baren Incident' in 1990 and Muslim Separatists Calling for Jihad and Independence**

The Tiananmen incident in May-June of 1989 and the Muslim unrest in Urumqi, stimulated more small-scale sporadic demonstrations and gatherings towards the end of the year in Kashgar. They were supposed to be the major potential sources of religious and separatist agitation. According to Chinese official sources, in July 1989 an 'Islamic Party of Eastern Turkestan' allegedly was established. It was active in recruiting members from young Muslims, holding meetings, collecting funds, storing weapons and ammunition, and preparing for a large-scale rebellion.<sup>19</sup>

It was reported later from government sources that Muslim separatists had planned to have an armed uprising throughout Xinjiang around the 12<sup>th</sup> April, during the time of Ramadan. However, an incident caused the uprising of Baren Township to be prematurely shifted to an earlier time. The local police arrested one of the members of the 'Islamic Party of Eastern Turkestan' for disseminating a message of 'Jihad' by video. Organizers and leaders of the Islamic Party were startled by the news and decided to have an armed uprising in advance.<sup>20</sup> On April 5<sup>th</sup> 1990, an armed uprising

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<sup>18</sup> C.Mackerras, *China's Minority Cultures: Identities and Integration Since 1912*, Longman, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1995, p. 126.

<sup>19</sup> Abudurahiti Wusmen, 'Barenxiang fan geming baoluan pinding hou dui woqu zongjiao huodong de fansi', *unpublished internal report*, Xinjiang shehui kexueyuan, 1991, pp. 160-161.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

broke out at Baren Township of Akto County, in the Kizilesu Kirghiz autonomous prefecture of Xinjiang, not far away from Kashgar. This violent riot led to a series of clashes in which at least seven members of the People's Armed Policemen and one minority cadre, who was sent to negotiate with the rebels, were killed. About 3000 armed Muslim separatists occupied the government buildings of Baren Township calling for Jihad against the Han Chinese, and at the same time they proclaimed the establishment of 'Eastern Turkestan Republic'.<sup>21</sup>

The next day, 6<sup>th</sup> April, the situation at Baren Township worsened and grew out of control at Baren Township. Chinese authorities dispatched armed police forces, militiamen and the People's Liberation Army to Baren to quell the uprising. As shown on television, the army and the Muslims fought each other fiercely on a battlefield. From April 8<sup>th</sup>, martial law was enforced in this area. Yet resistance did not cease. Almost 200 Muslim rebels retreated to the areas near the Pamirs and continued their resistance. They wanted to cross the border and flee to neighboring countries. The government military forces stopped them by using helicopters and cavalry units. Hundreds of rebels were wounded, more than a hundred were arrested, and fifteen were killed, including the rebels' leader J. Yusup.<sup>22</sup> The whole process of the uprising was shown on Xinjiang television and a special exhibition, 'Putting down the Anti-Revolutionary Armed Uprising at the Baren Township,' was held in Xinjiang later on. The official media stated that many Muslims were forced to fight with armed policemen by Islamic extremists for exemption from having to contribute a large amount of money. Some religious clerics who were involved in the riot promised, in

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. Also see Xinjiang Television, April 1990.

the name of Islam, that paradise would be waiting for those who died and hell for those who did not fight against the 'infidels'.<sup>23</sup>

The Xinjiang government strongly condemned: "This violent rebellion is a well-planned, well-organized, anti-Party, anti-socialist and counter-revolutionary uprising plotted by a small number of ethnic 'splittists' (term used by the Chinese authorities to refer to Xinjiang ethnic separatists)".<sup>24</sup> The uprising was subsequently put down and order was apparently restored. But animosity between Muslim minorities and Han Chinese and the threat from national separatists never stopped. The gaps between these ethnic groups are widening. However, the official media emphasized that religion or nationality did not cause the disturbances in southern Xinjiang's tensions. The origin of the instability actually is from the activities of "extremely reactionary political forces whose aim was to undermine the nation's unification and unity among nationalities and practise splittism of nationalities".<sup>25</sup>

The Chinese officials believed that the main threat to the stability of Xinjiang came from "the splittists forces within and outside the country".<sup>26</sup>

Those 'within' obviously refer to a 'handful of national splittists who were using the cloak of religion to instigate rebellion amongst fanatical followers'. From the Chinese government's internal report, the Islamic Party of Eastern Turkestan, which was formed by "national splittists and extreme religious clergymen", organized the

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<sup>23</sup> Abudurhiti Wusmen, p. 165.

<sup>24</sup> Xinjiang Television, April 1990. More details see the Party leaders speech and official articles.

<sup>25</sup> Abudurhiti Wusmen, p. 170.

<sup>26</sup> 'Minority Affairs', *The China Quarterly*, 123 September 1990, p. 583.

rebellion.<sup>27</sup> From July 1989, members of the Islamic Party of Eastern Turkestan took the local religious schools and mosques as their safety sites from where they were recruiting their membership, collecting money from believers, buying and making weapons, training young Muslims and preparing for a big uprising. They had planned for a thirty-year war, in which the first ten years would be a terrorist war, the second ten years would be a guerrilla war, and the last ten years would be a regular war.<sup>28</sup> One Islamic Party leader of Xinjiang claimed in August 1989 that the main purpose of the organization was to wipe out Marxism by using the Koran, and to establish an Islamic republic throughout Xinjiang. A military commander of the rebellion stated in October 1989 at a meeting for recruiting new members, that they would try to practise the Islamic religion in order to overthrow the rule of Marxism and win the independence of Xinjiang, and that they would do everything based on the Koran.<sup>29</sup>

Those 'outside the country' presumably refers to those exiled ethnic separatists who were trying to incite secession from outside China. Many books, pamphlets, tapes, and videos banned by the Customs of Xinjiang, showed that the Baren event was strongly supported by the separatist movement outside China and highly influenced by the global Islamic resurgence. The most convincing example showed by the Xinjiang government was the journal of the *Voice of Eastern Turkestan* which was sponsored by the exiled Uighurs' organization 'Eastern Turkestan Charity Funds', led by Isa Alptkin. In the articles of this journal, Isa rails against the "current Chinese colonialism in Xinjiang and calls for 'Jihad' to overthrow the rule of the Chinese

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<sup>27</sup> Abudurihiti Wusmen, p. 171.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Communist Party".<sup>30</sup> Another report in 1992 also stated that exiled Uighurs in the Kazakhstan capital, Alma-Ata, had vowed to launch a guerilla war in Xinjiang, to seek international recognition for their cause.<sup>31</sup> An Australian scholar wrote in his book that Turkey also had been involved in Xinjiang's separatist movement for some time, while Islamic secessionists also received help from sympathizers in some of the states of western Asia.<sup>32</sup> The support from outside the region was not only moral but also material. Another report clearly stressed that Xinjiang rebels were receiving weapons from tribesmen across the border, mainly from Afghanistan's and Pakistan's unofficial armed forces. Some young Uighurs and Kirghiz were sent across the border and trained secretly for 'Jihad'.<sup>33</sup>

As the consequence of the Baren Incident, the Chinese government reemphasized the importance of pursuing political stability rather than economic development in Xinjiang, which was the priority of the region from the time of the implementation of the open policy in the 1980s. A large campaign against ethnic separatism was launched by the Xinjiang government in the whole region and has been continuing since then.

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<sup>30</sup> Hasmu Hoja and Han Lin, 'guowai Fan Tujue zhuyi shili huodong he Yisilan fuxing yundong jiankuang', a research report published by Xinjiang shehui kexueyuan, 15 (1990), p. 20.

<sup>31</sup> Asia Week, XVIII, 15 April 1992, p. 28.

<sup>32</sup> C.Mackerras, 1994, p. 194.

<sup>33</sup> Cheng Guang Lian, p. 26.

### **Three Controversial Books and the Issue of Xinjiang's History**

During the period 1986 to 1989, three controversial books-*Weiwuer Ren (The Uighurs)*, *Xongnu Jianshi (The History of Hsiung-nu)* and *Weiwuer Gudai Wenxue (The Uighurs' Ancient Literature)*-were published by the Xinjiang Youth Press in Urumqi and Uighur Languages Press in Kashgar, and they generated a great stir among Xinjiang Muslims and the press. The author of the three books is Turghun Almas, a professional poet in the Xinjiang Federation of Literary and Art Circles. He became a conspicuous figure within Xinjiang and abroad after the event. What made the Chinese government feel anxious was not just the books, but their impact on the Muslims. These three controversial books caused serious debate about the issues of Xinjiang's history and nationality among government officials, academic circles and Muslims. Soon these books prevailed rapidly throughout Xinjiang and were published overseas. The quick response from the government was that these books were banned and an academic inspection of the books was arranged.

In the period from May to October of 1990, the three books had been translated into Chinese. Over the following month, more than 20 scholars and experts from the disciplines of history, archaeology, ethnology and minority literature were invited to carefully examine the contents of the three books. In February and March of 1991, the Bureau of Press and Publications Administration of Xinjiang also organized experts and scholars in history and publication areas to censor and make comments on these books. The final result confirmed that the three books distorted and misrepresented the history of Xinjiang and various nationalities from political and

academic points of view. The books advocated the national separatism ideology and militated against the unity of nationalities.<sup>34</sup> Some important points are outlined as follows: firstly, the author of the book misinterpreted the facts that the various nationalities, which had been living in the north part of China at different times spoken different languages, and were all the ancestors and compatriots of the Uighurs. He proclaimed that the birthplace of the Uighurs was Central Asia as a whole, and the Uighurs had their own history for about 8000 years.<sup>35</sup>

According to Chinese historical records, the Uighurs (those so called today) can trace their origins as Dingling--Tiele (Gao Che)--Hui-he (Huihu)--Uighurs, and were only one of the ancient tribes in the Western Region (Xiyu).<sup>36</sup> Chinese academic scholars pointed out that the reason why Turghun Almas claimed that all ancient residents-such as Hsiung-nu (later infamous in Europe as the Huns)<sup>37</sup>, Saka, Dayueshi, Uysun, Xian Bei, Rou Ran, T'u-chueh (Turks), Khitan, Oirat, even Genghis Khan -were the ancestors and compatriots of the Uighurs, was twofold. One reason put forward was that the historical activities of the Uighurs could be traced back to 5000 BC if Hsiung-nu (Huns) was taken as their ancestor.<sup>38</sup> Another was that their historical activity could be expanded in the east to the border of the Kuril Islands, west to the Black Sea, north to Lake Baikal and upper Yenisei River, south to the Great Wall, and southwest

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<sup>34</sup> Zhang Hongchao, 'Weiwuer Ren deng sanbenshu wenti taolunhui zongshu', *Xiyu yanjiu*, 1991, Special Issue, p. 72.

<sup>35</sup> Turghun Almas, *Weiwuer Ren (The Uighurs)*, Xinjiang qingshaonian chubanshe, Urumqi, 1989, pp. 175-176.

<sup>36</sup> Liou Zhixiao, 'zhonghua minzu tongyi tuanjie jinbu de lishi zhuliou burong fouding', *Xiyu yanjiu*, 1991, Special Issue, p. 51.

<sup>37</sup> L.J.Moser, *The Chinese Mosaic: the peoples and provinces of China*, Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1985, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> Turghun Almas, *Xongnu Jianshi (The History of Hsiung-nu)*, Weiwuer Yu chubanshe, Kashgar, 1986, pp. 1-2.

to the border of Northern India, if the T'u-chueh (Turks) were regarded as their ancestor.<sup>39</sup> It is obvious that the author tended to expropriate the common heritages, which rightfully belongs to all nomadic tribes of Xiyu. Wimbush aptly called this tendency 'cultural imperialism'.<sup>40</sup>

Secondly, the author of the three books misinterpreted the historical regimes, which had been established by different northern inhabitants at different historical periods, as many independent states beyond the historical category of China.<sup>41</sup> He declared in his books that from the recorded history of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Uighurs had established 11 large, powerful, rich and civilized empires and kingdoms. They were Uyghus Empire-Great Hsiung-nu Empire (220 BC-AD 216), Europe Hsiung-nu Empire (375-468), White Hsiung-nu (Yanda) Empire (420-565), Great Blue T'u-chueh Khanate (551-745), Ouighun (Hui-he) Khanate (646-845), Gaochang Huihu Kingdom (850-1187), Uighur Karahan Dynasty (850-1212), Ghazni Dynasty (960-1187), Great Sahrzhuk Sultan Kingdom (1040-1157), Khwarazm Kingdom (1172-1231) and Sayid Dynasty (1504-1678).<sup>42</sup> Yet Chinese academic experts claimed that among the eleven empires and kingdoms, which the author enumerated in the books, some never existed in history, some had no relation with the Uighur nationality, and some did not even belong to the category of Chinese history.<sup>43</sup> For example, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century when Hsiung-nu (Huns) established the slaveholder military regime in the north part of China, the Dingling, which was the ancestor of the Uighur nationality, was only one

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<sup>39</sup> Turghun Almas, 1989, pp. 175-176.

<sup>40</sup> S.E. Wimbush, 'The Politics of Identity Change in Soviet Central Asia', *Central Asian Survey*, vol.3, 3 (1984), p. 73.

<sup>41</sup> Liu Zhixiao, 1991, p. 53.

<sup>42</sup> Turghun Almas, 1989, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Liu Zhixiao, 1991, p. 53.

of the tribes under the control of Hsiung-nu slaveholders. In the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, when T'u-chueh (Turks) established their Khanate, the Hui-he (Huihu) which was the ancestor of the Uighurs, was also one of the tribes under the control of the T'u-chueh (Turks) Khanate. Until the early years of the Tang Dynasty, the Hui-he (Huihu) gradually developed into a Khanate. At the same time, the Hui-he (Huihu) accepted the official appointment from the Tang Dynasty and a title conferred by the Tang Dynasty to establish seven Superior Prefectures (Fu) and eight Prefectures (Chou). The Ghazni Dynasty and the Great Sahrzhuk Sultan Kingdom, which were established by the T'u-chueh (Turks), were actually independent states beyond the territory of China. They had no relationship with the Uighurs.<sup>44</sup> Additional evidence provided by Chinese experts was that in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Uighur established the Karahan Dynasty, its emperor being called Khan of Taohuashi (meaning Tang dynasty).<sup>45</sup> Their culture was a mixture of Turkic traditional cultural and Islamic culture that had emerged during the period of the Abbasid Dynasty, which contained Uighur, Kazak, and Tajik Islamic culture.<sup>46</sup> The author's purpose for listing the eleven 'Uighur Dynasties' was supposedly to give people the impression that Uighur people had established many independent states beyond the Chinese regime since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.<sup>47</sup>

Thirdly, the author of the three books misinterpreted the relationship between nomadic nationalities of the north steppe areas and sedentary people of the Central

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<sup>44</sup> Chen Hua, 'wei minzu fenglie zhuyi zhizao lishi genjiu de sanbenshu', *Xiyu yanjiu*, 1991, Special Issue, p. 37.

<sup>45</sup> Guo Pingliang, 'weishenme yao qujie Taohuashi', *Xiyu yanjiu*, Special Issue, 1991, pp. 68-71.

<sup>46</sup> Ibn Al-Athiri, *Chronicon Quod Prefectissimum Inscrbitur*, vols 9-12, translated by Wei Liangtao, see his work *Karahan Wangchao Shigao*, Xinjiang Renmin chubanshe, Urumqi, 1986.

<sup>47</sup> Cheng Hua, p. 38.

Plain areas as being warlike.<sup>48</sup> In all three books, he described the history of Xinjiang as being full of crucial war and conflicts among the Hsiung-nu (Huns), T'u-chueh (Turks) and the Han nationalities, and between nomadic peoples and the Central Plain empires.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, he regards 'Heqin was an espionage activity and would sow discord in the state ruling'.<sup>50</sup> Heqin was considered to be an important diplomatic practice in the history of China. By marrying daughters of the Han imperial family, the minority rulers along the border areas would cement the relationship of both sides. Chinese scholars criticized the author for deliberately missing the seven Superior Prefectures (Fu) and eight Prefectures (Chou), which had been established by the Tang Dynasty as administrative institutes in the Mo-bei Huihu and Xiyu areas. The author also did not mention the establishment of the Anxi and Pei-t'ing Protectorates, where had been the commands of military governors at the southern and northern Tianshan Mountains since the Han and Tang Dynasties (see Map 3.1). There was not even a mention of the fact that Ku-li-P'ei-li and the other twelve Uighur K'o-Khans were conferred titles by the Tang Dynasty. Chinese historians commented that the author uses these books to attempt to provoke historical grievances among different nationalities and to advocate ethnic separatism under the pretext of academic research.<sup>51</sup>

In February 1991, a big conference on the three books was held in Urumqi. The Communist Party, government leaders, officials from the press and propaganda agency, and academic scholars attended the conference. Important persons who gave

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<sup>48</sup> Liu Zhixiao, 1991, p. 51.

<sup>49</sup> Turghun Almas, 1989, p. 232.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 265.

<sup>51</sup> Ji Dachun, p. 65.

speeches at the conference included: Wang Enmao, a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC); Ismail Aymat, director of the State Nationalities Affairs Commission; Tomur Dawamat, Chairman of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region; Janabur, Deputy Party Secretary of Xinjiang Communist Party Committee; and Feng Dazhen, Propaganda Minister.

The conference reached agreement that the three books deliberately misinterpreted, distorted, and fabricated Xinjiang's history in term of academic studies, and provided the historical grounds for the ethnic separatism and imperilment of the unity of nationalities. This kind of behavior should be criticized.<sup>52</sup> Participants of the conference also pointed out that the three books were the achievements of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism, which has spread in Xinjiang since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, in order to carry out the campaign against national separatism in Xinjiang in the future, an understanding of the history of Xinjiang and its nationalities was considered the necessary step.<sup>53</sup> Official leaders called for stopping the dissemination of separatist ideas to schoolchildren and urged strict control of publications that could propagate ethnic separatism and extreme religious thought.<sup>54</sup>

### **Bombings, Assassinations and Violent Actions Link to Muslim Separatists since 1990**

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<sup>52</sup> Zhang Hongchao, 1991, Special Issue, pp.76.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

1992 was an equally tense year for Xinjiang. Demonstrations and armed rebellions of Muslim separatists were replaced by serious terrorist activities. The official media reported that on 5<sup>th</sup> February, the time when the Chinese Han people celebrated the Spring Festival, a bomb blasted in a public bus in Urumqi killing 6 people and injuring 20. At the same time, two more bombs were found in a bus and a video room located in the central area of the city. Criminals were caught later and confessed that Muslim separatists directed these bomb explosions.<sup>55</sup>

During the summer and winter of 1993, there were reports of widely scattered bombings in Kashgar, Turfan and other cities and riots in twelve counties and cities of Xinjiang.<sup>56</sup> On the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1993, a bomb ripped a huge hole in a government building in a Kashgar city, killing or wounding up to 10 people and causing serious damages. It was believed to be an anti-government attack from various local Muslim activists. According to the government internal report, the four-story building belonged to the city municipal government and housed the offices of the agricultural machinery division. Public Security Bureau forces had arrested one person allegedly involved in the bombing. <sup>57</sup>.

Bombings also occurred in other cities in eastern and southern Xinjiang. There was a report that the wide scattered bombings coincided with a meeting of Islamic militants in Kashgar, which included representatives from Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, and

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<sup>55</sup> Sources from local news and unpublished internal report, 1992.

<sup>56</sup> Sources from local news and unpublished internal report, 1993.

<sup>57</sup> FBIS-CHI, 24 June 1993.

Kashmir as well as Yining Muslims.<sup>58</sup> It is said that the head of the Ministry of Public Security of China, Wang Fang, accompanied by Cheng Jinchi, the president of the Public Security Department of Xinjiang, had been in Kashgar to deal with the bombings.<sup>59</sup>

Turmoil continued escalating in November 1993. According to the government official internal report from 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> November, organized riots had erupted in 12 counties and cities of Xinjiang: Ining, Aksu, Bole, Khotan, Kurle, Chabuchar, Gongliu, Weili, Shaya, Luopu, Wensu and Akto. Demonstrators and people who were involved in the riots attacked the local Communist Party and government departments, including the local Public Security Bureau and Judicial Departments. Some of the demonstrators threw bombs and incendiary bombs made by themselves at the government propaganda cars. The most serious riot was in Kurle City, where there are the most important oil bases in Xinjiang. On the 8<sup>th</sup> November, demonstrators in Kurle City robbed the state goods and materials storehouse, and shot the local army soldiers. Meanwhile, another group of about 600 people occupied the railway station, demanding to go to Urumqi by train to petition. The demonstrators took hostage the Deputy-Party Secretary, the Deputy Mayor of Kurle City and other leaders for 6 hours. The riots continued until next morning with 9 people being killed, including two policemen, and 80 people injured. Preliminary investigation by officials had confirmed that there were small numbers of Party and government cadres involved in

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<sup>58</sup> J.T.Dreyer, 1994, p. 53.

<sup>59</sup> Sources from internal report, 1993.

the riots. A few underground organizations deliberately sowed discord between Hui and Uighur nationalities and intensified the incidents.<sup>60</sup>

As centrifugal forces emanate from Xinjiang, greater contacts with the outside world increased demands for greater concessions by Muslims. In May 1995, five Muslim separatists were sentenced to death for supporting the independent movement and being responsible for the bombings in 1992, but even the executions seem unlikely to stop the Muslim rebellions in Xinjiang. In July 1995, another armed rebellion took place in Khotan district, which is close to Kashgar. According to the local media, a few Muslim extremists, on the pretext of replacing Hatip (a title of religious clergyman) incited the ordinary people to rebel against the Chinese government and the Communist Party.<sup>61</sup> One month later, 19 Muslim rebels were accused of participating in the 'anti-revolutionary organizations' and unlawful possession of weapons. The new Party secretary of Xinjiang, Wang Lequan, called for strong action against national separatists and the wiping out of all 'illegal religious activities'.<sup>62</sup>

In 1996, Separatists fighting for the independence of Xinjiang had organized a series of political killings. Pro-government Muslim leaders and innocent people became the targets of separatist assassins. A government internal report confirmed that in February 1996, a pro-government mullah, Akenmu Sidike, was shot dead by Muslim extremists in western Toksun County. In April of the same year, Muslim separatist

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<sup>60</sup> Lee Zijing, 'Xinjiang shire xianshi baodong', *Dongxiang* (Hong Kong), December 1993, pp. 18-19.

<sup>61</sup> Sources from internal report, 1995.

<sup>62</sup> Chinese official explanation about 'illegal religious activities': any action by using religion to advocate separatism ideology, jeopardize the national security, subvert state power and undermine unity of the nation all can be considered as 'illegal religious activities'. See the speech of Wang Lequan, *Xinjiang Ribao*, 24 October 1997.

assassins also attempted to kill a Vice-Chairman of Xinjiang's Political Consultative Conference.<sup>63</sup> The figures from the central security department show that in 1996, there were 96 violent riots with hundreds of participants and 26 violent riots with thousands of participants. More than 420 policemen and military soldiers were wounded or dead. More than 4700 Muslim separatists and ruffians were arrested, 3130 of them being sentenced to imprisonment and about 220 Muslim separatist leaders being sentenced to death.<sup>64</sup> The report also confirmed that for the recent violent riots, Xinjiang ethnic separatists had colluded with international forces, such as organizations in the United States and separatists in Saudi Arabia. Some high level Communist Party members were also involved in the separatist activities. Accordingly, the government officials stated that Communist Party members and officials involved in political bombings, assassinations or other violent terrorist activities must be immediately investigated and given due punishment.<sup>65</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The demonstrations, armed rebellions and violent riots that have occurred in Xinjiang in recent years, clearly indicate that Muslim separatist activities in Xinjiang are becoming increasingly stronger since the 1980s, reaching their peak in the 1990s. Also, the demands of the Muslim separatists have changed from the early 1980s to the

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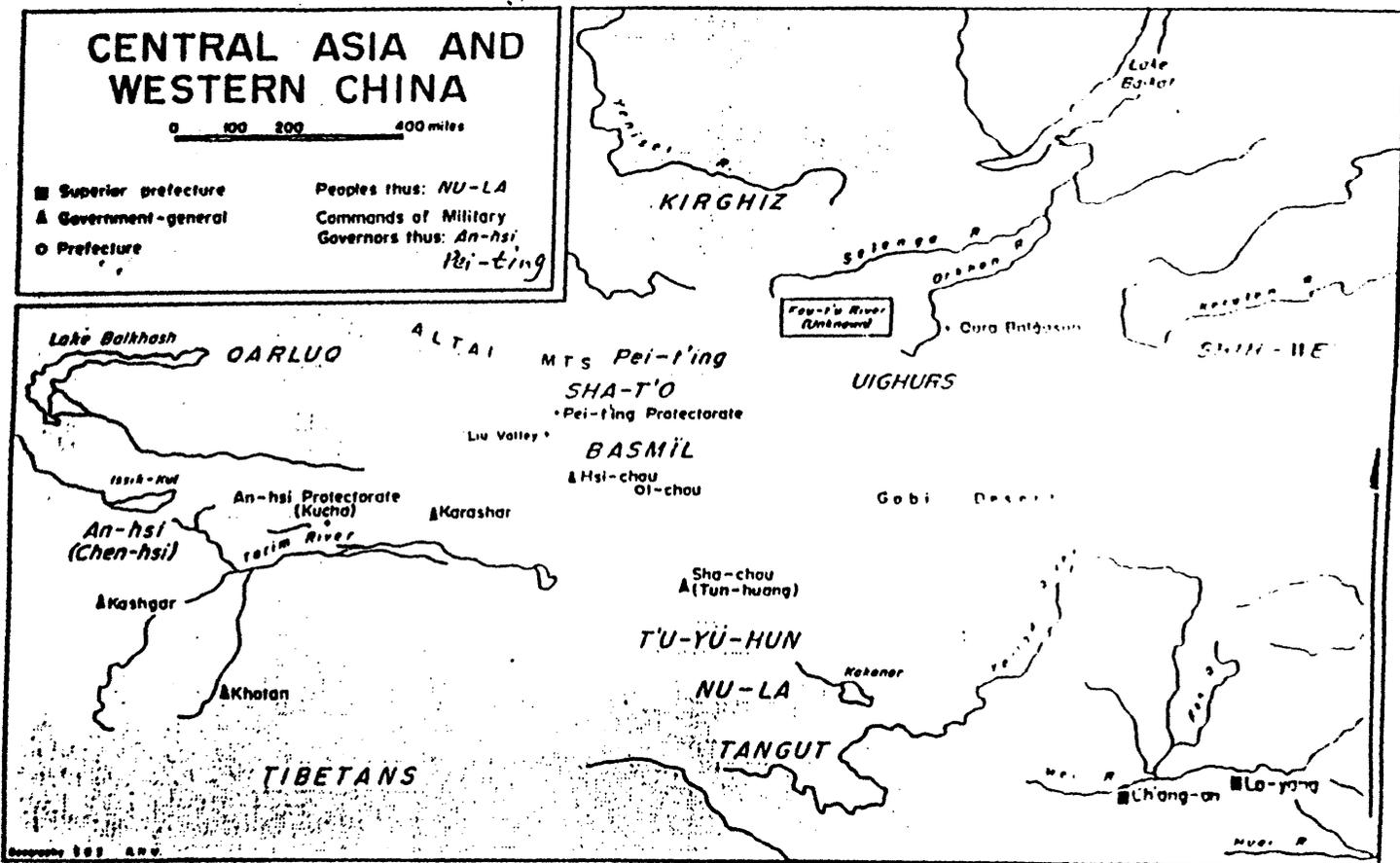
<sup>63</sup> Source from official internal report, 1996.

<sup>64</sup> Guan Jie, 'Xinjiang wuzhuang baodong jishi', *Zhengmin* (Hong Kong), March 1997, p. 26.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

1990s, from demands for economic development and freedom of religion to the independence of Xinjiang. However, no matter how they changed the form of the demands, the essential nature of ethnic separatism could not be changed: fighting for the independence of Xinjiang in the name of Muslim and Islamic religions, which had strong national cohesion among Xinjiang's indigenous people. Religious problems proved to be the fuel of most riots, especially when the religious problems intertwined with national issues. Compared with the previous Muslim rebellions, the scale and scope of demonstrations and riots during the 1980s and 1990s have become larger and they are very well organized. Young Muslims, especially those, who are well educated, some of them even educated abroad became the main forces of the rebellions. Historical experience indicates that national conflicts have a peculiarly festering quality. During some periods, they are latent, then erupt, only to subside again, and so the cycle continues. The incidents, which happened in Xinjiang during the 1980s and 1990s, were the best examples.

The frequency and intensity of these violent riots have threatened the unity of China and its nationalities, the political stability and economic development of Xinjiang. For this reason, the Xinjiang government has adopted a mix of radical and moderate methods. These include an increase in security alertness and presence; further limits on religious and cultural activities; an intensified campaign against separatism and its upholders; mobilising support from local community leaders; and ultimately, the armed crackdown of violent riots followed by the arrest and sentencing of the culprits. It is certain that there is no way that the Chinese central government would give up its sovereignty over Xinjiang nor concede to any Muslim claim for an independent Xinjiang.



Map 3.1: Central Asia and Western China  
 Source: provided by Pu Kafu, Central Asian Institute, Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences.