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CHINA'S XINJIANG POLICY: AN ANALYSIS BASED ON THE THEORY OF RELATIVE DEPRIVATION

Xinjiang, which is China's western province that comprised 18 percent of the country's total land area and heavily populated by non-Han Chinese ethnic minorities, is a region increasingly beset by the problem of confrontation between two very distinct groups- the more recently arrived Han and the indigenous Uighur Turkish Muslims. The confrontation revolves primarily around the struggle for domination over the province between the two, and also Uighur quest for greater autonomy rights or even independence from the government of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In order to tackle these problems, the government of CCP has already taken and implemented both coercive and persuasive measures and policies in Xinjiang since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. However, disturbances by ethnic minorities in Xinjiang such as violent demonstrations and ethnic clashes continue and can recur anytime in the future with little forewarning if necessary steps were not taken. All these, reflect the failure of CCP government's policies towards Xinjiang in its efforts to ensure stability in the region. To what extent the effectiveness of CCP's policies towards Xinjiang depends on the factor of relative deprivation (RD) that exist among the minorities in Xinjiang, particularly the Uighurs when they compare themselves with their Han counterparts that obviously have better living conditions compared to them.

Keywords: *Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR), ethnic minority, relative deprivation, resentment, separatism, terrorism, ethnic conflict, East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM)*

Introduction

Beijing has already implemented both coercive and persuasive measures and policies in Xinjiang in order to curb the problems of Uighur separatism as well as ethnic confrontation between the Uighurs and the Hans in the region. However, disturbances by ethnic minorities such as violent demonstrations continue to occur and these disturbances have in fact turned more serious in terms of their magnitude, where they became increasingly violent and caused higher property as well as human losses in recent years. Thus, one may ask, despite all the strategies taken by the Chinese Government in order to restore peace and stability in Xinjiang, why the situation in Xinjiang not only did not get any better but has in fact become worse?

In this article, I examine this question both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, I have identify an interesting explanation that would better explain the failure of Beijing's Xinjiang policy since 1949 based on the theory of Relative

Deprivation, and hypothesize that there are five factors that lead to the feeling of relative deprivation among the Uighurs in Xinjiang that eventually cause failure in the policy. These factors include historical memory of the Uighurs, Uighurs' instinct to preserve their identity and PRC's insensitivity towards local Muslim sentiments, mass influx of Han Chinese into Xinjiang, as well as Xinjiang's increasing exposure to the Islamic world. These hypotheses are different from Beijing's opinion that the resentment among its Xinjiang minorities is caused by the problem of poverty. Empirically, I have also examine Beijing's Xinjiang policy since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 and how these policies have shifted through time and event.

This article is divided into three sections. I first lay out PRC's policy in Xinjiang from the period of 1949 until 2009. This section also shows how the policy changes over time as well as the internal and external factors that facilitated those changes. In the next section, I then introduce my theoretical framework and my explanation about the main question of this study. The conclusion considers that some of these new interpretations might be able to offer some solutions to the 'Xinjiang Problem' and suggest changes in how Chinese scholars and policymakers should look at the issue today and in the future in order to restore peace and stability in the region.

China's Policy towards Xinjiang

The discussion about China's Xinjiang policy will be divided to four phases and will be discussed accordingly. The first phase will discuss about China's policy in Xinjiang for the period between 1949-1976, while the second phase will discuss Beijing's policy in Xinjiang for the time period of 1977-1990. This is followed by the third phase that will discuss about Beijing's policy in Xinjiang from 1991-2000. Lastly, the fourth phase will discuss about China's Xinjiang policy for year 2001-2009.

The First Phase: 1949-1976

In the end of 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had successfully taken control over Xinjiang and China from Guomindang (GMD) after the long 22 years of civil war. In 1st October 1949, Mao Zedong has announced the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) with its capital in Beijing. During this period of time, it is important for Beijing to strengthen its territorial integrity by monitoring and reducing the separatist tendencies among the population in Xinjiang that share a strong ethnic ties with population in Soviet Union's territories in Central Asia. Therefore, to achieve this goal, Beijing in the early stage of the establishment of the PRC has taken a more tolerant policy towards Xinjiang in order to further integrate Xinjiang into the PRC.

In 1st October 1955, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region was officially established.¹ The establishment of XUAR with the 'autonomous' status means that the population in Xinjiang is supposed to have their rights to rule the province although their 'autonomous' rights have been limited by Beijing. However, The CCP's *tongyi zhanxian* (united front) policy counseled the establishment of links with 'progressive members' of social and religious elites, which involved only minimal interference in business,

¹ Michael Dillon, "Ethnic, Religious and Political Conflict on China's Northwestern Border: The Background to the Violence in Xinjiang," *IBRU Boundary and Security Bulletin* (Spring 1997), p. 81.

religious practice, or social norms in Xinjiang.² The party did, however, slowly take control over religious institutions in Xinjiang through the China Islamic Association, as well as the confiscation of mosque lands and forcible replacement of religious courts with 'People's Courts'.³

In order to control the situation in Xinjiang, Beijing has also established the *Production and Construction Corps* (PCC) that is also known as the *shengchan jianshe bingtuan* in 1954. Though the PCC was initially billed as a force to protect China's sovereignty in its sensitive border regions, the pattern of deployment of its units makes it clear that defense against foreign invasions was not Beijing's main concern.⁴ In fact, the main concern of the CCP and the rationale behind its deployment in Xinjiang is to control and prevent the problem of separatism among the minority population in Xinjiang in their quest to form their own state.⁵ This can be seen through the high concentration of PCC units in areas such as Aksu, Kashgar and Qumul that has high Uighur population.⁶ Even though the PCC is heavily dominated by the Han Chinese, but there is also a small amount of minority Chinese in the body. This is very important to ensure that if the Uighurs were to seek independence from Beijing through both violence and non-violence means in the future, their quest will not only be opposed by over 7 million Hans, but also by another 2 million of other minorities in PCC such as the Mongol, Xibo and Turkic.⁷

However, this relatively tolerant policy towards Xinjiang was replaced with a more assimilationist policy when Mao Zedong launched the Great Leap Forward Plan in 1958. This radical collectivization and industrialization drive was accompanied by a more assimilationist cultural thrust, political attacks on Xinjiang natives associated with Soviet Union and an upsurge in Han immigration and settlement in northern Xinjiang.⁸ For this plan, ethnicity has been seen as an obstacle for the development of the country. Thus, at that time, Islam and other minority's customs were regarded as backward customs and were condemned by the Chinese government. As a result, Xinjiang as a part of China also had to go through a forcible cultural homogenization.

During this period of time, state sponsored Han immigration into Xinjiang is already an important component in Beijing's policy towards Xinjiang. Not long after the establishment of the PRC, Beijing has come up with a plan to move approximately two million Han Chinese from other provinces in China into Xinjiang.⁹ However, the plan was over-fulfilled. Between 1950 and 1978, there were roughly around three million Hans that had moved into Xinjiang.¹⁰ As a result, the population of Han Chinese immigrant in Xinjiang has increased from nearly 300,000 people in 1953 to nearly six

² Gardner Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang: Han Nationalist Imperatives and Uyghur Discontent," *Policy Studies 11* (Washington, DC: East-West Center Washington, 2004), p. 18.

³ Donald H. McMillen, *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949-1977* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979), pp. 113-114.

⁴ Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," pp. 26-27.

⁵ Abanti Bhattacharya, "Conceptualising Uyghur Separatism in Chinese Nationalism," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (July-September 2003), p. 367.

⁶ Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," p. 26.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁸ James Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment* (Washington, DC: East-West Center Washington, 2004), p. 6.

⁹ Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," pp. 23-24.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

million people in 1990, in addition to more than one and a half million demobilized Han soldiers in PCC.¹¹ This phenomenon is also influenced by the impact of the famine caused by the Great Leap Forward where between 1959-1960, around 800,000 Han Chinese from all over China have migrated to Xinjiang.¹² According of the 2000 census, Han Chinese has made up 41 percent of Xinjiang's total population, where their presence not only has created strong competition for the Uighurs in terms of Xinjiang land and resources, but has also asserted a strong language pressure on minority languages and cultures in the region.¹³

A return to a more liberal and moderate policy towards Xinjiang can be spotted in early 1960s but this policy was then reversed again with the event of Cultural Revolution in 1966. During the era of Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), non-Han cultures were again been seen the symbol of underdevelopment. Beijing's policy towards Xinjiang and its non-Han population was the most assimilationist and intolerant during the era of Cultural Revolution.

The Second Phase: 1977-1990

With the end of the Cultural Revolution after Mao's death in 1976, Chinese leaders and policy makers came to face a crisis. The Cultural Revolution has provoked resentment among many of its citizens, especially among the non-Hans. For Uighurs in Xinjiang, the Cultural Revolution was not only merely a social and political assault, but it was also an attack on their unique identity.¹⁴ The Chinese policy makers realized that the continuation of a hardline policy will further increase discontent among the Uighurs. Therefore, they have decided to use the combination of both persuasive and coercive elements in their policy towards Xinjiang, through the loosening of economic policy with the tightening of political policy, which is a combination that has been used until today. Their decision was also influenced by the deterioration in Sino-Russia relations between 1960-1977 that has a negative impact on China's economy. As a result, economic recovery has become the main priority in Beijing's policy in this period of time.

When Deng Xiaoping came into power in 1978-1979, he has announced an economic reformation in China and has practiced a more tolerant economic, cultural and religious policy in Xinjiang. He has also introduced China with a new era by announcing a new openness for intellectual exploration. In Xinjiang, Uighur writers such as Turghun Almas had produced multiple writings about the history of Uighurs who had once formed their own state. However, this situation changed after series of student protests along 1980s, the 1989 Tiananmen Incident and the 1990 Baren Incident. Since then, Beijing has tightened its control over the matter of publication in Xinjiang where Uighur writings will be censored over and over again before publishing and many were banned for fear that they will revive Uighurs quest for independence. In 2002, the Chinese government

¹¹ Arienne M. Dwyer, "The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse," *Policy Studies 15* (Washington, DC: East-West Center Washington, 2005), p. 4.

¹² Bovington, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," p. 19.

¹³ Dwyer, "The Xinjiang Conflict," p. 4.

¹⁴ Bovington, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," p. 21.

even openly burned 'illegal' books and writings that still exist.¹⁵ Besides, Uighurs' writings, audio tapes of poetry and music were also banned for bringing 'unhealthy social effects'.¹⁶ In addition, outspoken individuals and those who were involved in major demonstration or those suspected of harboring separatist ideas were also sent to jail for a period of time, mostly without formal charges.¹⁷

In order to control the population growth among the minorities in Xinjiang, Beijing has also decided to extend its national family planning policy to include to non-Han minorities in Xinjiang. Since then, Uighurs in urban area were limited to only two children per household, while those who live in rural area were allowed to have three children although there are a few exceptions.¹⁸ This policy was opposed by the Uighurs. However, this limitation towards its minorities was followed by a preferential policy also known as *yohui zhengce*. This policy allow lower admittance scores on the national university entrance examinations for the Uighurs and allow some Uighur couples to have two or three children.¹⁹ Uighurs can also find jobs in state-owned enterprises with lower qualifications and join government bodies more easily than their Han counterparts in Xinjiang.²⁰ The Chinese government has also invested heavily in infrastructure and social development projects in southern Xinjiang where the Uighurs are the majority among the local residents.²¹ These policies have unquestionably contributed to the emergence of Uyghur working and professional classes but many Uighurs still feel that they have been downgraded to strangers in their own land, where they are now dependent on Han governors for policy handouts and Han employers for jobs.²²

In terms of religion, the CCP did loosen control of religion in Xinjiang in the early 1980s after the end of the Cultural Revolution. One obvious sign of this was the massive rebuilding of mosques in the region. When Deng Xiaoping took over the leadership, his relatively more tolerant policies has led to the rebuilt of over 2/3 of the original mosques operating in the area before 1966 and by 1981, there were around 4,700 mosques in Kashgar District and 93 in Kashgar City alone.²³ Mosque construction continued throughout 1980s and by the mid-1980s, Muslims in Xinjiang had more mosques per capita than their co-religious anywhere in the world, with a ratio of one mosque for every 150 people.²⁴

Third Phase: 1991-2000

¹⁵ Joshua Kurlantzick, "China's Dubious Role in the War on Terror," *Current History*, Vol. 102, No. 668 (December 2003), p. 432.

¹⁶ Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," p. 31.

¹⁷ Dru Gladney, "Xinjiang: China's Future West Bank?," *Current History*, Vol. 101, No. 656 (September 2002), p. 267.

¹⁸ Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," p. 26.

¹⁹ David Wang, "East Turkestan Movement in Xinjiang," *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (June 1998), p. 8

²⁰ Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," p. 37.

²¹ Wang, "East Turkestan Movement in Xinjiang," p. 8.

²² Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," p. 37.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ J. Peter Pham, "Beijing's Great Game: Understanding Chinese Strategy in Central Eurasia," *American Foreign Policy Interests*, No. 28 (2006), p. 56.

The collapse of Soviet Union in 1990 had no doubt eliminated Beijing's fear against Soviet's influence and threat to Xinjiang, but it also posed new challenges for Beijing- uncertainty in dealing with five new Central Asian republics and the problem of regional Islamic revival. Thus, China has established The Shanghai Five in 1996 with China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as member states. The organization then changed its name to Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) after Uzbekistan joined the group in 2001.²⁵ The main objective of this organization is to neutralize the Uighurs quest for support from the Central Asian republics by expressing its concerns about the rise of religious fundamentalism, terrorism and separatism. In return, China has provided these Central Asian republics with massive loans and other forms of aid such as by supporting their actions against their own internal challenges.²⁶

During this period of time, the Chinese government also thinks that poverty breeds discontent among the minorities in Xinjiang. Therefore, economic development in Xinjiang was given priority by the Chinese government during this time. Beijing's strategy of economic development in Xinjiang emphasizes equally on both cross-border as well as domestic trade and investment for the region.²⁷ Thus, in early 1990s, the government had announced its 'West-leaning' policies which involved favorable land lease rates and tax abatements in its western hinterlands in order to lure labor as well as capital to its western regions.²⁸ As a result, we can see thousands and thousands of Han Chinese all over China poured into Xinjiang in search of jobs and wealth in the 'Great Northwest'. However, there has been a scarcity of the most desirable kinds of immigrant to Xinjiang such as educated youths, technical workers and reliable cadres.²⁹

Therefore in June 1999, Beijing has launched its 'Go West' policy (*xibu da kaifa*) which allocated a large sum of capital and resources for the purpose of infrastructural development in Xinjiang and other western provinces in order to attract all kinds of Han immigrants to its western region.³⁰ Beijing furthered its development strategy in its western region through the 'Prosperous Border Rich People' (*xingbian fumin*) policy announced in 2000, which is a part of the 'Go West' policy that mandated the government to spend 60 percent of its total capital investment in its western region.³¹ Through this policy, Beijing hopes to create an ethnic merchant middle-class that will tolerate any instability in the region even though they are not pro-Chinese.³² Beijing also regularly provided Xinjiang with enormous subsidies which amounted to almost half of annual government expenditures.³³ For example, Xinjiang received nearly 12 billion yuan of subsidies from Beijing in 2000.³⁴

²⁵ Ramakant Dwivedi, "China's Central Asia Policy in Recent Times," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No.4 (2006), p. 142.

²⁶ Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," p. 23.

²⁷ Chung Chien-Peng, "Confronting Terrorism and Other Evils in China: All Quiet on the Western Front?," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2006), p. 79.

²⁸ Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," p. 25.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Bhattacharya, "Conceptualising Uyghur Separatism in Chinese Nationalism," p. 369.

³¹ Chung, "Confronting Terrorism and Other Evils in China," pp. 79-80.

³² Ibid., p. 80.

³³ Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," p. 38.

³⁴ Ibid.

Although economic development in Xinjiang was given priority by the Chinese government, but all kinds of violent events that happened along 1990s had forced Beijing to undertake a more repressive political policy towards the region. One example of these violent events is the February 5, 1992 Urumqi Bus Bombing where three civilians were killed and 23 other were injured in two bus explosions.³⁵ There are two major components in Beijing's political tightening in Xinjiang. First, is the yearly 'Strike Hard' (*yan da*) campaign aim to combat violent property crimes, drug problems as well as political crimes.³⁶ The second component is the 'Comprehensive Management' (*zonghe zhili*) which refers to periodic sweeps arranged by Public Security personnel to shore up control in each locality.³⁷

Fourth Phase: 2001-2009

The terrorist attack in Washington D.C, Pennsylvania and New York on 11 September 2001 has changed United States' threat perception and also its national security strategy. These can be seen through the anti-terrorist campaigns launched by the U.S such as the War on Terrorism (WOT) to combat the Taliban regime and al-Qaeda as well as the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security. The 9/11 tragedy has also provided an opportunity to other nations in the international system to link their domestic problems with WOT that will allow them to use wider range of tactics without the fear of condemnation from the international community.

Beijing was swift in grabbing the opportunity by linking an Uighur separatist group called East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) based in Xinjiang with al-Qaeda and Taliban and has successfully placed the Uighur's fight for independence in the context of international terrorism even though ETIM's relations with al-Qaeda and Taliban are yet to be proven. Beijing has offered Washington its support in the WOT to combat international terrorism. Its support for WOT can be seen through its support for the coalition forces to invade Afghanistan as long as the attack will not target any innocent civilians.³⁸ In addition, Beijing has also agreed to share information about Taliban and al-Qaeda with Washington and play an important diplomatic role in convincing Pervez Musharraf's government to support war against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.³⁹ Besides, Beijing has also monitored suspected terrorists bank accounts in both Hong Kong and mainland China and closed its border with Afghanistan to avoid Taliban's fighters from entering Xinjiang.⁴⁰ Following its support for the WOT, Beijing was also quick in modifying its strategy and policy in Xinjiang.

The international community has heavily condemned China for its actions in Xinjiang including the executions of separatists and its suppression of religious practices in the region. However, these criticism have softened after the 9/11 bombing. As a result, the condition in Xinjiang has become worse after the event of 9/11. In late 2002, Beijing

³⁵ Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang*, p. 15.

³⁶ Bovingdon, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," p. 22.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ David Shambaugh, "Sino-American Relations since September 11: Can the New Stability Last?," *Current History*, Vol. 101, No. 656 (September 2002), pp. 243-244.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 244.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

has expanded its definition of terrorism to include those who have 'separatist thoughts'.⁴¹ Beijing unspecific and general definition about terrorism has indirectly allows Beijing to arrest and execute any suspected individual as it wish.

Beijing has also urged Washington to support and cooperate with the Chinese government in its effort to combat Uighur 'terrorists' in Xinjiang. China's Minister of Public Security at that time, Zhou Yongkang has also tried to convince the U.S ambassador to Beijing, Clark Randt to support Beijing's efforts in combatting Uighur 'terrorists' through a more organized cooperation between the two governments.⁴² Beijing also sought support from the Central Asian republics for its fight against the Uighur 'terrorists' in Xinjiang through SCO and other economic means. This is very important because the Uighur liberation struggle has gained popular support from the population of these republics.⁴³ But the governments on the contrary are supportive of Beijing fight against Islamic radicalism, terrorism and separatism by cooperating with Beijing to suppress cross-border terrorism and separatism for the sake of their economic interests with China.⁴⁴

Following the event of 9/11 terrorist attack, Beijing has also further restricted the religious rights of Muslim population in Xinjiang including the banning of some religious practices during the holy month of Ramadan, increasing control over the Islamic clergy and also closure of mosques in the region.⁴⁵ There was also heavy People's Liberation Army (PLA) presence in the region that created fear among the Uighurs to interact with foreigners.⁴⁶ The Chinese security forces in Xinjiang also constantly check the identification of the Uighurs in Xinjiang and those who fail to show their identity card will be arrested immediately.⁴⁷

China's decision to intensify its pressure on Xinjiang as a whole was not merely caused by the opportunity offered by the WOT, but also the event of political change in Central Asia. In March 2005, an incident called the Tulip Revolution has occurred in Kyrgyzstan and has successfully overthrown the leadership of President Askar Akayev who has ruled the country since its independence.⁴⁸ Since early 1990s, Beijing has constantly inserted its influence onto Askar Akayev administration to control the Uighurs in Kyrgyzstan tightly. Through the Tulip Revolution and the fall of Askar Akayev, Beijing was worried that Uighurs in Kyrgyzstan will now have more freedom to seek independence in that country and encourage Uighurs in Xinjiang to do the same.

An Analysis Based on the Theory of Relative Deprivation

In the field of political science, RD has been seen as a factor which can lead to a revolution and usually appears when a dominant community has advantages on a

⁴¹ Joshua Kurlantzick, "Repression and Revolt in China's Wild West," *Current History*, Vol. 103, No. 674 (September 2004), p. 264.

⁴² Kurlantzick, "China's Dubious Role in the War on Terror," p. 437.

⁴³ Niklas Swanstrom, "China and Xinjiang after September 11," *NIAS*, No. 3 (2002), p. 14.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Bhattacharya, "Conceptualising Uyghur Separatism in Chinese Nationalism," pp. 370-371.

⁴⁶ Kurlantzick, "Repression and Revolt in China's Wild West," p. 264.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 264-265.

⁴⁸ Michael Clarke, "China's Integration of Xinjiang with Central Asia: Securing a "Silk Road" to Great Power Status?," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2008), p. 101.

minority community and uses the political and economic power that it has to maintain or strengthen its position.⁴⁹ This will definitely create dissatisfaction and resentment among the minority community due to “the perception of discrepancy between the standard of value expectation and standard of value capabilities of any individual or community”.⁵⁰ This statement is parallel with Karl Marx’s hypothesis which suggested that as long as there is a gap between what the workers think they should have and what they really have, they will rise and rebel until the particular gap is minimized or diminished.⁵¹

Aberle has defined RD as “a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations and actuality”.⁵² Gurr on the other hand, has defined RD as “actors’ perception of discrepancy between their value expectations and their value capabilities”.⁵³ ‘Value expectation’ here refers to things and living conditions that a person believes he has a right to own, while ‘value capabilities’ refers to things and living condition that a person can and has the ability to own or maintain.⁵⁴

According to the theory of RD, the main factor that leads to the dissatisfaction of the minority community is not because of the problem of poverty, but it is in fact caused by the comparison made by an individual or even a group of individuals with their reference groups. The feeling of RD that exists within an individual is also known as ‘personal deprivation’ which normally only has effects on a few individuals in anytime.⁵⁵ For example, the feeling of RD occurred when an individual failed to get the promotion that he has been expected’. On the other hand, the feeling of RD among a group of individuals appears in situations such as suppression by ruling political party or when their status has been relatively lowered compared to the status of their reference group.⁵⁶ Most importantly, the feeling of RD that exists among a group of individuals has the potential to cause collective violence when a group of people have the same dissatisfaction about the same thing.

This theory of RD is applicable and can best explain Beijing’s policy failure in the case of Xinjiang. In order to restore peace and stability in Xinjiang, Beijing has taken both persuasive and coercive policies in the region since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. However, minority disturbances in Xinjiang continue to occur and have become more serious. This essay will offer a few interesting explanations about factors that might lead to the failure of Beijing’s policy in Xinjiang based on the theory of RD.

The level of RD among the Uighurs in Xinjiang will also determine the effectiveness of China’s policy in Xinjiang. The higher the level of RD among the Uighurs will lead to the failure of Beijing’s Xinjiang policy and vice-versa.

⁴⁹ Abdul Rashid Moten and Syed Serajul Islam, *Introduction to Political Science* (Kuala Lumpur: Thompson Learning, 2005), p. 383.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² David F. Aberle, “A Note on Relative Deprivation Theory,” in Sylvia L. Thrupp, ed., *Millennial Dreams in Action: Essays in Comparative Study* (The Hague: Mouton, 1962), p. 209.

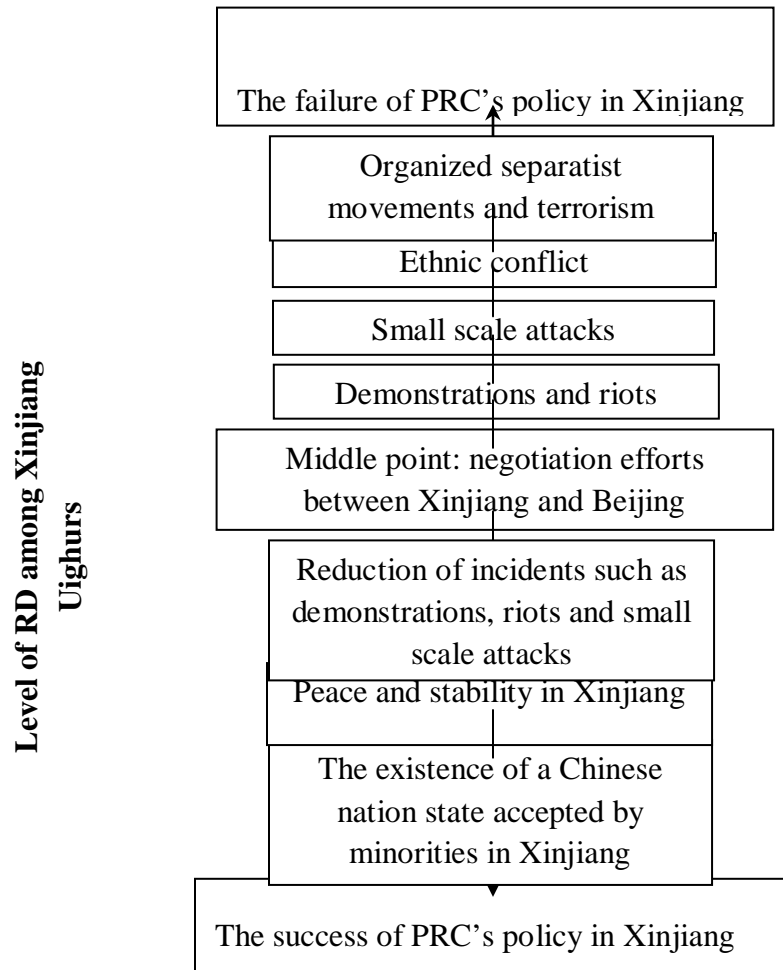
⁵³ Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (New Jersey: Princeton University, 1970), p. 24.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p 27.

⁵⁵ Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, p. 29.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Figure 1: The Level of RD and the Effectiveness of PRC’s Policy in Xinjiang



As illustrated in figure 1 above, the level of RD among the Uighurs in Xinjiang is low if there is a reduction of incidents such as demonstrations, riots and small scale attacks in the region. The level of RD gets even lower when peace and stability started to exist in Xinjiang where the Uighurs can live in harmony with the Hans in the region. At this level, Beijing’s policy in Xinjiang can be considered as effective in achieving its goals in restoring peace and stability in its western region. The level of RD is at its lowest point when the minorities in Xinjiang including the Uighurs accept the concept of a Chinese nation state and refer themselves as a Chinese instead of their unique identity as a minority. This means that Beijing’s Xinjiang policy has been very successful where it has successfully integrated Xinjiang into a state dominated by Han and gave rise to a new united multi-ethnic China where national unity plays an important role.

The middle point of this feeling of RD among the Uighurs in Xinjiang is when both Uighurs and the Chinese government agree to negotiate with each other for mutual benefits. This is made the middle point because the success of the negotiation has the potential to improve the situation in Xinjiang by reducing the level of RD, while the failure of the negotiation will make things worse by increasing the level of RD among the Uighurs if inappropriate policies continue to be practiced by Beijing in Xinjiang.

The failure of Beijing's policy in Xinjiang can be seen in the upper half of the figure. The level of RD reaches a high but not-so-serious level when the Uighurs show their dissatisfaction to the Chinese government through demonstrations and riots. The next level shows that the feeling of RD among the Uighurs in Xinjiang has risen to a serious level when they started to use violence means in expressing their dissatisfaction through small scale attacks, especially on the Hans and government's properties that will sometime cause fatality. Next, the level of RD rises to a very serious level with the occurrence of ethnic conflict between the Uighurs and the Hans in the region. Ethnic conflict reflects extremely high Uighurs dissatisfaction towards the Chinese government which is dominated by Han Chinese. The level of RD is at its highest point when the Uighurs express their anger to the Chinese government through organized separatist movements and terrorism. At this level, Uighurs dissatisfaction to the Chinese government reaches its maximum point where Uighurs and Hans no longer can live together in harmony where the Uighurs have chosen to separate themselves from the rest of China by forming their own state.

Thus, one can notice that Beijing's policy in Xinjiang has been ineffective since PRC was established in 1949 because there is never peace and stability in Xinjiang since that time. The situation in Xinjiang got worse along 1980s and 1990s with series of demonstrations and riots. For example, in December 1985, a demonstration by 2,000 non-Han students has erupted in Urumqi against Beijing's policy for nuclear testing in Xinjiang, Han mass immigration into Xinjiang and Beijing's plan to extend its family planning policy to include the minorities in Xinjiang.⁵⁷ Such demonstration and riot continue to exist into 1990s. For instance, the Baren Incident that happened in April 1990 and Yining Incident in February 1997 that happened due to the Chinese government prohibition of Uighur social organization known as *mashrap*.⁵⁸

The complete failure of Beijing's policy in Xinjiang can be seen in 2009 when ethnic conflict erupted between the Uighurs and the Hans in Urumqi. While there are also increasing problem of organized separatist movements and terrorism in Xinjiang, the 2009 ethnic conflict in Urumqi has caused over 197 deaths and 1,700 injuries among the civilians besides 331 and 1325 damaged shop lots and vehicles respectively.⁵⁹ The magnitude and the use of violence in this conflict have also increased significantly compared to the past. Along 1990s, 'terrorist' activities in Xinjiang had only caused the total of 162 deaths and 440 injuries among the innocent civilians through small scale attacks.⁶⁰ All these events show the highest Uighurs' dissatisfaction to the Chinese government since the establishment of PRC in 1949.

Factors Contributed to the Feeling of RD among Xinjiang Uighurs

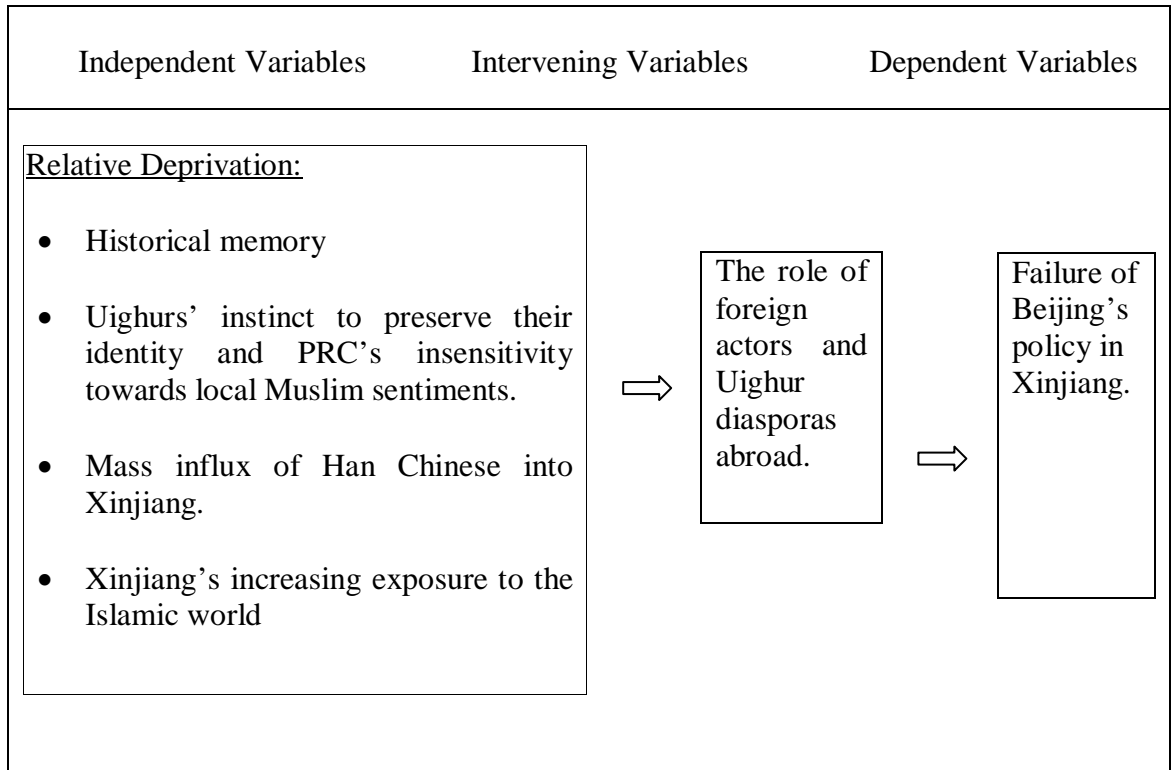
Table 2: Factors that lead to the failure of Beijing's policy in Xinjiang

⁵⁷ Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang*, p. 8.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵⁹ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Negara Brunei Darussalam, July 18, 2009, <http://www.bn.china-embassy.org/eng/zgxw/t573946.htm>.

⁶⁰ Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang*, p. 12.



Historical Memory

Xinjiang had long been included in the Chinese maps, but it was not until the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) that the Chinese took serious steps towards Xinjiang’s integration into the Chinese soil.⁶¹ In the memory of the Uighurs, Xinjiang was a part of Central Asia and was the homeland for various branches of Turkic people such as the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tatars, Uzbeks and the Uighurs themselves. In the 19th century under the influence of Pan-Turkism, Xinjiang has adopted the Pan-Turkic ideal to unite all the people of Turkish origin where the Uighurs were regarded as one of the branches of the Turkic tree.⁶²

The region’s first demand for independence can be traced to an uprising by a local Khokandi militarist named Yakub Beg in 1865, who has established an independent Kashgar emirate in southern Xinjiang, extending his rule as far as Turfan that lasted until his death in 1877.⁶³ Even though the Qing Empire succeeded in reconquering most of Xinjiang in late 1870s, Yaqub Beg’s 12-year reign has set the precedent for Uighur independent movements based on religion and ethnicity. Besides, the incident has also exposed China weakness in its hold on Xinjiang and is still celebrated by the Uighurs today as a rallying point for Uighur nationalism. In November 18, 1884, the Qing Empire has formally annexed the East Turkestan region into its territory and has renamed the

⁶¹ Matthew Moneyhon, “Controlling Xinjiang: Autonomy on China’s “New Frontier”,” *Asia-Pacific Law and Policy Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Winter 2002), p. 125.

⁶² Bhattacharya, “Conceptualising Uyghur Separatism in Chinese Nationalism,” p. 361.

⁶³ Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang*, p. 3.

region as Xinjiang, which means 'new territory' or 'new frontier'.⁶⁴ For the Uighurs, the name 'Xinjiang' itself implies that the region did not belong to China from historical times like what the Chinese government claims.

In addition, the Uighurs had twice formed their own state. The first was the East Turkestan Republic which was established in Kashgar in November 1933 and lasted till February 1934.⁶⁵ It was also known as the East Turkestan Islamic Republic in official materials and has become the milestone in Uighur nationalist history as well as a precedent cited by Uighur independence advocates today. In 1944, one of Xinjiang's most influential Islamic leaders, Ali Han Tore has founded the second East Turkestan Republic in Ili region in northern Xinjiang.⁶⁶ The republic was to a degree controlled by the Soviet Union and lasted until 1949 when Chinese Communist forces occupied Xinjiang with little resistance.⁶⁷

Although Xinjiang has been given the status as an autonomous region in 1955 by Mao Zedong, but the Uighurs in reality have no actual rights to exercise self-rule in their land and this situation has provoked and exacerbated Uighur discontent towards the Chinese government. When the Uighurs in Xinjiang started to compare themselves to the Han Chinese that dominate the country, they soon realized that though top positions in local administration are occupied by the members of minority community, but the Uighurs are underrepresented at all levels in CCP, which is the center of real power in China.⁶⁸ For instance, Uighur leaders do not hold any place in the top central leadership position of the CCP and the region's Party First Secretary is always a Han.⁶⁹ These political deprivations have led to the feeling of RD among the Uighurs and thus fuelled enormous dissent among them and caused Beijing's policy failure in the region.

Uighurs' Identity and PRC's Insensitivity Towards Local Muslim Sentiments

Xinjiang is located on the famous Silk Road, where Uighurs played an important role in cultural exchanges between the East and the West. As a result, the Uighurs have eventually developed a unique culture and identity of their own. However, the most important marker for Uighurs' identity is Islam. In the 8th century, the Arab armies had swept into Central Asia and spread the new faith of Islam.⁷⁰ Islam is not merely just a religion for Uighurs in Xinjiang, but it is also a tool to preserve Uighurs' historical traditions and cultures. This is because Uighurs in Xinjiang also referred themselves as part of the ummah (world Islamic community), where they have linked their identity to the wider Muslim community through regular prayers, reading the Quran and adopting Islamic food habits and symbols.⁷¹ Therefore, one can say that Islamic heritage, Turkic language and Uighurs' strong ethnic and cultural ties with the Central Asians have contributed to the formation of a unique Uighur identity.

⁶⁴ Bhattacharya, "Conceptualising Uyghur Separatism in Chinese Nationalism," p. 360.

⁶⁵ Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang*, p. 5.

⁶⁶ Moneyhon, "Controlling Xinjiang: Autonomy on China's "New Frontier"," p. 126.

⁶⁷ Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang*, p. 5.

⁶⁸ Sanjeev Kumar, "The Roots of China's Xinjiang Problem," July 18, 2009, <http://www.icwa.in/Ibdoc/IB-xinjiang.pdf>. p. 6.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Bhattacharya, "Conceptualising Uyghur Separatism in Chinese Nationalism," p. 361.

⁷¹ Ibid.

However, Han culture still dominates and has the tendency to overwhelm the identity and cultures of the minorities in many aspects of life in China. In the case of Xinjiang, Uighur language has been slowly replaced by Mandarin where minority languages were said to be irrelevant for a modern Chinese state. Indeed, Uighurs religious belief and activities were also strictly controlled and monitored by the Chinese authorities. All these, have caused the feeling of RD among the Uighurs, especially when they compare themselves with their cousins in Central Asia and other Muslim community in China that relatively have more cultural and religious freedom than them.

In 1990-1991, Uighurs in Xinjiang had witnessed the collapse of Soviet Union and how their cousins in Central Asia had established five new independent Central Asian republics. The feeling of RD emerged among the Uighurs in Xinjiang when they compare themselves to the population in Central Asia who now has their own state. In addition, unlike the Uighurs who enjoy only limited religious and cultural freedom in Xinjiang, the Central Asians on the other hand have wider freedom in terms of their beliefs, cultures and tradition. All these had no doubt led to the feeling of RD among the Uighurs and further encouraged separatism among the Uighurs in their quest for independence.

The Chinese government must also be more sensitive in matters regarding the Uighurs and Islam. Beijing has to realize that Islam itself is inseparable with the identity of Uighurs as a Muslim minority group in China. Thus, when Beijing started to impose a strict religious and cultural policy in Xinjiang, Islam in that region has slowly become more and more political and has also become a rallying point for Uighurs' desire.⁷² As a result, one can notice that many Uighur demonstrations and riots occurred in Xinjiang were caused by issues related to Islam. One good example of these is the Talip incident in Yarkand that occurred on January 5, 1990 where the Chinese authorities have closed down private religious schools (madrasahs) in the area and return the students (talips) to their home districts due to the tremendous increment in the number of madrasah and talip.⁷³ As a result, hundreds of talips have demonstrated in Yarkand shouting slogans such as 'study and protect Islam' and 'down with the kafirs'.⁷⁴

The Chinese government must also understand that its strict religious and cultural policy imposed on the Uighurs in Xinjiang will lead to the feeling of RD among the Uighurs. Besides the Central Asians, other Muslim groups in China had also become the reference group for the Uighurs in Xinjiang. While Beijing has loosened its control over the religion of the Dai in Yunnan and Hui (Han Muslims) in north and southwest of China, the same cannot be said for Xinjiang.⁷⁵ Since all three groups shared the same identity as Muslim groups in a Socialist Chinese state, Uighurs in Xinjiang will tend to think that they too deserve the same treatment as the Dai and Hui by the Chinese government. This will also lead to the feeling of RD among the Uighurs when they compare themselves with the Dai and Hui and realized that these two groups relatively have more religious and cultural freedom than them.

⁷² Lilian Craig Harris, "Xinjiang, Central Asia and the Implications for China's Policy in the Islamic World," *The China Quarterly*, No. 133 (March 1993), p. 120.

⁷³ Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang*, p. 14.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Bovington, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," p. 32.

The Influx of Han Chinese into Xinjiang

The influx of Han Chinese into Xinjiang is the most important factor that leads to the feeling of RD among the Uighurs. Han mass migration into Xinjiang has become an important component in Beijing's Xinjiang policy since the establishment of PRC in 1949. This is because PRC's policy of Han migration to Xinjiang has the ability to change the demography in the region by turning the majority Uighur population into a minority group in Xinjiang itself in order for Beijing to maintain strong control over the region concerned.⁷⁶ The Chinese government also believes that ethnic minority discontent would disappear if the problem of poverty and huge income disparities could be remedied.⁷⁷ Therefore, in June 1999, Beijing has announced an ambitious plan to develop China's western frontiers known as the 'Go West' policy or *xibu da kaifa*. The policy calls for massive infrastructure projects such as rail roads and dams building, as well as highway construction had of course has facilitated more Han migration into Xinjiang in search of economic opportunities. Beijing's decision to develop its western regions however, has not only created further discontent among the Uighurs in Xinjiang, but has also led to the emergence of feeling of RD among them when they compare themselves with their Han counterparts who relatively have higher living standard than them.

It is undeniable that Beijing's policy to bring in the Han Chinese into Xinjiang for the purpose of economic development has brought several benefits for the indigenous people, especially for those who can speak fluent Mandarin. But Hans in Xinjiang are easier to get jobs, have better living conditions and will sometimes use their superior status to suppress the Uighurs.⁷⁸ Thus, Uighurs who are skeptical of Beijing intentions and motives behind the plan believed that the real objectives of the "Go West" policy were to integrate Xinjiang's policy more firmly with the rest of China, facilitate more Han migration into the region and thus enhance Beijing's control over the region. This is because although China's plan to develop Xinjiang has also increased the per capita income for the people in Xinjiang and enhanced their living standards tremendously, but the disparities in the wealth retribution between the Uighurs and the Hans continue to exist, or perhaps has even widened.

The widening of wealth gap between the Uighurs and the Hans is resulted by the economic priorities set by Beijing in Xinjiang that can be best described as 'one white, one black', which refer to the production of cotton and oil. Xinjiang is the largest cotton producer in China but PRC's subsidies for the cotton production sector is only profitable for large mechanized PCC farms dominated by the Hans and leave small-scale Uighurs farmers worse off. Even for the oil industry, the Uighurs have been excluded from the industry in Xinjiang where the workforce is overwhelmingly Han. Many Uighurs also feel that Xinjiang's oil and other petroleum products are their wealth, but these products have been exploited by Beijing for energy needs all over China with only little compensation to the people in Xinjiang. This economic deprivation has then led to the feeling of RD among the Uighurs and fuelled their dissatisfaction towards the Chinese government.

⁷⁶ Bhattacharya, "Conceptualising Uyghur Separatism in Chinese Nationalism," p. 366.

⁷⁷ June Teufel Dreyer, "China's Vulnerability to Minority Separatism," *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Summer 2005), p. 75.

⁷⁸ Kurlantzick, "Repression and Revolt in China's Wild West," p. 263.

It is difficult for us to measure the wealth gap between the Uighurs and the Hans to prove that the Uighurs have fallen behind the Hans economically in Xinjiang. However, the situation can be reflected through the strong coincidence of high incomes with high concentration of Hans in Xinjiang, as well as low incomes with Uighur predominance in the region.⁷⁹ Beijing's policy to bring in the Hans into Xinjiang to develop the area is an inappropriate approach. The policy not only failed to reduce separatism sentiment and ethnic confrontation in the region, in fact, it has increased tension between the Uighurs and Han Chinese in the region. This is parallel with Roskin et al in their explanation about RD that says: "the poor seldom revolt; they are too busy feeding their families. But once people have a full belly they start looking around and notice that some people are living much better than [them]".⁸⁰ Even though Beijing's plan to develop its western regions has increased the per capita income and living standard of the Uighurs, but the Hans that have migrated to Xinjiang obviously have higher living standard where they dominated most of the top positions in the government, have advantages in getting jobs with higher pay. These Hans also dominated trade and business in major cities in Xinjiang such as Urumqi and live a more luxurious life compared to the Uighurs.

Xinjiang's Increasing Exposure to the Islamic World

Xinjiang's increasing exposure to the Islamic world is also one of the factors that will contribute to the feeling of RD among the Uighurs in Xinjiang and thus, influences the effectiveness of Beijing's Xinjiang policy. Xinjiang's exposure to the Islamic world, particularly the Central Asian republics has increased drastically when Deng Xiaoping took over the ruling power of CCP in 1978 by taking a more liberal and tolerant religious and cultural policy towards the minorities.

In the early stage of Deng's leadership, Muslims in China were encouraged to preserve their identity and were given freedom to practice their beliefs. For instance, in 1980, the Xinjiang Islamic Association was permitted to re-introduced Arabic scripts in Uighur and Kazakh languages.⁸¹ Deng administration also re-allowed Muslims in China, including Xinjiang Muslims to undertake the *hajj* in Mecca. Development in Xinjiang in the 1980s has further accelerated Xinjiang exposure to the Islamic world through significant transportation and administrative infrastructure building. Rapid construction of roads, railroads and cities have helped to facilitate the flow of goods, services and ideas from the Central Asian republics and Pakistan into Xinjiang where many Chinese Muslims have started to travel on business to these countries.⁸² This exposure has enabled Xinjiang Muslims to gain foreign funds, especially from countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iran to improve their conditions. These funds have been used to build mosques, theological schools and import religious materials such as the Quran.⁸³

⁷⁹ David Bachman, "Making Xinjiang Safe for the Han? Contradictions and Ironies of Chinese Governance in China's Northwest," in M. Rossabi, ed., *Governing China's Multiethnic Frontier* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), pp. 165-168.

⁸⁰ Michael G. Roskin et al, *Political Science: An Introduction* (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009), p. 362.

⁸¹ Harris, "Xinjiang, Central Asia and the Implications for China's Policy in the Islamic World," p. 120.

⁸² Dwyer, "The Xinjiang Conflict," p. 4.

⁸³ Harris, "Xinjiang, Central Asia and the Implications for China's Policy in the Islamic World," p. 120.

The Chinese government during that period of time has also chosen to open up Xinjiang's border to Central Asian republics for economic purposes. However, Deng's tolerant policy has its own pros and cons. One must agree that by opening Xinjiang's border to Central Asia for economic purposes, economic development in Xinjiang can be achieved more quickly through unlimited movement of labor, capital and goods which are important for economic development in Xinjiang. However, the policy that allowed greater religious expression for Muslims in China has also increased Xinjiang's contact with the Islamic world and brought in the problem of domestic instability to Xinjiang through the inflow of 'wrong' ideas, weapons, belief and religion practices from Central Asia, as well as literatures about pre-1949 Xinjiang history.⁸⁴

The feeling of RD among the Uighurs in Xinjiang emerged when they notice that the Muslim population in other parts of the world has even more religious freedom than them. This situation eventually whetted Uighurs' appetites for greater religious freedom at home. The Chinese government realized the significance of this phenomenon and started to change its liberal religious policy into a new religious policy with new restrictions. Since then, the government has forbid meetings between Muslim clerics and foreigners, as well as the teaching of Uighur history and doctrine of Jihad (holy war).⁸⁵ Arab teachers from the Middle East were not allowed to work in theological schools in Xinjiang which was established through funding from Saudi Arabia and only applicants aged 50 and above were allowed to undertake the Hajj in Mecca.⁸⁶ Last but not least, no Chinese citizens were given permission by the Chinese government to study in either Iran or Pakistan.⁸⁷ However, Uighurs' thirst for greater religious freedom at home cannot be reversed and this is one of the factors that have contributed to the failure of Beijing's policy in Xinjiang.

The Role of External Actors and Uighur Diasporas Abroad

The Uighur diaspora in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have established formal political organizations in the two countries concerned after they have achieved their independence.⁸⁸ These organizations distributed various books, magazines and cassettes into Xinjiang and sought international attention for Uighur independence movement in Xinjiang.⁸⁹ They represent the Uighurs to promote and lobby for the rights and interests of the Uighurs in Xinjiang on world stage to gain international attention on Beijing's suppression on its minorities and Uighur quest for independence from China.

Beijing's suppression on its minorities in Xinjiang, particularly the Uighurs has whetted the desire of Uighur diaspora in other parts of the world to offer financial and moral support to Uighurs' struggle in Xinjiang. For instance, there are some wealthy Uighurs living in Saudi Arabia that have provided support and funds to advocate

⁸⁴ Yitzhak Shichor, "China's Central Asian Strategy and the Xinjiang Connection: Predicaments and Medicaments in a Contemporary Perspective," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (May 2008), p. 56.

⁸⁵ Harris, "Xinjiang, Central Asia and the Implications for China's Policy in the Islamic World," p. 121.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Bovington, "Autonomy in Xinjiang," p. 11.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

independence and political Islam in Xinjiang.⁹⁰ ETIM is one of the major beneficiaries of these encouraging supports from Uighur diaspora abroad besides other Uighur organizations such as the World Uighur Youth Congress and East Turkestan National Congress.⁹¹ This source of funding from Uighur diaspora abroad has become more critical with the release of an Uighur activist and businesswoman, Rebiya Kadeer from detention in China on 14 March 2005 on charges of providing state secrets abroad.⁹²

The Uighur diaspora abroad are also becoming more and more active and organized in their activities to fight for the rights and the welfare of Uighurs in Xinjiang. There have been contacts between Uighur diaspora with diaspora of other dissident ethnic groups. For example, as early as in 1986, exiled leaders from Xinjiang, Mongolia and Tibet had joined forces to publish a journal entitled 'Common Voice: Journal of the Allied Committee of the People of Eastern Turkistan, Mongolia, Manchuria, and Tibet Presently Under China'.⁹³ Today, they are using the internet to expand their reach to the audience and gain more attention from people all around the world. Furthermore, in 2004, the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) was established, unifying two leading Uighur exile groups. The son of former leader of Xinjiang pre-1949 government, Erkin Alptekin was elected as the organization's first president.⁹⁴ The organization hoped that Alptekin popularity in international arena will help WUC to promote Uighur cause internationally. Last but not least, the new generation of western-educated Uighur diaspora abroad today also started to use slogans related to the concepts democracy and free election in Xinjiang, which are more appealing to the western audience.

It is true that the efforts of Uighur diaspora all over the world have brought increasingly international attention to the issues of independence and freedom of the Uighurs in Xinjiang. In fact, these Uighur diaspora abroad had also played an important role in further fuelled the separatist movements by the Uighurs in Xinjiang through their support and funds. However, these diaspora organizations have only little impact on Beijing's policy in Xinjiang. Their efforts to influence Beijing's policy in Xinjiang still needs help of external actors such as Multi-national Corporations (MNCs) and foreign governments to pressure Beijing on its suppression to its minorities in Xinjiang. However, these external actors often have their own agenda and interests regarding their relations with Beijing, which are usually against the interests of Uighur diaspora.

Conclusion

The main reason for the failure of Beijing's Xinjiang policy, which aimed to restore peace and stability in the region by eliminating or reducing the separatist tendencies among the Uighurs and ethnic confrontation between the Uighurs and the Hans is not the problem of poverty focused in Beijing's Xinjiang policy, but is the feeling of RD that exists among the Uighurs in Xinjiang. This feeling of RD emerged when the Uighurs compared themselves with their reference groups such as the Hans, the Central

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Rohan Gunaratna and Kenneth G. Pereire, "An Al-Qaeda Associate Group Operating in China?," *China and Eurasia Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (May 2006), p. 57-58.

⁹² Ibid., p. 57.

⁹³ Dreyer, "China's Vulnerability to Minority Separatism," p. 79.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

Asians as well as other Muslim community in China. Among a few factors that have contributed to the feeling of RD among the Uighurs in Xinjiang include Uighurs' historical memory, their instinct to preserve their identity and Beijing insensitivity towards Xinjiang's Muslim sentiment, the influx of Han Chinese into Xinjiang, as well as Xinjiang's increasing exposure to the Islamic world.

Among all these factors, the influx of Han Chinese into Xinjiang is the most important factor that leads to the failure of Beijing policy in Xinjiang. Beijing's decision to bring in huge number of Han Chinese into Xinjiang for the economic development in the region has created a gap in Uighurs' perceptions about what they think they should be able to achieve and what they can really achieve when they compare themselves with their Han counterparts in their everyday lives. This is because although China's plan to develop Xinjiang has been successful in increasing Uighurs income per capita and enhancing their living standards, but the Uighurs in Xinjiang still fallen behind the Han Chinese who migrated into the region in many aspects of their lives. This feeling of RD combined with Uighurs' resentment and dissatisfaction to the Chinese government had resulted in Beijing policy failure in Xinjiang since PRC's establishment in 1949.

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