University of Cincinnati

Date: 6/24/2021

I, Murat Yilmaz, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

It is entitled:

China's Development Model as Internal Colonialism: The Case of the Uyghurs

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39309

China's Development Model as Internal Colonialism: The Case of the Uyghurs

A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School
of the University of Cincinnati
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the Department of Political Science
by

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M.A University of Cincinnati
May 2015

Committee Chair: A. S. Runyan, Ph.D.

Abstract

The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), or East Turkestan, located in northwest China, is geo-strategically and economically important to the Chinese state. It is also the centuries-old homeland of Turkic/Muslim Uyghurs and an area of ongoing conflict between them and successive Chinese rulers, from dynastic to nationalist to Communist, culminating in a now high-profile case of egregious violations of Uyghur human rights, including the incarceration of at least a million Uyghurs in so-called "re-education" camps, under China's Western Development Plan and justified by China's People's War Against Terrorism. This dissertation makes the case that China's expansion into and rule over the Uyghur homeland has always been, to lesser and greater degrees, by internal colonialism, in which the lands, culture, and way of life of a typically indigenous or minority people are expropriated and/or expunged by a majority-ruled state within its borders. China's contemporary economic development, which extends both its national economy through resource extraction in the XUAR and its global economic reach through its Belt and Road Initiative to serve as gateway to commerce with Central Asia and beyond, is, in part, being achieved through a violent phase of internal colonization of the Uyghurs. I argue that not only does the treatment of the Uyghurs constitute internal colonialism rather than merely ethnic discrimination. Furthermore, the internal colonialism that the Uyghurs experience under the Chinese state and Han-Chinese majority rule explains why the Uyghurs are not benefitting from, and are actually being undermined by, China's economic and security policies. By revealing how a globalizing China discursively constructs itself as a modernizing force and Uyghurs as a "backward" and inherently violent people, to justify its actions against them in the name of neoliberal development and anti-terrorism, I expose mechanisms of internal colonialism at work in contravention to China's self-

identity as an anti-colonial state. To reveal other aspects of past and contemporary internal colonialism of the Uyghurs, I trace the treatment of Uyghurs by the Chinese state historically, including some violent reactions of Uyghurs against this over time, based on secondary sources; empirically determine the economic, cultural, religious, educational, and infrastructural impacts of China's development model on Uyghurs through analysis of policy and media documents; and investigate more recent non-violent resistance to various features of China's internal colonization of the Uyghurs through international human rights reports, press accounts, Uyghur lobby documents, social media postings, and interviews with Uyghur people in exile in Turkey. I find that the adverse conditions of the Uyghurs have become so acute that Uyghurs, who are fleeing from China in ever greater numbers, are also speaking out in greater numbers in the diaspora, gaining international attention and some support, particularly from Western countries as well as human rights organizations. Whether such support will have any impact on China's Uyghur policies remains an open question. However, Chinese government claims about the Uyghurs as backward Islamic terrorists to justify their surveillance, criminalization, incarceration, "re-education," forced labor, disappearances, and even sterilization are losing credibility with international publics.

Keywords: Internal colonialism, Uyghurs, China, resistance, development, terrorism

Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to Dr. Anne Sisson Runyan, who has been an advisor, research assistant supervisor, mentor and supporter during my PhD career. I have benefitted enormously from her guidance in terms of my intellectual development and my overall professionalization. It has been a pleasure to have served as her RA for several semesters. I could not have had a better advisor and champion throughout my time at the University of Cincinnati.

I likewise owe Dr. Laura Dudley Jenkins an enormous debt for her guidance over the years, as a committee member and graduate director. I appreciate the opportunities she has sent my way, including the opportunity I had to attend a summer school on decolonizing theory, organized by the International Center for Cultural Studies and International Institute for Cultural Studies in Hsinchu, Taiwan. I am further grateful to Dr. Moore as a committee member who provided me excellent feedback and support during my time at the University. I was lucky to work with both Dr. Jenkins and Dr. Moore on my master's project and to have had their guidance for my evolving research agenda.

I would like to acknowledge the Turkish Education Ministry for their financial support over the years, for my tuition and cost of living while I completed my MA and PhD at the University of Cincinnati.

This dissertation benefited from financial support from the Taft Research Center at the University of Cincinnati. I was a 2018-2019 Taft Dissertation Fellow. Having this financial support enabled me to spend time conducting fieldwork in Turkey. I also benefitted from research grant awards from the Taft Research Center, which further assisted me in conducting fieldwork abroad.

I am also thankful to the Department of Political Science for their support when I served as a Graduate Assistant. This provided me with multiple professionalization opportunities in serving as a teaching assistant as well as an instructor and conducting research for faculty.

Finally, I would like to thank the three most important women in my life. My mother, Turkan, my sister, Ozgur, and my partner, Crystal.

List of Acronyms

ASPI	Australian Strategic Policy Institute
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CGTN	China Global Television Network
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
ETCSA	East Turkestan Culture and Solidarity Association
ETIM	East Turkistan Islamic Movement
ETNC	East Turkestan National Congress
ETRC	Eastern Turkistan Refugee Committee
ETUE	Eastern Turkestan Union in Europe
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IJOP	Integrated Joint Operations Platform
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPE	International Political Economy
IUHRDF	International Uyghur Human Rights and Democracy Foundation
ISI	Import-substitution industrialization
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
IRB	Institutional Review Board
MSR	Maritime Silk Road
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
ROC	Republic of China
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SREB	Silk Road Economic Belt

SCIO	State Council Information Office
TAR	Tibet Autonomous Region
TIP	Turkistan Islamic Party
UNPO	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization
UHRP	Uyghur Human Rights Project
WUC	World Uyghur Congress
XUAR	Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is to make the case that China's economic development is, in part, being achieved through a contemporary form of violent internal colonization of its largest minority group, the Muslim Uyghurs. I argue that an internal colonialism lens not only best explains why the Uyghurs are not benefitting from and are actually being undermined by China's Western Development Plan, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and "vocational camps"[1] but also reveals how a globalizing China discursively constructs itself as modernizing force and the Uyghurs as a "backward" one to justify its actions against them in the name of neoliberal modernization. Not only are the Uyghur people not benefiting from China's economic boom, but they also are being dispossessed economically, politically and culturally by a globalizing China's general embrace of neoliberal development. This plan is implicated in an increase in tension with the state and state violence against the Uyghurs, whose Muslim identity puts them in a particularly precarious position in the context of the war on terror.[2] An internal colonialism lens enables me to interconnect authoritarian capitalist development with the ethnic/religious discrimination against the Uyghurs that has accelerated and morphed into what some are calling cultural genocide or outright genocide ("The Uyghur Genocide" 2021).[3] As a result of this "development" and the national security measures that have increasingly been deployed in the

[1] These camps are widely known as "internment camps" or "political re-education camps." After international backlash, China portrayed these camps as "vocational camps."
[2] In China's specific case, it is named "People's War on Terror."
[3] There is not expert consensus on genocide. Sachs and Schabas (2021) argue there is not yet sufficient evidence to confirm a genocide per international law. Cotler and Diamond (2021), on the other hand, argue that genocide is undeniable in practice. Although there were some attempts to have the ICC investigate claims of genocide, no investigation has yet been undertaken as of summer 2021 (Corder 2021).

name of the "war on terror," there is a wide range of other interrelated costs to the Uyghurs who are constructed as barriers to development and threats to security.

To explore this argument, I use an internal colonialism theoretical lens as I historically trace the treatment of this Muslim population by the Chinese state based on secondary sources; empirically determine the impacts of China's development model on the Uyghur people through analysis of policy and media documents and interviews with members of the Uyghur community outside China; and investigate resistance to various features of China's internal colonization of the Uyghurs through interviews with some Uyghur people and their political representatives outside China.

The contributions of this study are five-fold. First, it challenges positive assumptions about China's economic boom as well as common assumptions about and self-identifications of China as a non-colonizing state and as a champion of former or still colonized states and peoples. Second, it exposes not just the unevenness of Chinese development but its destructive effects on minority Muslim populations characteristic of internal colonization practices, both material and discursive. Third, it reveals China's contemporary development model deployed in Uyghur's homeland as internal colonialism rather than just a case of ethnic discrimination. Fourth, it reveals how the Chinese state justifies to itself and the international community its deployment of violence against the Uyghur by declaring their resistance as Islamic terrorism. Finally, this study fills several gaps in the internal colonialism literature: minimal attention to minority Muslim populations subjected to internal colonialism; a reluctance by a few scholars in the 1990s to characterize China as an internal colonizer, particularly of the Uyghurs; and how globalization and the war on terror have exacerbated internal colonialism in contemporary China, which has

broader implications for the human rights and fate of other, and especially Muslim, minorities elsewhere and for what this bodes concerning China's economic expansion at home and abroad.

1.2 Background on the Uyghur case

The official name of the region is the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). However, Uyghurs call it "East Turkestan" or "Uyghuristan."[4] Historically, Uyghurs have settled in the northern part of the XUAR called Tarim Basin or "Altishahr" region as it is called in the 18th and 19th centuries.[5] It is China's geographically largest province, approximately 1.6 million km^2, located in the northwest of China (see Figure 1: Map of China).[6] The location of the region is geo-strategically and economically important. It shares borders with India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Russia. As can be seen on the map, the XUAR is a gate for China to the energy resource-rich area of Central Asia. Besides its neighbors, the XUAR alone has massive energy resources, such as natural gas, coal and oil. It has China's largest coal and natural gas reserves and 20 percent of its oil reserves (Wong 2014). Besides energy resources, the XUAR also has rich mineral resources, such as iron, manganese, chromium, lead, zinc etc. (Guo and Guo 2013).

The XUAR's geostrategic location and abundant energy resources have made the region a major focus of the Great Western Development policy. For example, by 2014, state-owned businesses had invested $300 billion in the XUAR and the Chinese government had spent $130 billion on infrastructure (Wong 2014). The national government recognizes that the XUAR's energy resources will be integral to boosting the Chinese economy.

[4] For the rest of the dissertation, the region will be referred as the XUAR or Uyghurs' homeland.
[5] Altishahr means "Six Cities," namely Kashgar, Maralbeshi, Aksu, Yerkent, Yengisar, Hotan.
[6] After the Chinese invasion in 1755, the region was named Xinjiang, which means "New Dominion."

Figure 1: Map of China

Source: University of Texas Libraries

Also, because the XUAR shares borders with seven countries, its location is important for trade routes. China has been working on a project called the BRI project, which is an idea to create one continuous land route known as The Silk Road Economic Belt and one continuous maritime route, which it calls the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road. These routes connect Southeast Asia to Europe through Central Asia and the Middle East. With Urumqi, Kashgar

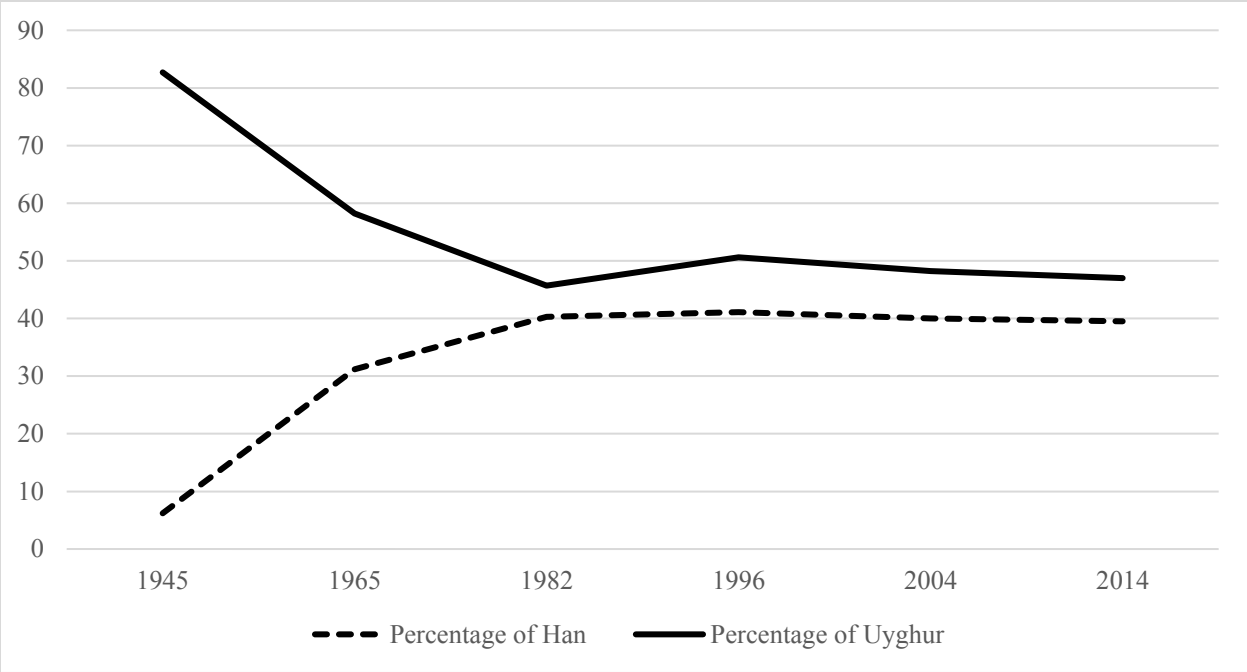
(Kashi) is an important city for China's Central Asian markets, which it hopes will be a major trading post in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

China's National Bureau of Statistics estimates that the XUAR's population is 25.2 million in 2019, making the region the third least densely populated region of China (NBS 2020). The ethnic structure of the XUAR population has changed over time due to Mao Zedong's migration policies, which were inspired by Lenin and Stalin. In 1946, the Uyghur population was the ethnic majority, having lived in the region for centuries before Chinese expansion, representing over 80 percent of the total population, while the Han community was only about 6 percent of the region's population (Primiano 2013). This proportion changed dramatically over the following decades. According to 2014 estimates, the region's population is made up of 46 percent Uyghur as compared to 40 percent Han (see Figure 2: Percentage of Uyghurs and Han in the XUAR between 1945-2014).[7] More recently, Han migration has increased, yet interestingly without any push by the Chinese state. Instead, Han are trying to escape the poverty and lack of employment in their own native regions (Mackerras 2004, 9). Due to their majority status, the Han population has the edge over the minorities in the XUAR in the job market, thus exacerbating inter-ethnic conflict in the context of economic competition. This change in ethnic structure without effective minority protection policies for the integration of the two societies has raised the level of ethnic tension in the region. Most of the Uyghur population lives in the south of the XUAR while the Han Chinese are the majority in the north. A large portion of the Uyghur community lives in rural villages as they are still largely an agricultural

[7] Others are Kazak, Hui, Kirghiz, Mongol, Xibe, Russian, Tajik, Uzbek, Tatar, Manchu and Daur. Chinese colonial treatment to other Turkic and Muslim minorities, such as Kazaks, Kirghiz and Uzbeks, are not different from its treatment of Uyghurs. In this dissertation "Uyghurs" includes these other Turkic and Muslim groups.

people while Han Chinese tend to live in the cities. In fact, there are almost no Han Chinese in the villages located in the south of the XUAR.

Figure 2: Percentage of Uyghurs and Han in the XUAR between 1945-2014



Source: NBS and Howell and Fan (2011).

Uyghurs' identity is different from Han identity on many levels. Uyghurs are a Turkic ethnic group and their language is a member of the Turkic language family while the Chinese language is a Sino-Tibetan language. This means that while Turks in Anatolia, which is thousands of miles away from China, can communicate with a Uyghur, Han and Uyghurs have difficulties communicating with one another. Their languages are mutually exclusive. Another difference between the two societies is concerning religion. While the Chinese state remains secular and even atheist as still ostensibly Communist, with the Han following suit for the most part, most of the Uyghur population are followers of the religion of Islam. Disentangling religious identity from ethnic identity is not an easy task in the Uyghur case. Threats and oppression by the Chinese government to Uyghur identity has made Uyghurs protective of both

their ethnic and religious identities and has caused the two identities to become intertwined. This extends to the melding of traditional Uyghur dress with elements of modest Muslim attire, including the wearing of headscarves and long dresses for women and the preference for beards among men. Both traditional and Muslim cultures maintain a strong separation between public and private, in which women are assigned to the latter sphere. Uyghur mosques are also integral to Uyghur historic sites and daily Islamic practices also serve to maintain a distinct Uyghur Muslim culture.

Unfortunately, there is not much research that looks into the level of inter-ethnic relations between Uyghurs and Han. Yee (2003) conducted a survey over a decade ago in Urumqi, based on Gordon's (1964) seven variables for examining ethnic relations: culture, social interaction, intermarriage, ethnic identity, prejudice, discrimination and power distribution. Results indicate that the level of integration between the two ethnic groups is low, even in Urumqi, a city which Han population and Uyghurs have shared together for decades. For instance, 43.6 percent of Uyghurs and 31.7 percent of Han think of themselves are more hygienic than other ethnic groups (Yee 2003). Another example shows that 26.3 percent of Uyghurs and 36.2 percent of Han have two or fewer friends from the other group (Yee 2003). Another finding from the study is that Uyghurs are highly protective of their culture; 52.1 percent of Uyghurs and 10 percent of Han Chinese are against intermarriage between Uyghurs and Han (Yee 2003). One of the latest studies was conducted by Caprioni (2011), who, based on the interviews, finds that the social integration level between Uyghurs and Han Chinese in Urumqi is still very low.

1.3 Argument for seeing the treatment of the Uyghurs in China as a case of internal colonialism

Although there was some debate in the literature in the late 1990s between Gladney (1998) and Sautman (2000) as to whether the Uyghur region constitutes an internal colony in China or is just a case of ethnic discrimination, as findings about the further deteriorating conditions of Uyghur since the imposition of the Western Development Plan of 2000 demonstrate, I contend that internal colonization of the Uyghur community is operational and both accelerating and deepening. To make this case, I rely on theories of, and literature on, internal colonialism, to which this dissertation will contribute. Since its initial theorization, there have been a host of applications of the term. For instance, it has been used to describe the treatment of indigenous minorities in Croatia (Karlovic 1982), Finland (Alapuro 1979) and Italy (Palloni 1979) as well as native peoples in the Americas most associated with the effects of internal settler colonialism (Churchill 1993). What binds various conceptualizations of internal colonialism are understandings that it entails the economic and social subordination of a minority culture, ethnic group, or nation, by a dominant culture, ethnic group, or nation, within state borders through invoking the need to civilize "backward" minority populations to justify the exercise of material and cultural dispossession and discipline, typically to pursue economic modernization. Thus, in agreement with Gladney (1998), the only case in the literature seeking to apply internal colonization theory to China and its Muslim minority, namely the Uyghurs, I find such theorization helpful to understand the conditions of the Uyghurs.

Early theorists of internal colonialism argued that as the nation-state became an engine of development, minorities within it have become colonies (Casanova 1965). According to Casanova, capitalism is the primary factor impoverishing what are typically indigenous people,

as the system of capitalism is designed to benefit the majority ethnic group within the state. In this construction, the state takes over the residual colonial structure left by previous colonizing powers. Local elites of the majority group post-formal external colonization come to wield colonizing oppressions against indigenous groups. Although China is not a perfect example of this theoretical description by Casanova as it was not subject to an external colonial power, it nevertheless parallels the description of a state that became akin to a settler colonial state as it expanded westward, enveloping and treating an indigenous population it internalized, namely the Uyghurs who had occupied their lands for centuries before Chinese rule over them, as a colony, even as China champions itself as both an anti-colonial and a non-colonizing state.

I find all these facets (political, social, cultural, economic, and environmental) of internal colonization helpful to explain the experiences of the Uyghur in China, while adding the dimensions of China's contemporary embrace of neoliberal globalization and use of the war on terror, which are significantly contributing to China's particularly ruthless approach to what I argue is the internal colonization of a Muslim minority in the name of development and complicating Uyghur resistance to this within and outside China. To understand the human rights crisis of the Uyghurs in China as a case of internal colonialism rather than just a case of discrimination amenable to internal legal avenues for redress explains why escape from China is largely the only option for Uyghurs dispersing to the diaspora, if possible, particularly to Turkey but also elsewhere (including European countries and the US) where Uyghurs can speak out more and gain the attention and assistance of international human rights organizations. China is far from the only state that has practiced or is still practicing some form of internal colonialism, and some of the very states (especially Western states) that have decried China's treatment of the Uyghurs are themselves implicated in this (such as the US treatment of Native Americans over

time). The authoritarian nature of the Chinese state, coupled with its national and international development designs that make it imperative to extract resources from and transform the infrastructure of the Uyghur homeland and its use of anti-terrorist discourse and laws to dislodge the Uyghurs from their homeland, culture and religion, has made this one of the most egregious cases of internal colonialism in the contemporary period. While I have been studying the Uyghurs for some time throughout my graduate work, the more wholesale destruction of the Uyghur way of life in their homeland and the rise of detention or internment camps in the XUAR in 2017, to which millions of Uyghurs have been sent for months or years most recently provides compelling evidence that China is practicing internal colonialism, perhaps leading to genocide, depending on the definition adopted, legally or otherwise. This also makes this case a matter of significant international importance and a major challenge with respect to gaining observance of international human rights in China.

1.4 Methodology and assessment of evidence

After providing a literature review in Chapter 2, my dissertation asks the following questions addressed serially per chapter. In Chapter 3 I ask: How has China internally colonized the Uyghurs in the past, economically, politically, and culturally? In Chapter 4, I explore: What is the relationship between China's contemporary approach to economic development and the increase in ethnic conflict with and violent repression of the Uyghurs? How has a globalizing China's embrace of neoliberal development deepened and accelerated particular and unique forms of internal colonialization of the Uyghurs, both material and discursive? Chapter 5 asks, how has China responded domestically and internationally, particularly in relation to labeling the Uyghurs, a Muslim minority group, as terrorists to undermine their cause in the age of the war on terror? Second, what specific implications does this have for the survival of the Uyghurs and the

impunity with which a globalizing China engages in violence against ethnic minorities in pursuit of development at home and abroad? In Chapter 6 I examine what domestic and international strategies have the Uyghurs pursued to resist China's internal colonialism? To investigate these questions, I conduct an in-depth study of the historical and contemporary political, economic, and cultural relations between the Chinese state and the Uyghurs. This helps to substantiate how internal colonization has been deployed by the Chinese state since its founding and more recently in the name of its capitalist development model, characterized by aggressive resource extraction and investment strategies by the state and corporate actors that often involve various forms of dispossession and destruction in the name of modernization and growth by this ostensibly Communist state.

I use several qualitative methodologies. These include drawing on historical accounts of the Uyghurs and their relations with the developing Chinese state and economy as well as providing contemporary analyses of the Great Western Development plan, the BRI plan, and original research on the effects of this on the Uyghurs. This latter effort includes performing a discourse analysis of Chinese western development policies and official statements on them (which have been translated into English)[8] that reveal internal colonial assumptions and intentions as well as gathering and analyzing data on the material and cultural effects on Uyghurs and their resistances to these policies. Data on effects and resistances are, in part, gathered from the literature as well as international human rights, press, and Uyghur lobby group reports, and systematic social media collection, and, in part, from interviews with Uyghurs, whose language I

[8] These documents are official, meaning that their English translation was done by the Chinese government. As a non-Chinese speaking person, I cannot evaluate whether these documents differ from internally developed policies in Chinese. However, it would be interesting to compare the two sets of policies to see whether they differ. Nothing in the literature suggests that these are any differences in these English language documents compared to what is prepared for domestic audiences.

speak as a Turkish national. The group of people I interviewed is Uyghurs who have migrated or escaped from China and are now residing in Turkey. In 2011, Murat Salim Esenli, then Turkish ambassador to China, said the Uyghur population in Turkey was around 300,000, while China estimates there are 100,000 Uyghur living in Turkey ("Some Uyghurs" 2015). Since the 1960s, the Turkish governments has settled Uyghurs who arrived in Turkey in the city of Kayseri. In 2013 alone, the Turkish government resettled 1000 Uyghurs in Kayseri, making it a major site I identified for interviews of these migrants.

In March 2019, I went to Kayseri to conduct my interviews. First, I contacted the East Turkistan Culture and Solidarity Association (*Doğu Türkistan Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği*, ETCSA), which is located in Kayseri. I asked the group to spread the word about my study among Uyghurs. I was able to find 14 volunteers who accepted the invitation to contribute to my study. Unfortunately, they were all men, and I was not able to interview any Uyghur women there. The lack of women participants poses a problem for my study because there are likely to be gender differences regarding Uyghur experiences. For example, although I do not address this directly in the dissertation given the difficulties of gaining first-hand accounts, press accounts in recent years have suggested that Uyghur women may be subjected by the Chinese state to forced abortions and/or sterilization as well forced intermarriage with Han Chinese to break down the reproduction of Uyghur people and culture (Hartman 2019; Chen 2020; Halliday 2020; Enos 2020; Sato 2021). While it would be inappropriate and unethical of me as a male interviewer and outsider to seek such information from already highly vulnerable female informants in a culture that has a strong separation between public and private, with most women, particularly from or in rural areas relegated to the latter, I still hoped to speak with some Uyghur women to gain some sense of their reactions to the plight of their people. I asked the head of the women's

branch of the ETCSA if it were possible for me to interview any women. She explained that men are seeking jobs and are more easily able to talk. In contrast, women are typically in the home, taking care of the household and day-to-day chores and are generally more closed off than men. The head of the women's branch went so far as to say that she even had difficulties speaking with Uyghur women. Unless a woman is experiencing a problem, women do not speak with anyone outside of their neighborhood in general. I learned that there is a Uyghur women's appreciation ceremony in Istanbul. There were many women's branches of Uyghur organizations in attendance at this ceremony. The head of the women's branch of the ECTSA recommended I try there to interview Uyghur women. In Istanbul, I was able to interview five Uyghur women at this ceremony. As I explain in Chapter 6, my interviewees were mainly from a more middle-class background as traders in China. The Uyghur men in exile I interviewed in Kayseri were engaging in sheer economic survival activities for themselves and what families they had with them upon migration to Turkey. They had more significant daily life problems compared with the women I interviewed in Istanbul, who were more established and more public-oriented than women living in Kayseri in the sense that they could join civic organizations and participate in community and volunteer activities. The substance of these interviews informs some of my findings in Chapters 4 and 5, but some verbatim material from some of my interviews is used to highlight Uyghur reactions and resistance to China's internal colonial practices in Chapter 6. Following the Institutional Review Board (IRB) interview protocol for my research, I keep interviewees' identities anonymous.

1.5 Mapping the dissertation

Chapter 2 reviews the primary literatures that frames this study. It first outlines modernization theory, development discourses, world-system and dependency theory. It then

connects these literatures to the underlying theoretical thrust of internal colonialism as it has more recently been understood. The chapter describes how internal colonization takes form within states in a way that replicates the structures of external colonialism, which is the more typical pattern, but how China, even as it departs from this as for the most part it was not externally colonized, still displays the same internal colonialism dynamics concerning the Uyghurs. Additionally, Chapter 2 details how the Han-dominated state has developed means to suppress Uyghur culture while also enacting severe economic discrimination and exploitation of Uyghur labor, as well as dispossessed Uyghur lands and resources. Finally, the chapter concludes by highlighting Uyghur resistance against internal colonialism, taken up in more detail in Chapter 6.

Chapter 3 traces the history of the Chinese state's colonization of Uyghurs from the Qing Empire annexation of the region in 1755 until 2010, examining the political (including security), economic and cultural postures towards the Uyghur and their homeland before and since the establishment of the modern Chinese state. I find that the Chinese state and previous governments of what is now China have long engaged in colonial practices in the Uyghurs' homeland. The purpose of this chapter is to contextualize the contemporary internal colonial project bent on destroying the Uyghur community as it exists, to demonstrate that the ongoing measures taken by the Han-dominated state are not new. Although there have been periods when the state has not been as disruptive of the region, Chinese elites always debated over the "Uyghur problem" and what can be done to "resolve it." There has long been a perspective that has suggested eradicating Islam in the region to better control its inhabitants. While the chapter also details acts of political violence that the Uyghurs have engaged in when seeking independence in the 1940s and more recently in the eruption of street violence in Urumqi that did result in some

Han death and injury, this was put down summarily by Chinese security forces, also taking Uyghur lives. Violent resistance by Uyghurs is found to be understandable (although not condoned) in response to the largely steady assaults on Uyghur lives and ways of life.

Chapter 4 details the Chinese state's approach to economic and cultural policies in the XUAR over the past decade that deepen and accelerate processes of internal colonialism. I suggest that China uses the justification of economic growth and its concept of "peaceful development" to erode the cultural and religious practices of the Uyghurs. This chapter provides an extensive discussion of a succession of cultural policies employed by the Chinese government, ranging from the displacement of the Uyghur language in favor of Mandarin Chinese and the teaching of Chinese nationalism in education, the removal of Uyghur children from their families to be raised by Han Chinese, the disapprobation of Uyghur attire and facial hair, and the so-called "re-education" or "vocational" (or forced labor) camps, specifically in terms of their use to advance China's economic development in an attempt to routinize Uyghurs to industrial labor and abandon their religious beliefs and cultural practices.

Chapter 5 examines Chinese security policies in the XUAR over the last decade under the pretext of ensuring national security and assisting in the global war on terror to justify to the international community its dehumanization of Uyghurs under what is now a thoroughgoing colonization of the Uyghur community. Discourses by the state suggest that Uyghurs are inherently backward and dangerous and only through state intervention, including through broad and vague anti-terrorist legislation targeted almost exclusively at Uyghurs for common cultural and religious behaviors well beyond any violent acts, can China ensure its national security. In particular, this chapter analyzes the "extremification" regulations developed by the state that depict Islamic practices as signs of potential or actual terrorist activity. I find that this web of

legal and security enforcement measures makes it close to impossible for Uyghurs to observe their cultural and religious practices without being subject to charges of terrorism.

Chapter 6 discusses Uyghur resistance to China's recent actions that are deepening internal colonialist processes, most notably with the rise of internment camps. Given that escape from China is one of the only options now for Uyghurs suffering under even more enhanced repression, the basis for this chapter are interviews I conducted with Uyghur exiles while doing my fieldwork in Turkey. Additionally, this chapter discusses how Uyghurs use new media and technology for their cause against China's incursions against their community. The third component of this chapter is a discussion of the Uyghur lobby organizations that lie outside of China, and some of which China has also labeled as terrorist organizations, and advocate for the community's rights. I find through this examination that Uyghur exiles are now more willing to speak about their plight to international human rights organizations, the press, and researchers as the incarceration and disappearance of their loved ones back in China is so widespread that there is little left to lose by speaking out. I also find that there have been some successes arising from Uyghurs speaking out, international human rights organizations taking up their cause, and the work of Uyghur lobbies, including Western nations no longer willing to classify, as China does, any Uyghur lobbies as terrorist organizations and their willingness to classify what China is doing to the Uyghurs as genocide.

Finally, in my concluding chapter (Chapter 7), I review my arguments and findings that make the case that China is engaging in internal colonization of the Uyghurs and thus deserves the disapprobation of the international community, which also has an obligation to support the Uyghurs' resistance to this and their human rights. While the uptake of the Uyghur cause more internationally and particularly by Western states (some of which are not innocent of internal

colonialism either) can also be read more cynically in the context of great power politics and contestations over the rise of China on the world economic and political stage, I note that this should not overshadow the actual plight of the Uyghurs at the hands of the Chinese state, the reputation of which is being tarnished by its actions against the Uyghurs. While it remains a conundrum how to hold China accountable for these egregious human rights violations and, thus, how to end them, the fact that its actions have been exposed on the world stage (by Uyghur, human rights organization, press, and academic accounts coupled with remote-sensing data that confirms the existence of massive and numerous detention camps) does conflict with China's narratives, which are no longer accepted nor seen as acceptable. This opens the way for future research I intend to conduct in Turkey, to which I will be returning to learn more about the status, lives, and advocacy work of Uyghurs in exile there.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

How is China a case of internal colonialism? In this chapter, I review the literature on the development of the concept of internal colonialism largely promulgated in the 1960s and its applications and reworkings since then. Following the work of Blauner (1969), Hechter (1975) and Gladney (1998-1999), I have determined that internal colonialism is best conceptualized as an extension of world-system theory and, thus, provide a review of world-system theories and dependency theories that preceded them. I begin by laying out the structure of the world economy that world-system theory posits, namely the formations of core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral states, the foundations laid by early capitalism during the period of formal colonization. The economy's structure began taking modern shape with the drive towards modernizing development, particularly in the wake of the near completion of formal decolonization post-WW II. I then consider an array of works on internal colonialism emerging, especially in the 1970s, which develop typologies of what constitutes internal colonialism. This phenomenon has lived on despite formal decolonization that resulted in nation-states independent from external/foreign rule. I focus on the conditions and treatment of racial, ethnic, and/or cultural minorities or indigenous nations within largely Western states as examples of it. This lays the basis for arguing that China's treatment of the Uyghurs is a case of internal colonialism, particularly visible now with its increasingly ruthless suppression of Uyghur culture, severe economic discrimination and exploitation of Uyghur labor, and stepped-up dispossession of Uyghur lands and resources as China pursues its massive development of the XUAR. This is so despite China's historical claims to be anti-colonial based on its socialist/global South/non-aligned past. However, the violently enforced peripheralization of the

Uyghurs across all these dimensions by the core of the Chinese state and its Han majority has not been without resistance. Thus, I also review the literature on resistance in the context of internal colonialism. Given that colonizing repression is more easily carried out by a state internally and China has done this in such a totalizing way and with relative impunity, the greatest resistance comes from Uyghur leaders in exile in the diaspora. I cover the forms of resistance that Uyghur leaders in the diaspora have engaged in to lobby IGOs and states to act against this repression and/or seek Uyghur independence from China. This entails both organizational and digital resistance, the latter enabling more Uyghurs outside China to voice their plight and their need for rights.

In the critical international political economy literature, world-system and dependency theory stress how economic exploitation is apparent in the global economy. Yet global inequality is also tied to notions of being "civilized" and "advanced" (Mehta 1999). For example, modernization theory is riddled with an ethnocentrism that assumes a universality and a singular, linear path to modern life rooted in Anglo-American history and culture (Rudolph 2005). In following this, formerly colonized countries carried out colonialism within their borders, engaging in discourses around nation-building and development that relied on modernization to justify the seizure of land from ordinary, often marginalized, people, to create the accoutrements of development, including pricey dams, fancy tourist destinations, modern highways, industrial factories and military zones. Such capitalist penetration in the name of modernity often entangled indigenous and other populations, who endured a form of colonialism in which the state colonized its own citizens, forcing "indigenous peoples/nations consequently [to] become colonized entities within a given national territory rather than subject to more classic form of colonization from abroad" (Churchill 1993, 25). While some scholars have recognized the logic

of internal colonialism, which divvied up populations into core and peripheral spaces within the state, many leaders of peripheral and semi-peripheral countries did not, uncritically embracing modernity and economic reforms, which came at the expense of certain modes of living (Frank 1969; Scott 1989). The terms core, semi-periphery and periphery describe the current international system, which is a result of European colonial expansion. These divisions of labor between core, periphery and semi-periphery countries produce interlocking and hierarchical chains in which core states control the capital, while the periphery and semi-periphery countries provide mainly raw goods and fewer high-end manufactured goods.

The concept of internal colonialism, arising theoretically and discursively in the 1960s and commonly circulated in the 1970s, emphasizes the economic and social subordination of a minority culture, ethnic group or nation by a dominant culture, ethnic group or nation, and "explain[s] the movement of colonial capitalism from the international to the national level" as part of the world-system theory (Martins 2018). The world-systems theory views global capital as divided into economic exploiter and exploited states in the international system, the result of colonialism and continued imperialism (Wallerstein 1974). Internal colonialism builds on this, understanding that the pattern occurs within states where social groups exploit and are exploited, in pursuit of global capitalism. Internal colonialism works to understand how colonialism promotes "moral hierarchies" that construct internalized inferiorities among populations (Martins 2018).

While various conceptualizations of internal colonialism exist, what binds them together is the recognition of economic and social subordination of a minority culture, ethnic group or nation, by a dominant culture, ethnic group or nation, within state borders. It most often occurs through invoking the need to civilize "backward" minority populations that justify material and

cultural dispossession and discipline, typically to pursue economic modernization. Internal colonialism is still commonly experienced in the contemporary world.

I argue that theories of internal colonialism, by connecting the economic impact of development with its cultural, social, political, and environmental impacts specifically on indigenous peoples and/or minorities, provide the best lenses for understanding why and how the Uyghurs are being rendered expendable by the Chinese state in its drive to exploit resources on their land and modernize the economy in the XUAR.[9] Central to this drive to modernity is the construction of the Uyghurs as backward and needful of development and ultimate assimilation or disappearance—a typical colonial construction of indigenous peoples. Resistance to this is not tolerated under China's authoritarian capitalist development model, and its extreme treatment of the Uyghurs has ranged from detaining hundreds of thousands of them behind barbed wire in "re-education" camps and surveilling their bodies and movements through enforced DNA testing and GPS tracking and the erection of checkpoints to prohibitions on observing Islamic dress and customs, the relocation of Uyghur children to other parts of China, and the destruction of ancient Uyghur buildings in the name of secularization (Millward 2018). These suppressions are in addition to the hundreds killed by state forces and ethnic conflicts and the thousands forced into exile.

Internal colonialism derives from critiques of development, most notably modernization theory, and particularly through the continuation of world-system theory, which critiques mainstream development assumptions. The genealogy of internal colonialism lies in the theoretical insights of world-system theory. Therefore, I begin by overviewing development,

[9] The Uyghurs are a religious, ethnic, cultural minority group within China, but also one that occupied territory for centuries prior to Chinese rule, thus, making them akin in some ways to indigenous peoples.

modernization and world-system theory not because these will be components of this study but because they are the roots of internal colonialism, which is the focus of this study.

2.2 Development, modernization and world-system theory

Modernization theory, which emerged in the mid-20th century, idealizes the development of European countries and the concept of progress, with progress understood as modernity. Although this makes the definition of modernization theory circular, it has not slowed its adherents who promote modernization as a foregone process of "improvement" associated with capitalism, technology and rationality that all countries must eventually go through. It is believed that through the implementation of the linked notions of capitalism, technology, and rationalism that a country will achieve both a democratic political culture and economic development. Moreover, modernization theory presumes no alternative paths to, and no alternative definitions of, "progress" (Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart and Welzel 2009; Rudolph 2005). This linear understanding and lack of historical, cultural, economic, and political contextualization is exemplified in W. W. Rostow (1960), who outlines five stages in *The Stages of Economic Growth*: traditional society, preconditions for take-off, take-off, maturity and, high mass consumption. To him, all countries are in different stages and will jump to the next stage in different times. However, once a country enters the last stage, supposedly, mass consumption and capitalism will provide for the needs of all citizens, who will be able to lead happy and fulfilled lives thanks to all their consumption (Rostow 1960). Rostow's five stages are oriented in a progressive fashion to the end goal of mass consumption, which can only be gained by adopting capitalism and technology (Rostow 1960).

Dependency and world-systems critics of capitalist economic development as modernization (Foster-Carter 1973; Frank 1967; Wallerstein 1987) have long identified how this

has structurally widened class inequalities within and among states. Contemporary critics of neoliberal development and globalization (see, for example, Sassen 2014; Harvey 2003 and 2005; Fatton 2014) have revealed the extent to which the global capitalist economy is not just further widening economic inequalities but also dispossessing and expelling (through austerity, incarceration, displacement, chronic unemployment, and the like) rather than incorporating workers and peoples under financial capitalism and its crises while appropriating and laying waste to land for extractive purposes.

Critical theorists working in world-system theory and dependency theory also question modernization's pillars of faith, particularly its trust in capitalism as well as Rostow's one-size-fits-all stages of development that rest in the notion that some states have yet to integrate into global capitalism. What critical International Political Economy (IPE) theorists in world-system and dependency theory instead see is a system that has forced all states to become "integrated, exploited and essential parts of the larger [global capitalist] system" (Chase-Dunn 1982). Immanuel Wallerstein's *The Modern System* (1974) contests the state as the appropriate unit of analysis in development studies, which Rostow's stages of economic growth notably takes as its starting point. Wallerstein argues that economic development can only be understood from the systems level—the modern world economy—which he takes as the best unit of analysis to understand development. The current international system derived from European colonial expansion and resulted in three main divisions of labor: the core, semi-periphery and periphery. Wallerstein explains that the economic interactions between core, periphery and semi-periphery countries are defined by interlocking economic and hierarchical chains that bind them together. Rich core states control the capital, import raw materials from the periphery and semi-periphery countries and export manufactured goods to them. In turn, semi-periphery countries import raw

materials from peripheral economies and manufactured goods from core ones and export semi-manufactured goods to others core countries for finishing the process. Periphery countries, the lowest in the hierarchy, remain dependent on raw commodities export and on the core and semi-periphery for development inputs. In the Cold War, core countries were understood to be capitalist countries aligned with the US against the Soviet Union. Semi-periphery countries included Soviet countries and Latin American countries. Finally, periphery countries included those still colonized or recently decolonized in Asia and Africa. Many in the latter once decolonized galvanized as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to avoid having to take sides in the US-Soviet Cold War, seeking a "third way." Over time, this association led these countries to be known as the Third World.

Wallerstein's core, periphery and semi-periphery conceptualizations derive from previous work by dependency theorists. These scholars contested arguments made by those such as Rostow (1960), who see only one (capitalist) path to modernization. Andre Gunder Frank (1969) argues that Rostow's stages of economic growth have no basis in empirical evidence. In looking at how core countries developed, this was only possible through processes of mercantilism and colonialism, which stand in stark contrast to the free marketism and foreign direct investment that has been suggested as the path to modernization since World War II. Furthermore, Frank stresses the structural differences in the global economy in the post-World War II era (when semi-periphery and periphery countries were first being told by Bretton Woods institutions such as the World Bank and The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). These formed in the post-WWII period to govern international development and finance as well as the development agencies of core countries to adopt free marketism and foreign direct investment) versus the conditions that core countries industrialized under, which permitted the mercantilist

and colonialist practices of empires. There could not be a single path to global capitalism even if that were deemed a useful goal. Even non-critical theory economists such as Raúl Prebisch (1950), involved in the UN Economic Commission for Latin America, suggested that periphery countries could not follow in the footsteps of the core countries by adopting the free trade practices that core states today use to end up with similar economies. This is because the economies of periphery countries are rooted in raw materials, which is a result of colonial practices of core countries. No matter how export-focused periphery countries are, their comparative advantage is typically low return. Following mainstream capitalism's comparative advantage thesis—which is the basis of capitalism—will not likely lead to modern economies in periphery countries.

Although critiques of modernization theory were united by a pursuit for greater equality in the international system, there was no single understanding of capitalism or what alternative to development should be taken. Some sought to overthrow capitalism, while others were more reformist in approach. There were also debates about whether to blame inequalities in the international system on colonialism and neocolonial practices of the West or if local elites shared blame as well. For Frank (1969), it was the international order that was to blame. Unlike other theorists, Frank viewed the semi-periphery and periphery as sharing uniform exploitation by core countries. Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Chilean sociologist Enzo Faletto (1979), however, stressed the role of local elites in periphery countries, showing that depending on local elites' behavior, there could be greater or lesser exploitation. Giovanni Arrighi and John Saul (1973) likewise pointed to the role of state bureaucrats in development processes, especially how these local elites benefitted from consumer imports while ordinary people were hurt by imports.

Christopher Chase-Dunn (1982) believed that focusing on local (national) factors could encourage semi-periphery countries to exploit worse-off periphery countries, which would expand global capitalism. For Chase-Dunn, a global socialism that promoted class struggle across national borders was needed to overturn capitalism to ensure equality. Conversely, the economist Prebisch (1950) sought to retain capitalism when he promoted import-substitution industrialization (ISI) policies. ISI sought trade policies that protected domestic production and tried to limit foreign imports, which hurt domestic production. Although Prebisch wanted greater equality in the global system, this did not entail the end of capitalism from his perspective.

There were also differences in approaches, given the geographic area that critical theorists were working in. Latin America had industrialized more than other areas of the global South, which frequently retained agricultural economies. Despite the recognition of many leaders in agricultural economies that foreign direct investment by core countries was tantamount to neocolonial exploitation, they nevertheless determined it was necessary for economic development based on Rostow's stages of development (Arrighi and Saul 1973). Giovanni Arrighi and John Saul (1973) who worked in Africa, promoted instead African "self-reliance" given global capitalism's low valuation for raw materials as well as the exploitation by the West to extract mineral resources. While many African countries are rich in mineral resources, to extract these materials, multi-national corporations have had the better end of the stick than locals. For instance, during Latin America's debt crises, "between 1980 and 1988 the real prices of the South's commodity exports declined by some 40 per cent… And as the London Interbank Offering Rate (LIBOR) for Eurodollars shot up from less than 11 per cent in mid-1977 to over 20 per cent in early 1981, payments to service debts soared" (Arrighi 2010, 334). Mainstream economists, including those within global financial institutions, such as the International

Monetary Fund (IMF), blamed Latin American governments for backward domestic policy, especially "fiscal expansion and exchange rate overvaluation," as the cause of the debt crisis (Pastor 1989, 82). However, the critical Left perspective argued that Latin American governments had obligingly opened to foreign direct investment and gave into the unrestrained borrowing pushed by global financial intergovernmental institutions in the 1970s. Such borrowing was cut off by these same institutions in the 1980s in reaction to falling oil prices and growing global South government debt as raw commodity prices fell. As Latin American countries accumulated intense debt, governments had no choice but to accept the so-called structural readjustment programs forced on them by the IMF. It was so bad that "even countries adopting orthodox programs have found it difficult to obtain significant net capital flows" (Pastor 1989, 82). While in the 1970s global financial bankers were "begging Third World states to borrow their overabundant capital," following the 1980s debt crisis, global South countries found themselves desperately seeking out "credit needed to stay afloat in an increasingly integrated, competitive, and shrinking world market" from these same global financial institutions (Arrighi 2010, 334).[10] Over the 1980s, the IMF pushed governments in the global South to slash spending as a way of "earning" the chance to reschedule loan repayments. While a global financial depression was avoided through this method, it was the global South that paid the price. For example, "Latin American growth rates and living standards have fallen dramatically" (Pastor 1989, 79).

To sum up this section, I have highlighted the major concepts and arguments from development, world-system and modernization theory that link to internal colonialism. Specifically, the most relevant points that link to this project are noting how global capitalism

[10] For more information, see Kamisnky and Pereira (1996).

widens economic inequalities among people and dispossess and expels individuals in the name of development and modernization. In the next section, I demonstrate how these principles operate within the state through processes of internal colonialism.

2.3 Internal colonialism

After European colonialism was largely dismantled by the mid-20th century, many newly independent states had been established in Asia and Africa. Although decolonization from European rule was successful, for early internal colonialism theorists, colonialism did not end in these newly independent states. Different from postcolonial theorists who have also long argued that external colonialism and its legacies have continued, early theorists of internal colonialism assert that, contrary to the still-dominant understanding of colonialism at the time of formal decolonization, colonization does not occur only at the hands of an external actor often from overseas. Rather, as the nation-state became an engine of development, the minorities (typically racial/racialized) within the state became its colonies (Casanova 1965). There are different definitions, usages, and applications of the term internal colonialism. For instance, Robert Blauner (1969) uses the concept to describe the conditions of African Americans in the US, thus heralding its use most often in cases outside the global South. Michael Hechter (1975) examines the development policies of the UK and their effects on Celtic peoples as an example of his conceptualization of internal colonialism. Internal colonialism has also been applied to cases of racial, ethnic, or indigenous minorities in such countries as Croatia (Karlovic 1982), Finland (Alapuro 1979) and Italy (Palloni 1979).

Although there are different usages of the term, there are two common arguments. First, internal colonialism occurs through domestic economic and social structures. Second, it emerges between two different cultures, usually ethnic groups or nations within state borders. There are

different sets of definitions, in which some are used to highlight class relations and some others ethnic divisions. However, given my focus on the Uyghurs in China, as a country that has moved from peripheral to core status while also spanning in a short time global South and North positionings and identities as a communist-ruled yet capitalist state, it is essential to capture how class and ethnicity are intertwined and contemporary modernization processes involve not only labor exploitation and cultural suppression, but also significant resource dispossession and extraction. Thus, it is most productive for my purposes to see the process of internal colonialism in a more thoroughgoing way, such as that described in *The Ecologist* (1992) which emphasizes how internal colonization within global South/developing states materially dispossess internally colonized peoples of their lands and resources. However, in the case of China and its development, such dispossession of the Uyghurs is an advantage to the Han Chinese. The centralized state is now a linchpin of the global economy rather than the North (most often understood as the West) invoked here:

> Using the slogans of 'nation-building' and 'development' to justify their actions, Third World governments have employed the full panoply of powers established under colonial rule to further dismantle the commons. Millions have lost their homelands—or the land they made their home—to make way for dams, industrial plants, mines, military security zones, waste dumps, plantations, tourist resorts, motorways, urban redevelopment and other schemes designed to transform the South into an appendage of the North. Deals have been made with Northern interests in return for aid and military protection; debts incurred to build projects that line the pockets of local commercial interests but which drive millions into poverty; multinational companies offered land, cheap labour and tax breaks at the expense of workers, peasants and the environment; subsides handed out to richer farmers; industries allowed to pollute; and national economies tied more tightly than ever to the interests of global economies. (The Ecologist 1992, 139)

Casanova (1965) argues that the main cause for the poverty of indigenous people is capitalist relations, which have been designed to benefit the majority ethnic group. One of the main components of Casanova's framework is the colonial structure left by the colonizing states and inherited in the ex-colonies. He states that "with the disappearance of the direct domination

of foreigners over natives, the notion of domination and exploitation of natives by natives emerges" (Casanova 1965, 27). When formal decolonization occurred, these structures did not disappear but instead were taken over by the majority ethnic group to use against indigenous and minority groups. While China imperfectly fits this mold given that it was not colonized at the time of its western region expansion, its treatment of the Uyghur community is akin to colonizing moves despite its self-identity as an anti-colonial and non-colonizing state.

Blauner's (1969, 396) oft-cited internal colonialism framework derived from his study of African Americans in the US entails four main components that are consistent with the Chinese approach to the Uyghurs:

- "forced, involuntary entry" into the dominant society
- policies applied by the colonizing power that "constrains, transforms, or destroys indigenous values, orientations, and ways of life"
- "colonization involves a relationship by which members of the colonized group tend to be administered by representatives of the dominant power"
- Racism.

Outside of Black studies, Blauner's conceptualization is also helpful to understand the connections between the "war on terror" and internal colonization. Turner (2017), who uses Black studies literature on internal colonialism, for instance, examines the UK's counterinsurgency policies, the "Prevent programme" specifically, in which university lecturers, teachers, community workers and religious leaders are legally obligated to report any "suspicious" behavior. As noted earlier, such a program works to make Muslim minorities, in this case in the UK, "suspect, abject and 'unworthy'" (Turner 2017, 2).

Hechter (1975) uses internal colonialism to explain rising sub-nationalism. He argues that to understand the nationalism among groups in the periphery within a state, such as the Celts in Ireland, Scotland and Wales, we need to conceptualize this region through internal colonialism. Briefly, he argues:

> The spatially uneven wave of modernization over state territory creates relatively advanced and less advanced groups. As a consequence of this initial fortuitous advantage, there is crystallization of the unequal distribution of resources and power between the two groups. The superordinate group, or core, seeks to stabilize and monopolize the advantages through policies aiming at the initialization of the existing stratification system. It attempts to regulate the allocation of social roles such that those roles commonly defined as having high prestige are reserved for its members. Conversely, individuals from the less advanced group are denied access to those roles. This stratification system, which may be termed a cultural division of labor, contributes to the development of distinctive ethnic identification in the two groups. (9)

Specifically, it was cultural divisions of labor that may have led to the construction of ethnic identities through the contrasts made between the core urban cities, in which power was concentrated, and the deprived periphery of the rural areas, which became defined as marginalized by not just their distance from the power center, but also ethnically.

Added to these are Churchill's (1993) characterization of indigenous peoples in North America as an internal colony and observations about the relationship between economic modernization and the material destruction of the lands of indigenous peoples (*The Ecologist* 1992) that is also characteristic of internal colonization in what is termed "settler colonial" states, in which, in the case of the Americas, involved the migration of European settlers who expropriated the lands used indigenous peoples. In the broadest sense, migration is linked to colonialism, given that there can be no colonialism without migration of some sort. Colonialism is linked with conquest, done by an outsider party (Blauner 1969). In the literature on internal colonialism, migration has not been extensively examined as other considerations have garnered

greater theoretical attention. However, there is no question that migration by the in-group to minority areas constitutes a method of internal colonialism. Settler colonialism – a close variation of internal colonialism – focuses on migration as a significant theoretical consideration. In the last couple of years, there has been discussion of the XUAR as an example of settler colonialism (Clarke 2021).

What is notable about the case in the XUAR, which takes place in the 21st century, is the role of technology, which first, impacts the logics of internal colonialism differently than in the past—such as in the 19th and 20th centuries—in terms of internal colonialism, in, for example, the case of the Americas, and secondly, influences the forms of resistance to internal colonialism, which has more avenues in the 21st century compared to the past given digital activism and other online spaces. Surveillance in internal colonialism is far deeper reaching today given advancements in 21st century technology, such as with CCTV cameras that apply facial recognition technology, the tracking of mobile phones and social media, and listening in on Uyghurs' conversations in the case of China. Uyghurs' movements are tracked by checkpoints and through the use of cameras, as well as other forms of tracking software, which documents when a Uyghur visits a gas station, makes a financial transaction or uploads anything to social media (HRW 2019; Millward and Peterson 2020). Moreover, there are required medical examinations and state IDs, which require face scans as well as use "voice-print and gait-print" data (Millward and Peterson 2020, 5). While many indigenous populations were forced onto reservations in the 19th and 20th centuries in the Americas, which limited their movement and agency, the ability of the Chinese government to monitor Uyghurs' every move is only possible due to technologies of the 21st century. Yet, this same technology provides greater avenues of resistance to populations undergoing internal colonialism. This is especially so for those who are

part of the diaspora, living outside of China, who can fully use the networking capabilities of social media. The ease of the transnational connections in the 21st century compared to the past are substantial, as is the ease of travel to flee spaces such as the XUAR, to become a part of the diaspora. In the next section, I turn to the issue of resistance, where the role of technology is further discussed.

To sum up, although China was not colonized when it expanded into the Uyghurs' lands as part of its western expansion, the Han-dominated state's policies toward the Uyghurs can be best understood as a form of internal colonialism as outlined in the previous examples in which states not subject to past colonial rule nevertheless engage in colonizing practices against indigenous and/or minority populations within their borders. The Uyghurs are a minority group present in their region long before Chinese rule that has been systematically oppressed by the majority ethnic group that controls the state, which seeks to do away with their societal practices as well as exploit them and their lands economically for the benefit of the Han majority.

2.4 Internal colonialism and China

The Uyghur "problem" in China was initially viewed as a case of internal colonialism in the late 1990s. In his *Whither the Uighur* (1998-1999), Gladney argued that much of the foregoing features of internal colonialism are in play. Sautman (2000), however, challenged this primarily by arguing that China "has provided huge budget subventions for Xinjiang" (261) even though he admits that "Xinjiang's economy is mainly based on primary products, its Han are more likely than minorities to have high-status occupations and its rural areas are poorer than in China as a whole," so "its relationship to the centre seems colonial" (260). Almost two decades later and in light of vastly increased development and repression, the case of the Uyghurs in

China puts into sharp relief internal colonial mechanisms accelerated by the dimensions of globalization and the war on terror. These are significantly contributing to China's particularly ruthless approach to the internal colonization of a Muslim minority in the name of development, and complicating Uyghur resistance to this, both within and outside China.

In recent years, research on internal colonialism in China has revived, as China has gotten more aggressive toward minorities. In many studies, the XUAR and Tibet cases have been examined together due to the similarities between the two groups' treatment by the state, particularly in how China's policies oppress religious and ethnic minorities in these regions. Most of the time, these studies reach the same conclusions that can be applied to both regions. However, according to Chien-Peng Chung (2018), internal colonialism is measured by three aspects, specifically political domination, economic inequality and resource exploitation--and it is in the first area that distinguishes the XUAR from Tibet. Although both Uyghurs and Tibetans have been assimilated into the CCP, a greater proportion of Tibetans have entered powerful levels of the party as compared to Uyghurs (Chung 2018).

Anand (2018), on the other hand, who works on Tibet, suggests that the term internal colonialism detracts from our understanding of minorities in China and argues instead for calling both the treatment of Tibetans and Uyghurs "full-fledged modern colonialism of the kind that European powers imposed on many parts of the world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (7). Anand (2018) sees it as essential to disrupt the idea that only Western powers can be colonizers and he claims that the use of internal colonialism—which sees Tibet and the Uyghurs' homeland as part of China—legitimizes China's claims over these regions when those living in these provinces see themselves as having their own homelands. I agree that colonizing is not limited to Western powers; however, I contend that it is analytically important to

distinguish between overseas colonialism—like Europe's colonialism—and what the Chinese state is doing within its current borders. First, colonial policy is easier to carry out under internal colonialism since the state may be seen as having a more legitimate claim over these lands because they are not abroad. Second, internal colonialism alters the form of political resistance because of the state's capacity to more efficiently and cost-effectively deploy troops.

Moreover, as Martins (2018) has suggested, getting caught up on the "internal" part of internal colonialism is a "semantic trap." Martins (2018) argues that we cannot think of internal as applying strictly in the geographic sense of inside a state. Rather, internal colonialism can be/is best conceptualized as a continuation of world-system theory, further breaking down into smaller units of core, semi-periphery and periphery within the state in a manner that fuses the bourgeois at the state level to the global system. In the case of China, the core is constituted by the Han majority while there is no semi-periphery, and the Uyghurs exist on the periphery economically, culturally, politically, resource-wise, and even geographically. As Whetstone and Yilmaz (2020) have suggested, since the concept of internal colonialism is best represented as a continuation of the world-system theory, internal colonialism and global level resistance are connected.

To sum up this section, there are strong critiques of the usage of the term internal colonialism. However, I think that the analytical benefits from this conceptualization outweigh the drawbacks. Specifically, resistance against internal colonization becomes significantly more difficult to enact given the state's perceived legitimacy to tamp down whatever threats it sees within its borders, particularly in the view of the hegemonic in-group. Likewise, the state will require fewer resources to tamp down any resistance compared to overseas colonies. I now turn to the literature on resistance and Uyghur resistance specifically that informs this case.

2.5 Resistance

Through the 2000s and 2010s, Uyghurs conducted various campaigns of resistance against China's oppression. These resistances mainly took the form of demonstrations and resulted in police brutality. As I briefly overview in Chapter 3 of the dissertation, these demonstrations started not because of a goal of an independent state or establishing Sharia rule in the region, but because of an unjust and racially discriminating use of force by Chinese officials against the Uyghur community. As anthropologist Darren Byler (2015), who conducted ethnographic fieldwork in the XUAR, argues, "new Uyghur social formations were not catalyzed by ideology. Instead, resistance and refusal were motivated by acute forms of social loss and a desire for greater ontological security" (334). However, after a series of violent incidents in 2014 that prompted China's rapid increase of control in the region through colonization methods officially called "People's War on Terrorism," demonstrations by Uyghurs as well as other forms of resistance against state oppression have become impossible. Byler (2015) observed in his fieldwork that "many Uyghurs would prefer to respond to loss or the threat of loss not with reactive violent resistance but with forms of refusal to concede their autonomy. If given a chance, they would prefer to leave and try to escape the reach of the state engineering project" (335). That is what happened after China's strike hard campaign started after 2014; many Uyghurs looked for a way, legally or illegally, to flee the country, although some have become a part of the resistance against China's treatment of Uyghurs in their homeland.

Considering the incomparable material power between the Chinese state and the Uyghur community, escaping from oppression can be the only solution for Uyghurs to survive. As Scott defines in *Everyday Forms of Resistance* (1989), escaping is a form of resistance where power differences are too great between the oppressor and the oppressed. In more detail, Scott (1990) explains that the schemes of escape can also be considered "hidden transcripts" of resistance

(120). Everyday resistance is quiet, dispersed, disguised or otherwise seemingly invisible (Lilja and Vinthagen 2018, 215). Joanne Smith Finley provides many examples about the everyday resistance of Uyghurs in the 1990s in his study, *The Art of Symbolic Resistance* (2013). One of these examples is by (re)constructing stereotypes and counter-stereotypes of Uyghurs that feed into resistance against the state that creates positive views of Uyghurs and negative depictions of the Han. Uyghur stereotypes include positive attributes based on "centuries of shared daily practices, derived mainly—although not exclusively—from Islam" (Finley 2013, 81). "Counter-stereotypes in this sense became 'the rhetorical and strategic tools deployed […] in reaction to perceived stigmatisation, racism and discrimination', or a means through which to 'stigmatise the stigmatisers'" (Finley 2013, 82, quoting Lamont and Mizrachi 2012, 366; 373).

Within China, it is less clear what everyday resistance looks like since independent researchers are not permitted to conduct studies on the Uyghurs within the country. Moreover, because the state has banned so many forms of cultural and religious symbols as signs of separatism, extremism and terrorism, Uyghurs could not use these more typical forms of everyday resistance against the state. For example, having a beard—which is linked to elderly men's Uyghur identity—is constituted as an extremist threat that could entail a fine or placement in camps. Indeed, many prominent people (such as poets, singers, and academics) have been imprisoned. These kinds of individuals often play a role in collective resistance through their art and studies. For instance, Finley (2013) focused on two poets in his book, one of whom has been sentenced to 8 years because of a song he performed (WUC 2019).

Given the increased oppression and surveillance in the XUAR, this has led to the rise of resistance by the Uyghurs exiled outside of China. In recent years, this has become the strongest source of resistance to the Chinese state's treatment of the Uyghurs in their homeland. Uyghur

lobby groups consisting of Uyghur politicians and business leaders living in exile in such places as the US, Turkey and Germany have put pressure on intergovernmental organizations and some states to criticize or sanction China. Beyond this formal lobbying, developments in information and communications technologies have opened up new forms of resistances in cyberspace, creating more space for individuals, including ordinary Uyghurs living outside and inside China and their human rights allies abroad, to participate in the resistance. To put external resistance in context, it is important to understand the construction and nature of the Uyghur diaspora and its political formations. In Chapter 6, I detail my interviews with Uyghurs who have fled China and explore their resistance.

To conclude this section, in this study, I highlight everyday resistance by Uyghurs by examining how the diaspora keeps resistance going when the state has suppressed the Uyghur community to such an extent that everyday resistance is increasingly difficult. By highlighting those who are part of survivors who have fled China as well as organizations working against Chinese oppression of Uyghurs, I demonstrate the significant barriers to anti-colonial resistance in the context of internal colonialism.

2.6 Uyghur diaspora

Uyghur immigration to and from what is today Russia (formerly Tsarist Russia and then the Soviet Union) and China began under the Qing Empire, and later between Soviet Russia and Communist China, from 1881 until the 1960 Sino-Soviet split. These dispersions shaped the living areas of Uyghur populations in Central Asian countries.[11] Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan hold the greatest numbers of the Uyghur diaspora.[12] Although the Uyghur diaspora is

[11] For more information, see Clark and Kamalov (2004).
[12] For more information, see Mackerras and Clarke (2009).

the largest in Kazakhstan, Uyghur lobbies there have not made their voice heard on the international level. Apart from the Soviet-backed armed Uyghur organizations in Central Asia, one of the first significant, pro-independence and nationalist Uyghur lobby organizations, the Eastern Turkestan Refugee Committee (ETRC), was established by Isa Yusuf Alptekin and Hacı Osman Taştan in 1960, in Turkey, where few Uyghurs lived at the time.[13] After Mehmet Emin Bugra's death in 1965, Alptekin, who had Turkish citizenship, took on a symbolical leadership role for Uyghurs until his death in 1995 (Shichor 2009).[14] In addition to the ETRC, Alptekin, with some other Uyghur leaders, founded the East Turkestan Foundation (*Doğu Türkistan Vakfı*) in 1978, which was based in Istanbul. He also published journals, such as *Voice of Turkestan* (*Shärqiy Türkistan Awaz*) and attended international conferences as a representative of Uyghurs (Shichor 2009). These organizations have aimed to help Uyghur refugees, preserve Uyghur culture, and raise public awareness for Uyghur independence. Thus, Turkey was the center of Uyghur nationalist activities from the 1950s through the 1990s. It was then that the movement shifted centers due to three reasons.

- Uyghur leaders established new lobby organizations in Western countries, most significantly in Germany and the US, including the Eastern Turkestan Union in Europe (ETUE) in 1990 (Shichor 2013, 617). The first Uyghur organization in the US, The Uyghur American Association, was established and based in Washington D.C. in 1998.
- Just before the Soviet Union collapsed, Uyghurs set up cultural-educational organizations and "non-registered political organizations propagating the independence of East Turkestan" in Central Asian countries (Kamalov 2009, 127). However, these lobby

[13] Isa Yusuf Alptekin was the secretary general of the East Turkestan Islamic Republic.
[14] Mehmet or Muhammed Emin Bugra was the founder and the first president of the East Turkestan Islamic Republic.

organizations lost their effectiveness due to Chinese pressure on the Central Asian governments, especially by exercising its economic influence through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Thus, Uyghur organizations in the Western countries, where there was easy access to funding and little influence from the Chinese government, have become the main sources for the voice of Uyghurs (Han 2011).

- Third, with the death of Isa Yusuf Alptekin, who was widely embraced by Uyghurs globally, there was no one of a similar stature who could represent the global community of Uyghurs. Instead there were many exiled leaders in different countries, but none had the prestige of Alptekin to represent all Uyghurs. This situation changed when Rebiya Kadeer fled to the US and became the president of the World Uyghur Congress (WUC), where she has proven to be highly influential as "the mother" of Uyghurs. Kadeer embodies the global hope of Uyghurs for their own country and international standing along the lines of the mother of the nation who carries forward Uyghur culture (Yuval-Davis 1997).

When the Soviet Union collapsed and Turkic nations in Central Asia established independent states, Uyghur organizations launched an international organization to institute cooperation among Uyghurs in different countries. The first fruit of their effort was the Inter-Republican Organization of Uyghurs, which was founded in 1992, in Almaty, Kazakhstan but without the aim of East Turkestan independence (Kamalov 2009). However, an independence-oriented one, the Organization for the Freedom of Uyghurstan, was established the same year in Almaty. In December 1992, delegates from Central Asian republics, the Middle East, the United States, Europe and Australia attended the Eastern Turkestan World National Congress in Istanbul and decided:

> To strengthen the struggle for the self-determination of the people of Eastern Turkestan, to draft a new charter, and to set up an umbrella organization which would represent the interests of the Eastern Turkestanis living at home and abroad ("Eastern Turkestan Information Bulletin" 1992).

Attempts to create an umbrella organization succeeded with the East Turkistan National Congress (ETNC), which was established in December 1998 in Istanbul, with the participation of 18 Uyghur organizations from 13 countries (UNPO 2004).

The WUC was established in April 2004 in Munich, and Erkin Alptekin was elected as its first president in its First General Assembly. The organization became well-known in the West and increased its affiliate organizations after Rebiya Kadeer was elected as president of the WUC in the Second General Assembly, which took place in Munich in November 2006. Kadeer's presidency is significant because she is a high-profile leader who understands how to operate in elite spaces such as the UN General Assembly and meet with heads of state, including the US president. Erkin Alptekin, as an experienced, respected lobbyist, is also one of the founders and honorary presidents of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) and involved in the process of forming Uyghur lobbies in Germany. He is still giving lectures and attending lobbying conferences while becoming the chief advisor in the organization. But, what Uyghurs needed after Isa Yusuf Alptekin's death was a spiritual, high profile and well-known leader; in brief, they needed someone who could be the "Dalai Lama" of Uyghurs.

Kadeer was a successful businesswoman and politically active in China and in the XUAR. In 2000, she was jailed for "leaking government secrets" and "being in contact with separatists," including her husband living in the US. While in prison, she became famous in the West and was awarded the Rafto Memorial Human Rights Prize. Because of her good behavior in jail and the pressure human rights organizations and the US Government put on China on her behalf, she was released early for medical reasons. As soon as she arrived in the US in 2005, she

started lobbying activities. In the same year, she founded the International Uyghur Human Rights and Democracy Foundation (IUHRDF), became a president of the WUC in 2006 and served as a president of the Uyghur American Association between 2006 and 2011. She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize several times and re-elected in as the president of the WUC in 2009 and 2012. Thus, in her the WUC found a highly visible and credible spokesperson, even if not with quite the currency of Tibet's Dalai Lama.

The WUC has many affiliate organizations from 18 countries, which are the US, Germany, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Austria, Canada, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, the UK, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Finland, Japan and Australia. Even though the focus of the WUC's activities has shifted to the US, its headquarters remains in Munich. Its Third General Assembly was convened in Washington, D.C. in 2009 and the fourth one was convened in Tokyo in 2012. Although Dolkun Isa – a longtime Uyghur activist and politician – has been the president since the 6th General Assembly in 2017, Kadeer has remained as an important figure for Uyghurs' voice and even met with US policymakers.

The US had concerns regarding the "Uyghur issue" even before the WUC and Kadeer's leadership, going back to the second half of the 1990s. As part of its concerns, the US Congress has held hearings and discussed bills related to the Uyghurs, and Radio Free Asia started broadcasting in Uyghur (Han 2011). The WUC's increased effectiveness in the US is largely thanks to Kadeer and the funds that Uyghur lobbies are receiving. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED), for example, has provided about $8.7 million to Uyghur lobbies from 2004 through 2020 (NED 2020).

Another important organization is the East Turkistan Culture and Solidarity Association (ETCSA), founded in 1989, based in Kayseri, a city in central Anatolia, and one of the locations

where I conducted my fieldwork. Uyghurs in Kayseri began migrating from China in the 1960s. Their first stop was Afghanistan. However, they had to leave the country due to China's pressure on the Afghan government. Uyghur immigrants chose Turkey as a safe haven, even though the Soviet Union, the US and Saudi Arabia opened their doors for them too. Uyghur leaders in Turkey played a crucial role in this decision. The message sent by the leaders was clear: "if you want to live like a Chinese, go to Saudi Arabia. If you want to live like a Turk come to Turkey" (Gul 2007, 261). The Turkish government settled them in Kayseri in 1966. Since then, Kayseri has had the largest Uyghur population of any other city in Turkey. ETCSA's current president is Seyit Tümtürk, who was elected in 2002. The organization has offices in Ankara and Istanbul. It has published the bimonthly journal *Gökbayrak* since 1994. Through an exploration of these lobbies—and particularly their digital resistance, which opens up wider resistance by Uyghurs beyond formal lobbies —I will show how Uyghurs have been working against internal colonialism.

2.7 Conclusion

To conclude, in this chapter I connected modernization theory, development discourses, world-system and dependency theory to the underlying theoretical thrust of internal colonialism as it has more recently been understood. Internal colonialism at its most basic is a continuation of the production of core, semi-periphery and periphery divisions and relations outlined in the world-system and dependency theories, operating not only among states but within them. While these hierarchies operate within the state, they nevertheless impact the global system and are a feature of the global economy that not only divides up states into core, semi-periphery and periphery, but also populations within states in this way. Typically, the periphery is made of ethnic minorities while the hegemonic group makes up the core. I have argued that China's

Uyghur community is an example of internal colonialism given the oppression and exploitation it is undergoing at the hands of the state. Like all forms of colonialism, those undergoing internal colonialism do not simply submit. I outlined the resistance being performed by Uyghur lobbies operating outside of China to promote Uyghurs' rights. In the next chapter, I outline China's economic and social exploitation of Uyghurs' homeland from a historical perspective.

Chapter 3: History of China's Economic and Security Policies

3.1 Introduction

China has internally colonized the Uyghurs in the past, politically, economically, and culturally. In this chapter, I trace the history of the Chinese invasion and colonization of the territories and peoples of the western regions of what is now China since the Qing dynasty, with special attention to the Uyghurs in the XUAR. This history, organized by the political (including security), economic, and cultural postures towards the region and actions taken by successive Chinese rulers, explains why and how ethnic minorities, particularly the Uyghurs, have been internally colonized in various degrees. I argue that the contemporary actions of the Chinese state are not a rupture with the past but rather an acceleration of previous engagements between what is today's Uyghur community and the Han-dominated state. There is a historical trajectory which, while it has seen some periods of relaxation when Chinese rulers have left the region to itself, has mainly been defined by Chinese elites debating what could be done regarding the "Uyghur problem." A reoccurring perspective has advocated for eradicating Islam from the Uyghurs' homeland, so as to better control the region.

As this history shows, this occurred in variegated ways over time depending on how Chinese rulers constructed Chinese imperial or national interests and how ethnic minorities, and the Uyghurs particularly, were constructed by them as problems for or threats to these interests. The Uyghurs have resisted Chinese rule at various junctures. The most pronounced violence against Uyghurs in the last century has occurred in periods when assimilationist policies driven by security, economic, and/or cultural ideologies and practices have been most enforced. This was only briefly interrupted primarily under late Chinese National and early Chinese Communist Party rule. This includes the Maoist period and under the current regime. Thus, this history also

lays the basis for subsequent chapters in which I examine in more depth the contemporary treatment of the Uyghurs by the Chinese state in terms of politics and security, economics, and culture that represents perhaps the most concerted effort to complete the project of internal colonization.

China's interest in the Uyghurs' homeland in the 18th and 19th centuries was focused on security over its western borders.[15] Economically the region and all of Central Asia lost importance as the Silk Road lost prominence due to technological innovations in maritime navigations. The threat from the Dzungar Khanate, which ruled over the Uyghurs' homeland, drove the Qing Empire to annex the region (Millward 2007). In later years, the empire wanted to keep the region as a buffer zone against Russian and British expansion (Kim 2004). The economic and security importance of the region for China in the 20th century combined as energy and natural resources were discovered in the Uyghurs' homeland and neighboring countries. In the meantime, nationalism and separatism became a constant concern for China. Regardless of the ruling government, the Qing Empire, the Nationalist government or the Communist Party, the perception of "backwardness" of the people in the Uyghurs' homeland, and idea of wiping out the people or culture from the region (sometimes all Muslims in China), was always a subject of a debate or a policy for the ruling regime of what is now China (Millward 2007).

Since the 1970s, China has developed rapidly and received praise for its economic growth rates from some global South countries, international financial institutions and international development experts. Not wanting to appear threatening to the world or be charged with exploitative practices, and consistent with some aspects of Chinese culture, political ideology and self-identity, Chinese officials term their approach to economic growth as

[15] In this introduction of the chapter, I use "China" as all the states/governments established in the region, including Manchu Qing Dynasty, the Nationalist government and Communist People's Republic of China.

"peaceful development," formerly known as the "peaceful rise" concept.[16] However, the benefits of economic development have been distributed unevenly among the regions of China, especially between eastern and western China. To bring less developed regions into the fold of China's globalized route to modernization, China has implemented the Great Western Development plan, which includes the region of the XUAR, where Uyghurs are one of the minority populations. This plan has similarities with James Scott's assessment of high modernity in development in *Seeing Like a State* (1998). He argues that "the most tragic episodes of state-initiated social engineering originate in a pernicious combination of four elements," namely, administrative ordering of nature and society, high modernist ideology, an authoritarian state and a weak civil society (4-5). This chapter emphasizes that underlying China's development plan in the XUAR is the notion common to colonizing development or civilizing mission narratives that "'failed societies can be fixed only if they abandon their 'backward-looking' norms and embrace 'modernity'" (quoted in Fatton 2014, 2). This has resulted in material and cultural dispossessions of the Uyghurs and prompted greater violent resistance on the part of the Uyghurs, which has been met with brutal suppression and charges of terrorism by the Chinese state. Thus, understanding China's development model as internal colonialism also involves the distinctive ways in which globalization and the war on terror are implicated in it.

The oppression of the culture and religion of minorities has fluctuated throughout Chinese history. In some eras, complete assimilation was the aim, while at other times they were freer to embrace their culture and practice their religion. What is noticeable about these policies is that the changes between them were usually drastic and sudden. Historians tend to define less oppressive times, for instance, in the aftermath of the 1982 constitutional change, as "relatively

[16] Additionally, peaceful development or peaceful rise is also a strategy used by China to increase their power on the international level.

liberal," while the Uyghur community read these as "China's trick" to wipe out Uyghur culture and Islam.[17] One common example for this reading is the Hundred Flowers Campaign, although it is not specific to the XUAR. After the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) strengthened its position and administration throughout China, Mao encouraged citizens to criticize the government in the Hundred Flowers Campaign. However, one year later, he started the Anti-Rightist Campaign and eliminated people who took part in the Hundred Flowers Campaign and criticized the Communist Government.

To show the colonizing development and civilizing mission of China at work that resulted in the material and cultural dispossessions of the Uyghurs, I trace China's security, economic and minority policies through historical sources on the XUAR and China. First, I provide an overview of China's security policies and concerns starting from the Qing Dynasty's first military intervention into Central Asia and continue with a review of the minority revolts to Chinese rule, the rise of short-term independent states, and the spread of Uyghur nationalism in Uyghurs' homeland, ending with the CCP's security approach to the region in response to these challenges. Second, I examine the economic policies of the CCP era since, as explained above, the economic importance of the XUAR increased gradually in this period. Lastly, I give some examples of China's minority policies, again focusing on the CCP era. Although there are limited resources on the early period of the CCP, as the Party has kept its archives secret, there are still enough resources and historical accounts to understand the gist of colonial oppression in the Uyghurs' homeland under the CCP. For better navigation in this historical chapter, see Table 1 below.

[17] According to Millward (2007), the 1982 Constitution "restored much of the language devoted to minority equality, rights, customs and political and fiscal autonomy in earlier constitutions that had been dropped during the Cultural Revolution era" (59).

Table 1: Important historical events in Uyghurs' homeland (1755-1955)

Year	Event
1755	Qing Empire annexed Tarim Basin (today, northern XUAR)
1865	Yakub Beg established an independent state in Tarim Basin
1877	Second annexation by Qing Empire (Zuo Zongtangand and Liu Jin-tang)
1933	Sheng Shicai ruling
1933-34	East Turkestan Islamic Republic (only Kashgar area)
1944-49	East Turkestan Republic (located in the westernmost part of China and collapsed just 19 days before Communist China forces proclaimed victory in Beijing)
1949	The CCP took control of the region
1955	Region administration system changed; Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region established.

3.2 Historical analysis of China's security policies

Before the Qing empire annexed the region today called the XUAR in 1755, it was under the control of the Dzungar Khanate, which was the last powerful nomadic empire. The Khanate was a confederation of Buddhist Mongolian tribes and was established in the north of the Tian Shan. They rapidly expanded their territory by conquering the Tarim Basin in the early 1700s (Millward 2007). As the only remaining strong power, the Dzungars posed a threat to western China and the Qing empire's interest over Tibet. Relations between them were almost constant war, especially over East Turkestan and Tibet. With the help of the region's geography, which was suitable for nomadic warfare tactics, the Dzungar threat remained until 1755 (Millward 2007). Due to disputes over leadership within the Khanate and with the help of new allies in the

region, the Qing empire marched into the Dzungaria and conquered the region and exterminated the Dzungarian people. After that, the Qing armies occupied Tarim Basin, too. According to Millward, the Emperor "repeatedly urged his reluctant generals to exterminate all the Zunghar" men and enslave the rest (2007, 95). As Perdue states, with this genocide, China reached a "final solution" in the frontier (Perdue 2005, 282-7). However, this "solution" lasted less than a century until the Dungan[18] or Hui revolt in 1862. Until that time, the empire relied on local leaders (*beg*)[19], Muslim elites (*ulama*) and elders (*aksakal*)[20] to govern the region. Because of this administration system, Millward (2007) points out that while some historians argue that East Turkestan became a vassal state, he suggests that the region became part of the empire in this era. But Millward (2007) also claims that the Qing Empire's influence in the region between 1755 and 1862 was minimal (Millward 2007). Most of the time, the Qing Empire kept small garrisons to prevent revolts in Altisharh with a headquarter in Dzungaria.[21]

In the 19th century, the Qing Empire started to decline due to natural disasters, famines, devastating losses to European colonial powers, religious (Christian) interference and the nationalist Taiping Rebellion,[22] which put the Qing Empire in a difficult position. In these years, conflict between Hui and Han populations became constant, which resulted in an uprising against the empire in the western regions.[23] Due to the focus of this dissertation, I will not go into great

[18] According to Karpat, "the term derives from *dungen*, *dongen-donme* in modern Turkish, that is, converted to Islam" (Karpat 1991, 19). Hui people are ethnically similar to the Han Chinese, but they are a religious minority group. The majority of the Hui population follows Islam. Although Uyghurs and Huis are both Muslim societies, they have had conflictual relations throughout history.
[19] Beg means noble, ruler or general in Turkish. According to Millward (2007) there were about 300 begs in the region at the time (101). For more information about the administration/ruling system, see Newby (1998).
[20] This term means white beard.
[21] For example, Jahangar Khoja Revolts, see Newby (2005).
[22] The Taiping Rebellion or Taiping Heavenly Kingdom rebellion, led by Hong Xiuquan, who believes himself to be Jesus Christ's brother, occurred between 1850-1964 in southern China. For more information, see Heath and Perry (1994).
[23] For more information, see Lipman (1997), Kim (2004) and Dillon (1999).

detail regarding the revolt, but it is important to understand how the Qing dynasty handled the situation. Marshall Broomhall (1910, 55), a Protestant Christian missionary to China in the early 20th century, wrote in his book *Islam in China*:

> Colonel Bell affirms that the population of [G]ansu was reduced from 15,000,000 to 1,000,000, and that nine out of ten Chinese were supposed to have been killed, and two out of every three Mohammedans. These figures may be somewhat overstated, but in an extended journey through the province he states that "all the villages and farmsteads for miles and miles in all direction were in ruins, and huge cultivable hills were for the most part deserted (quoted in Dillon 2013, 60).

In the further west, many *begs* established their own local rulers in the cities. But Yakub Beg, famous in the region due to his military accomplishments against Russians, was sent by Kokand Khanate[24] to Kashgar to help their allies in 1865. Yakub Beg is known as a hero among Uyghurs today. In one of my visits to a Uyghur organization in Turkey, I saw his picture on the wall that described him as a martyr. He consolidated his power in the city and soon after captured many major cities in East Turkestan and some begs submitted to him.[25] Yakub Beg established an independent state and signed trade agreements with Russia and British India to strengthen his position. His request to be recognized as the legitimate ruler of the region by the Ottoman Caliph Sultan was accepted and the Sultan gave him the title, *Amir*, which was respected by Muslims in the region (Karpat 1991).

From a security perspective, the Taiping Rebellion from1850 to 1864 was a more imminent threat for the Qing empire, and therefore securing the southeast region became a priority. Only after suppressing the Taiping Rebellion did the empire turn to the west to deal with the Muslim revolts. After seven years of fighting, the Qing Empire suppressed the Dungan revolt and was ready for a second annexation of the Dzungaria and Altisharh regions (Kim 2004). In

[24] It was a small khanate located in today's Uzbekistan.
[25] He could not capture Ili (Kulja) which was under Russian occupation (Karpat 1991, 19).

the meantime, there was a debate among high officials in the imperial court on security prioritization. Specifically, many officers favored the maritime defense against the European colonial powers and the rising power in Asia, the Japanese empire.[26] For them, the western frontiers' worthiness was questionable and focusing on the west could weaken the maritime defense (Kim 2004). The counter-argument was that the Qing Empire required a buffer zone in the west against Russian and British expansion. Eventually, the empire accepted the importance of the frontier defense arguments and appointed Zuo Zongtang as the commissioner for the Uyghurs' homeland military affairs (Millward 2007, 125-7; Kim 2004, 161-3). He marched to the west without much resistance and captured the Dzungaria. While preparing for the annexation of the Altisharh region, Yakub Beg suddenly died in 1877 and Zuo entered the region with little resistance (Millward 2007, 130).[27]

The second annexation in 1877 is a turning point in the history of the region. For the purpose of "stability" and reducing costs and effort, Zuo's suggestion of Sinicization of the region was accepted. Therefore, Zuo diminished the old ruling system based on local leaders and appointed Han Chinese to the high-level offices and started a "Chinese-style administration in Xinjiang as part of his 'postpacification' (shanhou) reconstruction programme in both north and south Xinjiang" (Millward 2007, 132). As Jia (2011) summarizes Zuo's opinion on the region from the historical records:

> …when Zuo Zong-tang debated how best to govern southern Xinjiang, one of his deciding guidelines was that Islam should be displaced by Han culture, otherwise southern Xinjiang would not be peaceful. Both Zuo Zongtang and Liu Jin-tang (刘锦

[26] At the time, the great loss of war against Britain and France in the Opium Wars showed that the Qing Dynasty could not defend its territory against the new empires. Meanwhile the Japanese empire, Meiji, was modernizing the military and economy of Japan.

[27] There are different theories on his death. Uyghurs believe that he was poisoned by the Chinese, but some historians believe that he had a stroke (Kim 2004, 167-8).

棠), the first governor of Xinjiang province, argued that Uighur children should be educated in Confucian texts instead of Islamic ones. (12)

The governors of Qing empire and Nationalist Republic of China (ROC) after Zuo, continued Sinicization policy in different ways, until the rule of Sheng Shicai (1933-1944), who was an admirer of Marxist-Leninist dialectics, during which there was a Soviet-inspired approach to ethnic minorities discussed below and which informed in part the creation of the XUAR under the CCP in 1955 (Jacobs 2016).

Before today's use of the term Uyghur, an imagined community existed in the region of Altisharh (the homeland of the Uyghurs) among inhabitants who spoke the same language and believed in the same religion. Prior to 1900, the term Uyghur referred to an ancient kingdom. Those from Altisharh identified as "Altishari," meaning a person from Altisharh (a term that roughly translates to the six cities) and "Musulman" (Muslim). During the early 20th century as nationalism spread, the term Uyghur was adopted to identify those from Altisharh (Thum 2014). Before examining the XUAR, it is important to unpack the spread of Uyghur nationalism that affected this region from the twentieth century onward and the Soviet Union's interest in the region. Nationalism came through from two external sources. First, Pan-Turkism spread among Turkic intellectuals, especially in the Ottoman Empire, as a response to the declining trend of the Empire in the late 19th century. These ideas spread through Central Asia via Ottoman educators.[28] Many from the region of Altisharh, who now identified as Uyghurs, traveled abroad to Tsarist Russia (later the Soviet Union) and the Ottoman Empire for education or commerce/trade, which introduced them to modernity and nationalism.[29] The second external source was West Turkestan, which was under Soviet Russian control. Stalin constructed an

[28] Particularly Jaddist Turks or modernist Muslims established some jadidist-education schools in the region (Millward 2007, 188).
[29] According to Thum, in the 1920s and 1930s hundreds of students were sent to West Turkestan (2014, 174).

ethnocentric system and the Turkic nations in Central Asia established autonomous republics under the Soviet Union (Brophy 2016, 173-6).[30] In the Uyghurs' homeland, there was a ripe environment for structuring a Uyghur ethnicity as Sheng Shicai, who was the Military Governor of Xinjiang and was in favor of the Soviet Union, applied the Soviet ethnocentric system approach in the Uyghurs' homeland, labelling it as an "autonomous" region, while still fighting against Uyghur nationalism and separatism (Millward 2007; Thum 2014).[31] In the meantime, Chinese nationalist leaders had their own agenda for ethnicity. Sun-Yat Sen, who was the first president of the ROC, was in favor of a republic of five nations in harmony with one another: Han, Manchu, Hui, Tibetan and Mongolian. For Chiang Kai-Shek, who was a prominent politician and a military leader in ROC at the time, on the other hand, there was only one nation, and it was Han (Dillon 1999, 81-82; Millward 2007, 207-208). From this time onward, Uyghur nationalism and separatism took center stage in security policies regarding the Uyghurs' homeland among these and subsequent Chinese governments.

In the Nationalist government era, Uyghurs had two short-lived, small independent states. The first one, the East Turkestan Islamic Republic, survived only one year (1933-1934). It was founded in Kashgar city, located in the westernmost part of China. After a series of conflicts, this state was demolished by Hui. The second independent state, the East Turkestan Republic, survived longer than the first one (1944-1949) with support from the Soviet Union, catalyzed by the "Ili Rebellion." Ili was founded in the northwest of the region, with Ghulja the capital city. The state collapsed due to the efforts of China's National Forces on October 20, 1949, just 19 days before Communist China forces proclaimed victory in Beijing.

[30] There were also substantial numbers of people from Altisharh in Soviet territory near the China border, who helped in constructing Uyghur identity by participating in debates on ethnicity in the USSR (Thum 2014, 177).
[31] According to Millward, Sheng brought Stalinist-type ethnic taxonomy to Xinjiang, the same approach the PRC would later apply to minorities throughout China (2007, 207).

The Communist Party took control of the region with only a small resistance by the Uyghurs in 1949 and kept the ethnographic taxonomy established by Sheng. Under Mao Zedong, China implemented some devastating policies not only for the Uyghurs' homeland but for the whole country. The Great Leap Forward (1958-1962) and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), which will be discussed later in this chapter, caused drastic changes in society and millions of deaths. Under the Maoist administration, "Xinjiang" was renamed the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and the central government defined 13 minorities in the region.[32] Although the XUAR's name includes "autonomous," the Han Chinese have always held the highest rank and power in the region's administration. After Mao's death, Deng Xiaoping initiated "open door" policies in 1978 to recover the country from the destruction of previous policies. As a part of these efforts, China implemented several reforms in its constitution to direct the country towards stability and modernization in 1982. These changes to the constitution that gave more rights to minorities ended with the 1990 Baren Uprising when thousands of Uyghurs arose to protest the government. Following this, the Uyghur and Han-dominated state conflict intensified with several large-scale uprisings, which have defined the XUAR from 1990 through today.

There are four milestones in the recent history of the treatment of the Uyghurs by the CCP between 1990 and2010. The first begins in 1990 with the Baren Uprising and the "strike hard" campaign in 1996. The uprising erupted at the beginning of the second week of Ramadan fasting, on April 5, 1990. About 200 people gathered under the leadership of Zeydin Yusup

[32] As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, these minorities are: Uyghur, Han, Kazak, Hui, Kirghiz, Mongol, Sibe, Russian, Tajik, Uzbek, Tatar, Manchu and Daur (Millward 2007, 244).

(Zeydin Kari), the founder of the (ETIM-TIP).[33] Demonstrations against the One-Child Policy[34], nuclear tests at Lop Nur[35], and Chinese policies on extracting the resources of the XUAR turned to armed conflict (Bovingdon 2010). According to Chinese officials, about 22 people were killed, including Yusup, while independent sources claim that the death toll is 60 (Bovingdon 2010). After the Baren incident, a couple of bombings in the XUAR occurred in the first half of the 1990s (Millward 2004). China considered the ETIM responsible for these bombings, which caused a small number of deaths and injuries.

The second period starts with China's strike-hard campaign, which came into force in the XUAR and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in 1996. Under the campaign, regulations were tightened, and China's military presence increased in the region. In the first two years of the campaign, 190 separatists were executed by Chinese security forces (Primiano 2013). During this period, one of the most important events was the Ghulja demonstrations in February 1997, during the last week of Ramadan fasting. According to accounts of those in the Uyghur diaspora, demonstrators "demand[ed] the release of hundreds of young Muslim believers who had been detained the night before while engaging in their traditional prayers in their homes" but police broke up the demonstration with force (WUC 2013).[36] Large numbers of arrests and executions followed the demonstration (Amnesty International 1999). To protest the executions, another demonstration was organized in April, in Ili, and three people were shot down by the police

[33] Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (a.k.a. Eastern Turkistan Islamic Party; a.k.a. ETIM; a.k.a. ETIP) is an organization that is listed as a terrorist organization by the UN, China and the US. It was eliminated in Afghanistan in 2003, but another organization, which calls itself Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), became the successor of the ETIM in 2008 (Fishman 2011). The group also became a key player in some battles of the Syrian Civil War.
[34] There were different rules for minorities under One-child policy. Minorities could have two children, and if they live in rural areas, they could have three children.
[35] China conducted many nuclear weapon tests around Lop Nur (Lop Lake) in the Uyghur's homeland between 1964-1996.
[36] The death toll differs in various accounts about the incident. According to Chinese officials "7 innocent" people were killed (Millward 2007, 332) but human right organizations claim that the death toll was 30 (HRH 2011).

(Vicziany 2003). Uyghur lobbies define the Ghulja incident, which is "the second largest protest in Xinjiang's recent history" according to Millward (2007, 331), as a massacre, and they commemorate it every year on February 5. Chinese officials first claimed that the incident was an ordinary crime action and later labeled it "a serious riot" in the 2002 White Paper on Terrorism (Millward 2007). This change in discourse also signals China's policy changes after 2001, when the second period ends.

The milestone for the third period for the Uyghur in the XUAR is the 9/11 terrorist attacks. China started to consider the problems in the XUAR in the context of the US-led global war on terror, which was launched by George W. Bush after the 9/11 attacks. China, with the purpose of being a "responsible stakeholder," entered into counterterrorism cooperation with the US and claimed there were connections between Al-Qaeda and Uyghur organizations, such as ETIM and Eastern Turkestan Liberation Organization (ETLO). This change in the Chinese perspective on the Uyghur problem can be seen in the state's official discourse. For instance, and as noted above, just after the Ghulja demonstrations, Chinese officials claimed this was an ordinary crime. However, in the 2002 White Paper on Terrorism, the demonstrations are described as "a serious riot" to support Chinese arguments about Uyghur-terrorism claims (Millward 2007). Also, another Chinese official report holds that "the 'East Turkistan' terrorist forces" were responsible for 200 terrorist actions between 1990 and 2002, which resulted in 162 deaths and more than 400 injured (Information Office of State Council 2002). The reflection of the changes also can be seen in Chinese media discourse on the Uyghur problem. As Brian Fishman (2011) states, "during the 1990s, the Chinese official media referred to Uyghur nationalist movements as 'splittists' (*fenliezhuryizhe*), but in the years following 9/11 attacks the media increasingly referred to them as 'terrorists' (*kongbufenzi*)" (55). This era will be analyzed

extensively in Chapter 5. In brief, the state begins to play up Uyghur religious identity, particularly by using the term "religious extremist" to label Uyghurs. With time, the term came to be simply extremist. However, it implied religious or Islamic extremism.

The latest large-scale incident broke out in July 2009 in Urumqi, the capital city of the XUAR. Rumors that two Uyghurs raped a Han Chinese woman in a toy factory in Shaoguan City, Guangdong Province (in the far southeast developed area of China) spread quickly, and an ethnic clash erupted between Uyghurs and Han Chinese in Urumqi as news arrived of the ethnic fighting. According to Chinese sources, 197 people were killed, while the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) president Rebiya Kadeer claims that the death toll was about 500.[37] Because of the riot, the XUAR was restricted in its use of the internet and international telephone calls for ten months. A large number of arrests and executions took place, and human rights organizations blamed China for forced disappearances (HRW 2009). This incident differs from the other two because the driving motivation of the riot was ethnic tension not uncommonly flared by charges of rape.

After 2010, there were a series of terrorist attacks claimed to have been carried out against the state by Uyghurs. The CCP launched its "People's War on Terror" in 2014 as a crackdown measure on such attacks. A series of laws were then passed to tamp down Uyghur resistance further. These included the Counter-Terrorism Law (2015), the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Regulation on De-extremification Ordinance (2017) and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Religious Affairs Regulations (2015). These more recent events will be explored in detail in Chapter 5. In 2017, the state also began detaining millions of Uyghurs in so-called "re-education" camps, which will be explored more broadly in Chapter 4.

[37] For more information, see "Innocent Civillians" (2009).

3.3 Historical analysis of China's economic policies

When the CCP came to power in 1949, they recognized the need for economic development. Between 1953 and 1957, the CCP implemented the First Five Year Plan, which was based on a Soviet-inspired development model and included support from the USSR in terms of funding and on-the-ground expertise. The focus of the First Five Year Plan was on developing industry and infrastructure, especially in urban areas, and it included the takeover of private farms by state collectivism, which ultimately collectivized over 93 percent of farms in the country. During this time, there was increased movement from rural areas to cities, which strained those working in agriculture who had a growing urban population to support (Cairns and Llewellyn 2016). In the meantime, the PRC conducted land reform to undermine landlords, as Marxist development requires collectivization in production (Millward 2007, 240-241).

After the First Five Year Plan, Mao Zedong applied more ambitious development goals for the country and started China's Great Leap Forward (1958-1962) program to surpass the developed countries in production. However, it failed dramatically for multiple reasons,[38] causing the Great Chinese Famine and tens of millions of deaths. This devastation affected the XUAR, too. Although it is not possible for us to confirm how many lives were lost, Millward (2007) gives some examples of the devastating effects of the policy:

> A total of at least a thousand starved to death in Xinhe, Kucha and Aqsu' counties; at least a thousand convicts starved in the Bingtuan labour camps. There were incidents of starvation in counties in the Kashgar area as well. Even the regional capital, Urumchi, was reduced to a three day's supply of grain at the height of the shortages in 1961… A major steel plant outside the city lost a third of its workers. During the Leap some people in Urumchi were at times compelled to eat tree bark. Needless to say, non-staple items (vegetables, salt, sugar, soap, tea, fuel) were in short supply and tightly rationed. Water too was severely rationed, and in Urumchi public bathhouses closed down. (260)

[38] One main reason is that local officials were afraid to report the actual situation to the center due to the Anti-Rightist Campaign. For more information, see Chan (2001).

The aftermath of the Great Leap Forward in the XUAR is unclear due to the lack of historical sources. The region's economy stayed relatively the same size from the 1960s to the 1980s, when liberalization began across the country, from which point the economy grew rapidly. Starting with liberalization, small-scale trade returned in force to the region, after likely being suppressed by authorities during the process of collectivization. Despite the return of small-scale trade for the Uyghur community, the state retained control of most of the formal economy in the XUAR, which was made up of mainly the oil industry and state-owned corporations in agriculture. Notably, Uyghurs were not allowed to participate to the same extent as Han citizens in either of these avenues, leaving them out of the most lucrative sectors. Uyghurs were shut completely out of managerial positions and additionally were not included as laborers in anywhere near proportion to their overall numbers in the region (Thum 2018).

Since opening-up policies were launched in 1978, the Chinese economy has made tremendous strides. With an average growth rate of GDP of 9.4 percent between 1978 and 2012, the Chinese economy became the second biggest economy after the US in 2009, surpassing Japan (Hirst 2015). To better understand the breadth of economic development in China, note that while India increased its GDP (PPP measures) from 1.04 to 9.56 trillion dollars between 1990 and 2019, China increased its own from 1.11 to 23.48 trillion dollars (World Bank n.d.). In the meantime, urbanization has increased and poverty in China has dropped dramatically from almost 90 percent in 1981 to 4 percent in 2016 (Ravallion 2021). Statistics show that China has been closing the economic gap between itself and the Global North countries.

China has been working on its current concept of development since the mid-1990s. At the beginning, The Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which is a politics school that trains leaders of the Communist Party of China, proposed a

concept called "peaceful rise." With this notion, China wanted to reduce the concern of Western states over China's rapid rise as a great power in the international system. When they proposed this concept, scholars and politicians outside of the region were discussing the "China threat theory" (Choo 2009). China announced and implemented its "peaceful rise" concept as an official policy in 2000 (Shouren and Wenshu 2006). However, its name changed in 2004, since the term "rise" reminds too many people in the West of "Rise of Germany" and "Rise of Japan" from history ("Peaceful Rise" 2004). It has since become known as "China's peaceful development."

Zheng Bijian (2005), a Chinese scholar and advisor to China's leadership, coined the term the "Peaceful Rise of China." He argues that China's development has been peaceful ever since the beginning of its opening-up policies to world markets, which started with the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 1978. But the concept was officially accepted in 2002 by the Sixteenth Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party and the President of China, Hu Jintao, who announced the principles of "Peaceful Rise" in 2004. Zheng (2005) summarizes these principles as ensuring "our nation's survival and our rights to development… [by allowing us] to protect state sovereignty and territorial integrity and achieve development and modernization instead of ongoing expansion or invasion" (88). Official papers, called "The White Paper on China's Road to Peaceful Development" were released in 2005 by the General Administration of Press and Publication of the Chinese State Council that announced China's aim of becoming a mid-level developed country by 2050 (Choo 2009).

As a response to the "China threat theory," the concept proposes a different path from what German and Japan took in the WWII period[39] or taken by the Soviet Union in the Cold

[39] Japan and Germany pursued territorial expansionism in WWII.

War[40] (Zheng 2005). Instead, it aimed for industrialization with the help of globalization. Zheng (2005) argues that globalization can provide opportunities for China to achieve the critical resources that are required for industrialization. Globalization also provides a key element for China to reduce income inequality, to solve environmental problems, and to protect the stability in the country (Zheng 2005). In 2011, the Information Office of the State Council released the second version of the White Paper on peaceful development, which states that the aim of the concept is "to promote development and harmony domestically and pursue cooperation and peace internationally" (The White Paper on China's Peaceful Development 2011). Since then, "harmony in the country, peace in the world" has become China's motto, which is based on the peaceful development concept.

Zheng (2005, 80) argues that China does not seek an industrialization similar to that of Germany in World War I, or Germany and Japan in World War II. China's foreign policy will not be aggressive and expansionist to access resources. Furthermore, China does not seek the path of the Soviet Union in the Cold War. "The White Paper on China's Road to Peaceful Development" does not indicate a plan to divide the world and create a new bloc regarding differences in ideology and social systems (Choo 2009, 396; Zheng 2005, 48). In this manner, China rejects the industrialization paths witnessed in the 20th century and, in Zheng's own words, pursues a "brand new path" to industrialization (Zheng 2005, 48).

The answer to how China can be an industrialized state without using old patterns of industrialization is globalization or entering into the global capitalist economy. Zheng (2005, 51) believes that only with the help of globalization will China be able to access the required resources, especially energy resources, for the purpose of becoming an industrialized state. With

[40] The Soviet Union's path divided the world based on ideology.

the "opening-up" policy applied in 1978 and integration into the global economy without isolationist policies, peaceful development can be achieved. Zheng (2005, 51) defines this correlation between globalization and peaceful development as a "historically unique condition." Moreover, China considers globalization as one of the most important factors to solve its current challenges, such as income inequality, environmental problems and lack of resources, and to protect stability in the region, which it views as an essential condition for ongoing economic development (Zheng 2005).

Besides Zheng's arguments, there is a social constructivist approach to explain the reasons for how the peaceful development concept can be achieved. According to Shouren Wang and Zhao Wenshu (2006, 120), China has historically been a defensive state that does not seek to become a hegemonic power, and the Great Wall is the most persuasive evidence of this interpretation. In addition to Chinese history, the ethical and philosophical system of Confucianism — one of the main features of Chinese culture — has a principle of "Harmony in Diversity." Shouren and Wenshu (2006, 123) claim this principle constitutes China's unique approach to International Relations thinking and conclude that China culturally is able and willing to seek the peaceful development policy and the notion of a harmonious world.

Following such arguments about China's approach, the concept of peaceful development policy is summarized as based in principles and concerns of "rights to development, how to protect state sovereignty and territorial integrity and achieve development and modernization instead of ongoing expansion or invasion" (Zheng 2005, 88). According to the *White Paper on China's Peaceful Development* (2011), released by the Information Office of the State Council, the peaceful road can be defined as follows:

> China should develop itself through upholding world peace and contribute to world peace through its own development. It should achieve development with its own efforts and by

> carrying out reform and innovation; at the same time, it should open itself to the outside and learn from other countries. It should seek mutual benefit and common development with other countries in keeping with the trend of economic globalization, and it should work together with other countries to build a harmonious world of durable peace and common prosperity. This is a path of scientific, independent, open, peaceful, cooperative and common development. (para. 6)

In the same official paper, the aim of peaceful development is essentially "to promote development and harmony domestically and pursue cooperation and peace internationally" (White Paper on China's Peaceful Development 2011). Unless a threat against China's security and sovereignty arises, this concept will be the path of industrialization for China (Zheng 2005, 64-65).

3.4 History of the Uyghur case in the context of the Western Development Plan

Economic improvement has been concentrated in Eastern China, and in comparison, western China has remained underdeveloped. To address this, in 2000, China started its "Great Western Development" plan. This plan is meant to drive economic development in Shaanxi, Sichuan, Gansu, Guizhou, Yunnan, and Qinghai provinces, and the XUAR, Tibet, Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, and Ningxia autonomous regions. As part of this endeavor, China has erected trade zones, developed energy pipelines, created infrastructure for transportation, and launched foreign investment opportunities in the western regions, including the XUAR.

Kashgar, a Uyghur city in the center/western part of the XUAR, remains strategically important for China. The city is a cornerstone in the Chinese government's reviving of the Silk Road plans. The project, which came to be known more broadly as "One Road, One Belt," consists of one land route (The Silk Road Economic Belt) and one maritime route (21st-century Maritime Silk Road) that connects Southeast Asia to Europe through Central Asia and the Middle East. (Most recently, the effort has been dubbed the Belt and Road Initiative). Along with Urumqi, Kashgar is considered a gateway for China to Central Asian markets and is projected as

an important trade post in the region, along with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The CPEC consists of bilateral agreements on transportation, energy, industrial cooperation and infrastructure between China and Pakistan. One of the most significant overseas investments of China, constituting a $62 billion project, the corridor will connect Kashgar to Gwadar Port (Rafiq 2017). In other words, the CPEC will connect the western regions of China to the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road (Ebrahim 2015).

The economic projects that China is pursuing in the region will create new economic opportunities and growth. China plans to create a center of trade in the region. The Chinese government established trade zones and Kashgar has received and continues to receive massive infrastructure investments to build highways, railways and pipelines (Chou and Ding 2015). Because of the new economic opportunities, it is expected that Kashgar will expand with migration from inner China. To prepare Kashgar for the future, China is ambitiously redesigning the city. Although China's economic development plans are mostly appreciated by the international development community and surrounding countries, critics of urban planning in Kashgar argue that its redesign is at the expense of Uyghur culture and everyday life (Levin 2014).

Due to the Western Development Plan, there is now more economic investment in the XUAR. However, comparing it to other regions in China we can see that overall growth in the XUAR has remained the same as compared to before the launch of the Western Development Plan (Jeong 2015). While the XUAR has grown economically, this growth is not at the level of the central region's growth on any single growth outcome indicator (Grewal and Ahmed 2011). This is all the more striking given that the XUAR has an official development plan while the central region does not. Likewise, the XUAR's share of regional investment from the

government remained unchanged from 2000 to 2004 (Jeong 2015). Most tellingly, the Western Development Plan has failed to gain any substantive foreign direct investment. The same is true of Tibet as well. Likewise, with the influx of Han internal migration into the XUAR, much of the economic growth has not reached Uyghurs. Ethnic minorities do not enjoy the same levels of economic development that the majority Han do. Studies of the job market in the XUAR show that there is widespread discrimination against Uyghurs in both hiring and promotion (Maurer-Fazio 2012). Also, there is a sharp distinction in the type of occupations held by Uyghurs as compared to the Han population. While Han are disproportionally taking high-wage jobs, Uyghurs are over-represented in low-wage work (Hasmath 2014). This likewise occurs disproportionally in state-business sectors too. These and other socio-economic impacts of China's "peaceful development" will be explored in Chapter 4.

3.5 Historical analysis of China's ethnic minority policies

The nationalist government (1925-1948) shared a belief in the superiority of the Chinese culture and the "backwardness" of other cultures that was held during the Qing dynasty era (Tam and Wu 1988). In the first years of the PRC, when the CCP was trying to consolidate its power throughout the country and the Soviet Union was a model of a multinational state, ethnic minorities' rights to administration and cultural affairs were protected by the constitution and respected by the government. Minority languages, together with the Chinese language, were used in public spaces, such as in media, education and administration (Finley 2013). After this short period, minority policies switched back to pursuit of assimilation, as was the case in the Qing dynasty and the Nationalist government, for multiple reasons. According to Finley (2013), who focuses on the Sino-Soviet split and China's security policies, the reason was to prevent a cultural coalition among Uyghurs and Turkic/Muslim nationalities in the Soviet republics. An

additional reason is offered by Siu-Ma Tam and David Wu (1988), who highlight Uyghur and other ethnic minority nationalisms; and tension between locals and the newly migrated Han population with the rise of "peaceful development" in western regions. Another reason is that the change in government from the Nationalists to Communists did not erase the common belief in the superiority of the Chinese and the "backwardness" of others among the high-ranking CCP officials. As Tam and Wu (1988) note, Wang Feng, "then a deputy director of United Front Work Department and a vice-chairman of the State Commission on Nationalities Affairs, made a blanket assertion that Hans were more developed than minorities in all fields" (83).

Ethnic minority policies became more destructive for Uyghurs and other minorities during the Cultural Revolution. Although its name implies drastic changes in culture, one of the goals of this socio-political campaign was economic development as the Four Olds (old customs, culture, ideas and habits) were accepted as the obstacles to development and reasons for the failed Great Leap Forward policies. The Cultural Revolution was destructive for the Han Chinese without doubt, but it was worse for minorities as they were constituted as more "backward" than the Han. Historians give many examples to establish an understanding of the atrocity of this full-fledged attack on all cultural aspects of ethnic minorities. Thum (2018), for instance, states that "Islamic schooling was gone; mosques were converted to party offices; religious texts were confiscated or destroyed; and shrine veneration could only be carried out in secret". Tam and Wu (1988) mention that "some Hui (Muslims) were even compelled to raise pigs, while Islamic leaders were forced to parade in the street with a pig's head around their necks. Xiboism, a belief combining Buddhism and the Yi's native animism, was completely eradicated, and burial was abolished in favour of cremation" (83). Clarke (2011) recounts "burnings of Qurans, persecution of imams, desecration of mosques and other religious sites, humiliation of ethnic minority

intellectuals, and prohibitions on traditional dress" (66). Lastly, according to Millward's (2007) personal communications with Uyghurs in the region, some mosques were turned into pigsties (276).

State education is an important tool for the state to strengthen feelings of nationalism and unity in the country. China has used this tool in conjunction with different policies since 1982 when the new State Constitution was declared. The last sentence of Article 4 of the Constitution says: "All nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own folkways and customs" (PRC Constitution 1982). Additionally, Article 12 of the Education Law of the PRC guarantees that "schools or other educational institutions which mainly consist of students from minority nationalities may use in education… the native language commonly adopted in that region" (PRC Education Law 1995). More detailed regulations on the issue were established with articles 36, 37 and 71 of Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law of the PRC (1984).[41] The most relevant part of these articles comes from the Article 37:

> Schools (classes) and other educational organizations recruiting mostly ethnic minority students should, whenever possible, use textbooks in their own languages and use these languages as the media of instruction. Beginning in the lower or senior grades of primary school, Han language and literature courses should be taught to popularize the common language used throughout the country and the use of Han Chinese characters.

With these articles, the Chinese government provides legal guarantees for the minorities to learn in their own language. However, with different policies and educational programs, ethnic minorities' rights are being violated. Some examples of these programs are the Xinjiang Class,

[41] Each of the articles are very large for the narrow-scope of this study. See PRC Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law ([1984] 2001) for the articles.

Bilingual Education Program, political re-education camps, and the Belt and Road Initiative, which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced a history suggesting that China has long internally colonized the Uyghurs politically, economically, and culturally. I argue that the narrative of the Chinese invasion and colonization of the territories and peoples of the western regions of what is now China, with special attention to the Uyghurs in their homeland, extends back to the Qing dynasty. This history has included political (including security), economic, and cultural postures towards the region that have actively sought to internally colonize—to varying degrees, depending on the period in question—the Uyghur community, most recently under the rubric and policy imperative of peaceful development through a globalizing China that sees its western region as the gateway to further international commerce and thus further integration into, and competitive edge in, the world economy. While it sees the "backward" Uyghurs as an impediment to its massive infrastructural projects to remake the XUAR and has reacted summarily to any form of violent uprisings by the Uyghurs resisting the transformation of their homeland, what is happening today in China to the Uyghur community, particularly with the rise of mass detention camps discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, is not a break with the past but rather a continuation of past practices, although at an unprecedented level of force and efficiency. Successive Chinese rulers have long debated how to resolve the "Uyghur problem," with one reoccurring argument being to eliminate Islam from the region to better control the Uyghurs' homeland. In the next chapter, I cover contemporary economic and cultural policies in the XUAR to demonstrate how current policies have accelerated internal colonialism of the Uyghur community.

Chapter 4: China's Economic and Cultural Policies in Uyghurs' Homeland as Internal Colonial Practices

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter looked at China's "peaceful development" and its contravening treatment of the Uyghurs as internal colonialism from a historical perspective. This chapter traces the Chinese state's more recent economic and cultural policies in the XUAR, which have resulted in the continued internal colonization of the Uyghur community by focusing on the period of the last decade. Internal colonization in states like China occurs through a process in which the majority – who dominate the state – economically and culturally strips minority populations of land and resources, including ethnic or cultural practices, as well as economic opportunities and rights in the state. Through a division of labor that highlights both ethnic and class status, internally colonized groups are forced to assimilate to the majority's social and cultural practices while enduring unequal economic relations, systematically disinherited of their community's practices and their land (Casanova 1965; Hechter 1975; Blauner 1969). This chapter frames how China practices internal colonialism in its approach to, and construction of, Uyghurs as drags on development by portraying the community as sources of poverty, as backward or unmodernized, and as insufficiently socialized for patriotic education and work.

Specifically, two questions organize this chapter:

1) What is the relationship between China's contemporary approach to economic development and the increase in cultural and religious oppression of the Uyghurs?
2) How has a globalizing China's embrace of neoliberal development deepened and accelerated particular and unique forms of internal colonialization of the Uyghurs, both material and discursive?

By addressing these questions, the twinning aspects of internal colonialism – the racializing of minority groups and hierarchical class relations – this chapter reviews the policies used by the Chinese government to colonize further the Uyghur community, justified on the grounds of economic development. Neoliberal development encouraged by intergovernmental financial institutions constitutes the "unleashing of capitalism" and makes it imperative that countries open themselves to global capital infiltration of all forms (Neilson 2020, 86). Despite casting its development approach as state-led "peaceful rise" as opposed to neoliberalism, which also implies minimal state regulation of capital, China's (authoritarian) state capitalism nevertheless partakes in practices associated with neoliberal development to expand its economic growth and influence in the world capitalist system. Just as critics of Western neoliberalism have found that while it "frees" capital and goods, it does so at the expense of the lives, livelihoods, and mobility of most "have-nots" in the world who face a host of state-dictated social and border regulations not applied to capital (see, for example, Harvey 2007 and Sassen 2014), China's seeming growth imperative through globalization as laid out in its official documents appears to be driving a set of state regulatory policies that work to assimilate and engage in direct violence against Uyghur cultural practices that are seen as drags on its economic development and in the way of its greater integration into the global economy.

This chapter proceeds as follows. The first section examines the Chinese state's poverty alleviation policies in the region, which ultimately serve to forcibly assimilate Uyghurs into Han social and cultural practices. However, the government promotes these policies on the claim that these are helping the Uyghur community to obtain jobs, even as this is flatly untrue. The second section unpacks the impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative on the Uyghur community to highlight the devastation its construction is having on local cultural practices. The Belt and Road

Initiative's stated purpose is economic development. Yet its impact is the destruction and disinheritance of Uyghur cultural and historical sites. The third section constitutes the bulk of this chapter and contains an extensive discussion of cultural policies employed by the Chinese government, including the so-called "re-education" camps and forced labor camps, specifically in terms of their use in economic development. This chapter closes by examining Chinese policies on infrastructure and culture in the Uyghur's homeland.

4.2 Chinese development as poverty alleviation in the XUAR

In the XUAR, development rhetoric is emphasized by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Considering the development gap between western and eastern China as outlined in Chapter 3, "poverty alleviation" has been a widely used term in the CCP documents and policies for the XUAR; a goal which is resonant with contemporary western-oriented international development agencies and programs, but arguably long a goal of many states and non-state movements. However, I argue here that such an expressed goal appears to serve as an internal and external driving force for many economic and cultural policies the CCP has imposed on the XUAR that disrupt and displace the economic life of the Uyghurs and cause erosion of Uyghur culture and identity.

Data on economic development and quality of life in the region show remarkable progress in the XUAR in terms of traditional economic measures, such as growth and employment. From 2014 to 2018, the XUAR saw over 2.3 million people lifted above the poverty line ("Xinjiang Makes Headway" 2019). The vast available statistics from state institutions and independent studies on development in the XUAR show significant success of CCP-led development in the area. Chinese state media also take full advantage of these data to show the greatness of China and how much the CCP has done for the region. The following are

examples extracted from Chinese state media sources. These provide a flavoring of the kind of discourses that inhabit the Han majority's understanding of the XUAR, and the kind of success brought to the region by the CCP.

Example 1: *The State Council Information Office (SCIO) released a report entitled "Build a beautiful Xinjiang, realize the Chinese dream" on Tuesday, introducing the economic and social development over the past 70 years in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region* ("How Xinjiang's Economy" 2019).

Example 2: *With its extremely dry weather and landlocked position, you may think the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the largest of its kind in China, is just another poor area in the west of the country. Well, the reality may surprise you. Xinjiang actually has the most oil and natural gas reserves in all of China. But before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, residents relied mainly on farming and pasturing animals* ("Xinjiang: Getting" 2019)

Example 3: *The official said that governments in Xinjiang use more than 70 percent of their annual fiscal budgets and financial support from wealthy provinces to fund public sectors and projects boosting employment and education* (Lei 2017).

Example 4: *Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region has entered a new era of development, unity and stability since its peaceful liberation on Sept. 25, 1949* ("Facts & Figures" 2019).

Despite numerous data on overall economic development in the XUAR, there is very little research on wealth distribution there, including ethnic/racial and gender (in)equality in terms of jobs and wealth. In what follows, I point to how this data indicates internal colonialism patterns, not merely discrimination against Uyghurs, to reveal how Uyghurs are actually not benefitting economically from state development projects at the level of their Han counterparts.

4.2.1 Employment and subsidies

Although there are different numbers regarding how many Uyghurs work in agriculture, historically and today, most Uyghurs remain in rural areas and make up the majority of the region's agricultural workforce. Chien-Peng Chung (2018) provides 2016 statistics on the population structure of the cities in the XUAR and suggests that there is a large gap between Han and minorities, which are mainly made up of the Uyghurs, on many counts but most prominently in agricultural work, wherein Uyghurs far outpace those of Han background in agricultural work. Yufan Hao and Weihua Liu (2012) explore statistics from the year 2000, which provide more detailed accounts of these differences in job sector attainment. High-paid jobs typically go to those of the Han population, while low-level agricultural labor is performed mainly by Uyghurs (see Table 2). Zang (2010) collected data in the XUAR capital of Urumqi in 2005, which demonstrates that the government-owned businesses disproportionately hire Han Chinese over Uyghurs. However, in public institutions, there is no significant difference between the hiring of Han and Uyghurs. Additionally, Zang (2012) found that wages were more equal among majority and minority groups in state institutions versus non-state employment.

Table 2: Ethnic labor force structure of XUAR in 2000 (%)

Job sector	**Han**	**Uyghur**	**The XUAR**
Managers and administration	3.99	0.83	2.29
Professional and technical workers	11.12	5.35	8.16
Cleric workers	6.10	1.93	3.86
Sales and service workers	17.20	5.41	10.57
Agricultural workers	36.77	80.51	61.10
Manufacturing and transportation workers	24.73	5.84	13.91
Other	0.08	0.13	0.11

Source: Hao and Liu (2012)

While Uyghurs predominate in agricultural work, they are nevertheless paid at lower rates compared to Han agricultural workers. For example, "in 2000, the average income of Uyghur peasants was RMB 732 (US$105) and RMB 2,680 (US$386) for Han peasants" (Howell and Fan 2011). One reason for the pay discrepancy could be that cotton grows best in the north, where most farms are state-owned businesses, and in the south, where most Uyghurs live in XUAR, land availability is far more limited than in the north. Although farms grow cotton, it cannot be grown as much as in the north because of the reduced land availability. For this reason, what farms—which are typically small household farms—do produce is lower quality compared to the cotton grown in the north, which fetches a lower price for farmers (Spoor and Shi 2008; Chung 2018).

Besides being disadvantaged in agriculture, Uyghurs who live in urban areas are subjected to inequality in pay too. There are not many studies on the discrimination in payment considering the sensitivity of the issue, but Howell (2013) successfully managed to conduct a survey in Urumqi, the capital city of the XUAR. His findings show that differences in education level are not the reason for the pay gap between Han and Uyghur workers. Everything being equal, Uyghurs earn 31 percent less than their Han counterparts in Urumqi. Inequality rises if we compare Han men with Uyghur women (see Table 3).[42]

Table 3: Uyghur-Han Income Inequality (Means, in Yuan)

	Han	Uyghur
Men	1,362	1,198

[42] Data on the kinds of employment Uyghur women engage in outside of the home is unavailable. It is also unknown if they are counted as agricultural workers on their family farms.

Women	886	619

Source: Howell (2013)

Economic investment in the region has opened new economic opportunities, which has caused Han migration from other regions. It is safe to assume these new jobs are most likely to be occupied by more Han than Uyghurs.

Another method that the CCP uses to eliminate poverty in the region is offering subsidies and loans to local business owners. However, it is unlikely that they are distributed in a manner of racial equality. One interviewee from Kayseri told me that he had a store in Urumqi. No matter how many times he applied for subsidies for his business, he got rejected every time, while his Han Chinese neighbor, who was also a store owner in the market, received multiple forms of aid and loans. Eventually, the Uyghur interviewee had to sell everything he owned to afford to flee the country. Among many reasons for leaving China, my research participant felt that the discrimination against him and favoritism showed to the Han population were strong pushes to leave.[43]

4.2.2 Resource extraction

The territory of the XUAR is endowed with significant natural resources, most notably coal, oil and natural gas. There are also mineral resources. The XUAR is a major supplier for Chinese consumption of natural resources. This has resulted in considerable environmental pollution in the XUAR due to energy and mineral extraction (Overton 2016; Ahmad et al 2021). Notably, extraction rates have increased over recent decades. Over the period 2005-2014, coal production rose from 24.35 million tons to 143.27 million tons (Overton 2016). Twenty-four coal fields offer an estimated 10 billion tons of potential coal ("Energy Industry" 2019). Over 2000-

[43] Personal interview with the author with anonymous interviewee in Kayseri in March 2019.

2014, oil production went from 18.48 million tons to 27.39 million tons. This constitutes about 13 percent of China's overall oil production (Overton 2016). Oil reserves are thought to reach 23.4 billion tons in the region ("Energy Industry" 2019). Estimates of natural gas in 2000-2014 suggest that it has increased from "0.66 billion m3 to 29.15 billion m3" and now constituting nearly 22 percent of China's total natural gas (Overton 2016). The XUAR contains an estimated 13 trillion cubic meters of natural gas reserves ("Energy Industry" 2019). In total, the XUAR supplies over 20 percent of the country's energy reserves, the top energy-producing province in the country. The region is the second top producer of wind and solar energy and is the fourth largest provider of potential hydropower ("Energy Industry" 2019).

The enormous jump in resource extraction over the last two and a half decades has led to the creation of new jobs. However, the state encourages Han migration westward to fill these jobs. Migrants from the east are far more likely to fill jobs in the energy extraction sectors than Uyghurs (Moneyhon 2003). A young Uyghur man complained, "I am a strong man, and well-educated. But Chinese firms won't give me a job. Yet go down to the railway station and you can see all the Chinese who've just arrived. They'll get jobs. It's a policy, to swamp us" ("Go West, Young Han" 2000). The Uyghur community is well aware of the importance of these energy resources and recognizes that if they could control their extraction, the XUAR would maintain self-sufficiency. Uyghurs were making this claim in 1994, noting the possibilities of these resources if they could control them (Dreyer 1994). In 2019, during my fieldwork, I witnessed the same discourses at play. After I conducted interviews in Turkistan Culture and Solidarity Association (ETCSA) in Kayseri, I observed a group of seven to eight men discussing the poverty of Uyghurs despite the mineral richness of the Uyghur's homeland. The consensus of the group was delivered by one man at the end: "What China says about development and wealth for

Uyghurs is a lie. They want to make the Han rich. If they [China] give us five percent of what they took [oil, gas and minerals], there would be no poverty in the region."

4.2.3 The Belt and Road Initiative

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is part of a globalizing China's embrace of some aspects of neoliberal development insofar as China pursues development through globalization, albeit under authoritarian state capitalism. BRI is a development project that started in 2013. President Xi announced its launch in 2013 when he visited the Central Asian countries. Its announcement was welcomed by leaders in the region. The BRI has two main components. The first one is the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) which will connect China to the rest of Asia and Europe through roads and railways. The second component is the Maritime Silk Road (MSR), which will connect China to Southeast Asian countries, Africa and Europe through maritime routes that include massive investments to ports. BRI, although thus far a more regional initiative, does represent more integration of China into the global economy and thereby further increase its influence in it. It includes 70 countries and is projected to be completed in 2049. According to Adrian Zenz (2019), a critic of BRI, there are five goals to the BRI in the XUAR:

- "[to] maintain the minority population in state-controlled environments,"
- "inhibit intergenerational cultural transmission,"
- "achieve national poverty reduction goals,"
- "promote economic growth along the BRI,"
- "bring glory to the Party by achieving all of these four aims in a way that is ideologically consistent with the core tenets of Communist thought – using labor to transform religious minority groups towards a predominantly materialist worldview" (paragraph 3).

Although the BRI's rhetoric proclaims modernity and prosperity, I argue that it has already deepened and accelerated particular and unique forms of internal colonialization of the Uyghurs, both materially and discursively. Geographically, the XUAR holds a central place in BRI. In China, the region is at the crossroads of natural resource-rich countries in Central and Western Asia. The BRI it is also a gateway to Europe. The SREB route crosses through the capital city of the XUAR, Urumqi, which is located in the south of the region. The city of Kashgar, located in the northern part of the region, holds an important role in MSR as a hub for the China-Pakistan economic corridor. Gawdar, in Pakistan, is a critical maritime port for MSR, and Kashgar links this port to China. Chen Quanguo, former head of Tibet and well-known "ethnic policy innovator," was appointed to head of the XUAR (Xinjiang Party Secretary) in 2016.[44] Previously he was governor of Tibet (2011-2016), during which time he "solved the Tibet problem" (Zenz and Leibold 2017). After coming to the XUAR and taking over, Chen's policies hardened the situation of Uyghurs. Security and assimilation policies were ramped up.

4.3 Cultural Repression to Advance Development in the XUAR

Cultural repression of the Uyghurs is being justified on economic grounds by the Chinese state. So-called bilingual education policies and political re-education camps that seek to strengthen the colonial presence of China in the region by erasing Uyghur identity are explained as necessary for the state to bring economic development to the region. The state sees Uyghur identity as the main reason for "backwardness" in the region. This includes not being fluent in Mandarin and practicing Islam.

[44] Chapter 5 will cover Chen's security policies in the XUAR.

4.3.1 "Bilingual education" policies

Besides the "terrorism/instability" argument discussed in Chapter 3, which I take up in-depth in the next chapter, the Chinese government blames Uyghurs for not being fluent in Mandarin for any pay inequality that they experience. To fix this problem, China has created a series of educational programs that are considered by Uyghurs to be part of "cultural cleansing" (UHRP 2019).

The Xinjiang Class is an educational program implemented in the XUAR in 1997 for middle school students, mostly Uyghur students. The program has funding to transfer students who graduate from middle schools in the XUAR with a high-grade point average to attend Mandarin language-only schools in the eastern cities, where most Han live (WUC 2012). Together with the usual high school class subjects, these students also take a course on "patriotic education" (UHRP 2007). Although the program is officially done on a voluntary basis, interviews with Uyghur parents show that there is hidden pressure from the officials to send their children to Han-majority schools in the east. One parent argues that officials say to them, "your child has been chosen to be sent to a Xinjiang Class. If he does not go there maybe you will have some trouble, maybe your child will have a bad future" (UHRP 2007). Enrollment for the class comes with some criteria, such as the financial situation of the families (specifically low-income families) and students' test results. Students who participate in the "Loving my Chinese Nation" language competition can earn extra points, increasing their chance of being selected for the program (Grose 2010).

Extensive research by Grose (2010), shows that many features of the program, such as taking the course on patriotic education, sitting in Mandarin-only classes and moving away from their families and from the kind of cultural environment that students know, is backfiring against the state. According to Grose (2010), based on his interviews, contrary to the program's aim,

Uyghur students' ethnic identity has become strengthened as a result of the program. Besides failing in its political aims, particularly to convey a sense of integration, the program is also failing in terms of its academic aims due to the gap between Uyghur and Han students on Mandarin language proficiency and academic performance (Chen 2006). What happens to the students after they graduate from the Xinjiang Class program and have earned a University degree is another issue. Interviews show that even though those students get job offers from big companies in industrial cities, like Shanghai or Beijing, they cannot get work permission from the Xinjiang Education Bureau, which means that they have to go back to the XUAR and work for low pay (Chen 2006; Grose 2010). This defeats the government's whole reason for pushing them into the educational program meant to increase their economic development (Grose 2010).

Another conflictual issue around education is the "bilingual" policies operating in the XUAR. The policies developed gradually since the 1970s when there were many minority schools in the region that conducted learning in the Uyghur language. However, using the Uyghur language in teaching has dropped drastically in recent years as a government policy called a bilingual school program has been implemented. Bilingual schools were first established in big cities where they have improved facilities. It has been implemented in a few prefectures as a pilot program. These so-called bilingual schools teach almost all courses in Mandarin, with the exception of minorities' literature and language courses.

In education, the Uyghur language is actively discouraged by the Chinese state in schools through its bilingual policy, which, contrary to the meaning of bilingual, actually seeks to increase Mandarin speakers. The Uyghur community sees the bilingual policy as nothing more than an assimilation policy (UHPR 2007). China claims that the policy only aims to increase Uyghurs' fluency of Mandarin as a means to increase their economic prosperity since speaking

Mandarin supposedly helps them on the job market (Szadziewski 2011). However, unemployment in the XUAR goes far beyond language skills. Far more problematic is the ethnic discrimination that Uyghurs face. It is so blatant that job descriptions simply list Han ethnicity as a requirement (Szadziewski 2011; Congressional-Executive Commission on China 2014).

Forced education in Mandarin echoes past internal colonial processes in North America and Australia (as well as other locales, including New Zealand and Chile) when government programs forcibly removed indigenous youths from their families to "remove the Indian" in them through schooling. Indigenous children in the US and Canada lost the ability to communicate with their families and their communities. It was not only language that was lost, but social, cultural and religious practices as well (Welch 1988).

4.3.2 "Political Re-education" camps

The most destructive policy implementation for Uyghur identity in recent years are the "political re-education camps" whose existence was previously and regularly denied by the Chinese government. Many researchers identified these camps as internment camps, although according to the Chinese government, they are vocational camps for Muslim minorities, particularly Uyghurs and Kazakhs, and supposedly help reduce poverty in the XUAR. For many Uyghurs, these camps are part of the "cultural genocide policy" to erase Uyghur identity from the region as it is impacting both the current and next generation. According to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2018), 2 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities such as Kazakhs and Uzbeks have been forced into the camps. Some researchers estimate that this number may go up to 3 million (Stewart 2019). For those forced into the camps who have children, those children are removed from their parents and placed into orphanages, which presumably will provide nonresistant generations for Chinese colonization in

the XUAR. This has mainly been understood from a security standpoint, as it is seen to be a final solution for "the Uyghur problem" for China. I examine this approach to the camps in Chapter 5.

According to the U.S. Department of State report on Religious Freedom (2018), which relies on media outlets and NGO reports, starting in Spring 2017, China forcibly took thousands of Uyghurs to the camps. According to Human Rights Watch, authorities did not show any warrant or evidence of crimes committed by those taken into the camps (HRW 2017). A deeper analysis of the situation within the camps, done by special correspondence in *Foreign Policy* ("A Summer Vacation" 2018) and by Finley (2019), connects the use of camps to China's "People's War on Terror" policies, which were declared in 2014. These scholars accept 2014 as the beginning of mass detentions. Notably, Uyghurs I talked with in my fieldwork highlighted 2016 as when they perceived the mass detentions as starting. The year 2016 is when China began confiscating Uyghurs' passports. An interviewee said, "Chinese passports were the trap, we didn't know [that this was a trap]. First, they encouraged us to get passports, that we were not able to get before. We traveled with that passport, and then [after that] they [state officials] started to put people into the camps because they visited their relatives in Turkey [and other countries] with a Chinese passport."[45] Visiting one of 26 countries is one of the criteria that China uses to estimate "trustworthiness" of Uyghurs. The other criteria, according to *The Economist* ("China Has Turned" 2018) include:

> [being] 15 to 55 years old (i.e., of military age); Uighur (the catalogue is explicitly racist: people are suspected merely on account of their ethnicity); unemployed; have religious knowledge; pray five times a day (freedom of worship is guaranteed by China's constitution); have a passport; have visited one of 26 countries; have ever overstayed a visa; have family members in a foreign country (there are at least 10,000 Uighurs in Turkey); and home school their children.

[45] Personal interview with the author with anonymous interviewee in Kayseri in March 2019.

Since 2018 – as more journalists and researchers have learned about this issue – the criteria to be sent to the camps has been shown to be far more extensive than initially realized. Some of those criteria are the usual suspects, such as using Western social media websites, having links to relatives abroad or a foreign journalist/researcher, having former criminal convictions, or association with a convict, etc. (Rajagopalan 2017; Shih 2018). The most important criteria fall into a broad category that is called extremist religious practices. When the camps were revealed to the world, China's first explanation was that it is the Chinese state's right to fight against "extremist terrorism" ("How China Corralled" 2020). However, a vague definition of "extremism" is a cover-up for China to erase Uyghur identity from the region to strengthen China's colonial presence. Some of the "extremist practices" involves Uyghurs' appearance, such as having a beard or wearing veils and long clothes (Finley 2019). The policy even attacks the simplest identity form, labeling "asking an imam to name one's children" as "extremist behavior" for China (Finley 2019).

Moreover, an official document published in 2014 that lists 75 signs of extremism is also used by Chinese authorities as criteria to justify sending people into the camps (Denyer 2014). Besides the cultural and religious habits listed above, some of the "extremist signs" are:

- Storing large amount of food;
- Smoking and drinking but quit doing so suddenly;
- Buying or storing equipment such as dumbbells, boxing gloves, maps, compasses, telescope, ropes, and tents without obvious reasons;
- In villages, people who do not greet the party secretary or cadres;
- People who do not smile at weddings or cry at funerals;
- Wearing short trousers;

- Wearing a watch on their right wrist;
- Dying their hair red with henna (HRW 2018).

A Chinese official explains the procedure for dealing with the people who display the behaviors above: “We talk with whoever exhibits any of the signs and ask them to correct their behavior. If they refuse to cooperate, we send them for re-education in order to liberate their thoughts and minds” (“New Guidelines” 2017).

At the beginning of mass detention, China used schools and other government buildings to hold thousands of people. But soon after, as China proudly showed to the world its capacity to build huge facilities, such as hospitals at the beginning of the COVID-19 epidemic, they likewise built dozens of internment camps across the XUAR in a short span of time. These facilities have prison-like features such as guard towers, iron bar doors, wire fences and perimeter walls. Along with the camps, China also expanded its orphanage and boarding school capacity for the children of those forcibly taken to the camps (Wang and Kang 2018). When camps drew worldwide attention with a Reuters’ report in late November 2018, there were already one million people in the camps. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) also published a similar report in early November 2018, explaining the situation as follows:

> The speed with which China has built its sprawling network of indoctrination centres in Xinjiang is reminiscent of Beijing’s efforts in the South China Sea. Similar to the pace with which it has created new ‘islands’ where none existed before, the Chinese state has changed the facts on the ground in Xinjiang so dramatically that it has allowed little time for other countries to meaningfully react.

Increasing evidence gathered by researchers using satellite imagery and those working on the ground suggest that re-education camps are shifting individuals to forced labor after they “graduate” from the camps. Through programs that fall under the government’s “Xinjiang Aid” policy, Uyghurs and other Turkic, Muslim minorities are moved from camps to factories in the

XUAR, to perform factory labor. Individuals struggle to avoid this labor as it is linked with the detention programs intended to "re-educate" them. If people seek to decline government-assigned work, return to detention is likely. At this point, labor transfers are seen as part of the re-education process and the central government refers to this as "vocational training," harkening to the justification of development, not only ending religious terrorism and extremism (Ryan, Cave and Ruser 2020).

Companies from core capitalist countries cooperate with local elites in China to optimize the exploitation of the Uyghur community (Frank 1969; Cardoso and Faletto 1979). Most disturbing in this whole enterprise are the private individuals who receive a price per head for assigning Uyghurs to jobs, which is paid by the provincial government of the XUAR. From 2017 to 2019, an estimated 80,000 Uyghurs have been sent to factories that produce goods for 82 top global companies, including Nike, Adidas, Fila, Amazon, Victoria Secret and others (Ryan, Cave and Ruser 2020). Uyghurs are under around-the-clock surveillance in these forced labor situations. It has been documented that Nike's factory features a watchtower to keep an eye on workers and is surrounded by barbed wire. While Han workers leave the factories during holidays to visit their families, reports suggest that Uyghurs cannot leave the factory premises (Ryan, Cave and Ruser 2020). There are multiple accounts of individuals who ordered products made in and shipped from China containing notes apparently from Uyghurs stating: "I am in jail" and asking for help (Wamsley 2019; Sauer 2020).

Treatment within the camps is problematic. Reports indicate that the camps are overcrowded, showering is limited, and the food is of poor quality. There are allegations that Uyghurs' dietary restrictions are ignored, and some report being forced to eat pork as a way of punishing bad behavior. Internees are forced to take Mandarin language and classes on the CCP,

and are forced to learn Chinese marches. There are allegations of physical abuse against detainees. Obviously, the ability to perform religious practices is prohibited. Secularization is coerced, with officials often requiring internees to renounce or criticize Islam. Likewise, internees may have "privileges" such as showers withheld if they fail to learn in their courses. Uyghurs are always expected to behave cheerfully and patriotically, despite being held against their will (Finley 2019). Gulbahar Jelilov is one of the first women to speak openly about treatment in the camps. Jelilov is a well-known figure who talks openly about her experiences. She has claimed she was given pills that confused her. Jelilov felt that the purpose was brainwashing, to make her forget things and to leave her feeling numb. Women are regularly sterilized in these camps, again adding to claims that actual genocide is occurring (Mishra 2019).[46] I met with Jelilov during my fieldwork, where she confirmed these same points.

The impact of detainment and forced labor is having a major impact on Uyghur families. The children of detained parents are known as "single-hardship" or "double-hardship" children, depending on whether one or both of their parents are detained. The rough estimates suggest "that around 250,000 of the region's nearly 3m Uyghurs under the age of 15 have had one or both parents interned" ("Orphaned by the State" 2020) As of the end of 2019, some 880,500 children have been forced into state boarding due to their parents' internment. The incredible pace of Uyghur internment has left the local governments struggling to create housing solutions for the children left behind. Many primary schools are being transformed into boarding centers. This entails the setting up of barbed wire fencing. Another impact on Uyghur families has been forcible sterilizations of women interned in the camps. The birth rate of Uyghurs has dropped

[46] This forced sterilization is in contradistinction to the more relaxed approach to the one child policy for such rural/non-Han populations when it was in force. Moreover, at the same time that Uyghur women are being sterilized, the one child policy has been ended, particularly for the Han majority, suggesting desires to increase the ethnic majority beyond decreasing this ethnic minority.

significantly. Statistics for the city of Kashgar and the prefecture of Hotan document a drop in the birthrate of "more than 60 percent between 2015 and 2018" ("Orphaned by the State" 2020).

4.3.3 City planning and geographic naming in the XUAR

Kashgar is one of the oldest cities in Central Asia. Historically, Kashgar was a central trading center along the Silk Road and was the capital city of many Khanates. The mud-brick style architecture and long history make the Old City district of Kashgar a central part of the Uyghur community's past. It is the equivalency of Jerusalem to Christians, Jews and Muslims (McLaughlin 2010).

It is not only the Uyghur community who sees something in Kashgar. The Chinese state sees strategic importance in the city's role in the Chinese Government's plans to revive the Silk Road. China argues that SREB and MSR will lead to new economic growth and opportunities in the XUAR. To create the proposed trade center, the government has established trade zones and set aside massive infrastructure investments for Kashgar that will go to build highways, railways and pipelines (Chou and Ding 2015). Further migration from inner China to Kashgar is expected. To prepare Kashgar for the influx of newcomers, China wants to redesign the city. While most appreciate economic development plans, others worry that this urban planning may lead to a loss of Kashgar's history.

In 2009, China announced plans for modernizing Kashgar. One aspect, known as "Kashgar Dangerous House Reform," was specifically applied to the Old City of Kashgar. The official explanation, which came from Kashgar's deputy mayor Xu Jianrong, claimed that Kashgar was particularly at risk of receiving earthquakes and that the Chinese government had a duty to protect its citizens by revamping the dangerous old city (Hammer 2010). The plan seeks to tear down 85 percent of the Old City, preserving only a small part of it as an open-air

museum. New concrete buildings would be constructed in its place. Not only costing $500 million, the majority of Kashgar's residents, about 220,000, would be moved into "modern" houses that will be constructed 8 km away from the Old City (Tharoor 2009; Hammer 2010).

Uyghurs are skeptical of the government's true motives. No Chinese state officials ever consulted with locals about the proposed plan, nor did officials ever inspect the houses to verify that they could not withstand earthquakes. In fact, Uyghurs argue that the only houses that have collapsed in earthquakes have been the new concrete houses. The traditional Uyghur homes were the buildings that survived earthquakes. As a result, the Uyghur community is certain that China does not respect their indigenous knowledge and lifestyle. Instead, they believe that the state only wants to use their local culture as a tourist attraction (Hammer 2010). In addition, the destruction of 500-year-old mosques and houses that contain rare architecture is a blatant cultural attack on Uyghur's identity and history (Hammer 2010). UNESCO's culture programme specialist in Beijing, Beatrice Kaldun, admits that the Chinese government's plans for Kashgar is "one of the black spots of heritage conservation." Tragically, it appears too late to save this historically and culturally significant part of Uyghur identity (Levin 2014).

Names of the settlements and geographical structures, such as mountains and lakes, are an important part of shared history. They give a sense of ownership to the people live in the place. Names are shared history for the people. Changing the names from one language to another language shows domination. It cuts the bonds between the local people and the place they live and their history. Changing the names of the locations in the colonies was a common policy of Western imperialist powers. Maybe the most famous example of this policy is Mumbai/Bombay. The Portuguese Empire gave the name *Bombay* for the city. The usage of this

name continued in the time of the British Empire, too. Moreover, it remained the same until 1995, when the Indian government changed it back to Mumbai.

China pursues the same imperialist policies in Uyghurs' homeland as those the Portuguese – and later the British – did in India. It is usually not only a translation or transcription issue, but in fact a changing of the name completely. Ghulja, for example, which served as a capital city to the East Turkestan Republic between 1944 and1949, has been changed to a Chinese name, *Yining*. Qumul is another example. It is a historical city for Uyghurs and famous for its melons. Under Chinese rule, the city is called *Hami,* and its famous melon, *Hami Melons* (Elkun 2012). The same policy is applied to geographical features. The biggest mountain in the region is called *Tengri Tagh* in the Uyghur language, but officially it is called *Tian Shan* in Chinese.

Although Chinese names appear on the map and media all the time, "Uyghurs are well used to operating this dual level of naming, easily translating official place names in news reports into local parlance" (Elkun 2012, 4). However, with China's other policies on education and development, the sense of being more thoroughly colonized has been developing more deeply in the Uyghur community.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted China's economic and cultural policies in the XUAR, which promote the internal colonization of the Uyghur community. Through forced assimilation and the disinheritance of land and resources, the CCP erodes the community while portraying Uyghurs as drags on development and the government as graciously trying to better its citizens. This chapter examined the relationship between China's contemporary approach to economic development, which has failed to benefit Uyghurs compared to Han Chinese workers who have

flooded the labor market, and the increase in policies that undergird what is increasingly seen as cultural or actual genocide through relentless violent repression of the Uyghurs. It has highlighted how China's use of aspects of neoliberal development in the context of authoritarian state capitalism in the form of large infrastructural and resource extraction projects that further connect it to and assist it in dominating world markets has deepened and accelerated internal colonialization of the Uyghurs (one outcome of which can be genocide as we have seen historically in other contexts). It did so by tracing the policies and programs deployed by the Chinese government over the last decade that have made Uyghur language and everyday cultural and religious dress and practices suspect and subject to sentencing to "re-education" camps and forced labor as ways to forcibly assimilate the Uyghur community, justified on the grounds of economic development also used to destroy Uyghur historical architecture and place names. In the next chapter, the CCP's use of security to excuse its enhanced internal colonization of the Uyghurs' homeland is highlighted. National security and development policies in China work in conjunction to reify the internal colonialism of Uyghurs.

Chapter 5: China's War on Terror policies in the XUAR

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 of this dissertation examined the history of China's security policies in the Uyghurs' homeland from the 18th century to the 21st centuries and introduced China's anti-terror policies and strategies after the 9/11 attacks. In this chapter, I will analyze China's security policies from the late 1990s to today, focusing on the period following the 9/11 attacks, to support the argument that China uses securitization discourses to justify its repression of the Uyghur community as an expression of internal colonialism. Securitization here is "having been a reaction against the perceived danger (arising from broadening the security agenda) that the traditional security mindset (characterized by militarised, conflictual, and zero-sum thinking) will be extended into what hitherto had been regarded as non-military areas by labeling them 'security'" (Booth 2007, 164). Two questions guide this chapter. First, how has China responded domestically and internationally, particularly in relation to labeling the Uyghurs, a Muslim minority group, as terrorists to undermine their cause in the age of the war on terror? Second, what specific implications does this have for the survival of the Uyghurs and the impunity with which a globalizing China engages in violence against ethnic minorities in pursuit of development at home and abroad?

This chapter argues that by portraying Uyghur social practices as inherently violent, backward and committed to terrorism, China has successfully implemented a regionalization and internationalization of its claims about Uyghur terrorism that attempt to justify its internal colonial policies that seek to eradicate Uyghurs' way of life as they know it. As indicated in my historical review, factions of Uyghurs have engaged in what can be defined as terrorist attacks, for example, bombings and knife attacks and so on, against the Chinese state over time and have

formed or been a part of what have been deemed terrorist organizations within and outside China. I do not provide a complete list of documented recent terror attacks as these can be found in human organizations reports, Chinese official reports and other research. Instead, I consider analytically key attacks and incidents that reached international media and have become important factors in China's anti-terrorism discourse that justifies its internal colonial policies. This chapter does not depreciate the violent attacks that have occurred in China or express approval of such attacks. Likewise, I am not arguing that China is the only country using a vague and broad definition of "terrorism" to oppress specific groups or populations. However, it is important to identify how China's terrorism claims and its counter-terrorism measures inside the XUAR have become an integral strategy for the colonialist goals of China in the region. Claims of terrorism have become the main rhetoric used against the Uyghur population in China since 2002. Thus, as I show, China uses terrorism and extremism as "catch-all" terms to dehumanize a whole group of people.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I provide an overview of the "three evil forces" of extremism, separatism and terrorism as they appear in Chinese legal codes. These codes provide a legal framework to justify what is happening in the XUAR even as many of the state's actions preceded the construction of the legal framework. Second, I trace China's depiction of major terrorist attacks and unpack these official narratives. To investigate how Uyghurs have been linked by China to international terrorism, the third section takes up Uyghurs' presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan from the late 1990s to the early 2010s coinciding with the rise of the US Global War on Terror, which grew to be the dominant policy in world politics. The fourth section reviews Uyghurs' presence in Syria's civil war and the different forces Uyghurs have joined in this context in the early 2010s. The fifth section outlines additional legal documents

introduced by the Chinese state to justify their actions against Uyghurs and notes how China's economic influence allows it to deflect much of the criticism for its treatment of Uyghurs, even from Muslim-majority countries such as Pakistan and Egypt.

5.2 China's "Three Evils"

China has conceptualized the securitization of the Uyghurs' homeland through the notion of the "three evil forces," namely extremism, separatism and terrorism, all of which are deemed to undermine national unity and stability. While extremism refers to Islamist extremism and stems from Pan-Islamism, separatism refers to the Uyghurs' aim to establish an independent state seen to stem from Pan-Turkism. These forces are seen as against three other forces prized by China, namely, ethnic unity, stability and prosperity (Meyer 2012, 2016). For China, national prosperity is only achieved through coherent ethnic unity and stability, which means quiet submission by minority communities to adopting the Han way of life and submitting to state-led development. As Deng Xiaoping states, "In China the overriding need is for stability. Without a stable environment, we can accomplish nothing and may even lose what we have gained" (Deng 1993, quoted in Meyer 2012, 54).

China highlights either seemingly positive or negative forces to different degrees in creating discourses to justify its actions against Uyghurs, dependent too on whether speaking to domestic audiences versus the international arena. To domestic audiences, the regime emphasizes socialist values and Confucianism (Meyer 2012, 57). In the international arena, particularly just after the 9/11 attacks and later when international pressure on China increased after 2017 as its more draconian treatment of the Uyghurs became more visible, the government relies on discourses of "terrorism" and "extremism" to justify its actions against the Uyghur community. The use of official terms can also shift to be more intelligible outside China, as in

the case of "illegal religious activity." Patrik Meyer's study (2012) shows that Chinese academics debated the usage of "illegal religious activity" in the 1990s, suggesting changing it to "extremism," as the former does not appear in international literature. While this suggestion has been implemented for the international arena, such as in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) documents, usage of "illegal religious activities" continues in Chinese official documents (Zhang 2021, 282). Although the term changes, the essence is the same: any religious activities that contradict Chinese laws and rules are illegal. However, national and regional rules and regulations on religion are so broad and strict that the phrase actually means any religious practice that is not specifically allowed in laws and regulations. I will show this later through an examination of legal documents. This means that Uyghur culture, identity, and their way of living and believing in Islam, are deemed a threat to both unity and the national stability necessary for China's economic development and prosperity. Uyghur practices are defined as illegal and targeted through religious extremism claims that are ultimately meant to eradicate anything related to indigenous Uyghur practices.

5.3 Terrorism in China and ETIM/TIP

In this section, I will summarize some of the terrorist attacks in China. These are important to understand the rest of the chapter, which describes China's attempt to render the Uyghurs as a threat to international security and its labeling of any Uyghur lobby groups abroad as terrorist organizations. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 3, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, or as it is later called the Turkestan Islamic Party (ETIM/TIP), is, according to China, a jihadist terrorist organization and responsible for 200 terrorist attacks between 1990 and 2002. Most of the incidents committed by ETIM/TIP have been labeled as terrorist incidents by the Chinese government following the 9/11 attacks. I do not attempt to make a catalogue of

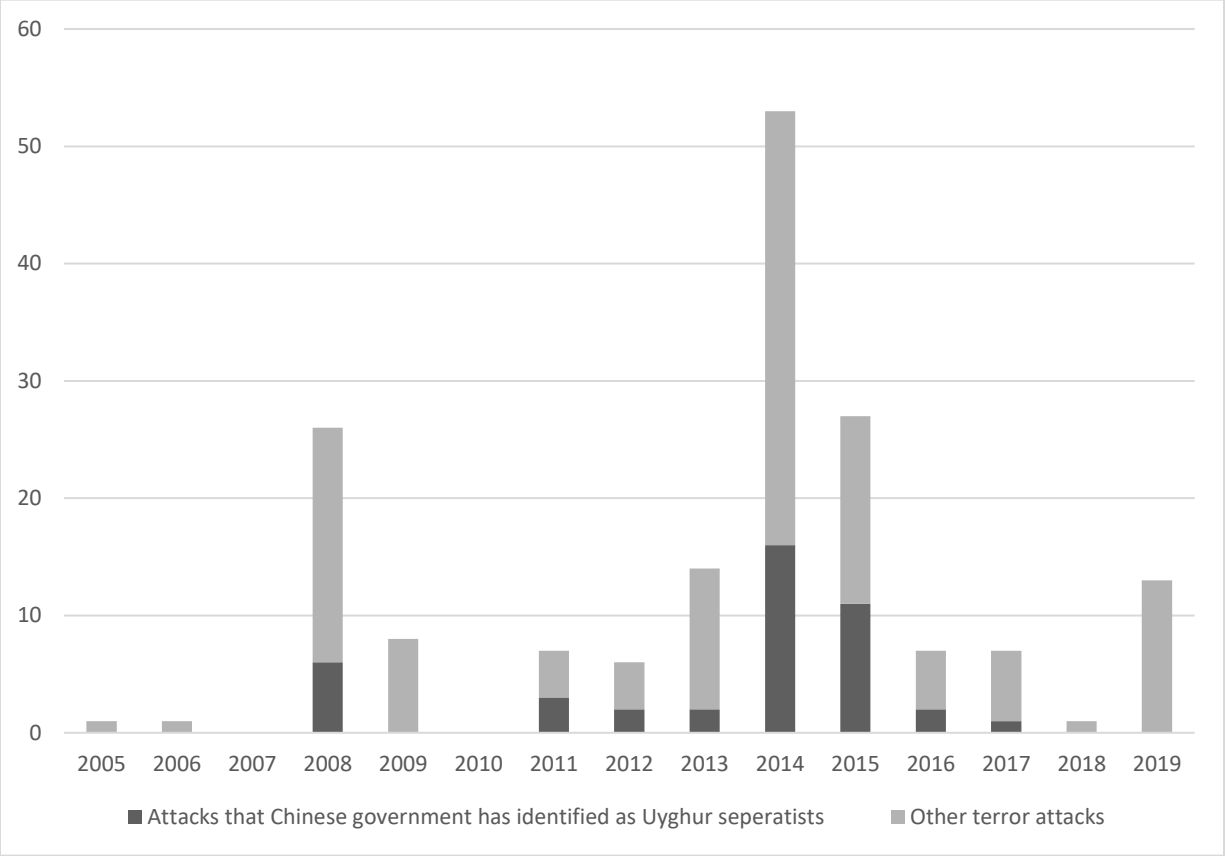
every violent incident committed by ETIM/TIP, but rather only the ones that have most affected China's treatment of Uyghurs, specifically through its use of securitizing discourses that label the Uyghurs as terrorists.[47]

Datasets for the violent incidents in the XUAR are far from accurate for multiple reasons. First, China's juridical system does not publish court records if the incident under review is considered terrorism. Any such files are presumed to include sensitive information about state security and so should remain out of the public record (HRW 2017). The second reason stems from the disagreement on the definition of terrorism. China relies on a vague and broad definition of terrorism under which many criminal incidents are counted as terrorism. Notably, Chinese officials tend to apply terrorism charges to any criminal incident if the suspects are Uyghur. The last reason is due to inaccurate data. China sometimes changes the status of criminal incidents to terrorist incidents if it suits China's interests. The 2009 Urumqi incident that I mentioned in Chapter 3 can be viewed as an example of both vague charges and broad definitions of terrorism. For many international journalists and human rights organizations, the Urumqi incident was an example of social unrest or a riot (Finley 2013; Bovingdon 2010). After a couple of years, China started to label this as a terrorist incident, which changed the event's status and relied on a broad definition of terrorism. Against this backdrop of problems with data on terrorism in China, I do provide below the number of terror incidents from the *Global Terrorism Database* in Figure 3 to show the trend in reported terrorist incidents in the whole of

[47] Some of those incidents can be found in Todd Reed and Diana Raschke's book called *The ETIM* (2010). However, other scholars, such as Roberts (2020) provide serious objections against *The ETIM*. Roberts argues that Reed and Raschke take the Chinese government's point of view without interrogating the motivation of those who commit acts of violence in these attacks, meaning that these attacks are described without contextualizing the oppression under which the Uyghur community has been living.

China. Some of the attacks were conducted under the sponsorship of terrorist organizations, while others were lone-wolf attacks.

Figure 3: Number of terror attacks in China between 2005 and 2019.



Source: Global Terrorism Database

Despite China's claims that hundreds of terrorist attacks have occurred and that the ETIM/TIP and other Uyghur separatist groups share responsibility for committing them, the dominant opinion among independent researchers who specialize on the region is that terrorism in China is a low-level threat for the state (Roberts 2020). This assessment is partly accepted by China, particularly when state officials attempt to justify preemptive counter-terrorism

measures.[48] However, beginning in the early 2010s, there were some high-profile terror attacks inside the XUAR and other parts of China for which the ETIM/TIP claimed responsibility.

One example occurred in October 2013 when an SUV rammed into a group of tourists on the symbolically important Tiananmen Square. As a result, two civilians and three attackers died, and 38 people were injured. Chinese officials declared this incident a terror attack (Rajagopalan 2013). After Chinese officials' investigations, five other people were arrested and three of them were sentenced to death ("Three sentenced to death" 2014). The three people in the SUV that hit the tourist group were Uyghurs. Besides the male driver, his wife and mother-in-law were in the car too (Wan 2013). This immediately raises the question as to why a terrorist would commit such an attack with his family members in the most secured site in China. It suggests that the incident may not have been motivated by terrorist intent and minimally requires a thorough investigation to understand other possible explanations for the event.

Also relevant to this discussion are a series of high-profile incidents that occurred in 2014. In March 2014, eight knife-wielding men attacked passengers in the Kunming Railway Station in Kunming, Yunnan. Thirty-five civilians died, including four of the attackers, and 141 people were injured. This attack was labeled as "China's 9/11" by Chinese state media ("Nothing Justifies" 2014). In April and May 2014, two separate suicide bombings occurred in Urumqi. In total, 47 people were killed and over 150 people were injured. These were the deadliest attacks to date in Urumqi. ETIM/TIP claimed responsibility for of all these attacks. After these incidents, in May, China started a new "strike hard campaign" in the XUAR. Following the rhetoric of the

[48] For instance, Enshan Li (2018) reports that "in a speech at the Telephone and Television Conference with the National Counter-terrorism Leading Small Group in January 2016, the Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Committee Guo Shenkun reiterated the importance of proactive policing and pre-emption in China's counter-terrorism legal arsenal. Guo urged law enforcement agencies to "Strangle the Baby in the Cradle," meaning "[to] hit when it is early, small and only the beginning of a trend (Dazao, Daxiao, Damiaotou)" before terrorist threats become larger" (351).

Global War on Terror, China named its counter-terrorism efforts as the "People's War on Terror."

In July 2014, another major incident occurred in Yarkand, a city in the XUAR. According to Chinese reports, a group of "terrorists" (all Uyghurs) attacked a police station and killed 35 Han Chinese. In response, Chinese security forces killed 59 "terrorists" (Jacobs 2014). Uyghur lobbies outside of China designate the incident as the "Yarkand massacre" and claim that Chinese security forces killed at least 2,000 Uyghurs and disposed of the bodies (Hoshur 2014). According to local sources that Uyghur organizations were able to reach, the incident broke out after a police officer killed five Uyghurs over an argument about wearing headscarves and other traditional clothes often worn by Uyghurs. A group of Uyghurs gathered in front of a police station to protest the killings, and some Uyghurs attacked police vehicles with sticks. After that, "Chinese military forces immediately called for [reinforcements] and started to shoot and kill all the participants of the march and other villagers during house-to-house searches" (Hoshur 2014).

These illustrations suggest that the Chinese government seeks to define any "incident" (crime or accident) that involves Uyghurs and Han citizens as Uyghur culpability in committing acts of terror. The state's naming of these events as terrorist activities allows the state to proceed with its agenda to depict to domestic audiences the dangers posed by the minority Uyghur community and facilitates its ability to convince international audiences that Uyghurs are committed terrorists. This is then used to justify further encroachment of Uyghurs, thereby exacerbating internal colonialism.

5.3.1 ETIM/TIP: Its capacity and connections in the late 1990s and 2000s

Despite China's claim that ETIM/TIP is responsible for hundreds of terrorist attacks, scholars who specialize in the region have held strong reservations regarding ETIM/TIP's

capability of carrying out attacks and even its existence (Roberts 2020; Millward and Peterson 2020). For instance, Sean Roberts (2020) argues that:

> I suggest that what has been defined as ETIM and recognized as a Uyghur-led 'terrorist organization' has, in reality, been a fragmented religiously inspired Uyghur militant movement that was limited in its activities by outside actors and presented no real threat to China or the world during the first decade of GWOT [Global War on Terror].
>
> Furthermore, I find no conclusive evidence that either ETIM or TIP has ever carried out political violence deliberately targeting civilians, an act which would qualify these groups as 'terrorists' per this book's working definition. (99)

However, China managed to convince the US and the UN to designate ETIM as a terrorist organization in 2002 as a part of the Global War of Terror.[49] The US's support of China's claim was not unconditional. Washington accepts some Uyghur organizations in the US and has supported their cause for human rights. However, the designation of ETIM as a terrorist organization damaged Uyghurs' reputation inside government security bodies such as the CIA and among security officials in the US. Many working in these institutions are now likely to view Uyghurs as "dangerous people" (Roberts 2020).

Beijing's strategy to label Uyghurs and their lobbies as terrorist groups started before the 9/11 attacks under the regional organization SCO or formerly the Shanghai Five.[50] One of the goals of the organization, according to Article 1 of the SCO Charter, is "joint combating terrorism, separatism and extremism in all their manifestations, fighting against illicit narcotics and arms trafficking and other types of transnational criminal activity, and also illegal migration." Terrorism, separatism, and extremism are part of the so called "three evil forces" rhetoric that China has established against Uyghurs since the end of the 1990s. With the SCO,

[49] ETIM was removed from the US terrorist list just before the end of Trump's term. A US State Department official stated that "ETIM was removed from the list because, for more than a decade, there has been no credible evidence that ETIM continues to exist" ("US removes" 2020).

[50] The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was established by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in June 2001. Especially Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have considerable populations of Uyghurs in their territory.

the Uyghurs became a regional issue in Central Asia. Throughout the 1990s, many Uyghur organizations were established in Central Asia, such as the Nozugum Foundation, the Kazakhstan Regional Uyghur Organization, the Kazakhstan Uyghur Unity and the Kyrgyzstan Unity (Gladney, 2004). However, these lobby organizations lost their effectiveness in promoting the Uyghur human rights cause due to Chinese pressure on Central Asian governments. China has used its influence to prevent the Uyghur lobby groups from operating freely by using its economic power over Central Asia countries and through the SCO.

Next, I examine the story of domestic terrorism in China and the relations between alleged domestic terrorist organizations (ETIM/TIP) and the Taliban regime as well as al-Qaeda along four different accounts to understand the complex structure of the connections. These four accounts are from: (1) China, (2) ETIM/TIP, (3) the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and (4) Uyghurs who fled to Afghanistan.

Firstly, according to the Chinese Government's Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN (2001), there are 40 different groups and organizations responsible for terror attacks in China. Although all of them support violent actions "both overtly and covertly" against China, the document claims that only seven of them have openly supported violent actions against China. Those organizations that openly advocated violence against China are located outside of China, in countries such as Turkey, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Switzerland. The document also includes "basic facts" about relations between ETIM and the Taliban as well as al-Qaeda as follows:

- ETIM is a component of al-Qaeda.
- Hasan Mahsum, the leader of ETIM, lives in Kabul, Afghanistan and carries an Afghanistan passport issued by the Taliban.

- Osama bin Laden demanded ETIM carry out attacks in Central Asian countries and China.
- ETIM that has 320 terrorist fighters active in combat for the Taliban in Afghanistan.
- ETIM has training camps in Afghanistan and their members receive battle training from the Taliban.
- ETIM has connections with Osama bin Laden and received $300.000 financial help from al-Qaeda (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN 2001).

In the case of ETIM accounts, there are not many sources that explore their situation in Afghanistan when the leader, Mahsum, was found dead during a Pakistan Army operation. The most important source for ETIM's account is a *Wall Street Journal* interview with Abudula Kariaji, who claims to be the deputy chair of the organization (Cloud and Johnson 2004). He explains that ETIM established relations with bin Laden before the 9/11 attacks and received permission to construct three camps for Uyghurs in Afghanistan. About 500 Uyghur families lived in these camps, and Uyghur men received training in weapons and small explosives. Kariaji also admits that the organization sent dozens of men to China between 1997 and 2001 but they did not carry out any attacks. According to Chinese reports, some of the members were caught and admitted that they were sent to China to recruit new members and raise funds for the organization (Reed and Raschke 2010, 150). Returning to ETIM-al Qaeda relations, in a short interview with Mahsum, Kariaji says, "The East Turkestan Islamic Party hasn't received any financial assistance from Osama bin Laden or his al-Qaeda organization. We don't have any kind of organizational links with al-Qaeda or the Taliban" ("Uyghur Separatist" 2002). Kariaji has expanded further on the minimalist relations between the two organizations. He mentions that he and some others attended bin Laden's speech in Kandahar as members of the audience. He also

highlights an interesting divide between the two groups in saying, “We had deep differences with the Arab fighters…The Arabs told us that, as Muslims, your first duty is to free Palestine and the sacred Arab lands” (Cloud and Johnson 2004). Likewise, bin Laden did not mention the Uyghur community’s situation in the Uyghurs’ homeland.

Concerning Taliban and al-Qaeda accounts, there are relatively more sources to understand their perspectives. Although there were Uyghur camps in Taliban-controlled areas in Afghanistan and people could train in arms, Taliban forces did not allow ETIM militants to carry out any attacks on China. Considering China is a great power in the region and a neighbor of Afghanistan, it is reasonable to think that the Taliban wanted friendly relations with Beijing (Fishman 2011, 49). Sean Roberts offers another explanation for the contradictory position of the Taliban on the ETIM. He suggests that the Taliban regime could use ETIM as “a bargaining chip in their diplomatic negotiations with China” prior to 9/11 (2020, 108). bin Laden wanted to have more than friendly relations with China against their common enemy, the US. As bin Laden stated:

> I often hear about Chinese Muslims, but since we have no direct connection with people in China and no member of our organization comes from China, I don’t have any detailed knowledge about them. The Chinese government is not fully aware of the intentions of the United States and Israel. These two countries also want to usurp the resources of China...So I suggest the Chinese government be more careful of the U.S. and the West. (Quoted in Fishman 2011, 49)

On another occasion, after several terrorist attacks in Beijing, he warns China against CIA activities rather than blaming Uyghur Muslims (Fishman 2011, 49).

Some Uyghurs became entangled in the US coalition war in Afghanistan. China has strong anti-terror cooperation policies with its Central Asian neighbors through the SCO. Afghanistan under the Taliban regime was the only Central Asian country that had no extradition agreement with China. Significantly in this regard, it is a route to Western countries for people

who flee the XUAR. During the US-led coalition's operation in Afghanistan, 22 Uyghurs were captured and sent to the infamous Guantanamo Bay prison for allegedly being terrorists. This is important as these are the only people known to be living in camps in Afghanistan and who have provided information about these camps. By 2008, all 22 prisoners were released as non-combatants and repatriated to third states, although China sought their return. Based on those Uyghurs' accounts, some living in the camps were trained to use guns. Others mentioned that joining the training was optional and only worked on construction projects in the camps. When the US started its Afghanistan intervention, these 22 Uyghurs fled to Pakistan. However, some Pakistani officials and villagers sold them to the US government for $5,000 based on assertions by the Pakistanis that the Uyghurs were terrorists. At the time, the US government was offering rewards for turning in terrorists. Lastly, according to one Uyghur account, affinities for the Taliban were not based on attraction to terrorism:

> All of us who stayed there had great respect for the Afghan people, and the Taliban, because no one else provided refuge to the Uighur people. You didn't need a passport or anything else. Even if you were not making any money you still had three meals a day. I'm still grateful to them. No other country has given Uighur refugees anything like that. ("The Guantanamo 22" 2015)

To sum up, I suggest that China has dramatically exaggerated the threat and the capabilities of ETIM/TIP to justify its dehumanization of Uyghurs and colonization of the Uyghur community within the global arena. By tapping into the discourses of the Global War on Terror, China has found a way to justify its colonial project against Uyghurs.

5.3.2 Uyghurs in the Syrian Civil War and ISIL

Because of the previous strike hard campaigns and other actions against the Uyghur community, thousands of Uyghurs have fled from China. Some of them ended up in Syria where they become trapped in the Syrian Civil War (2011-present). Some Uyghurs have joined various armed factions operating in this war. Some researchers describe Uyghurs joining these groups as

a self-fulfilling prophecy of the Chinese government's oppressive policies.[51] Because Uyghurs flee China to escape internal colonization, they are forced by circumstance to join these groups that represent the marginalized as there are no other options to provide themselves with basic security in the ongoing Syrian conflict.

The widespread protests that swept Arab countries as part of the Arab Spring in 2010 reached Syria in 2011. Syrian security forces attempted to violently shut down the protests, which resulted in armed conflict and eventually turned into civil war. Many Salafist and jihadist groups began to pour into Syria to fight against the Assad regime. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) pushed out Syrian government forces and many other jihadist groups from a considerable part of the territory of Syria and created a state-like organization. Many jihadists from all around the world joined ISIL to fight and live under the "caliphate state." Besides ISIL, some Uyghurs joined other groups in Idlib, most notably the Al-Nusra Front. It is the major power in the Idlib region against the Assad regime and used to be affiliated with al-Qaeda. China claimed there were 5,000 Uyghur fighters in Syria in 2017. Other reports suggest that the numbers may go as high up as 20,000 Uyghurs. This number includes not only fighters but whole family members.

The first reports about Uyghurs in Syria were published in October 2012. According to Chinese reports, ETIM/TIP members, who are trained by al-Qaeda, were sent to Syria to fight against government powers (Pantucci 2012). Nate Rosenblatt's (2016) quantitative research is based on over 3,500 registration forms collected by ISIL between mid-2013 and mid-2014. These forms were captured by security forces and show the background of the foreign fighters.

[51] For instance, Roberts (2020) explains in detail this self-fulfilling prophecy in his chapter 5. It is one of the common themes that researchers highlight on the issue of terrorism in the XUAR (Boehm 2009, Roberts 2020). Also, see Larson (2009); Larroca (2015); Dorsey (2018).

This provides a gist of who members of ISIL are.[52] According to this report, the fighters from the XUAR were largely rural and poor and over 70 percent said that this was their first experience being in a country outside of China. Moreover, none of those from the XUAR ever admitted to fighting in a jihad previously. Rosenblatt (2016) suggests that based on the high poverty background of these individuals and their lack of previous engagements with jihadi movements, most had joined ISIL out of pure desperation as they had run out of options (50).

Interviews with Uyghurs show that there are a variety of motivations for joining the war in Syria. Some of them made a conscious decision to fight in the war, but some were tricked into going to Syria. Others joined to "get some military training to prepare" for an "inevitable fight" against China (Juma 2019). One of them stated: "My only intention was to free my motherland from the cruelty of the Chinese government, so that Uyghurs can live freely and in peace" (Juma 2019). The difference between al-Qaeda and Uyghurs in their respective prioritizing of jihad persists in Syria, just as in the Afghanistan war. Even though al-Qaeda leaders started to support jihad in the XUAR publicly, inside Syria was a different story (Roul 2019). One Uyghur interviewee explained: "He [the recruiter] told me that all the preparation is ready and now it was time to work for the cause of our homeland, but when we arrived, we heard no talk of our homeland" (quoted in Juma 2019). Another Uyghur, who claims to have been tortured in China and fled to Turkey, was promised help to obtain anxiety medications and was told that he would receive free healthcare. He later realized that "it was a place for fighters" and admits that "if I were ever given the opportunity to join a group of fighters, it would be a group that resisted China—one where I could work and eventually return to my homeland to be with my family" (Juma 2019).

[52] This source represents an unprecedented cache of personal information about foreign fighters, including names and phone numbers of family and friends and notes about fighters' potential roles within ISIS.

Turkish security officials report that between January and June 2015, 400 Uyghurs were caught along the Syria-Turkey border (Sardan 2015). Although I was not able to interview anyone who fought in Syria during my fieldwork, I had a conversation in March 2019 with the East Turkistan Culture and Solidarity Association (ETCSA) official in Kayseri about the situation of Uyghurs in Syria. He told me that Turkish security officers had called multiple times to the Uyghur organization to get help with translations for the people they caught on the Turkey-Syria border. He shared that "illegal organizations" inside Syria lied to Uyghurs, including that they would have a new home in Syria. These organizations also spread rumors that Turkey would send them back to China to make it seem unsafe to stay in Turkey.

5.3.3 People's War on Terror

In May 2014, China once again started its "strike hard campaign" in the XUAR. Referring to the US "war on terror," after the 9/11 attacks, China called its strike hard campaign the "People's War on Terror" to provide legitimization for the new wave of oppression. To provide a legal framework, China passed laws and regulations such as the Counter-Terrorism Law (2015), the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Regulation on De-extremification Ordinance (2017) and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Religious Affairs Regulations (2015). These will be examined later in this chapter to expose how China uses vague terms to legitimize its oppression of Uyghurs through internal colonialism and to veil its real aim to turn Uyghurs into loyal subjects.

In 2016, the CCP appointed Chen Quanguo as the Xinjiang Party Secretary. Chen's role was to establish the security and surveillance structure for the "People's War on Terror." According to Adrian Zenz and James Leibold (2017), Chen "lifted a strategy directly from the imperial playbook, with past colonial powers like England and Japan enlisting 'native'

populations to watch over their own people" by increasing security forces. Following Chen's appointment, over 90,000 new security-related positions opened in the XUAR (Zenz and Leibold 2017). Similar to what he authorized in Tibet, Chen introduced "convenience police stations," a massive policing network that connected major cities to villages in the XUAR ("Xinjiang Introduces" n.d., Wong 2019). Additionally, he implemented new technologies in data collection and surveillance that eventually turned the Uyghurs' homeland into an "open prison." To materialize the CCP's internal colonization approach in the region, Chen increased the XUAR's budget for domestic security. The spending on security in the XUAR in this period from 2014 to 2016 was double the average spending in other regions of China in the same period and tripled in 2017 (Zenz 2018).

Chen's police network is supported by the "Integrated Joint Operations Platform" (IJOP), China's "Big Brother" application or "system of systems" of mass surveillance. The IJOP functions in three main areas: "it collects data, reports on suspicious activities or circumstances, and prompts investigative missions. When it finds someone or something the app considers suspicious, the app sends an alert to a nearby government official to find out more" (HRW 2019). It collects data from CCTV cameras with face recognition technologies all around the Uyghurs' homeland and cellphone inspection and tracking software as well as from gas stations, schools, checkpoints on the street, and personal information in banking records and on social media (HRW 2019; Millward and Peterson 2020). It also collects biodata that is gathered "in the course of mandatory medical examinations and in the process of issuing ID cards, including DNA, blood type, face-scan, retinal scan, voice-print and gait-print" data (Millward and Peterson 2020, 5). China's "successful" surveillance can be measured in terms of its massive incarceration figures detailed further below. With "successful" implementation of artificial intelligence to

detect “extremist thoughts” in the XUAR, Chinese tech companies have gained a reputation for this around the world, particularly among authoritarian states. Venezuela, Ecuador, Zimbabwe, and Uganda are some of these states that imported Chinese surveillance technologies to implement for domestic usage (Greitens 2020).

With the investments in total social control mounted in the name of combating “extremism” and “terrorism” in the XUAR, detention numbers have skyrocketed. According to Buckley (2019), in the XUAR, in 2019, imprisonment rates were similar to China’s national average before 2014. Although the rates increased after 2014, a radical change occurred after 2016. “During 2017 alone, Xinjiang courts sentenced almost 87,000 defendants, ten times more than the previous year, to prison terms of five years or longer. Arrests increased eightfold; prosecutions fivefold” (Buckley 2019). Before 2017, less than 11 percent of imprisonment punishments were over five years. Following 2017, five-year and above imprisonment sentences now constitute 87 percent of all prison charges (HRW 2021). Additionally, Chen started another program, which is officially called “concentrated educational transformation” camps for Uyghurs who were “extremist” but not enough to put in jails. There are an estimated up to 3 million people suspected to be interned in these camps (Stewart 2019). Many of the details about the camps can be found in Chapter 4.

Meanwhile, according to Amnesty International (2020), activists, journalists, academics and their relatives who are Turkic minorities are arrested without their relatives receiving any notification of their arrests and get sentenced to years of incarceration in secret trials for “inciting ethnic hatred and ethnic discrimination.” Just three examples from many incidents are illustrative. Ekpar Asat was convicted because he participated in a US State Department leadership training program (Amnesty International 2020). About 20 family members of

Gulcehre Hoca, who works as a journalist at Radio Free Asia, were all arrested and interrogated about Gulcehre's work and their connections to his work (Amnesty International 2018). Lastly, one of the most infamous cases is that of the economics professor Ilham Tohti, who expressed the belief that the coexistence of ethnicities (particularly Han and Uyghurs) can be achievable "as long as we [people of China] have the wisdom and vision for the future, as well as the courage to face reality head-on" (Tohti 2014). Following a short trial of only two days in 2014, Tohti was determined to be guilty of engaging in "separatism." This resulted in two punishments: life imprisonment and the freezing of his assets. "In September 2014, after a two-day trial, Tohti was found guilty of 'separatism' and sentenced to life imprisonment in addition to all of his assets being frozen."[53]

For many years, Uyghur lobbies abroad used "cultural genocide" to identify China's treatment of Uyghurs (Clarke 2008; Mackerras 2015). However, with increased oppression against Uyghurs starting with the People's War on Terror in 2014 and following the rapid and massive security measurements taken in 2017, researchers started to discuss "genocide" in the XUAR in the context of international law. In early 2021, the US, Canada and the Netherlands recognized the Uyghur Genocide (Briscoe 2021). Uyghur lobbies abroad applied to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate China's crimes against humanity and genocide. However, the prosecutor decided not to investigate further based on not enough evidence in late 2020 (Hernandez 2020). Many researchers and experts in such fields as International Law and Chinese Studies published a report in March 2021 which concludes that "China is committing an ongoing genocide against the Uyghur ethnic group, in violation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide" ("The Uyghur Genocide" 2021). Not all

[53] For more information, see US Congress Human Rights Commission "Ilham Tohti" n.d.

experts agree with the designation of genocide. Jeffrey Sachs and William Schabas (2021) have disputed the label genocide on the grounds that there is insufficient evidence that the Chinese state intends to physically destroy the Uyghurs as a community. Nevertheless, one conclusion of internal colonialism can certainly be genocide, legally or otherwise recognized.

5.4 China's security discourse in legal documents

China uses both a broad understanding of and vague legal language to define terrorism. In legal documents, the state conflates completely different and broad concepts, namely extremism and separatism. Again, many researchers agree that vagueness in law documents are open to abuse of power. To clarify, I suggest that the term "abuse of power" can be interpreted as a misuse of power from well-intended laws and rules. It can be a consequence of a purposefully vaguely written law that could allow for its manipulation or lack of knowledge of law. However, in the view of independent researchers, counter-terrorism laws in China have been designed deliberately to subjugate Uyghurs as they provide the justification for mass detentions, widespread surveillance and the incarceration of millions into camps (Roberts 2020; Famularo 2015). Such laws constitute the pretext for destroying any way of life that is not accepted by China, which includes whatever happens to fit with what China legally defines as "extremism."

Although terrorism is one of the main rhetorical devices used by China in the Uyghurs' homeland since the late 1990s, China's Counter-Terrorism Law was passed only in 2015. Article 3 of the law defines terrorism thusly:

> 'Terrorism' as used in this Law refers to propositions and actions that create social panic, endanger public safety, violate person and property, or coerce national organs or international organizations, through methods such as violence, destruction, intimidation, so as to achieve their political, ideological, or other objectives.[54]

[54] For the translation of the law, see https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/counter-terrorism-law-2015/.

The Article continues with sorting "terrorist activities" into five sections such as harming society, injuring individuals, causing property damage, participating in terrorist organizations, and providing information, funds, labor, and so on to terrorist organizations. The last section refers to "other terrorist activities." Roberts (2020), rightly, raises concerns over Articles 80 and 81 of the law (178). In Article 80, the phrase "terrorism or extremism" is used four times, while throughout the document, there is no definition of extremism ever given. These Articles provide punishment for terrorist activities including where "the circumstances are minor and do not constitute a crime," such as "using methods such as intimidation or harassment to interfere in the habits and ways of life of other persons, or in production or management" and "inciting or coercing others to hold religious ceremonies in place of marriage or divorce registration" while providing no definitions of what constitutes "intimidation," "harassment," "inciting" or "coercion" The last section of the Article is consistent with the rest of the document in terms of vagueness. It instead refers to "other acts of using extremism to obstruct the implementation of the national legal system."

Three years after the counterterrorism law was enacted came new regulations to eradicate so-called extremism in the XUAR. Such regulations targeted the religion of Islam since Uyghurs largely identify as Muslim. Associated with some Muslims religious practices is the wearing of burqas with face coverings, sporting beards and using Qur'anic based names. The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Regulation on De-extremification 2018 regulation outlaws:

- Advocating or spreading extremist thinking,
- Interfering with normal cultural and recreational activities, rejecting or refusing public goods and services such as radio and television,

- Wearing, or compelling others to wear, burqas with face coverings, or to bear symbols of extremification,
- Spreading religious fanaticism through irregular beards or name selection,
- Publishing, printing, distributing, selling, producing, downloading, storing, reproducing, accessing, copying, or possessing articles, publications, audio or video with extremification content,
- Other speech and acts of extremification.[55]

We live in an age of technology where terrorist organizations can produce Hollywood-level video productions as propaganda. Therefore, it is understandable for readers of the law to assume or that some of the articles presented above are acceptable measures, such as "audio or video with extremification" content, given how persuasive and high-quality many propaganda films are. For example, ISIL's videos are infamously renowned for their production levels and recruitment. However, the XUAR Religious Affairs Regulations (2015) are explicit in tying what is deemed banned extremist materials with threats seen as emanating internally from Uyghurs in particular. Such materials are considered to:

- undermine national unity, social stability, economic development, or scientific and technological progress,
- incite ethnic hatred, instigate ethnic discrimination, or undermine ethnic unity,
- promote ethnic separatism, religious extremism, and violent terrorism,
- affect religious harmony, or cause strife among various religious or internally within a religion,

[55] For the translation of the regulation, see https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/decision-to-revise-the-xinjiang-uighur-autonomous-region-regulation-on-de-extremification/.

- endanger public morality or Chinese culture and tradition, violating other laws and regulations (Famularo 2015, 4).

Moreover, using the SCO and the coalition of the War on Terror, China has also managed to find international and regional support for its internal colonial treatment to Uyghurs. China has garnered greater international support in some quarters than in previous years, in part due to China's economic influence, which has become greater globally. For example, in October 2019, 23 countries, mostly Western states, submitted a joint statement "on Xinjiang at the Third Committee Dialogue of the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination" to declare their concerns on China's actions in the XUAR (US Mission to the UN 2019). Speaking out against this statement were 54 countries, primarily authoritarian or semi-authoritarian states, some of which have Muslim majority populations, such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Egypt, which also declared their support for China (UN 2019). The irony here is that the behaviors that China defines as Islamist extremism (and much more) for Uyghurs are also the same behaviors that moderate Muslims perform in these Muslim-majority countries that have lent their rhetorical support to China. The statement supporting China by these countries also reiterates almost every position China has taken on development, security and de-extremization to cover over its colonization of Uyghurs, even down to using Chinese rhetoric. For example, the statement notes, "China's remarkable achievements in the field of human rights by adhering to the people-centered development philosophy and protecting and promoting human rights through development." The statement also invokes China's rhetoric of "three evil forces" thusly: "We take note that terrorism, separatism and religious extremism has caused enormous damage to people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang, which has seriously infringed upon human rights,

including right to life, health and development." This constitutes a watershed for China because heretofore only those countries in the SCO accepted such rhetoric.

5.5 Conclusion

To review and conclude, this chapter traced China's longstanding and ongoing efforts to portray its minority Uyghur community as inherently violent and a security threat. China has done so through classifying, at the time or after the fact, a range of violent incidents associated with Uyghurs as terrorist acts with little investigation and no acknowledgment of what China is doing to Uyghurs that might explain certain acts. Such classifications have also brought increasing state violence upon the Uyghurs. And even when some ETIM/TIP have claimed responsibility for acts of political violence that appear to be in the realm of terrorism, there is no expert consensus outside China that this group and other Uyghur groups within or outside of China have any capacity to pose a real threat to the state. Similarly, despite Chinese claims that Uyghurs are deeply involved with other, higher capacity militant groups associated with Islamic terrorism, ranging from the Taliban to al-Qaeda to ISIL, the evidence is that few Uyghurs have actually joined such groups or committed violence with them, and instead have turned to them simply for survival help in the absence of other options.

While China appears to have purposely used very vague and elastic notions of terrorism to charge Uyghurs with doing it, particularly in the context of the Global War on Terror in attempts to gain international support for Uyghur repression, more recent counter-terrorism laws and regulations appear to particularly target Uyghurs in their specific focus on acts that China has accused Uyghurs as most guilty of. The mass surveillance and incarceration of Uyghurs in particular bear this out. Ironically, such acts include the same expressions and behaviors most Muslim-majority countries value, yet several Muslim-majority countries (along with Russia and

the like involved in the SCO) have to come the defense of China against Western states that have condemned China's treatment of the Uyghurs. As I demonstrated in Chapter 4, the Chinese construction of Uyghurs' economic and cultural backwardness constitute layers of justification for killing and incarcerating them, while economically marginalizing them and destroying their culture and infrastructures. As noted earlier, while many international observers have labeled the outcome of such actions as cultural genocide and now genocide, these outcomes can result from internal colonialism. While a situation of internal colonialism may not include genocide and likewise, an instance of genocide does not require the presence of internal colonialism, these two categories may overlap, as they appear to in the case of the Uyghurs. To sum up, the combination of national security with so-called Uyghur economic and cultural backwardness has allowed China to let loose internal colonial practices.

In my next chapter, I highlight the growing Uyghur resistance to Chinese internal colonialism. I discuss how resistance has changed since the establishment of the internment camps and share my fieldwork interviews conducted in Turkey with Uyghurs who have fled Chinese oppression.

Chapter 6: Uyghur Resistance to Internal Colonialism

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapters of this dissertation covered the theoretical foundations of internal colonialism (Chapter 2), the historical colonial relationship between the Chinese state (and its predecessors) and the Uyghur community (Chapter 3), China's recent economic and cultural policies that have led to a deepening of internal colonialism against the Uyghur community (Chapter 4), and recent security policies that have accelerated processes of internal colonialism against the Uyghurs (Chapter 5). This chapter highlights the varied resistances by the Uyghur community against the Chinese state's ongoing internal colonialization with a focus on interviews collected in Kayseri[56] and Istanbul, Turkey, between March and April 2019. As noted in Chapter 2, James Scott (1989) suggests that escaping is a major form of resistance where extreme power differences define the oppressor and the oppressed. Moreover, because researchers struggle to access the Uyghur community in China given the uptick of oppression since 2014 and interviewing Uyghur there would put them at risk, I conducted fieldwork in Kayseri. This city has taken in a significant influx of Uyghurs fleeing persecution in China.

Instead of using short excerpts from the interviews I conducted, as I did in previous sections where relevant, I gather them here to provide context for each interviewee who shared some aspect of the difficulties they faced that led them to emigrate from China. All interlocutors are identified only through an alias. Their true identities are hidden to protect them and their relatives. As mentioned in the methodology section in Chapter 1, there is a sizeable population of Uyghurs in Turkey, particularly in Istanbul and Kayseri. Kayseri was my primary field study

[56] The city is located in the Central Anatolian region. It is one of the most industrialized and developed cities in Central Anatolia.

area because the Turkish government settled Uyghurs who recently migrated to the city; therefore, their experiences would be more likely to fit my study, which is focused on the contemporary situation. I interviewed 14 men and five women during my fieldwork. In this chapter, I share key results from interviews with six of the men and three of the women whose stories offer a representative range of experiences of struggle and resistance. A couple of my interviews did not go as I expected because the refugees were eager to talk about broad issues and history rather than their personal experiences. I also excluded some others from this chapter to avoid repetition, as many Uyghurs I interviewed shared a similar background and so had similar experiences. My interviews were semi-structured, including ten primary questions (see Appendix 1).

In previous chapters, I explained the broad economic and security policies that impact Uyghurs in the XUAR. However, my questions in interviews with Uyghurs in Kayseri related to their daily life when they were living in China. I did not ask my interlocutors what they thought about China's broad or specific economic and security policies but, rather, what were the effects of these policies on Uyghurs; specifically, how did these policies—developed thousands of miles away in Beijing—disrupt their daily life in the XUAR? The main questions that I asked the Uyghurs with whom I spoke were oriented to address the guiding research question for this chapter: What main events in the daily life of Uyghurs led them to decide to escape or resist in other ways? One typical response among interviewees as to why they fled, for instance, is that China's policies in the XUAR have increasingly impacted daily life as local officials use these security laws to serve their own interests. Some officials threaten Uyghurs by claiming that they would be cited as engaging in so-called extremist behavior unless they paid the official a bribe.

This chapter begins by outlining the change in resistance by Uyghurs against the Chinese state following the widespread use of internment camps to internally colonize the Uyghur community. This section is mainly based on my observations as a researcher on this issue since 2015. The second section overviews my fieldwork in Kayseri and Istanbul, Turkey in spring 2019. The third major section traces the use of new media in Uyghur resistance and highlights some of the important successes garnered through this method of resistance. In the final section, I review further recent successes that have been won through major Uyghur lobby organizations working in tandem with international human rights organizations.

6.2 Change in resistance

Although the strike hard campaign, or the "People's War on Terror" policies, started in 2014, Uyghur's resistance and attention to it changed most after the internment camps were established in 2017. As a researcher who has been studying the Uyghur issue since 2015, I have found that the change in resistance and coverage of the issue first surfaced in late 2018 and early 2019. Before this period, I was using web news and social media mention tracking applications, in addition to checking region-specific news websites and Uyghur lobby groups' press releases and newsletters. At this time, a couple of hours every week was enough to read all the news, comments and opinion pieces about the Uyghur issue. This began to change by September 2018 when the Human Rights Watch (HRW 2018), and then in November 2018 when the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) published their respective reports about the internment camps in the XUAR (Fergus, Cave, and Ruser 2018). On 26 November 2018, at the National Press Club in Washington, Mihrigul Tursun shared her detainment experience in the camps (Connell 2018). Shortly after that, on 29 November 2018, *Reuters* ("Tracking China's Muslim Gulag") published their investigation on the internment camps. Following this documentation (which included

satellite images of the camps), the issue of detainment camps for Uyghurs garnered global attention. By early 2019, I found that I had to spend all my daily work time reading that day's news, comments, interviews, testimonies and opinion pieces on the situation of Uyghurs as media around the world began to pay attention.

Before this global attention, the regional-specific websites and Uyghur lobbies newsletters were publishing information mainly from Uyghurs living in China. These individuals would talk of and send messages to their relatives who live outside of the XUAR, and these stories were published anonymously, with only a couple of exceptions.[57] It was understandable that those stories were not published in mainstream media, which prefers to have a clear confirmation process of its information sources. It was also understandable that Uyghurs who shared the information sought anonymity, considering that they could be accused of spying and eventually executed by the Chinese state. Uyghur lobby officers and a few activists were willing to provide their names and reveal their faces in the international arena. However, after the plight of the Uyghurs began to gain global attention following the documentation of two Uyghur women who revealed their names, Mirhrigul, and Gulbahar Jelilov,[58] and shared their stories, many other Uyghurs started to give interviews using their names and allowed their faces to be seen by news agencies. Likewise, Uyghurs began to feel more willing to publish their own testimonies on social media and no longer hesitate to come out of the shadows and tell their stories. This was a significant change in the pattern and form of Uyghur resistance. For the first time, the world was able to listen to an increasing stream of Uyghurs' stories regarding China's

[57] There are some Kazakhs from the XUAR who revealed their identities in their stories in early 2018, which is examined later in this chapter. However, they were not picked up by international media.
[58] I mentioned Gulbahar Jelilov in Chapter 4.

oppression that came not from anonymous people or unknown sources but from the individuals themselves who suffered the oppression in the region.

I obtained an understanding of this dramatic shift in resistance in conducting my fieldwork in Turkey in March 2019. Before I met with Uyghurs in Turkey, I worried that Uyghurs would not talk with me to protect their relatives from harm that may come from the Chinese government. The state would likely punish relatives if they could not punish the person sharing their story of the oppression taking place in the XUAR. As explained in previous chapters, China used relatives of Uyghurs who escaped from China to blackmail them not to talk to the foreign press or organizations about the situation in XUAR. To conduct interviews with Uyghur refugees in Turkey, I prepared an IRB protocol for vulnerable subjects. As a part of the protocol, I had to read a transcript that ensures that their identity would remain anonymous. I told them that I would not ask for their name or signature or ask any question that may reveal their identity. I also assured my research participants that if they thought any of my questions might reveal their identity and put their relatives at risk, they could skip the question. I also told them that I would not take any pictures or videos and that there would not be any digital recordings of the interview, but only pen and paper. Most of the time, research participants cut off my talk to say that they were fine about giving their names and even gave me permission to take their picture. “There is nothing left to lose” said one of them, which summarizes their emotional state and why Uyghurs around the world are more vocal and visible now. It is not that all their family members and relatives have escaped from China, but that interviewees did not know even if their relatives were alive after their relatives were put into internment camps.

6.3 Examples from interviews

After I arrived in Kayseri, I contacted the East Turkistan Culture and Solidarity Association (ETCSA) and asked them to spread the word about my study among Uyghurs to find volunteers. I met with 14 men in Kayseri with the help of ETCSA. As Uyghurs speak a dialect of a Turkic language and learned Turkish as spoken in Turkey, which is my native language, I was able to conduct my interviews in Turkish. Only in a couple of cases I could not understand some words used by the interviewees; therefore, I occasionally needed an interpreter in those cases.[59] The individual who helped me with this was with the ETCSA and spoke fluently the Turkish language as used by Uyghurs. Because the Turkish I speak and the Turkish that Uyghurs speak is so similar, there was no need for a systematic review of translations as I only struggled with a few words. The ETCSA officer assisted me with translation in these few instances. The Uyghurs that I met in my fieldwork shared similar backgrounds and came from a similar class location. Most of them used to engage in a trade back in their homeland. Because of this occupation, they were able to make enough money to escape with their families. With their savings and through selling their investments, they were able to pay bribes to local officials in XUAR and human traffickers. Some of the interviewees have high levels of education. Notably, I was not able to talk with women in Kayseri due to a gender difference in terms of how and where men and women spend their time. A woman officer responsible for Uyghur refugee women in Kayseri serves as a contact point for Uyghur women to provide for their resettlement and other needs. This officer told me that women are very closed to communication with people from outside their community. Even the officer has problems reaching out to Uyghur women.

[59] Quotes from Uyghurs in this chapter are my translations from Turkish to English. The translations modify grammar to some degree for readability.

For this reason, I was told that women's branches of Uyghur advocacy organizations hold a meeting in Istanbul and that these women would be more open to giving interviews. I was able to talk with five Uyghur women at this conference in Istanbul. However, again, these individuals came mainly from the equivalent of the middle-class sector. The men whom I met in Kayseri were not active participants in Uyghur lobbying organizations. Their main concern at the time was to survive and to provide food for their families. By contrast, the women I met in Istanbul were active participants in these lobbying organizations, quite different from the Uyghur women in Kayseri who lead more private and guarded lives. While this information contextualizes my interviews with these Uyghur women and men in Turkey, it should not be read as representative of Uyghur women and men escapees residing in Turkey, but rather as a sense of those men and women I could gain access to and who were willing to tell their stories to me. What all interviewees have in common with Uyghurs generally in Turkey is that they all have someone in China whom they cannot contact, including children, parents, siblings, and so on. Their family members are either in prison, in internment camps, or have "graduated" from internment camps, making their family members afraid to contact them for fear of having them be sent back to the camps.

Mehmet was a former contractor in construction who owned a small business in the XUAR. I asked Mehmet what made him decide to leave China. He responded: "Back in 1980s-1990s there was competition with Chinese too. But at the time Chinese business come to XUAR, it stays 4-5 months and after the construction was done, they leave. Today they stay there permanently because the state supports them in various ways." I asked him what kind of support from the state Han-owned companies received. "They get subsidies. Banks belong to the Chinese; cement factories belong to the Chinese. When Chinese companies ask for a loan or

material for the construction, they can get them a lot more easily and cheaper than my business. When the work got delayed, I had to pay penalties, but Chinese companies did not get punished." I heard resentment in Mehmet's voice as he continued: "Does not matter how much you serve to the state, does not matter even if you denounce your religion, the state does not allow you to rise your wealth or expand your business. Sometimes they destroy it in a night, sometimes in couple months."

Erkin, another male interviewee, mentioned the issue of land reform in China.[60] "We had land rented for 30 years from the state. It was not too big, but enough for my family. I invested in this land, but it has been taken from me." I asked if what he meant is that the state took his land. He said it was not state policy but that he was threatened by local officials: "I was told if I would not [give the land back] they [local officials] would put my family in prison. Many land tracts have been taken from Uyghurs and given to Chinese families in this way."

Ziya was a medical school student but was suspended after one and half years because he engaged in prayer in the school's dormitories. After the suspension, Ziya continued his education but in alternative medicine. "After I graduated, I opened an herbalist store. It was difficult to start a business. I had to pay much in bribes [to local officials]. But even when you have permission after paying a bribe, officials come over every two weeks for inspection. They always find some excuse to fine my business." I asked Ziya if Han Chinese herbalist owners were treated the same as Uyghur herbalist owners. Ziya replied that: "Other herbalist stores who are owned by Chinese were even able to sell smuggled products."

[60] Erkin refers to the Land Management Law (1998) that gave land contracts on a 30-year basis to local families. The land—technically belonging to the state—was already being worked by these families. For more information, see Chari et al. (2019).

Zordun used to work as a bank clerk. I asked if he felt like he could earn a promotion when he was a bank clerk. Zordun replied that all the managers and higher-ups were Han. I asked him why he felt this was the situation. Zordun answered: “China denies our existence, our culture, history and religion. When it is Ramadan, they want to be sure that we eat and do not fast. In the rest of the year, they do not care if Uyghurs are hungry.” Zordun added: “No one is born as a terrorist. We have to protect our culture.”

Abdurehim, who was a cloth trader in China, spoke about his daily life difficulties as a Uyghur. “I moved to Urumqi from Aksu. Security measures were a little bit more relaxed in Urumqi. But the police said I had to go back to Aksu, as everyone has to live where they were born.” I asked Abdurehim if it was difficult to come to Turkey. “People who came here were richer ones. I had to sell everything I had for a little money to brokers. To escape with my family, to provide security. If there was not oppression, if we could leave peacefully, I would stay, I would go back. I had everything there my business, my friends, relatives…”

Yusuf, a small business owner, discussed the difficulties of engaging in religious practices. “If they [local officials] find prayer beads, a prayer rug, a Quran or any religious materials, they ask thousands of yuan in fines or a similar amount in bribes. If you do not have money, they put you into the camps.” I also asked Yusuf how businesses worked for him in the XUAR. He answered: “When you start a business, if you pay enough in bribes, it is easy to open a store. If you come into prominence, make good business, gain wealth then they [local officials] look for excuses to charge you for with terrorism to destroy your business.”

Another interviewee, Isa, also mentioned the ubiquity of bribes. “One day they [local officials] found a religious video in my phone. It was nothing but a call for prayer. It is enough for them to accuse me of terrorism. To escape the accusation, I had to pay a bribe of 5000

(yuan).” I asked Isa if he feels free to practice his religion since leaving China. He replied: “In here (Turkey) we can wake up to the call for prayer every morning and live my religion freely. It is really important for me.”

Reyhan, one of the few women I was able to interview, went to medical school for seven years. She began working as a gynecologist in China and did this for 13 years. I asked Reyhan about the discrimination she faced as a Uyghur on the job. Reyhan explained: “The discrimination was overwhelming in the hospital I worked. I was supposed to be promoted, but they appointed a Chinese doctor who had less service years than I had.” Another example she gave is that:

> when there was Uyghur patient, Chinese doctors refuse to treat them and ask me to treat Uyghur patients. We are doctors, how can we discriminate against patients? I still do not understand. When I complained about this discrimination, the head doctor of the hospital made me to apologize for my rebellious behaviors in front of my colleagues, nurses and other workers in the hospital. We, Chinese and Uyghurs, lived together. We went to school together. We played games on the street together. Before I started work in the hospital, I did not know I was different. What I mean, we were different, but I did not feel that our differences were problem. I thought this state [China] is my state, the red flag [China’s flag] is my flag. Chinese people thought me that I am different. They thought me that I am Uyghur. After I came to Turkey, I learned that I (Uyghurs) have a history. Now the blue flag [the Uyghur flag, a white crescent with a five-pointed star on a sky-blue background] is my flag.

I asked her about forced sterilization and abortions. “There were many birth control operations, such as inserting coil (IUD), against their will. We were taught that was the right thing; it was the law. There were forced abortions too. Doctors sometimes used law, sometimes made-up medical reasons. One woman, I will never forget. She thought she would give birth in a month. They aborted the pregnancy without medical reason.” At this point, due to Reyhan’s increased stress level and emotional pain caused by telling her story, following the IRB protocol, I stopped the interview.

Meryem, a woman who owned a cloth trade business in the XUAR, escaped in 2017. Before she escaped, Meryem had come to Istanbul many times for her business. She says, "Urumqi was a little bit more comfortable than other cities in the XUAR for us. There was no difference in life in Istanbul and Urumqi. [But]...it has become very difficult after 2015. Every time you leave the country or go back to China, I had to go through an investigation." I asked Meryem about her business in Urumqi. She answered: "All of the workers in the business were Uyghur women and men. The state banned selling conservative clothes that fully covered women's bodies, including long sleeves for women, and also banned selling prayer rugs. Many businesses closed because of this." I asked what kind of new laws passed around 2015 impacted her. Meryem explained: "One of the rules that impacted deeply me and my relatives and friends was that it was mandatory to live in the place people were born. There was a married couple among my workers. The woman was born in Kashgar and the man was born in Urumqi. Their marriage was official, but because of the rule, the woman had to move to Kashgar." Meryem gave another example: "People were hesitant to talk with those who have connections outside of China, such as me. Many of my friends and distant relatives were hesitant to meet and talk with me." Meryem continued: "Police raids have become a normal part of our life such that we stopped sleeping with our pajamas in case police raids at nights." I asked her if she had any relatives in the internment camps. She replied, "my sister stayed in a camp for three months. The only reason they took her was that they found a Quran that was gifted to her many years ago."

Aynur, another woman, stated: "We were born and raised and identified as Muslim. But it is a problem in China. I am happy in Turkey. I wake up to the call to prayer, then I pray to Allah. Most importantly, I feel secure because I know that police will not come to my home in the morning to check if I am praying."

To sum up, I point to how these stories speak to escape as a form of resistance because the levels of oppression have been both deepening and broadening among the Uyghur community in recent years. I suggest that together, the quotes from my interviewees support the findings of human rights reports on the Chinese state's oppression over Uyghurs and align with what news media have shared regarding the situation of Uyghurs over recent years. The major themes from these interviews speak to the inability of Uyghurs being able to practice their religion as they would like, the inequalities within the labor sector in the XUAR where Han citizens are always in managerial positions while Uyghurs are workers, and the discrimination that Uyghurs face in operating a business in the XUAR. Notably, when Uyghurs have successful businesses, the state tends to intercede to ensure that Uyghurs do not become wealthy. While the state seeks to keep Uyghurs above the poverty line, Chinese officials are keen to keep a noticeable wealth gap between Han and Uyghur citizens.

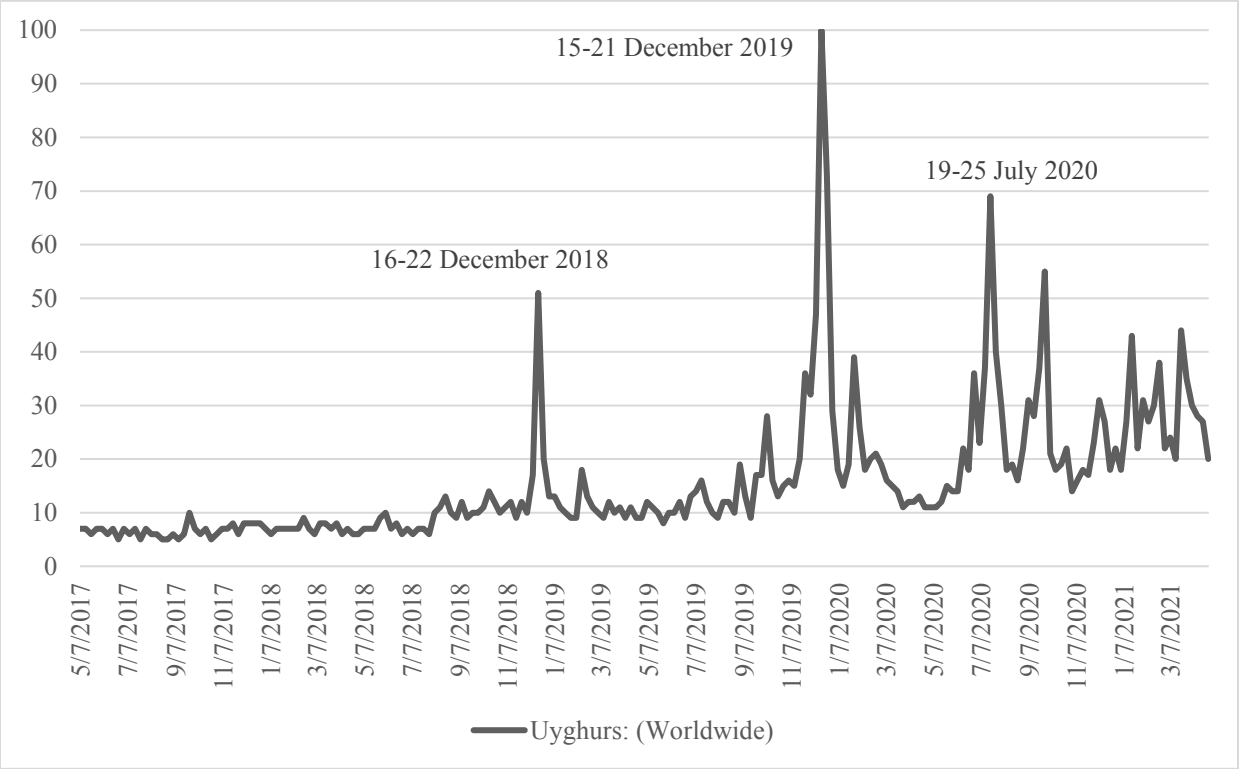
6.4 New media and resistance of Uyghurs

As noted earlier in section 6.2, Uyghur individuals living in exile have become one of the main sources of the resistance. They now have no fear of showing their faces and telling their stories or seeking out their relatives. They have become eager to give interviews to traditional media.[61] However, some people do not have access or the opportunity to make their voices heard in the media. For many Uyghurs, social media have become critical to enabling them to tell their stories, and to ask for support for their disappeared relatives.[62] The growing influence of social media has made it easier for Uyghurs' voices to be heard and it has led to having a number of

[61] Some examples are: "Uighurs: Nowhere" (2019), "Uighur exile" (2019), "Xinjiang: China" (2019), "China's Uighur Camp" (2021) and "Uighurs in Turkey" (2021).
[62] Some of the examples of Uyghur's testimonies about their disappeared can be found at:
https://twitter.com/YTumaris/status/1364275611854897152
https://twitter.com/AdityaRajKaul/status/1309459972619530240
https://twitter.com/CevlanJevlan/status/1245565783553576963

creative campaigns to increase awareness around China's internal colonial treatment of the Uyghurs. As a result of the increasing appearance of Uyghurs in both traditional and social media, attention to the XUAR has increased dramatically since 2018 December (see Figure 4: Search requests for "Uyghurs" using Google, worldwide results over time).[63]

Figure 4: Search requests for "Uyghurs" using Google, worldwide results over time[64]



Source: Google Trends (2021)

On 3 December 2019, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the UIGHUR Act.[65] However, the highest popularity of the term as searched in Google appears to be on 15-21

[63] As noted earlier Reuters investigation was published on 29 November 2018. Various newspaper/networks published related pieces through December 2018.

[64] The figure does not show how many times the term (Uyghurs) was searched in worldwide online but does show the search interest. While 0 shows the no interest, 100 shows the highest popularity. The long-term Google search results show when people get interested in a term over a period, which speaks to the level of popularity of a term. For more information, see https://support.google.com/trends/answer/4365533?hl=en.

[65] The Uighur Intervention and Global Humanitarian Unified Response Act suggests to the Secretary of State to consider sanctions against "members of the Government of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese Communist

December 2019. On 14 December 2019, Mesut Ozil, a German-Turkish soccer player who plays for Arsenal,[66] posted about Uyghurs on his social media accounts. Even though the posts were in Turkish, it grabbed attention worldwide. The *Guardian*'s (Ames 2019) translation of his post is as follows:

> East Turkistan, the bleeding wound of the Ummah, resisting against the persecutors trying to separate them from their religion. They burn their Qurans. They shut down their mosques. They ban their schools. They kill their holy men. The men are forced into camps and their families are forced to live with Chinese men. The women are forced to marry Chinese men.
>
> But Muslims are silent. They won't make a noise. They have abandoned them. Don't they know that giving consent for persecution is persecution itself?[67]

The second-highest spike in terms of the popularity of the Uyghur issue appears on 19-25 July 2020. This happened when more than 180 Uyghur and international human rights organizations urged companies with ties to production facilities in the XUAR where forced labor claims were being made to halt their use of this forced labor (Milne 2020).

In social media posts, Uyghurs sometimes shared their stories with hashtags that had become famous through other resistance movements, particularly movements in the US. For instance, they replicate the #MeToo movement, which spread in 2017 against sexual abuse and harassment, by using #MeTooUyghur to spread their stories.[68] Similarly, they have replicated the #BlackLivesMatter on social media by using #UyghurLivesMatter.[69]

When their attempt to increase awareness of the situation in China through hashtags was largely ignored by media outlets, they tried other methods. For instance, in early October 2019,

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Party, and state security apparatus, including Xinjiang Party Secretary Chen Quanguo and other officials credibly alleged to be responsible for human rights abuses in Xinjiang and elsewhere." To check the full text of the act, see https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/649/text.

[66] One of the "Big Six" teams in England's Premier League.

[67] For follow up story, see *France 24* "Ozil Blasts" (2020) and *BBC* "Mesut Ozil" (2020).

[68] Some examples can be found in Yang (2019) and Lam (2019).

[69] For an example, see https://twitter.com/RIGiiDnJoBwLJEE/status/1390002577996193797.

some human rights activists appeared at a US National Basketball Association (NBA) game with "Free Hong Kong" and "Google Uyghurs" signs. Due to the "no political signs" policy of the NBA, similar to most sport organizations, their signs were confiscated by NBA security. This event caused a discussion in the US about relations between the NBA and China (Li and Ciechalski 2019; Rogin 2019). Another example is the case of a 17-year-old American citizen, Feroza Aziz, who published a video about Uyghurs on the Chinese-owned social media company TikTok in November 2019. She starts her video as a make-up tutorial, a popular type of content in social media. While showing how to use make-up equipment, she then starts to talk about Uyghurs' situation in China:

> Then you're going to put [the eyelash curler] down and use your phone … to search up what's happening in China, how they're getting concentration camps, throwing innocent Muslims in there, separating families from each other, kidnapping them, murdering them, raping them, forcing them to eat pork, forcing them to drink, forcing them to convert. (Quoted in Kuo 2019).

After her video had gone viral, TikTok suspended her account due to her previous satirical videos (Cellan-Jones 2019). Although TikTok re-opened her account, the incident elevated discussion about Chinese social media companies and freedom of speech in the US.

Lastly, the website shahit.biz[70] and its sister project Uyghur Pulse channel[71] on YouTube have provided important avenues for Uyghurs to be heard and seen by an international audience. The founder of these connected projects, Gene Bunin, was inspired by the work of the Atajurt Kazakh Human Rights Organization.[72] The Atajurt Kazakh Human Rights Organization mobilized everyday Kazakhs who live in China to openly discuss their disappeared relatives and

[70] The website is also known as Xinjiang Victims Database. *Shahit* means "Witness." Similar to this project is the Uyghur Transitional Justice Database: https://www.utjd.org.
[71] This organization's YouTube channel can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxtHBfWaWYQPNgfvdvSDn4A.
[72] This organization's YouTube channel can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5uns79sHr1AZiUw1ikV7PQ.

then the organization published these stories on YouTube (Bunin 2021). Even though this organization was a pioneer in encouraging oppressed populations in China to speak openly about their experiences, the Atajurt Kazakh Human Rights Organization has rarely received credit for this work (Kasikci 2020). Bunin explains his projects, shahit.biz and Uyghur Pulse, thusly:

> Speaking about a victim and making their story public has, as shown over and over again, been much more likely to help them than make things worse. That probably wasn't true some years ago, but today I feel like being quiet is just silly – the ice has been broken in a very major way and the Chinese authorities seem to know that local intimidation is unlikely to work and may just end up bringing even more negative attention (Bunin 2021).

Currently there are over 14,000 entries from those who have identified a victim of the Chinese state in the form of enforced or involuntary disappearances into the prisons or camps in the XUAR. Many of these individual entries that document a victim include testimonies of relatives of the disappeared people in the XUAR, official documents, testimonies of the people who saw the disappeared ones for the last time, the official response to family members by the state, and court records about imprisonment.

6.5 Uyghur lobbies and international arena

Uyghur lobby organizations hold organized protests, contact state and international authorities, and help international human rights organizations collect data. Thus, they act as a bridge between international media and individual Uyghurs who want to speak up. In the 6th General Assembly of the World Uyghur Congress (WUC), Dolkun Isa[73] was elected, instead of Rebiya Kadeer, the then current president, as the organization's new president. Kadeer is still highly respected among the Uyghur exiled community and is given a continuing honorary role in

[73] Uyghur who is a German citizen, studied politics and sociology and one of the main figure in the establishment of the WUC.

the organization. However, after the election, some of the local Uyghur organizations, for instance, the East Turkistan Culture and Solidarity Association (ETCSA) in Kayseri, Turkey, chose to separate from the WUC. The ECTSA officers were hesitant to answer my questions about the WUC election and their relations with the WUC. I assumed that they did not want to discuss their "domestic" issues with an outsider like me. I suspect it is a dispute over the president.

Whatever the reason for the change in leadership (it could be Kadeer's age or language barrier), with the new generation, Uyghur organizations have become more active at the governmental level where they are located and at the international level. From my observations of Uyghur lobby organizations' activities over the years, the WUC's priority has changed from a long-standing goal of unifying Uyghur lobby organizations to now focus on increasing global awareness of and finding an immediate solution for the ongoing overwhelming oppression in the XUAR. In addition to already existing Uyghur lobby organizations, many more have recently been established with a range of more specific aims. Some are working to increase awareness, helping refugees and/or providing education on Uyghur language and culture. Two people, Dolkun Isa, the WUC president in Germany and Europe and Nury Turkel,[74] the Chairman of the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP),[75] have become more prominent on the international stage. With their and other Uyghur organizations working together with international human rights organizations, they have helped to pass some laws and sanctions against China for China's maltreatment of Uyghurs. As a result of the advocacy work of Uyghur lobbies and their international allies, there have been some successes. In 2020, the US Department of Homeland

[74] An American citizen and attorney, who was appointed a commissioner on the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom.
[75] This is a Uyghur advocacy organization based in Washington D.C.

Security blocked products from five companies in the XUAR on the grounds of these products having been made through forced labor. This was quickly followed in 2021 by votes in the Canadian House of Commons, the Netherlands Parliament and the UK's House of Commons to identify the Uyghurs as undergoing genocide in China. Additionally, in 2021, the European Union adopted sanctions against Chinese officials for human rights abuses against the Uyghur community.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided the range of the various forms of Uyghur resistance against internal colonialism by China. While there are likely to be everyday forms of resistance in China, given my lack of access to research within that country, I have instead highlighted the other ways that Uyghurs resist. Changes in resistance have occurred in recent years, since the rise of the use of internment camps, which have notably led to greater voice and visibility of Uyghurs living in exile —including a willingness to identify themselves on the international stage as they seek to bring attention to their missing and/or incarcerated loved ones. I also highlighted escape as resistance to internal colonization by bringing forward the voices of some of those who have been fortunate enough to flee China. The last two sections of this chapter show the roles of both new media and traditional forms of advocacy by highlighting how younger Uyghurs are using platforms such as Twitter to bring attention to the abuse of Uyghurs in China, as well as the work done by Uyghur advocacy organizations in tandem with international human rights groups to censure China for its escalating abuses and even possible genocide of the Uyghurs. In the next chapter, I provide a conclusion that reviews the main arguments and findings of this dissertation and the possibilities it holds for future research.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

In this dissertation, I have argued that China's economic development is partially achieved through violence in the form of internal colonialism against its largest minority group, the Uyghurs. I have suggested that internal colonialism is the best analytical lens to shed light on how Uyghurs as a collective have not simply failed to benefit from China's economic growth over the past decades but are actively harmed by these development processes. While a globalizing China portrays itself as the purveyor of modernization that will benefit the Uyghurs, the Uyghur community instead finds itself dispossessed economically, politically, and culturally. In the context of the global war on terror, China has used securitization policies to undermine Uyghurs due to their Muslim identity, constructed as Islamic terrorists.

7.2 Review of the dissertation chapters

In Chapter 2, I made the theoretical linkages between external and internal colonialism by outlining concepts from modernization theory, development discourses, world-system and dependency theory to internal colonialism. Using internal colonialism theory, I connected how China's authoritarian capitalist development has increased both ethnic and religious discrimination against Uyghurs, a process that fast-tracked "development" and national security measures launched in the context of the global war on terror. Additionally, I outlined other interrelated costs to Uyghurs, who are constructed by the state as hindrances to development and threats to China's security by their embodied presence. The chapter further summarized how China has employed internal colonialism against the Uyghur community as well as how attention has been drawn to the collective resistance of Uyghurs to the state, most notably by escaping

China and working through Uyghur lobby organizations abroad. Although China was not a colonizing state when it began to dispossess Uyghurs as part of its western expansion, state policies toward the Uyghur community may, past and especially present, be best understood using the lens of internal colonialism. The Uyghurs, as a minority group with indigenous roots in what is now XUAR long before the modern Chinese state, have been systematically oppressed by the majority Han-controlled state that exploits the Uyghurs and dispossesses them of their lands and cultural and social practices.

Also in Chapter 2, I made a case for internal colonialism as there have been some serious critiques of this theoretical framework. First, I argued that colonial policy is most efficiently carried out through internal colonialism since the state is typically seen as having a legitimate claim over lands under its sovereignty, as opposed to lands abroad. Second, political resistance to colonialism is more difficult within internal colonialism because the state can more easily and efficiently deploy policies against the internally colonized population. Overall, I stressed that getting caught up in the "internal" of internal colonialism is a semantic trap (Martins 2018). According to Martins, internal is not meant to apply only inside of a country but rather is best understood as a continuation of world-system theory in which geographic spaces are broken down into smaller units along the lines of core, semi-periphery and periphery within the state. In China, while there is no semi-periphery within the state, the Han majority are core and the Uyghurs compose China's periphery, pushed to the edges of the state, literally and symbolically.

In the historical analysis chapter (Chapter 3), I made the argument that China's current policies of internal colonialism in Xinjiang toward the Uyghur community do not arrive out of nowhere, but rather are an acceleration of a history of internal colonial violence by successive Chinese rulers in the western regions of contemporary China. Although there have been periods

where Chinese rulers have receded from the lands of today's XUAR, overall, the Chinese state and its predecessors have long debated how to handle the "Uyghur problem." A recurring side of this debate has been to somehow prevent Uyghurs from practicing Islam, as this is seen as a unifying force for the Uyghurs and a divisive force for the Han-majority Chinese nation. Whether the Qing Empire, the Nationalist government or the Communist Party has been in power, there has been a continued emphasis on the "backwardness" of those in the Uyghurs' homeland, which has over time and at various times led to proposals to wipe out the people or the people's social practices from the region (and beyond in China, extending to all Muslims). Chapter 3 highlighted that the subtext of China's development plan for the XUAR is to "civilize" the region through colonization as "'failed societies can be fixed only if they abandon their 'backward-looking' norms and embrace 'modernity'" (quoted in Fatton 2014, 2). The outcome of this development plan has been the ongoing and deepening material and cultural dispossessions of the Uyghurs. The acceleration of these processes since 2014 have ignited greater violent resistance on the part of the Uyghurs against the state. This resistance has been met with brutal suppression at the collective level and seen the state use charges of terrorism to its advantage in this conflict. China's development model is rooted in the so-called "peaceful rise" approach, which became official policy in 2000, although since 2004 it has been re-labeled "China's peaceful development." This peaceful development would be secured through globalization, which would help China to reduce poverty and income inequality (Zheng 2005). Even though the east coast regions have become highly industrialized and gained in economic development, the economic gap increased in the eastern and western regions. Because of this, China started the Western Development Plan to generate economic investment in the XUAR and

bring ‘modernity’ to the region. The chapter emphasized China’s development model as internal colonialism as it involves an embrace of globalization and the war on terror.

Chapter 4 overviewed the current Chinese economic and cultural policies in the XUAR that exacerbate and further reify internal colonization of the Uyghur community. The Chinese government works to present its interventions as promoting economic growth, but the intention of the state is to discourage and wipe out Uyghur cultural and religious practices such as dress, language, praying and celebrating religious holidays, among other things. This chapter highlighted how China engages in internal colonization of Uyghurs and works to portray the community as drags on development. Uyghurs are depicted by the state as sources of poverty, as backward or unmodernized, and as insufficiently socialized for patriotic education and work. Specifically, this chapter asked: What is the relationship between China’s contemporary approach to economic development and the increase in cultural and religious oppression of the Uyghurs? The chapter also sought to answer: How has a globalizing China’s embrace of neoliberal development deepened and accelerated particular and unique forms of internal colonialization of the Uyghurs, both material and discursive?

I suggested that the use of the notion of “poverty alleviation” in CCP documents and policies in the XUAR is used to justify the state’s supposed goal of development. The current Chinese discourse of poverty alleviation resonates with contemporary mainstream international development agencies and programs. I argued here that this rhetoric ultimately serves as both an internal and external justification for the economic and cultural policies the CCP has imposed on the XUAR, which work to dispossess Uyghurs of their land as well as disrupt the economic and social practices of the Uyghurs. The ultimate aim is to end Uyghur as an identity. Although there is extensive data regarding overall economic development in the XUAR, there is a notable lack

of research on wealth distribution in the region, including disaggregated data that would reveal ethnic/racial and gender differences in how economic development serves those living in this region. I suggested that what data does exist on economic development supports the case that internal colonialism is at play against the Uyghurs. This data demonstrates that Uyghurs by and large do not gain from state development and certainly not at the same level as their Han counterparts. In terms of employment, subsidies, resource extraction and the Belt and Road Initiative, despite the positive rhetoric around these concepts meant to signify modernity and prosperity, such policies have accelerated and/or deepened processes of internal colonialization against Uyghurs in material and symbolic ways.

The economic policies that undermine the Uyghurs are not the only policies at play. The state also engages in cultural repression through so-called bilingual education policies as well as through the use of political re-education camps. These examples work to enhance China's internal colonial presence in the Uyghurs' homeland by erasing Uyghur identity. "Bilingual" education and re-education camps have been justified by the state as part of its regional development plan. The state works to portray Uyghur identity as the main reason for the region's economic "backwardness." This includes not being fluent in Mandarin while practicing Islam. The "bilingual education" policies, contrary to what might be expected, work to discourage the use of the Uyghur language in schools by increasing the use of Mandarin. In the "political re-education" camps, which are the most destructive policy implementation for Uyghur identity and bodily safety in recent years. The camps are claimed by the Chinese state to be vocational camps for Muslim minorities, particularly Uyghurs and Kazakhs, to alleviate levels of poverty in the XUAR. Until recently, China denied the existence of these camps. However, with satellite images, the government can no longer do so. Most researchers understand the camps to be

internment camps, while many Uyghurs see camps as a major method to implement a "cultural genocide policy" by China. Other examples of working to overturn Uyghur cultural identity in the Uyghurs' homeland include altering the names of the settlements and geographic landscape (such as mountains and lakes) from Uyghur language names to Mandarin names. Such name changes are an important signifier of domination by severing the bonds between the local people and the place they live and their history. Furthermore, in the old city of Kashgar, the government has destroyed traditional homes on the basis of improving life for Uyghurs.

Chapter 5 suggested that the Chinese state depicts Uyghur social practices as inherently violent, backward and committed to terrorism as a means to justify deepening internal colonization of the community. China has securitized the XUAR through what officials refer to as "three evil forces," extremism, separatism and terrorism, which are claimed by the state to undermine national unity and stability. Extremism refers specifically to Islamist extremism and stems from Pan-Islamism. Separatism refers to the Uyghurs' desire for an independent state, which China sees as linked to Pan-Turkism. The three evil forces are deemed by China to undermine ethnic unity, stability and prosperity, which are seen as benefitting the state and its economy (Meyer 2012, 2016). For the state, national prosperity is possible only through ethnic unity and stability. This is understood by China as the adoption of the Han way of life and submitting to state-led development by minority communities. In pursuit of this goal of seeing national prosperity through harmonious ethnic unity and stability, the government defines any "incident" (crime or accident) involving both Uyghurs and Han citizens in terms of Uyghur acts of terror. The official designation of these events as terrorism allows the state to portray its responses as addressing the dangers posed by the minority Uyghur community to other domestic audiences. Likewise, it allows the state to justify to international audiences that Uyghurs engage

in terrorism. Both factors promote deepening internal colonialism on the grounds of national security.

Also in Chapter 5, I reviewed the narrative of domestic terrorism in China and the relations between the alleged domestic terrorist organizations (ETIM/TIP) and the Taliban regime as well as al-Qaeda through four different accounts: China, ETIM/TIP, the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and Uyghurs who fled to Afghanistan. In the first account, China claims that ETIM/TIP is a Uyghur terrorist organization active in Afghanistan and a component of al-Qaeda, which orchestrates terrorist attacks in China. In the second account, ETIM/TIP's leadership refutes connections with al-Qaeda and argues that Uyghurs and Arab fighters attracted to al-Qaeda have different understandings of both jihad and who is the enemy. The third account, the Taliban and bin Laden account, confirm ETIM/TIP's leadership account that refutes ties between al-Qaeda and Uyghurs. The Taliban have tried to construct good relations with China and see the US as the enemy. For Uyghurs, China is the clear enemy, yet the Taliban have not supported Uyghurs in this fight. In the fourth account, Uyghurs acknowledge that the Taliban opened their camps to Uyghurs and their families, giving them refuge. These various accountings provide a multitude of ways that acts by Uyghurs can be construed that contest China's single lens of terrorism. Since 2014, China has used the so-called "strike hard campaign" in the XUAR, which is understood as part of the "war on terror," a term echoed through China's "People's War on Terror." The strike hard campaign has provided the justification for the most recent wave of oppression against Uyghurs. I traced this turn of events by analyzing Chinese discourse in legal documents that create a legal framework for the state. China has passed numerous laws and regulations such as the Counter-Terrorism Law (2015), the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Regulation on De-extremification Ordinance (2017) and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous

Region Religious Affairs Regulations (2015) in pursuit of the "People's War on Terror." I exposed how China uses vague terms in these laws and regulatory polices to legitimize the state's oppression of Uyghurs through internal colonialism and to veil its real aim to turn Uyghurs into loyal subjects.

Chapter 6 provided an overview of the various forms of Uyghur resistance against internal colonialism by China and outlined the changes in forms of Uyghur resistance to China that are especially and currently a reaction to the state's widespread deployment of interning Uyghurs in detention camps. The rise of these camps has increased the voices of Uyghurs, particularly those living outside China in exile, on social, other media and in terms of speaking out less guardedly with human rights organizations and researchers. In these contexts, more Uyghurs are willing to identify themselves on the international stage to bring attention to their missing loved ones as it now seems to make little difference if loved ones left behind China are protected if Uyghur exiles remain silent and anonymous. I shared the theoretical base of my fieldwork conducted in Kayseri and Istanbul, Turkey, over spring 2019, arguing that escape constitutes perhaps the most frequent form of Uyghur resistance to the Chinese state, enabling the rise of many more Uyghurs voices critical of the Chinese regime. Additionally, I chronicled the use of new media in Uyghur resistance, highlighting the successes that have been made through this method of resistance to bring attention to the plight of Uyghurs to global audiences. This chapter further outlined other recent successes secured through Uyghur advocacy groups and international human rights organizations. Within China, where possible, Uyghurs likely engage in everyday forms of resistance. However, given my inability to research within the country, I emphasized other ways that Uyghurs resist internal colonialism by the state.

7.3 Contributions and limitations

This present work comes at a time when the Uyghurs have become a subject of intense international attention; thus, beyond providing a substantiated case for understanding the plight of Uyghurs in China as arising from internal colonialism and thus contributing to that literature to expand it to include Muslim minority cases, this dissertation also provides a significant contribution to the literature on the Uyghurs to advance understandings of their struggles.

This dissertation provided five major contributions. First, it disputed the positive attributes uncritically given to China's economic boom and challenged assumptions that China is a defender of the colonized and is a non-colonizing state. Global South countries and international financial organizations admire China as a model for development when this development has come at the cost of Uyghurs and other minorities' well-being. This dissertation adds to development literature by complicating simple narratives around China's economic success, particularly in terms of poverty. Second, and relatedly, this project exposed the inequalities and inequities baked into China's development. More significantly, I demonstrated the destructive impacts of China's development plans on Muslim minorities through internal colonialism, which has had both material and discursive effects. Third, it suggested how China's development model in the XUAR functions as internal colonialism rather than simply a form of ethnic discrimination, shedding light on the urgency of halting this process. Fourth, it highlighted the processes by which the Chinese state portrays itself to the international community as a defender of national security while in actuality unleashing significant violence against the Uyghur community on the grounds that Uyghurs engage in "extremism." When Uyghurs resist the state's violence, they are portrayed as Islamic terrorists.

Finally, this study filled several important gaps in the literature on internal colonialism and human rights more broadly. This includes expanding attention to how minority Muslim

populations are subjected to internal colonialism; the hesitation of but a few scholars to identify China as a (internal) colonizer; and how globalization and the global war on terror have deepened, in part by serving as pretexts for, the internal colonialization of the Uyghurs within China. Uyghurs have been more willing to speak out about the violence taking place in the XUAR against their community because of the widespread detentions, which threaten the safety and security of all Uyghurs, whether individuals abroad speak out or not. Since they have little left to lose now by speaking out, they are more willing to share their experiences with international audiences that serve as counter-narratives to China's official story. While this dissertation offers insights into the relationship between China's plans for economic expansion both within its borders and abroad and the human rights violations it exercises against its Muslim minorities within its borders to do so, it also holds important implications for Muslim minority populations, indigenous or otherwise, outside of China in terms of detectable patterns of internal colonial practices that account for human rights violations. In this sense, this dissertation also advances thinking on human rights in connecting an analysis of internal colonialism with a contemporary high-profile case of gross human rights abuse, culminating in what many now see as genocide. When the detention camps are seen as a culmination of a *longue duree* of the internal colonization of the Uyghurs by China, the camps not only come as no surprise but also calling only for their closure is revealed as insufficient to stem the human rights crisis being experienced by the Uyghurs in China. And as international human rights advocates have observed, the sophisticated technologies employed by the Chinese government to surveille and track primarily Uyghur communications, movement, and behavior are easily exported for use by other states to use against internal populations and particularly minorities constructed as threats

to the state, thereby producing new forms and techniques of internal colonialism (HRW 2019; Millward and Peterson 2020).

In terms of limitations, this dissertation has had to rely on sources primarily outside of China to determine how the actual histories and experiences of the Uyghurs depart from Chinese claims about them. Given the extensive surveillance of the Uyghurs that the Chinese state undertakes, which disallows them from speaking freely, and its limitations on foreigners to interact with them, in-person ethnographic research and participant observation in the XUAR is challenging and ultimately not feasible for me. Similarly, as a non-Mandarin speaker, I had to rely on English translations of Chinese documents, and could not interview Han Chinese people in XUAR either, who would also probably not speak freely to me either. Nevertheless, there is still a fair amount of historical and anthropological literature on the Uyghurs, primarily by Western scholars, as well as a growing number of international human rights organization reports, substantial amounts of official Chinese documents are available in English, and my knowledge of the Turkic language spoken by the Uyghurs and my Turkish citizenship enabled me to access Uyghurs in the Turkish diaspora and to follow Uyghurs outsider and to some degree within China on social media. As long as China sustains its stranglehold, born of internal colonialism, on Uyghurs in China, research on them will remain limited. This is all the more reason that international human rights organizations need to continue to call for independent assessments of Uyghur life (and death, both physical and cultural/religious) in China.

A further complication, which I address more below in my final section on future research, is how addressing the Uyghur human rights crisis is entangled in US (and more broadly Western)-China relations, with the potential of reducing the Uyghurs plight to a political football between great powers. According to scholars of internal colonialism, the US has itself practiced

this (and continues to do so) with respect to Indigenous peoples and African Americans within its borders, reducing its own legitimacy in calling for China to desist from its egregious treatment of the Uyghurs. At the same time, Uyghurs and their political representatives (the Uyghur lobbies) have gained leverage with the US and other Western powers to challenge China on this matter in the context of the more confrontational politics with China adopted by the Trump Administration. While this has constituted fertile ground for international attention to the Uyghurs plight, which cannot be denied or overshadowed by power politics, I was particularly careful to corroborate Uyghur interview and social media material with independent press, human rights organization, and scholarly accounts to present the case of their internal colonization in China.

7.4 Future research

Uyghurs' resistance has gained traction, particularly since the rise of and international attention to internment camps. The fact that their resistance is to a country that has become an economic powerhouse in the region and beyond and which aims to become one at the global level complicates how their resistance is received internationally. On the one hand, the Uyghurs' resistance to Chinese treatment of them has sometimes worked against them in some countries, including even Muslim-majority ones, that seek to garner greater Chinese investment in their countries and further their own development. On the other hand, Uyghurs' resistance to the Chinese state is taken quite seriously in some other countries, particularly Western ones.

For example, when Uyghur internment camps became known to the international community in 2017, in the US, the Trump Administration and Republicans, in general, used the abuses of Uyghurs as one reason (among many others) to justify the Trump Administration's ongoing trade war with China. It is an interesting counterfactual to wonder how much attention

the violences against the Uyghurs would have gained (especially in the US) if this issue did not feed into US national economic and security interests at the time. In terms of future research, unpacking how human rights issues are politicized in the context of interstate power politics is necessary, but also how international human rights campaigns can either capitalize on such conflicts to gain greater international attention or disentangle such cases from power politics to further legitimize the cause, including legally. As I noted in Chapter 5, there is some controversy over whether China is committing genocide against the Uyghurs in terms of the letter of international law, so tracking if and when the case comes to the International Criminal Court will be important. In terms of my own future research, as Turkey is (one of) the largest diaspora areas for Uyghurs, I am interested in how they are maintaining and evolving their own culture and religion there and how the Turkish state aids or not in that process, whether or not they ever return to China. Evidence from my interviews suggests that they no longer fear practicing their religion in Turkey and with much relief but are still highly traumatized and many are struggling economically. Thus, the question arises as to the status of Uyghurs in Turkey and, more broadly, Uyghur-Turkish state-Turkish civil society relations and support. This dissertation is also a basis that will enable me to continue to track the political work of Uyghurs in Turkey in resistance to Chinese internal colonialism, particularly as it further impacts international condemnation and Chinese behavior (if at all), while determining the political, economic, social, and cultural conditions Uyghurs face in Turkey. Although my research will continue to focus on Uyghurs and their conditions and resistance to the Chinese state in Turkey, Uyghur refugees have scattered worldwide. Each Uyghur refugee serves as an embodied example of resistance, each of whom deserves to be studied more in-depth to understand the collective resistance of Uyghurs against Chinese internal colonialism.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions

The following questions offer a rough guideline of the order and type of questions the researcher asked the participant:

1) In what sector did you work in China?
2) In China, what sort of education/training did you get to be employed in the sector you worked in?
3) Did you experience discrimination in the workplace or while training?
4) Were you comfortable to display your ethnic and religious identity in the workplace?
5) Did you experience economic discrimination?
6) Were you a member of a labor union? If yes, what was the union's position against discrimination?
7) Did you get economic aid from the central and/or local government?
8) Why did you flee from China?
9) Were you part of a resistance group against discrimination in China? If yes, what kind of activities were you a part of?
10) What do you think about China's accusation of terrorism of many forms of Uyghur resistance?