

Effects of Interdependency in the Xinjiang-Central Asian Region

Ann Mary McMillan

BA, TESOL, MA

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to
the Department of International Business and Asian Studies, Griffith University,
Nathan, Qld 4111.

June 2004

ABSTRACT

The past decade has seen a transformation in the relationships among states in the Xinjiang-Central Asian region. The thesis is an analysis of this relationship, a relationship primarily built on economic and strategic interdependency. Within the thesis, the basis of the relationship is established; the extent of the relationship is ascertained, and the impact of this relationship is evaluated.

The thesis differs from previous studies of this area in several ways. The most significant is that a group of Central Asian states and an autonomous region of China have formed into a unit of economic interdependency, which needs to be assessed as a group rather than as individual entities. Much of previous and recent scholarship tends to focus on issues within a particular country or part of a country, such as the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China. However, it is my contention that this is not an adequate representation of what is occurring in the region today. The focus needs to be widened to take into account the dynamics of this interdependent relationship which consists of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and several of the former Soviet Union states, primarily Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. All of these states with the exception of Uzbekistan are contiguous with Xinjiang. This relationship of interdependency has reached a level sufficient to influence decisions taken by governments within the region, and a prime factor of this has been the suppression of secessionist movements, principally Uygur separatist movements, among the Uygur diaspora residing in neighbouring states.

Another highly relevant issue the thesis evaluates is sources of tension within the Xinjiang-Central Asian region and the impact these tensions have on the interdependency relationship. An assessment is made as to whether because of this interdependency, the sources of tension may not be adequately addressed by the respective governments to the satisfaction of the general populace. This is seen as due to the individual governments' hesitation to upset China by addressing such matters as border demarcation and transboundary water diversion between China and neighbouring states. An outcome of this scenario may be that many of the tensions are left to simmer and therefore bode ill for future stability in the region.

Fundamentally, the thesis argues that the matters raised in the previous paragraphs need to be assessed on the basis of an ongoing relationship of interdependency encompassing Xinjiang and several neighbouring Central Asian states. The overlapping of multiple sources of commonality such as geography, ethnicity, culture, religion, economics and strategic matters, dictates that we should not assess issues on a country-by-country basis. Rather, it is necessary to consider the region as a whole, taking into account the prevailing conditions emanating from this relationship of economic and strategic interdependency.

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Ann Mary McMillan

CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Declaration	iii
Contents	v
List of maps and figures	vii
List of key countries	ix
Glossary of terms and abbreviations	xi
Acknowledgements	xiii
I Introduction	1
Research impetus, 1; Sources of tension within Xinjiang-Central Asia, 3; Xinjiang-Central Asia: Natural regionalism or a construction?, 11; Methodology, 15.	
II The Importance of Xinjiang to China	19
Geographic position of northwest China, 23; History of Xinjiang-Central Asia, 31; Central Asian states of the former Soviet Union and their geographic importance to China, 42; The ethnolinguistic connectiveness, 48; Oil, gas and geopolitical tensions in the Xinjiang-Central Asian region, 50; Intra-regional trade, 62.	

III China's position in Central Asia	67
The flow of Han Chinese and Chinese goods into FSU states, 71; Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, 80; Interstate relationships, 91.	
IV Intra and inter-state tensions in Xinjiang-Central Asia: border demarcation and water management	113
Border demarcation, 115; Water management, 126.	
V Ethnic conflict in Xinjiang-Central Asia	155
The impact of interdependency, 162; Trans-migration into Xinjiang, 167; Resource exploitation, 175; Language policy, 179.	
VI Islam as a source of tension in the Xinjiang-Central Asian region	187
Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami, 193; Contemporary Islam: reformation or revolution?, 196; Diffusion of Islam, 200; The Muslims of China, 202; Terrorist/terrorism, 204.	
VII Summary and Conclusion	227
Select Bibliography	235

LIST OF MAPS AND FIGURES

MAPS

2.1 China	25
2.2 Xinjiang-Central Asia	25
2.3 Proposed Kazakhstan-Xinjiang oil pipeline	55
2.4 Oil fields and proposed and existing pipelines	57
3.1 Kyrgyz-Xinjiang Electricity Project	99
4.1 Xinjiang-Kyrgyzstan border region	119
4.2 Flow path of Ili and Irtysh Rivers	131
4.3 Aral Sea	141

FIGURES

5.1 Relative Population Increases for Selected Ethnic Groups, 1978-2002	174
---	-----

LIST OF KEY COUNTRIES

<i>Country</i>	<i>Capital</i>	<i>President</i>
Kazakhstan	Astana	Nursultan Abish-uly Nazarbayev
Kyrgyz Republic (Commonly referred to as Kyrgyzstan)	Bishkek	Askar Akayev
People's Republic of China	Beijing	Hu Jintao
Russia	Moscow	Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin
Tajikistan	Dushanbe	Emomali Sharipovich Rahmonov
Uzbekistan	Tashkent	Islam Abduganiyevich Karimov

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AZAT	Kazakh nationalist party called Azat (freedom)
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
Caliphate	(Khilafat). The Islamic state established by successors to the Prophet Mohammad that in the early Islamic period united all Muslim lands under a single caliph.
CARs	Central Asian Republics
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation
CSIS	Centre for Strategic and International Studies
ETIC	East Turkestan Information Centre
ETIM	East Turkestan Islamic Movement
ETLO	East Turkestan Liberation Organisation
ETR	East Turkestan Republic
FSU	Former Soviet Union
HT	Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami. Islamic movement that seeks through non-violent means to restore the caliphate.
ICG	International Crisis Group
IEA	International Energy Agency
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
IMT	Islamic Movement of Turkestan. Also known as Hizb-i-Islami Turkestan (Islamic Party of Turkestan).
IPT	Islamic Party of Turkestan
NBR	National Bureau of Asian Research
NGO	Non-government Organisation
Oblast	Province
PCC	Production and Construction Corp
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
RAS/RATS	Regional Antiterrorist Structure

RFERL	Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty
SCO	Shanghai Co-operation Organisation
TCA	Times of Central Asia
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN FVDP	United Nations Ferghana Valley Development Programme
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WUYC	World Uyгур Youth Congress
Xinjiang PCC	Xinjiang Production and Construction Corp
XUAR/Xinjiang	Xinjiang Uyгур Autonomous Region

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My primary thanks for their assistance and support during the writing of this thesis over the past three years must go to my two supervisors, Professor Colin Mackerras and Professor Nick Knight. Their expertise, both individually and jointly, complement each other to such a degree, that it combines to make this very onerous task achieve a degree of possibility. For this, and their general encouragement and forbearance, I thank them.

I would also like to express my appreciation of assistance given to me in topographical matters by Associate Professor Larry Crissman and Jason Wotherspoon. The administration staff of the Department of International Business and Asian Studies also rate special mention, especially Carole Mackinney and Colin England, who at all times did their utmost to smooth the way. Robyn White's formatting skills provided a fitting conclusion.

The thesis would not have been possible without the award of a Griffith University Postgraduate Research Scholarship. The Griffith Asia Pacific Research Institute contributed to the overall effort with the provision of workshops and additional funding. The Australian National University also contributed by allowing me to participate, at their expense, at a China Studies Summer School, with the Australia-China Council providing funding for the airfare to enable me to attend the week-long session.

Completing my thesis would not have been possible without the support of those who never doubted my studies would be completed.

Dedicated to Cora, Max and Bill McMillan.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This decade may well see the re-emergence of an historic trade and economic zone comprising former Soviet Central Asia, Afghanistan, eastern Iran, Pakistan, and northwest India, with close links to both the Caucasus and Xinjiang in China. The re-emergence of this region, which for 2,500 years was understood to be the true “Central Asia,” will mark an epochal change in the world economy and open unimagined prospects for international trade and investment.¹

As part of this rapidly emerging zone, China’s Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region is not only extremely significant to the development of the Chinese economy, it is also a vital component of the interdependent relationship emerging between neighbouring Central Asian states. Throughout this thesis I will refer to this regional interdependency relationship as either Xinjiang-Central Asia or simply Central Asia, and later in this introductory chapter will set out my reasoning for doing so.

Not only is Xinjiang significant because of its geographically strategic position, it also gives China access to the potentially vast quantities of oil and gas in the Central Asian-Caspian area, which can in turn supply the much needed energy resources required to fuel China’s economic development. At the same time, Xinjiang reopens an ancient trade route by providing a springboard for China’s trade expansion into Central Asia, and onwards to the Caspian region, the Middle East and Europe. Xinjiang provides an inlet for energy supplies, and as an outlet functions as a trade route. It also offers additional security to China, if trade routes such as the Taiwan Strait become unusable.

RESEARCH IMPETUS

The initial impetus for this research project arose from a combination of previous research, and personal experiences in the Xinjiang-Central Asian region.² When the opportunity to undertake this research occurred, I was in the Central Asian region, and

¹ Starr, S. Frederick, “The investment climate in Central Asia and the Caucasus,” (undated) Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University, accessed via www.cacianalyst.org/index.htm, 8 July 2002.

² My Masters thesis assessed the impact of Islamic activism in Xinjiang and, following its completion, I worked in China and then travelled in Central Asia and Russia from July to September 2000.

sufficiently interested in and disturbed by what I found there to generate a research project focussed on that region.

The thesis as presented is not as originally envisioned. The original thesis was solely based on an examination of the sources of tension in Xinjiang-Central Asia, and their impact on the region. While that thesis is still relevant to this study, my research has led me to a conclusion that is quite different to what I expected. Even at an early stage of research, I was certain that unrest in the region was not caused by a sole source of tension, but by multiple causes of tension, and that alleviating one source of tension would not solve the unrest in the region. What I found and which was totally unexpected, was that a relationship of interdependency had built up in the region between Xinjiang and several neighbouring states. Pursuing this discovery, I found that actions taken by regional governments in response to many of the tensions in the region, and the overlapping of many of the tensions, took on a different dimension when it became apparent that this interdependency relationship is, to a certain extent, dictating how governments in the region deal with these intra and inter-state tensions.

Initially, my plan was to look at the tensions as a source of intra and inter-state conflict, which seemed to be a reasonable supposition, and certainly during my empirical investigations within the region, and by the constant monitoring of media sources – this did appear to be the case. However, my research forced me to widen my viewpoint, and led me to conclude that the tensions being generated in the region were actually of benefit to regional governments. The tensions gave validity to the respective governments' theories of unrest, thereby validating – at least in their minds – constrictive and repressive measures against their citizenry; and these repressive measures undertaken by the governments in the region have been beneficial to the Chinese government in its endeavour to prevent separatist movements within Xinjiang. This interdependency relationship, with its growing tentacles, not only has Xinjiang acting as an economic conduit between China and Central Asia and further afield, it has directly impacted on the internal security of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The core proposition of the thesis can thus be stated as follows.

An economic interdependency relationship has formed in the Xinjiang-Central Asian region. This economic interdependency is not only contributing to economic development in the western regions of China, in particular, the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, but also in several neighbouring former Soviet Union (FSU) states. As this interdependency relationship has coalesced and tightened its grip, an outcome is occurring which may or may not have been foreseen by the Chinese government. This interdependency relationship with its ever strengthening ties is not only countering previous and new tensions such as border demarcation, water diversion, inter-state migration of Han Chinese and Islamic activism, it is also restricting secessionist movements, especially the Uygur ethnic group in Xinjiang. The FSU governments in the region have previously taken an attitude of leniency towards the Uygur diaspora residing in their countries, but this leniency appears to be evaporating as the economic interdependency in the Xinjiang-Central Asian region expands. The crackdown against any group that may impact on the stability of the region, be it through secessionist movements or religious ideals, appears to be the direct result of the burgeoning economic relationships taking place in the region.

Tensions in the region, whilst causing resentment and unrest in the general populace are not causing the same type of angst to individual governments, which appear to regard these tensions as beneficial to their strategies of holding onto power. The danger here is that these governments, by their repressive actions, could be building a time-bomb. Repression is causing what could and should be perfectly moderate expressions of dissent against bad governance and suppression of religious activity to go underground and mutate into a more militant form of behaviour, simply because of lack of freedom to express opinions and let off steam. In brief, tensions are highly likely to provide problems in the future, but do not at present pose a threat because of the repressive style of governance practised in the region. However, when the tensions develop sufficiently to challenge repressive governments, the impact will be far greater than if they had been dealt with at an embryonic stage when some form of consensual outcome may have been possible.

SOURCES OF TENSION WITHIN XINJIANG-CENTRAL ASIA

While an interdependency relationship has emerged in the region that has had the effect of suppressing or moderating tensions, these tensions are still present and continue to simmer, as the research presented in this thesis will demonstrate. I will now briefly explain the tensions that I will be assessing within this thesis to ascertain whether or not they have the potential to cause increased division within the region, both at ground level among the general population, and at a higher level – between governments. But what do I mean by tension? The word tension suggests a strained (political, social etc.)

state or relationship. This is a fairly mild term, and possibly too mild to explain incidents which have taken place in the Xinjiang-Central Asian region over the past decade or more. However, the term is appropriate, as a state of tension, if left unresolved, tends to simmer, and can lead to even greater problems emerging. This is what has been occurring in many of the states in the Xinjiang-Central Asian region. Therefore, we have seen civil unrest, insurgency, bombings and many similar such-like incidents occurring because the underlying source of tension has not been adequately addressed by government and eventually has come to the boil and erupted. Presently, these tensions are simmering and appear to indicate the possibility of increased unrest in this extremely volatile region, unless measures are taken to satisfactorily address the source of these tensions.

Tensions of whatever nature are not beneficial in maintaining a climate of economic and social stability. Intra-state tensions can very easily spill over into inter-state tensions. The geographic and kinship situation in certain countries in Central Asia, including the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China, shows a certain propensity towards this. Not only is the geographic situation of Xinjiang significant in this regard; so also is its Turkic and religious connection through its Muslim Turkic ethnic groups, and the Chinese government's expanding security and economic relationship with the bordering republics. Throughout this thesis, I use the term "ethnic group/s" rather than minorities, except when it is necessary to use minority for clarification. My stance on this issue is because I believe the use of the term "minority" (minzu) can at times be used in a derogatory manner, not only between Han and non-Han Chinese, but also within different social classes of Han.

Inter and intra-state deprivation of livelihood and basic living resources can turn what is general discontent with government policies into ethnic conflict where different ethnic groups are involved. This can intensify, especially where cross-border relational groups are involved, even if there has not been unity on previous issues. Deprivation of resources, above all water which is essential to conditions of life sustainability, cannot be compared to other issues such as territorial claims, culture, language and so on, that may not in their entirety unite different sectors of society or different tribal identities within one ethnic group into a cohesive body of discontent. However, water allocation is one such matter. Indeed, the issue of water allocation and its accessibility is one such factor, if not the ultimate factor, where previous division between groups can be set

aside, and a very volatile situation emerge that threatens the perceived perpetrator. The action of the Chinese government in its water diversion plans poses such a scenario.

The Chinese water diversion plans do bring to mind Wittfogel's theory of a hydraulic society in which the bureaucracy in China controls the population through the control of water.³ While not totally agreeing with Wittfogel's theory, the control of water does constitute a significant theme in Chinese history over thousands of years. When assessing the issue of water diversion and its implications, I did not anticipate what I found, and that was a relationship between water diversion and border demarcation, which made the issue of border demarcation assume an added importance.

However, although the issue of accessibility or non-accessibility of water may become the major source of tension in this region, it is my contention that at the present time there are numerous factors adding to the general tensions. In many instances these tensions are interconnecting, and I consider it to be impossible to isolate a single factor as being the primary source of these inter and intra-state tensions. This is contrary to what the governments of the region are stating; they are virtually unanimous in laying the blame for incidents occurring within the Xinjiang-Central Asia area on what they refer to as "Islamic terrorism." The implications of this assertion will be assessed in Chapter VI of this thesis.

There are, therefore, important sources of tension in the Xinjiang-Central Asian region, but those are more than balanced by the growing interdependency between regional states and economies. The concept of interdependency and its manifestation in Xinjiang-Central Asia are therefore core themes for this thesis. I therefore need to clarify my use of the term *interdependency*. I am not using this term to convey a relationship of total equality between regional states. I do acknowledge the relationships in the Xinjiang-Central Asian region are not equal; China does dominate, economically, politically and militarily. However, a condition of interstate dependency does exist, and is continuing to expand, and will prove of benefit to all participating

³ Wittfogel, Karl A. *Oriental Despotism: a comparative study*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957. See also Colin Mackerras. *Western Images of China*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. Mackerras includes a chapter outlining Wittfogel's hydraulic society thesis. Mackerras in this chapter also refers to Owen Lattimore and John King Fairbank as having views reminiscent of Wittfogel on water control in China.

parties to some extent, as it is not totally a one-way street in favour of China. On the one hand, the bordering FSU states and others have what China needs to maintain its economic growth; and on the other hand, China can provide funding to these states to enable infrastructure to be built, which in turn can benefit local economies. According to Yang et al. “China’s recent growth is simply not sustainable without access to foreign markets and injections of foreign capital”, and that “given the size of the Chinese market and the difficulties in pushing around a country as large as China, it is already evident that those who benefit from trade with China are very reluctant to sever ties of interdependence. It seems that the economic logic of market forces overcomes most opposition.”⁴

The predominantly economic interdependency that now exists in the region encompassing Xinjiang and several of the bordering FSU states is such that it has assumed an ever increasing importance to all of the states involved in this relationship. This interdependency is not solely based on any one factor, although the supply and processing of oil and gas is dominant. Xing Guangcheng argues that China and Central Asian states have established an entirely new relationship in the last few years. He states that this relationship “... has been developed to establish good neighbourhood relations, and to make progress in common economic prosperity for both China and the Central Asian states.”⁵ Xing believes that mutually beneficial economic co-operation can help economic reforms in both China and Central Asia; that in expanding its trade and economic relations with Central Asia, China could not only alleviate severe economic difficulties in Central Asian states, but benefit from its stable and prosperous neighbouring states. Xing further argues, “... *to a large extent the stability and prosperity of Northwest China is closely bound up with the stability and prosperity of Central Asia.*”⁶

⁴ Yang, Richard H., Jason C. Hu, Peter K.H. Yu and Andrew N.D. Yang, eds. *Chinese regionalism: the security dimension*. Colorado: Westview, 1994, 8.

⁵ Xing, Guangcheng. “China and Central Asia: towards a new relationship” in *Ethnic challenges beyond borders: Chinese and Russian perspectives of the Central Asian conundrum*, eds. Yongjin Zhang and Rouben Azizian. Hampshire: Macmillan, 1998, 32.

⁶ Xing, *ibid.*, 35. The words in italics are Xing’s emphasis.

This, to a certain extent, is contrary to arguments put forward by Colin Mackerras, Nicolas Becquelin and others. Mackerras and Becquelin's arguments are not dissimilar on this one aspect, although they differ greatly in other areas, and will be evaluated during the course of this thesis. Becquelin argues that the overriding aim of the Chinese government in developing the western regions of China, and particularly Xinjiang, has been to bind Xinjiang more closely to the rest of the PRC: by neutralising the impact of the new Central Asian states; by developing communications axes linking Xinjiang with the rest of China; by reinforcing military and paramilitary forces in Xinjiang, especially in the south, and above all through measures aimed at speeding up Han migration to the region.⁷ While not disagreeing in every respect with Becquelin's argument, his thesis that the development that has taken place and is currently underway in Xinjiang has been solely to bind it closer to the rest of the PRC does not equate with the situation in the Xinjiang-Central Asian region today, and it is doubtful that this was the overriding aim for the Chinese government. My own research shows that Xing's argument is closer to the truth: that China recognised at a very early stage of its economic reform that in order to progress not only the economics of the northwest, but also of the rest of China, it needed to economically expand into the Central Asian region. China also recognised that from the viewpoint of security, China needed not only to reinforce its profile in Central Asia, but to become a major player in order to keep control in Xinjiang, and post-11 September, with the entry of the US forces into the Central Asian region, there was further incentive for Chinese presence in Central Asia. Simply tying Xinjiang closer to the centre does not achieve one of the primary objectives of the Chinese government, that of stopping any separatist movement within Xinjiang – control of separatist movements must also be exercised from the Central Asian side. The Chinese government recognises that stability in Central Asia is essential to guarantee stability in Xinjiang.

Stephen Blank's argument is not dissimilar to Xing's. Blank argues that:

⁷ Becquelin, Nicolas. "Xinjiang in the nineties." *The China Journal*, July 2000, issue 44, 65-90. The overall argument from this article is carried forward in Becquelin's article "Consolidating the periphery: Xinjiang and the campaign to open up the west." This article of which I have read a draft copy is subject to further revisions and is due to be published in the *China Quarterly* in 2004, and has been quoted in this thesis with the permission of Dr Becquelin. See also Colin Mackerras, "Ethnicity in China: the case of Xinjiang." *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, Winter 2004, vol. VIII, no. 1, 4-14.

Chinese scholars explicitly articulate the connection between Xinjiang and Central Asia, arguing that, China's policy to expand economic co-operation with Central Asia is undertaken, among other reasons, because to a large extent the stability and prosperity of northwest China is closely tied to Central Asia's stability and prosperity.⁸

Previous Chinese expansion into the Central Asian region has in the past been mainly for military purposes, but the current push by China into this region is largely an economic exercise. To a certain extent the military priority has been superseded, but not downgraded, by economics. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, pressure has been taken off the previous Sino-Soviet border-zone in this area, with the FSU states providing a buffer zone between the two major powers.

Why do I class the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China, and the neighbouring FSU states as a unit, in an interdependent regional relationship, rather than classifying the FSU states as one unit, and Xinjiang as being completely separate, as being part of the PRC? As a precursor to a more analytical appraisal of other definitions of this relationship undertaken later in this chapter, I will here set out my reasoning for doing so.

My definition is not totally in accordance with others writing in this area. Many authors include some or all of these FSU states and Xinjiang, plus others, within the region generally referred to as Central Asia, and the reasons for doing so are quite diverse. Some writers tend to base their regional grouping on historical, economic or ethnicity linkages. Many others group some or all of them together without really analysing why they do so, or because they are uncertain as to the boundaries of this regional relationship.

Although the historical aspect is extremely important, my reasoning for inclusion of Xinjiang and the neighbouring FSU states as Central Asia is that the interdependency issues at play in this region in the first decade of the 21st century are clearly becoming dominant. Much previous and current scholarship has failed and is continuing to fail in taking too narrow a view by looking at one issue only or one state at a time, when in fact an interdependent relationship covering such diverse issues as trade, security and geophysical matters, amongst others, has been established and impacts on these several

⁸ Blank, Stephen. "Xinjiang and China's strategy in Central Asia." *Asia Times*, 3 April 2004, accessed online via www.atimes.com, 3 April 2004.

states and Xinjiang in very similar ways. This interconnecting and interdependent environment will continue to develop, thereby building this relationship into one that must be analysed in a regional sense, not just as a group of separate states.

The overlapping issues are assuming added importance as the interdependency between all of these actors (Xinjiang and FSU states) deepens, and are in some instances producing tensions which in turn show potential to curtail economic growth in key areas. This growing regional relationship between these states, with its varied dimensions, needs greater attention than current literature in this field has given it. A gap exists in current scholarship because the overlapping dimensions of this relationship with its resultant tensions have not been considered in the light of this interdependent regional relationship. In the majority of material dealing with this region, the tensions have been analysed as individual issues, relating to an individual country, rather than taking connective factors into account. Scholarship has not caught up with the ongoing dynamics in this area, and this thesis seeks to fill this gap. Therefore, throughout this thesis, as already stated at the beginning of this chapter, I will refer to this regional relationship as either Xinjiang-Central Asia or simply Central Asia.

However, before proceeding, I want to make it clear that I do not see this grouping of Xinjiang with neighbouring ethnically and religiously related states as a catalyst for Xinjiang to break away from China. Scholte discusses a trend whereby globalisation has ushered in the transcendence of borders, rather than the mere crossing or opening of borders. Scholte uses the term *transcendence*, which he explains is what he believes the phenomenon of globalisation is.⁹ Part of Scholte's thesis is that if globalisation poses a threat, it is not to the state itself – but to democracy. While I agree with Scholte that globalisation does involve transcendence of national borders, because of the type of governance in the Xinjiang-Central Asia region, this transcendence of borders is not necessarily a threat to the state – or the authority of the state. More specifically, this interdependency relationship is not a threat to the authority of the Chinese state. However, because of the power imbalance in the relationship between China and the FSU states, the emerging regional relationship may be a threat to the authority of other states in this relationship.

⁹ Scholte, Jan Aart. "Global capitalism and the state." *International Affairs*, 1997, 73, 3, 427-452.

China has clearly signalled the importance of the western regions of China, and in particular Xinjiang, for the Chinese economy as a whole. For China to pull back at this stage from the regional relationship with Central Asia would prove extremely problematic, not only for China, but also for the regional states. China is investing in several of these countries, with the majority of the investment funds going chiefly to Kazakhstan. Lesser amounts, but still substantial investment funds, are flowing into Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. These states have the energy resources that China needs to progress the Chinese economy. Although China does have other sources to provide some of its required energy needs, and continues to actively seek additional sources from other parts of the world, this region, with its reach to the Caspian Sea energy resources, and through to the Middle East, is still of utmost importance to China.

The outcome of this economic interdependency is extremely beneficial to China. Not only is it contributing towards the necessary energy resources in order to continue the development of not only the western regions of China, but China as a whole, it is also containing and restricting independence movements both within and outside of Xinjiang. As the director of the CCP Organisation Department in Xinjiang has stated: “The stability and development of Xinjiang bear on the stability and development of the whole country. We must recognise the importance of maintaining stability in Xinjiang from this standpoint ... we must completely isolate and crack down on a handful of ethnic separatists and serious criminals of various kinds.”¹⁰

As a result of this economic interdependency, China is now in a better position of control over Xinjiang than it has been for some time. Nevertheless, the regional interdependency in Central Asia has reached such a stage that if circumstances cause this interdependent relationship to deteriorate, this would have a major impact on the development of Xinjiang. It is inevitable that there would be a flow-on effect to the rest of China, for Xinjiang is becoming a vital cog in the wheel of economic development. Any inter or intra-state tensions need attention by the Chinese state.

Nevertheless, while the Chinese government needs to address interconnecting intra and inter-state tensions in Xinjiang-Central Asia, it has also become quite clear during the course of my research that China is very much in control of this interdependency

¹⁰ Chen Demin, quoted in XJRD, 10 May 1996, p.1, FBIS, 29 May 1996, p.72, quoted in James D. Seymour and Richard Anderson. *New Ghosts, Old Ghosts: prisons and labor reform camps in China*. Armonk: ME Sharpe, 1998, 121.

relationship. Even though several of the tensions prevailing in the region would normally generate sufficient unrest to force governments to action to alleviate the situation, the type of governance in the region and the regional economic interdependency ensure this is not necessarily occurring. In short, even though in some instances local movements in the region have agitated against the Chinese government, it does seem that regional governments will not support them to the detriment of their relationship with China. This of course does not mean that these tensions may not have an impact on regional relationships in the future. With a change of leadership within the FSU states, a change of attitude may occur, and that is where the danger lies for the Chinese state.

XINJIANG-CENTRAL ASIA: NATURAL REGIONALISM OR A CONSTRUCTION?

Having dealt with the issue of what constitutes tension and interdependence, I will now argue the case for placing the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in the wider context of Central Asia rather than as merely being a region, albeit a very important region, in the northwest of China. The issue of the composition of an entity referred to as Central Asia is not clear-cut, and differs depending on what perspective one approaches it from.

According to Cornell and Spector,¹¹

Central Asia, defined geographically, is commonly understood as the region encompassing the five former Soviet “stans,” Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The region that is Central Asia, however, historically extends beyond the borders of these five Central Asian republics to western China and Afghanistan.

However, Russia writers tend to divide the former Soviet Union into two zones. The eastern communities of the former USSR form in the main the so-called southern belt divided by the Caspian Sea: Transcaucasia in the west and a vast geographical area in the east, which up to 1924-1925 was called Turkestan. Turkestan was part of the Russian Empire, and later part of the USSR, extending from the Caspian Sea in the west to the Chinese border in the east, and from the Aral-Irtysh watershed in the north to the

¹¹ Cornell, Svante E. and Regine A. Spector. “Central Asia: More than Islamic Extremists.” *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 25, issue 1, Winter 2002, note 1, 204.

border with Iran and Afghanistan in the south – the so-called Russian or Western Turkestan. Along with it is the Chinese or Eastern Turkestan in Xinjiang and the Afghan Turkestan in the north of Afghanistan.¹²

After the division into national states in 1924-1925, the name Turkestan was changed to Central Asia. Thus, from a purely geographic point of view, Central Asia (formerly Turkestan) includes the territories of the present Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and the southern part of Kazakhstan. A somewhat different division is used in economic geography: Kazakhstan is not included in the Central Asian region (hence the standard geographic definition “Central Asia and Kazakhstan”).¹³

Russian geographical tradition precisely delimits Central Asia from Middle Asia, another vast geographical region situated farther to the east and covering the territories of Mongolia and the greater part of China. In the European geographical tradition, the concepts of Central Asia and Middle Asia are not clearly differentiated. Moreover, at the meeting of the heads of state of the region held in Tashkent at the beginning of January 1993, it was decided to name the region encompassing Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan as Central Asia.¹⁴

However, Tatiana Shaumian, writing on foreign policy perspectives of the Central Asian States, extends the parameters of Central Asia as a geopolitical unit further than most. She sees it as including the Republic of Mongolia, the Xinjiang region of China, Tibet, Afghanistan, and the northern regions of India, as well as Kashmir and Pakistan.¹⁵

In contrast, Lena Jonson and Roy Allison, in assessing security policies in the region, are uncertain as to which states are relevant for an analysis of Central Asian security policy, and perhaps also for the integrity of a Central Asian security complex. They argue that it is not clear whether the definition of a Central Asian security complex

¹² Porkhomovsky, Victor Ya. “Historical Origins of Interethnic Conflicts in Central Asia and Transcaucasia” in *Central Asia and Transcaucasia: Ethnicity & Conflict*, ed. Vitaly V. Naumkin. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994, 2. (Porkhomovsky also refers to *Bolshaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya*, 3rd ed. vol. 24, part 1, 377).

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Shaumian Tatiana. “Foreign Policy Perspectives of the Central Asian States” in *Post-Soviet Central Asia*, eds. Touraj Atabaki and John O’Kane. London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998, 62.

should be confined to the border of the CIS Central Asian states as cross-border interactions with a wider Central Asia become more significant. They further argue that Northern Afghanistan at least may be considered as lying within a 'wider' Central Asian security complex, although its role in exporting instabilities beyond the Afghan frontiers has represented a challenge to the security of the Central Asian states. The northern and eastern parts of Xinjiang increasingly appear to fit within such a wider Central Asian security complex, despite the efforts of Chinese leaders to insulate Xinjiang from cross-border instabilities.¹⁶

The term Inner Asia has also been used in the past, and continues to be so in certain sectors. The authors of *The Modernization of Inner Asia* have defined Inner Asia as comprising the three modern nations of Iran, Afghanistan and Mongolia as well as the regions of Tibet and Xinjiang in the People's Republic of China, and the five former Soviet Republics that constituted Soviet Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.¹⁷

Owen Lattimore, the renowned scholar, whose work encompassed this region, preferred the term Inner Asia. When writing on this region in 1950, he noted that the term "Inner Asia" was at that time coming into wider usage than the term "Central Asia."¹⁸ He defined the Inner Asian region as being closed off on the Middle Eastern side by Iran, and on the Far Eastern side by the Mongolian People's Republic, with Xinjiang being the pivot of this region. In the 19th century, and in its narrowest application, the term "Central Asia" was used for the territories also known as "Russian and Chinese Turkestan." He applied the term "Inner Asia" to a group of countries, territories, and provinces which have no outlet to the sea, including Xinjiang, Tibet, Kashmir and several smaller states of the Indian frontier, Afghanistan, the Asiatic Republics of the then USSR, the then Mongolian People's Republic (Outer Mongolia), and the Inner Mongolian territories of China.¹⁹

¹⁶ Jonson, Lena and Roy Allison. "Central Asian security: internal and external dynamics" in *Central Asian security: the new international context*, eds. Roy Allison and Lena Jonson. Washington: Brookings Institution, 2001, 6.

¹⁷ Black, Cyril E., Louis Dupree, Elizabeth Endicott-West, Daniel C. Matuszewski, Eden Naby and Arthur N. Waldron. *The Modernization of Inner Asia*. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1991, 3.

¹⁸ Lattimore, Owen. *Pivot of Asia*. New York: AMS Press, 1975, x. (Reprint of edition published by Little, Brown, in 1950 with a new introduction).

¹⁹ *ibid*, x-xi.

A different approach comes from David Christian who argues for two zones – an Inner and Outer Eurasia. In Inner Eurasia he includes most of the former Soviet Union – Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and the Baltic states – as well as Russia’s huge territories in Siberia. He also includes Russia’s former empire in Central Asia, as well as China’s Central Asian empire, with the modern provinces of Xinjiang and Gansu. Finally, he includes Mongolia, both the parts within modern China, and those within the Republic of Mongolia.²⁰ Christian states that he would have preferred to use an existing historical label for this region, but reluctantly decided that none was quite right – they either tied him to a geo-political or cultural relationship which he did not accept.

One can thus see a wide variety of different perspectives on the region. For the purpose of this research project, I am defining the area of Central Asia in the way put forward by Cornell and Spector, with the exclusion of Afghanistan. This is because of the historical connections; and also because of the overlapping issues between these states, and in particular, between Xinjiang, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan and Tajikistan. I also prefer to use the term “Central Asia” for this region, because in the main, it is the terminology in common usage at this time. At the same time, one has to admit Anthony Bichel’s view that “the cartographic representation of Central Asia has always been a creative exercise.”²¹

The regional relationship is a construction, as are others I have discussed, but it suits the purpose of my research to analyse Xinjiang together with several Central Asian states. That is how I perceive the regional context – a geographic/ trade/ security/ cultural and linguistically related relationship. I do not include countries which could be seen to fit into this regional relationship, such as Afghanistan and the Republic of Mongolia, because there is insufficient interdependency existing to include them, although the position of the Republic of Mongolia could become relevant in the not too distant future. It is entirely possible, and most likely probable, that the economic relationship that defines the region of Xinjiang-Central Asia will expand or shrink depending on circumstances, so therefore could be classified as a fluid relationship of economic interdependency which has the ability to adapt to changing conditions.

²⁰ Christian, David. *A history of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, vol. 1, Inner Eurasia from prehistory to the Mongol empire. UK: Blackwell, 1998, xv.

²¹ Bichel, Anthony R. “Mapping Central Asia.” *ICARP Publications*, 1997, accessed online via www.icarp.org, 24 November 2002.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology I have adopted for the research required to produce this thesis has been conventional in that I have drawn widely on academic texts, both books and journals. For specific Central Asian background which may or may not incorporate Xinjiang, I have tended to give more credence to authors who are either writing from the background of being of Russian or Central Asian nationality, or who have spent periods of time living in the region. Further analysis of the issues in the region have also been garnered from non-academic authors such as Ahmed Rashid, who not only writes insightful articles for the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, but also produces on a regular basis books which clearly indicate a deep knowledge of the region and issues pertinent to it.

I have used Central Asian newspaper sources extensively, in particular, the *Times of Central Asia* (TCA) which is published in Kyrgyzstan and available online. The reason for extensive monitoring of this particular newspaper is because, although many of the articles published in TCA are picked up by outside sources and re-produced on various internet sites around the world, occasionally TCA staff members generate obscure information that provides the key to puzzling actions taken by regional governments; and this information is not circulated outside the newspaper site. I have also monitored on a regular basis not only other newspapers within Central Asia, but also the Chinese, Russian, and Pakistan media outlets, amongst others. Chinese government publications have also been accessed and quoted where appropriate, as have reports produced by such agencies as the Asian Development Bank and the International Crisis Group which regularly reports on projects and issues in the region. These included sources in English, Chinese and Russian, although the main access language was English.

As mentioned above, I have found that Russian or Central Asian authors are able to access and communicate the dynamics of the Central Asian region more readily than authors who do not have their background, and who may tend to miss the nuances, which in many cases provide the key to a genuine understanding of prevailing conditions. This observation does not of course apply to all writers in the field of Central Asian studies. Certainly such scholars as Martha Brill Olcott, S. Frederick Starr and others, have considerable knowledge and expertise of this area based on personal

familiarity with the region and its peoples, and I have taken full advantage of their scholarship, as I have with the work produced by Svat Soucek. Svat Soucek in *A History of Inner Asia* provides a concise, insightful and very accessible history of the Xinjiang-Central Asian region beginning with the arrival of Islam, and concluding with contemporary issues in the region.²² The history of Islam in general is covered in a very impressive manner by Ira Lapidus in *A History of Islamic societies*.²³ Lapidus evaluates fact and fiction associated with Islam, and explains why Islam has become such a major religion and way of life. These authors are but a sample of the scholarship I have been able to draw upon within this study. Although this thesis does not contain a separate literature review, discussion of numerous scholarly works takes place where appropriate throughout the thesis.

Although I am more familiar with the Chinese situation, having studied, worked and travelled extensively in China over the last decade, including several periods spent in Xinjiang, I have endeavoured to obtain some degree of understanding of the conditions that drive the political and economic agenda in the Central Asian states. My initial visit to the Central Asian region was in the latter half of 2000 for a period of two months, which incorporated travel in Russia. In September/October of 2002, I returned to the region, and undertook formal and informal interviews in Kazakhstan. The interviewing took place both within government agencies and within the Uyghur diaspora community. Following that, I took a bus from Almaty in Kazakhstan to Yining in Xinjiang, travelling as part of the shuttle trade. I spent approximately one month travelling by public transport around Xinjiang from the Altay region to Turpan, and then south to Kashgar, Yecheng and Hetian, and thence across the desert highway to Urumqi. During this period, I conversed as widely as possible with the inhabitants of Xinjiang. This travel also helped me to obtain an understanding of the impact of water diversion, desertification, and related issues that are important to this thesis. This was also the first time since 1994 that I had spent any time in Xinjiang, apart from briefly in 2000, and I found the pace of development throughout Xinjiang quite overwhelming. This experience gave me some insight as to why non-Han ethnic groups are feeling overwhelmed by the development that is taking place throughout the region.

²² Soucek, Svat. *A history of Inner Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

²³ Lapidus, Ira. *A History of Islamic societies*. 2nd ed. UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

CONTENTS

The thesis comprises seven chapters. Although the chapter titles attempt to categorise the contents of that particular chapter, it should be noted that more often than not issues are not exclusive to any one chapter; there are many instances in which issues overlap into another chapters or chapters. Since a prime component of my argument is based on the effects of interdependency, it is only to be expected.

Following the introductory chapter, Chapter II examines the importance of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region to the People's Republic of China. It follows a natural progression from examining the geographic position, then to an examination of the history of Xinjiang-Central Asia from the Han dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) to the present time. Even though this research is a contemporary study, the linkages from the past are relevant, and need to be shown. Chapter II will also provide a brief outline of the FSU states involved in this economic relationship, highlight their importance to China, cover inter-state trade, and the significance of energy resources in this relationship.

In Chapter III, China's position in Central Asia will be evaluated. An assessment is made of China's interstate relationships, such as how China is perceived by its neighbours, and in this context, the source of one of the tensions present in the region, Han Chinese migration into Central Asia, is analysed. Within this chapter, the very pertinent issue of the relevance of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation is assessed. Post September 11, and following the entry of US forces into Central Asia, the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation has been re-invigorated and "given more teeth", and does appear to be an extremely useful vehicle for Chinese and Russian objectives in the region, as well as being regarded by less influential members of the organisation as a form of protection when they are faced with radical movements within their countries.

Chapter IV continues the theme of assessing tensions, with this chapter examining the very contentious, and at times overlapping, issue of border demarcation and water diversion. The border demarcation issue assumed even greater importance upon my realisation that this issue was not simply a matter of China claiming Qing border territory – but that China was prepared to concede territory for a practical purpose – that being control of water.

Chapter V evaluates another source of tension, ethnic conflict within Xinjiang-Central Asia, particularly relating to the Uygur ethnic group. Within Xinjiang, trans-migration of Han Chinese into the region is once again proving controversial, as is language policy and the exploitation of resources. While I did not find that at the present time nationalism is a primary factor causing tensions in the region, when assessing the root cause/s of the tensions between Han and non-Han ethnic groups, particularly the Uygurs, it does come down to ethnic conflict between different ethnic groups which are culturally, linguistically, and religiously separate.

The research component of this thesis is concluded in Chapter VI with analysis of Islam. Islam and perceptions of Islam are very relevant to what is occurring in the Xinjiang-Central Asian region. The majority, if not all, of the governments in the Xinjiang-Central Asian region are blaming any unrest emanating from any societal issue on Islamic activism. The focus on Islam and the laying of blame on Islam for any difficult societal woe is problematic and open to abuse, and Islam will be examined in order to ascertain whether Islamic activism in Central Asia is revivalism or, as the regional governments state, Islamic radicalism.

Chapter VII, the concluding chapter, will re-state the thesis, summarise the materials leading to the conclusion of this research, and in general terms, conclude this paper. The concluding chapter will reiterate the thesis' central argument that a relationship incorporating Xinjiang and several neighbouring FSU states, primarily built on economic interdependence, is thriving and expanding in the Xinjiang-Central Asian region. This interdependent relationship not only benefits China in its quest for energy resources to enable the Chinese economy to progress, it also provides a market for Chinese goods and services; but more importantly perhaps, this regional interdependency is restricting secessionist movements by non-Han ethnic groups within Xinjiang. We turn now to an extended validation of this argument by looking in the next chapter at the importance of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region to the People's Republic of China.