

## UNDERSTANDING MUSLIM UYGHUR IN XINJIANG: A PATH-DEPENDENT ANALYSIS

Agus Syarifudin Efendi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia  
agus.efendi@uinsa.ac.id

### ABSTRACT

This article explores why the Chinese government has implemented repressive policies against Muslim Uyghurs. It focuses on the socio-political tensions between local groups and state authority in Xinjiang. Before the 1980s, Uyghurs enjoyed relative tolerance under the Communist regime. The collapse of the USSR sparked ethnic nationalism across Central Asia, fueling popular desires for independence in Xinjiang and leading to political conflicts. Because Muslim Uyghurs frequently participated in social unrest, Chinese authorities linked separatist and terrorist activities to Islam. Under the guise of a war on terrorism, the government used this narrative to justify oppressive actions against Uyghurs. However, Xinjiang's structural issues, such as social exclusion, economic inequality, and discrimination, contribute to the worsening of inter-ethnic tensions. To address this deep-rooted conflict and maintain social stability in Xinjiang, the central authority decides to reshape the identity of the Muslim Uyghurs. The establishment of re-education camps marks the apex of a historical process planned to erase Uyghur cultural identity and promote integration into a unified, majority-aligned national culture.

**Keywords:** Muslim Uyghur, Repression, Extremism, Inequality, Identity

### INTRODUCTION

In late December 2019, China's embassy in Jakarta suddenly attracted public attention. Hundreds of Muslims organized protests against China's government and expressed solidarity with the Uighur people in northwestern China. Some Indonesian public figures also voiced similar concerns. They emphasized that the Indonesian government should send a formal protest to Beijing immediately regarding the treatment of Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang (HRW 2018). This Muslim response marks the second wave of protests, according to international reports, that started two years earlier due to human rights abuses against Muslim Uyghurs. Interestingly, a couple of weeks before the protest, The New York Times published a provocative report titled The Xinjiang Paper (Ramzi & Buckley, 2019). It addresses an information leak about China's systematic practices that forced ethnic minorities, especially Muslim Uyghurs, into mass detention.

In such cases, most Muslims expect the Indonesian government to speak out clearly on the international stage. However, Jakarta's response to the Uyghur issue

*Article History:* Received 20 January 2026, Revised 03 February 2026,  
Accepted 02 May 2026, Available online 01 June 2026.

**Copyright:** © 2026. The authors.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-  
ShareAlike 4.0 International License

has been vague. Some analysts argue that Indonesia's foreign policy has become constrained in its dealings with China due to strong economic ties between Jakarta and Beijing over the past 10 years. This is different from Indonesia's response to the persecution of the Muslim Rohingya, where it has been more vocal. Indonesia could take on a leadership role in applying diplomatic pressure on Myanmar. Comparing these situations, it appears that Indonesia tends to respond to the Uyghur issue without direct conflict. Still, the Indonesian government stresses that it remains dedicated to supporting the Uyghurs. This issue is complicated, as showing solidarity with the Uyghurs is often seen as a threat linked to Islamist movements' narratives (IPAC, 2019). Public discussion about Uyghurs slowed due to a lack of reliable sources.

A recent study on the condition of Muslim Uyghurs introduces the concept of cultural genocide (Roberts, 2020). This term describes a structured attack targeting a specific group of people and their cultural identity (Bilsky & Klagsbrun, 2018). It argues that the cultural identity of Muslim Uyghurs has been systematically eroded. This repression, aimed at asserting political control over religious freedom, results in mass migration abroad (Anand, 2022). To defend their people's rights, the World Uyghur Congress and the Center for Uyghur Studies work tirelessly to raise awareness among the international community about the humanitarian crisis in Xinjiang. They also urge the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to find a solution to end discrimination against Muslims Uyghurs (Havlová, 2024). However, the result appears minor, leading us to consider more how the Chinese view the Muslim Uyghur identity as something wrong.

To address this issue, we will analyze the tensions between local forces and China's authority in Xinjiang. This article adopts a historical perspective to reveal the pattern of socio-political changes in the region. We also examine the role of ethnic identity within Xinjiang society, focusing on the relationship between Han Chinese and Uyghurs. This helps us understand the opportunities, disparities, and rivalries that have emerged alongside China's development efforts. By exploring how economic structures intersect with cultural factors, we can better comprehend why Xinjiang has experienced multiple riots since the 1990s.

As a multiethnic country, the People's Republic of China generally supports religious freedom. The Authority allows believers to participate in regular religious activities. However, under certain conditions, the government might restrict religious practices that threaten public order. In the case of Muslims, the ban on religious practices is related to the influence of radical groups' ideology (C. Zhang, 2021). Muslim Uyghurs encounter greater restrictions on practicing their religious faith compared to Hui Muslims, primarily because of their involvement in extremist organizations. In contrast, the communist regime perceives Hui Muslims' identity as less scrutinized and easier to sustain. The identity of Muslim Uyghurs has become increasingly problematic for the state as local ethnonationalist ambitions intersect

with religious revivalism. To fully understand this shift, it is essential to examine China's history of repressive policies and the rise of separatist and extremist movements in Xinjiang. The state's failure to grant genuine regional autonomy has transformed cultural differences into pressing political grievances, making it crucial to discuss how these issues continue to evolve.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a historical institutionalism framework grounded in path-dependency theory. This approach indicates that socio-political issues, particularly the interactions between the state and minorities, do not stem from sudden or isolated policy shifts. Instead, they are heavily influenced by historical context (Mahoney, 2000; Pierson, 2000). This perspective allows us to demonstrate how crucial state-building decisions become deeply embedded and create self-perpetuating trajectories that resist change over time.

To operationalize this framework, the study first identifies critical junctures, brief periods of significant contingency during which specific institutional choices are established along developmental paths (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007; Collier & Collier, 1991). By isolating these foundational moments, the analysis evaluates how early state strategies structurally marginalized indigenous networks and set a restrictive precedent for future state-minority relations. To relate these historical moments to today's results, the study uses process tracing to identify the pathways connecting early policy choices with the present socio-political landscape (D. Collier, 2011). By examining how inter-ethnic economic relations, state modernization initiatives, and bureaucratic strategies for managing Muslim identity, the analysis shows how initial institutional decisions created self-perpetuating processes that gradually limited minority socio-cultural spaces and emphasized economic integration at the expense of true regional autonomy.

The analysis employs a triangulation of qualitative secondary data, including historical policy directives, macroeconomic and demographic trends, and historiographical literature on the region's structural changes. By examining these data within a path dependency framework, this method offers a robust, theory-based understanding of ongoing issues related to institutional lock-in and minority-state relations.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Root of Uyghur Resistance**

The term "Uyghur" originally refers to a Turkic subethnic group that has resided in Central Asia for centuries. The Islamization of the Uyghur people is closely linked to the founding of the Karakhanid Sultanate in Central Asia. In the tenth century, Kashgar served as the political center. Consequently, the Sultanate's legacy is reflected in the Uyghur language and literature. Islamic traditions have a

significant influence on Uyghur culture, as evidenced by the presence of the Sufi tarekat within the community (J. Millward, 2007). Therefore, it's not surprising that nearly all Uyghurs are Muslim.

By the mid-1700s, the Manchu Qing dynasty had defeated the Mongol Zunghar, who ruled the Tarim Basin. They renamed the area 'Xinjiang,' meaning 'new frontier land.' To establish authority over this region, the Qing established a military government aimed at maintaining the support of traditional institutions and ensuring their fulfillment of duties, such as tax payments. Essentially, Xinjiang is managed more like a political entity colony (Clarke, 2011, p. 20). This indirect rule certainly provokes resistance among indigenous populations. One key figure is Ya'qub Beg, who played a significant role in persuading people to join a rebellion against China in the 1870s (Kim, 2004, pp. 73–93). This movement can be viewed as a struggle to increase awareness among Turkic peoples of the need to participate in resistance. It is also seen as the origin of Uyghur identity nationalism.

In the first half of the twentieth century, Xinjiang maintained a degree of autonomy. During this period, local political movements were quite prominent. This environment encouraged the native population to pursue an autonomous government, which they named the "Islamic Republic of East Turkmenistan (*Uyghurstan Jumhuriyati*)" in 1933, with Kashgar serving as the capital. However, due to the inability to sustain political unity, this government quickly dissolved. The instability caused by the civil war and Japanese invasion led to the rise of political authority in northern Xinjiang, specifically through the formation of the East Turkmenistan Republic (ETR). This new republic received indirect backing from the USSR, particularly through arms supplies (Benson, 1990). It ended after the People's Liberation Army (PLA), a military branch of the Communist Party of China, arrived to peacefully unify Xinjiang with the broader Chinese nation (Dillon, 2014, pp. 190–209).

The establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) marks a new chapter in the history of the Uyghur people in Xinjiang. Clearly, the new government needs to foster consensus regarding nationality (Bovingdon, 2010, pp. 42–48). While the Communist Party of China is the only ruling party of the PRC, political elites seem to accept the concept of nationality developed by Kuomintang leaders Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek. This idea argues that a new China should recognize ethnic differences, but territorial boundaries are absolute (Benson, 1990, pp. 11–18). It was therefore granted autonomous status in Xinjiang. Administratively, this region is officially called the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). The term 'Uyghur' indicates that, although Xinjiang is part of China, the Uyghur people are recognized as a distinct nationality. As a result, each level of government in Xinjiang has ethnic representation. This policy was put in place to support Uyghur and other non-Han ethnic minorities, who comprise nearly ninety percent of Xinjiang's population. Under Mao Zedong, the CPC's goal in Xinjiang was

to establish legitimacy as the top authority by appointing local leaders. Mao believed that local leaders played a key role in preventing chauvinism among the majority and in resisting nationalist movements based on ethnicity or religion (Clarke, 2011, p. 52).

During the Cultural Revolution, there was no significant change for Uyghurs. Although they were forced to join the commune, their agricultural output remained low. A main reason for this low productivity is the lack of government support and expert assistance. In the late 1960s, China faced a threat from the USSR's effort to spread revolutionary ideas in Xinjiang. This contributed to the belief that these ideas led to the creation of the underground East Turkmenistan People's Organization Party. Reports indicated that this group had infiltrated numerous cities and rural areas, emphasizing the separatist issue in Xinjiang. As a result, youth activists and government-appointed experts sent to assist peasants and enhance agriculture had to leave and refused to return to Xinjiang (Dreyer, 1986, p. 726).

During the following period, Deng Xiaoping promoted a different political vision for China's development. He asserts that public life should no longer need to be restricted but must be reinforced (J. Millward, 2007, p. 278). This vision influences the policy towards ethnic minorities, promoting greater pluralism. It has also significantly enhanced the religious and cultural practices of minorities. For example, numerous Islamic modern schools (*madrassahs*) and mosques have been established across various locations (J. Rudelson & Jankowiak, 2015, p. 301). Additionally, Uyghurs feel free to share their religious beliefs and practice their traditional rituals. This is evident in the Uyghur diaspora, as he recalled his childhood:

"We, at the time, can attend *madrassa* school around our living milieu. I learned how to recite Al Qur'an from a *mullah* in our village ... Nobody is scared to learn about Islam. And no one is strictly inspecting us." (Mahmut 2019, 32)

### **The Separatist Movement and Repressive Measures Toward Muslim Uyghurs**

The regional situation significantly impacts the political movement in Xinjiang, especially after the USSR's collapse. With the fall of a major global power, Central Asian countries declared independence. The success of ethnonationalism in forming states such as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan encourages Uyghurs to wonder why the Kazakh and Uzbek peoples were able to gain independence. At the same time, Uyghurs face different struggles that they cannot overcome (Roberts, 2015, p. 229). As a result, they call for political struggle in Xinjiang. Being a radical movement, it often spreads anti-government views and fosters negative feelings toward the Han Chinese. Since then, for the Chinese government, the political struggle in Xinjiang has been classified as a separatist movement.

Baren, a small town in southern Kashgar, is often identified as the starting point of the security crisis in Xinjiang. The April 1990 Baren incident erupted when a group of Uyghurs and Kyrgyz attempted to stage a protest, aiming to expel Han Chinese from Xinjiang and to create an independent state called East Turkistan (Clarke, 2011, p. 91). The protest escalated, and armed individuals mobilized to seize control of the local government for several days. The Chinese government attributed the outbreak to the East Turkestan Islamic Party, which allegedly planned the attack months earlier. The riot was quelled when the military arrived, leaving at least a dozen people injured. Hundreds of people were detained on suspicion of involvement. This incident thus attracted the Xinjiang government's attention and warrants further discussion at the Communist Party meeting. A notable outcome of that meeting was the recognition that separatism poses the greatest threat to Xinjiang. (Becquelin, 2000, p. 69).

The resurgence of separatism has prompted the Chinese government to adjust its policies on freedom and religion. Restrictions will likely be limited to high-threat regions within Xinjiang, not the entire area. These measures include banning foreign preachers, closing mosques, shutting down madrasahs, and regulating imams. Such policies usually still allow Muslims to pray in mosques and perform the Hajj pilgrimage, helping maintain China's image in the international Muslim community while opening its economic borders in Central Asia (Dillon, 2004, p. 74). To prevent separatism, the Chinese government regulated Islamic organizations and increased control in southern Xinjiang through military bases, deploying thousands of party cadres to maintain rural stability, and enforcing relevant laws (Hierman, 2007, p. 52).

The Chinese government believes that madrasahs serve as centers of anti-China propaganda, leading to their closure. As a result, many Muslim Uyghur youths travel to neighboring countries to pursue Islamic education. Thanks to an open-border policy and infrastructure connecting Xinjiang with Central and South Asian nations, crossing the border is relatively straightforward. Notably, when these individuals return to Xinjiang, they often express sympathy for or are influenced by jihadist ideologies (Fayaz, 2012, p. 247). Jihadi ideology motivates separatist groups to commit acts of terror in Xinjiang. To curb the spread of this ideology, Xinjiang's authorities introduced a regulation prohibiting religious instruction within educational institutions (Clarke, 2011, p. 104).

In the following years, the frequency of violence and bombings grew. According to one source, from the Baren incident until late 1998, Xinjiang experienced at least forty violent and bombing incidents (Hierman, 2007, p. 50). The April 1995 Ghulja incident was a major riot that marked a shift toward harsher policies against separatism. About 10,000 protesters, including workers, traders, and teachers, held a mass strike across Ili near Kazakhstan's border, demanding local government break ties with China and cede control to Kazakhstan (Dillon,

2004, p. 68). The Chinese government did not approve this demand, viewing it as a separatist aspiration. To suppress the protest, security forces were dispatched to the Ili region (Clarke, 2011, p. 116).

The Ghulja incident prompted China's security bureau to become more alert to separatist movements operating both within the region and from abroad. This prompted the Chinese government to launch the 'Strike Hard' campaign in 1996. This strategic effort aims to prevent separatism and target individuals involved in serious criminal activities. However, under this security agenda, Islam is treated as a significant factor in criminal activity. Undoubtedly, this has led to a set of regulations that restrict illegal religious activities, further oppressing Muslim Uyghurs. For example, educational institutions are prohibited from teaching religious subjects, and a wide range of publications, such as books and audiovisual materials on Islam, are tightly controlled by state authorities (Dillon, 2004).

Strict regulations often encourage many Muslim leaders to cooperate with the government. One thing is clear: when they cooperate, they are relatively free to carry out religious activities. In other words, praying in mosques and celebrating Islamic holidays are guaranteed as long as the Public Security Bureau oversees them. That stance is unfavorable to those who support separatist movements. That is why acts of violence, such as stabbing attacks on religious figures, have occurred in Xinjiang. The reason is that the religious figure's position opposes the separatist view. A notable example is the May 1996 attack on Mullah Arunhan Aji, an imam at a mosque in Kashgar. He was targeted because he was believed to have supported the Chinese government through his roles as vice chairman of the Consulting Committee of the Chinese People in Xinjiang and as a member of a state-sponsored Islamic organization (Dillon, 2004).

In February 1997, Ghulja became the site of widespread unrest following the government's decision to execute separatist members. Thousands of Uyghurs took to the streets, attacking Han Chinese settlements, resulting in at least tens of Han fatalities and hundreds of injuries. The authorities initially suppressed information and, over several days, adopted a decisive approach to end the riots. An official report estimates at least 400 deaths—all Uyghurs—along with hundreds wounded and thousands detained. This tragic incident not only cost many lives but also deepened the security crisis in Xinjiang. The Ghulja incident exposes a key shift in Xinjiang: from resistance against the Chinese government to escalating tensions between Uyghurs and Han Chinese, fueled by ethnic sentiment and inequality worsened during economic development. We will discuss this further.

Besides the 'Strike Hard' program to eliminate separatist movements in Xinjiang, the Chinese government also tries to restrict the activities of secessionist groups in foreign countries. Therefore, China seeks to persuade four neighboring countries (Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) to enter into security cooperation agreements. This is well known as the Shanghai Five. This cooperative

effort initially focuses on controlling arms in the border region by establishing security checkpoints. The program does not target preventing Pan-Turkism rooted in religion in the south, but rather aims to curb the growth of Uyghur nationalism grounded in secular ideals in northern Xinjiang. (Roberts, 2015).

### **New Rhetoric: Terrorism and Extremism**

In the 1990s, jihadist networks emerged as significant political forces in Central and South Asia. Notably, the Taliban seized Kabul in 1996, while Al Qaeda promoted anti-American ideologies. Their presence profoundly influenced neighboring countries. This is evident in Xinjiang, where social unrest erupted as separatist movements adopted jihadist strategies, primarily through terrorist acts like bombings, to destabilize society. This reality has drawn increased attention from the Chinese government and Central Asian nations regarding Muslim political activities.

In a 1998 meeting, the Shanghai Five committed to eliminating the three common threats: separatism, religious extremism, and international terrorism. This threat is also called 'the three evils.' From that meeting, the five countries reached a consensus to proactively prevent any activities within their territories that could pose a threat to their national sovereignty, security, and social stability (Clarke, 2011). Certainly, the treaty's policy implications vary significantly across different nations. For the Chinese government, this agreement served as a strategic tool to justify and reinforce its efforts to suppress groups it accused of sponsoring riots and acts of terror in Xinjiang. By framing these groups as threats, Beijing has used the treaty to legitimize a range of security measures, including increased surveillance, detention, and censorship, under the guise of maintaining stability. This approach reflects a calculated use of international agreements to support domestic policies aimed at controlling ethnic unrest and preventing what it perceives as destabilizing influences.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, China has implemented a proactive approach to counter separatism and terrorism. However, this strategy evolved following the United States' initiation of the 'Global War on Terrorism' (GWOT). China often endorses this narrative to justify its repressive measures aimed at eradicating terrorism. Notably, it quickly classified the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as a terrorist organization, citing supposed backing from Osama bin Laden, which reinforced its position against perceived threats (Roberts, 2020). This group promotes ethnonationalist goals, suggesting that the Chinese government portrays Uyghurs in Xinjiang as a terrorism threat. To support this, the government published a report detailing bombings and mass riots since the 1990s as evidence of terrorism.

The narratives around Uyghur terrorism have gained prominence after recognition by the United States and the UN. While the U.S. conducted military operations in Afghanistan, individuals linked to Al Qaeda and the Taliban were

labeled as terrorists. Islamic extremism is often cited as the primary indicator of terrorism. Still, this oversimplification can lead to the mistaken belief that all terrorists are radical Muslims and distort the relationship between Islam and terrorism. Ultimately, these narratives frequently fall into the trap of demonization.

The deployment of terrorism discourse as a legitimizing tool to uphold repressive policies against Uyghur Muslims reflects a significant development in the security dilemma facing Xinjiang. Historically, Chinese authorities prioritized concerns over ethnic minority aspirations; however, post-GWOT, the focus has shifted predominantly to Islamic identity. This shift is evident in state measures aimed at countering terrorism, such as the detention of religious teachers, the closure of religious sites, and increased surveillance of ritual practices. Nonetheless, China's religious affairs official Zhou Guohai has articulated concerns about Islamic extremism, questioning the pedagogical value of Quranic teachings. He emphasizes that Islam must be expressed in ways consistent with Chinese cultural traditions (Steele & Kuo, 2007). An independent report states that terrorism narratives have reinforced the view of Islam as a negative influence on Xinjiang. This explains why Uyghur Muslims are prohibited from practicing their religion publicly (AI, 2002).

The Chinese government has long acknowledged the cultural identity challenges faced by Uyghur Muslims, leading to a policy dilemma. It notes that while the Chinese:

"... suppress Islam, most Uyghurs feel oppressed and oppose the government; when they allow or encourage it [Islam], Uyghurs become more content with the government, but their strengthened Islamic practice leads them to feel more separate from and apathetic towards Chinese society." (J. J. Rudelson 1997)

From the perspective of the Chinese government, permitting Muslims to practice their faith freely appears to pose a greater threat than suppression, despite an awareness that resistance movements are likely to develop. However, Gardener Bovingdon argues that such resistance could, in fact, strengthen Uyghurs' collective identity, thereby potentially undermining government efforts to control the region (Bovingdon, 2010).

Before the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the Chinese government intensified its scrutiny of Uyghur Muslim identity. A few months prior, security officials received critical intelligence indicating that a terrorist group was planning to carry out bombings targeting the Games. Subsequently, attacks occurred in Shanghai in May and Kunming in July, exemplifying the ongoing threat. These incidents prompted the Minister of Public Security, Zhou Youngkang, to officially state that terrorism—commonly associated with Uyghurs—constituted the primary security threat to the Olympics (Elegant 2008). In response to heightened security concerns, authorities implemented stringent screening protocols targeting Uyghur residents in Beijing.

Reports emerging shortly before the Olympic Games indicated that thousands of Uyghur workers had been detained and then repatriated to their hometowns, raising questions about the scope and implications of these measures (York, 2008).

### **Considering the Economic Structure and Cultural Entanglement**

The Chinese central government views Xinjiang as a region with significant potential that has yet to be effectively managed. The primary challenge in this largest province is inadequate infrastructure. The government advocates for the "Open the West" campaign initiated in the 1980s, which permitted cross-border economic activity. Sean Robert notes that initially, this policy was well received by Uyghurs and other minorities, given their socio-cultural similarities to neighboring communities, fostering trust and trade. However, traditional business practices persisted in the market. Over the following decade, state-controlled trade agencies, predominantly Han Chinese, marginalized local merchants, eroding their extensive networks that previously facilitated affordable and high-quality goods. Consequently, Muslim traders in Xinjiang were confined to small-scale operations (Roberts, 2015).

In the 1990s, Xinjiang's development relied heavily on capital-intensive industries amid ongoing conflicts and security crises. This situation made the XPCC crucial, as it supplied the workforce needed to build these industries. Notably, during this decade, the Han population in Xinjiang grew by approximately 30%, highlighting demographic shifts that supported the region's economic focus (Becquelin, 2004). The high rate of inter-regional migration shows that economic growth in Xinjiang has been driven more by demographic shifts than real efforts to include everyone. The development policies seem to have been designed mainly to benefit the Han Chinese rather than to create a fair labor market. Although some might argue that differences in inter-ethnic abilities to take part in development matter, the evidence suggests otherwise. Non-Han ethnic groups in Xinjiang have not seen any real improvement in living standards, revealing a systemic neglect that questions the claim of inclusive growth.

This developmental strategy has notably driven rapid economic growth in Xinjiang, as evidenced by key financial indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP). Statistical data from the 1990s reveal that Xinjiang's GDP growth consistently reached approximately 10% annually, underscoring the effectiveness of targeted economic policies in fostering regional development (Wiemer, 2015). By 2000, Xinjiang's GDP per capita was approximately RMB 7,000, and it consistently grew at an annual rate of eight percent. By 2009, it had soared to RMB 20,000 (about USD 2,930). This rapid economic expansion was driven primarily by the agriculture and petroleum sectors. Xinjiang's prominence as a leading cotton producer, accounting for one-third of China's total cotton output, underscores its agricultural significance (Becquelin, 2000). Xinjiang is viewed as a key energy source, supplying a quarter of China's petroleum.

Although Xinjiang's economic indicators appear promising at first glance, a deeper analysis reveals that its development still lags behind other provinces. The 2009 national ranking places Xinjiang at 25th out of 31 provinces, highlighting the need for targeted policies to accelerate its growth and close the gap (Cappelletti, 2020). This fact underscores that the underlying productivity issues are deeply rooted in Xinjiang's economic structure, indicating systemic challenges that significantly affect the region's overall economic performance.

The primary challenge Xinjiang faces in enhancing human capital quality is the language barrier, compounded by its ethnocultural diversity. This plurality can impede socialization and educational integration. Linda Benson notes that Xinjiang's education system often employs a flexible curriculum, especially during the 1980s, when many schools were permitted to teach in local languages. For non-Han ethnic groups, the local language is the first language learned and used in daily interactions, serving as the foundation for literacy and communication. This linguistic landscape influences educational accessibility and social cohesion, affecting long-term human capital development (Benson, 2015). In schools primarily attended by Han Chinese students, instruction is conducted in Mandarin. However, students from minority ethnic groups often lack fluency in the language, which puts them at a significant disadvantage. Mastery of Mandarin is not merely a linguistic skill; it serves as a crucial gateway to higher education and the opportunities it affords. Therefore, ensuring equitable language proficiency is essential for fostering genuine educational equality and social integration.

In rural areas, Uyghurs continued to face disempowerment. Although town and village enterprises (TVEs) have grown significantly in eastern China, she noted that in Xinjiang these developments have not led to meaningful empowerment for the Uyghur population, revealing a stark disparity in economic and social progress (Dreyer, 2000). The persistent lack of entrepreneurial spirit in the region is directly attributable to the Xinjiang government's failure to implement effective incentive schemes for rural residents. Despite the existence of a central government financial support program, ethnic minorities are effectively excluded from accessing these funds, as they are diverted to party cadres' businesses, thereby hindering broader economic empowerment (Wu, 2006). Therefore, it is understandable that Uyghur people may feel disgusted with Han Chinese cadres.

In urban Xinjiang, social mobility is limited, with the Han Chinese dominating key positions in state-owned enterprises. This exclusivity reduces opportunities for ethnic minorities, reinforcing their marginalization and hindering equitable advancement (Becquelin, 2000). Furthermore, the portrayal of Han Chinese as hard workers and modern underscores societal stereotypes that reinforce their perceived superiority in development and progress. In contrast, the depiction of Uyghur people as underdeveloped and unproductive serves to justify marginalization and a lack of opportunities for them. This dichotomy reflects deeper

biases that sustain systemic inequalities and influence perceptions of each group's societal value (Zang, 2011). The growing tendency to discriminate against minorities is evident across different social and economic context indicators. For example, in the petroleum industry, where the majority of workers are Han Chinese, ethnic minorities living in urban areas are often relegated to lower-ranking positions. This pattern highlights how disparities in social mobility, driven by structural opportunities and limitations, continue to sustain and worsen inequality in Xinjiang. Therefore, it is evident that these systemic barriers play a major role in shaping the region's unequal social landscape.

The regional disparity in Xinjiang reflects unequal development, with north Xinjiang's GDP per capita 60% above the average, and south Xinjiang's 50% above the average (Qin, Zou, and Wang 2021). North Xinjiang, mainly inhabited by Han Chinese, shows higher levels of development and economic prosperity compared to South Xinjiang, where the Uyghur population is more concentrated. Alessandra Cappelletti emphasizes this difference by comparing Shihezi, a relatively small but economically advanced town in the north, and Kashgar, a historically important city in the south. This contrast highlights a broader pattern of unequal wealth distribution within Xinjiang, which worsens existing inter-ethnic tensions and undermines social cohesion. The focus of resources and development in the northern areas not only consolidates economic power but also deepens socio-political divides, fueling grievances among the Uyghur community. These disparities are not random; they reflect systemic policies and structural inequalities that marginalize minority groups and create regional imbalances, posing serious challenges to social stability and unity in Xinjiang (Cappelletti, 2015).

Multiple studies reinforce the existence of significant inter-ethnic disparities in income. A 2005 mini-survey by Wu Xiong and Xi Song reveals that Han Chinese workers consistently earn more than Uyghur workers within the same sector, highlighting persistent economic inequality. Specifically, in the agricultural sector, Uyghur workers earn an average of only 250 Yuan per month, substantially lower than the average for Han Chinese workers. Although disparities appear smaller in non-agricultural sectors, the data indicate that Han Chinese earn approximately thirty percent more than Uyghur workers. This persistent income gap underscores systemic inequalities that require further investigation and targeted policy interventions (Wu & Song, 2014).

As the capital and most developed city in Xinjiang, Urumqi serves as a primary destination for migrants, including both Han Chinese and Uyghurs, seeking better employment opportunities. Xiaowei Zang's research reveals significant inter-ethnic disparities in urban areas. It underscores how income inequality between Uyghur and Han Chinese workers is influenced by factors such as education, occupation, political affiliation, family background, and economic sector. Uyghur workers in the

non-public sector earn about half as much as their Han Chinese counterparts, highlighting systemic economic inequality challenges (Zang, 2011).

The ongoing issues of income inequality and discrimination in the job market have fostered deep resentment among the Uyghur community, often leading to anger and negative feelings toward the Han Chinese population. As Debasish Chaudhuri's analysis points out, such disparities not only worsen individual grievances but also escalate interethnic tensions, creating a volatile environment in which societal divisions grow more pronounced. This cycle of resentment and hostility threatens the social fabric, highlighting the urgent need for a comprehensive approach to address economic and social inequalities to prevent further polarization and promote genuine reconciliation and understanding (Chaudhuri, 2010).

### **Critical Juncture: Umruqi Riot**

The Chinese government considers the management of inequality in Xinjiang a critical issue. Recognizing the potential for social and economic instability, authorities began taking proactive measures in 2003 by implementing job assistance programs to integrate Xinjiang's labor force into the broader national industrial framework. These initiatives reflect an analytical approach to addressing regional disparities through targeted economic policies (Byler, 2021). This placement program aims to support rural residents in southern Xinjiang through mandatory state-funded vocational education before employment. However, critics argue it's an assimilation strategy designed to erode intra-Uyghur cultural identity (Turdush & Fiskesjö, 2021). In 2007, it was expected that hundreds of thousands of Uyghur workers would be employed in factories along China's eastern coast. (UHRP 2008). This program functions as a capitalist strategy aimed at increasing profits by exploiting cheap labor. Additionally, the concentration of ethnic minorities in factories may reduce class conflict and weaken labor solidarity (Hess, 2009).

In early May 2009, the Xuri doll factory hired hundreds of new workers from Xinjiang. Uyghur workers are often not accepted by their Han Chinese colleagues because of cultural differences, and they are also perceived as stealing work hours. (R.A., 2011). One month later, a rumor spread among factory workers claiming that several Uyghur workers had sexually assaulted two Han Chinese women. These angered hundreds of Han Chinese workers, who demanded that security investigate the matter. When their demands were ignored, they began vandalizing factory property and eventually attacked the Uyghur worker dormitory, leading to a confrontation. Reports indicate that two Uyghur workers were killed, and 118 others were injured during the incident. In the following days, a police investigation concluded that the rumor about the sexual assault was false.

The Xuri incident represents a significant development in the plight of the Uighurs in Xinjiang. Initial reports suggest that the underlying causes of the chaos at Xuri remain unresolved and that the responsible parties have not been identified.

This situation has prompted students in Urumqi to organize protests calling for a formal investigation. However, the university has issued a warning to students, advising them to refrain from involvement in any related activities (Millward, 2009). The Xinjiang government does not allow protests. On July 5th, when a thousand students gathered in the city square, security forces blocked their way. The students ignored the barriers, believing their protest was justified and lawful. However, the security forces insisted on dispersing the protest, using tear gas and force against the demonstrators. This response highlights a troubling suppression of civil liberties and underscores the need to reevaluate such repressive action measures.

The following episodes depict the protester retaliating and urging allies to incite violence, highlighting the deep resentment of the Uyghur community toward government injustice. This escalation appears to deepen negative perceptions and hostility between Uyghurs and Han Chinese, ultimately leading to outright conflict and animosity. The violence includes attacks on Han Chinese individuals and destruction of property. Security forces' efforts to control these riots are hindered by their spread across multiple cities. The next day, the situation in Urumqi shocked many Han Chinese, though some responded with revenge, attacking Uyghur communities and damaging stalls and property. Security agencies seem to tacitly allow these retaliations. Ultimately, the cycle of violence results in 184 deaths, 1,680 injuries, and widespread damage to shops and vehicles, underscoring the serious toll of rising tensions and inadequate response (Zhang & McGhee, 2014).

The Urumqi riots have had significant political consequences, highlighting the urgent need to reform policies toward Xinjiang and address the rising tension between the Han Chinese and Uyghur populations. These events fundamentally threaten the future of the Uyghur community in the region. In response, the Chinese government held a work conference in May 2010 to discuss these issues. During this meeting, President Hu Jintao and party leaders committed to creating a policy framework that balances economic growth with social stability in Xinjiang. However, the immediate plan to implement this policy appears to prioritize economic development, possibly at the expense of social cohesion, which could further tensions and undermine long-term stability (Shan & Weng, 2010). This decision clearly demonstrates the Chinese government's recognition of the economic issues in Xinjiang. Additionally, it highlights China's broader ambitions through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to revitalize the Silk Road and enhance inter-regional economic development.

The tensions between Uyghurs and Han Chinese appear deeply entrenched, with few historical precedents suggesting a possibility for reconciliation. In the years following the Urumqi riot, incidents involving violence and terrorism by Uyghurs have increased in frequency. The March 2014 attack at Kunming's train station vividly demonstrates the severity of the threat, as a group of Uyghurs brutally assaulted nearly a hundred people, leading to at least 34 deaths and 141

injuries (Wong, 2014). This situation highlights the growing stereotype toward Muslim Uyghurs and the rise of Islamophobia in public discourse, especially among Han Chinese. It underscores the challenges minority groups face in asserting their identity amid prejudice. The increased tensions in Xinjiang, exemplified by conflicts between Uyghurs and authorities, show how government policies and societal attitudes deepen divisions and weaken social cohesion. After the Urumqi riots, protests in southern Xinjiang surged but were largely suppressed, driven by policies such as bans on veils, specific dress codes, beards, and other symbols. Security measures aimed at preventing extremism further contribute to these conflicts (Roberts, 2020).

After the riot in Urumqi, the situation in Xinjiang grew more tense and unpredictable. Violent clashes and acts of aggression increased, raising concerns about safety and security throughout the region. In response to this rise in violence, Xi Jinping announced a nationwide campaign, calling it a 'People's War' to restore stability and regain control over the unrest and chaos that had erupted (UHRP 2015). The anti-terror campaigns clearly targeted the Uyghurs as primary targets. It is reinforced by the narrative that protecting Chinese citizens from common threats is vital to maintaining social stability in Xinjiang. Therefore, the Chinese government aims to modify or erase the Uyghur identity not only to combat terrorism and religious extremism but also to lessen inter-ethnic conflict in Xinjiang.

### **Re-education Camps as the Site of Repression**

In this section, we will examine the outcome of inter-ethnic conflict caused by unequal opportunities and discrimination within the context of rising public violence. For Chinese authorities to stabilize Xinjiang, human rights must be temporarily suspended within what are called 're-education camps.' Instead of debating terminology, it is far more important to focus on understanding the true purpose of these camps and shed light on the experiences of Uyghur Muslims inside them, highlighting the severity and implications of these human rights abuses.

The central government believes that the issues in Xinjiang can only be solved through a systematic approach. That's why the Central Committee of the CPC needs the right person to be the new party secretary of Xinjiang. Because of his experience handling disturbances in Tibet, Cheng Quanguo is appointed. Chen's strategy for addressing Xinjiang's complex problems focuses on three main areas: strengthening the security forces, creating job opportunities, and reinforcing national identity. It also marks a new phase of a comprehensive repression policy toward the ethnic minority. On security, Chen oversaw large-scale police recruitment and the building of thousands of security posts in urban Xinjiang. At least 100,000 security personnel are needed to maintain social stability. The goal is to increase control and surveillance over Xinjiang residents (Zenz & Leibold, 2020).

By 2016, the Xinjiang government began constructing education and vocational camps. In Chen's view, these camps aim to empower Uyghur people to

access better jobs and to promote Chinese national identity and socialist ideology. It estimates that these camps reach about thirty percent of rural Uyghur residents, who are believed to have been influenced by extremism (Zenz, 2019). However, the authority's definition of extremism is vague, and it has highlighted anti-Islam perceptions. This is clear when we examine the regional regulation on 'de-extremification.' It lists several examples of extremist conduct, such as inviting someone to prayer, promoting halal food, and circulating religious materials. The resident exhibiting extreme behavior was detained to participate in a 're-education' program. Conversely, many residents in southern Xinjiang, predominantly living in rural areas, were encouraged to attend vocational training camps. These individuals are productive laborers who need to acquire sufficient skills. Such training is essential for improving their prospects in the national employment market.

The scale of the minority population subjected to re-education programs likely peaked around mid-2017, prompting scrutiny from international organizations. Investigations into Xinjiang, particularly focusing on education and vocational camps, reveal troubling human rights violations. A Human Rights Watch report, based on interviews with 50 Uyghur individuals who participated in the re-education program, highlights that these camps fundamentally suspend citizens' rights. Detainees are not processed through legal procedures, are denied access to legal counsel, and are prohibited from discussing or practicing their religion, indicating a systematic erosion of personal freedoms (HRW 2018). However, there is at least one million Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang who are being compelled to participate in re-education programs, with each individual's duration varying.

While the international community focuses on the human rights abuses in Xinjiang, the Chinese government has developed a strategy to persuade the Muslim community that the information is false. As an economic partner and the world's largest Muslim-majority country, Indonesia remains a key diplomatic target. In early 2018, the Chinese government invited a dozen Muslim figures to observe the conditions of the education and vocational camps as well as religious practices in Xinjiang. Interestingly, the narrative that came from that visit seemed to endorse the repressive policy toward Uyghur Muslims, claiming it was necessary to eradicate terrorism and separatism (Rakhmat, 2022). The Indonesian government adopts this political stance deliberately, reflecting a calculated reticence that critics deem a reluctance to speak out on human rights issues. Nonetheless, one Indonesian delegation uncovers critical facts during its visits to Xinjiang camps, highlighting gaps in official narratives. When Uyghur Muslims participate in the re-education program, they are systematically denied the basic rights to pray, recite the Qur'an, or practice their faith, exposing the oppressive nature of the policies in place (Sikap Muhammadiyah dan Cerita Setelah dari Uighur 2019).

From this point, human rights abuses are evident in re-education camps. However, when considering the broader context of daily life for Uyghur people

outside these camps, the term 'human rights abuse' may no longer be fully appropriate. Beyond the confines of the camps, the Xinjiang government has systematically implemented Sinicization policies, which include separating children from their parents and promoting inter-ethnic assimilation (Xiao, 2019). Simultaneously, the authorities are working to erase Uyghur identity markers. As a result, numerous historical sites and culturally significant places, including ancient buildings, cemeteries, and tombs, have been demolished by authorities, further diminishing the region's historical and cultural heritage (Sintash, 2019). Furthermore, there are significant restrictions on the expression of religious and cultural beliefs, undermining individuals' fundamental rights to freely exercise their faith and cultural practices (Greer, 2018). These limitations not only hinder personal freedoms but also stifle cultural diversity and social cohesion. These facts illustrate the essence of cultural genocide. Consequently, re-education camps serve not only as sites of repression but also deliberate sites of cultural erasure, systematically designed to eliminate the very roots of Uyghur Muslim identity.

## **CONCLUSION**

The continuing crisis in Xinjiang is the result of a long historical process, in which key events have repeatedly prompted tighter security measures. The 1990s marked a crucial shift in the Chinese government's view of Uyghur identity. During this time, amid the growth of separatist movements and systemic social obstacles, China framed ethnic differences as a threat to national sovereignty. As a result, the government enacted policies that prioritized social control and effectively limited future political opportunities for the Uyghur population. The escalating horizontal conflict between Uyghurs and Han Chinese has established a feedback loop that bolsters the security forces. Every repressive action further deepens the government's dependence on force.

The peak of the process occurred with Chen Quanguo's appointment as party secretary of Xinjiang in 2016. Under his leadership, Xinjiang's securitization shifted from a reactive stance to a sustained, systematic framework involving surveillance and "re-education." The aim of 'Sinicization' represents the logical culmination of this development. In essence, existing policies are based on a strict institutional framework that sidelines non-coercive methods of governance. The Chinese government employs re-education camps to suppress Uyghur Muslim identity and integrate Uyghurs into social systems designed to promote a unified national identity centered on the ethnic majority.

## REFERENCES

- AI. 1999. *People's Republic of China: Gross Violations of Human Rights in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region*.
- . 2002. *People's Republic of China: China's Anti-Terrorism Legislation and Repression in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region*.
- Anand, Amit. 2022. "Repression of Uyghur Muslims and the Freedom of Religious Beliefs in China." *Journal of Social Inclusion Studies* 8(1): 23–36.
- Becquelin, Nicolas. 2000. "Xinjiang in the Nineties." *The China Journal* (44): 65–90.
- . 2004. "Staged Development in Xinjiang." *The China Quarterly* 178: 358–78.
- Benson, Linda. 1990. *The Ili Rebellion: The Moslem Challenge to Chinese Authority in Xinjiang, 1944–1949*. London: M. E. Sharpe, Inc.
- . 2015. "Education and Social Mobility among Minority Population in Xinjiang." In *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S Frederick Starr. New York: Routledge, 190–215.
- Bilsky, Leora, and Rachel Klagsbrun. 2018. "The Return of Cultural Genocide?" *European Journal of International Law* 29(2): 373–96.
- Bovingdon, Gardner. 2010. *The Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Byler, Darren. 2021. *Terror Capitalism: Uyghur Dispossession and Masculinity in a Chinese City*. London: Duke University Press.
- Capoccia, Giovanni, and R Daniel Kelemen. 2007. "The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism." *World politics* 59(3): 341–69.
- Cappelletti, Alessandra. 2015. "Socio-Economic Disparities and the Development Gap in Xinjiang." In *Inside Xinjiang: Space, Place and Power in China's Muslim Far Northwest*, eds. Anna Hayes and Michael Clarke. London: Routledge, 151–82.
- . 2020. *Socio-Economic Development in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chaudhuri, Debasish. 2010. "Minority Economy in Xinjiang—A Source of Uyghur Resentment." *China Report* 46(1): 9–27.
- Clarke, Michael E. 2011. *Xinjiang and China's Rise in Central Asia - A History*. New York: Routledge.
- Collier, David. 2011. "Understanding Process Tracing." *PS: political science & politics* 44(4): 823–30.
- Collier, Ruth Berins, and David Collier. 1991. "Critical Junctures and Historical Legacies."
- Dillon, Michael. 2004. *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Far Northwest*. London: Routledge.
- . 2014. *Xinjiang and the Expansion of Chinese Communist Power: Kashgar in the Early Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge.

- Dreyer, June Teufel. 1986. "The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region at Thirty: A Report Card." *Asian Survey* 26(7): 721–44.
- . 2000. "Ethnicity and Economic Development in Xinjiang." *Inner Asia* 2(2): 137–54.
- Elegant, Simon. 2008. "China's Curious Olympic Terror Threat." *Time*. <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1720909,00.html> (March 12, 2022).
- Fayaz, Sadia. 2012. "China's Xinjiang Problem and Pakistan." *The Dialogue* 7(3): 235–54.
- Greer, Tanner. 2018. "48 Ways to Get Sent to a Chinese Concentration Camp." *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/09/13/48-ways-to-get-sent-to-a-chinese-concentration-camp/>.
- Havlová, Radka. 2024. "The World Uyghur Congress as an Actor of Foreign Policy." In *Non-State Actors and Foreign Policy Agency: Insights from Area Studies*, Springer, 127–46.
- Hess, Steve. 2009. "Dividing and Conquering the Shop Floor: Uyghur Labour Export and Labour Segmentation in China's Industrial East." *Central Asian Survey* 28(4): 403–16.
- Hierman, Brent. 2007. "The Pacification of Xinjiang: Uighur Protest and the Chinese State, 1988-2002." *Problems of Post-Communism* 54(3): 48–62.
- HRW. 2018. *Eradicating Ideological Viruses: China's Campaign of Repression Against Xinjiang's Muslim*.
- IPAC. 2019. *Explaining Indonesia's Silence on the Uighur Issue*. Jakarta.
- Kim, Hodong. 2004. *Holy War in China: The Muslim Rebellion and State in Chinese Central Asia, 1864-1877*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Mahmut, Dilmurat. 2019. "Controlling Religious Knowledge and Education for Countering Religious Extremism: Case Study of the Uyghur Muslims in China." *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education* 5(1): 22–43.
- Mahoney, James. 2000. "Path Dependence in Historical Sociology." *Theory and Society* 29(4): 507–48.
- Millward, James. 2007. *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Millward, James A. 2009. "Introduction: Does the 2009 Urumchi Violence Mark a Turning Point?" *Central Asian Survey* 28(4): 347–60.
- Pierson, Paul. 2000. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics." *American political science review* 94(2): 251–67.
- Qin, Xianhong, Hui Zou, and Lei Wang. 2021. "Changing Regional Inequality Patterns in Western China: A Case Study of Xinjiang." *Complexity* 2021: 1–12.
- R.A. 2011. *Reflection on Chinese Policy in Xinjiang Uyghur Automous Region*. London.
- Rakhmat, Muhammad Zulfikar. 2022. "China's Faith Diplomacy Towards Muslim

- Bodies in Indonesia: Bearing Fruit.” *Fulcrum*. <https://fulcrum.sg/chinas-faith-diplomacy-towards-muslim-bodies-in-indonesia-bearing-fruit/>.
- Ramzi, Austin, and Chris Buckley. 2019. “The Xinjiang Paper; ‘Absolutely No Mercy’: Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslim.” *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/11/16/world/asia/china-xinjiang-documents.html>.
- Roberts, Sean R. 2015. “A ‘Land of Borderland’: Implication of Xinjiang’s Trans-Border Interaction.” In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*, ed. S Frederick Starr. New York: Routledge, 216–37.
- Roberts, Sean R. 2020. *The War on the Uyghurs: China’s Internal Campaign against a Muslim Minority*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Rudelson, Justin, and William Jankowiak. 2015. “Acculturation and Resistance: Xinjiang Identities in Flux.” In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*, ed. S Frederick Starr. New York: Routledge, 299–319.
- Rudelson, Justin Jon. 1997. *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China’s Silk Road*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Shan, Wei, and Cuifen Weng. 2010. “China’s New Policy in Xinjiang and Its Challenges.” *East Asian Policy* 2(3): 58–66.
- “Sikap Muhammadiyah Dan Cerita Setelah Dari Uighur.” 2019. *Suara Muhammadiyah*. <https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/12/16/sikap-muhammadiyah-dan-cerita-setelah-dari-uighur/>.
- Sintash, Bahram K. 2019. *Demolishing Faith: The Destruction and Desecration of Uyghur Mosques and Shrines*.
- Steele, Liza, and Raymond Kuo. 2007. “Terrorism in Xinjiang?” *Ethnopolitics* 6(1): 1–19.
- Turdush, Rukiye, and Magnus Fiskesjö. 2021. “Dossier: Uyghur Women in China’s Genocide.” *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 15(1): 22–43.
- UHRP. 2008. “CHINA: Transfer 400.000 Young Uyghur Women into Eastern China.” [http://www.david-kilgour.com/2008/Jun\\_20\\_2008\\_01.htm](http://www.david-kilgour.com/2008/Jun_20_2008_01.htm).
- . 2015. *Legitimizing Repression: China’s “War on Terror” Under Xi Jinping and State Policy in East Turkestan*. Washington.
- Wiemer, Calla. 2015. “The Economy of Xinjiang.” In *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*, ed. S Frederick Starr. New York: Routledge, 163–89.
- Wong, Edward. 2014. “China Executes 3 over Deadly Knife Attack at Train Station in 2014.” *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/25/world/asia/china-executes-3-over-deadly-knife-attack-at-train-station-in-2014.html>.
- Wu, Xiaogang. 2006. “Communist Cadres and Market Opportunities: Entry into Self-Employment in China, 1978–1996.” *Social forces* 85(1): 389–411.
- Wu, Xiaogang, and Xi Song. 2014. “Ethnic Stratification Amid China’s Economic

- Transition: Evidence from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.” *Social Science Research* 44: 158–72.
- Xiao, Eva. 2019. “China Pushes Inter-Ethnic Marriage in Xinjiang Assimilation Drive.” *Hong Kong Free Press*. <https://hongkongfp.com/2019/05/18/china-pushes-inter-ethnic-marriage-xinjiang-assimilation-drive/>.
- York, Geoffrey. 2008. “Beijing Busy Welcoming the World as It Turn Away Its Ethnic Minorities.” *The Globe and Mail*. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/beijing-busy-welcoming-the-world-as-it-turns-away-its-ethnic-minorities/article656845/>.
- Zang, Xiaowei. 2011. “Uyghur—Han Earnings Differentials in Ürümchi.” *The China Journal* (65): 141–55.
- Zenz, Adrian. 2019. “‘Thoroughly Reforming Them towards a Healthy Heart Attitude’: China’s Political Re-Education Campaign in Xinjiang.” *Central Asian Survey* 38(1): 102–28.
- Zenz, Adrian, and James Leibold. 2020. “Securitizing Xinjiang: Police Recruitment, Informal Policing and Ethnic Minority Co-Optation.” *The China Quarterly* 242: 324–48.
- Zhang, Chi. 2021. “‘Illegal Religious Activities’ and Counter-Terrorism in China.” *Politics and Religion* 14(2): 269–93.
- Zhang, Shaoying, and Derek McGhee. 2014. *Social Policies and Ethnic Conflict in China: Lessons from Xinjiang*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.