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Internal Security Challenges in China

Current Situation in Xingjiang Province, Inner Mongolia and Tibet

Abstract

Our series of studies would like to draw attention to the fact that China, which has so far had considerable foreign policy experience, is also forging serious capital from dealing with its own internal conflicts. A diverse, high-spread country is testing the effectiveness of 'soft power' in its provinces. Without foreign policy adventures, these locations provided the Chinese Communist Party with adequate experience in resolving certain types of conflicts. Uyghur, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Hong Kong, Macao embody archetypes of problems that pose a direct threat to the Chinese state. In addition to regional conflicts, we can also consider the problems of the Christian community of about one hundred million. Uyghur is an excellent example of how to achieve results along the fault lines of cultures and religions.

The first part of the series of studies shows how Uyghurs with significant separatist traditions have been persuaded to make 'modern life' the same as accepting the Chinese order. Through the Uyghurs, China is learning how to refine its methods concerning Muslim countries in Central Asia.

Keywords: *China's domestic policy challenges, responsible power, soft power, global governance, one China principle, Xinjiang province, the Uyghur situation*

1. Introduction

Anyone who travels a lot soon realises that he/she meets completely different people and customs a few hundred kilometres away. Due to globalisation, our world from Europe is unified. In the 'field', we quickly experience that as the all-encompassing Western culture reaches all countries, it acquires an entirely different meaning in Xinjiang.

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The countries of Asia are also modernising based on Western patterns. However, it can be said that if we want to understand the processes that take place there, we need to understand the process of synthesis that connects traditions and modernity in a new order of values. In case of China, all this is exponentially true. Anyone who has been to this continental country may have experienced that the 'otherness' is so striking that it causes a real cultural shock to the visitor for the first time.

It is paramount to the Western world to know and get to know this emerging new world power as soon as possible. However, to do so, it must understand that the Chinese follow different customs and procedures in our daily and official communication than we do. Here we get nothing by voicing cultural supremacy, threatening, educating. Because of its size and strength, we cannot even afford to ignore the Chinese people's culture and essential elements. We can only blame ourselves for our periodic failures and give up Western people's bad habits when they behave like elephants in a porcelain shop in an alien environment. The Chinese see themselves as representatives of wealthy and influential world power with a vast past and culture, not backward Indigenous people in the Third World. They are extremely sensitive to any manifestation of a sense of superiority.³

2. Diversity of Chinese culture

Prohibition of public touch, respect for the hierarchy above all else (in any system and at any age), preferably a low level of courtesy in everyday life, slow-building trust in cooperation, relegation to the Western essence, contempt for self-promotion, obligatory flattery, from everyone the characteristic modesty, the importance of gift-giving, the otherness of Chinese humour. The avoidance of honesty in the Western sense, and the phenomenon of 'face loss' can quickly destabilise the visitor. Neither praise nor humble statements should be given excessive importance. These are just forms of politeness.

The Chinese are thinking about processes. They accept that the world around them is always moving and constantly changing. They believe that there is no need to resist these forces that keep the world moving. Throughout our lives, we must strive to adapt our actions to this flow. If this succeeds, we can live in harmony, and our lives will become a process free of effort and violence.

They may seem cumbersome during discussions, but they are aware of the value of time. Time and accuracy here are more European than Asian units. A Chinese is not late, and even if he makes it difficult to present what he has to say, he often apologises if he takes someone's time.

The Chinese will not go, of course, until the transaction has been completed, but the point has been made. This is indeed a double standard. The Chinese penchant for humility demands that the other person's time be seen as precious; on the other hand, the Chinese expect a liberal amount of time to be allocated for repeated consideration of the details of a transaction and to the careful nurturing of personal relationships surrounding the deal.⁴

³ Richard D Lewis, *When Cultures Collide. Leading Across Cultures* (Boston: Nicholas Brealey International, 2006), 58–59.

⁴ Ibid.

Western culture is short-term, time-oriented: they believe in quick results, maximised profits, immediate rewards, and the importance of leisure time. The position held does not play a role in personal relationships. China is a long-time-oriented culture: it is here that they believe in the importance of continuity, perseverance, thrift, work, adaptability and relationships, which is ranked by status. It is not customary in Chinese culture to show weakness and vulnerability even in a fallen situation.

Keeping a 'face' with ourselves and our partner is very important in our dealings with the Chinese. The 'face' means dignity, respect, favourable judgment, and is one of the central values for the Chinese. To preserve them, they usually control their emotions; they do not show fierce anger, sorrow, and joy because the exaggerated expression of emotion means losing face. That is why the Chinese typically smile even in awkward situations – they mask their negative emotions and keep their faces.⁵

The Chinese consider it most important not to be ashamed of what happens daily. People fear that they will find out that they have not told the truth, violated a socially accepted rule, or a community expectation. In addition to their own 'face loss', they also take care to preserve the faces of others. No one will be openly warned to keep their promise; they will avoid prosecution and shouting. Only positive emotions can be detected towards people in high positions, and negative emotions can only be expressed towards people with low status. The expression of shame, sin and fear is limited; the seemingly constant smile in Asian cultures reassures superiors and 'smooth out' social relations problems. If they do not like something, they will not clearly say it but will bring it to the other's attention in flowery language. All of this is done to protect the authority of the other party and not out of ambiguity. This is one of the foundations of Chinese politeness.

We must never forget that the standard Chinese language, known in Western terminology as Mandarin Chinese (Putonghua/Guoyu) for just over fifty years, provides understanding among the people living there (previously only writing was expected), and the importance of non-verbal communication is still great.

China has a deep belief in hierarchy, and from this point of view. It does not matter what kind of political system prevails in the country: it already means some rank, who can settle in which city, and even more so if you graduate from a foreign university, preferably an American one. The Chinese elite is increasingly teaching its children abroad, who are then encouraged to return home with a Western degree and work from home – and this, as individualism is traditionally uncharacteristic, is abundantly done. The knowledge gained in this way will, of course, remain within the elite – but the country is now able to extract the creative middle and senior management strata that foreign experts were previously typically called upon to replace.

It has become clear that the Central and Eastern European region can act as an economic and cultural bridge between East and West in recent years. This is especially true for Hungarians, who for centuries have been considered by the Chinese to be the only European related people. Our culture carries Asian elements that were most

⁵ *Interkulturális kézikönyv* (Budapest: Európai Integrációs Alap, 2013), 60–61.

likely individualistic, even in the early periods. Our culture and historical experience can help us communicate based on mutual respect and help our Western peers better understand what is happening in China's domestic and foreign policy.

3. Reforms and problems

China's economic reform, which began with the announcement of Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening-up policy in 1978, has been going on for more than four decades. The Chinese Communist Party broke with the Soviet model of planned economy and gradually switched to a specifically interpreted socialist market economy. They try to modernise the state through capitalist modernisation. Commonly referred to in Chinese economic and political circles as socialism with Chinese characteristics. China is in the early stages of socialism to use capitalist methods according to the Chinese Communist Party's ideology.

'It is not interesting if the cat is black or white as long as he grabs the mouse.' This quote well illustrates the essence of the Chinese model. Without a change of political regime, the Chinese sought and sought the fastest paths to economic development. The coexistence of private and public companies with state governance and regulation is the engine of economic development. All banks are still state banks. The Chinese developing state model shows that a mixed economy can develop as well, and the liberal view that the state is a lousy farmer in all circumstances is not correct.

In addition to centrally managed large companies, there is real competition between small and medium-sized companies in China. The exceptionally high development of 8–10 per cent per year is partly explained by the fact that China started from a lower development level than the transition European countries. Outstanding results are created by market competition, which controls, organises and regulates competition ideologically, the Chinese developing state model.

The Chinese one-party system can work because politicians representing business, political, and military interest groups clash in real debates within the Chinese Communist Party. China's economic and social development proves that this form of representative democracy, which is not applicable in Europe and America, can be effectively operated under Chinese conditions. Moreover, the Chinese Communist Party's pragmatism can be deduced from the Chinese perception that nothing is black or white for the Chinese and even less eternal. According to the CCP, in the initial phase of building socialism, where China is today, it is indeed possible to promote economic and social development through a private-state mixed-market economy and capitalist means.⁶

The Chinese army is the most significant force in the world, with its 2.3 million soldiers. As a result of the force's modernisation, the troops' combat value will reach the U.S. defence capabilities in the coming years. According to the Chinese leaders, their country does not seek any hegemony in the present or the future. They have sought

⁶ Új Egyenlőség, 'A kínai modell sikerének titka', 22 March 2019.

to eliminate the sources of conflict as much as possible to deal with the problems multilaterally. Due to the successes achieved, regional power has begun to master the methods and roles that a global power must become more familiar with. In 2011, Xi Jinping broke with modest foreign policy goals based on 'avoiding attention and waiting for time' (taoguang yang hui) and at the meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, his national goal was to become a 'socialist cultural superpower'. While the world economy countries are increasingly dependent on China's performance, China is gradually reducing its dependence on everyone else.

As China's influence as a great power has strengthened and increased, opinions have been divided among Western democracies about where this influence should develop further. Many are increasingly demanding that the country take a proportionate share of international affairs. In contrast, others want it to keep its distance from global problems because of the political system.

'Global governance.'⁷ At first (suspecting a trap) viewed with suspicion of countries demanding greater international involvement, China feared that after making it impossible for modern colonisation methods to be applied in its country, urging global involvement was just another way not to devote its resources own development. The majority of Chinese (like the early U.S.) focuses on solving local problems and do not see why it would be necessary to help deal with global problems. Let us not forget that, according to the Chinese, the current international (capitalist) system is unfair, and it can be predicted from all this that this country will not soon become a convincing ally of the powers that govern international affairs today.

In building global power, China realised the importance of the image of the country. There is currently no consensus on what elements should be used to design this. Many suggest the use of values rooted in traditional, ancient Chinese culture and at the same time universal: peace and harmony, morality, etiquette, benevolence. Some vote in favour of the capacity and legitimacy of the Chinese political system. The third trend would be to organise the building of cultural power around China's economic catching up. All three trends agree that they must also use Chinese methods of soft power specifically for this.

One year after his election as president, Xi Jinping introduced the term 'Chinese dream' in 2013, which has become a symbolic term for today's 'soft power' in China.

The country has set several important goals with the tools of soft power. The primary goal is to gain an 'image' within the international community by gaining respect from the great powers, responding to more tolerant external reactions, and gaining support and sympathy for the issues that matter to it. It also seeks to gain economic benefits indirectly, which is especially evident when new markets are opened up.⁸

The Chinese dream is also attracting people in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and parts of Asia, where China's image may still have developed favourably. However, the general perception of the West is that Beijing is welcome in difficult financial times, but all bad news about China is immediately communicated. This attitude suppresses

⁷ Global governance, or in other words, world governance, is a movement towards political cooperation among transnational actors like nations and organisations, aimed at negotiating responses to problems that affect more than one state or region.

⁸ Trefor Moss, 'Soft Power? China Has Plenty', *The Diplomat*, 04 June 2013.

any soft message that Beijing may try to send. However, it also limits Western politicians' thinking. If it is suitable for any power that it is not enough to communicate news about it on an ideological basis, it is China. Leaders have still not given up on convincing Western public opinion and tying their country to positive things.

The Chinese government's development pace is also considered excessive because overheated growth causes severe equilibrium, environmental and other problems. Therefore, the Chinese economic leadership is making efforts to slow down economic recovery, with little success so far. Currently, the sustainability of the highly rapid economic development can be affected by four factors: problems of environmental damage, social and regional inequalities, undesirable levels of debt, and problems of population and ageing. There is a good chance that the developing Chinese state will find solutions to all issues because they have identified the problems and are working on solutions to them. The results of substantive solutions will only be visible and measurable in decades to come. Even though China does not see itself as a country in imminent danger and its opponents do not think it is on the verge of an internal explosion, it would be worth paying more attention to the similarities between domestic policy challenges and foreign policy goals.

There is a widespread view that because China is not a member of any federal system and does not have significant foreign bases (Djibouti, Afghanistan, South China Sea islands), its army can only conduct military operations in close areas of the country. According to these opinions, the soft power methods used in Asia, Africa and South America do not provide enough experience to become a world leader in the foreseeable future. A diverse, high-spread country is testing the effectiveness of 'soft power' in its provinces. Without foreign policy adventures, these venues provided the Chinese Communist Party with adequate experience in resolving inevitable conflicts (even those of a military nature).

East Turkestan, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Hong Kong, Macao embody archetypes of problems that pose a direct threat to the Chinese state. Despite the provinces' location, the first three provinces touch on the problems of China's eastern (imperial) heritage. At the same time, the last three are the vestibules of the formation of the West. In addition to the regional conflicts, we can also consider the problems of the Christian community of about one hundred million.

Uyghur is an excellent example of how to achieve results along the fault lines of cultures and religions. The first part of the series of studies shows how Uyghurs with significant separatist traditions have been persuaded to make 'modern life' the same as accepting the Chinese dream and the Chinese order. Through the Uyghurs, China is learning how to refine its methods concerning Muslim countries in Central Asia and combat the legacy of emperors.

3.1. Lagging regions can be a source of domestic political threats

Any state with plans for great power must recognise that increased involvement puts an extra burden on its economic and political system. To this end, China must take action against the side effects of rapid development. The Chinese leadership has

identified these problems, and action plans have begun to be implemented. Chinese economists also read Jeffrey G Williamson's 1965 work entitled *Regional Inequality and the Process of National Development: A Description of Patterns*. According to the study, entering an era of the industrial revolution, a country is undergoing rapid economic expansion; however, most modern production is concentrated in a few industrial districts, so a sharpening of territorial inequalities accompanies growth. Following the Industrial Revolution's completion, with the economy's further growth, the levelling out of territorial inequalities will begin. According to Williamson, the state must actively address social tensions caused by income disparities. The example of the 'welfare states' of Western Europe shows that sustainable economic growth can be achieved in parallel with reducing territorial inequalities.

Reducing social and economic inequalities within the country was, of course, seen as an essential task by the young Chinese Communist leadership that came to power in 1949. However, this only caught the attention of Western economists and politicians as China began to emerge as an increasingly dominant factor in the world economy. China's current territorial differences have an impact on the situation of the whole country (e.g. its development, international competitiveness) and, through the latter, on world economic processes.⁹

However, according to the European model, these regions can be sources of trouble and problems and possible reserves for internal development. Involving hundreds of millions of people in modern production, spreading modern production processes, increasing production efficiency, and adopting consumer society's achievements and customs are frequently a substantial driving force for the Chinese economy. Recognising this, they focus on economic processes and apply soft power methods in these areas in a planned and organised manner. The 'One China principle' has foreign policy significance and a significant impact on domestic policy processes. The nationalities of China, with the image of a responsible, healthy, internationally recognised Chinese state, are trying to convince once and for all that whoever wants to live well, who wants to earn much money and live a thriving, modern life, is better off giving up separatist aspirations and uniting in a 'Chinese dream'.

An essential element of this plan is for the country's leadership to unite people living here in a new system. Thus, it seems much more beneficial for the inhabitants of lagging regions to be prosperous citizens of a country that is slowly becoming the world's number one leader than to become a region that is permanently lagging.

3.2. The unique role of Xinjiang Province

China is a large enough country to have a part of the so-called 'foreign country' within its borders. This is especially true of the provinces that China has only laid its hands on for a few decades. These territories did not previously belong organically to the

⁹ Ferenc Gyuris, 'A fejlettség regionális egyenlőtlenségei Kínában' [Regional Inequalities of Development in China], *Tér és Társadalom* 21, no 3 (2007), 143.

empire. Xinjiang, formerly known as East Turkestan, is about 1.5 million km², roughly the same as the provincial-level Chinese administrative unit called Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region with unique characteristics. In China's case, there is usually a contrast between the developed East and the underdeveloped West. According to the Chinese state, this is mainly due to exogenous rather than endogenous sources.



Figure 1: Map Xinjiang Province

Source: www.chinasage.info/provinces/xinjiang.htm



Figure 2: Map Xinjiang Province

Source: www.chinasage.info/provinces/xinjiang.htm

According to Uyghur independence organisations, a particular form of endogenous economic development that builds primarily on an area's internal resources is possible without public investment in the province. The province's natural resources, raw materials, skilled workforce, know-how and innovation capacity are developed, specific local products (agriculture, forestry, handicrafts, local production) and factors attractive to tourism (weather conditions, natural and cultural heritage, attractive landscape and other comfort factors) would make the area suitable for self-sufficiency. In Xinjiang, we are talking more about a catching-up region, and its example is to reinterpret China's traditional East–West divide. It can still be said that developed provinces are in the East, but catching up has already begun in the West and North. The lagging areas are in the middle and south.

4. Historical milestones in Chinese resistance

Uyghurs have a long and meaningful history, and aspirations for independence have a long tradition. It was an initial highlight of their long history when they overcame their masters in 747 and took over the Turkish empire, solidified over the next 50 years under Mojencó's rule. Around 840, however, they were seriously attacked by Kyrgyzstan, and in addition to killing the Kagan, the capital was also set on fire. Then, after the disintegration of the empire, part of the Uyghurs settled in what was then East Turkestan and then formed two new kaganates. Initially, they were Buddhists and then converted to the Islamic faith. After that, the Mongol Empire ruled East Turkestan for approximately 600 years.

After the Mongol era, the inhabitants of East Turkestan established several independent Muslim principalities. From the 16th century onwards, the area came into conflict with Chinese, Russian and British spheres of interest and eventually came under loose Chinese rule. In 1759, the Chinese renamed the area from East Turkestan to Xinjiang.

The incorporation of the new province into the empire was very difficult. The Uyghurs' quest for independence is well illustrated by the fact that until 1862, an anti-China uprising broke out almost every year. The forty-two uprisings then brought the expected result. In 1864, East Turkestan declared its independence, also recognised by the Turkish Empire, Britain and Russia.

In 1876, the Chinese again invaded the young state and, after twelve years of desperate struggle, in 1884, they permanently annexed the area.

After the empire's fall in 1911, between 1933–1936 and 1944–1949, short, reasonably long-lived state formations existed in East Turkestan and the Second East Turkestan Republic, also supported by the Soviet Union. Then, on 27 August 1949, the Uyghur leaders' plane crashed under mysterious circumstances, after which Chinese troops reappeared in the province and finally occupied the area.

The independent East Turkestan Republic leaders eventually fled to Turkey via India, Pakistan, and partly Egypt.

5. Forced escape

Since the uprisings against Beijing that began in the 1950s have failed, many have chosen emigration. It is estimated that there are about 20,000 people of Eastern Turkestan descent in Turkey (Istanbul and Kayseri).

However, those starting a new life in Turkey, Europe and America have not been cut off from their homeland and culture, as they maintain many associations and organisations. Uyghur emigration of about two million people is scattered around the world. In order to strengthen their cohesion, the World Congress of Uyghurs (2004, Munich) was established, with its first president, Erkin Alptekin, who took his father's place to organise emigration work as a CIA adviser.

Between 1979–1989, a significant number of Uyghurs fought in the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan. Some of these warriors returned home and brought with them more radical Islamic teachings. With the independence of the Soviet member republics of Central Asia, more and more national organisations emerged in the province. They all agreed on the need to prevent the violent transformation of the ethnic image of the area and guarantee human freedoms, but only the most radical groups aimed at secession.

In the spring of 1990, in the city of Baren, the Chinese authorities cracked down on a demonstration with particular cruelty, where protesters stood up for the Uyghur national survival. General riots throughout the Autonomous Province followed the atrocity of more than fifty deaths and hundreds of injuries. As the vast majority of China's nuclear tests were tied to the province, members of the emigration in 1992 organised an anti-nuclear conference to bring their cause to greater international attention.

In 1993, the Uyghur Liberation Front was formed, which carried out nearly a thousand assassinations in China. By 1995, Uyghur emigration had succeeded in opening representation centres in Washington and several European capitals.

After establishing the Shanghai Cooperation, the separatists no longer found supporters in the surrounding Islamic countries, so they looked for new supporters. The Islamic Movement of East Turkestan allied first with the Taliban and then with al-Qaeda, resulting in more than 600 Uyghur militants' training. The Chinese authorities classified all Uyghur organisations as terrorists and described the fight against them as part of international counter-terrorism operations.

An uprising broke out in Yining on 5 February 2003, after 30 Uyghur activists were executed. Some 70 Uyghurs were killed and hundreds wounded in street fighting.

In 2004, Amnesty International published a report criticising the execution of a significant proportion of Uyghur political prisoners.

The U.S. separates various organisations' activities and only registers the Islamic Movement in East Turkestan as a terrorist organisation. Rabiya Kadir, who will hold the presidency of the Uyghur World Congress until 2017, has also achieved significant results. Thanks to her work, Western diplomacy got to know the cause of the Uyghurs. The lady was previously an active economic and political player in China until she was arrested and imprisoned in 1999. After her release in 2005, she immediately fled to the United States, where she received a residence permit and citizenship. Washington welcomed Kadir with open arms, but the Turkish authorities never allowed her into

Turkey. Turks and Americans want to use independence groups for different purposes. In Syria, groups have emerged fighting under Uyghur and Turkish flags. With guns in their hands, these emigrants in Turkish military uniforms threatened the Chinese state in the Mandarin language.

Turkey has also successfully recruited mercenaries in Syria, Libya and, more recently, Azerbaijan. These include well-equipped Uyghur groups. Turkish recruiters will side with the Uyghur separatists with the promise of fighting for a new homeland on the Syrian (and Iraqi) fronts. In this area, they can settle down, establish a new state, and freely live their religion. About 20,000 Uyghurs have been settled in Ildib province so far. According to Turkish ideas, the Uyghurs, together with the Turks, will organise a collision state in northern Syria. Although both the United States and Turkey have classified an organisation called the Islamic Party of Turkestan as a terrorist organisation, its members have been favourably employed to pursue both NATO members' goals. The Turkestan Islamic Party carries out most of the assassinations against the Chinese authorities in the areas inhabited by Uyghurs.

Turkish newspapers close to the government published that the Chinese authorities hold about 3 million Uyghurs in various 're-education camps'. According to news reports referring to Chinese human rights foundations and the Uyghur World Congress in Munich with U.S. support, Beijing is also banning the practice of Muslim naming and is even signing official documents with Muslim citizens about their 'voluntary' refusal to fast. Moreover, this topic has appeared and continues to appear in the Turkish press and American newspapers.

Since 2017, China has been building an internment camp in Xinjiang, inhabited by Uyghurs. According to Chinese propaganda, nothing else happens to 're-educate' Uyghurs following the challenges of modern life. China is trying to set up the internment of minority groups as if it were just a simple professional development program. According to official wording, they would only provide an opportunity for members of the minority to take up a well-paying work.

For China, the fate of the Uyghur minority has become the most critical domestic and security policy issue of the century. Thanks to the success of the Uyghur emigration, this problem has gone far beyond China's borders, which, due to the economic and geostrategic importance of the area, affects the government more painfully than, for example, the question of Tibet. The autonomous province could quickly become a hot spot in China, so over the past decade, the communist government has realised that in order to achieve its plans, it must resolve this issue. The Chinese police and army are gaining significant operational experience in the fight against separatist organisations. Compared to UN missions, these conflicts are much more active, more hidden from the press and the operations are much more uniform. Experiences are continuously processed, and training, technical tools and leadership skills are continuously developed based on the conclusions drawn from the results.

Representatives of European Uyghur organisations are not optimistic. In their view, in addition to the many atrocities, the Chinese authorities are achieving increasing success by separating children from their parents, demolishing religious sites and banning the participation of young people under the age of 18 in religious events and using forced political indoctrination. Separating generations, voicing the old-fashionedness

of national self-consciousness, and proving the backward thinking of religious people find more and more understanding ears among young people. Soft power methods have so far convinced many more young people than hard-power methods. It is also of great help that the Western mainstream media reports similar news about nationalist dictators, populism, the abolition of white, Christian superiority. Moreover the Western part media regularly reports on the events of the ideology created by the Western far left in the Chinese press and sees justification for his ideology in the current events.

Due to the failure to weaken separatism, Chinese politics has recently taken an entirely novel approach to the problem. The essence of the new principle is that the state should more significantly support the province compared to the surrounding areas. Communist Party leaders hoped that if vigorous development began to make the province significantly more developed, separatism would be fatally wounded by the simple petty-bourgeois principle of materiality even in neighbouring Chinese territories. Few will want to sacrifice the rise in living standards in all areas of life to dream of creating a politically weightless, relatively isolated independent country. Since the opening of the oil and hydrocarbon fields, it is clear to local leaders that an independent Uyghur state without a coast would not deliver its resources to the world market, only through China or Russia. However, then the latter would reap the benefits. For example, the province's education index is among the highest in all of China (0.812, compared to the national average of 0.783), suggesting that above-average economic development is not the result of financial-statistical gimmicks. The combined effect of high-quality education and appropriate ideologies causes some of the Uyghur youth to want to stop the endless struggle and prefer to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Chinese state. The German anthropologist and sinologist Adrian Zenz has done several studies on Uyghur re-education camps.

6. The American response to the situation

Although Europe has only been aware of them for a few years, Uyghur organisations have had excellent ties to the American Republican Party for decades. It is perhaps no coincidence that outgoing U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo raised his voice in defence of this minority.

'After a thorough study of the facts at my disposal, I have established that the People's Republic of China, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, is committing genocide in Xinjiang province against predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and other ethnic and religious minorities' Pompeo wrote in a statement. 'I see that the genocide is still going on. What we are witnessing is a systematic attempt by the Chinese party-state to destroy the Uyghurs', he added.¹⁰

The head of American diplomacy addressed allegations of forced labour, electroshock treatments, injections for unknown purposes, sterilisation, restrictions on religious

¹⁰ Mandiner, 'Amerikai külügyminiszter: Kína népi tást követ el az uigur kisebbség ellen', 19 January 2021.

freedom and the detention of more than one million civilians. The purpose of the statement, of course, was to increase further the already severe tensions between the United States and China. Experts say at least one million Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Huits and other minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region have been imprisoned in political re-education camps for seemingly arbitrary reasons such as praying or travelling abroad. China regularly denies such violations in Xinjiang.

Earlier, the U.S. passed a sanctions bill against China over the situation of the Uyghur minority. The seriousness of the matter and the commitment of the Americans is indicated by the fact that the House of Representatives voted in favour of the legislation in a 413:1 ratio. The same proposal was unanimously approved by the Senate a week earlier.

The bill calls for punitive measures against Chinese leaders responsible for the mass internment of members of the Muslim Uyghur minority. Florida Senator Marco Rubio, who introduced the legislation, suggested that Chinese government officials responsible for violating the human rights of Uyghurs be deprived of the possibility of a possible U.S. entry visa and that the U.S. government study the possibility of additional sanctions.¹¹

Last October, the U.S. Government banned 28 Chinese companies and other organisations for taking advantage of state forced labour because they are involved in the repression of the Uyghur minority.

6.1. Another scientific approach to the situation

Li Xiaoxia, an exceptional researcher at the Xinjiang Development Research Center, said the government had treated the region as leniently as possible.

In his study refuting the claims of the German scientist, he writes that at the time of the first national census in 1953, the total population of Xinjiang was still only 4.8736 million. According to the sixth national census in 2010, 21.8158 million people were registered, representing a 3.3-fold increase in population over 57 years. According to the researcher, the total population of Xinjiang has been growing steadily in recent years. Chinese statistics show that between 2010 and 2018, the population of ethnic minorities and that of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang has grown strongly, while that of the Xinjiang Han ethnic group has grown only slightly. In terms of population size, the number of permanent residents of Xinjiang increased from 21.8158 million to 24.8676 million between 2010 and 2018, representing an increase of 3.0518 million new residents, or 13.99 per cent.

According to official data, the Uyghur population increased from 10.1715 million to 12.7184 million, increasing 25.04 per cent in their case. In parallel, the Han population in the province increased from 8.8299 million to only 9.0068 million, an increase of 176,900 people, or 2.0 per cent. According to the Chinese scholar, the Uyghur population's growth rate is higher not only in the region as a whole but also concerning other ethnic minorities. It is much higher than that of the Han population.

¹¹ HVG, 'Az ujjurok elnyomása miatt készül szankcionálni Kínát az Egyesült Államok', 28 May 2020.

According to Li Xiaoxia's study, since the founding of New China, a comparison of the total regional population and the population of ethnic minorities shows that the province's population growth has been sustained by the rapid growth of the Uyghur population.

6.2. Summarised reasons

The Chinese Government supports family planning policies among all ethnic groups through laws. To ensure the coordinated and sustainable development of ethnic minorities, it implements a relatively loose policy of restricting the births of individual couples to ethnic minorities, which is different from people belonging to the Han population. In 1975, Xinjiang Province also began implementing family planning policies in Urumqi and other cities where the Han population was relatively concentrated. With the publication of temporary provisions on family planning issues in 1981, the implementation of the family planning policy was fully realised among the Han people.

In 1992, family planning measures for the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region were issued, setting out a more lenient family planning policy for ethnic minorities. In the big cities, every Han couple was encouraged to have only one child, while every Han couple who lived in the countryside could raise two children. According to family planning measures, each ethnic minority couple could have two children in cities, raising three children in rural areas.

In 2017, with improved economic and social development and considering the childbearing aspirations of people from all ethnic groups, Xinjiang revised its regulation on population and family planning, requiring all ethnic groups to implement a unified family planning. According to this, couples living in urban areas can have two children, and those living in rural areas can have three children.

Based on research data, according to the 1988 National Fertility and Birth Control Sampling Survey, Uyghur women had an average of 6.13 children between 1970 and 1974 and 5.4 children between 1985 and 1987. Han women had 5.2 and 2.5 children in the same area in the two periods. In 1981, Tibetans (5.84) and Uyghurs (5.59) had the highest overall fertility rates in China among all ethnic populations.

Li Xiaoxia also highlights the mortality rate. In the early days of the founding of New China, the mortality rate in Xinjiang was 20 per cent. As medical conditions improved, the mortality rate fell below 10 per cent in the mid-1960s and later declined further. Accordingly, the natural growth rate and the birth rate changed basically in parallel.

Between 1949 and 1983, research was conducted in Yingjiasha County, a village inhabited by Uyghurs. The average age of the dead was 18.76. Of these, 127 infants died within a year, accounting for 54.74 per cent of all deaths. Research in 2016 found that only eight people died that year, and their average age was already 73.9 years. Between 2014 and 2015, 282 babies were born in the village, and only one baby died.

The quality of life of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang has improved significantly, especially the level of health care for women and children has steadily improved. The maternal mortality rate fell from 43.41 per cent in 2010 to 26.65 per cent by

2018; infant mortality fell from 26.58 per cent to 14.02 per cent, and the average life expectancy reached 74.82 years of age.

Family planning policy was not implemented too rigorously, resulting in the emergence of different large populations. Various factors have made it challenging to promote and implement the family planning policy in Kashgar, Hotan and other southern Xinjiang regions, leading to rapid population growth in these areas. Some residents opposed family planning policies because they insisted on their old concept of having children, which hindered restrictive policies.

In some areas, the family planning policy has not been fully implemented. In compiling the regulations, more emphasis was placed on rewarding current family policy followers than punishing offenders. The limited number of family planning officers has also seriously affected the implementation of the regulations.

Interestingly, a family planning officer had to serve an average of 15,000 residents in Kashgar Shache County (Yarkand), where the farthest couple sometimes lived 130 km from the office. In 2015, an impressive statistic was compiled on the implementation of the measures in force in one of the provinces of Kashgar Prefecture. It was reported that between 1989 and 2014, 359,000 people were born in the county; 10.5 per cent of births were unplanned births.

According to Li Xiaoxi, the birth rate and natural growth rate of Xinjiang's population fell from 15.88 per cent in 2017 and 11.40 per cent in 2017 to 10.69 per cent and 6.13 per cent in 2018. Compared to 2017, the number of newborn in 2018 decreased by about 120,000. The main reasons are as follows:

- Local authorities strictly enforce the current family planning policy. According to the 2017 amendment to the Population and Family Planning Decree of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang enjoy equal family planning rights. Specifically, each registered urban couple can have up to two children, and each registered rural couple can raise three children. Any violation of the regulation will result in appropriate penalties. Meanwhile, special funds to reward birth control and provide social security are earmarked in a definite way by governments at county and higher levels for those who adhere to the measures. Couples of ethnic minorities living in rural areas of Xinjiang who have only one or two children (including adopted children) are entitled to obtain a moral certificate during their lifetime. Compliant residents can also receive a 3,000 RMB yuan bonus from the local government.
- In recent years, the Xinjiang provincial leadership has made continuous efforts to improve the quality of health of its citizens and to promote scientific knowledge in the field of contraception and reproductive health.
- Safe, effective and appropriate contraceptive measures are available for couples of childbearing potential. There have been 9,788 distribution points in Xinjiang, where free condoms and other contraceptives have been released. Seventeen contraceptives are offered free of charge each year. Smartphone applications have also been developed that provide detailed information on contraceptive sites, meeting the individual needs of contraception and reproductive health.

The mindset about marriage and procreation has changed. During these years, young people in Xinjiang have already discarded backwards and outdated ideas about mate choice and procreation. More and more ethnic minority youth began to devote more time and energy to their personal development, thus postponing their first marriage.

Meanwhile, the perception of 'less and better' profoundly affected many married women belonging to rural minorities to find work to earn more money.

Thus, the continuity of the previous idea of 'marriage-motherhood management' was broken, and their status in the family greatly improved. Women are more likely than ever to decide whether to have a child with social development, and the generalisation of progressive ideas, absolute freedom to marry. The rate of divorce and remarriage was stable, with a slight decline. According to official data, the number of registered divorced couples was 74,979 in 2015, 51,223 in 2017 and 47,919 in 2018, with an annual decrease of 14 per cent; the number of remarriages in these years was 195,008, 150,628 and 115,831, an annual decrease of 16 per cent.

7. Effective curbing of religious extremism

Severe and complex counter-terrorism operations have been carried out in recent years. The measures responded to the complex challenges of fighting extremist groups. We have managed to reduce the number of violent and terrorist crimes. Security of life and property has been restored in the province. The Xinjiang Government has managed to free many people's minds from the shackles of religious extremism, both by addressing the symptoms and the root causes and by continuing the war against extremism. The idea of a civilised, modern life has won the support of the public and communities. Those infected in the past with religious extremism have been persuaded to appreciate their freedom to marry and to accept legally registered marriage and divorce. They ignore the idea of extremists that those involved in the birth control program are heretics.

They embraced the idea of 'fewer and better births create lifelong happiness' that raised awareness of marriage and obstetric procedures in all ethnic groups. In eradicating extremism, the minds of some women were liberated, gender equality and scientific awareness of reproductive health were promoted, which is why women were no longer reproduction machines. Women strived to be healthy, confident, independent, family-loving, patriotic and modern in the new era.

According to the Chinese scientist, the evolution of the world's population has suggested that the more developed the economy and society, the more critical people consider self-realisation and more conscious upbringing of children so that fertility and natural population growth rates decline accordingly. According to the canonical demographic transition theory, the human population changes from 'high mortality rate, high birth rate and low growth rate' to low 'mortality rate, low birth rate and low growth rate' as human society develops.

Since the mid-1960s, the birth rate in some European countries has been steadily declining, with a total fertility rate of 1.6 between 1980 and 1985. At the end of the 20th century, the birth rate in Europe was shallow. China's total fertility rate fell to

a relatively low level in the early 1990s and has been steadily declining. In 2015, the ratio was 1.5–1.6.

Xinjiang's demographic change is typically characterised by relative hysteresis and structural differences compared to the national level. With continuous economic and social development, the living conditions of people of all ethnic groups have shown fundamental changes, especially in travel, housing, education, health conditions and employment. The quality of life of the population is, therefore, significantly improving. In Xinjiang, the birth rate, mortality rate and natural population growth rate fell from 22.55 per cent in 1978, 7.69 per cent and 14.86 per cent in 2018 to 10.69 per cent, 4.56 per cent and 6.13 per cent, respectively.

Based on the four-stage hypothesis of demographic transition theory, the population of Xinjiang has entered the fourth stage, that is, the stage of low mortality, low birth rate and low growth rate. In 2018, in Xinjiang, both the fertility rate and the natural growth rate of the ethnic minority population (especially the Uyghur population) declined significantly. All this can be attributed to the strict implementation of family planning policy and the acceleration of the relatively hysterical transition of the population of ethnic minorities, which is the result of the rapid economic and social development of recent years.

According to a particular researcher at the Xinjiang Development Research Center, further promoting poverty alleviation will significantly improve the living conditions of poverty-stricken South Xinjiang. The process of urbanisation has accelerated in the region. Members of all ethnic groups are more educated and have more usable (educable) cultural qualities. The idea of late marriage and childbearing, 'less or better births', became more and more popular and became a new fashion in southern Xinjiang. The secular and modern way of life proclaimed in southern Xinjiang has already achieved remarkable results. The attraction to backward thoughts declined significantly, leaving more room for individuals to decide full autonomy in maternity control.

As the old concept of childbearing fades significantly, young women enjoy greater autonomy in having children. A safe conclusion can be drawn that the evolution of the Uyghur population is caused by their own decision and independence rather than by political ideas and external forces. The transition is not only a matter of population size but also a topic that includes an overall improvement in the quality of life of the population as a result of the voluntary choice of people belonging to all ethnic minorities.

8. Conclusion

China's opponents are interested in the protracted and regular escalation of the Uyghur conflict, and it is in China's interest to resolve it as soon as possible. The communist government realised that with soft power techniques applied within the border, it could achieve much better results in the autonomous province than when it pursued a firm hand. Western politics has been at a disadvantage, as in most cases, the traditional, economic or military means of international politics have entered the conflict using complex power methods. With China making significant progress in soft power

methods, influencing people's consciousness, and exerting its impact in education, culture, sports and science, it is progressively increasing its influence in problem areas.

The U.S. also needs to realise that a viable vision needs to be developed for the Uyghurs and that investing a few tens of thousands of dollars is not enough to lend this much-suffered community. You could help moderate organisations with soft power techniques specially developed for the province – in their present state, Western societies struggle with an identity crisis.

When Western consumer society steers man into a world of ever improving selfishness and, while proclaiming freedom above all else, significantly unifies, formalises, compresses, forces him/her to behave similarly, it will be difficult to convince the Chinese or Uyghurs that they are not the same. Processes take place in them as in the world.

On the other hand, society's long-term interests can be ensured by developing long-term planning, cooperating, pleasant, mature personalities. China does not need this as much as developed democracies, so it wants to unite the country in a consumer culture similar to the West.

The promotion of the purified, materialistic, modern way of life of spirituality has already achieved remarkable results in Xinjiang. While traditional values are described as backward, superstitious, non-fashionable throughout the world, it is no wonder that the communist leadership, which used these ideas to justify its actions, achieved a significant decline in nationalist, spiritual thought. They believe that their procedure has given more space to individuals, liberating women, young people.

At a time when the boomer-zoomer opposition is becoming more and more intense in the West, when in some states it is decided that parents can decide the child's life after birth, when it becomes common for anyone who gives birth to a child to commit 'climate murder', it will be difficult to demand that the old concept of childbearing be accepted among Chinese minorities. With the soft methods it used, the communist leadership achieved that the changes in the Uyghur population's dynamics were increasingly caused by their own decision and perceived independence rather than by external intervention in the traditional sense. Seeing the Uyghur events, we are almost shocked to see the all-pervading effects of globalisation processes.

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