

FORCED ASSIMILATION AND CONFLICT:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE MUSLIM UYGHURS OF CHINA

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**Abstract**

The People's Republic of China (PRC) provides a case for scholars interested in examining the effects of forced assimilation policies that target minority populations. This study seeks to examine the dynamic relationship between forced assimilation policies and social protest (which sometimes manifests itself as terrorist violence) in relation to the case of Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang province. In particular, this study explores how conflict theory can be used to explain conflict dynamics between Han Chinese and Muslim Uyghurs and how PRC efforts to assimilate Uyghurs have resulted in social protests against these policies. It is hoped that this study will contribute to scholarship on conflict associated with structural violence, deprivation of basic human needs, and relative deprivation. Additionally it is hoped that such an examination will result in a better understanding of how each of the aforementioned theories results in and contributes to communal violence and social protest.

The Han nationality has the population, the minority nationalities have the land...It is thus imperative that the Han assist the minorities in raising their standard of living and socialist ideological consciousness, while the minorities provide the natural resources necessary for the industrialization and development of the motherland.<sup>1</sup>

-Mao Zedong

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### **Introduction**

The emerging field of conflict resolution has proceeded through many stages in its relatively short fifty year history. At each stage, scholars and practitioners alike have sought to understand and confront complex forms of human conflict unique to their time. Many disciplines have contributed to the formation of conflict resolution, creating an academic discipline that is truly interdisciplinary.

Conflict resolution emerged as an academic discipline in the 1950's as a response to the realist paradigm in the context of the Cold War (Ramsbotham, 2005, Centre for Conflict Resolution, 2000). Early scholars were concerned with conflict between superpower countries and the development of nuclear weapons. In the 1960's and 1970's the field was expanded to include a broader conceptualization of *peace* as being more than the negation of overt violence. These contributions were furthered by scholars who drew from the peace religions (e.g. Quakers, Mennonites, and Buddhists) and the long history of non-violent social thought (including contributions made by individuals like Mohandas Gandhi and later Martin Luther King Jr.). The 1980's saw the rise of alternative dispute resolution and important contributions relating to mediation, arbitration, negotiation, and the conflict dynamics associated with conflict settlement.

Today, emerging research seeks to account for the underlying sources of violent communal conflict as a response to the increasingly important role of non-state actors.

This research seeks to integrate conflict theory- the cumulative evidence extracted from multiple cases- to better understand conflict dynamics and the policies that may contribute to conflict escalation and social protest.

A pressing form of conflict that has, as yet, been largely unexplored in the conflict literature is the dynamic relationship between forced assimilation policies carried out by governments and corresponding social protest and violence undertaken by minority populations who feel a sense of siege as their identity and way of life is threatened. This increasingly common form of conflict is not unique to any one single part of the world but can be better understood through an examination of cases that are at once both unique and very similar. This study seeks to explore one such case: the conflict between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang province. It is hoped that examining this particular case will contribute to the growing body of research focusing on the relationship between policies designed to integrate minority populations and corresponding social violence. Such an examination may contribute to the small body of scholarship in the conflict literature on this topic and even serve to inform those who hope to intervene in such conflicts. In addition, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the enhancement of conflict theory by way of testing several existing theories in relation to a specific case, so as to improve conflict theory in such a way that will be better able to inform current and future practice.

### *Theoretical Basis of Study*

Scholars disagree on how best and where to locate the sources of conflict. Some conflict scholars subscribe to scholarship that identifies the sources of conflict as being embedded within the social structure of society and expand the conception of violence to include violence that is not just physical but also causes people's mental realization to fall below their actual potential.

This has given rise to the theory of structural violence. Other scholars subscribe to scholarship that identifies the sources of conflict as being rooted in the deprivation of human needs, which include a universal need for security, identity, recognition, development, and distributive justice. Some scholars have classified these needs as ontological, basic to human survival, and fundamental to an understanding of the very roots of violent social conflict. These scholars have contributed to the evolution of basic human needs theory. Others scholars have sought to identify the roots of conflict as being the result of group comparison that results in a sense of relative deprivation that leads to frustration which leads to protest and even violence.

Such conflict theory is useful to understanding how policies endorsed by the People's Republic of China to assimilate the Muslim Uyghurs minority in Xinjiang province have resulted in social protest and violent opposition that have had the unintended consequence of fueling not mitigating social protest and violence. However, the application *of* these theories and the relationship *between* these theories raises important questions that deserve consideration.

## Chapter 1

### The Problem

An important question in conflict theory is whether relative deprivation is just as important as structural violence and deprivation of human needs in generating conflict. This is a critical question in relation to forced assimilation policies taken by governments to integrate their minority populations. If structural violence and deprivation of human needs (e.g. for identity, security, and recognition) implies conflict, then the victims of human needs deprivation almost always react with violence. Yet, history suggests that this is not always the case. Victims of forced assimilation policies do not always react with violence.

Understanding the conditions under which victims of forced assimilation rise up and engage in violence against governments or majority populations is important for two reasons. First, if there are dynamics that are unique to conflict generated by forced assimilation. Understanding these dynamics could help reduce the likelihood of forced assimilation in the future. Second, since ethnic nationalist separatist movements are often associated with forced assimilation policies, understanding how forced assimilation leads to separatism could help us better understand and prevent the negative consequences of such movements.

In this study, I explore whether the concepts of structural violence and basic human needs deprivation or the concept of relative deprivation better explains the increase in violence related to forced assimilation. In the first section, I will introduce the main elements of these three conflict theories. I then discuss policies of forced assimilation. In the second section, I use the case of the forced assimilation of Muslim Uyghurs in China to explore relationships between Uyghur protest and violence and different stages of China's forced assimilation policies.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

The effectiveness of a variety of integration policies and strategies used by governments to integrate minority populations has been given special treatment in political science literature. The unintended consequences of government policies designed to integrate minority populations has also been a matter of considerable debate. However, despite the long relationship between such policies carried out by governments and evidence of resulting social protest (see below chart) against such policies, considerably less attention has been spent examining the specific relationship between forced assimilation policies and social violence. This is problematic to scholars interested in understanding this dynamic relationship and exploring it in relation to specific cases.

Time Period	Government	People	Policies	Outcome
1780-1870	France and Spain	Basques	Language repression, border restrictions	Social protest, violence
1790-1920	United States	Native Americans	Language repression, limit movement of people, suppression of religion	Social protest, violence
1930-1960	Australia	Aborigines	Restrict women's rights, language repression	Social protest, violence
1960-1998	Northern Ireland	Protestant and Catholics	Suppression of religion, border restrictions	Social protest, violence
1948-present	Israel and Palestine	Israelis and Arabs	Border restriction, suppression of religion	Social protest, violence

Since the issue of forced assimilation and social protest has not been addressed directly in conflict literature, this literature review is broken down into three sections. First, I examine the literature on forced assimilation that is important to understanding policies carried out by

governments and the effect they have on minority populations. Then, I examine the literature on social protest and the contributions that have been made by conflict scholars in locating the underlying sources of social protest and violence. Last, I examine the literature on the roots of communal violence.

### *Forced Assimilation*

Scholars agree that the concept of assimilation is a process rather than a single event (Gordon, 1964) that culminates in two cultures becoming one. Assimilation, although a process itself, is part of a larger process known as acculturation. The Social Science Research Council has defined acculturation as, “a cultural change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems” (Siegel *et al.*, 1953, p. 974). Assimilation is the final step of the acculturation process.

Specific minority populations have experienced forced assimilation policies ranging from language repression, restricted movement, and restriction of women’s rights. The chart above shows five examples of minority populations. There are many more examples of populations that endured hardships due to government regulation only to be denied cultural survival. Other significant minority populations such as Irish Americans, African Americans, and Mexican Americans have all suffered under assimilation policies and practices. Although each population has unique characteristics, there are commonalities that allowed for assimilation including differences in religion, language, work ethic and women’s rights. Members of the Irish, African, and Mexican American groups were able to retain some bits of cultural heritage (i.e. food and, to varying degrees, dress) but over the years have been forced to adopt the American way on the issues that once separated them (Feagin, 2003).

The nature of forced assimilation policies is to have a final product of only one culture.

This 'ethnic cleansing' that is a result of government policies spurs ethnic conflict. It has been said that one of the roots of violence can be attributed to ethnic conflict since the bonds sustaining civility are strained (Horowitz, 1985, p. 12). The lack of scholarship on forced assimilation policies negatively impacting minority groups has led to confusion when resolution techniques are to be instituted. Strategies of conflict intervention and resolution that have been applied to situations resulting from forced assimilation practices have been limited to treating ethnic conflict as a manifestation of something else such as the stresses of modernization, or the persistence of traditionalism (Horowitz, 1985, p. 13). Bridging the gap in scholarship between forced assimilation practices and subsequent conflict will better inform conflict resolution practitioners as well as scholars interested in examining the effects of governmental policies negatively impacting minority populations.

### *Social Protest*

Ralph Turner (1969) defines protest as an expression or declaration of disapproval or dissent (p. 816). Turner goes on further to expand on social protests. Social protest refers to protest that is targeted at creating action based on serious grievances (p. 816). Some view protest as direct action while others view protest as a form of communication. Social protest is measured on a continuum with non-violent acts on one extreme and violent acts on the other. Social protest is also known in literature as social movements and public demonstrations which include activities such as marching, picketing, and street protesting. The purpose of a social protest of movement is to bring attention to problems that are hurting that will bring about change. "Many people pool their efforts in collective action to benefit a large category of persons (Oberschall, 1993, p. 1). There is power in numbers. "Crowds do not just collect randomly in time and place within a population that has grievances. They collect after a

precipitating event has occurred” (Oberschall, 1973, p. 325). When a large gathering is taking place more attention will be paid allowing the grievances to be known by many. Rallying support is critical in social protests and movements. The more people are willing to stand up for one side the more pressure is put on the governing body to change policies that have caused the grievances.

The three examples mentioned in the previous section (Irish, African, and Mexican Americans) each were resistant to the forced assimilation policy. The Irish conflict centered on religion. The African conflict centered on civil rights. The Mexican conflict centered on land. This conflict generated by changing tolerance level and procedures was presented in the form of social protest. In some cases the protests turned violent (Feagin, 2003, p. 81, 178, 207). It is unclear in the literature thus far which conflicts have the potential to escalate to violence. Examining the underlying sources and making the connection that specific conditions must be present (i.e. policies of forced assimilation) in social protests in order for violence to occur will aid scholars and practitioners in determining the necessary force and effort to de-escalate the conflict.

### *Communal violence*

Building off the ideas of forced assimilation as an ethnic conflict and social protest as a reaction to the conflict, the concept of communal violence —“violence involving groups that define themselves by their differences of religion, ethnicity, language or race” (Human Rights Watch, 1995a, p. vii) —combines the two theories. The role of government interaction in the formation of communal violence can take several forms. Following the principle of forced assimilation, “some cases [of] discrimination that favor a dominant group or marginalize a minority from full participation in the society creates a climate of mutual suspicion and

intolerance” (Human Rights Watch, 1995b, p. 2) ultimately leading to violence on a community level. Community in this instance is defined by ethnicity. The jump from social protests and movements to violence acts such as communal violence depends on many aspects sociologists have identified such as rapid social change (forced or natural), magnitude of strain, social dislocation, and reaction of authorities to the grievances expressed (Oberschall, 1993, p. 152-3).

Just as assimilation is the final step of the acculturation process, communal violence is the final step of a process that begins with manipulation by government over ethnic tensions that creates polarization of public opinion (Human Rights Watch, 1995b, p. 10). The main responsibility of preventing or eliminating communal violence falls upon the heads of governments, the same officials that allowed the conditions central to creating communal violence to prevail. Informing governmental leaders of the tautology of communal violence can help in implementing new policies and procedures that are fairer and less likely to lead to conflict situations. More scholarship on the relationship of forced assimilation, social protest, and communal violence can help scholars and conflict resolution professionals better identify the main sources of conflict and tailor the techniques of resolution to address the root causes not just the effects or symptoms.

## Chapter 3

### Theoretical Background

Three theories will be used to examine how policies of forced assimilation lead to social protest. They are structural violence, basic human needs deprivation, and relative deprivation. The theories will be presented in this section and used as explanatory devices in other sections of this study.

#### *Structural Violence*

Structural violence is a term credited to John Galtung (1960s) which describes a systematic way in which violence is embedded in social institutions or organizations on the basis of denial of basic human needs. John Burton (1997) said, “Structural violence...is a term used to describe damaging deprivations caused by the nature of social institutions and policies” (p. 32). Political, economic, cultural or legal organizations all contribute to structural violence. Structural violence is often harder to discover since there is no clear actor. Galtung (1969) helped clarify how to distinguish between direct violence and structural violence: “We shall refer to the type of violence where there is an actor that commits the violence as *personal* or *direct*, and to violence where there is no such actor as *structural* or *indirect*” (p. 170).

Peace psychology researchers such as Daniel Christie (1997) help bridge the gap of understanding of how structural violence contributes to the development conflict. Working off the basic human needs theory and applying it to a smaller population he said, “*Structural violence* occurs when economic and political structures systematically deprive need satisfaction for certain segments of society” (p. 315). When restrictions, either physical boundaries or limitations or policy implementations, are placed on individuals or mass population’s frustration begins to intensify. Using the logic found in the frustration-aggression hypothesis developed by

John Dollard (1939), the natural progression of a frustrated people is to become aggressive. It is not hard to see then the natural progression of structural violence into direct violence.

In the field of conflict resolution this presents multiple problems in how to resolve the issues of structural violence. Many have critiqued the structural violence theory including Chris Mitchell (1981) who says it does not adequately take into account the triangular nature of all conflicts and the importance of identifying the interrelationships between social, political, and economic situations, individual and collective attitudes, and specific behavior. Kevin Avruch (1998) feels this theory is too universal and does not do the cultural peculiarities justice. However if one can understand how structural violence is related to other theories such as basic human needs and relative deprivation using a combination of theories can help explain the conflict better and provide many approaches to resolving the conflict.

#### *Basic Human Needs Deprivation*

Basic human needs theory as related to conflict resolution was developed by John Burton based on the work of Abraham Maslow. Maslow (1943) created a hierarchy of needs that were predetermined meaning needs must be met at the base of the pyramid (basic human needs) before the upper needs can be met. Burton expanded on Maslow's ideas and classified basic human needs as security, identity, recognition, development, and distributive justice (Sheehan, 2007, conflict glossary). Because these needs are ontological, meaning, "unalterable and non negotiable" (Avruch, 1998), "It follows that unless satisfied within the norms of society, they will lead to behavior that is outside the legal norms of society" (Burton, 1990, p. 36-37). These needs must be met on an individual level first but are also applied to groups, larger cultures, and civilization as a whole. Conflict erupts when the needs are not met within the norms of society.

Deprivation of basic human needs can lead to many different outcomes. More often than

not, when conflict resolvers begin to examine the specifics of the conflict the focus is placed on the symptoms and not the root of the problem. This means the conflict will re-manifest itself in different ways without ever being resolved. Appreciation to the humanity aspect of conflict and accounting for the needs of everyone involved will ultimately lead to a basic human needs approach or evaluation. One cannot focus on solving the dispute at hand with a neighbor if he is hungry or worried about how to keep his job and position in society.

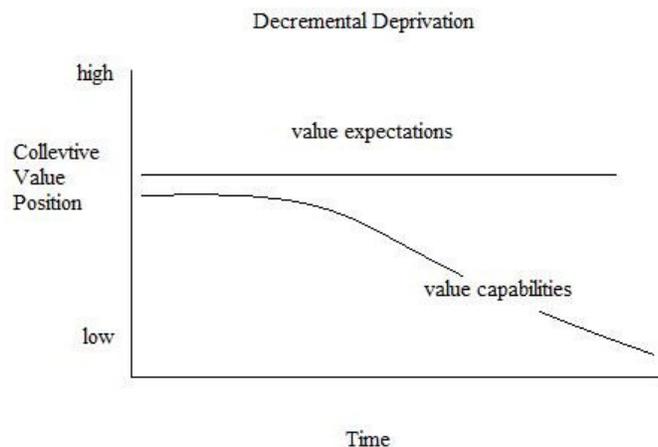
As with all theories, agreement is not universal. Katrin Lederer (1980) offered this critique, "Particular problems arise from such a theory because...it suggests a distinction between basic and nonbasic needs...and between more basic and less basic needs" (p.6). There has been and will continue to be discussion on how needs are prioritized. What is most important to take into account when applying this theory is there are needs that are, "universal and, therefore, held in common" (Burton, 1990, p. 42). Taking the next step and extrapolating what is most important to the specific culture can address concerns.

### *Relative Deprivation*

Another theory that was born in the 1940s was the idea that even though basic needs of life are being met, social comparison can lead to feelings of inadequacy and negate the positive effects of the fulfillment of needs. Samuel Stouffer was interested in examining and explaining the dissatisfaction of promotion in army units during the Second World War. He applied the thinking that a man isn't doing well even though he is thriving in society because there is someone doing better than him. This theory is known as relative deprivation. The needs Burton defined such as security, identity, recognition, development, and justice are all being met but when compared to someone else there is much room for improvement. An adaptation of this theory was developed for the field of conflict resolution by Ted Gurr. Gurr (1970) defined

relative deprivation as “actors ‘perception’ of discrepancy between their value expectations and their value capabilities” (p. 24). “Values are the desired events, objects, and conditions for which men strive” (p. 25). Value expectation, “are the average value positions to which its members believe they are justifiably entitled” (Gurr, 1970, p. 27). Value capabilities are, “the average value positions its members perceive themselves capable of attaining or maintaining” (Gurr, 1970, p. 27).

There are three manifestations of relative deprivation when applied to societies: 1) decremental deprivation (actuality of obtaining), 2) aspirational deprivation (hope of obtaining) 3) progressive deprivation (special case of aspirational where value expectations keep rising while value capabilities taper off). Each have their own characteristics that help explain the patterns of change yet each strive towards a state of equilibrium. The one that will be used for the intents and purposes of this paper will be decremental deprivation. Deprivation, whether actual or perceived, is not a comfortable state for man to be in.



## Chapter 4

### Forced Assimilation and Conflict

In 1923 two sociologists, Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess developed an early and influential definition of assimilation. They thought of assimilation as a process of shared experience and history in which two cultures are incorporated into one common life (Gordon, 1964). A more specific interpretation of assimilation is provided by Brewton Berry (1958) as he notes the blending of two cultures into one while addressing dress, eating habits, language, and food but also the less tangible items like values, memories, ideas, and attitudes.

From the aforementioned definitions of assimilation, the practice of two cultures converging into one, the process appears to be a simple conversion without tension. For this course of action to be without dispute, each culture must agree change is appropriate and wanted. When there is not consent, conflict occurs. This changes how assimilation is viewed. Force must be used to when there is difference of opinion. When the word forced is added as a descriptor of assimilation the connotation turns negative. One can extrapolate that forced assimilation is the process by which one culture is dominated by another replacing the lesser culture with the more dominate. The idea of eradicating opposing or threatening cultures by replacement has been a justification since there has been social contact and interaction. The most effective way the process has been implemented is through government action with specific policies.

Governments use policies of forced assimilation for many reasons including a desire for only one culture (unicultural), eliminating cultural norms/traditions, economic growth, and land procurement. Many times when governments intervene it is without common consent meaning policies are implemented whether the public agrees or is even aware. The shock and awe

method usually brings about fear and resistance making it much harder to uphold the new laws. No country is exempt from enacting these types of policies; no matter how advanced a country is or how open their borders, there is always the possibility of a shift towards discrimination.

The Native American's experience in the early years of the United States and the Basques in France and Spain both offer examples of governmental policies supporting forced assimilation leading to pain, suffering, and, ultimately, a new identity.

#### *Native Americans in USA*

The struggle to remain true to one's heritage while adjusting to modern life has plagued society since there has been social interaction. Cultures and societies can live peacefully when left to their own devices yet when others come in contact, cultural egocentrism begins to take over leading to assimilation. For hundreds of years the Native Americans were living peaceful, productive lives on the American continent. The introduction of the white man as far back as the days of Columbus began hardships the Native Americans would be forced to face.

Columbus did not put forth an effort to 'reform' the Indians rather they were killed off to make way for the superior race, the white men. Tensions continued to rise as the white men continued to colonize the newly-found land. It was not until the colonies of the New World were freed from the rule of Britain and united in the cause to become one country that the Native Americans were seen as people with potential. When this potential was realized policies were created to, from the white man's point of view, 'civilize' the Indians and make them a part of the new country. Holm (2005) points out George Washington and Henry Knox rallied Congress to pass an act that would regulate trade between the tribes and among other things, civilize the Indian people (p. 2). This was one of the first ways the government began to encroach on the Indian way of life ergo the assimilation process.

One of the ways the whites began the process of assimilating the Indians without the involvement of the government was through the demarcation of private property. This was an abstract idea to the natives but through much encouragement from President Jefferson and many others, the Native Americans began plotting out their land and becoming farmers. Even though this practice originated without governmental support, it was soon adopted as an administrative policy. Thus began the Native American's forceful change of abandoning their nomadic lifestyle and adopting the 'white man's' lifestyle.

“The establishment of the Indian Territory and the reservation system, although an overt attempt to restrict Indian movement and to compress tribal territories so that Indians would be forced to take up farming, was instituted according to the American ideology of the period to prepare Native Americans for their entrance into American society” (Holm, 2005, p. 3).

This is just one of the many ways early America treated the Indians. One of the most famous discriminatory acts against the Native Americans happened in the late 1830s in the southeastern United States. The Trail of Tears forced the Cherokee Indians out of Georgia to land westward for a variety of reasons including greed, gold, and ability (Holm, 2005).

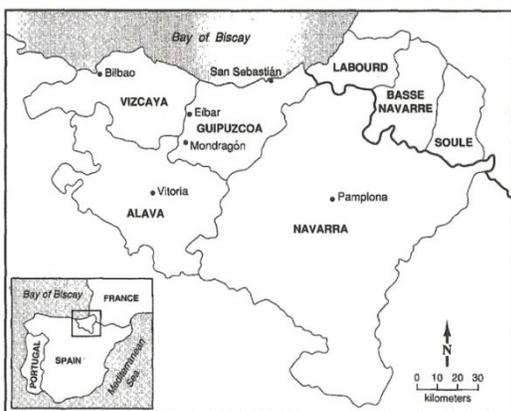
There were positive aspects that came out of the changing policies but most were written and enacted with an undertone of superiority. The Lake Mohonk Conferences of Friends of the Indians began in 1883 with the purpose of assimilating the Indians into the American body politic. Teaching English, reading, and writing would make the Native Americans better able to compete with their white counterparts (Holm, 2005, p. 7-8).

Today many Native Americans are forced to live in poverty conditions on land designated by the government. Some tribes have been fortunate enough to establish businesses on the reservations that bring in extra income and allow them to live comfortable lifestyles but for the majority of the Native Americans life is extremely difficult. Some tribes have been able

to resist full assimilation and continue every-day life as if the white man never came but this is becoming rarer as America continues to develop and prosper. Only time will tell if the Native Americans can truly resist full assimilation into American culture.

### *Basques in France and Spain*

The story of the Native American's fight for cultural survival is not unique. The specific dates and names change but the themes remain the same. The case of the Basques in France and Spain will show how similar the fight for cultural independence really is.



Map 1.1. The Basque region (Euskadi).

For many centuries, “The Basque region has been classified as, “a society in crisis suffering from a downward spiral of frustration...conflict and violence” (Zirakzadeh, 1991, p. 2). Its geographic position, “...consists of seven small provinces. The larger four (Alaca, Guipuzcoa, Navarra, and Vizcaya) are located in northeastern Spain and the other three (Labourd, Basse-Navarre, and Soule) in southwestern France along the border with Spain” (da Silva, 1975, p. 228). The split of the Basque country has caused the progression of the Basques to also be split. As France and Spain grew to be different countries their respective Basque territories followed suit. “Under French and Spanish monarchies the Basque provinces enjoyed considerable autonomy. This was lost, however, when the French and Spanish states imposed uniform legal and administrative systems over the territories” (da Silva, 1975, p. 229). This created a divide

between the Basques which still exists today.

The Basques of Spain have had a more troubled past whereas the French Basques have kept conflict minimal. The border that divides the Basque region is much more than a demarcation between two countries. It has become the divide between peace and conflict, freedom and fear, respect and hatred, civil society and terrorism (Beck, 2005, p. 1). The subsequent examination will focus solely on the Basques in Spain to demonstrate how governmental policies encouraging forced assimilation cause harm.

“The question of Basque autonomy and the policy of state centralization became a more complex and prolonged problem in Spain, lasting throughout most of the nineteenth century and including the participation of the Basques in the two Carlist civil wars. At the conclusion of the second Carlist War, the Basques were stripped of most of their traditional liberties but left with some degree of fiscal and administrative autonomy” (da Silva, 1975, p. 229-30).

The little autonomy granted did not satisfy the people. A sense of relative deprivation began to grow between the Spanish and the Spanish Basques but also between the Spanish Basques and the French Basques. Feeling frustrated, groups began to form such as the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA). When the frustrations were no longer bearable and enough people had joined the camp of wanting to produce change, war broke out. Hopes of reclaiming their culture quickly vanished since, “After the Civil War, the government launched a campaign of forced assimilation, prohibiting all manifestations of Basque culture or identity” (da Silva, 1975, p. 232). This policy included language bans in education, mass media, and any administrative dealings (Linz, 1973). Many smaller protests and acts of violence occurred but none to the level of war. The Basques did not give up easily. Retaining their language and lifestyle was important, “But the chief concern...was...to arrest the assimilation process, which had been proceeding for centuries, or to reverse it in order to preserve their identity as a people” (da Silva, 1975, p. 247).

The Basque situation has been complicated by the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> tragedy. The ETA has been put on the terror watch list halting negotiations. There is still a struggle for the Basques to have their language, customs, and culture. Given the history this struggle has the potential to continue for many years to come.

## Chapter 5

### Introduction of the Uyghurs of Xinjiang, China

Recent clashes between the Muslim Uyghurs of China and the Chinese government raise questions about the relationship of forced assimilation to conflict. Does structural violence implicit in forced assimilation invariably lead to conflict? Is deprivation of basic human needs a necessary ingredient? Is it sufficient? And what is the role of relative deprivation in processes such as these?

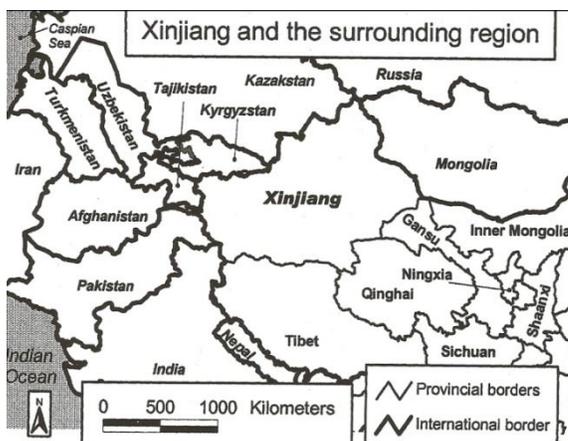
It is possible that the structural violence and basic human needs deprivation suffered by Uyghurs is the primary reason for its recent clashes with the Chinese government. However, it is also possible that Uyghurs are experiencing a growing sense of relative deprivation. This may have come about as a result of the increasing numbers of Han Chinese moving into “their” native areas combined with the experience of seeing new and free independent Muslim republics in regions lose to their borders.

In this section, I will provide background information on the Uyghurs of China. I will then examine China’s policies of forced assimilation since its founding in 1949. In addition, since relative deprivation may play an important role in the rise in recent conflicts I will examine some of the effects of these assimilation policies in terms of increased migration of Han Chinese into Uyghur areas of China and I will also look at the potential effects on Uyghurs of the rise of independent Muslim republics on its borders.

#### *China’s Uyghur population*

The Uyghur population is relatively unknown to the global community. Many people are unaware of the Muslim communities in the country of China. The Uyghurs are an agrarian society that has lived in peace with their own governance until the PRC realized the potential of

the land on which the Uyghurs make their living. The home of the Uyghurs is located in the northwest corner of China.



The province is known as Xinjiang which means ‘new frontier’ or ‘new territory’ (Starr, 2004, p. 6). The territory of Xinjiang came under Chinese rule during the Manchu Q’ing Dynasty (1644-1911) (Otto, 2007, 2). Today’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, the largest of China’s political units, covers an area of 1.6 million square kilometers, one-sixth of China’s total area and three times the size of France” (Millward & Perdue, 2004, p. 29). The province of Xinjiang officially became an autonomous region in 1955 (Yom, 1). XUAR borders many countries including Tibet, India, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Russia, and Mongolia as well as the Chinese provinces of Gansu and Qinghai.

XUAR is a predominately Muslim area with the most populous ethnic group being the Uyghurs after which the province was named. The Uyghurs are Turkic ethnically and culturally, and strong adherents of Islam (Mackerras, 2001, p. 289). The outlay of the land within the borders of Xinjiang is anything but ordinary. Three basins (Tarim, Pamirs, and Tian Shan) are divided by mountain ranges and rivers. Within the basins lies the Taklimakan Desert (327,000-square-kilometer), a mostly uninhabitable land but interest has been growing for the ‘wasteland’ with the discovery of oil (Millward & Perdue, 2004, p. 30).

The modern-day, “Uyghurs have little more in common with the CCP today than their ancestors did with the Manchu Qing dynasty when Xinjiang first became part of “China.” Their dress, customs, language, history, and religion were all unfamiliar to the Chinese. Xinjiang has always been recognized for its strategic value. The Qing saw the region as buffer zone between China and the interests of its neighbors along Xinjiang’s borders. Today, the same is still true, but Xinjiang has even greater value in terms of natural resources to fuel the growing Chinese economy. As a result, Xinjiang has been viewed as a backward outer territory since it became part of China. The Chinese have always recognized the strategic value of Xinjiang but have never treated the Uyghurs, or any of the other minorities in Xinjiang, as equals” (Welshans, 2007, p. 16).

## Chapter 6

### China's Forced Assimilation Policies

A brief examination of China's history shows a long list of national policies and campaigns that, in theory, are useful in helping achieve a desired outcome. Rarely, if ever, did enacting these national campaigns exemplify the desired intent. The time frame of focus is from the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1949) under Chairman Mao's rule to the late 1990s when there was a turn to violence and upheaval among certain populations that is still occurring today.

#### *Hundred Flowers Campaign (1956)*

In 1956, China began making the transition to socialism under the direction of Chairman Mao Zedong. Private property no longer existed and the government seized control of the means of production except in the rural parts of China. This created a separation between state and society which was the exact opposite intention of implementing socialism according to Marx. (Meisner, 1999, p. 157). This transition resulted in less freedom for intellectuals yet more freedom for discussing relationships between state and society and between those leading and those being led. (Meisner, 1999, p. 157-158). In December 1955, Mao began the push for more citizens to participate in economic and political life (Meisner, 1999, p. 159). "To the outside world, the episode has come to be known as the 'Hundred Flowers' period after Mao's earlier slogan 'Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools contend'" (MacFarquhar, 1960, p. 3). One of the intentions was to foster communication with the people being led and the leaders making the decisions in hopes of creating a better system. At first, there was skepticism that freedom indeed meant freedom from retaliation.

“...if the hundred flowers were to bloom, if the intellectuals were to speak up, there must be assurance that there would be no sudden reversal of policy that

would find them exposed to counter-attack. In the absence of that assurance, the intellectuals would not consider the atmosphere suitable for airing their views. Past experience had made them cautious...” (MacFarquhar, 1960, p. 25).

Once the criticisms came rolling in after much enticing by Mao and other influential officials, Mao did not like what he was hearing. He put a stop to the criticisms and no longer offered retaliation free remarks. He labeled those who were for democracy and fair representation as rightists. Mao’s decision to halt the ‘Hundred Flowers’ campaign resulted in another campaign to eradicate those not following the current system or those who continued to speak out against the current system.

This campaign did not directly affect the Uyghur population in Xinjiang when dealing with intellectuals airing grievances but it did open the door to believing in other ideas and other ways for the people to be represented. The idea of language reform was born out of this campaign but was not implemented until after the Great Leap Forward ended.

Relative deprivation was created during this campaign since the focus was on specific groups like intellectuals. This created class distinctions defined by education. Specific populations began benefiting (Hans); while others remained stagnant or began declining (Uyghurs). Frustrations began fostering resentment leading to frustration and ultimately creating conflict. A quote from Moneyhon (2004) demonstrates the growing divide between the Uyghurs and Hans: “To make matters worse, according to quality of life indicators such as education, unemployment, life-expectancy, and poverty-rate, Uyghurs lag far behind their Han Chinese counterparts” (p. 11).

#### *Anti-Rightists Campaign (June 1957-58)*

“Mao himself launched the Hundred Flowers campaign, urging students and intellectuals to vent their grievances. This they did, calling for democratic reforms and the rule of law...But what Mao gave, he could also take away: a campaign led by none other than Deng Xiaoping branded the reformists students

and intellectuals as “rightists”; half a million were sent away for “labor reform” (Goldman, p.10).

This new intolerance for airing grievances and punishing those who were adhering to the new policy came to be known as the Anti-Rightists Campaign. “During the anti-rightist campaign...a number of minority nationals belonging to the CCP who held government position were either demoted or purged as...local nationalists and anti-Party elements” (McMillen, 1979, p.46). This policy directly affected the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Locals who held high positions of authority were replaced with Han officials who prescribed to the Communist Party in hopes of gaining a presence in the region. Ethnic purging of officials was only the beginning.

“The other prong to this anti-rightist campaign was a vigorous programmed of political education for all, designed to eradicate doubts and erroneous thoughts that the rightists might have inspired” (MacFarquhar, 1974, p. 264). The CCP wanted as much control as possible. Re-educating the young in hopes of training the new generation to be communist thinkers was the goal. Labor reform was the punishment used for those who held beliefs that the communist way was not the best way to proceed. The main lessons the Chinese learned from the Anti-Rightists campaign was to keep quiet and be satisfied with the current situation for the consequences of disobedience are swift and severe.

During this campaign the theory of relative deprivation was still a contributor to conflict but a stronger force that created conflict was the theory of structural violence. Policies of immigration of Hans into Xinjiang meant the already difficult task of finding a decent job as a Uyghur was all but eliminated. Once the Hans were present in Xinjiang the political focus was on helping the Hans succeed so they would remain in the land. The policies were created in favor of the Hans leaving the Uyghurs to struggle to survive amidst the violence due to unfair

policies. Dru Gladney offers this insight that captures the Uyghur sentiment, “Uyghurs and other Muslims complain not only that the growing number of Han Chinese monopolize the best jobs and eventually take the profits back home with them but also that their presence erodes that natives’ traditional way of life and denies them any significant voice in their own affairs” (Starr, 2004, p. 118).

*Great Leap Forward (October 1958-1961)*

Following the Anti-Rightist campaign, Mao envisioned a China that was linked together in hopes of competing with the United States’ economy. Unlike the previous campaigns that evolved over time, “The great leap forward took shape gradually” (MacFarquhar, 1983, p. 1).

The future of China rested in:

“Two possibilities...They could have launched a major programme of agricultural modernization, diverting resources to industries directing promoting agricultural development—the strategy adopted in the late 1970’s. The alternative was to attempt to expand agricultural output by exploiting traditional methods, particularly water conservancy, to the limits. It was the fateful decision to adopt this latter strategy that led to the great leap forward (MacFarquhar, 1983, p. 4).

Because of China’s massive amount of land, having a unified country presented some difficulties. The make-up of the land, the distance between communities, and the local cultures contributed to the societal fragmentation. Mao wanted a unified China where sharing of resources happened freely under one rule. “The decision to launch the great leap forward in Xinjiang was partially based upon Chinese determination to exploit the natural resources of the border region” (Rudelson, 1997, p. 102). This was not a wise decision executed by Mao. He was blinded by Communist thought and had little care for the consequences that would evolve. Forcing cultures to radically adjust to new policies and procedures over a short period of time with no sympathy for the personal struggle that inevitably follows change creates conflict. The Uyghurs were front and center of this policy enactment and were not compliant with Mao’s

doctrine and refused to be pressured into submission.

Taking advantage of local minority groups, such as the Uyghurs, was nothing new to Mao. The, “Uyghurs were forced to collectivize in communes, material incentives were abolished, and private land holdings were eliminated” (Rudelson, 1997, p. 102). Mao was well on his way to having one China. Not everyone benefited from the new exploitation. “The peasantry suffered particularly severely. Government procurement of grain to feed the swollen urban population was based on claims not actuality” (MacFarquhar, 1983, p. 329).

With grain rationing and increased demands for exportation, many farmers, who were mainly Uyghurs, suffered the most. The little money the farmers did make from the grain was not sufficient to buy food to meet the family’s needs. The Uyghurs were less concerned with the larger issue of independence during their oppression resulting in immediate loss of basic needs, e.g. food and safety, but when stable enough to reflect on the reality of their dire circumstances, the need for a response became clear. Constant catering to the Hans left the Uyghurs as frustrated, exhausted, and hungry, second-class citizens ready to fight for their cause. Grain rationing was not the only way the Uyghurs were aware of their forced assimilation. James Millward (2007) points out how Uyghurs who sought jobs outside the farming industry were denied. Employment in the construction divisions and in the energy sectors were reserved for Hans only increasing Uyghur frustration. Since employment was not readily Eliminating opportunities for productivity and stability and grain rationing was occurring many of the basic human needs were denied to the Uyghurs; thus continuing the conflict cycle.

Justin Rudelson (1997) spent time in Xinjiang among the Uyghurs. In his account the Great Leap forward was not only a manipulation of local minority groups and land but included a religious reform. The Uyghurs suffered greatly during this time. The “...closure of bazaars,

attacks on Islam, and emphasis on assimilationist policies during this period caused considerable destabilization and increased discontent among the Uyghurs” (Rudelson, 1997, p. 2).

Unlike the ending of other campaigns where a new campaign was started or a new way of thinking was presented, the Great Leap forward ended, “...not with a bang but with a whimper. No rallies were held. No speeches were made. No pamphlets were issued. Indeed no announcement was ever made that the leap was over” (MacFarquhar, 1983, p. 326). Inferences from local newspapers were the only sign the Great Leap had ended. Mao and his followers did not want to admit failure.

China was not an equal contender with the United States economically, which was one of the primary goals of the Great Leap. The result of the Great Leap was not that of equal economic status as the United States rather discontent among those populations that had been abused for one reason or another, as well as a widespread famine. Some scholars have termed it the Great Leap Backwards; since such damage was caused. It would be another few years before a new national campaign was launched. China needed time to recover, regroup, and redirect.

#### *Cultural Revolution (1966-1969)*

The introduction of the new practices of intolerance for any thought or action that was not Communist was masked under the pretense that it, “was a war against bureaucratic privilege and oppression...[a] movement [that] announced itself (and won much of its massive popular support)” (Meisner, 1999, p, 293). A population that was vulnerable and susceptible to influence was the youth. Mao saw the youth as automatic supports. This resulted in having not only a top-down approach but grass-root efforts as well as. “He [Mao] encouraged China’s youth, formed into bands of ‘red guards,’ to launch political and often physical assaults on the...personnel of the party and bureaucracy” (Millward, 2007, p. 266).

Another way Mao gained support for the cause was to label the people of China as 'blank.' This idea, "was driven by a utopian impulse to escape history and by an iconoclastic desire to wipe the historical-cultural slate clean" (Meisner, 1999, p. 299). However this 'blank or clean sheet of paper' was already blotched by the previous campaign both politically and ideologically (Meisner, 1999, p. 229).

Power is a wonderful tool for rallying support, but can quickly spiral out of control. Unchecked uses of power lead to oppression. One of the policies that caused oppression that directly affected the Uyghurs was the practice of putting pigs in mosques. "However, bad as it is to house pigs in a Buddhist or Taoist temple, it is worse to do so in a mosque given the strength of Islam's taboo against the consumption of pork" (Millward, 2007, p. 276). Complete and utter disrespect for differences in religion (any many other aspects of life, including basic human needs) was a common theme during the campaign.

This campaign can be examined using two of the theories presented earlier, basic human needs deprivation and relative deprivation. Reviewing the literature and examples the more explanatory and prevailing theory is that of the relative deprivation. The analysis of relative deprivation is derived from the deprivation of basic human needs analysis therefore both are presented in this section with the understanding the analysis from this section forward will focus solely on relative deprivation.

Two of the main principles of the basic human needs theory are identity and recognition. Religion is one of the core sources of identity for Uyghurs. When the Muslim religion was dismissed the recognition as a people began to be destroyed. They do not want to be recognized as anything less than faithful members of the Muslim religion. Deprivation of basic human needs began as recognition of a separate and different population having different beliefs and

religious principles began to be mocked and belittled.

However great the ethnic tensions in Xinjiang, religion is not the only source. Tensions are also based on perceived and actual Chinese oppression over a long period. The initial deprivation of basic human needs grew into a mounting sense of relative deprivation. There is a strong view that the Chinese residents are better off than the Uyghurs and other minorities, and that they have accumulated this wealth by exploitation and by battenning off the miseries of the local minorities (Mackerras, 2001, p. 298).

Just as the previous campaign preyed upon weaker populations, the Cultural Revolution was no different in taking advantage and pushing the limits of the laws and those people whom, under the law, were lesser people.

“Uyghurs claim that the disruption brought about by the Cultural Revolution was most intense in small villages and among Uyghurs with the least education. Indeed, the remaining traces of the Cultural Revolution are most apparent in small villages throughout Xinjiang” (Rudelson, 1997, p. 103-4).

Despite the harsh conditions and treatment the Uyghurs received during this time many, “...Uyghurs...shrug this period off as a time of Han foolishness, placing full blame on the Hans for the suffering inflicted on the Uyghur people and China as a whole” (Rudelson, 1997, p. 104).

Throughout the many campaigns the Uyghurs have remained faithful to their one true goal of living their life in peace in the area that rightly belongs to them. Each new change of thought strengthened the Uyghurs willingness to fight for their cause. Being forced to adhere to the ever-changing and poorly planned and implemented procedures has caused the Uyghurs to become something they are not; aggressive and defensive.

The Cultural Revolution, “...was attempt that failed, and it was failure on a grand scale, dominating [and] distorting the social and political life of the People’s Republic for more than a

decade and tarnishing the historical image of Mao in the process” (Meisner, 1999, p. 291).

According to historians, both within and outside China, agree that the campaign’s ideas that hand lingered officially ended with Mao’s death (1976) and the subsequent capture of the Gang of Four (Jiang Qing, Mao’s last wife, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen).

*Strike Hard Campaign (1996)*

Feeding off the events of 1989 in Tiananmen Square, the early 1990’s proved to be very difficult for China, the Uyghurs of Xinjiang especially. Peaceful protest had turned into raging violence. Something had to be done to end the uprisings in Xinjiang. The answer was yet another national campaign. “In 1996, the central government responded to the escalation of violence in Xinjiang with the ‘Strike Hard’ anticrime campaign, designed to eradicate crime and crack down on Uyghur separatists” (Moneyhon, 2004, p. 20). The groups the policies of this campaign were most targeted at included secessionists, separatists, student protests and full-blown rioters, those posing the greatest threat to the status quo.

There are always unintended consequences and unanticipated reaction. The aftermath of the Strike Hard campaign was no exception. “Rather than stemming the growing tide of Uyghur separatism, the ‘Strike Hard’ campaign actually incited separatists, increasing Uyghur anti-government protests and violence to levels unprecedented” (Moneyhon, 2004, p. 20). The policies were later abandoned when it was realized more harm than good was resulting.

Specifically targeting groups known for violent outbreaks allowed unknown groups to emerge. In order to prevent overt violence that was produced by the Cultural Revolution, China needed a paradigmatic shift. This meant a hasty reform of policies and procedures. With all the effort of governmental agencies battling the violence people were still starving, fighting diseases, and dying from violent acts not associated with secessionists or separatists. Structural violence

was a contributing factor to the overall violence but was not readily addressed.

## Chapter 7

### Increasing Numbers of Han Chinese in Uyghur areas

Just as many outside the Central Asian states are unaware of Muslim populations within China, many are unaware of how many other ethnic groups live within the Chinese borders (see Table 1). The Uyghurs are the most populous ethnic group in all of China but in their homeland of Xinjiang their population stability has been compromised (see Table 2).

Table 1. Xinjiang population table by ethnic group\*

Nationality	Population end 1997	1990 census population	1997 growth over 1990 (%)	Average growth 1990–1997 (%)
Uyghurs	8,020,040	7,194,675	11.47	1.53
Han	6,601,297	5,695,626	15.90	2.12
Kazaks	1,270,783	1,106,989	14.80	1.97
Hui	770,580	681,527	13.07	1.74
Kyrgyz	162,670	139,781	16.37	2.18
Mongolians	157,540	137,740	14.37	1.92
Tajiks	39,030	33,512	16.47	2.20
Xibes	39,030	33,082	17.98	2.40
Manchus	20,600	18,403	11.94	1.59
Uzbeks	13,530	14,456	-6.41	-0.85
Russians	9200	8082	13.83	1.84
Daur	6300	5398	16.71	2.23
Tatars	4600	4821	-4.58	-0.61
Others	65,600	81,686	-19.56	-2.61
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,180,800</b>	<b>15,155,778</b>	<b>13.36</b>	<b>1.78</b>

\*For the 1997 figures see XUAR Regional Gazetteer Compilation Committee, comp., *Xinjiang nianjian 1998 (Xinjiang Yearbook)* (Ürümqi: Xinjiang Yearbook Press and Xinjiang People's Press, 1998), p 9; for the 1990 census figures see Liu Weixin et al., comp., *Xinjiang minzu cidian (Xinjiang Nationalities Dictionary)* (Ürümqi: Xinjiang People's Press, 1995), p 891. The 1990 census took place on 1 July, while the 1997 figures refer to the end of the year, so the average annual growth is the total divided by 7.5, not by 7.

Table 2. Change in population structure of Xinjiang's main nationalities, 1949–1997\*

Year	Total	Uyghurs	Han	Kazaks	Hui
1949 (million)	4.33	3.29	0.29	0.44	0.12
%	<b>100</b>	<b>75.95</b>	<b>6.71</b>	<b>10.24</b>	<b>2.83</b>
1953 (million)	4.78	3.61	0.33	0.51	0.13
%	<b>100</b>	<b>75.42</b>	<b>6.94</b>	<b>10.59</b>	<b>2.80</b>
1964 (million)	7.44	4.02	2.45	0.50	0.27
%	<b>100</b>	<b>54.03</b>	<b>32.86</b>	<b>6.74</b>	<b>3.64</b>
1982 (million)	13.16	5.99	5.32	0.91	0.58
%	<b>100</b>	<b>45.50</b>	<b>40.45</b>	<b>6.94</b>	<b>4.37</b>
1990 (million)	15.16	7.19	5.70	1.11	0.68
%	<b>100</b>	<b>47.45</b>	<b>37.58</b>	<b>7.30</b>	<b>4.51</b>
1997 (million)	17.18	8.02	6.60	1.27	0.77
%	<b>100</b>	<b>46.68</b>	<b>38.42</b>	<b>7.40</b>	<b>4.49</b>

\*See the figures in Sun Jingxin et al., *Kua shiji de Zhongguo renkou, Xinjiang juan (The Population of China Towards the 21st Century, Xinjiang Volume)* (Beijing: China Statistical Press, 1994), p 26 and XUAR Regional Gazetteer Compilation Committee, comp., *Xinjiang nianjian 1998 (Xinjiang Yearbook)* (Ürümqi: Xinjiang Yearbook Press and Xinjiang People's Press, 1998), p 9.

In 1955, Uyghurs comprised approximately 73% of the total population in Xinjiang (Bovingdon, 114). Through different policies and procedures from the governing body of the PRC, Han resettlement into Xinjiang increased dramatically. The height of the in-migration policies peaked during 1978 when the total population of the region was 5.13 million with 12.23 million or 41.6% were Han (Mackerras, 2001, p. 293). With the Hans being more prevalent than ever before, the CCP gained power over the region. With this power came a tremendous shift which, evoked the ire of many Uyghurs who resented the influx Han settlers” (Moneyhon, 2004, p. 7). Today there are 55 minorities nationalities recognized by the Chinese government as well as the most populous and dominate Han (Mackerras, 2001, p. 291).

## Chapter 8

### The Rise of Nearby Independent Republics

What is happening to other countries struggling for independence as well as people suffering in oppressed and abused situations provides hope that someday the Uyghur situation will improve. The Uyghurs look to similar circumstances where freedom has prevailed to provide motivation and strength to keep fighting. Hope that one day an independent land will exist is what the Uyghurs have to cling to as they persist in their cause.

#### *Tibet*

The Xinjiang fight against Chinese rule may be less known to the outside world but the Tibetan fight for independence has been publicized to the global community and gained support over the previous decades.



Perhaps the unified leadership of the Dali Lama has helped the people of Tibet rally together or maybe the Buddhist religion that regards peace as the highest level of religious devotion. Whatever the reason for more knowledge and support of the Tibet fight for freedom, the Uyghurs have looked to Tibet as an example of how to persist in the cause for independence.

Unlike Xinjiang, Tibet offers little when it comes to economic or strategic value to China. Gladney (2004) notes that although Tibet is not as high a priority to China as Xinjiang, the,

“current [Chinese] leaders consider it important to demonstrate that they will not submit to foreign pressures to withdraw their iron hand from that region. It is worth nothing that Uyghurs have begun to work closely with Tibetans abroad to exert pressure on China on international issues on behalf of both regions” (Starr, p. 117).

There are Muslim populations as well as Uyghur populations that live peacefully in Tibet but still lack the freedom that come when an independent nation is established. The Tibetan and Uyghurs will continue to fight as long as they can. Either they continue to pressure China for independence or they live under oppressive rule. Each citizen must choose which circumstance is worse and which cause to support. International support is helping, “buoy Uyghur hopes for greater political self-determination” (Moneyhon, 2004, p. 17).

*Soviet Union breakup and creation of Central Asian states*

The early 1990s provided other examples of independent nations as the breakup of the Soviet Union commenced and the creation of the Central Asian states began. The breakup of the Soviet Union allowed for minority populations to create a space of their own as each new Central Asian state was developing. Muslim Uyghur populations outside of Xinjiang were able to thrive. The Uyghurs still within the borders of Xinjiang, thought this inspiring. Gladney comments that the Chinese government was aware of the power the breakup of the Soviet Union was to those populations seeking independence. The Chinese government was also aware of the potential rise of ethnic separatism due to renewed alliances, increase of regional trade, and influx of economic development (Starr, 2004, p. 118).

The emergence of other minority populations like the Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Tajiks having homelands, “resound[ed] symbolically in Xinjiang, where many Uyghurs were saying that there should be an independence ‘Uyghurstan’ to match” (Millward, 2007, p. 288-89). Hope

was on the horizon.

Although, “the breakup of the Soviet Union did not lead to the creation of a greater “Turkistan” or pan-Islamic collection of states...the breakup fell along the former Soviet border lines, which helped to establish the national majority and minority groups within those former borders” (Gladney, 2004, p. 102) which was enough to distract the Chinese government from their repressive leadership allowing the Uyghurs to reunite and re-strategize.

## Chapter 9

### Uyghur Protest and Violence

The most notable protest on Chinese soil is the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. The purpose of the demonstrations and protests was to bring about democratic change and end authoritarian rule. However there were protests and demonstrations before 1989 that involved minority groups including the Uyghurs who were discontent with the current situation in China. The summer and winter of 1967 brought about strikes and clashes among various urban groups (Baum & Bennett, 1971, p. 320).

Since the in-migration policies of the Hundred Flowers Campaign through the Cultural Revolution, there has been Uyghur-Han tension. This tension was always present but never manifested as a violent resistance until the early 1990's. "Uyghur grievances increasingly materialized in the form of public protest and sporadic violence. From the bus bombings in both Xinjiang and Beijing, to assassinations of Han Chinese officials, Uyghur resistance to Chinese rule has turned deadly" (Moneyhon, 2004, p. 5).

As frustrations continued to increase, the protests and demonstrations were not achieving the results the Uyghurs wanted; a push for further violence took place. It was a result of the 1996 governmental launch of its 'Strike Hard' anticrime campaign that broaden that scope to crack down on Uyghur national splittist (separatist) groups (Rudelson, 1997, p. 171).

Early 1997 proved to be a very difficult time for Xinjiang. It saw the second-largest protest in recent history which happened to be the most severe street violence since the Cultural Revolution (Millward, 2007, p. 331). Following the arrest of many Uyghurs at a mosque, "several hundred Uyghurs then marched on the morning of 5 February to protest these arrest and other examples of what they saw as repression (Millward, 1997, p. 332). The protests continued

into the next day where, “over 100 Uyghurs students brandishing blue East Turkestan Republic flags and shouting ‘God is Great’ and ‘Independence for Xinjiang’ hoping to see an end to China’s rule in Xinjiang were fired upon by police” (Rudelson, 1997, p. 171 & Pomfret, 2000, p. A17). Force was the only way the police saw as containing the crowd and ending the protests.

A few weeks later on February 25, 1997, three bombs exploded on public buses in Urumchi, killing nine and seriously injuring twenty-eight others (Millward, 2007, p. 334). This attack was later attributed to eight Uyghur men. Other examples of Uyghur unrest include gun smuggling, bus bombings, building bombings, street protest (Bovingdon, 2002, & Rudelson, 1997, p. 170-1). These examples of violence are evidence of conflict escalation.

## Chapter 10

### Research Methods

The questions this thesis examines is whether relative deprivation is just as important as structural violence and basic human needs deprivation in explaining Uyghur violence. The answer to this question is found by examining the extent to protest and records of conflict between Uyghurs and Hans historically in relationship to China's different minority policies and programs.

Policy/Program	Dates	Applicable Theory	Justification for choice of theory
Hundred Flowers	1956	Relative Deprivation	Only aimed to be beneficial for certain populations (intellectuals), emphasized class distinctions
Anti-Rightists	1957-1958	Structural Violence	Punishment for crossing the 'imaginary' line, separated those who followed and those who seek to destroy, forced into labor reform, ethnic purging, control
Great Leap Forward	1959-1961	Basic Human Needs	Policies that forced minorities to conform, minorities were taken advantage of while the majorities were rewarded, way of life was denied- religion, grain supply
Cultural Revolution	1966-1969	Relative Deprivation	Han culture correct way to live not Uyghur culture, eliminating employment opportunities for Uyghurs increasing opportunities for Hans
Strike Hard	1996	Structural Violence	Crack down on Uyghur separatists, demoralize Uyghur population,

#### *Strengths and Limitations of Single Case Study*

This case study has been used in this analysis of forced assimilation policies creating conflict in the Muslim Uyghurs of China because I wanted to capture the richness of the experience of the Muslim Uyghurs. A specific population was used, lending a way for a single case study approach. There are strengths and weaknesses to each method of research. The

strengths include conceptual validity, exploring causal mechanisms, and developing new hypotheses. The drawbacks include case selection bias, degrees of freedom problems, and a lack of representativeness or generalizability.

“Case studies allow a researcher to achieve high levels of conceptual validity, or to identify and measure the indicators that best represent the theoretical concepts the research intends to measure” (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 19). In the social sciences, many of the interests of study such as power and democracy are difficult to measure. Deciding how one culture is more powerful than another requires a contextualized comparison (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 19). This type of comparison is difficult to do as a statistical analysis but works well and is common in case studies. Statistical studies limit the scope of concepts by lumping similar concepts together in order to have a large enough sample. With case studies, concepts can be refined while having a high level of validity with a small number of cases.

Exploring causal mechanisms allows for a larger number of intervening variables to be examined (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 21). In a case study design historical context is allowed to influence the results. This is particularly important in the case of the Uyghurs since most of the resentment and hatred was developed long ago as well as map the progression towards violence. Using history allows evidence to be presented that establishes means, motives, and opportunity. Methods that focus heavily on statistical research fail to account adequately for contextual factors outside of those that have been coded (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 21).

As more information is gathered during a case study examination, the possibilities of explanation expand. This leads the researcher to be able to view the data as having new hypotheses. Statistical data allows for deviant cases to be examined and lend themselves to new hypotheses but cannot provide enough data to draw sufficient conclusions (George & Bennett,

2005, p. 20-21).

The main limitation of a case study is selection bias. “The decision as to which observations to select is crucial for the outcome of the research and the degree to which it can produce determinate and reliable results” (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994, p. 128). It is necessary to let the research draw the conclusion not the researcher based on defending a point. This is a common pitfall in case study designs.

Another limitation is the problem of defining degrees of freedom. For a statistical analysis, this problem is mitigated by a large sample size combined with a higher number of variables then run through a regression analysis resulting in a specific number leading to statistical significance (George & Bennett, 2005, p.28). Regression analysis cannot be used in a case study. Proving the statistical significance cannot be done in a case study.

The most problematic limitation of case studies is not noticed until after the information has been gathered and analyzed. That problem is how to interpret the specific findings of the case study and relate to the larger population. This cannot be done when only one case has been examined. “Case study researchers are more interested in finding the conditions under which specific outcomes occur, and the mechanisms thought which they occur, rather than uncovering the frequency with which those conditions and their outcomes occur” (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 31).

The element critical for success in choosing a research method or design is the relationship of the variables to each other and cases that are applicable. Doing a cost/benefit analysis as well as looking ahead to see what conclusions might be drawn will help narrow the scope of method. Overall, being truthful in representing data is the most important aspect of conducting research.

## Chapter 11

### Discussion and Conclusion

Policy/Program	Dates	Applicable Theory	Justification for choice of theory	Result of Policy/Program
Hundred Flowers	1956	Relative Deprivation	Only aimed to be beneficial for certain populations (intellectuals), emphasized class distinctions	<b>Protest against Han chauvinism, Mao policies</b>
Anti-Rightists	1957-1958	Structural Violence	Punishment for crossing the 'imaginary' line, separated those who followed and those who seek to destroy, forced into labor reform, ethnic purging, control	<b>No protests or violent outbreaks, citizens were scared, over 550,000 people identified as rightists, humiliated, imprisoned, demoted or fired, sent to labor and re-education camps, tortured, killed.</b>
Great Leap Forward	1959-1961	Basic Human Needs	Policies that forced minorities to conform, minorities were taken advantage of while the majorities were rewarded, way of life was denied-religion, grain supply rationing	<b>Death from starvation, frustrations grew from unfair treatment</b>
Cultural Revolution	1966-1969	Relative Deprivation	Han culture correct way to live not Uyghur culture, good Uyghur jobs were given to Hans, eliminating employment opportunities	<b>Violent outbreaks, suicides, protests turned deadly, Rival factions of Red Guards and Rebel groups fight, armed battles involving thousands and tens of thousands of people take place</b>
Strike Hard	1996	Structural Violence	Crack down on Uyghur separatists, demoralize Uyghur population	<b>No protests for fear of more severe retaliation by the government, citizens were scared</b>

Good scholarship seeks to build theory by way of refining existing theory through application to new cases. In this regard, this study serves to do the following: 1) Refine structural violence, human needs, and relative deprivation theories by applying them to the case of the conflict in Xinjiang province. 2) Augment the conflict literature by considering the relative importance of each theory as an explanatory tool. 3) Consider how each theory, as illustrated by specific policies, results in differing levels of violence and social protest. 4) Help to explain how policies, represented by the aforementioned theories, create a recipe for social protest and conflict. In this study, I have applied theory to test its relevance as an explanatory

tool and in doing so I believe I can make a small contribution helping to refine these theories.

Policies of assimilation, whether forced or natural, push the differing cultures to examine themselves and each other. A comparison on a cultural level has the tendency to lead to a breakout of ethnic conflict. In examining the PRC, a massive effort was made to eliminate the Uyghur culture and ethnicity. This was mainly done through the intolerance of religious practices and eliminating the farming lifestyle so apparent in Uyghur culture. The Uyghurs were forced to compare themselves with their Han counterparts who appeared more successful and stable as a culture and ethnicity. As the Uyghurs saw their potential as a people deteriorating rapidly, their sense of relative deprivation increased and so to did the protest resulting from this frustration. Conflict born out of frustration of the Hans appearing to have *more* or *better* than the Uyghurs, led to large-scale protests eventually leading to violence.

The results of this study lead the researcher to believe that the theory of relative deprivation is an important factor in explaining the development of conflict manifested as social protest. The theory of relative deprivation highlights group comparison. Each group desires to be the best and the highest ranked when in comparison. This study has shown that desire to be unobtainable for certain minority populations due to policies enacted by governing bodies.

Forced assimilation policies are not the most effective strategy for blending two cultures into one and bringing about change. Forcing populations to do anything they are not already willing to do produces resistance. Although the Uyghurs did not have a strong, unifying history as a culture the PRC pushed hard for Muslim Uyghurs to alter their identity to become Han Chinese. The harder the PRC pressed, the more the Muslim Uyghurs united around their limited history and experience to resist change. The primary method of assimilating the Uyghur culture during Mao's reign was in-migration policies of Han Chinese into Xinjiang. History reports that

although there was a relative measure of success being the Xinjiang is remained a part of the PRC, however the Uyghurs were not ‘mainstreamed’ into Chinese culture.

Again the results of this study lead the researcher to believe there is a causal relationship between policies of forced assimilation and the development of conflict. Resistance to change is a universal aspect of human nature. This human nature is extended to group behavior.

Developing and understanding as well as techniques that allow for individualization or ways for cultural and/or ethnic heritage to remain in some form while adapting to the ‘new’ culture is an important issue for conflict resolution scholars and practitioners to be aware of.

Another finding that is specific to the Muslim Uyghur that has universal applicability is how the government’s choice of response to the conflict changes the dynamic of the conflict. The PRC policies that created a sense of relative deprivation produced conflict. The escalation of conflict was violence. The response by the PRC was to enact policies of structural violence in order to scare the protesting and violent populations into conformity or at least to cease protesting and violent acts. This happened after both the Hundred Flowers campaign and the Cultural Revolution.

Broadening the idea that once governmental involvement begins, the tactic of fear is used to mitigate conflicts is powerful concept that can tremendously help outside interveners trying to understand the dynamics present. It is also helpful to conflict scholars attempting to uncover the mechanisms of how conflicts escalate and de-escalate.

#### *Further Research*

Studying minority populations disadvantaged by government action has generated many questions and possibilities. This research has uncovered many themes and patterns that are universal; however there is limited explanatory power. More research will need to be performed

to address:

1. If the theory of relative deprivation has more or less explanatory power than the theories of structural violence and/or basic human needs deprivation
2. To examine more fully the relationship between forced assimilation policies and the development of conflict.
3. To explore the conditions that must be present in order for governmental involvement to adhere to policies that induce fear to mitigate conflict.

What this study has provided is an insight into the importance of the theory of relative deprivation in explaining the growth of conflict and providing a link between theory and practice and how they merge to create a formula or recipe for social protest conflict. The more knowledge of the contributions and causes of conflict the better the intervention techniques can be at addressing the root causes, and not just treating the symptoms.

### Notes

1. Mao quoted in Chien-Peng Chuing, Regional "Autonomy" for Minority Nationalities in the People's Republic of China: Rhetoric or Reality?, in SELECTED PAPERS IN ASIAN STUDIES 23 (Western Conference of the Association for Asian Studies, 1996)

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