Cover

title:	China, Xinjiang and Central Asia : History, Transition and Crossborder Interaction Into the 21st Century Routledge Contemporary China Series ; 38.38
author:	Mackerras, Colin.; Clarke, Michael.
publisher:	Taylor & Francis Routledge
isbn10 | asin:	0415453178
print isbn13:	9780415453172
ebook isbn13:	9780203881705
language:	English
subject	Uighur (Turkic people)--Asia, Central, Uighur (Turkic people)--China--Xinjiang Uygur Zizhiqu, Xinjiang Uygur Zizhiqu (China)--Relations--Asia, Central, Asia, Central--Relations--China--Xinjiang Uygur Zizhiqu, Asia, Central--History, China--Politics and go
publication date:	2009
lcc:	DS793.S62C5273 2009eb
ddc:	951/.6
subject:	Uighur (Turkic people)--Asia, Central, Uighur (Turkic people)--China--Xinjiang Uygur Zizhiqu, Xinjiang Uygur Zizhiqu (China)--Relations--Asia, Central, Asia, Central--Relations--China--Xinjiang Uygur Zizhiqu, Asia, Central--History, China--Politics and go

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China, Xinjiang and Central Asia

Central Asia and Xinjiang – the far north-western province of China – are of increasing international importance. The United States, having established military bases in Central Asia after September 2001, has now become a force in what was previously predominantly a Russian sphere of influence, while China, Russia and Iran all continue to exert strong influence. These external, international influences have had a significant impact on local politics, with the overthrow of a long-standing regime in Kyrgyzstan, continued unrest and opposition to the current regime in Uzbekistan and the intensification of Chinese control in Xinjiang.

This book explores the effect of global and local dynamics across the region: global influences include the 'War on Terror' and international competition for energy resources; local dynamics include Islamic revival, Central Asian nationalism, drugs trafficking, economic development and integration. The authors argue that these multiple challenges, in fact, unite Xinjiang and Central Asia in a common struggle for identities and economic development.

This book provides a comprehensive overview of the region's historical significance, the contemporary international forces which affect the region, and of current political, economic and cultural developments.

Colin Mackerras is Professor Emeritus at Griffith University, Australia. His main works on ethnic minorities include *China's Minorities: Modernization and Integration in the Twentieth Century* and *China's Ethnic Minorities and Globalisation*. He has written a paper on Tibetans in contemporary China for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2005.

Michael Clarke is a Research Fellow at the Griffith Asia Institute at Griffith University, Australia. He has published numerous articles on the history and contemporary politics of Xinjiang in such journals as *Asian Security, Asian Studies Review, Issues & Studies* and *Terrorism & Political Violence*.

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History, transition and crossborder interaction into the 21st century

Edited by

Colin Mackerras and Michael Clarke

LONDON AND NEW YORK

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Page vi
First published 2009 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016
Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business
This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2009.

To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge's collection of thousands of eBooks please go to www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk.
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matter; individual contributors for their contribution
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mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter
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information storage or retrieval system, without permission in
writing from the publishers.
British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library
Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested
ISBN 0-203-88170-2 Master e-book ISBN
ISBN 10:0–415–45317–8 (hbk)
ISBN 10:0–203–88170–2 (ebk)
ISBN 13:978–0–415–45317–2 (hbk)
ISBN 13:978–0–203–88170–5 (ebk)

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List of contributors

Michael Clarke is currently a Research Fellow at the Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia. His doctoral thesis, 'In the Eye of Power: China and Xinjiang from the Qing Conquest to the New Great Game for Central Asia, 1759–2004', examined the expansion of Chinese state power in the 'Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region' since the eighteenth century and the implications of this complex process for China's foreign policy in Central Asia. His research expertise and interests concern Chinese history, politics and foreign policy, ethnic separatism and terrorism in Xinjiang and Central Asia, and nuclear proliferation in the Asia–Pacific. He has published on these subjects in journals such as *Issues & Studies; Asian Studies Review; Australian Journal of Politics and History; Asian Security; Terrorism and Political Violence*; and the *Nonproliferation Review*.

Ablet Kamalov is Leading Research Associate at the Institute of Oriental Studies (Center for Uyghur Studies) and Academic Leader at the Central Asian Resource Center (CARC) of the Educational Center 'Bilim-Central Asia' funded by the Open Society Institute, Kazakhstan. He earned his doctorate in history from the St Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russia (1990). He has been a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Washington (Seattle, 1997–8), a visiting scholar at the University of Oxford (2001–2), Georgetown University (2003) and the J.W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress (2003–4). He has published numerous articles on the history and culture of Central Asian peoples, most particularly the Uyghurs.

Colin Mackerras is professor emeritus at Griffith University, Queensland. He has researched in many areas of Chinese history and contemporary China, especially theatre, minority nationalities and international relations and has written widely on all those topics. His main works on ethnic minorities include *China's Minorities: Modernization and Integration in the Twentieth Century*, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1994 and *China's Ethnic Minorities and Globalisation*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003. He also wrote a web paper on the Tibetans in contemporary China for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2005.

Ann McMillan has a PhD in Political Science from Griffith University in Queensland, Australia. Her doctoral research assessed the strategic and economic interdependency which has developed in the Xinjiang–Central Asian region since the demise of the Soviet Union. Ann has travelled extensively worldwide and since 1996 has led several tours to China. She has been a convenor/lecturer for China Field Studies and has lectured in Australia–Asia Pacific studies. She is presently working in China teaching English as part of a cooperation programme between Australia and China.

Donald H. McMillen (PhD, Colorado, 1976) is Professor of Asian and International Studies, Department of Humanities and International Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Southern Queensland (USQ), Australia. His previous positions have included Director of Research and Research Development in the Faculty of Arts and Head of the Department of Asian Studies. He has also been: Head of the Department of Government and International Studies and Director of the 'Hong Kong Transition Project' at Hong Kong Baptist University; Director of the Centre for the Study of Australia–Asia Relations at Griffith University; Senior Research Fellow; and Acting Head of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the Australian National University. He is also a Member of the Editorial Board of *The China Journal* (Canberra), a Consulting Editor for several international publishing houses, and has delivered scholarly lectures or seminars at many institutions around the world. He is the author of a number of important works on Xinjiang, including *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949–1977*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1979; 'The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps: A Han Organization in a Non-Han Region', *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 1981, July, no. 6, 65–91; 'The Urumqi Military Region: Defense and Security in China's West', *Asian Survey*, 1984, August, 22 (8), 705–29; and 'Xinjiang and Wang Enmao: New Directions in Power, Policy, and Integration?', *China Quarterly*, 1984, no. 99, 569–93.

James A. Millward (BA Harvard 1982; MA, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1986; PhD, Stanford, 1993) is Associate Professor of Intersocietal History in the Edmund Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University. He specializes in the modern history of China and Central Asia, including Mongolia, Tibet and especially Xinjiang, where he travels frequently. He also teaches world history, and his current research combines Central Eurasian and world perspectives by following the paths of stringed instruments and musical exchanges along the silk roads and globally, with a particular focus on the globalization of the guitar over the past 500 years. He has delivered papers in China, France, Germany, Sweden, India, Japan and Korea and has been elected to serve on the councils of major academic associations (the Association for Asian Studies China and Inner Asia Council; Central Eurasian Studies

Society Executive Board). His publications include *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*, New York: Columbia, 2006; *New Qing Imperial History: the Making of Inner Asian Empire at Qing Chengde*, London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon 2004; and *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759–1864*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998; Chinese translation, 2006.

Kirill Nourzhanov holds a PhD from the Australian National University and a Master of Arts from the Moscow State University. He is currently a Lecturer at the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies (the Middle East and Central Asia). Dr Nourzhanov's areas of expertise include Russian and Eurasian politics, the strategic and security environment in Central Asia and the Caucasus, and Islamic radicalism. He teaches courses on the relevant subjects at the ANU, ADFA and CDSS. He comments regularly on the conflict in Chechnya, the geopolitics of oil, and terrorism in the Australian mass media. In 2000–2, Dr Nourzhanov acted as an international adviser to the governments of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in the field of public administration reform. He has published widely in refereed academic journals, and contributed chapters to books on Central Asia. His most recent publication was 'Caspian Oil: Geopolitical Dreams and Real Issues', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 2006, March, 60 (1).

Geoff Watson is a lecturer in the history programme in the School of History, Philosophy and Politics, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand. He completed his MA on Central Asian influences on the Mughal Empire at Canterbury University in Christchurch under the supervision of Dr S.A.M. Adshead and Dr Ian Catanach in 1992. He then completed his PhD on British images of Central Asia between 1830 and 1914 at Griffith University under the supervision of Professor Colin Mackerras and Dr John Butcher in 1998. He has published a number of articles based on his doctoral research in the *Worlds of the Silk Roads* series and also contributed an article on representations of Central Asian ethnicities to *Asian Ethnicity* in 2002.

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Acknowledgements

Colin Mackerras and I would like to express our sincere thanks to the Griffith Asia Institute and its Director, Professor Michael Wesley, for funding and supporting our research workshop on Xinjiang and Central Asia held at Robertson Gardens, Brisbane, 26–27 June 2006. Griffith Asia Institute's support allowed us to assemble a range of Xinjiang and Central Asia scholars from Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Kazakhstan to contribute to a wide-ranging discussion of the history, politics, culture and international relations of Xinjiang and Central Asia.

We would also like to thank our contributors not only for their wholehearted participation during the workshop itself but also for their willingness to revisit and revise their papers for publication. Moreover, we also appreciate their meeting of our deadlines to produce what we feel is a collection of high-quality research papers.

Finally, we would also like to thank Ms Robyn White, Publications Manager for the Griffith Asia Institute, for preparing the final copy of the manuscript.

Michael Clarke
Griffith Asia Institute
Brisbane, Queensland
8 April 2008

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List of abbreviations

CAU	Central Asian Union
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CFDP	Council on Foreign and Defense Policy
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CST	Collective Security Treaty
ETIM	East Turkestan Islamic Movement
ETR	East Turkestan Republic
EurAsDec	Eurasian Economic Commonwealth
FSU	Former Soviet Union
IES	Institute of Eurasian Studies
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
IROU	Inter-Republican Organization of Uyghurs
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
HT	Hizb ut-Tahrir
MPR	Mongolian People's Republic
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PRC	People's Republic of China
RATS	Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
SES	Single Economic Space
TIRET	Turkic Islamic Republic of East Turkestan
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Fund
UNDP-HDR-CA	United Nations Development Fund Human Development Report for Central Asia
UNPO	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization
UNRFET	United National Revolutionary Front of East Turkestan
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
XPCC	Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps
XUAR	Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

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1

China, Xinjiang and Central Asia

'Glocality' in the year 2008

Donald H. McMillen
University of Southern Queensland, Australia

Introduction

The contributors to this volume are grateful to the Griffith Asia Institute for hosting the June 2006 Workshop on 'Central Asia and Xinjiang into the twenty-first century' that has led to the publication of these timely and thought-provoking essays. The participants, many of whom had travelled far to be in Australia, offered informed, indeed fascinating, insights focused on the relationship between developments in Xinjiang and China's ties with the rest of Central Asia. In a broader sense, the proceedings touched on a range of significant global and international issues pertinent to that 'region', including recent views from Beijing, Moscow, Washington and Australia. In a more particular sense, and very correctly in my mind, they also critically delved into the more 'local' conditions of life, attitudes, history of events, and states' policies that have had equally profound effects on the various peoples and players there. All of these were placed in the context of a number of important 'transitions' that are variously underway today.

One of the main points made in my opening address, and one that will be discussed in greater detail later, was the need for an analytical framework that would assist in the contextualization and assessment of the issues treated by Workshop contributors – and one that would provide overall coherence for this volume. I suggested that one such framework could be based on the notion of 'glocality'. As it happened, just such a framework was consistently embedded in contributors' essays and served our aims well. First, however, I believe it is appropriate to briefly discuss the generations of scholars, and others, who have written about this 'Eurasian Outback' as a backdrop to the essays that follow.

The earlier generations of Xinjiang/Central Asia scholars

To be honest, when the workshop organizers, Professor Colin Mackerras and Dr Michael Clarke, invited me to present the opening paper, I was a bit anxious. This was because I began my own research career some 35 years ago by focusing on the efforts of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to

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establish its power in Xinjiang and, thereafter, formulate 'revolutionary re-integrationist' policies that would create a post-Liberation Xinjiang that was truly an integral part of the new People's Republic of China (PRC). I was fascinated by the fact that after 1949 the CCP had to deal with several 'historical truths', including that Xinjiang remained a rather remote, non-Han region along the Sino-Soviet border in Central Asia where complex ethnicities had become predominantly coloured by adherence to varieties of the Islamic faith. Indeed, these features were to have continuing impacts on Beijing's efforts to exert Chinese rule and establish a communist ethos there. Much the same had previously been the case in Soviet Central Asia for the leadership in Moscow.

At that time, I also was drawn to the study of Xinjiang by the work of at least two previous generations of largely Western scholars, many of whom had ventured there to either uncover the mysteries of 'Inner Asia',1 to fathom the 'Great Games'2 then being played out by a combination of exogenous and indigenous empires in that 'Pivot (or Pawn?) of Asia'3 or, more simply, to tell 'the story' of Central Asia and Xinjiang.4 Many of my colleagues in the United States at that time were quizzical, if not sceptical, about the region's importance – even when they knew where it was!

In my mind, the first lot of Central Asia and Xinjiang scholars composed the 'Generation of Adventurers, Explorers and Romantics' – even 'Exoticists'; while the second was basically a 'Generation of Traditional Geopoliticians' who assessed the imperial ambitions of extra-regional powers in those novel Eurasian continental lands beyond the Great Wall where Silk Roads and oasis cultures were seen to predominate.

In any case, these first two generations of writers brought the distant domains of Central Asia and Xinjiang to the attention of outsiders. However, in my view, they wrote relatively little about the particularities of the peoples and places there, and when they did so it was usually from Euro- or Sino-centric perspectives. More recently, this prompted S. Frederick Starr to lament the fact that many earlier studies of Xinjiang (and Central Asia) set the precedent of being based on 'hoary generalities and self-serving clichés' in explaining these places and peoples – treatments he claims were a 'tableau of exotica' or works that treated them as 'a crude geopolitical problem'.5 In his words concerning such writings on Xinjiang: 'Bluntly, there is hardly any "fact" concerning Xinjiang [and, one might add, Central Asia] that is so solid, no source information that is so independent, and no analysis based on such overwhelming evidence that someone does not hotly contest its validity or meaning.'6

That aside, but perhaps on account of these reasons, I was attracted to study that region and its peoples, and my initial research led to the 1979 publication of *Chinese Communist Power and Policy in Xinjiang, 1949–77*, which explored the political integration of that 'new frontier region' into the nascent PRC. That volume was followed by a 1981 article in *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, entitled 'Xinjiang and the Production and Construction

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Corps: A Han Organisation in a Non-Han Region'. Admittedly, I published these studies at a time when my own research, and that of the generation of Western scholars in that period, was largely framed by the ideological and geostrategic contexts of the then Cold War and, later, the development of the Sino-Soviet dispute.7 But this is not to say that no attempt was made by me, or others, to look 'beyond ideology' in undertaking such research and writing!

That notwithstanding, I would label that cohort of Western writers as scholars belonging to the 'Generation of Ideologists and Academic Voyeurs'. As a then young American researcher, and like most of my contemporaries, I had no direct access to China, and certainly not to Xinjiang or Central Asia.8 I was therefore compelled to pursue 'research' about that region from a distance (largely from Taiwan and Hong Kong). Thus, my investigations were undertaken in a very 'second-hand' manner, adopting analytical methodologies that were subsequently labelled 'Pekingology' for such studies focused on 'Red China' (or 'Kremlinology' for those pertaining to the then Soviet Union).

I nonetheless feel very gratified that Gardner Bovingdon would refer to my earlier research in one of his more recent writings on Xinjiang as follows:

A generation ago, Donald McMillen captured the central dilemma confronting Xinjiang's rulers [the CCP]. On the one hand, out of security considerations, the Party had to develop policies that respected the Uyghurs' (and others') cultural and religious differences – though not, McMillen adds parenthetically, 'their right of self-determination' – to avoid provoking popular antagonism. On the other hand, nation-building concerns led to policies such as forced Han immigration and language reforms 'designed to undercut the very ethnic and cultural uniqueness which the Party outwardly promised to safeguard….' The ultimate aim was assimilation. According to McMillen, the path chosen by Wang Enmao, who by 1965 was both military commander and first party secretary of Xinjiang, was 'to maintain actively the façade of regional autonomy for [the various *minzu*] … while at the same time adopting measures that would gradually make them, and the territory they inhabited, unquestionably Chinese'.9

While I shall return to some of these themes later, as do many of the contributors in this volume, my point is that by the mid-1980s my own research interests shifted away from Xinjiang, and it has been over 20 years since I last studied or wrote about that place.10 Hence, in making the opening remarks at the 2006 Workshop, I felt a definite sense of going 'back to the future'!

The newer generation of Xinjiang/Central Asia scholars

Nonetheless, I have remained fascinated by developments in Central Asia and Xinjiang and often have read, with much admiration, the more recent,

Page 4

and excellent, scholarship about these places and peoples by the latest generation of scholars. Most of them have had the good fortune to experience greater direct access to China and Xinjiang and the peoples there since the 1980s and to the places of 'ethnic cousins' in the post-Soviet states of Central Asia since the early 1990s. As a consequence of their ability to undertake such fieldwork there, they have obtained greater 'ground truths' about the region than I (or 'my generation') could have done earlier. Certainly, my own 'academic voyeurism' of the 1970s seems a far cry from today's more open and globalized research environment – where 'travel' (both real and virtual) across borders into such places, combined with newer technologies, has nearly removed 'curtains and walls' for interested researchers and policy-makers. Moreover, the newer (hence, current) generation of scholars, both Western ('exogenous') and 'Non-Western' ('indigenous'), also is frequently fluent not only in *putonghua* (or Russian) but also competent in at least one of the languages of the nationalities of that region.11

Therefore, this more current scholarship fits into what I call the 'Generation of Scholarly Visitors'. It is composed of exogenous micro-specialists who have the capacities to dissect Xinjiang, and Central Asian, lifestyles and relevant government approaches to political, economic and social management. Moreover, it also is a generation that now includes scholars indigenous to these places who have, to a considerable degree, stepped out from behind former 'barriers and dispositions' to more freely interact with their peers both locally and internationally. This has added a valuable degree of what I call 'rounded dimensionality' in terms of the perspectives represented in assessments and discussions about the region. It also supports the idea that we now have a generation of contemporary Central Asia and Xinjiang scholarship that is conditioned by processes and events that range through a 'continuum' from the local, national and regional to the global. For these reasons, therefore, this is an era of scholarship when 'glocality' already has become an important contextual and analytical component.

Xinjiang/Central Asia: 'glocality' as a framework of analysis

Conceptually, the notion of 'glocality' presents us with a context wherein continuing little and great 'games' are being played out, frequently as components of contests at all levels in the region of focus here; where there is an apparent seamlessness between the macro and the micro affairs of actors *within* Central Asia and Xinjiang (and of actors from *elsewhere*, both proximate and distant, including both nation states and others); and where the immediate lives of 'everyday peoples' are variously deemed to be of consequence. As Smith and Baylis suggest, 'the processes of increasing interconnectedness between societies is such that events in one part of the world more and more have effects on peoples and societies far away'.12 This view holds that 'the world is increasingly seen and experienced as a single place',

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whereby if 'someone "sneezes" in, say, Urumqi (or Beijing, and even Kashgar or Tashkent), others elsewhere could "catch a cold"'.

In a brief, but brilliant, discussion of globalization, Anthony McGrew has noted that [with some additions by the author]:

The growing *extensity, intensity*, and *velocity* of global interactions is associated with a *deepening* enmeshment of the local and the global in so far as local events may come to have global [and regional] consequences and global [and regional] events can have serious local consequences creating a growing collective awareness or consciousness of the world as a shared social space. Rather than social, economic and political activities being organized primarily on a local or national scale, they are also increasingly organized on a trans-national or global [glocal] scale. This is not to argue that territory and borders are now irrelevant, but rather to acknowledge that under conditions of globalization their *relative significance*, as constraints upon social action, and the exercise of power, is declining. In an era of instantaneous, real-time global communication and organization, the distinction between the domestic and the international, inside and outside the state, breaks down.13

McGrew goes on to equate this with a form of 'relative de-nationalization' of power, in so far as, in an increasingly interconnected global system, power is organized and exercised on a transregional, transnational, or transcontinental basis. In a similar fashion, Holton has argued that:

To be 'glocal' means the combination of global and local elements within human activities. Examples include local marketing by global corporations, or the environmentalist practice of thinking globally but acting locally. Glocalization, meanwhile, is the process whereby 'glocal fusions' take place. The term 'glocal', while not widely used in academic or popular debate, nonetheless has a significant presence in a range of areas from business and management, to city-to-city collaboration and social movements seeking to empower civil society to combat market-based globalization and the power of multinational corporations.14

Holton's words draw on a core insight of Roland Robertson's seminal discussion of 'global fields', which reasoned that much which might be called global or local may be better regarded as a syncretic, albeit a complex and shifting mix of both elements which thereby creates *glocal* rather than global relationships.15 In other words, the global and the local *interpenetrate* rather than maintain a distinct free-standing character.16 The idea of glocal levels of social life is a key example of the more general trend that Robertson refers to as *relativization*, which involves the combination, or interpenetration, of

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what he sees as universal *and* particular aspects of social life. In Figure 1.1, this writer attempts to depict such a 'glocal continuum', recognizing that some 'elements' (in brackets) are fungible. Therefore, one could suggest that in this era of 'contemporary accelerated globalization' (CAG), it is appropriate to analytically consider this concept of glocality, including as a reflection of actors' thoughts and actions.17 Perhaps the recent thoughts of a young Australian schoolgirl, shown in Figure 1.2, capture similar feelings on a personal level – and ones that are likely held glocally. Putting aside the fact that globalization processes, including those that pertain to glocalization, remain uneven and in many cases unfair (what might be termed 'asymmetrical globalization'), it seems more than reasonable that, taken together, they can provide an interesting and coherent analytical framework that draws attention to 'fusions' of global and local processes and players – whether configured by states, cities, business enterprises, social movements, or individuals. One could suggest that other dimensions, say those of sociocultural identity, human security, economic and resource development, and the world's environment, should be included with those elements which heretofore have tended to focus on the territorial state's 'national

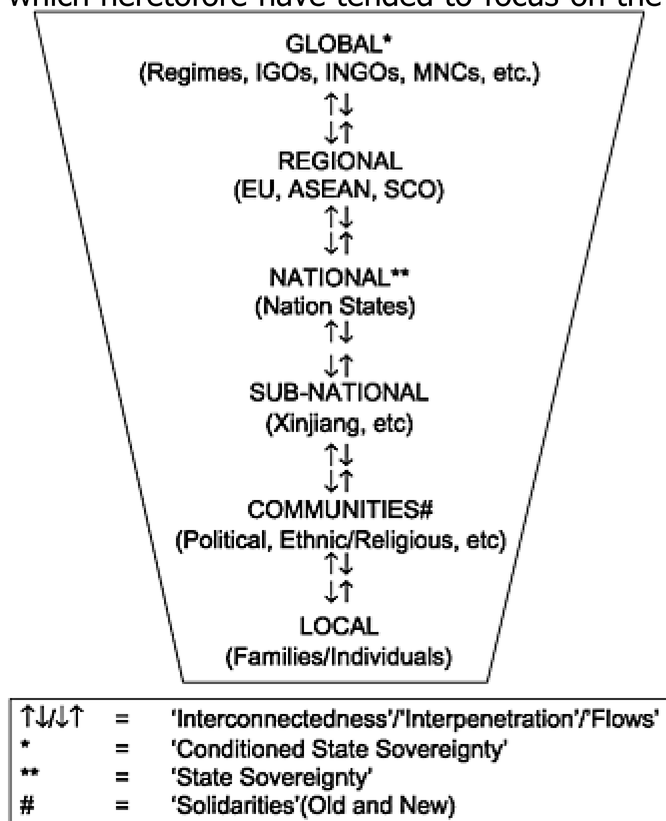

Figure 1.1 The 'Glocal Continuum'.

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I am a person who was born to live in a skin with a different colour than yours.
I could not choose my parents, nor you yours.
The colour pigments embedded in your skin by the unchangeable hands of nature
Are perchance white, while mine are black, brown or yellow.
But underneath, I am just like you.
My muscles ripple with the same waves of power, and thrill to the same throbs of
Joyous action.
My mind has the same functions as yours.
I reach out, just as you do, in aspirations of the soul.
I love and hate, hope and despair, rejoice and suffer, along with you.
When my children lose fair chances at life, and become aware of the bitter road of prejudice they must tread,
Then I know what my colour has cost them.
I offer you my hand in rebuilding an unjust world, a world you and I must make better than we found.
I am a person of a different skin.

Figure 1.2 A different skin.

security' and policies or other factors associated with it. As Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks recently noted:

Throughout history and until very recently most people (for most of their lives) were surrounded by others with whom they shared a faith, a tradition, a way of life, a set of rituals and narratives of memory and hope. Under such circumstances it was possible to believe that our truth was the only truth; that our way was the only way. Outsiders were few, dissidents fewer still. That is not our situation today. *We live in the conscious presence of 'difference'*. In the street, at work and on the television screen we constantly encounter cultures whose ideas and ideals are unlike ours. That can be experienced as a profound threat to identity…

Religion is one of the great answers to the question of identity. But that, too, is why we face danger. Identity divides. The very process of creating an 'Us' involves creating a 'Them' – people not like ourselves. In the very process of creating community within borders, *religion can create conflict across borders*.18

And one could extend this thinking to an assessment of the recent intensification of asymmetrical conflict as illustrated by the American-led 'global war on terror', within which notions of glocality seem to shape associated actions and policies (such as those based on the doctrine of pre-emption in what has been termed the 'paradigm of prevention'). And these seem to be utilized to promote the affinities of particular nation states' national interests in the face of threats or challenges by other state or non-state actors (the 'Them' and 'Us' equation) in any locality, worldwide.

The nature of this glocality, particularly the interconnectedness of the

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'Them' and 'Us' dichotomy, can be clearly seen in the 'Abstract' that publicized the 2006 Workshop:

The September 11 incidents have exerted a profound effect on Central Asia as a whole and, due to the predominantly Islamic confession of the region's population and proximity to Afghanistan, the region has been caught up in the war against terrorism. The United States has established bases in Central Asia, the first time in history that the Americans have been involved in what have up to now been Russian and to some extent Chinese and British spheres of influence. Since the 11 September incidents, the region has been assailed by a multiplicity of extreme influences that have impacted significantly upon the internal development of the Central Asian republics and Xinjiang. Indeed, the post-11 September period has witnessed the overthrow of a long-standing regime in Kyrgyzstan (the 'Tulip Revolution', March 2005), continued unrest in Uzbekistan (Andijan Incident, 2005), and the intensification of Chinese control in Xinjiang. Meanwhile, the contested nature of the region's international politics has been heightened by the July 2005 statement of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation [SCO] that requested the establishment of a timeline for the withdrawal of United States military forces from bases in Central Asia. Thus, the region's international relations and the future development of its constituent states remain in a state of flux.19

Of course, one could ask how such a glocal framework could be specifically relevant to today's Central Asia and Xinjiang. According to S. Frederick Starr, and others, Central Asia and Xinjiang are 'defined by their unique position along multiple cultural fault lines' – they are 'zones of cultural interaction' and 'cultural blotters'.20 But, as Starr adds, in reference to Xinjiang:

While it is an exaggeration to say that external influences have defined Xinjiang, it is hard to find another region on which such diverse external cultural forces have been so consistently exerted. Together, these act like external gravitational fields, pulling Xinjiang in different directions and away from whatever inward cultural moorings it may have.21

The view here is that there has been a recent tendency for some comparatively powerful 'extra-regional players' to focus on the more *macro* dimensions of security in that region out of self-interest – and, frequently, at the expense of the *micro* conditions of life at the local levels. Embedded within the aforementioned glocal continuum are many crucial processes ('missions') that remain unfinished, such as: the establishment and management of global institutions (and regimes) that provide accepted governance that is just and accountable; the construction (or maintenance) of extant and new/aspired *integrated and more than nominally independent* nation states; the challenges

of managing the aspirations of evolving 'imagined communities' or unfulfilled ethnonationalisms; and the struggle of individuals to 'make a fair go of it' in their lives – both locally and in wider regional and global (glocal) spheres.

On the one hand, it is contended here that today 'Xinjiang', in particular, is variously 'constructed' as an *intra*-state entity (primarily) by the Han-dominated CCP and PRC nation-state structure from the east – thus, a 'Hanjiang'? But, more reluctantly, it is constructed this way by most local minority nationalities (in the 1990s, Beijing changed the terminology governing its minority policies, moving to the use of 'ethnic' rather than the previous term 'national'). On the other hand, 'Xinjiang' is imagined/constructed by some locals, and by pan-ethnic/religious forces in the adjacent Central Asian region and amongst Diaspora elsewhere, as an 'East Turkestan' or an 'Uyghurstan' – that is, as a *potential* 'nation state'. Undoubtedly, such imaginings have been fuelled not only by recent events in the adjacent region but also by those at greater distance in places like the Balkans and Palestine. Nor is it insignificant that the formal names of the post-Soviet nation states of Central Asia bear reference to the predominant ethnic groups there. To a considerable degree, nonetheless, all actors (including many extra-regional and/or glocal players) also view 'place' in a regional context with Xinjiang being part of a larger construct called 'Central Asia'. However, these various imaginings and constructions of Xinjiang and Central Asia frequently do contend with one another, and sometimes with considerable volatility. And it is here that any aspirations for real local autonomy, more viable independence, or profitable interdependence often collide – whether through the application of 'soft' or 'hard' power by various actors.

There is little doubt, for instance, that in the case of Xinjiang the main stimulus for reactive or assertive ethnic unrest has been the consequence of Chinese policies, whether intended or not. To assure Chinese control there, the CCP-dominated PRC centre has concurrently adopted a 'dual strategy'. On the one hand, it has tried to calm and entice the locals through policies of rapid economic reform and the potential benefits that they would likely obtain, as well as through a diplomacy of 'separatist containment' with neighbouring Central Asian states (often under the guise of combating so-called terrorism). On the other hand, Beijing has also increased Chinese military/police presence and encouraged continuing Han migration there. This latter dimension of central policy, it appears, has had the effect of politicizing the more fervent ethnics and/or devout Muslims towards Xinjiang independence (*Jiangdu*). Most of the latter may be biding their time or operating underground, waiting for appropriate opportunities to actively and openly challenge the Chinese state or 'Han settlers' ('Chinese infidels') who have encroached on their homelands. This theme will be revisited below.

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Xinjiang and Central Asia: 'remoteness' and 'otherness'

The remoteness and the otherness of Central Asia and Xinjiang are factors long emphasized in scholarly works, and are illustrated in Maps 1.1 and 1.2. One needs to be reminded that in many societies around the world, including those located in Central Asia and Xinjiang, there remains a deep economic and cultural – even spiritual-like – attachment to 'the land' (even as harsh as nature has so often made life there). This is no less the case for traditionally more agrarian and/or nomadic peoples than it is for city/oasis dwellers. Beyond 'land/place', ethnicity, and especially its religious component, has variously shaped identities and notions of 'difference' amongst local peoples, and has also partially oriented their thinking towards other 'centres' – including alternatives to any 'nation-state centre', including that of the PRC.

It is understandable, therefore, that when non-ethnic/non-Muslim settlers from 'Mother Russia' or Han migrants from 'China Proper' have settled on vast tracts of land in Central Asia or Xinjiang ('China Improper'?) and have come to dominate the local economies and strategic resources there, senses of marginalization, displacement/dispossession and frustration have developed among the indigenous peoples. This is especially the case in Xinjiang, where such lands and local economies have come to be administered by the predominantly Han-populated Production and Construction Corps (*bingtuan*). The bingtuan had 2.54 million members in 2001, or 13 per cent of Xinjiang's total population and a third of all Han there, and has been constantly augmented by a stream of 'non-Muslim settlers or workers from the east'. In 2000, Uyghurs and Han comprised 44 per cent and 41 per cent of the region's population, respectively.

All of this has had the consequence of pushing some non-Russian/non-Han peoples towards even greater feelings of ethnic identity and solidarity locally as well as towards an enhanced affinity with their ethnic cousins (or religious brethren) elsewhere – often despite the historic competition amongst them or efforts to make them all 'Russian' or 'Chinese' (the 'Older Great Games'). Notions of a religious capital outside of Russia or China (in Mecca, for example), or dreams of a new 'East Turkestan' or 'Uyghurstan', have contributed to such local mindsets (and to the clandestine organization of, and sympathies towards, many politicized groupings). The saying 'where you sit is what you see' thus seems to reflect the perceptions (if not the realities) about how ideas of place and centrality (whether in narrower or wider contexts) are conceived there politically, socially, culturally or in economic terms. In one sense, 'borders' *do count* both for those who have recently created nation-state structures in Central Asia and, in an 'aspirational' sense, for those in Xinjiang who may have similar longings. But, in another sense, there must exist some sentiment that in social, cultural and economic terms such 'borders' have little meaning and actually could be obstacles to 'a more comfortable life'.

Moreover, it could be argued that these dimensions of 'remoteness and

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Map 1.1 China and Central Asia.
Source: Maps of Asia, University of Texas Libraries, University of Texas, USA.

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Map 1.2 Commonwealth of Independent States – Central Asian States.
Source: Maps of Asia, University of Texas Libraries, University of Texas, USA.

otherness' are conditioned quite differently in the year 2007. To a significant degree, the revolution in information and communication technologies (ICT) that continues to shape the current era of CAG has allowed such peoples to at least begin to 'overcome geography'. The remoteness and isolation of Central Asia and Xinjiang, as conceived in the past, have been substantially eroded as distance and borders at all levels now are, or can be, transcended by freer flows of goods, capital, people, information and ideas. The latest ICT revolution involving satellite television, laptops, mobile phones and other 'smarter innovations' has especially contributed to this. Even in terms of memory and identity, the senses of remoteness and otherness long felt by local peoples (or imposed on them by others) may be slowly shifting towards a mindset of 'liberation and recovery' as a consequence of this revolution in technology – despite the efforts of authorities of some states to prevent or control it.

This recent networking amongst locals and with others elsewhere has the potential for greater contest *and/or* for increased dialogue and cooperation. Importantly, it also enhances the possibilities for a reshaping of political (and other) communities, and offers a number of vehicles to achieve it – such as more borderless financial, trade and other transactions, greater access to knowledge, increased cross-border movements of peoples, more clever organizational skills, and even better weapons systems.22 John Urry, for instance, has argued that the conceptual tools we use to make sense of societies, as 'bounded areas of social life that correspond to the territories of nation-states', are less and less adequate to the task of making sense of 'emerging flows of social life and conflict that are increasingly global'.23 He suggests that, increasingly, technologies are the 'media' through which social relationships are constructed, and widened. In a similar vein, Manuel Castells has argued that globalization represents a 'planetary shift to a network society':

The fundamental dilemma in the network society is that political institutions are not the site of power any longer. The real power is the power of instrumental flows, and cultural codes, embedded in the networks. Therefore, the assault to those immaterial power sites, from outside their logic, requires either the anchoring in eternal values, or the projection of alternative, communicative codes that expand through networking of alternative networks. That social change proceeds through one way or another will make the difference between fragmented communalism and new history making.24

Therefore, the suggestion here is that access to such technologies (and consequent networking) by peoples in Central Asia and Xinjiang, while now comparatively limited, *is* nonetheless happening and it will increase! One need only note how both nation-state and non-state actors (such as terrorist cells with avowed or assumed connections to groups such as al-Qaeda) have utilized such features associated with CAG in the service of their agendas, glocally.

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The 'New Great Games'

In any case, these are some of the factors that now shape the perimeters of the contemporary 'New Great Games' being played in a glocalizing Central Asia and Xinjiang. Even if some of the current players have changed somewhat, the technological environment is vastly different from that which existed even two decades ago. And this environment further underscores, and contributes to, the emerging glocal processes (and glocalities) in these places – where both centripetal and centrifugal forces actively impact on events, lives and outlooks. However, this raises the question about the degree to which the phenomenon of glocalization there is being shaped by the greater state players (including China, Russia and the United States) or by non-state transnational actors such as multinational enterprises or avowed terrorist organizations. Or, is it evolving a character of its own based on indigenous ethnicities contoured by religious preferences and coloured by locality that seek a minimum objective of greater real autonomy (if not real independence)? The future for peace or volatility there is likely to be shaped by just such 'tensions'.

One could note some recent examples of such volatility in Xinjiang. In an insightful chapter entitled 'Xinjiang and the "War against Terror"', Michael Dillon stated:

One reason for China's enthusiastic espousal of the campaign against terrorism became clear when the Foreign Minister of the PRC, Tang Jiaxuan, claimed in a telephone conversation with his Russian opposite number Igor Ivanov on October 10th [2001] that China was also the victim of terrorism by Uyghur separatists…

By defining all separatist activity in Xinjiang as terrorist, the government of the PRC is hoping to obtain *carte blanche* from the international community to take whatever action it sees fit in the region.25

According to a web-based assessment authored by You Ji, Jiang Zemin's July 1999 statement outlining China's anti-terrorism policy had two components: a preventative strategy emphasizing tough measures against insurgents at home and enhanced cooperation with neighbouring Central Asian states through the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO); and a policy of minimizing contact with Afghanistan (as a base of al-Qaeda).26 This amounted to a further broadening of 'locality' towards 'regionality'. After the events of 11 September 2001 (9/11), this 'regionality' was further broadened to 'glocality' as China – for its own purposes – became at least nominally linked to the American-led 'coalition' waging a global war against terrorism and ramped up its efforts with the formation of specialist anti-terrorist fast-response units, anti-terrorist research and intelligence operations under the Ministry of State Security, as well as a three-month campaign to seek and destroy avowed terrorist bases and networks. By November 2001, Beijing claimed

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that 20 such bases had been eliminated, with over 250 arrests having been made (including 100 'insurgents' trained in Afghanistan).27

An earlier BBC report suggested that Beijing had 'come out of the closet' in terms of its earlier secretiveness about separatist problems in Xinjiang that were deemed to be embarrassing, but private, matters.28 There then began a steady flow of such reports in the international media – as well in official PRC releases (a document on 'East Turkestan terrorism', a white paper on Xinjiang, and a list of avowed terrorist groups) signifying Beijing's concerns.29 China claimed that as many as 500 Xinjiang separatists (classified now as 'terrorists') had been trained in Afghanistan by al-Qaeda, which also provided them with funding, weapons, indoctrination and sanctuary. As You Ji then argued, '*Jiangdu* activists have built base networks both at home and abroad, with extensive foreign connections revolving around three centres of activity, each of them interconnected.'30 These 'centres of activity' were said to include anti-China campaigns launched in the West under the banner of human rights and ethnic equality, dozens of Islamic organizations comprised of PRC exiles legally registered in Central Asia, and training and indoctrination centred in Afghanistan.

On 9 January 2007, Al Jazeera reported that China had announced that police from the Xinjiang Public Security Department had raided a remote south-western 'terrorist training camp' in the Pamir Mountains the previous Friday. Eighteen people described as terrorists were killed, while 17 more were captured and several others were being pursued. One policeman was killed and another wounded. The police claimed to have seized guns, 22 hand grenades and materials to produce 1,500 more. The authorities said that the camp was run by the 'East Turkestan Islamic Movement', listed after 9/11 as a terrorist organization in Xinjiang now having links with al-Qaeda (even though by China's own accounts the restiveness by separatists there pre-dates those tragic events).31

Whatever the nature of such incidents or the source and veracity of claims made about them, the common characterization in all of this is one of 'glocal networking'. Furthermore, all of this must leave the Beijing leadership feeling no little discomfort, as just under the surface of its Xinjiang (and Central Asian) policies there remains a constant worry about that region's vulnerability to any 'forces' – whether domestic or foreign – that could impede China's ambitions. Hence, this largely explains the CCP's earlier implementation of a 'Strike Hard, Maximum Pressure' campaign against separatism in the 1990s, the 'Western Development Strategy', or 'Develop the West' (*xibu da kaifa*), campaign from 2001, and its very active agenda of Central Asian diplomacy in recent years based on anti-separatism and securing access to vital energy resources.32

Several points can be made about China's more public face concerning separatism-cum-terrorism in Xinjiang (and in the adjacent region). First, China's projection of a higher public profile against such so-called terrorist (or other dissident activities) may have assuaged fears held by some in the

lead-up to the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing that the central authorities could prevent or manage possible incidents. While not diminishing human rights concerns here, the centre's harsh quelling of disturbances in Tibet prior to the Games reflected its attempts to 'handle such fears'. Second, and in a related sense, it may be a signal to all potentially disruptive elements, and possible supporters elsewhere, that the PRC authorities will not tolerate any display of opposition to CCP (read Chinese) rule or excessive ethnic/religious preferences, and that they are actively 'on the hunt' on both fronts. Third, it may be Beijing's way of allaying worries amongst potential investors or contractors wishing to be involved in the larger region's booming resource sector, implying that 'it is business as usual'. Fourth, in more strategic terms, China may be playing a subtle 'anti-terrorism card' to counter recent US moves into the adjacent region. Finally, if Beijing is incautious in its recognition of the newer states in adjacent Central Asia, and in its attempts to tap those nationalisms for its own grander purposes, it risks establishing counterproductive precedents that might have the rebound effect of stirring latent nationalist (*Jiangdu*) inclinations within Xinjiang that could have spillover effects more widely.

Despite the examples of volatility mentioned above, which did increase as the 2008 Olympic Games approached (at least in the case of Tibet), and as a 'global theatre' presented itself to dissidents, there has been considerable recent evidence pointing to the fact that for the majority of non-Han peoples in Xinjiang a 'begrudging accommodationism' to (Han) Chinese rule has evolved. And, so long as the local economy under central guidance continues to deliver positive results in terms of local livelihoods and other life opportunities there, such accommodationism will likely continue (obviously abetted by strict military/police conditions). Some dissatisfaction there may be, and not surprisingly so given the history of ethnic and other tensions there. But the turmoil of the 1980s and 1990s seems to have largely abated for the moment as, on balance, for local peoples the 'pastures seem greener' within the Chinese state. This assessment is similar to that made by James Millward, which is worth quoting at some length:

Although the catalogue of incidents [in Xinjiang] seems to indicate the existence of an organized, unified, and violent Uyghur movement, careful scrutiny reveals problems with the evidence presented in both media and official sources. In fact, both the frequency and severity of violent incidents in Xinjiang have declined since 1997–98, possibly because of Chinese efforts at interdiction. While it is not negligible, the current threat of organized Uyghur separatism and particularly of terrorist attacks on civilian targets seems less serious than claimed in official and media reports.

Episodes of resistance to rule from Beijing, while relatively common, have been discontinuous and characterized by a variety of ideologies, Islam being only one of them. The period since 1990 is the main concern

of [this] study and presents two main theses. First, from the analysis of Chinese official documents and international press accounts of violent activity attributed to Uyghurs, the record contains much inaccurate, questionable, or contradictory reporting and slanted conclusions reflecting ulterior agendas. Second, contrary to the implication conveyed by these materials and commonly voiced by journalists and analysts alike, both the frequency and severity of violent activity associated with Uyghur separatism have in fact declined since the late 1990s.33

In sum

So, where has, or where might, all of this take us in terms of serious and appropriately framed discussions about this 'Eurasian Outback'-cum-'Chinese Continental Frontline'? First, any overall assessment of the record of Chinese rule in Xinjiang and, hence, its relations with other actors involved in the larger region of Central Asia, must be mixed. On balance, there is little evidence to suggest that the CCP's long-term strategies of dealing with that restive region based on the ruthless suppression of separatism in Xinjiang, coupled with economic development and investment to improve the living conditions of the locals, has had *all* the effects desired by Beijing. Indeed, some have rightly argued that the strategies of the CCP in its 'ethnic borderlands' (such as Xinjiang) are akin to a process of 'internal colonization' whereby the non-Han peoples are placed in a position of considerable 'marginalization'.34 This is demonstrated by assimilationist policies that produce social and cultural exclusion for the 'ethnics', integrationist (and Han-dominated) economic policies, extractionist resource development that benefits 'China to the east', and increased regional militarization against 'dissent and separatism' under the cover of anti-terrorism.

Second, and associated with this, is the probability of emerging and possibly contending glocalities that are conditioned by alternative loyalties or agendas that compete with those of China, or other 'great state players'. Therefore, what happens in Xinjiang today may somewhere, some time or somehow have an effect on other glocalities in the larger 'region' of Central Asia (or vice versa). Indeed, the early twenty-first century has become a time in human history when the search for strategic resources (especially fossil fuels) coupled with the maintenance of state regimes has become imperative for all players – and Central Asia and Xinjiang loom large in this quest. This hunt for strategic resources is especially crucial for the PRC if it is to fuel continued dynamic economic development and solidify its great power status – which, in turn, are essential factors in maintaining the CCP's legitimacy as the sole arbiter of politics in China. Thus, the issues attached to both ethnic nationalisms as well as to the importance of their lands, and particularly what lies beneath such lands, take on a significantly different meaning. The view here is that, unfortunately, it well could be that neither the peoples nor the lands they treasure in Xinjiang or Central Asia will be allowed to count much

or obtain what is felt to be a 'fair share' in the intensifying competition for strategic resources and all that is associated with it.

Third, there are other geopolitical factors that conceivably could have a telling influence on events in Central Asia and Xinjiang. On the one hand, there is the distinct possibility of a wind-down of American-led forces in an Iraq that seems to be sliding further into the bloody chaos of a civil war marked by Islamic sectarianism. If this eventuates, based on a policy shift following the next United States presidential elections and abetted by increasing American public opinion against the Iraqi imbroglio, it might bring Beijing some joy in terms of the loss of face felt by its rival superpower, as well as a further erosion of American presence in the broader region. On the other hand, the same events could give succour to ethnonationalist and religious elements in terms of their abilities to 'take on and cast out' the forces of *any* great state actor. In the future, this could mean that a 'Rising China' might face similar challenges in consolidating its broader security interests in its own backyard. So far as Xinjiang and Central Asia are concerned, such a scenario also might entail a set of policies from the Chinese capital that are either 'more relaxed' or 'even tougher', or some combination of both. In any case, the situation there could have significant implications for the CCP in terms of 'added costs' that could impede its management of the economy and, hence, its continued political predominance in the Chinese political arena.

Finally, even though I personally have not been closely engaged in research about Central Asia and Xinjiang for some years now, in perhaps a somewhat idealistic vein I hope that the various dimensions of glocality will be objectively considered in future scholarly *and* official assessments. Moreover, I also would like to think that our attention to issues of broadly based security would include concerns about the more human conditions of those peoples situated in such glocal realms. Issues that ought to be factored into any assessment concerning the future of that region and its peoples include accountable governance, human rights and human dignity, environmental sustainability, poverty, 'grey area phenomena' related to well-being and health (including the scourge of HIV/AIDS), and reasonable aspirations that are universal to peoples no matter their locality or ethnicity.

To be honest, though, one could be somewhat anxious that those in variously located policy-making circles might think this is 'just all too academic, theoretical or utopian' – that we do *not* need to be concerned about the largely faceless individuals in faraway places within any so-called glocal continuum who are deemed to have little impact on the realpolitik of any New Great Games that others play on their fields of dreams. One only need remember, too, that one person's 'terrorist' is another person's 'liberation fighter' – although this is not to forgive anyone who commits crimes against humanity, let alone against the very basic tenets of their avowed values or beliefs.

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Notes

1 This is reflected in the works of: Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, New York: Capitol Publishing Company, 1950; Colin Mackerras, *The Uighur Empire According to the T'ang Dynasty Histories: A Study in Sino-Uighur Relations, 744–840*, Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972; Martin Nornis, *Gateway to Asia*, New York: John Day, 1944; Andrew Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims in Chinese Central Asia: A Political History of Republican Xinjiang, 1911–1949*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; and Aurel Stein, *On Ancient Central Asian Tracks – a brief narrative of three expeditions in innermost Asia and north-western China*, London: Macmillan, 1933.
2 O. Edmund Clubb, *China and Russia: The 'Great Game'*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1971.
3 A.S. Whiting and Sheng Shih-ts'ai, *Sinkiang: Pawn or Pivot?*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1954.
4 Jack Chen, *Sinkiang Story*, London: Macmillan, 1977.
5 S. Frederick Starr, 'Introduction', (ed.) *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004, p. 16.
6 Starr, 'Introduction', p. 6.
7 For example, Immanuel C.Y. Hsu, *The Ili Crisis: A Study of Sino-Russian Diplomacy*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972; George Moseley, *A Sino-Soviet Cultural Frontier: The Ili Kazakh Autonomous Chou*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962; Morris Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia, From 1368 to the Present Day*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1975; and David Wang, *Under the Soviet Shadow: The Yining Incident – ethnic conflicts and international rivalry in Xinjiang, 1944–1949*, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1999.
8 My first visit to Xinjiang was in early 1982, and in August of that year I authored an article in *Asian Survey* entitled 'The Urumqi Military Region: defense and security in China's west'.
9 Gardner Bovingdon, 'Heteronomy and its discontents: "Minzu regional autonomy" in Xinjiang', in M. Rossabi (ed.) *Governing China's Multiethnic Frontiers*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004, p. 122.
10 My last substantive publication about Xinjiang appeared in *The China Quarterly*, no. 99, September 1984, under the title 'Xinjiang and Wang Enmao: new directions in power, policy and integration?'.
11 There are a significant number of very talented scholars and experts in this newer generation of Xinjiang researchers (including a few 'old hands'). Only a few can be mentioned here, such as: Dru Gladney, Gardner Bovingdon, Morris Rossabi, Michael Dillon, David Bachman, A. Doak Barnett, James Seymour, Thomas Heberer, William Clark, Sean Roberts, Jay Dautcher, Justin Rudelson, Graham Fuller, Jonathan Lipman, Linda Benson, Yitzhak Shicor, S. Frederick Starr, Stanley Troops, Calla Wiemer, Michael Clarke, Nabijan Tursun, Colin Mackerras, June Dreyer, Nicolas Becquelin, James Millward, Ahmed Rashid, Marika Vicziany, Harry Hongda Wu, Geoff Watson, and even Amnesty International.
12 S. Smith and J. Baylis, 'Introduction', in J. Baylis and S. Smith (eds) *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, 3rd edn, London: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 8.
13 A. McGrew, 'Globalization and Global Politics', in J. Baylis and S. Smith (eds) *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, 3rd edn, London: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 19–40.
14 R.J. Holton, *Making Globalization*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 22.
15 Holton, *Making Globalization*, pp. 25–44.
16 R. Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, London: Sage, 1992, p. 64.

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17 See Smith and Baylis, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1–14 and J.A. Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd edn, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

18 Chief Rabbi J. Sacks, quoted in Hon. Andrew Robb (Federal Member for Goldstein and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Australia), ‘In Support of a Formal Citizenship Test: address to the Jewish National Fund Gold Patron’s Lunch’, Melbourne, 25 October 2006, p. 4. My emphasis.

19 Email to the author from Pearl Lee, Griffith Asia Institute, on 20 December 2005.

20 Starr, ‘Introduction’, p. 7 and one also might note Samuel S. Huntington’s interesting, but controversial, 1993 article, ‘The Clash of Civilizations?’, *Foreign Affairs*, 1993, vol. 72, no. 3, 22–49.

21 Starr, ‘Introduction’, p. 7.

22 See Andrew Linklater, ‘Globalization and the transformation of political community’, in J. Baylis and S. Smith (eds) *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, 3rd edn, London: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 709–26.

23 John Ury, *Global Complexity*, New York: Polity Press, 2003, pp. 255–74. Also, Arjun Appadurai, in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, pointed to the changing nature of contemporary experience by attaching primary importance to the cultural rather than the economic or institutional dimensions as being most critical in shaping contemporary globalization. He argued that it is the imagination that constitutes the field of social practices, and underlined the importance of ‘disjunctive experience’ – namely, the sense that globalization consists of experiencing multiple places and multiple temporalities. His term ‘ethnoscapes’ referred to the shifting terrains of people that constitute the world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, and guest workers.

24 Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, London: Blackwell, 1997, pp. 5–24.

25 Michael Dillon, *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest*, London: Routledge Curzon, 2004, pp. 156–62.

26 You Ji, ‘China’s Post-9/11 Terrorism Strategy’, Association for Asian Research, 5 November 2004. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.asianresearch.org/ articles/2047.html> (accessed 24 October 2008).

27 Ji, ‘China’s Post-9/11 Terrorism Strategy’.

28 T. Luard, (2003) ‘China’s Changing Views of Terrorism’, *BBC News*, 15 December. Online. Available HTTP: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3320347.stm> (accessed 24 October 2008).

29 See James A. Millward, ‘Violent separatism in Xinjiang: a critical assessment’, *Policy Studies 6*, Washington, DC: East-West Center, 2004.

30 Ji, ‘China’s Post-9/11 Terrorism Strategy’.

31 Al Jazeera [in English], (2007) *China raids Xinjiang ‘terror camp’*, 9 January. Online. Available HTTP: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia-pacific/2007/01/ 2008525141225209448.html> (accessed 24 October 2008).

32 Qian Tian, ‘China develops its West: motivation, strategy and prospect’, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 2004, vol. 13, no. 41, 611–36.

33 Millward, ‘Violent separatism in Xinjiang: a critical assessment’, pp. vii–viii.

34 See Dru C. Gladney, ‘Whither the Uighur?’, *Harvard Asia Pacific Review*, 1999, Winter, vol. 3, no. 1, 11–16; Gardner Bovingdon, ‘“Autonomy” in Xinjiang: Han nationalist imperatives and Uyghur discontent’, *Policy Studies*, 2005, no. 11, Washington, DC: East-West Center; and Minority Rights Group International, *China: Minority Exclusion, Marginalization and Rising Tensions*, London: Commissioned Report of Human Rights in China, February 2007.

2

The 'centrality' of Central Asia in world history, 1700–2008

From pivot to periphery and back again?

Michael Clarke
Griffith Asia Institute

The term 'Central Asia', for most people, conveys a primarily descriptive geographical image of a specific region on the globe. In contemporary usage this is confined to describing the five post-Soviet states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. This, however, highlights an important theme in the context of the region's role in world history that will be the focus of this chapter – the expansion and contraction of the limits of 'Central Asia'. What has determined this dynamic of expansion and contraction over the centuries has been the very geographic centrality of the region on the Eurasian continent. The establishment of any geographic, political or cultural limits to 'Central Asia' at any given point in history has been due to its interactions with regions around it. Thus, it is necessary to present 'Central Asia' as primarily a cultural rather than a purely geographic concept. Importantly, the factor that has aided in geoculturally distinguishing that which lay within and without 'Central Asia' throughout history has been the surrounding civilizations' agricultural basis. Central Asia in this paper is therefore understood as constituting the core of the Eurasian continent – not only the five post-Soviet states noted above but also Xinjiang, Mongolia (the Mongolian Republic and Inner Mongolia), northern Iran and northern Afghanistan – that is largely coterminous with the area termed the 'geographical pivot of history' by Halford Mackinder.1 Although the interactions of this 'geographical pivot of history' with the surrounding civilizations can be traced across millennia, this chapter will focus upon the interactions of 'Central Asia' with that of the surrounding agricultural civilizations from 1700 to the present. This period is significant for the reason that from 1700 onward this Eurasian core contracted under pressure from the expansion of the surrounding civilizations, most notably Russia and China. This chapter, in addressing the interactions of Central Asia and the surrounding civilizations between 1700 and the present, will argue three major points:

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1 Central Asia is central to an understanding of 'world history';
2 Central Asia was gradually 'removed' from world history by the expansion of civilizations on its periphery;
3 The Soviet collapse has resulted in the re-emergence of Central Asia as a region of contestation in world history and politics.

These arguments will be placed within a broad conceptual framework that revisits the geopolitical description of Central Asia as 'pivot' and 'periphery' in world history and aligns these concepts with S.A.M. Adshead's conceptions of Central Asian history as falling into 'active' and 'passive' phases of development with associated functions of 'diffusion' and 'convergence'.2 I conceive, in accord with Adshead, that the period of Central Asian history during the 1700 to 2007 period falls into a 'passive' phase of development characterized by the dialectic of geopolitical peripheralness and political, economic and cultural 'convergence'. As such the paper takes a broad-brush approach to the complex processes of the absorption of the major regions of Central Asia into the expanding states of China and Russia and seeks to highlight commonalities in these developments.

The centrality of Central Asia in World History: the confluence of geography and culture

'Central Asia' in its widest possible definition can be considered to be that vast belt of territory on the Eurasian continent that extends along a west–east axis from the Carpathian Mountains to Korea and a north–south axis from the Arctic Ocean to the Himalayas. This vast region is given unity through its distance from the sea, continentality of climate and shortage of rainfall. However, although there is great diversity within this wide expanse of territory, three distinct features mark Central Asia: (1) a belt of steppes and deserts which extend in latitudinal direction; (2) several latitudinal mountain chains that separate the steppe and desert region from South Asia; and (3) the interior drainage of several rivers that terminate in lakes or 'seas' (such as the Caspian and Aral Seas) or evaporate in the deserts.3 The steppe zone is delimited on the north by the Eurasian forest zone (the taiga of Siberia) and in the south by the latitudinal mountain chains and deserts. The variables of topography, orography and climate resulted in the evolution of three major ecological systems or 'natural zones' within this conception of 'Central Asia' that crucially impacted upon the forms of human habitation practised within them.4 The steppe zones are characterized by extensive grasslands or prairies. Within the steppe zones there is a distinction between the northern wooded or forested steppe and the generally more southern grasslands. This latter region, encompassing a broad belt from the lands north of the Black Sea in the west to the plains of Manchuria in the east, constitutes a distinct ecological system distinguished by the almost continuous coverage of grasses. In the west the steppe zone includes Ukraine, the northern Caucasus and southern Urals, and

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the Kazakh steppe. This latter region flows into the pre-eminent eastern steppe zones of Zungharia (northern Xinjiang), Mongolia and Manchuria.5

The southern portion of 'Central Asia', meanwhile, is dominated by large desert regions from the Caspian Sea to the eastern marches of the Gobi and Ordos deserts in Mongolia. From west to east, this southern portion is geographically dominated by the Karakum, Kizilkum, Taklamakan, Gobi and Ordos deserts. These regions, in contrast to the steppes, are characterized by separate but interrelated oases. In the west, major oases developed, most importantly in the Ferghana, Tashkent and Samarkand valleys, between the Syr Darya and Amu Darya which ultimately terminate in the Aral Sea. This belt of fertile oases is interrupted by the western spurs of the Tien Shan Mountains and the Pamirs. The Taklamakan Desert of Xinjiang, occupying the Tarim Basin, is enclosed to the north by the Tien Shan, to the west by the Pamirs and to the south by the Kunlun Shan. On the fringes of this elliptical area oases were formed, watered by the melting snows of the surrounding mountain chains forming such rivers as the Khotan, Yarkand, Aksu and Tarim.6 It is these latter two 'natural zones' – the steppe and the desert – that historically have been the geographical regions of concentrated human habitation which form the core of 'Central Asia' as understood in this chapter. This thus encompasses the contemporary states of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, the Republic of Mongolia and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China.

The major defining characteristics of Central Asia are in fact ecological, and these ecological pressures have determined the nature or form of human habitation within them. The primary zones which are capable of sustaining human habitation – the steppe and the desert oases – resulted in the evolution of two distinct, but interrelated, cultural realms. The open grasslands, limited rainfall and dispersed utilizable water of the steppe fostered the development of nomadic pastoralism – the 'following of the grass and water' of the Chinese histories – while the limited rainfall and concentration of utilizable water in the oases of the desert zone fostered the development of settled, urban and intensive agricultural settlements.7 The one variable was thus the relationship between the nomadic pastoralist and the sedentary.8 The uniqueness of Central Asia thus lay not only in the closeness of the contrasting landscapes of the steppe and oasis, and the relative proximity of the great sedentary civilizations, but primarily in the development of the historical phenomenon of the horse-breeding, highly mobile nomadic pastoralist.9 It is important to examine the unique political, economic and military implications of the development of this form of lifestyle, as it generated Central Asia's centrality in world history.

The lifestyle of nomadic pastoralism was made possible through the technological advances of the 'secondary products revolution' circa 4000 BCE, whereby new techniques were developed to exploit domestic livestock more intensively.10 Two innovations in particular – the harnessing of the traction power of livestock (especially the horse) and the extraction of animal products

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(e.g. milk, hair/wool and blood) without slaughtering the animals – resulted in the production, for the first time, of most of the food, clothing, shelter and traction power required for survival from domesticated livestock. This in turn permitted the exploitation of the steppe regions, characterized by large areas of grasslands that were unsuitable for early forms of agriculture.11 Moreover, the ecological conditions of pastoralism also encouraged the development of nomadism. The constants of nomadic pastoralism were thus grass, animals and mobility.12

The full significance of these conditions, however, was not felt until the later centuries of the first millennium CE with the emergence of a series of Turkic peoples from Mongolia and their gradual displacement of the extant Indo-European populations. Indeed, the core regions of present-day Central Asia, historical Transoxiana – the lands between the Syr Dayra and Amu Dayra – were from antiquity to around the ninth and tenth centuries CE populated by primarily sedentary Iranian-speaking peoples (e.g. Sogdians).13 From this point onward successive waves of Turco-Mongolian peoples from the steppe dominated the political history of Central Asia.14 The question that arises here is what was the force generating the predominance of the nomadic pastoralist over the sedentary? The most obvious feature shared by the nomadic peoples that inhabited the steppes of Central Asia from the Scythians of antiquity to the Huns and Mongols was their acquisition and refinement of a complex of individual military skills generated by their specific lifestyle on the steppe regions of Central Asia.15 The combination of extensive animal husbandry and migration encouraged the development of martial qualities such as leadership, constant vigilance against external threats, intimate knowledge of the animals (especially the horse), coordination of men and resources, specialization in mounted archery, pragmatism and stamina.16 The nomadic pastoralist's utilization of the steppe horse/pony was also of central importance in converting such martial qualities into a superior advantage over sedentary states/societies. The impact and utility of the nomadic military technique/method of the mounted archer is evidenced by its dominance from the time of the Scythians (c. fifth century BCE) until the eighteenth century.17 As such, Sinor has argued that 'Inner Asia' exerted its influence in human history 'through the excellence of its armed forces'.18

The main theories of nomadic pastoralist political, economic and social activity focus on 'greed' or 'need' and hinge upon the economic shortcomings of nomadic pastoralism.19 The notion of the nomadic pastoralist's greed was common throughout much of the historiography of the classical eras of the sedentary world, with both the ancient Greek and Chinese perceiving in the nomad an aggressive, acquisitive and ferocious nature, likening them to ravenous 'wolves' and 'tigers'.20 In this view interaction between the sedentary and nomadic pastoral worlds was determined by the nomad's insatiable desire for the goods of the former – such as grain, metals and luxury goods – and achieved through the exercise of their military capabilities. This view has developed, particularly in the twentieth century, into a perspective

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based upon the supposed perennial economic deficiencies of the steppe. The emphasis is placed not upon the nomadic pastoralist's *desire* for the fruits of the sedentary world but on the relationship of *dependency* of the nomadic pastoral world upon the sedentary engendered by the unstable nature of the steppe economy.21 The undiversified economic basis of steppe society – the stock-raising of horses, camels etc. – could not directly improve the individual's or group's living standards as producer and consumer were one and the same.22 The goal of the steppe economy was not the accumulation of wealth 'but the acquisition of goods which, for one reason or another, it was impossible to produce'.23 According to this model, the nomadic pastoralist could either acquire such externally produced resources through trade/ exchange with sedentary populations, or take what was not given by force.24

Scholars such as Fletcher, Barfield and Christian have suggested that the dynamic generated by this cycle of 'trade or raid' had important implications for the internal social and political development of nomadic pastoral societies. In particular they argue that the ecologically derived symbiosis between the steppe and agrarian regions of Central Asia, and between Central Asia and the sedentary civilizations of the Eurasian periphery, created the stimulus for the development of forms of political and social organization above that of the tribe.25 From this perspective the creation of a 'steppe empire' (such as that of the Xiongnu or the Mongols) was the result of a conscious effort to construct more efficient and effective methods of extracting resources exogenous to the steppe environment.26 Di Cosmo and Christian, however, go further by suggesting that although the stimulus could be external, it was also often generated through political, economic and social processes endogenous to the steppe environment.27 As such the formation and consolidation of tribal and supratribal associations are seen as a response to the instability of the pastoralist world. This instability generally took the form of conflict over resources that could, in the pastoral environment, result in intense periods of mobility and mobilization of tribal groupings. The chief resource – herds of animals – could multiply rapidly in the course of a few years or vanish almost overnight due to adverse climatic conditions, disease or theft. This variability resulted in the nomad having to manage the amounts of human labour and pasture required, and this could lead to the abandonment of traditional territories and migration routes, potentially bringing different groups into conflict. This internal instability could also bring nomadic pastoral societies into conflict with the sedentary:

In this way, the inherent instability of pastoralist lifeways leads to a constant jostling which encourages skirmishing and raiding. In Inner Eurasia, raiding often escalated into warfare which could spread over vast areas of steppeland, eventually spilling over into neighbouring agrarian regions. The exceptional mobility of horse pastoralism, and the ability to fight from horseback, explain why in Inner Eurasia these conflicts could embrace very large areas indeed.28

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Such a state of crisis could, along with external non-steppe originating pressures, generate the re-ordering of nomadic groups into tribal or supratribal associations.29 Central to both notions of state formation in the steppe environment is that the ecological imperatives of nomadic pastoralism typically resulted in the organization of nomadic pastoralists into small groups of related parental groups (known as *aul* in Turkic languages) that only formed higher levels of social and political organization under stress or threat from *within* or *without* the steppe.30

This dynamic defined Central Asia's relations to its sedentary peripheries and thus its centrality in world history. As noted above, a number of scholars have identified a need to establish more sophisticated means of accessing external resources as a constant in the development of nomadic polities.31 Indeed, Di Cosmo bases a periodization of Central Asian history upon the evolution of various methods employed by nomadic polities, in particular tribute empires (209 BCE–551 CE), tribute-trade empires (551–907), dual-administration empires (907–1259) and direct-taxation empires (1260–1796).32 This evolution of nomadic polities, and their direct involvement in trans-Eurasian political, military, cultural and economic flows, highlights the centrality of the region in world history. In the phase of the 'tribute empires' (209 BCE–551 CE), such as the Xiongnu (209 BCE–60 BCE), the health of the nomadic polity rested upon its ability to continue to extract resources through tribute from sedentary states, such as China, and other nomadic groups. The singularity of this mechanism, however, resulted in fragile polities as resistance from tributary states and groups could result in the collapse of the political structure of the empire.33 However, as Di Cosmo and others have shown, the Xiongnu also had intimate contact with other nomadic polities in Central Asia and actively facilitated trans-Central Asian trade.34 The following period of the 'trade-tribute empires' was characterized by nomadic polities' augmentation of the tribute mechanism by intense involvement in both long-distance and regional trade. The major polities of this period were the first and second Türk empires (552–630 and 680–745), the Uyghur empire (744–840) and the Khazars (630–965) in the west.35 That trade was equally important as tribute as a source of externally derived revenue for these polities, particularly in the case of the Türk and Uyghur empires, is suggested by the development of close relations with Central Asian merchants.36 Such linkages also facilitated the diffusion of religions, as evidenced by the practice of Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Nestorian Christianity in the Türk empires and the conversion of the Uyghur to Manichaeism.37 The bases of these polities, however, were also fragile as they depended upon the ability to extract tribute and maintain control over trade.

The phase of the 'dual-administration empires', whereby nomadic polities acquired knowledge and administrative skills to directly rule sedentary regions, witnessed the decreasing importance of exacting tribute and a greater tendency toward direct conquest and administration. Such patterns were

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evident in the reigns of the Khitan Liao (907–1125) and the Jurchen Jin (1115–1234) dynasties in north China, and were repeated on a vaster scale under the Mongols. As such the Khitan and Jurchen states' government was largely based upon the separate administration of the realm's sedentary and nomadic populations. The Mongols under Genghis, however, initially established a pattern reminiscent of the 'trade-tribute' variety and it was not until the rule of Ögödei that it was overturned in favour of conquest and direct administration, with Uyghurs and other Central Asian peoples taking a prominent role in the latter.38 The transition to the phase of the 'direct-taxation empires' (1260–1796) resulted in nomadic empires no longer relying for survival upon tribute but rather on the extraction of resources from conquered territories (mainly sedentary). The final step in the Mongols' transition to such a mode of governance can be identified as beginning with Khubilai's conquest of China (1260) and the simultaneous conquest of Persia and establishment of the Mongol Il-khanate. The control and manipulation of trade also assumed major importance under Genghis's successors in China, Iran and Central Asia.39 The tendency of nomadic polities to rely increasingly upon direct rule and exploitation of sedentary regions was further evidenced by the expansion of Timur and his successors from 1370 onward. The Timurids, although combining the pastoral and agricultural economies, focused their military and administrative energies upon the sedentary regions of their realm, in particular Transoxiana.40 Such patterns were also present in the establishment and development of the Ottoman empire in the west, but also in the evolution of the Manchu Qing empire in the East.41 In the latter instance, however, as Barfield has demonstrated, the Qing combined elements of 'Inner Asian' rulership that were significantly tempered by the precedent of the 'Manchurian' conquest dynasties of the Khitan and Jin.42

It can thus be argued that Central Asia was given a cultural unity through the existence and development of nomadic societies and polities. This is not to say, however, that the nomad always dominated the region that we have defined as Central Asia. Rather, what served to distinguish Central Asia, including the various desert, agrarian oases, from the agrarian civilizations on Central Asia's peripheries was the existence of the nomad. This factor played a central role in defining the dynamic relationship between Central Asia and the major agricultural civilizations. The differences between the two divisions of Eurasia – the agricultural civilizations of the periphery and the central lands – were thus rooted in the peculiar ecologically determined economic and social forms of nomadic pastoralism. As Sinor notes, the definition of Central Asia rests upon the *relative* economic and cultural standard of the area, not its absolute content.43 The importance of the region lay in the basic distinction between sedentary and nomadic pastoral life-ways as captured in the Scythian leader Idanthyrus's reply to Darius concerning the Persian charge that he was evading battle during the latter's invasion of the Pontic steppes circa 513 BCE:

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I have never run from any man in fear; and I am not doing so now from you. There is, for me, nothing unusual in what I have been doing: it is precisely the sort of life I always lead, even in time of peace.44

Central Asia, 1700–2008: from pivot to periphery and back again?

These factors are also important in generating conceptions of Central Asia's function throughout history. Common throughout much of the discourse on Central Asian history is the question of how to perceive Central Asia: as the pivotal, 'living heart' of the globe or the peripheral, 'dead centre' of the world. In this regard it is a well-established paradigm to view the development of Central Asian history since the early centuries of the first millennium CE as falling into two major phases. Halford Mackinder, who famously termed Central Asia the 'geographical pivot of history', temporally delimited this pivotalness as falling between the fifth and fifteenth centuries.45 For Mackinder, the 'pivotal' nature of Central Asia during this period was determined by the strategic advantage accruing to the highly mobile, horse-riding nomad through the geographic conditions of Central Asia.46 This 'pivotal' nature, however, was overturned in the early sixteenth century through the circumnavigation of the globe and expansion of the sedentary states beyond their 'homelands' on the periphery or 'Marginal Crescent' of the Eurasian continent.47 S.A.M. Adshead also develops a similar periodization of Central Asian history, although going beyond a geopolitical description through the ascription of a specific function or role for the region. Thus, the period from 1200 to 1650 is asserted to be the climax of Central Asia's 'active' phase in world history, whereby it became a point of diffusion to the sedentary 'homelands' of Europe, Iran, India and China for political, military, economic, technological and cultural developments.48 Adshead's second period, from 1650 onward, that corresponds to our period of focus here, is deemed to encapsulate Central Asia's decline into a 'passive' role in world history whereby it gradually became a point of convergence, and a recipient, for political, military, economic, technological and cultural developments generated from the surrounding 'homelands'.49

A combination of Mackinder and Adshead's conceptual framework can be usefully adapted to describe the development of Central Asian history since the eighteenth century. The following discussion will suggest that the 1700 to 2007 period in Central Asian history has been one of 'passivity' characterized by the dialectic of geopolitical peripheralness and political, economic and cultural 'convergence'. In terms of the question alluded to in the title of this section, Adshead's analysis appears to point toward an uncertain conclusion as to whether Central Asia may return to an 'active' and diffusionist phase in history due to the transformation of the region during this passive and convergent phase. The overarching argument that frames my elucidation of the three points outlined in the introduction is that it

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was the geographically and ecologically determined 'life-way', in Christian's terminology, of nomadic pastoralism that generated Central Asia's 'centrality' and importance in world history from antiquity to the latter centuries of the second millennium CE.50 Once the basis of the dynamism was weakened and ultimately controlled by the expansion of the centralized sedentary states of Russia and China in particular, the peoples and societies of Central Asia were effectively inhibited from continuing the processes of interaction, conflict and cooperation between Central Asia and the major sedentary areas of the Eurasian periphery that had been in operation since antiquity. This broad process in Central Asia can be characterized as one of the convergence of geopolitical, political, economic, and cultural pressures and structures from China and Russia.

A tentative periodization of the three centuries of history addressed here (i.e. 1700 to 2007) can thus be outlined in light of the considerations addressed above. Three major periods can be identified and correlated to the gradual process in the transformation of Central Asia's political, economic and cultural environment and role in world history. The 1700 to 1900 period can be seen as constituting an era of the gradual apportionment of the region between the imperial states of Russia and China, whereby the political and military power of these external societies overcame that of Central Asia. The overriding theme throughout this period was one the convergence or parallelism of geopolitical, economic and cultural developments through the agency of the Qing and Russian imperial states. The following period, 1900 to 1991, was one characterized by themes of both continuity with and change from the preceding imperial order. Of particular importance were the political and ideological dynamics emerging from the near simultaneous collapse of the imperial orders in Russia and China, and the consequent disarray of the former imperial centres. Significantly, the expansion of these sedentary states was renewed and reinvigorated by the mid-twentieth century in new forms and resulted in the insulation of the region from the major external areas of the Eurasian periphery that it historically had interacted with in favour of exclusive orientations toward Russia and China. Once more Central Asia became 'pivotal' during the first half of this period, as external states competed with each other and Central Asian forces for pre-eminence. Finally, the re-establishment of part of Central Asia's political independence with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 has resulted in the return of the region to a situation similar in a number of important respects to that which characterized the region during the 1700 to 1900 period. Once more the region has entered a period of transition that may redefine its role in world history, and the final section of this chapter will explore the potentialities of contemporary Central Asia to resume its 'centrality' in world history.

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The 'removal' of Central Asia from world history, 1700–1900: from pivot to periphery

As we have noted, Central Asia prior to the eighteenth century was generally characterized by fluidity, or in Toynbee's phrase 'conductivity', whereby the dynamic relationship between the steppe and the agrarian regions encouraged/permitted the relatively free transmission of ideas, commodities and technologies.51 This situation was changed irrevocably, however, from the mid-1700s onward through the near contemporaneous expansion of the imperial states of the Qing and Russia into Central Asia. The factors behind the expansion of both of these states into Central Asia were multifaceted and encompassed historically generated strategic, political and economic concerns. Qing and Russian expansion were also aided by the division, from the seventeenth century onward, of the major nomadic pastoral peoples they encountered, in particular the Mongols and the Kazakhs. Significantly, the exertion of Qing and Russian pressure on their respective Central Asian frontiers did not induce the forging of 'supratribal' polities amongst these nomadic pastoral peoples. Rather, the conflict and competition between Mongol and Kazakh tribes resulted in the weaker or more threatened groups seeking the aid or protection of the pressing external sedentary power.

The linkage between these processes at either end of the steppe belt was the rise and expansion of the last great nomadic pastoral polity of the Zunghar Mongols, which from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century dominated Xinjiang, parts of Kazakhstan, and western Mongolia.52 The pressures placed by the Zunghar expansion on the Mongolian tribes to the east in the present-day Republic of Mongolia and upon the Kazakh Hordes to the west resulted in these nomadic pastoralists seeking the succour of external powers – the Qing and the Russians. In the case of the Qing expansion into Mongolia and Xinjiang, it can be said that this coincided with the contemporaneous initiation of a military, diplomatic and cultural strategy to persuade the remaining Mongol tribes of the benefits of voluntarily submitting to an imperial state that shared their 'Inner Asian' heritage.53 This strategy only succeeded in the face of continued Zunghar threat to the lands of the other Mongolian tribes, with the Zunghar invasion of Mongolia in 1690 prompting a prolonged military struggle over the subsequent five decades between the Qing and the Zunghars that brought Qing dominion over not only Mongolia but also Xinjiang.54 The final destruction of the Zunghars in 1756 brought the Qing control over northern Xinjiang, and facilitated their absorption of the Tarim Basin oases with the expulsion of the ruling elites of these cities – the Makhdumzada Khojas – from Xinjiang.55

Simultaneously, the Kazakh Hordes sought Russian assistance against Zunghar expansion into their territories, with a loose Russian protectorate enveloping the lands of the Little Horde in 1731, the Middle Horde in 1740 and the Great Horde in 1742.56 The conversion of this nominal control over the Kazakh steppe into true, direct Russian rule, however, was not completed

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for another century when direct Russian military intervention suppressed the khans of the three hordes between 1822 and 1848.57 Russian dominance of the Kazakh steppe was then used as a launching pad for the southward thrust of expansion toward the Khanates of Khiva, Koqand and the Emirate of Bukhara that were extinguished in a series of military campaigns between 1865 and 1875.58 The final Russian absorption of all the territory of the contemporary Central Asian republics was completed with the subjugation of the Turkmen between 1881 and 1884.59 Thus within the space of roughly 150 years the steppe and oasis regions of Central Asia had been apportioned between the Qing in the east and the Russians in the west, a division that was to remain in effect for over a century.

How did the advent of external sedentary state rule impact upon the 'centrality' of Central Asia? Both Qing and Russian rule were demonstrably colonial, with both states first weakening existing political orders/structures, and then subsuming them within their own administrative and political frameworks.60 Moreover, the objectifying aspect of imperial policies also contributed to the solidification of ethnic, political and territorial boundaries between the peoples of Central Asia. The methods and techniques of Qing and Russian rule within their respective Central Asian territories actively weakened and managed the key factors that had generated the region's 'centrality' from antiquity onward – the distinctive 'life-way' of nomadic pastoralism and its free interaction with the sedentary world. Important in this regard was the deployment of 'the hegemony of inscription' by both the Qing and Russia through the delimitation of not only the territorial boundaries of their imperial possessions but also through the classification of who lived within those bounds and where, which limited the 'dangerous' mobility of the nomadic pastoralist.61 Thus both imperial endeavours undertook major cartographic and ethnographic surveys of their Central Asian lands immediately after their conquest.62 Perhaps the most complete example of this process was the absorption of the Mongolian tribes into the Qing 'banner system', which comprised 'territorial divisions, with definite boundaries subject to regular survey and mapping'.63

In Russian Central Asia meanwhile, after the Kazakh steppe had been subsumed but prior to the conquest of the states of Khiva, Koqand and Bukhara, the military governors under the auspices of the Tsar's 'Steppe Commission' began to conduct a census of the Central Asian population in order to establish administrative units and begin the collection of taxes.64 The mobility and martial life-way of such nomadic pastoralists as the Mongols and Kazakhs was also further weakened by state action in Mongolia and the steppe regions of Russian Central Asia. Both the Qing and Russia sought to de-nomadize these peoples through the encouragement of religion – Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia and Islam in the Kazakh steppe – and the conversion of the steppe into agricultural land. Moreover, both the Qing and Russia encouraged the colonization of the steppe regions of Mongolia, Xinjiang and the Kazakh steppe by Han Chinese peasants and Russian and Ukrainian

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peasants respectively, a process that accelerated by the second half of the nineteenth century.65

In the context of the oasis regions of Central Asia, Qing and Russian control displayed a parallel indirect mode of imperial rule during the initial phase of dominion. Both displayed caution in establishing imperial control over the concentrated, sedentary populations of the oasis regions of Central Asia, who had an entrenched political and social order based on Islamic civilization. Thus, the Qing ruled southern Xinjiang through the co-option of the existing Turkic–Muslim elites (*begs*) in the major oases of the region. The Qing construed the usage of the title *beg* to erode the prestige and leadership of the traditional aristocracy and religious establishment of Altishahr, and establish the Qing as the sole legitimate source of secular political authority.66 Moreover, in contrast to its policy in the steppe regions of Zungharia and Mongolia, the Qing between 1760 and the 1830s actively prohibited the colonization of southern Xinjiang by Han Chinese peasants due to the scarcity of agricultural land and a desire not to generate cultural tensions in this staunchly Muslim region.67 The oasis regions of Russian Central Asia, although ruled directly by a military governor general and a civilian bureaucracy directly responsible to the Tsar, also experienced indirect colonial rule. Thus, for example, the legal system based upon Islamic law was preserved and local administration left in 'native' hands under Russian supervision.68 Moreover, the Russians did not encourage colonization of these lands due to the scarcity of agricultural land, although a significant number of Russians employed by the colonial administration did reside in urban centres, such as Tashkent.69

Economically, the establishment of imperial control imposed a stable political environment over Central Asia that was generally beneficial to trade.70 The *pax Manjurica* and the relatively low Qing taxation within its Central Asian lands resulted in the generation of economic growth and commercial development, with trans-Central Asian trade unhindered by overzealous imperial control.71 The exception to this was the case of Mongolia, whereby the conversion of pasture to agricultural land, Han colonization and the growth of monastic centres had a deleterious impact on the economic well-being of the Mongols.72 Russian Central Asia, however, experienced economic and commercial exploitation along the lines of the classical colonial model, whereby the region became a supplier of raw materials and a consumer of Russian products.73 Thus the Russians actively encouraged cotton cultivation in their Central Asian lands in order to supply their emerging textile industry, which resulted in the increasing dependence of the region on other parts of the empire for its main food staple of wheat.74 The region also became a lucrative market for Russia's growing industrial base, with Russia developing a trade monopoly in its Central Asian territories by the later decades of the nineteenth century, facilitated by the completion of the Trans-Caspian, Trans-Siberian and Orenburg–Tashkent railroads.75

In summary the 1700 to 1900 period witnessed the initial reorientation of

the Russian and Chinese spheres of Central Asia toward exclusive relations with the imperial centre. The most significant alteration induced by the advent of external sedentary state rule was the weakening of Central Asia's nomadic pastoral peoples through the imposition of more rigid forms of territorial and political organization, and the encouragement of sedentary colonization of steppe regions. The oasis regions of Central Asia also experienced, for the first time, the direct rule of an external non-steppe-based state. Central Asia's passivity and peripheralness to the processes of expansion/ conquest and imperial administration, noted above, can be seen in the development of Central Asian revolt and 'great power' politics in the latter stages of the nineteenth century. For example, although Qing Central Asia, most notably Xinjiang, was racked by Turkic–Muslim revolts from the 1820s until the 1870s, it was largely a response to externally generated political and economic impetuses from the imperial centres of China and Russia.76 Moreover, the often romanticized 'Great Game' between Russia, Britain and the Qing for supremacy in Central Asia during this same period was played upon a strategic chessboard not of Central Asia's making. Once the boundaries of the respective empires were consolidated and agreed upon in the 1890s, Central Asia became of peripheral importance for the respective imperial centres.

Central Asia, 1900–91: imperial collapse and reassertion

The collapse of the Qing and Tsarist states in the first decades of the twentieth century did not ultimately result in the re-emergence of Central Asia as an independent region in world history. Instructively, the events that precipitated the temporary release of the respective imperial grips were generated from the core, rather than from the direct actions of the Qing and Russia's Central Asian subjects. The collapse and subsequent political weakness at the core generated a process somewhat analogous to that which encompassed Central Asia in the mid-eighteenth century, whereby internal crisis within the region induced the expansion of external sedentary states into the region. Thus, common to all three major parts of Central Asia across this period were the interaction of internal political developments with those emanating from their previous imperial centres of China and Russia. Ultimately, this resulted in the reassertion of Chinese and Russian power to the exclusion of other external influences and the re-absorption of Central Asia into reformed and restructured imperial endeavours. As such this period was characterized by the continued convergence of geopolitical, economic and cultural dynamics from outside of Central Asia.

That the three major regions of Central Asia did not achieve independence following the collapse of the Qing and Russian imperial orders is suggestive of the transformations of the region's broad political, economic and cultural situation initiated by the elements of imperial rule noted above. The imperial administrative divisions of Central Asia that distinguished between

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the steppe and the oasis regions were importantly mirrored in the development of local or 'indigenous' political movements after the fall of the imperial orders. Moreover, these divisions were also exploited by external powers in the case of Mongolia and Xinjiang, and the previous imperial centre in the case of the Central Asian republics. Once again this process resulted in Central Asia becoming a recipient of the emerging political and ideological developments generated within the former imperial heartlands of China and Russia over the course of the 1900 to 1991 period.

In the case of Mongolia, the division in practice of Inner and Outer Mongolia through the Qing encouragement of Han Chinese colonization of the former, for example, resulted in the more remote and more 'Mongol' Outer region leading the way toward the establishment of an independent state.77 Indeed, the pressures placed upon the autonomous Outer Mongolia by China during the second decade of the twentieth century induced the Mongols to seek the protection of Russia, a process that was intensified after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917.78 Although Russia's influence over Mongolia was eclipsed between 1917 and 1921 through the turmoil of revolution, it was soon reasserted with the Red Army intervening in 1921 to combat the activities of the White Russian forces of Ungern-Sternberg.79 Soviet intervention led to the rise to power of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, and the pre-eminence of the 'Mongolian Stalin', Marshal Choibalsan. From 1924 onward, when the country was officially proclaimed a 'People's Republic', Mongolia experienced the dynamics of radical political, economic and cultural transformation through the implementation of Marxist–Leninist strategies of development closely resembling those pursued in the Soviet Union.80 The subsequent 1924 to 1991 period thus witnessed the collectivization of the nomadic pastoral economy, state initiation of industrialization, promotion of agriculture, the suppression of Mongolia's Tibetan Buddhist institutions and the elimination of the country's lay and Lamaistic aristocracy.81 The Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) also adopted a Cyrillic script for the Mongol language in 1940, further cementing its ties to the Soviet Union and establishing a further barrier between itself and the non-Soviet world.82

During the 1930s and 1940s, Mongolia was essentially isolated from the outside world save for its close relationship with the Soviet Union, a dependency which enabled it to resist Japanese expansion and remain relatively untouched by World War II. Similar to the Soviet experience, Mongolia experienced a limited post-war 'liberalization' of the one-party state and in the words of one observer became a 'semi-modernized state well on the way to possessing a fully socialized economy and society'.83 Importantly, China did not give up its claims to Mongolia until 1945' Mao Zedong reaffirming the renunciation in 1950. Diplomatically, the MPR remained isolated well into the 1980s with only socialist states such as the Soviet Union, the Eastern bloc, North Korea and China, and 'neutral' states such as India, exercising relations with it.84 Even contact with China was postponed during the Sino-Soviet conflict of the 1960s and 1970s, depriving

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Mongolia of Chinese assistance, which prior to the split contributed significantly to the country's development, such as the completion of the Trans-Mongolian railway in 1955.85 Only after 1991 and the initiation of political reform did Mongolia again become open to external non-Russian/Soviet influences.

The political fragmentation of China following the overthrow of the Qing in 1911 also presented Xinjiang with the opportunity to reassert itself. The duality of weak political authority at the centre and along the frontiers facilitated the development of a dynamic that permitted a Han elite that retained its position in Xinjiang to have almost total autonomy from the Republic, albeit in the face of strong Russian and Soviet challenges.86 The successive 'warlord' administrations of Yang Zengxin, Jin Shuren and Sheng Shicai exhibited large measures of continuity with the Qing period regarding the strategies and methods of rule employed, particularly in the maintenance of divisions between the Turkic–Muslim populations.87 However they all experienced the vicissitudes of Xinjiang's ambiguous position between China and Russia and then the Soviet Union. Important in generating such external influence was the instability of Xinjiang from 1930 onward. This was largely the result of major revolts of the Turkic–Muslim population and it compelled the isolated Han Chinese elite, nominally in control of the region, to turn toward Russia/the Soviet Union for support.88 Indeed, Soviet support in crushing Turkic–Muslim rebellions in 1933 created a Xinjiang that was essentially a Soviet satellite.89 There were four key elements to the Soviet Union's influence in Xinjiang under Sheng Shicai: direct military intervention, economic exploitation, direct involvement of Soviet personnel in the administration and ideological domination of the region.90 The advent of Soviet support also brought with it processes similar to that which encompassed the present Central Asian republics in the 1920s and 1930s. Thus there occurred a 'reform' of the provincial authorities' approach to the non-Han populations of Xinjiang based upon adoption of a Soviet-inspired 'nationalities policy' which included the granting of limited cultural autonomy for the non-Han population and the co-optation of certain non-Han leaders into Sheng's government.91

This situation remained until the exigencies of World War II intervened to leave Sheng Shicai bereft of Soviet support in 1941, and inducing the warlord to seek the aid of the Republic of China the following year.92 The Republic's writ, however, was never consolidated, with the outbreak of a major Turkic– Muslim rebellion in late 1944 and proclamation of the East Turkestan Republic (ETR) in early 1945 in the north-west of Xinjiang, which left the region divided between Chinese- and ETR-controlled spheres. This rebellion is seen by a number of scholars as having been directly or indirectly inspired and supported by the Soviet Union in an attempt to re-establish its influence in Xinjiang and prejudice the ongoing Sino-Soviet negotiations regarding the Yalta agreement.93 The fate of Xinjiang was only finalized with the victory of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in China in October 1949. The CCP's

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policies in Xinjiang over the period from 1949 to 1991 were framed by the twin imperatives of internally consolidating and accelerating the region's integration with China and isolating it from Soviet influence.94 The constants of Chinese policy in Xinjiang over this period were the establishment of military–agricultural colonies, encouragement of Han colonization, control and management of religion, and co-optation of ethnic minority elites within the administrative apparatus and assimilation of the region's non-Han populations.95 The intensity with which individual components of this strategy were pursued, however, varied with the ideological fluctuations of the Maoist era, but the overall intent of Chinese rule did not. The subsequent post-Mao period witnessed the substantial re-evaluation of the techniques and methods of Chinese rule, which resulted in the initiation of a more 'liberal' approach to the region's ethnic minorities and the undertaking of economic reform.96

In contrast to developments in Mongolia and Xinjiang, the former Central Asian territories of the Tsar experienced the almost simultaneous reassertion of the imperial centre's power. The rapidity of this reassertion can perhaps be seen as the result of the combination of the ideological imperatives of the Bolsheviks, the strategic approach of Lenin, the contours of the civil war and the different responses of the Russian and Turkic–Muslim populations of Central Asia to the Russian and then Bolshevik revolutions.97 Indeed, it was clear as early as April 1917 with the establishment of the 'Council of Turkestani Muslims' in Tashkent and the 'Alash Orda' movement of the Kazakhs that the Turkic–Muslim peoples of Russian Central Asia wished to secure their autonomy from whatever political order was constructed to replace that of the tsars.98 However, the fact that the Russian opponents of the revolution sought to utilize the rebelliousness of the former subject peoples for their own counter-revolutionary ends, as illustrated by the activities of 'White' generals in Siberia and Mongolia, compelled Bolshevik action.99

The ideological imperatives of the Bolsheviks also played a role in the reabsorption of Russian Central Asia. When it became clear that the revolution would not spread to the west as Lenin and others had hoped, the Leninist analysis of 'imperialism' offered the way forward with the 'Asiatic' lands of the Tsar looming as a stepping stone for the export of the revolution, with Stalin remarking in 1919 that:

Turkestan, because of its geographical position, is a bridge connecting socialist Russia with the oppressed countries of the East, and in view of this the strengthening of the Soviet regime in Turkestan might have the greatest revolutionary significance for the entire Orient.100

Moreover, regardless of the appeal of the chimera of Bolshevik 'national self-determination', the second Russian absorption was achieved through coercive means. Between 1919 and 1924 the Soviets gradually established a political and military presence in Russian Central Asia which successively suppressed the Turkic–Muslim autonomy movements in Koqand, the Kazakh

steppe, Bukhara and the Basmachi guerrilla movement in the countryside.101 There followed in 1924 the process of 'national delimitation' that saw the division of the former Tsarist Central Asian lands along ethnolinguistic lines that led to the creation of the five 'national republics' of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.102

The delimitation of Soviet Central Asia largely served to strategically weaken the competing political/ideological movements of pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism of the Central Asian population. Moreover, the processes and trappings of 'nation-building' that accompanied this process – such as the development of national languages, national communist parties, symbols and national anthems – served to strengthen the boundaries between the peoples of Central Asia.103 The further erection of barriers around Soviet Central Asia was also achieved through the reform of the scripts of the Turkic–Muslim languages. Although the Arabic script, the script shared by all Russian Central Asian peoples prior to the Bolshevik revolution, had been abolished in favour of a Latin one in 1926, the Soviet authorities further signalled their desire to integrate the region more effectively with Russia by imposing the Cyrillic script in 1938.104 It is not coincidental that this was achieved without generating resistance from the Central Asians, as throughout the 1920s and 1930s, in parallel with the establishment of 'national republics', the intelligentsia of the Central Asian nations had been systematically suppressed and an ongoing campaign against Islam's influence implemented.105

This period also witnessed the imposition of the Stalinist economic and political system upon Central Asia, with perhaps the two most consequential changes being collectivization and the subordination of the Central Asian economy to central planning. The impact of these measures was to effectively 'solve' the nomadic pastoral question and encourage an agricultural monoculture of cotton cultivation in Soviet Central Asia.106 The forcible collectivization of the nomadic pastoral peoples, such as the Kazakhs, amounted to forced sedentarization, as the First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party bluntly stated in 1930:

Settlement is collectivization. Settlement is the liquidation of the semifeudal bias. Settlement is the destruction of tribal attitudes … Settlement is simultaneously the question of Socialist construction and the approach of socialism…107

Not only was the basis of their life-way, extensive animal pastoralism, effectively destroyed, but up to 1.5 million Kazakhs died during the 1930s as a result of collectivization.108

The assault on the nomadic pastoralist life-way was also furthered, much as in Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, through the reclamation of pasture in the Kazakh steppe for Russian and Ukrainian agricultural colonists.109 Cotton cultivation, as noted earlier, had also been a concern of the Tsarist administration, but under Soviet rule cotton cultivation became the major

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agricultural commodity in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. Moreover, as the central economic planning agency (Gosplan) set cotton prices artificially low, the colonial exploitation of the region was taken to an extreme.110 The political, military and economic dominance of Moscow was also furthered by the completion of numerous infrastructure projects such as the Turkish–Siberian railway. As such, Soviet policies could be seen as a continuation of the imperatives of Tsarist rule but implemented with greater ruthlessness and thoroughness.

Thus the major regions of Central Asia – Mongolia, Xinjiang and the present Central Asian republics – experienced the return of external sedentary state power, and in all three realms the life-way of nomadic pastoralism was significantly altered. Moreover, the action of the Chinese state in Xinjiang and the Soviet state in the Central Asian republics continued the processes, initiated under their Qing and Tsarist predecessors, of the solidification of political, territorial and ethnic boundaries between the peoples of Central Asia. Throughout the 1900 to 1991 period, Central Asia thus remained the recipient of political, economic and cultural dynamics rather than the diffuser, and the return to the division of the region between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China by mid-century maintained its peripheral role in world history.

Central Asia, 1991–2008: from pivot to periphery?

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent assertion of the independence of the five former Soviet Central Asian republics and the emergence of the Republic of Mongolia from behind the Soviet shadow augured a new phase in Central Asian history. Although Xinjiang remained entrenched in the People's Republic of China, China's strategy there was also significantly affected by both external developments in the form of the collapse of the Soviet Union and internal dilemmas stemming from the Tiananmen Massacre of 1989. Significantly, due to the processes outlined in the preceding discussion, two-thirds of Central Asia (re)emerged in the form of six modern, territorially defined nation states. This in and of itself is a major development in the long-term historical development of the region, whereby the broad historically and culturally defined realm of Central Asia has been divided into discreet 'actors' in world history. As such a major component of the post-Soviet experience has been concerned with the re-establishment/ redefinition of relations between these Central Asian states and the outside world, including the former imperial centre, and the revitalization of interconnections that had existed prior to the exclusive orientation of Central Asia toward the imperial centres.111 This complex process, combined with the difficult task of consolidating and developing the national identity and independence of these new states, has produced a period of flux in the evolution of Central Asia's place in world history.

The 1991 to 2007 period has been characterized by the re-emergence of the

region as a site of geopolitical contention that has been likened to that which took place in Central Asia during the nineteenth century. This contemporary 'game', however, differs substantially from its predecessor in terms of both the 'players' and the object of the game. For the external states such as China, Russia, and to a lesser degree the US, this 'game' impinges upon political, strategic and economic concerns connected to internal dilemmas. China, for example, has since 1991 attempted to forge strong relations with the Central Asian states, both individually and collectively, in order to buttress its ongoing project of development and integration in Xinjiang.112 For the Central Asian states, the geopolitical competition directly impacts upon domestic political and economic development. Across this period, the Central Asian states have struggled to strike a balance between the strategic, political and economic benefits deriving from cooperation and partnerships with such powerful external states and the possible dependency that this may create.113 Their ability to do so, however, has been constrained by the development of internal political and economic instability, including the spread of Islamist organizations, which prior to 11 September 2001 induced external powers such as Russia and China to seek a broader role in the region. Indeed, between 1991 and 2001 Central Asia was characterized by a confluence of inter-state geopolitical competition, 'pipeline politics' and transnational ethnoreligious movements.114 The most prominent result of this was the formation and development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), involving China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (as of 2001) from a multilateral dialogue on border normalization to a regional political and security organization to combat the 'three evils' of 'separatism, extremism and terrorism'.115

In contrast to the Central Asian republics, Xinjiang remains within its imperial centre – the PRC. Although thus distinguished from independent Central Asia, Xinjiang is very much connected with it, and according to some observers, developing a relationship of interdependence with Central Asia. This is primarily the result of the implementation of a development strategy for Xinjiang aimed at securing its simultaneous integration with Central Asia and China.116 The economic policies encompassed in the state's strategy – such as the promotion of cotton cultivation and infrastructure development – also played an instrumental role in generating ethnic minority opposition in Xinjiang.117 Particularly important in this regard were the waves of Han in-migration facilitated and required by these policies, with population transfer effectively being re-invigorated as a key facet of the state's integrationist project in Xinjiang.118 The state's strategy in Xinjiang was also underpinned by continued control of the parameters of ethnic minority cultural and religious practices. The establishment and goals of the 'Shanghai Five', and ultimately its transformation into the SCO in 2001, clearly illustrated such a projection of China's overwhelming concern for the integration and security of Xinjiang. Moreover, China's relations with individual Central Asian states, particularly Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, emphasized issues

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intimately connected to China's integrationist project in Xinjiang, such as control of Uyghur émigré organizations in Central Asia, energy procurement and security, development of infrastructure links, and water policy.119 The 'Great Western Development/Open Up the West' campaign (2000–10), in which the government has arguably placed much political and economic capital, aims to make China's western provinces into an industrial and agricultural base and a trade and energy corridor for the national economy.120 Due to two related reasons, Xinjiang is central to this long-term strategy: its geostrategic position at the crossroads of Central Asia and the logic of Beijing's political strategy for Xinjiang. What I mean by this second aspect is that the Chinese government has viewed economic development and prosperity for Xinjiang's ethnic minority populations as a cure-all for 'ethnic separatist' tendencies. Therefore, the economic development of Xinjiang is perceived to be central to the state's ability to secure the region and ensure its integration.

These processes were of course intensified as a result of the events of 11 September 2001 and the expansion of US military and political power into Central Asia. Thus as in the case of the Qing and imperial Russia being 'drawn' into Central Asia through the development of crisis in the steppe environment during the mid-seventeenth century, so too have new forms of crisis attracted the attention of powerful neighbours at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Significantly, the expansion of the US into Central Asia post-11 September 2001 has generated strategic competition among the external powers in the region. However, in contrast to the outcomes of the seventeenth-century process, the contemporary one appears to have been (and may continue to be) beneficial to the Central Asian states by providing an unprecedented opportunity to maximize the strategic, political and economic benefits of cooperation with Russia, China or the US.121

The period from 2001 to 2007 has also largely been defined by the implications of the events of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent projection of US military and political influence into Central Asia. The impact of this process has been somewhat contradictory for Russia and China's position in the region. In a regional sense, the projection of US political and military influence into four of the five Central Asian states is perceived to be a negative consequence of the 'War on Terror'. This is the case as US involvement has undermined to a degree Russia and China's foreign policy efforts in Central Asia since 1991, whereby they have played a key role in establishing and determining the function of such regional organizations as the SCO.122 Moreover, US involvement in the region has impacted on Russia and China's bilateral relations with the states of Central Asia, as the Central Asian states were compelled to choose between emphasizing their long-standing relationships with Russia and China or their new-found one with the US.123 In this regard, during the immediate post-9/11 period the Central Asian states clearly tilted toward the US. Between September 2001 and August 2002 all of the Central Asian states bar Turkmenistan had signed military cooperation

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and base access agreements with the US, as well as receiving significant economic aid packages. Uzbekistan especially benefited from increased US interests in the region, receiving not only an initial aid package worth US$150 million but also the conclusion of a US–Uzbek 'Strategic Partnership' in March 2002.124 The level of unease that China in particular felt as a result of these developments was highlighted in a May 2002 article in the weekly publication *Liaowang* (*Outlook*) entitled 'The Real Purpose of the American March into Central Asia', which asserted that US activities in Central Asia were a central component of a larger 'grand strategy for global domination'.125 As such it argued that the US strategy in Central Asia had four goals: to 'squeeze and press' Russia, to 'encircle' Iran and Iraq, to control South Asia and 'march all the way down to the Indian Ocean', and to contain the rise of China.126 The expansion of US power into Central Asia was also perceived as directly aimed at undermining China's relations with the Central Asian states and thus not only threatening China's sensitive 'back door' in Xinjiang but China's wider foreign policy strategy:

Various countries in Central Asia have been good neighbors of China … China has signed mutual trust treaties with regard to border regions with these countries. China has constantly strengthened its political, security, economic and trade relations with Central Asian countries. To this American officials seem mute, but are perfectly aware of these developments. The American press explains it this way: China is the 'potential enemy' of the United States; and Central Asia is China's great rear of extreme importance. The penetration of the United States into Central Asia not only prevents *China from expanding its influence, but also sandwiches China from East to West, thus 'effectively containing a rising China'*.127

Within Xinjiang, however, the US government's focus on combating Islamic 'extremism' and 'terrorism' in Chinese perceptions strengthened their efforts against separatist ethnic minorities in the province. This has been illustrated by China's contemporary framing of its struggle against ethnic separatists by reference to the goals of the US 'War on Terror'. Such an approach was outlined in the release of a Chinese government paper that detailed alleged incidents of Uyghur 'terrorism' in Xinjiang since 1990, entitled 'East Turkestan Terrorist Forces Cannot Get Away with Impunity'.128

In a broad regional sense the projection of US power in Central Asia also posed a challenge to China's strategy as it raised questions as to the viability and staying power of China's pet regional project, the SCO. Significantly, however, China has re-invigorated its position in Central Asia post-9/11 by forging new bilateral security agreements and cooperation with the region and bolstering the role of the SCO. China's strategy has been to present itself as a real and reliable security partner for the states of Central Asia and thus to provide them with a viable alternative to closer security and military

relations with the United States. Thus since 2002 China has concluded a number of significant military and security cooperation agreements with the Central Asian states, including joint military exercises with and extension of military aid to Kyrgyzstan in July 2002 and 2003, the conclusion of a Sino-Kazakh Mutual Cooperation Agreement in December 2003, and bilateral agreements on cooperation in combating 'extremism, terrorism and separatism' with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in September 2003.129 Moreover, in 2002 and 2003 China, by virtue of bilateral security agreements and police cooperation, extradited alleged Uyghur 'separatists and terrorists' from neighbouring Central Asian states, particularly Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and from as far afield as Nepal.130 Such bilateral agreements, however, also developed in parallel to China and Russia's re-invigoration of the SCO over the 2001 to 2006 period. These efforts made limited headway in 2002 due to the wide array of US agreements and cooperation with the Central Asian states.131 The SCO-related initiatives in the immediate post-9/11 period were focused on establishing the organization's operational framework, rather than active, 'on the ground' military and security activities. Thus the heads of SCO states' border guards met in Almaty (Kazakhstan) to coordinate responses to border security, illegal migration, and drug trafficking on 24 April 2002.132 Furthermore, the SCO's official charter was adopted at its 7 June 2002 meeting in St Petersburg and agreement reached regarding the establishment of the SCO secretariat in Beijing and the 'Regional Anti-Terrorism' (RAT) centre in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek.133 The lack of concrete practical action to make good on SCO rhetoric regarding regional military and security cooperation in 2002 led some observers to consider the SCO a 'stillborn' organization and a regional talkfest made irrelevant by the penetration of US power into Central Asia.134 Yet China and Russia's intent to make the SCO an important regional player was further underlined at a 30 November 2002 summit between presidents Vladimir Putin and Jiang Zemin in Beijing that focused on promoting the role of the SCO and declared the continuation of the Sino-Russian 'strategic partnership'.135 This Sino-Russian commitment was borne out in the following year. On 6–11 August 2003, the SCO states except Uzbekistan conducted 'Cooperation-2003' joint military exercises on Kazakh and Chinese soil.136 The absence of Uzbekistan illustrated Tashkent's half-hearted commitment to the SCO and served to strengthen Russian and Chinese perceptions that Karimov's government was yet to be convinced of the benefits that the SCO could contribute to Uzbek security. The 8 September 2003 SCO meeting in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) thus assumed great significance for the strategic imperatives of China and Russia in Central Asia. At this summit it was announced that the SCO secretariat would begin its functions on 1 January 2004 in Beijing and the executive committee of the RAT centre would open on 1 November 2003 in Tashkent and not Bishkek as previously announced.137 The transfer of the RAT to Uzbekistan from Kyrgyzstan was symptomatic of Russia and China's desire to see Uzbekistan drawn away from the US orbit.

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This pandering to Karimov's regional leadership pretensions appeared to be accepted by the other SCO states, particularly Kyrgyzstan, as a necessary concession to actively encourage Tashkent into wider involvement in the organization.138 Therefore, by the beginning of 2004, Russia and China through their bilateral relations with the Central Asian republics and the SCO had achieved a measure of success in re-establishing their pre-September 11 positions in the region. For China this was particularly accurate with respect to its relations with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

China's endeavours to re-assert its position in Central Asia after the expansion of US influence in the region through such bilateral and multilateral channels as those noted above has borne significant fruit since 2005. Chinese and indeed Russian credibility as viable security and, to a lesser degree, economic partners for the largely authoritarian Central Asian states was significantly strengthened by internal political dynamics within key republics in 2005. In March 2005, Kyrgyzstan experienced the Tulip Revolution that toppled President Askar Akayev, who had been in power since independence. In May the same year, Uzbekistan also experienced a wave of violent unrest, in particular the Andijan Incident in which approximately 4,000 people rioted and were subsequently violently suppressed by the Uzbek military. The significance of these events stemmed from their role in souring Central Asian perceptions of the US role in the region. Indeed, Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov, but also other Central Asian leaders, severely criticized the US government's promotion of democracy and human rights as opposed to 'stability'. Indeed, China's emphasis on common interests in economic development, security, stability and 'anti-terrorism' through its bilateral relations with Central Asia and the SCO combined with China's emphasis on 'non-interference' in other states' internal affairs to make China appear as reliable partner from the perspective of the region's remaining authoritarian leaders.139 This was underlined by President Karimov's state visit to China barely two weeks after the Andijan Incident, during which a Sino-Uzbek bilateral security agreement was signed.140

The SCO's subsequent July 2005 summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, furthered the tilt of the Central Asian states away from the US, with the organization releasing a heads-of-state declaration requesting that the members of states of the SCO *consider it necessary* that the respective members of the antiterrorist coalition set a final timeline for their temporary use of objects of infrastructure and stay of their military contingents on the territories of the SCO member states.141

Uzbek President Islam Karimov also used the forum to further criticize US interference in the internal affairs of Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan subsequently cancelled its agreement with the US regarding the American military's use of the Karshi–Khanabad air base, with the last US Air Force plane flying out on 21 November 2005.142 Furthermore, the SCO's June 2006 summit

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in Shanghai – which also saw the attendance of representatives of four observer states in the form of Iran, India, Pakistan and Mongolia – restated its commitment to combating the 'three evils' of terrorism, extremism and separatism while celebrating the organization's promotion of a 'new security architecture':

The SCO will make a constructive contribution to the establishment of a new global security architecture of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and mutual respect. Such architecture is based on the widely recognized principles of international law. It discards 'double standards' and seeks to settle disputes through negotiation on the basis of mutual understanding. It respects the right of all countries to safeguard national unity and their national interests, pursue particular models of development and formulate domestic and foreign policies independently and participate in international affairs on an equal basis.143

Finally, the 16 August 2007 summit of SCO leaders in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek illuminates some key successes for Russia and China's diplomacy in Central Asia but also some emergent challenges in the immediate future. A Chinese commentary a week prior to the summit suggested three emergent trends in international relations in the Central Asian context that bear on the discussion presented here. Firstly, the article 'SCO Reshaping International Strategic Structure' argues that there is an emerging balance between the 'great powers' in Central Asia, in particular between China and Russia.144 Second, that 'as US strategic pressure on Russia mounts', the SCO's importance in Russia's 'international strategy' has consequently risen, making Russia 'even more dependent on help from the SCO' to combat US challenges to Russia's traditional pre-eminence in the region.145 Finally, that securing China's western frontier will play a key role in China's overall foreign policy, in particular to act as a 'safety valve' for strategic pressures in the East:

Even more importantly, as China embarks on the great enterprise of national resurgence, the biggest threats to its national security continue to be attempts to damage China's territorial integrity and interference of outside forces in its unification process. In this sense, China's strategic focus will remain in the southeast in the foreseeable future, with western China continuing to be the 'rear' in China's master strategy for many years to come. *Nevertheless, only if the rear is secured will the strategic frontline be free from worry* … As the squeeze on China's strategic space intensifies, a stable western region takes on additional importance as a strategic support for the country. *The strategic significance of western China is self-evident*.146

The immediate outcomes of the 2007 SCO summit, however, suggest that these observations, particularly those regarding Russia, may have been overly

optimistic. This summit, much as the 2006 summit, captured headlines for the anti-US rhetoric of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, but more significant was the further re-emergence of Russia as a driver of the organization's agenda.147 Indeed, Russian President Vladimir Putin was publicly enthusiastic about the SCO 'Peace Mission 2007' joint military exercises held between 9 and 17 August at Chelyabinsk, arguing that 'The idea of holding such regular exercises on the territory of various SCO member-countries deserves consideration.' Moreover, he also explicitly asserted that such enhancement of the SCO's ability to respond to security threats in the region is 'intended to help bolster the SCO's potential in security matters'.148 While the summit itself produced the now customary declarations of 'good neighbourliness, friendship and cooperation', perhaps the most significant factors were the conspicuous absence of overt Chinese criticism of the US role in Central Asia, simultaneous with the explicit Russian and Iranian anti-US rhetoric and Sino-Russian hesitancy to admit new members to the organization.149 In this regard, it would seem that both China and Russia's position on SCO expansion is running counter to that of the Central Asian members with Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev asserting confidently prior to the summit that expansion was simply 'a matter of time'.150 This, of course, is unsurprising given that expansion of the SCO to include such current observers as Iran and India would introduce extra-regional powers and further strategic complications, while diluting Sino-Russian dominance over the direction of the organization. In the context of the Russia–China–US triangle in Central Asia, it is increasingly apparent that Russia has a clear preference for further Chinese rather than US engagement and influence in the region. As one observer has recently noted of Sino-Russian relations in Central Asia, 'To put it in simple terms, although Russia is challenging China in Central Asia and the other way around both prefer this state of relations to a US presence.'151 Moreover, the notion that the SCO will soon emerge as a NATO-like security organization to counter the US presence in Central Asia is also undermined by this rather limited common interest on behalf of the organization's key players.

As the question mark in the title of this chapter would suggest, I believe that the answer to the question of whether Central Asia has resumed its 'centrality' in world history is an equivocal 'no'. Given the preceding definition of Central Asia and identification of the factors which made it 'central' and 'pivotal' to world history, it is not possible to argue that the region today is characterized by the same 'centrality' that it was prior to 1700. Primarily, this stems from the argument that it was the unique life-way of nomadic pastoralism, and its associated military, political and economic implications/ imperatives, that defined the region's 'centrality' and 'pivotalness'. Moreover, division of Central Asia into the five post-Soviet states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the Republic of Mongolia and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China also suggests separate future development, particularly in the case of Xinjiang and Mongolia.

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However, as the latter segment of this chapter has noted, post-Soviet Central Asia and Xinjiang are very much interconnected and experiencing many of the same political and economic pressures. Yet Central Asia may reconstitute its 'centrality' through the development of a new political and economic basis that combines the potential and resources of its independent regions, perhaps along the lines of the European Union. Although this may seem a far-fetched contingency, the region has seen the proliferation of multilateral security and economic bodies,152 although a distinguishing feature of these has been the refusal of participants to diminish their hard-won sovereignty in order to achieve effective institution-building. Central Asia moving into the twenty-first century, as we have seen, is once more a site of contestation for the competing imperatives of external states, in particular two 'old stagers' – Russia and China – and the relative newcomer to the 'geographical pivot of history' – the US.

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3
Positioning Xinjiang in Eurasian and Chinese history

Differing visions of the 'Silk Road'

James A. Millward
Georgetown University

This chapter considers some of the historiographical and political implications of Xinjiang's position as a geographical and cultural crossroads of Eurasia. The region known as Xinjiang today has since prehistoric times lain between Chinese, Indian, Mediterranean and Islamic culture centres and astride the trade routes that facilitated exchanges of goods, ideas and arts between them. The Xinjiang region was also on the front lines of interactions between nomadic powers and oasis-based agrarian states of Central Eurasia; it played an important geostrategic role in relations between states based in north China and nomadic-type Inner Asian states based in what is now Mongolia and Kazakhstan. Xinjiang has always been significant for its intermediate position. Nor has the cultural and geopolitical significance of this 'betweenness' lessened as Xinjiang has become more closely integrated with China, for it has simultaneously been drawing closer to the world.

In recent decades, in both Chinese and western writing, one predominant metaphor used to depict Xinjiang's intermediate position between China, Central Asia and beyond has been that of 'the Silk Road'. Indeed, with official PRC claims for the primordial 'Chinese' identity of the Xinjiang region increasing in shrillness and ahistoricality, it is only in the context of 'the Silk Road' that the region's cultural diversity and multidirectional linkages may be safely discussed in China. Yet the Silk Road metaphor is used in different ways and to convey different messages in China than elsewhere. Whereas outside China the cross-cultural exchanges of 'the Silk Road' can serve as a heart-warming counter-argument to the 'clash of civilizations' world view, Chinese silk-roadism is more parochial and nationalistic. As this chapter will demonstrate, recent Chinese materials stake claims on the 'Silk Road' and treat exchanges across its length so as to stress Chinese cultural and commercial exports and Chinese uniqueness over bilateral exchanges and long-term pan-Eurasian integration. When imports such as Buddhism are undeniable, then the Chinese take on the Silk Road notion serves to highlight aspects of the Chinese past that resonate with today's vision of 'rising China' playing a major role on the world stage.

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The historiography and imagery of Xinjiang *qua* Silk Road is thus collared by contemporary political concerns. This chapter explores the implications of this through propaganda, history-writing, tourism packaging, and the official musicology of Uyghur art music, or *muqam*.

Games with names – is Xinjiang in Central Asia?

Let us begin with an apparently simple question. Is Xinjiang part of China? Is it part of Central Asia? Is to say that it lies in one place or the other to make an imperialist or a separatist claim? Can one safely say it is part of China *and* Central Asia simultaneously?

The first response to these questions is to state the obvious: Xinjiang is part of China: no national entity in the international community disputes China's sovereignty in the region; scholars outside China do not dispute it; even among Uyghur groups in exile, the calls for an independent Uyghur state are increasingly rare and, unlike their human rights concerns, get no serious hearing. It is also obvious to anyone who has read about or visited the region that geographically, ethnically, culturally and historically, Xinjiang shares much with its neighbours Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Mongolia. If you look at a map, Xinjiang lies smack-dab in the middle of the Eurasian continent – there is even a roadside attraction within convenient driving distance of the tourist hotels in Urumqi that claims to be the 'geographic centre of Eurasia'. So, by any definition of Central Asia (Central Eurasia) broader than simply 'former-Soviet Central Asia', Xinjiang is part of Central Asia.

All of this is self-evident, one might think, but the issue of Xinjiang's geographic labelling is surprisingly fraught. As specialists in Xinjiang know, one cannot use the terms 'Uyghurstan' or 'East Turkistan' for Xinjiang around Chinese or in any sort of official context, even when referring to periods before the Qing conquest in the eighteenth century. This is because both terms have been used at various points by Uyghurs or other Turkic peoples with separatist aspirations. (In the past few years, Chinese publications have for the first time begun using the word 'East Turkistan' [*Dongtu*], but only in scare quotes to indicate Uyghur terrorist organizations.)

More to the point here is that, in China, Xinjiang is not included within the concept of 'Central Asia'. The old Soviet studies centres in western countries have, since 1991, redefined themselves as centres for the study of Eastern Europe, Russia and *Eurasia* – with the latter notion increasingly including Xinjiang as well as Mongolia, Afghanistan and sometimes even Tibet. The Central Eurasian Studies Society, the main academic organization for Central Asianists in the United States (with members from outside the US as well, including China), explicitly includes Xinjiang within its ambit. Indiana University's recently created position in 'Xinjiang Studies' resides officially in the Uralic and Altaic Studies department, not its East Asian Studies Center

(Uralic and Altaic Studies also houses Indiana's Tibetanists, although Tibetan is neither a Uralic nor an Altaic language).

In China, however, Xinjiang is not considered part of Central Asia. The Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences is officially dedicated only to 'international studies'.1 A volume of papers produced by a Swedish–Chinese academic conference and study tour in Xinjiang in 1992 is entitled in English *Explorations and Studies on Central Asia*. In the Chinese title, however, where the English reads 'Central Asia', the Chinese substitutes '*Xiyu*' (Western regions – more on this term below.)2

Central Asia as a geographic concept is notoriously vague, with little agreement even among specialists about its boundaries; it is not surprising that for the purposes of dividing fields of study China lumps Xinjiang together with China, not with foreign countries. Since no one disputes that Xinjiang is part of China anyway, one might think it hardly matters that western and Chinese scholars slice the Eurasian pie differently.

However, when it comes to writing history, the implications become more troubling. Even for the thousand-year period (eighth through eighteenth century) when no China-based power controlled the region, recent Chinese writing nonetheless treats Xinjiang as part of Chinese history, and periodizes it according to the names and dates of Chinese dynasties based thousands of kilometres away. Chinese historiography considers ancient peoples of the Xinjiang region to be the ancestors of today's recognized Chinese *minzu* (nationalities). Invasions or local wars become 'rebellions'. Trade is regarded as 'tribute' to the Chinese court. And the official line that China has enjoyed uninterrupted control over 'the western regions' since 60 BC is so far from what is clearly recorded even in the official histories compiled by the Chinese dynasties themselves over some 2,000 years – let alone in the secondary scholarship readily available in any good modern library – that much rhetorical sleight of hand is necessary to perpetuate the government-mandated position.

Names, we all learn in our earliest courses on China, must be rectified, and indeed Confucius stressed that the first thing a ruler should do upon assuming office is to straighten out what things are called. 'If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things. If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success.'3 Names, then, are not mere conventions. They have political force, and can be used to establish 'truth'. That strategic onomastics has been and remains a prime concern of Chinese regimes is made abundantly clear in the case of Xinjiang. Han dynasty conquerors applied Chinese characters to places that had their own Indo-European names already: Loulan and Krorän are one such pair. The Tang's command centre in the Tarim Basin was named to reflect the Tang's strategic goal: Anxi, or 'pacified west'. (The town, or at least its name and garrison, had later to be relocated further east in response to military reality on the ground.) Some thousand years later,

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when the Qing conquered both the Tarim Basin and Zungharia, onomastic chaos ensued as different field officials each chose different Chinese characters to transliterate local Turkic and Mongolian place-names. The initial confusion was soon resolved through an imperially-sponsored project of onomastic name standardization (the *Xiyu tongwen zhi*, 1763),4 which also attempted to reconcile the 'new' names with the Chinese names from the Han and Tang periods. Throughout most of the Qing period, the Han-era term *Xiyu*, 'Western Regions' was still commonly used for the Xinjiang region, but with some ambiguity as to whether it included Qinghai or even Ferghana and parts further west. Interestingly, transcription was no problem in the alphabetic Manchu script, and for that reason the great Qing imperial atlases, compiled with Jesuit help, kept all place-names outside the Wall in Manchu. Perhaps it was in this spirit of Manchu pragmatism that the straightforward neologism 'Xinjiang' (New Frontier) – a term with no prior historical associations – was officially applied to the region in the second half of the eighteenth century and became its unique and exclusive administrative moniker.

Han Chinese leaders in the Republican period, indulging an undisguised assimilative agenda, stripped Ural–Altaic names from the Xinjiang map, and replaced them with old Han names, such as Shule for Kashgar, or patronizing ones like Ti-hwa (Dihua, 'come to be transformed') for Urumqi.5 The more multicultural Communists, in building their multi-nationality state (*duo minzu guojia*), restored many of the Turko-Mongolian and other non-Sinic names, but without quite eliminating the Han dynasty terms either (many remain as county names).6 And the PRC then added another layer of onomastic complexity with its nested system of 'autonomous' nationality counties, prefectures and regions: former Xinjiang province itself was rechristened after 1955 as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (*Xinjiang Weiwuer zizhiqu*). While this 'autonomous' minority nationality place system did not, in fact, invest its eponymous nationalities with any autonomy, it did serve the immediate purposes of a state bent on *divide et impera*.7

How does this relate to situating Xinjiang in China and Central Asia? A battle is raging now over the names used for and – a closely related matter – the narratives about Xinjiang. Scholars outside of China may not realize that they are engaged in this struggle, but relevant units and think tanks in China are geared up to the academic equivalent of a wartime footing. Consider a recent salvo edited by Li Sheng, with an introduction by Ma Dazheng, entitled *Xinjiang of China: Its Past and Present*. Both Li and Ma are fellows in the Research Center for China's Borderland History and Geography Studies,8 a unit of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The book was published in 2005 in English, French, Japanese, Russian, Uyghur, Kazak and Arabic. Its cover copy reads:

Xinjiang of China: Its Past and Present is not a book about general history, but one focused on facts bearing on stability and development in

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Xinjiang. It has been written on the basis of reality with the purpose of respecting history and clarifying the truth.9

This volume was one of a raft of Chinese publications from the past decade in Chinese, English and other languages that summarize Xinjiang's history for general readers. These include white papers from the State Council of the PRC on terrorism and one on the 'History and Development of Xinjiang', as well as several trade publications.10 There are probably several reasons why the Chinese government and academic units saw a need for a new publicity push at this point in time. As Xinjiang grew more integrated with and known to the world, it was no doubt deemed necessary to step up propaganda efforts aimed at general readers. Xinjiang and the Uyghurs came into the news after 9/11 as China sought to position Uyghur separatism as part of a global Islamic movement. More specifically, however, authorities and scholars in China were likely responding to a research initiative then ongoing in the United States which produced the book entitled *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (2004). For idiosyncratic reasons this volume came directly to the attention of China's security apparatus, apparently arousing great concern. Its articles surveyed the history, economics, education, security, geography and other aspects of Xinjiang (I collaborated on two history chapters). Most readers would agree, I think, that it differs little from most academic edited volumes: mixed in content and outlook, stronger in some parts than others, on balance useful, but free of startling revelations, trenchant critiques or thundering polemics and already somewhat outdated by the time it came into print. Why then the furore in China? One reason, I believe, was because the editor, S. Frederick Starr, is director of the Central Asia–Caucasus Institute at Johns Hopkins University. This, I suspect, raised alarms in Beijing: why was Xinjiang, properly part of China, being studied by a Washington DC think tank devoted to *Central Asia*? The cubbyholing of Xinjiang into 'Eurasia' highlighted parallels with Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and Ukraine – where occurred the 'colour revolutions' that Chinese and Russian authorities see as stage managed by a US government intent on undermining their power. Specifically, since the 1999 NATO intervention in Yugoslavia, Chinese analysts and leaders have feared that the US was planning to exploit Uyghur separatism and ethnic tension in Xinjiang to foment a Kosovo-style rebellion. The mere existence of the Starr-edited book touched a nerve, therefore, because it put Xinjiang in the wrong geographical category, and thus, in the eyes of some in China, seemed to challenge China's sovereignty in Xinjiang. The authors who contributed to the volume had no political or non-academic purpose, of course, and did not question Chinese sovereignty in Xinjiang. Nevertheless, Pan Zhiping of the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences (XJASS) summed up in this way the PRC fears about the Starr book in his preface to the pirated 'secret' translation published by XJASS:

[The American authors'] core thinking is that there is a great problem

with the legality of Chinese sovereignty in Xinjiang. One can say that this thought comprises American interference in Chinese internal affairs, and moreover provides a theoretical basis for one day taking action to dismember China and separate Xinjiang.11

This context, then, explains the stress on 'facts', 'reality', 'history' and 'truth' shouting from the cover of Li Sheng's volume. It also explains the odd title phrase 'Xinjiang of China', which is not a formulation used much, if ever, before in English. More than simply an awkward translation of *Zhongguo Xinjiang*, it has the character of an assertion. It is an attempt to rectify the names, to educate foreign audiences.

Xinjiang in World History

More than in the past, then, Chinese authorities and scholars in the 2000s feel an urgent need to internationalize their narrative of Xinjiang history. This shift parallels two other ongoing aspects of globalization: first, the greater integration of Xinjiang since the late 1980s (and especially since 1991) with the rest of China and with the world, thanks to improved communications, the collapse of the Soviet Union, expanding tourism, 'rising China's' role in the global economy, oil and gas exploration in and pipelines through the region, and even the concept of a 'global war on terror' which Chinese leaders have used to frame Uyghur separatism as part of a worldwide Islamic movement. Second, there has been a revival of general scholarly, pedagogical and popular interest in the Xinjiang region and in Central Eurasia more broadly. In part this arises from urgent contemporary issues (oil, Afghanistan), but it also owes something to a 'globalization' of history: the revived interest in world history as a discipline and an ideology, with its relative stress on interconnections, exchanges, networks and parallels between civilizations. This is a historiography well suited for an age of internationalism, multiculturalism, neoliberal free-tradism and we're-all-in-this-together environmentalism. Whether the Huntingtonians, religious fundamentalists and trade protectionists can reverse the trend perhaps remains an open question, but for now, speaking as a teacher of college-level history who has surveyed the new textbooks, I can say the one-worldist approach is well entrenched.

This affects our understanding of Xinjiang in significant ways. As a distant, dusty corner of China, Xinjiang seemed to figure little in the creation of Chinese civilization and the Chinese nation. It was remote, sparsely populated, climatically harsh and seemingly contributed nothing in itself. It was little more than a corridor along which admittedly important things, like Buddhism and silk, came and went. Like other parts of Central Eurasia, it was also a redoubt for barbarian tribesmen who repeatedly and mercilessly attacked the cultured centres of Cathay.

But what about when the focus shifts, as it does in the world historical narrative, to 'the places in between'?12 Then it is intercultural contact,

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exchanges of goods and biological material and the transmission of ideas that become central. The erstwhile barbarians are now facilitators of cross-cultural exchange. One student of mine demonstrated perfect internalization of this lesson when he wrote in an exam, 'in the thirteenth century, Genghis Khan set out to globalize the known world'.

This revised outlook is not restricted to academic or pedagogical contexts, but enters the broader popular consciousness is various ways. Viewers of television history programmes and readers of popular science magazines thrill to learn about mummies with 'European' features turning up in the Xinjiang desert. Television documentaries, travel writings, museum exhibitions and similar texts stress the themes of interconnectivity. In Washington DC, the Smithsonian Institution in 2002 hosted a two-week 'Silk Road Festival' on the National Mall between the Capitol and the Washington Monument in which tens of thousands participated. Tourists sign up in droves for Silk Road package tours. And books on the Silk Road, or playing on the idea of the Silk Road, are published by the dozens: in September 2007 Amazon.com listed over 70 English-language books published since the year 2000 with the words 'Silk Road' in their titles.

Not all 'Silk Road' fascination focuses on Xinjiang, of course, but it is certainly a key link. The ways in which the Xinjiang region has been involved in broader regional or world history are manifold. It is in fact much more than 'China's Muslim Borderland'. In the bronze and iron ages, Indo-European speaking peoples settled and nomadized across the northern tier of Eurasia, from the Black Sea to Gansu. Xinjiang and Mongolia were conduits and points of contact between these early peoples and the proto-Chinese societies developing in the North China Plains, Manchuria, Sichuan and elsewhere. Then and later, the Xinjiang region's primary historical significance lay in its position between Sinic, on the one hand, and Indic, Mediterranean/Islamic zones, on the other; and in the goods, ideas and people that passed through Xinjiang in getting from one of these areas to another: barley, wheat, domesticated sheep and camels, and, later, larger horse breeds, cotton, viniculture, plague, tea and that mighty purgative, rhubarb; 'animal-style' art, the chariot, possibly aspects of the bronze or iron metallurgical package, Han silks, Roman glass, Sassanian metalwork, Hellenic motifs, Chinese elements in Islamic miniatures, and Mughal forms in Manchu jade work; Buddhism, Manichaeism, Nestorian Christianity, Islam; paper, gunpowder, blue-and-white ceramics, astronomical and mathematical methods, medicines, musical theory and such instruments as the lute, spike fiddle and hourglass drum; chess; the travellers Zhang Qian, Faxian and Xuanzang and many more Buddhist pilgrims and translators; the ubiquitous whirling Soghdians, William of Rubruck, Marco Polo, Sven Hedin, Aurel Stein. And furthermore, to reduce to chaos any gathering at which Uyghurs, Chinese, Poles or Italians are present, one need only add noodles, pizza or the humble *mante* (also known as *jiaozi, pierogi* or *ravioli*) to this list.

One could write very large books dealing with exchanges over Xinjiang's

roads. Indeed, they have been written: the works of Edward Schafer and Joseph Needham come to mind; more recently, Liu Xinru has contributed to this body of scholarship.13 To be sure, one may question whether Xinjiang's contribution to the globalization of paper or the dumpling rises above simply that of a transit point. While this may be a legitimate caveat with regard to specific goods and some technologies, the Tarim oases did serve as mediators of and thus contributors to the idea systems that passed through them. Uyghur cooks are renowned in Central Asia for a reason. Buddhism was initially translated for Chinese consumption in such places as Khotan, Kucha and Dunhuang and by Khotanese or Kuchean monks in Chinese monasteries. The Central Asian and Tarim passage filtered and amplified aspects of the religion, stressing certain sutras, teachings and practices, and helping shape its form in China. The same might be said a fortiori for Islam in China, which owes much to the missionary Sufi networks hailing originally from Bukhara and who set down roots in Xinjiang before moving into Gansu and Qinghai.

Xinjiang's world historical status, in short, is as the crossroads of Eurasia; no mere byway, but a crossroads where things happened. To the east–west dimension of its world historical role, moreover, we must add the equally significant north–south dimension. Xinjiang is linked to the steppe-sown dynamic – a long-running issue in world history – both as a setting where that dynamic was played out, and, more broadly, as an inevitable sideshow to any conflict between nomadic states based in Mongolia and agrarian states based in North China. Schematically put, the argument for this goes as follows.

The Tarim Basin oases were agriculturally fertile and stood astride lucrative trade routes. They produced grain and revenue, but could not support herds of horses, so they tended to be dominated by powers based in the north, where steppes and mountain slopes provided good pasture and thus a military edge. These equestrian powers might be based as far away as Balasaghun and the Yettisu area (modern Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan), whence they could simultaneously extend power over the northern and western Tarim as well as Transoxiana; most important, however, were the powers that controlled the Turfan basin and northern Tarim cities from just beyond the Tianshan passes in Zungharia (northern Xinjiang) or even from Mongolia. When strategic rivalries between Mongolia-based and north China-based states intensified and Chinese states attempted to cut off the nomads' access to grain and trade revenue, the value to nomad states of the Hami–Turfan– Kucha belt rose. China-based states then expanded operations westward, 'to cut off the right hand of the Xiongnu', in the famous phrase from the *Hanshu*. Xinjiang was in this fashion drawn into China–Mongolia conflicts not only during the Han–Xiongnu rivalry, but during that of the Tang with the Turks, of Khubilai with Arigh Böke and Khaidu, of the Ming and the Mongols, and of the Qing and the Zunghars. The Xinjiang region, then, particularly its eastern portion, is tied to what was an enduring face-off between north China-based and nomadic-type states across the Great Wall line. Most clearly seen in the China–Mongolia case, similar dynamics were a

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feature of steppe-sown relationships in South Asia, Iran, the Middle East, the Black Sea coast and Russia.

The Silk Road in Chinese eyes

If 'Crossroads of Eurasia' represents Xinjiang's position in world history from a non-Chinese perspective (in particular, mine, hence my use of the phrase as the title of my history of Xinjiang), then Li Sheng's 'Xinjiang of China' sums up how Chinese scholars – officially, at least – present it. It is not that Chinese scholars entirely ignore Xinjiang's important world historical role as a conduit between cultures, but that they must discuss that interconnectivity in a Chinese national context. Since it is problematic for them to include Xinjiang in 'Eurasia', or 'Central Asia', the old Han dynasty term *Xiyu*, 'Western Regions', is still commonly used and is politically acceptable, as it blurs the question of pre-modern sovereignty over the Tarim Basin and Zungharia. But 'Western Regions' does not work well when translated into English, as it is too easily confused with 'the West'.

However, it turns out that the term 'Silk Road' fits the bill rather nicely. *Sichou zhi lu* (or *silu*) in Chinese, the term proves useful in allowing discussion of Xinjiang's cross-continental linkages while avoiding the awkward question of Xinjiang's place in 'Central Eurasia'. In part for this reason, I believe, as well as for its marketing potential, China has embraced this romantic, nineteenth-century German term as or more eagerly than anywhere else. The 'Amazon test' when conducted with the bookseller's Chinese site yields 90 current book titles including the phrases *sichou zhi lu* or *silu*.14

But Chinese sources often use 'Silk Road' somewhat differently than do Western materials. Outside Xi'an (the old Tang capital of Chang'an, often called the eastern Silk Road terminus) stands the Famen temple, whose ancient pagoda has been maintained, despite collapses, over the centuries. A piece of the Buddha's finger-bone once housed here was the subject of a xenophobic, anti-Buddhist polemic by the Confucian scholar Han Yu, a rather dyspeptic piece that has been enshrined in the canon of Chinese literature. A hidden vault under the stupa recently yielded a trove of artefacts demonstrating early Chinese links with Indian Tantric Buddhism, including two pieces of finger-bone, one purported to be the very bone that so exercised Han Yu. The Famensi pagoda itself is today again a religious pilgrimage site, but the artefacts and nearby structures has been museumized. What is interesting about the exhibits is the secular ideological uses to which they put the site and its Silk Road ties. When I visited in 2004, a large billboard over the parking lot showed General Secretary Jiang Zemin posing with some of the precious artefacts from the vault (but not, sadly, with the Buddha's finger). Text plaques in the exhibit included the following:

The ancient China in Tang's period has strong national power, stable society, prosperous economy, and advanced culture. Her dignified and

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vigorous royal manners, and all embracing *opening attitude* gained the respect from all over the world. China becomes the prosperous paradise enjoying popular confidence. *The treasures unearthed from the underground palace of Famen temple reflect the magnificent scene of 'the whole world are longing to go to Tang', and reproduce the Tang's elegance as a proudest country in the world. The all-embracing opening spirit of Tang creates the matchless vigorous Tang Dynasty. The completeness and perfection of Tang's civilization just consist in extensively assimilating the advanced culture from all over the world*. Chinese nation processes the spirit of perseverance and creativity since the ancient times. *After assimilating the outside civilization, this national spirit burst out the much stronger force*, which is the profound inspiration and spiritual encouragement presented by the 'elegance of grand Tang' and 'oriental light' to our common people.15
(Verbatim English text; emphasis added)
In other words, for the curators, this Silk Road site demonstrates, first, the openness of China in the Tang as now in the post-Deng era (but unlike during certain other periods of Chinese history); and second, that people from the across the world, like today's Silk Road tourists, were drawn inexorably to this elegant, confident, prosperous, matchless, dynamic, vigorous – the adjectives go on and on – advanced, magnificent world power. All it lacks is a reference to the 2008 Olympics.
When expressed this way, the Silk Road metaphor well serves the ideological purposes of today's Chinese state. By emphasizing silk, Buddhism and the high imperial periods of the Han and Tang Dynasties (the last time China had a presence in Xinjiang until the eighteenth century), China represents Xinjiang and the Silk Road as a stage on which China plays the leading historical role. Just as early Euro-American scholarship on south-west Asia and India once focused on traces of lost classical civilizations and ignored or denigrated the more recent Islamic past, the historical packaging of Xinjiang has de-emphasized the more recent, Islamic millennium in favour of Buddhist and pre-Buddhist antiquity and Han and Tang-period areas. This is particularly noticeable at tourist sites. For example, in Xinjiang's westernmost, still predominantly Uyghur and Muslim city of Kashgar, developers recently built a faux ancient city-site commemorating the Han Dynasty general Ban Chao, complete with a mini-Great Wall (anachronistically in the Ming dynasty style), a 'spirit road' flanked with life-size figures of soldiers and ministers, and of course a statue of the conquering general himself. Ban Chao originally consolidated his control over Kashgar in the year AD 87 by calling a banquet to celebrate a truce with the towns' local defenders, getting them drunk, and slaughtering them. It is hard to say whether planners or city officials considered the sensitivity of erecting a monument to him. In any case, Pantuo City, as the park is called, has now become a new station on the Silk Road, at least for some tourists.

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Even where the monuments are undeniably Islamic, the stress in tourist materials and guided presentations often falls on those aspects linking the site to places further east in China. For example, the Amin Khoja or Sulayman mosque (Su Gong Ta) in Turfan once stood by itself amid fields and grape-drying arbours. Recently, however, developers have erected a modern statue of the Amin Khoja, a Turki noble who collaborated in the Qing conquest of Xinjiang. He is posed in the act of receiving an edict from the Qianlong emperor, his eyes cast reverently upwards, as if the emperor were floating in the sky over the vast new parking lot. At the Afaq Khoja Mazar in Kashgar, much is made of the so-called 'fragrant concubine' (Xiang Fei), a woman from Afaq Khoja's family who was married to the same Qianlong emperor after the Qing conquest. She is not in fact buried at the site. It is Afaq Khoja and his male descendents, a powerful Sufi order who once controlled western Xinjiang, for whom the mazar was originally erected and maintained. Still, at a concession just outside the shrine doors one may be photographed (for a fee) with girls playing Xiang Fei in either Uyghur dress or in martial get-up with helmet and sword.

The Silk Road idea also resonated positively with developments in the post-Deng, post-Soviet era of openness and economic reforms, and especially the region's renewed communications with Central Asia and increased autonomy from Beijing in dealing with foreign tourists, governments, NGOs, trade partners and investors. The general preface to a series of academic 'Silk Road Researches' published in 1993 by Xinjiang Renmin press made the relevant connection:

…Some authors [in the series] have attempted to combine their [Silk Road] studies with *the reform and the open door policy of China* in hope that the past can serve the present and show what we can learn from our ancestors…. There is no demand that the views of the authors should be in conformity with that of the editors. Instead, we appreciate the *contention of different schools and ideas* in the studies, for we believe that it is the only way to promote the Silk Road studies…. It is not a coincidence that the [UNESCO-affiliated] Centre for Silk Road Studies, Urumchi, has been founded in Xinjiang: *the most important section of the Silk Road*. All this proves that a *new age to rediscover and revitalize the great Silk Road* has come to us [emphasis added].16

The editors wished to say, in other words, that China now officially embraces the openness and connectivity implied by the Silk Road idea. These characteristics are, after all, healthy for China's growing foreign trade. But at the same time, China claims a controlling stake in the Silk Road, the 'most important section' of which is precisely Xinjiang. Thus what in the West are celebrated as Silk Road exchanges and interconnectivity are, in China, portrayed rather as evidence that the world is beating a path to China's (once again) open door. Rather than as a transnational

bridge between civilizations, the Silk Road here is nationalized as China's doorstep.

Yet despite such Silk Road boosterism, Chinese authorities today are not terribly interested in cultural exchanges or linkages other than touristic or commercial ones over the revitalized Silk Road. In fact, one of the top priorities of Xinjiang's security apparatus today lies precisely in *preventing* the import of religious and political influences, people, news and certain trade items (drugs and arms, understandably enough, but also videotapes and books). Likewise, official China remains ambivalent or even suspicious about Xinjiang's historical westward links. The official approach to traditional Uyghur music demonstrates this ambivalence.

Uyghur music and the distortions of Chinese silk roadism

Uyghur music became the object of a state music project even before the rise of the PRC. The Uyghur art music form, *muqam*, is a series of suites or song cycles considered by many Uyghurs to be the acme of Uyghur cultural achievement. Until the mid-twentieth century, the *muqam* in Xinjiang consisted of a flexible tradition with many individual and regional styles (such as those of Kashgar, Ili, Dolan and Qumul) passed on from masters to disciples. During their apprenticeship, disciples might play percussion on the *dap* frame-drum while the master sang and played the *dutar* (a two-string long-necked lute), *rewab* (a mandolin-like lute with doubled strings and a round, skin-covered body) or *tambur* (another long-necked lute, with a doubled melody string).17 In this way, the pupil could internalize the complex rhythms, poetic lyrics, melodies and rules of ornamentation before performing *muqam* on a melodic instrument themselves. For the most part, it appears, Uyghur musicians traditionally did not perform whole cycles, but rather isolated pieces or sections of *muqam*. Both Ahmetjan Qasimi (leader of the Eastern Turkestan Republic in northern Xinjiang in the 1940s) and Seypidin Äziz (Saifuding; former member of the ETR government who served later under the PRC both as regional vice chairman and chairman of the Xinjiang Nationalities Committee) sought to promote the *muqam*, and particularly the *twelve muqams* (*on ikki muqam*) tradition of Kashgar, as the prestige music of the Uyghur people.18 In the 1950s, an orchestra director from Nanjing, together with scholars in the Muqam Research Group, were charged with collecting and organizing the suites, which in fact existed as an unsystematic living tradition with more than twelve suite names overall, and with no one performer's or regional tradition's repertoire including twelve complete suites. The collection and editing project thus focused on 'reconstructing' an idealized former system of twelve and only twelve complete *muqam* suites, each consisting of about thirty songs and instrumentals. In the event, it was the tradition as known and performed by one master, Turdi Akhun, that became the basis of the canon of the *twelve muqams* that was recorded, reordered, transcribed and

published in 1960.19 This and subsequent editions (also based solely on the repertoire of Turdi Akhun) have become the foundation of most pedagogy and professional performance of the *muqams* in Xinjiang, while other variant traditions from Tarim Basin cities are dismissively treated as 'local' or 'individual'. There remains little if any room for improvisation in *muqam* performance, as many of the movements are now played by orchestras rather than small groups of a singer and one to four instrumentalists. Thus preserved, systematized and frozen, the Uyghur *muqams* are lauded as a 'treasure trove', 'encyclopaedia', and 'perfected' tradition raised from a 'germ' over 'two thousand years' by the Uyghurs as an 'expression of their social and productive struggles'.20 The corpus of 'folk classical' music (*khelq klassik musikisi*) has thus been apotheosized as the unique, ancient and autochthonous tradition of Uyghur music, now reconstructed nearly in its entirety and enshrined as one of the national musical forms of new China.

Despite the success of this programme of ethnic cultural codification and representation, the Uyghur *muqam* still presents certain problems for PRC nationalist ideology, problems that arise from its Silk Road history. *Muqam* (variously spelled *maqâm, mugham, mukâm* and so forth) as both suite form and music theory belongs to an Arabo-Irano-Turkic tradition that spans Central Asia, the Caucasus, Afghanistan, Iran and the Arab countries.21 Of the twelve names applied to the twelve standardized suites in Xinjiang today (Rak, Chebbiyat, Mushavrek, Chargah, Penjigah, Özhal, Ejem, Ushshaq, Bayat, Nava, Sigah and Iraq), all but two are used elsewhere in the Islamic world, and derive from Arabic and Persian, not Turkic language roots. Of the two used uniquely in Uyghur *muqam*, 'Rak' may in fact be a derivation of an Arabic word, or even of the Indic *raga*, and Chebbiyat is a Turkicized variation on another common Arab *maqâm* suite name, Bayat. Even the notion of specifically *twelve muqam* (the number twelve having zodiacal significance) appears earliest in the thirteenth century Arabic writings of Safi al-Din.22 In Arab and Persian, *maqâm* refers to the musical modes of each suite, in which the pieces of a given suite are composed. The Arab *maqâm* maintains the modes consistently; in Central Asia and Xinjiang in particular, the modes of pieces within the suites vary: they may begin and end in a particular mode, but middle pieces adhere only inconsistently.23 (A mode is a particular order in which notes of a scale are be played. The *muqams* also use a wider variety of scales than the major, minor and harmonic minor scales most common in pre-twentieth-century Western art music.)

It in no way diminishes the beauty or sophistication of the Uyghur *twelve muqam* to recognize that it is part of a quintessential Silk Road musical form: variations on a theme stretching from the Tarim Basin to the Black Sea. The *muqam* scales, modes, rhythms, lyrics, instruments and terminology tie the Uyghurs to a system shared across the Islamic heartlands of Eurasia. They do not, however, point to any obvious connections with Chinese musical tradition. Moreover, the fact that the Arab versions maintain consistent modality, while the Uyghur and other Central Asian ones do so only

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partially or nominally, would seem to indicate an Arab centre for the tradition. (*Maqâm* literally means 'place or rank' in Arabic, and is one of the standard terms used for mode in Arabo-Irano music theory.)

Both Uyghur and Han politicians in China have worked to obviate these inconvenient implications. For example, in prefaces and keynote speeches delivered over decades on the subject of Uyghur *muqam*, Seypidin argued that *muqam* is originally a Uyghur word, corrupted by Persian and Arabic influences; he urged the cultivation of a 'Uighur Mukamology' that Uyghurizes relevant vocabulary.

This Chahetai language [Chaghatay is a literary written Turkic, with many Persian loan-words, that flourished from the fifteenth through nineteenth century in Central Asia – JM] found its way into the terminology and poetry of the mukam, by way of the verses of the Maola [mullah] poets, during the Middle Ages. The result was that the Uighurs, creators of the mukam, could hardly understand the lyrics themselves. It is time that this mixed language of the mukam be cleansed of its impurities.24

Chinese musicologists have joined the effort to de-emphasize the obvious transnational nature of *muqam* and its association with Islam, while playing up evidence of local origin and development and connections to Chinese music. One approach has been to argue that the *muqam* began with the pre-Islamic Uyghurs. In his historical study of the *on ikki muqam*, Abdushukur Muhemmet Imin suggests that the word 'muqam' itself is originally Turkic and dates from the fourth century, well before it is attested in Arabic and before the Islamicization of Central Asia. It was during the Karakhanid period in the eleventh century, Imin argues, that the *muqam* spread westward.25 Zhou Jingbao sounds both Turkic and Chinese nationalistic notes, making a case for the influence of 'Chinese' instruments and music – i.e. those of the Turks and of Qiuci (Kucha) – on Abassid period Baghdad from the mid-eighth century. He points to five-string lutes in frescoes at Kizil (near Kucha in Xinjiang) as evidence that the *oud*, the central instrument in Arab *maqâm*, was a Kuchean export.26 Moreover, he argues that al-Farabi (870–950), an author of musical treatises as well as a famous commentary on Aristotle, was a Turk; likewise, Zhou suggests, Ibn Sina (Avicenna, 980–1037),27 should be seen as 'eastern' in his thinking and as a beneficiary of Turkic and Chinese influence in his musical theory because he was educated in Bukhara. Zhou's logic is worth quoting:

In conclusion, the foundation of Ibn Sina's thinking derives from al Farabi, and Farabi was a Turk. Thus, there is no doubt that Ibn Sina's theory enjoys Turkic influence…. Bukhara [where Ibn Sina lived as a youth] fell under the control of the Anxi Commandery (*duhufu*) and historical records illuminate the influence of Chinese culture on Bukhara.

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Because before he was 18 years old Ibn Sina lived in the Bukhara area, he unavoidably received the influence of Chinese civilization.28

Never mind the fact that the primary vehicle of the Tang dynasty's influence in Bukhara was its largely Turkic army, or that this army was present in Transoxiana for only a few years, 230 years before Ibn Sina's birth! (Ibn Sina's autobiography gives no suggestion of Chinese influence.)29

Other arguments by PRC authors have likewise highlighted local roots and Chinese connections of the Uyghur *muqam*. Some scholars have noted structural and rhythmical similarities of the Tang period suites known as *daqu* with certain subsections of the *muqam*, and posited a common origin in the music of Kucha. Yin Falu goes further still, claiming that the suite form itself was originally introduced into the Tarim Basin by the Chinese during the Han dynasty, to be thenceforth adopted by the people of Kucha, Kashgar, Turfan and so on as the basis of their own popular music.30

Mukamology (to use Seypidin's word) in China, then, has celebrated the Uyghur *muqam* as a unique cultural achievement of the Uyghur people, realized through a process of mutual interchange with the fraternal Han people. Links to the musical traditions of Central Asia, Iran and Arab lands which share the name *muqam* were, according to this argument, merely one-way; they allegedly arose from the westward spread of Turkic and Uyghur musical culture and contributed significantly to the development of Arab music, providing, besides the *muqam*, certain scales and even the five-string lute or *oud*. On the other hand, according to this preferred Chinese view, the Arab and Persian literary and terminological influences that flowed back east with Islam represent not Silk Road cultural interaction, but an unfortunate corruption of the original purity of the Uyghur *muqam*.

As the Uyghur *muqam* begins to receive well-deserved international recognition, it is the limited, one-way Silk Road along which it is officially situated. The 2005 UNESCO proclamation of Uyghur *muqam* as one of the 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' makes no reference to the *mukâm, maqâm* or *mugham* of other societies in this trans-Eurasian tradition. Rather, *muqam* is referred to only as Uyghur and Chinese. Moreover, while never mentioning that the *muqam* form is found from Hami to the Hellespont, the UNESCO website takes pains to assert that

The music of Uyghur Muqam is characterized by variations and continuity of musical patterns, *indicating close affinity with the musical culture of China's central plains* [my emphasis].31

UNESCO here lends a hand in the internationalization of the official PRC narrative of Xinjiang history.

Chinese historical anxieties over Xinjiang

Are the historiographical nuances I have been discussing here at all relevant to contemporary affairs? Does it matter that, in China, Xinjiang is not categorized as part of Central Asia, or that Chinese writers conceive of the Silk Road differently than is fashionable elsewhere? The Silk Road is, after all, merely a metaphor. Does it even really matter that the Chinese State Council would disseminate an English-language document claiming, contrary to the Chinese dynastic histories, that 'after the establishment of a frontier command headquarters (*duhufu*) in the Western Region by the Han Dynasty in 60 BC, Xinjiang became a part of Chinese territory. From that time on, the central government has never ceased jurisdiction over Xinjiang'?32 After all, Xinjiang is what it is, a part of China bordering on several South and Central Asian countries as well as Russia, with an economy expanding in pace with other rapidly developing regions of China. Half of its 20 million registered residents – and even more if its unregistered population is included in the measure – is Han.

As a historian, of course, I am bound to argue that history – and how it is written – is relevant. It matters not only because truth matters, but also because the efforts to 'rectify names' and internationalize a peculiar narrative of Xinjiang history reveal a profound anxiety on the part of the Xinjiang regional and Chinese national leadership, a defensiveness that actually shapes aspects of foreign as well as domestic policy. The Chinese government's efforts in the months following the 9/11 attacks on the United States to frame Uyghur separatism as part of the Global War on Terror were widely seen internationally as a cynical effort to provide cover for an intensified crackdown on Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Similarly, its assertions about the threat of Uyghur terrorist groups lack credibility, in part because many of its claims about Xinjiang's ancient and recent history are so obviously false. China was internationally embarrassed when Premier Wen Jiabao signed a decree in December 2006 that, in fulfilment of a pledge to the International Olympic Committee, China would allow foreign journalists freedom to travel throughout the country and report without interference between 1 January 2007 and 17 October 2008, to correspond with the Olympics – and then specifically excluded Xinjiang and Tibet from this relaxation of restrictions.33

From the best we can tell, moreover, this sense of insecurity does not arise from serious threats on the ground in Xinjiang or anywhere on its borders, official Chinese claims of the existence of a well-organized, al-Qaeda-linked Uyghur terrorist network notwithstanding.34 The threat of a Kosovo-style intervention in Xinjiang is not plausible, especially now that the US has been driven from its bases in Central Asia. Following the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, observers predicted that the influence of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, India or the United States would increase in Central Asia. Yet though unanticipated, China has been by far the clearest and greatest 'winner' in this new Great Game. Far from being destabilized by events west of the Pamirs in

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the 1990s and 2000s, Xinjiang has arguably emerged as one of the most stable places in China, given that it seems to have experienced few of the tens of thousands of peasant and worker disturbances that now break out in eastern and central provinces annually.35

Rather, the Chinese defensiveness about Xinjiang and its accompanying efforts to police terminology and historiography arises from its own concerns over historical legitimacy. Chinese propaganda has barricaded itself behind a nearly indefensible line, claiming that Xinjiang has been part of China for 2,000 years without interruption; that the borders of China under the Qing empire, and all the peoples within them, have comprised 'China' since antiquity;36 that the *muqams* are Chinese in origin; and so on. This is a difficult line to maintain in light of more objective historiography highlighting the nearly constant flow of peoples and cultural material into and out of Xinjiang, from many directions, including but not restricted to regions under the control of Chinese states; historiography which, for that matter, also clearly demonstrates the eighteenth-century origins of the current Chinese control in Xinjiang.

This historical anxiety betrays a fetish for historical depth that is, if not uniquely Chinese, at least characteristically so. Most states facing separatist or ethnic dissent would be pleased to be able to demonstrate 250 years of occupancy in a problem region, even with interruptions, especially if they also enjoyed universal international acceptance of their sovereignty there. But China's own modern history, and the emphasis in its national myths on victimization by foreign imperialists in the nineteenth century, rather than on Qing creation of empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth, back Chinese ideologues and historians into a corner. Xinjiang, Tibet and Taiwan are obvious prizes of Manchu expansion that they feel cannot be acknowledged as such.

There is a great irony here. If we do take the very long view, it is clear that the PRC is now more secure in Xinjiang than any state based in the north China plains has ever been before it. The stability and extensiveness of its administration far surpasses that of the Qing, the first state based on the north China plains to directly govern both the Tarim Basin and Zungharia. Thanks to its economic clout and the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, China now enjoys influence across the Pamirs that not even the 'grand Tang' could boast. With the SCO, moreover, China has succeeded in strongly counterbalancing US influence in Central Asia, resolving border territorial disputes in its favour and undermining potential resistance from cross-border Uyghur enclaves. China now enlists the security agencies of Central Asian states to police Uyghur communities and extradite suspects. There remain environmental threats to development, especially water shortage. But in its economic, political and diplomatic importance, Xinjiang now more resembles that 'most important link' on the idealized, China-centred Silk Road than ever in the past.

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Notes

1 The IREECAS English-language website is: Online. Available HTTP: <http://euroasia.cass.cn/English/About.html> (accessed 29 October 2008).

2 Ma Dazheng *et al.* (eds) *Xiyu kaocha yu yanjiu* (Explorations and studies on Central Asia), Urumqi: Xinijiang renmin, 1994. The commemorative T-shirt from the conference likewise glosses 'Central Asia' as '*Xiyu*'.

3 *Analects* 13:3. From James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics, Volume I: Confucian Analects*, Safety Harbor, Florida: Simon Publications, 2001; first published Hong Kong 1861. Downloaded text from Project Gutenberg. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/4094> (accessed 29 October 2008).

4 Fu-heng *et al.*, comp., *(Qinding) Xiyu tongwen zhi* (Imperially commissioned unified-language gazetteer of the Western Regions), Beijing [?]: 1763; *Siku quanshu* edition, 1782; repr. Minzu guji congshu, 2 vols., Wu Fengpei (ed.) Beijing: Zhongyang minzu xueyuan chubanshe, 1984.

5 Dihua was in Qing times originally the name of a fort in Urumqi; in the Republican period authorities applied it to the city as a whole.

6 James A. Millward, 'Coming onto the map: "Western regions" geography and cartographic nomenclature in the making of Chinese Empire in Xinjiang', *Late Imperial China*, 1999, December, vol. 20, no. 2, 61–98.

7 See Gardner Bovingdon, *Strangers in their Own Land*, book manuscript, ch. 3, for a history and incisive analysis of the workings of the local autonomy system in Xinjiang.

8 Zhongguo bianjiang shidi yanjiu zhongxin. Li Sheng and Ma Dazheng are old acquaintances and colleagues of mine; I am pleased to have dined with them on *shua yangrou* in Beijing and blue crabs in Washington, not to mention boiled mutton in the middle of the Taklamakan.

9 Li Sheng (ed.) Qin Min, trans., *Xinjiang of China: Its Past and Present*, Urumqi: Xinjiang People's Publishing, 2005.

10 Information Office of the PRC State Council, 'East Turkistan terrorist forces cannot get away with impunity', released 21 January 2002. Online. Available HTTP: <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200201/21/eng20020121_89078.shtml> (accessed 28 October 2008), and the websites of PRC embassies in certain countries; Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 'History and development of Xinjiang', Beijing: New Star Publishers, 2003, also available at PRC embassy websites as a white paper; Ji Dachun (ed.) *Xinjiang lishi baiwen* (100 questions on Xinjiang history), Urumqi: Xinjiang meishu xieying chubanshe, 1997; Wang Shuanqian (ed.) *Huihuang Xinjiang* (Splendid Xinjiang), Urumqi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 2003.

11 Pan Zhiping, 'Wo du Meiguo de "Xinjiang gongcheng"' (My reading of the American 'Xinjiang Project') in Fuleidelike Sitaer (ed.) *Xinjiang: Zhongguo musilin juju de bianchui*, Frederick S. Starr (ed.) *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, translated from English by Shi Lan (n.p.: preface dated 2004), p. 4.

12 I borrow the phrase from the title of Rory Stewart's recent travelogue, where he follows the route Babur once marched through Afghanistan. Rory Stewart, *The Places in Between*, New York: Harcourt, 2004. Babur's mother was an Islamicized Mongol from what is now Xinjiang – which, some would say, makes the founder of India's Mughal dynasty a Chinese.

13 E.H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963; Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954–85; Liu Xinru, *Ancient India and Ancient China: Trade and Religious Exchanges, AD 1–600*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988; Liu Xinru, *Silk and Religion: An Exploration of Material Life and the Thought of People, AD 600–1200*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996.

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14 Conducted 2 October 2007.

15 'Concluding remarks' plaque, from Famensi Museum complex, Shaanxi province. The accompanying Chinese text conveys the same meaning.

16 Zhou Jingbao, 'The general preface to the series of Silk Road studies' (in English), in Wang Binghua (ed.) *Sichou zhi lu kaogu yanjiu* (Archaeological Research on the Silk Road), *Sichou zhi lu yanjiu congshu* series no. 1, Urumqi: Xinjiang renmin, 1993, pp. 12–14.

17 Wan Tongshu, *Weiwuerzu yueqi* (Uyghur instruments), Urumqi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 1986, has photos and descriptions of these and other Uyghur instruments.

18 Nathan Light, 'Slippery paths: the performance and canonization of Turkic literature and Uyghur Muqam song in Islam and modernity', PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 1998, Ch. 1, 'Turkic history and the Uyghur Muqams', pp. 29–30. Online. Available HTTP: <http://homepages.utoledo.edu/nlight/frntmtr1.htm> (accessed 29 October 2008).

19 Wan Tongshu, *On ikki muqam / shier mukamu* (The Twelve Muqam). Bilingual Chinese–Uyghur edition, 2 vols. Beijing: Yinyue chubanshe and minzu chubanshe, 1959.

20 Sai-fu-ding (Seypidin Äziz), *Lun Weiwuer Mukam* (On the Uighur Mukam). In Chinese and English, Beijing: Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu chubanshe, 1994, pp. 45–6, 49, 51.

21 J.-Cl. Ch. Chabrier, 'Makâm', in H.R. Gibb (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, Leiden: Brill, 1960.

22 Light, 'Slippery paths', Ch. 1, pp. 30–31.

23 Light, 'Slippery paths', Ch. 1, p. 28, p. 28 n. 19.

24 Seypidin Äziz, 'On the Uighur Mukam' (a speech delivered at the Xinjiang Forum on Literature and Art, 1991), in Saifuding, *Lun Weiwuer mukamu*, Beijing: Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu chubanshe, 1994, p. 72.

25 Abdushukur Muhemmet Imin, *Uyghur khelq kilassik muzikisi 'On ikki muqam' heqqide*, Beijing, 1981; Sabine Trebinjac, *Le pouvoir en chantant*, Tome (vol.) I., 'L'art de fabriquer une musique chinoise', Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie, 2000, p. 228; Light, 'Slippery paths', pp. 58–9.

26 Zhou Jingbao, *Sichou zhilu de yinyue wenhua* (Musical culture of the Silk Road), Urumqi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 1987, pp. 217–18, 224–7. A five-string lute is depicted in the cave frescoes at Kizil (also spelled Qizil; near Kucha) and listed in Tang sources as one of the Kuchean (Qiuci) instruments. However, such lutes with vaulted backs are common across Eurasia, and there are similar instruments depicted in Mediterranean sites dating from the second century BC. On the pipa's import into China, see Shigeo Kishibe, 'The origins of the Pipa', *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* (Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko), 2nd series, 1940, vol. 19, 259–304.

27 Avicenna's *Canon* became the foundational work of Renaissance medicine in Europe.

28 Zhou Jingbao, *Sichou zhilu de yinyue wenhua*, p. 227.

29 W.E. Gohlman (ed.) trans., *The Life of Ibn Sina*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974.

30 Yin Falu, 'Woguo lishi shang de minzu qianxi yu wudao wenhua jiaoliu' (ethnic migrations and exchange of dance culture in the history of my country), *Wudao luncong* 3, pp. 48–57, cited in Trebinjac, *Le pouvoir en chantant*, pp. 222–3.

31 UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization), 'Third proclamation of masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity' 2005. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/intangible-heritage/10apa_uk.htm> (accessed 29 October 2008).

32 Information Office of the PRC State Council, 'East Turkistan terrorist forces

cannot get away with impunity'. The more widely available white paper 'History and development of Xinjiang' makes a similar false claim: 'Since the Western Regions Frontier Command was established in 60 BC, the inflow of the Han people to Xinjiang, including officials, soldiers and merchants, had never stopped.' Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 'History and development of Xinjiang', p. 2.

33 Edward Cody, 'China to allow more freedom for journalists from abroad', *The Washington Post*, 2 December 2006, A08.

34 I am among those observers of the situation in Xinjiang who believe that claims regarding the threat of violent resistance or terrorist attacks in Xinjiang to date have been exaggerated. See James Millward, 'Violent separatism in Xinjiang: a critical assessment', *Policy Studies 6*, Washington, DC: East-West Center, 2004.

35 One recent exception was a fight in late September 2007 between thousands of cotton farmers in Kuitun and police and paramilitary guards. The police had been searching farmhouses for caches of cotton that farmers were hoping to sell at open market rates, rather than at the artificially low fixed prices paid by the Xinjiang Production Construction Corps. The issue that sparked the incident had nothing to do with ethnicity, and resembles similar conflicts that have broken out frequently elsewhere in China over economic issues and abuses by local authorities. 'Chinese cotton farmers clash with police, 40 injured', *Associated Press*, 5 October 2007.

36 The PRC State Council White Paper, 'History and development of Xinjiang' makes a point of Xinjiang's multi-ethnic character since ancient times. However, the 'many tribes and ethnic groups' it mentions only migrate 'across the land of China', for which purpose it includes Mongolia and Tibet, although these areas were administered by a state based in China only during the Qing period. The document (p. 2) refers to the 'Sai (Sak)', for example, as 'a nomadic tribe [that used] to roam about the area from the Ili and Chuhe river basins in the east to the Sir (Syrdarya River westward)'. In fact, the Sai or Saka were Indo-European speakers, part of a cultural and linguistic continuum of Iron Age nomadic and settled peoples that stretched across Central Eurasia and included the Scythians whom Herodotus describes at length. (Iranian 'Saka' and Greek 'Scythian' are cognate words.) Northern Xinjiang or Mongolia was probably the easternmost extent of their range. This white paper (pp. 3–5) also labels all China's traditional adversaries, the nomads inhabiting territory that now lies in the Republic of Mongolia, as Chinese. For example, 'The Turks were ancient nomads active *on the northwestern and northern grasslands of China* from the sixth to the eighth centuries' (p. 4; my emphasis). It is worth noting that not only were these grasslands not part of the Tang empire, but they are not part of the PRC now! Of Chinese dynasties, only the Qing was able to incorporate and control Mongolia (as opposed to sporadically manipulating nomad elites through bribes and diplomacy) from north China.

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4
'Failed States' on the 'Perilous Frontier'
Historical bases of state formation in Afghanistan and Central Asia

Geoff Watson
Massey University

Thomas Barfield chose *The Perilous Frontier* as the title for his book on relations between the nomadic and sedentary worlds. Although written with reference to relations between nomadic societies and China between 221 BC and 1757 it will be argued that his work resonates in present attempts to create a new polity in Afghanistan.1 Although the present situation in Afghanistan is popularly presented as a clash between al-Qaeda and a resurgent Taliban on the one hand, and a fledgling Afghan government supported, to varying degrees, by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the United States and Afghan warlords on the other hand, this chapter argues that the present conflict can more accurately be viewed through the lens of the longer-term dynamics of state-formation in Central Asia. The first section analyses the external dynamics of state formation in Afghanistan and Central Asia, focusing on the historic usage of security concerns and perceptions of 'oriental despotism' as pretexts for external intervention in Central Asia. It then analyses internal dynamics of state formation, arguing that the external pretexts for intervention can be attributed to the historical tensions between nomadic and sedentary societies. It is further argued here that there are historical continuities between present rhetoric, which presents Afghanistan as a base of fanatical Islam and lawless tribalism, and the dominant discourse of the so-called 'Great Game' era between 1830 and 1914. In both instances, such rhetoric reveals more about mainstream Western thinking than the regions they are applied to.

What purposes does this labelling serve? Historically, there have been three, sometimes interrelated, pretexts for outsiders seeking to influence state formation in Central Asia: a desire to annex its territories as part of a wider empire; to address a perceived threat from within the borders of its territories; and a perceived moral imperative to counter 'oriental despotism'. The first of these pretexts, a desire to incorporate Afghanistan within a formal empire, is not evident in the present conflict although it has been argued that Hamid Karzai's regime has been effectively rendered a 'client state',

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dependent upon Western patronage.2 Nevertheless, there is no evidence that the political will exists to undertake a permanent occupation of all or part of Afghanistan, something which was advocated by advocates of the 'Forward Policy' such as Henry Rawlinson and Demetrius Boulger during the nineteenth century.3 Attributing the present situation in Afghanistan to lawless tribalism and religious fanaticism does, however, serve the second and third pretexts mentioned above. Concomitantly, the topographical challenges of Afghanistan and Pakistan, combined with the perceived complicity of its rulers and peoples in Oriental despotism, have served as exculpatory factors when the aims of past and present objectives, such as the failure to unseat Dost Mohammad in the nineteenth century and the continuing failure to arrest Osama bin Laden and prevent traffic of insurgents between Pakistan and Afghanistan, have not been realized.

One of the historic bases of the present situation in Central Asia is a western tendency of caricaturing its peoples and environment. One important rhetorical figure in this regard is the phrase 'The Great Game' or 'the New Great Game', which is commonly applied to the region.4 A recent evocation of this term came from Richard Dannatt, head of the British Army, who suggested the Army was 'on the edge of a new and deadly "great game" in Afghanistan'.5 In many ways it is a revealing term which is important to unpack. It might be argued that the 'Great Game' is a useful conceptual tool through which to view the present situation in Afghanistan because it acknowledges the contest for political influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia which undoubtedly exists. Although acknowledging parallels between the present situation in Afghanistan and nineteenth-century geopolitics, the present writer is wary of pronouncing the present situation as part of a 'New Great Game' in which the objective is to gain political and military influence in Central Asia (in particular its oil resources).

There are three main reasons for this. First, the oil resources of the area are small on a world scale. Kirill Nourzhanov has recently noted that present reserves for the Caspian Sea region are estimated at 17 billion barrels, far fewer than the 1990s projections of 200 billion barrels. Moreover, at present, the Caspian basin produces less than two per cent of the World's total output of oil.6 Second, the so-called 'Great Game' of the nineteenth century was as much a contest for knowledge about Central Asia and eclipsing the remnants of nomadic power as it was a contest for political and military supremacy.7 Alarmed at the prospect of Tsarist Russia expanding its territories, the Government of India embarked on a quest for information on Central Asia, which became the focus of sustained exploration between the 1860s and the 1880s, culminating in the Anglo-Russian boundary commission of the 1880s which achieved its avowed aims of 'knowing' the region and delimiting mutually satisfactory frontiers.8 In contrast to the nineteenth century, twenty-first-century attempts at state formation in Afghanistan and Central Asia have been conducted with a full knowledge of the geography of the country and a working knowledge of its political, religious and tribal dimensions

obtained as a result of European exploration during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the incorporation of the majority of Central Asia into the Russian and Chinese polities of the twentieth century and the extensive Western knowledge of Afghanistan obtained as a result of assistance given to the Mujahideen during the Russian invasion of Afghanistan between 1979 and 1988.

The third, and perhaps most significant, problem with the term 'Great Game' is that it positions Central Asia as a passive playground upon which the whims of key international actors are played out. It appropriates the language of sport, which in popular culture is embedded with notions of heroism and myth creation, and thereby minimizes the significant human costs of past and present interventions in Central Asia. Just as many nineteenth-century accounts of spying and diplomatic intrigue in Central Asia (and much of the twentieth-century analysis of these actions) presented Central Asia as a stage on which daring feats occurred (and marginalized the killing of many of its peoples during Russian expansion), so too do many present accounts depict present rivalries in the region as a form of sporting tournament. To say the least, this masks the complex interplay of political rivalry and localized factional interests in Central Asia. At another level, however, the appellations 'Great Game' or 'New Great Game' serve as what Edward Said called 'rhetorical figures' which tacitly legitimate the notion that the territories and peoples of Central Asia are a prize to be squabbled over by outsiders.9 As Don McMillen notes, a preoccupation with policy-making intended to fulfil the 'security' objectives involved in such 'games' can lead policy-makers to believe 'that we do *not* need to be concerned about the "faceless" individuals in far-away places who are deemed to have little impact on the "realities" of the "New Great Games" that others play on "glocal fields"'.10 One wonders if the term 'Neocolonialism in Central Asia', arguably a more accurate characterization of the present situation, would be as attractive to commentators.

How might we account for the persistence of such terms in spite of the significant differences between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries? Part of the explanation lies in the historical amnesia about Central Asia in mainstream western knowledge. Despite the extensive British and American history of involvement in Afghanistan, the region is still referred to in many recent texts as a 'black hole' about which little is known. This is reflected in popular works, such as the 2001 BBC documentary *Afghanistan – The Dark Ages*, narrated by John Simpson, in which the viewer is informed at the beginning that 'this is one of the wild places of the earth, a black hole in the world's consciousness'.11 This perception of Central Asia as a 'black hole' is significant in two ways. It denies that the region has any people residing in it who are affected by the actions of outside powers.12 It also means that Afghanistan, and indeed much of Central Asia, becomes a blank slate upon which any image can be projected (and sometimes old images can be reprojected onto the area). As Ebel and Menon noted in relation to Western

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coverage of the oil and natural gas reserves of the Caspian region, 'this hyperbole thrives on simple ignorance: most Americans know next to nothing about this part of the world and exaggerations go unchallenged – or, more likely, are simply unnoticed'.13 A May 2004 editorial on Afghanistan in the *Free Lance-Star* noted that 'before September of 2001, most Americans would have been hard pressed to find the country on an unlabelled map'.14 The commercial success of Sacha Baron Cohen's 2006 mockumentary *Borat*, which reinforces many caricatures of Central Asia, is partially explained by Kazakhstan being largely unknown to its Western audience, thereby enabling Cohen to reinvent the country for his own purposes.15 This is not a new element in outside perceptions of the region. In previous times, for example, Central Asia was believed to be the realm of Prester John, the purported great Christian monarch who persistently eluded discovery.16 In the context of world history, Andre Gunder Frank made similar observations about Central Asia, arguing that for those from outside Central Asian studies the region appears as something of a black hole. Frank called for scholars to recognize the 'centrality of Central Asia'.17 On one level this has been achieved in that the events of 11 September 2001 saw a revival of academic interest in Afghanistan. Much of the coverage of Afghanistan in media reports, however, is devoid of any historical context and consequently some old characterizations of Afghanistan as an inaccessible land inhabited by warlike, untrustworthy peoples and ruled by inherently unstable regimes have been resurrected in modern garb.

External influences on state formation in Afghanistan

Perceptions of threats from within Afghanistan's borders

One dominant image projected onto present-day Afghanistan (and periodically onto Central Asia) is the notion of the 'failed state'. The dominant discourse among Western writers is that Afghanistan is a failed state and, significantly, a failed state responsible for an attack on the Western world. External intervention in Afghanistan is therefore justified on the basis that it was the source of a threat to the western world owing to terrorist activity within its borders. Krasner and Pascual, writing in 2005, cited Afghanistan as an example of a failed state that 'became the base for the deadliest attack ever on the US homeland, graphically and tragically illustrating that the problems of other countries often do not affect them alone'.18 Condoleezza Rice, United States Secretary of State, echoed this view when she asserted that 'Afghanistan became a failed state and a haven for terrorism. We all came to pay for that.'19 The continued presence of Western forces and influence in Afghanistan is justified on the basis that Afghanistan remains a potential source of terrorist activity, drug smuggling and instability until the present regime is appropriately secure. Frederick Starr, for example, has warned that 'if progress continues, the reconstruction of Afghanistan will mark a

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significant victory in the war on terrorism. If it flags, the recent gains will start to recede.'20 The underlying implication here is that it is the responsibility of what might be termed 'functioning states', that is polities with the capacity to control their own citizens and deploy armed forces abroad, to ensure that events within 'failed states' do not harm nations outside their borders.21

The origins of this type of thinking can be traced back at least as far as the nineteenth century. The term 'failed state' is something of a rhetorical figure, whereby any polity held to be incapable of exerting centralized authority can be deemed a real or potential threat to regional stability, thereby becoming a candidate for outside intervention.22 It is argued here that the historical basis of this term can be located in the nineteenth century and that it is a twenty-first-century derivative or mutation of Social Darwinism. The nineteenth-century forerunner of today's 'failed state' versus 'functioning state' dichotomy was the perceived opposing forces of 'civilization' versus 'barbarism', the belief being that 'when civilization comes into contact with barbarism, barbarism must give way'.23

In the nineteenth century, two manifestations of this perceived barbarism, the slave trade and nomadic raids, were cited as pretexts for British and Russian intervention in Central Asia. These moral pretexts made it difficult for British opponents of Russian expansionism to gain traction for their arguments that Britain should take stronger action against Russia. For example, even trenchant critics of Russian expansion, such as Boulger, agreed that the attempted Russian invasion of Khiva in 1839 was justified because Russian citizens had been made slaves.24 It will be argued later that the pretext of Islamic despotism provided a complementary moral legitimation to the security pretexts of suppressing terrorism, when Afghanistan was invaded in 2001.

The Russian conquests of the Khanates of Khiva, Bokhara and Khokand in 1866, 1868 and 1873 respectively and their subsequent campaigns against the Turkomans in the 1880s were justified on the basis that lawlessness within these polities was affecting Russia and that it was necessary to prevent internal disorder within nomadic societies from affecting Russian territory. Accordingly, each of these conquests was justified by the Tsarist regime on the pretext of establishing settled government and maintaining law and order, arguments which will be familiar to those aware of the present-day rhetoric directed at 'failed states'. Russian generals such as von Kaufman and Skobeleff were given free rein in Central Asia, their successes welcomed as just retribution against lawless raiders and any failures disavowed as the actions of overzealous generals.25 Russian expansion posed a moral dilemma in that, although many felt it threatened Britain's strategic interests, opponents conceded an element of moral justification in Russian expansion. Charles Marvin, for example, supported Russia's policy of occupying the territory of the Turkomans and maintaining order, comparing it favourably with the British policy of sending repeated punitive expeditions to the North-West frontier and Afghanistan.26 Accordingly, he conceded that the Russian advances in Central Asia were justified 'owing to the provocation of

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the nomads'.27 Even Rawlinson, the arch-opponent of Russian expansion, justified the Russian conquests on the basis that they represented the inevitable triumph of civilization over barbarism.28 This sense of an inevitable progression in history, where civilization supersedes barbarism, is implicit in external intervention in Afghanistan today, where it is asserted that 'reconstruction' (a term which begs the question of what exactly is being reconstructed? Afghanistan as it was before the 2001 invasion?) will enable a functioning state to supersede the previous 'failed state'.29

British intervention in Central Asia in the 1830s was also justified on the basis that it was an unstable entity and accordingly an assertion of influence was necessary. There were two areas of concern for the British here: the expansion of the Russian sphere of influence and the fear that Russia would foment anti-British sentiment among the tribes of Central Asia and that this would lead to these tribes undertaking an invasion of India.30 The effect of the Russian victory in the Russo-Persian war of 1826–8 and its failed action against Khiva in December 1839 was that Britain sought to formulate strategies for dealing directly with nomadic polities, which had previously only appeared in British literature as abstract entities under the generic term of 'Tartars'. This term was mistakenly applied to the Mongols who invaded Europe in the thirteenth century and came to be applied to the peoples of Eurasia in general. The term 'Tartar' evoked apocalyptic images, being associated with the Greek word 'Tartarus' meaning hell. Those living in Tartary were deemed to exhibit the warlike and savage characteristics of the Mongols to at least some degree. Ethnicities deemed to exhibit 'Tartar features', such as the Uzbeks, were more likely to be characterized unfavourably than those of a more European appearance, such as the Tajiks.31 These underlying perceptions informed British views of Central Asian peoples during the nineteenth century.

Britain's early encounters in Central Asia provided substantive evidence for the prevailing view that its peoples were barbaric and duplicitous. Concerned at the potential for Russian expansion towards India, the British sought to create buffer states among the Central Asian Khanates of Bukhara, Khokand and Afghanistan. Accordingly, in 1839, it was decided to unseat the then ruler of Afghanistan, Dost Mohammad, who, after unsuccessfully appealing to the British to curtail the expansionist activities of Ranjit Singh, had received a Russian deputation. He was replaced by Shah Shuja, a former ruler who had been exiled to the Punjab. In another echo of the present situation, the initial conquest was successful but enduring control proved elusive, and the British suffered a catastrophic defeat in 1841–2. Despite a punitive expedition being dispatched, the loss to British prestige was considerable and Dost Mohammad was duly restored. The defeat in Afghanistan, and the execution of two British envoys, Conolly and Stoddart, by the Amir of Bukhara in 1842, an action which was unavenged by Britain, reinforced the underlying view that Central Asia was a region where oriental despotism flourished.32 It also signalled a temporary end to

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British attempts to directly influence state formation in Afghanistan and Central Asia.33

The expansion of Tsarist Russia in Central Asia during the second half of the nineteenth century, however, revived concerns about the potential threat to British India. It was the catalyst for a second attempt at state formation, in the form of the Second Afghan War between 1878 and 1880. Concerned about Sher Ali Khan negotiating with Russia, a British expeditionary force displaced him and installed Yakub Khan as ruler in 1879.34 These actions prompted a revolt, during which the British envoy Louis Cavagnari was murdered and a second British expedition, headed by Major General Roberts, was dispatched to Kabul. Amir Abdur Rahman (reigned 1880–1901), acceptable to both Britain and Russia, was installed as ruler with British support. Profiting from British financial assistance, he was able to consolidate his rule, albeit in an authoritarian and bloody manner. An Anglo-Russian boundary commission was established to delimit the frontiers of Afghanistan and accordingly the Wakhan strip was included to ensure that the British and Russian empires did not come into direct contact. Amir Abdur Rahman and his successors had to accept British suzerainty in foreign policy until 1919, but this privilege was effectively purchased from Afghanistan via aid.35 It was in the mutual interests of Britain and Tsarist Russia to have Afghanistan, as delimited by the boundary commission, as a buffer state because both recognized that military occupation of Afghanistan was beyond their respective capabilities.36 In a historical sense the defeats of the British were significant because they became embedded in Afghan historical memory and remain a point of reference today.37

What nineteenth-century Social Darwinism and the twenty-first-century concept of the 'failed state' share is an underlying presupposition that phenomena can be categorized into hierarchies and that moral judgements can be abstracted from these categorizations. Just as in the nineteenth century, different ethnicities were categorized on a hierarchical basis and on that basis it was viewed as acceptable, indeed inevitable that 'civilized' nations would supersede 'barbaric' regimes when they came into contact, so too is it presently argued that in the interest of global security a 'failed state' can and should be superseded by a 'functioning state'. The categorization element to the 'failed state' concept is evidenced by a recent study released in the Fund for Peace and Foreign Policy which ranked Afghanistan among the world's ten weakest states in the 'Failed States Index' for 2006.38 Another parallel between the categorization implicit in Social Darwinism and the concept of the 'failed state' is that the criteria by which polities are judged is both defined and enforced by hegemonic Western countries. In the case of the 'failed state' the underlying premise appears to be that the ideal model of a state is a western-type democracy and its supporting centralized bureaucracy. Frederick Starr, for example, sees a reconstructed Afghanistan as a key actor in the establishment of a Greater Central Asia Partnership for Cooperation and Development (GCAP), a 'regionwide forum for the

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planning, coordination, and implementation of a variety of US programs'.39 Promoting democracy is seen as a vital part of this reconstruction as is an accompanying programme promoting 'the fundamental American Values that inform them'.40 As in the nineteenth century, judgements of Afghanistan and Central Asia are being made on the extent to which they conform to Western criteria of what form a successful polity should take. Failure to meet these criteria and exercise control over the actions of its citizens means that a polity becomes a possible candidate for outside intervention, this intervention being justified by the argument that 'failed states' are destabilizing influences on functioning polities.41 It will be argued later that seeking to impose the idealized western model of a functioning state is particularly problematic in a Central Asian context because of a historic pattern of resistance to centralized rule.

Moreover, just as the concepts of Social Darwinism were generally accepted in the dominant discourse of the nineteenth century, the use of the term 'failed state' has become embedded into everyday language and is largely unchallenged in the Western media.42 As Kolhatkar and Ingalls note, the 'failed state' label is used when weak states affect powerful ones. Such labels are useful for dominant powers because they focus on local issues, specific to a country, thereby ignoring the role of external actors (especially the dominant powers) in creating disorder.43 These observations are particularly applicable to Afghanistan and much of Central Asia. The present boundaries of Afghanistan are a result of nineteenth-century British and Russian intervention and do not reflect any pre-existing political or cultural entity. The borders agreed by the Anglo-Russian boundary commission were based around the strategic need to separate the borders of British-and Russian-controlled territory, hence the narrow Wakhan strip of land. Another nineteenth-century legacy is the Durand Line, the boundary between present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan, which is not recognized by the Afghan government because it divides Afghan Pashtun communities.44 It is from within this area, which some have labelled 'Jihadistan' on account of its quasi-autonomous nature, that many Taliban cross undetected between Afghanistan and Pakistan.45

The role of external actors in destabilizing Afghanistan in the twentieth century has been comprehensively discussed by scholars such as Saikal and Rubin. Russian intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 was motivated partly by concern that the Soviet-backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) regime was losing control over the countryside.46 Russia was also concerned about the rise of assertive Islamic regimes in the area, given the emergence of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran and Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan.47 The Mujahideen, whose resistance to the PDPA had been the catalyst for the Russian invasion, vigorously resisted the Soviet incursion. After a prolonged resistance, Russian armed forces withdrew in 1989. During the Russian invasion, however, extensive external support for the Mujahideen was provided via the CIA, who utilized Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) agency

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as a conduit for arms to Afghanistan. As had previously occurred in the nineteenth century, the unity generated among Afghan leaders by external intervention proved ephemeral and after the collapse of Najibullah's regime in 1992 a variety of leaders contended for power. Rabbani was declared leader after the Peshawar agreement in 1992 but was soon coming under attack. The ISI-supported Taliban took control of much of Afghanistan in 1996 and, supported by Pakistan and the United States (at least until American support for the regime ended in 1999), remained the dominant group until 2001.48

Islamic fanaticism and 'oriental despotism'

Historically, Western imperialism has often been accompanied by a legitimating ideology. In the nineteenth century, this often took the form of a 'civilizing mission' which sought to uplift the spiritual and material conditions of indigenous peoples.49 Similar trends can be discerned in regard to present-day Central Asia. Subduing fanatical Islam and alleviating 'oriental despotism' have consistently been cited as legitimating factors by outside countries seeking to influence state formation in Afghanistan, and indeed Central Asia generally. One parallel between the nineteenth- and twenty-first-century conflicts in Central Asia is that the region has been cited as the realm of Islam in its most extreme forms. In the nineteenth century travellers such as Vámbéry were bitterly critical of the 'fanatical Islam' practised in Central Asia, comparing it unfavourably with the more moderate Islam practised in the Ottoman Empire. Some writers attributed the condition of Central Asia to what they regarded as the excessive Islamic piety of the region. Both the ninth and eleventh editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* attributed the decline of Central Asia to the venality of the Mullahs.50 In the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, published in 1915, Vámbéry emphasized the 'fanaticism' of the region. 'From Constantinople East', he asserted, 'a gradually increasing fanaticism and ignorance will be observed and the deeper the penetration into Asia, the more outspoken and intense become the hatred and the aversion of the believer to the adherents of a foreign creed.'51 Moreover, he maintained that the peoples of Central Asia were proud of their standing as strict Muslims and viewed themselves as upholding the religion.52 In his view, the Muslim community in Central Asia was presented as promulgating a primitive Islamic fundamentalism. 'There', he asserted, 'we find a distinctly different religious life, the manners and customs of which do not resemble those of West Asia. There everything bears the special stamp of extravagant fanaticism, of an exalted conception of the value of ritual trivialities, and of a deep hatred against innovations.'53 He reinforced his arguments by citing examples of brutal executions and the oppression of women under Islamic rule in Central Asia.54 These attitudes, he believed, were evident in the 'barbarous mountaineers of Afghanistan'.55 Another justification presented for the Russian invasion of the Central Asian

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Khanates was that they were Islamic despotisms. For example, a leading article in *The Times* on 6 December 1869 declared:

A country could with difficulty be named where a change of government would be more desirable than Central Asia. The rulers show all the indolence and fanaticism of Mohomedanism with none of its virtues. They have succeeded in reducing what were once fertile plains and wealthy cities to dreary deserts. Land and people alike cannot but profit by a substitution of Russian genius for order, mechanical and routine as it may be for the existing lawlessness.56

The Taliban regime, which was displaced after the United States-led invasion of Afghanistan in September 2001, was characterized in many of the terms previously used to describe 'oriental despotisms'.57 Criticism focused on its rigid adherence to Islam, its intolerance, as exemplified by the destruction of the Buddhist statues in Bamiyan in 2000, and its repressive measures against women.58 A subtext of the invasion was that not only was it necessary on security grounds to remove the terrorist threat, but it was also justifiable because it removed a repressive regime whose fanaticism had seen it accommodate terrorists.59 Although in 2001 United States President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair were careful to reassure leaders of Muslim countries that they respected Islam, Afghanistan was seen as the homeland of a particularly fanatical strain of Islam.60 As Amin Saikal has noted, 'a Western contention, which has resonated more strongly in Washington than in any other Western capital, sees those forces of Political Islam which defy US control or influence as a serious threat to Western interests that must therefore be combated in whatever way necessary'.61 In his analysis of western responses to Islam since 11 September 2001 Saikal identified three kinds of rhetoric. The first emphasized the non-religious, non-ethnic nature of the war on terror. The second identified Western civilization as superior to Islam, arguing that Islam was an inherently warlike religion. The third view denounced Islam as a religion which inspired and encouraged terrorism.62 The language used to describe the Taliban and, by extension, Islam in Afghanistan, embodied the second and third types of views. The Taliban was presented as an exemplar of extreme Islamic fundamentalism and United States policy advocated secularizing the polities of Afghanistan and Central Asia as an insurance policy against radical Islam.63

The Taliban regime was not the only perceived Islamic threat emanating from Central Asia. At a more general level, Shahram Akbarzadeh has argued that Islam has been seen as a threat to regional stability in Central Asia for two reasons: first, a fear that its adherents will demand an Islamic fundamentalist state; and second, that Islam has the potential to be a uniting force among the peoples of Central Asia, but a uniting force against, rather than for Western interests.64 He further argued that modern Central Asian states had the potential to suffer from a cycle of imposed westernization, social and

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economic insecurity, popular disillusionment, Islamic radicalization and state suppression. Akbarzadeh also noted a tendency among Central Asian states towards the first stage of this cycle (imposed westernization) and that these states have inherited the legacy of a 'top-down authoritarian culture'.65 This is evident today in countries such as Uzbekistan.66

Internal dynamics of state formation in Afghanistan and Central Asia

The dialectic between nomadic and sedentary society has been a key challenge to state formation in Central Asia. In evaluating this issue, it is important to understand the meanings of statehood in Central Asia. If we take a state to mean a polity with clearly delimited boundaries in which power is exercised by a centralized regime, assisted by formal institutions of government and complemented by civil society, then, with the possible exception of Daoud's regime between 1953 and 1963, it is doubtful whether Afghanistan has ever met these criteria.67 David Christian's analysis of nomadic states is useful here. He argues that 'state' formation is often discussed in the context of sedentary states and that the nomadic forms of 'states' have often been marginalized.68 State formations in steppe societies tended to be minimalist, meaning that they allowed considerable autonomy to individual chiefs but retained the capability of exerting a degree of coercive power over a large number of people for a sustained period. They had the power to extract resources, either from within their own sphere of influence or from outsiders.69 Christian identifies six levels of social organization in pastoralist societies, beginning with parental groups on level 1, and extending through camping groups of 8 to 50; reproductive groups based on kin ties of 50 to 500; tribes, associations of these groups numbering between 500 and 1,000; and supratribal associations of between 1,000 and 100,000; and, finally, pastoralist states/empires with a population ranging upward from 100,000 to millions. These last two levels were temporary entities which would come together to fight a common enemy and occasionally, at the highest level, pastoralist states which could command the loyalty of tribal and supratribal units because of their ability to distribute prestige goods, confer honours and retain sufficient internal support to maintain at least a majority among constituent tribal groups.70

It must also be recognized that the present polities of Central Asia have emerged relatively recently in historical terms and that their fixed borders do not reflect a nomadic heritage of migratory pastoralism. Sayed Askar Mousavi suggests that the appellation 'Afghanistan' emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, and came to be applied in a generic sense to a territory composed of many different ethnicities.71 Previously the territories of present-day Afghanistan were known by the appellation 'Khorasan'. Khorasan itself denoted a geographical region, in which a number of different polities existed, rather than a kingdom or principality per se. When, for example, envoys from Balkh visited the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in 1661, they

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were not referred to as envoys of Afghanistan, but were identified as representatives from the Kingdom of Balkh.72 As the Mughal and Safavid empires began to break up in the eighteenth century, new polities, which Muzaffar Alam refers to as 'successor states', emerged.73 It was during this process that the present-day Afghanistan emerged and under the leadership of Ahmad Shah Abdali Afghanistan attained its greatest territorial extent in the mid-eighteenth century.

What factors allowed for the coalescence of such a diverse grouping into some type of state formation during the reign of Ahmad Shah? Essentially, he was able to satisfy two key preconditions – he was able to satisfy his nomadic followers who wanted war with campaigns against the sedentary state of India. The wealth he obtained in these campaigns also enabled him to maintain a minimalist state infrastructure via strategic redistribution of goods.74 Even at its peak, however, Ahmad Shah did not preside over a centralized state; rather he was the head of a number of chiefs, each of whom retained control over their own areas.75 Historically, the most successful periods of statecraft in Central Asian history have emerged from personalized rule rather than centralized rule. It is no coincidence that former nomadic rulers, such as Timur, have been refashioned as exemplars of political skill in many Central Asian places.76 The problem from a western perspective is that those leaders capable of exerting effective rule (thereby meeting security and strategic objectives) often do so by employing repressive tactics and this in turn negates the professed objectives of ending despotism and advancing human rights.

The key problem confronting Central Asian leaders was that supratribal associations tend to be fluid and often fragmentary in nature. Their existence is dependent upon the ability of the leader to either exercise coercive power and/or distribute rewards. Allegiances are conditional and transferable in the event of conditions such as military defeat, superior economic incentives by an outside party or intertribal feuding. Joseph Fletcher referred to this phenomenon as 'Bloody Tanistry'.77 In the eighteenth century, the death of Ahmad Shah Abdali resulted in a protracted succession dispute among his descendants and it was not until Dost Mohammad that a leader capable of commanding the allegiance of a majority of Afghan leaders emerged. A more recent example of this is the supratribal organization referred to as the 'Northern Alliance', an entity which played a leading role in defeating the Taliban in 2001 but then reverted to a diffuse collection of individual groups. Strong, charismatic leadership is essential to the functioning of such polities.78 Judged on its own terms, the pattern of succession disputes and internecine fighting has its own logic as tribal leaders and their followers either seek supremacy or align themselves with what appears to be the ascendant faction. This in turn means that the institutions and practices associated with sedentary rule, such as a centralized bureaucracy exercising uniform authority over all regions within a territory according to a common set of rules, does not develop.

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To outsiders from the sedentary world, Central Asian conflicts have often been viewed as evidence of an inherent lawlessness and a consequent inability to adapt to a settled lifestyle.79 Arminius Vámbéry encapsulated the views of many nineteenth-century observers when he wrote in 1885 of 'the idea of a whole Afghan nation being a preposterous one, considering that these unmanageable elements can hardly ever be roused into unity'.80 In the nineteenth century, some triumphalist accounts of Russian expansion welcomed their victories as a decisive triumph over an age-old enemy – the nomadic raiders of Central Asia. A review of Frederick von Hellwald's book *The Russians in Central Asia* in 1874 proclaimed that 'the once dreaded power of the Asiatic Nomades has been dissipated by the science of Europe, and the bravest and fiercest of the Turkoman races had not even a chance of success in a contest with the legions of Russia'.81 The warlords of Afghanistan are in many ways a twenty-first-century manifestation of the supratribal organizations of previous centuries. Their leaders exercise and maintain power through a mixture of personal charisma, kin ties, coercion and a capacity to reward a working majority of their followers. In his analysis of warlords in Tajikistan, Kirill Nourzhanov argues that they are 'perhaps the most efficient instrument available to regional populaces to bargain for scarce resources'.82

Historically, rulers of Central Asian polities needed to reconcile the interests of nomadic and sedentary elements.83 The states formed under Amir Abdur Rahman (emir from 1880 to 1901) and his successors did so through a pattern of personalized rule which rewarded loyal adherents. Constrained by the expansion of the Russian and British empires from attacking sedentary polities in Persia and India, the rulers turned inward to reward their followers. The Hazaras, who had developed settled agricultural communities, were brutally oppressed and their resources redistributed among Abdur Rahman's supporters.84 In the longer-term context of interaction between nomadic and sedentary societies, the Afghan regime stood out as an example of a polity of nomadic heritage acting in an active rather than passive way. By the last decade of the nineteenth century the formerly independent Central Asian Khanates of Khiva, Bukhara and Khokand and the territories of the Turkomans had been absorbed into Tsarist Russia and Yakub Beg's regime in Kashgar had been crushed by the Chinese armies led by Zuo Zongtang. In Afghanistan, by contrast, a polity of nomadic heritage was able to remain in power by appropriating the resources of sedentary communities.85 Resistance to centralizing rule has continued to be a feature of Afghanistan's history. Daoud's second regime, between 1973 and 1978, lost support when he proposed an ambitious policy of land reform.86 The PDPA regime, which came into power in the subsequent coup of April 1978, also sought unsuccessfully to impose a centralized regime on Afghanistan. Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin used a strategy of mass arrests and executions on the one hand and instituted a series of political reforms on the other to assert control.87 These regulations sought to usurp the role of tribal rulers by regulating mortgages, marriages and bride price. The state was also given the power to

place surplus lands under the jurisdiction of the Land Reform Department, which required landowners to register their deeds with the state. These attempts to impose centralizing reforms were vigorously resisted and a series of rebellions occurred which undermined the authority of the new government.88 Rubin attributes the failure of the PDPA's reforms to the weak state organization inherited by the regime, internal weakening of the army and an inability to convince a majority of people in the provincial regions to support the reforms, because they were poorly implemented and on balance the villagers preferred the tribal leaders they already knew to the officials of the PDPA. The Soviet-installed regime which replaced the PDPA was no more effective in enforcing centralized authority than its predecessor. The new government, headed by Babrak Karmal, struggled to achieve effective control over the countryside and therefore income from taxation was sharply reduced. Foreign aid and sales of natural gas accounted for 60 per cent of total expenditure after the Soviet invasion.89 The installed regime had some success in repressing internal dissension by developing networks of informers and reorganizing the intelligence agencies but made very little progress in convincing countryside leaders to defect to their regime en masse. Nor were the Soviet leaders willing to commit sufficient numbers of troops to secure the whole of Afghanistan and, faced with mounting casualties and scant evidence of success, they withdrew in 1989.90 Hamid Karzai, the present ruler of Afghanistan, has had to accommodate the warlords in his present administration and his power over these leaders is minimal.91 Attempts at exerting meaningful authority by stopping opium production and forming a credible Afghan National Army have only been partially realised.92

Conclusion

This chapter has evaluated the historical bases of state formation in Afghanistan and Central Asia. It is argued that the present challenges of constructing modern states in Central Asia reflect the difficulties of seeking to impose centralized power in a region where state power has historically been indirect. Institutions modelled on sedentary regimes have limited applicability in a region where centralizing reforms have historically been resisted, although there have been periods of personalized rule. The coercive power needed to maintain personalized rule is, however, incompatible with the avowed humanitarian ideals of 'reconstruction' in Afghanistan. The reconstruction also presupposes a shared nationalism and identity among the ethnicities of Afghanistan, which does not recognize that the formation of modern Afghanistan owes more to the geopolitical concerns of the nineteenth century than a pre-existing nation state in the sense that it would be conceived today.

The one dynamic which has been more successful than any other in generating a sense of Afghan unity is outside intervention. Although this is a

negative rather than a positive motivation, outside intervention has resulted in the formation of supratribal coalitions for the purposes of undermining invasions. This was evident in the Afghan wars of the nineteenth century and the prolonged resistance of the Mujahideen during the 1980s. Outside interventions have been motivated by two key factors. First: a perceived threat to the security of Western territories from within the borders of Afghanistan. Second: the perception of Central Asia as a heartland of Islamic fanaticism and oriental despotism has provided a humanitarian gloss for outside intervention. It has been argued here that the perception of Central Asia as a region inhabited by warlike, lawless tribes hostile to Western citizens and ideals is an enduring one which can be traced back at least as far as the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century. Outsiders have vacillated between viewing Central Asian polities as potential allies or as a threat to settled societies depending on political priorities.

This labelling has served important purposes in legitimating intervention. In the nineteenth century, British and Russian intervention was justified on the basis that Central Asia was a region ruled by capricious, unreliable sovereigns and populated by unruly tribes who engaged in immoral activities. Nomadic societies were also viewed as degenerate, according to the judgements of Victorian literature. The twenty-first-century version of nineteenth-century Social Darwinism is the concept of the 'failed state', whereby polities deemed a threat to Western countries become candidates for outside intervention. One term common to both eras is the notion of the 'Great Game', a term which simultaneously relegates the peoples and places of Central Asia to a passive position and appropriates the heroic elements of sport to romanticize and legitimate external intervention. One reason why such recurring allusions are possible is the enduring perception of Afghanistan in particular, and Central Asia in general, as a 'black hole' whose history and peoples are allegedly unknown despite the vast developments in Western knowledge of the region since the nineteenth century. This historical amnesia is evident in everyday reporting on Afghanistan and Central Asia and as a consequence informed debate on these areas is lacking (despite the existence and accessibility of material detailing the historical context of present events). Much work remains to be done before the scholarly awareness of the 'centrality of Central Asia' filters through to a wider audience.

Notes

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2 S. Kolhatkar and J. Ingalls, *Bleeding Afghanistan: Washington, Warlords and the Propaganda of Silence*, New York: Seven Stories, 2006, pp. xvii, 69.

3 In relation to the 'Great Game' period see for example Henry Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East: A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia*, London: John Murray, 1875, p. 204 and p. 365; D.C.

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Boulger, *England and Russia in Central Asia*, London: W.H. Allen, 1879, vol. 2, pp. 338–9. See also John Lowe Duthie, 'Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson and the art of great gamesmanship', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 11, 1982–83, 253–74; A. Vámbéry, *The Coming Struggle for India*, London: Cassell: 1885, p. 100.

4 The phrase the 'New Great Game' or 'The Great Game' has been evoked since the 1990s in relation to contests for political and military influence in Central Asia since the collapse of the former Soviet Central Asian Republics in 1991. See, for example, H. Hendrischke, 'Chinese concerns with Central Asia', in D. Christian and C. Benjamin (eds), *Worlds of the Silk Roads: Ancient and Modern*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1998, p. 97; L. Klevemann, *The New Great game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia*, New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003.

5 *Dominion Post*, 29 August 2007, B1.

6 K. Nourzhanov, 'Caspian oil: geopolitical dreams and real issues', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 2006, vol. 60, no. 1, 60. See also R. Ebel and R. Menon (eds), *Energy and Conflict in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000, p. 2.

7 G. Watson, 'Beyond the great game: British images of Central Asia c.1830–1914', Unpublished PhD Thesis, Brisbane: Griffith University, 1998, pp. 3, 250–52.

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9 The term 'rhetorical figure' here is applied both in the linguistic sense, where a phrase is used in a different sense to the usual literal meanings of its words, and in the sense used in Edward Said's analysis of European ways of depicting other cultures, in which 'rhetorical figures', including notions such as 'bringing civilization to primitive or barbaric peoples' and "they" were not like "us" and for that reason deserved to be ruled', are employed. E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London: Vintage, 1994, pp. xi–xii.

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11 J. Simpson, *Afghanistan – The Dark Ages*, BBC Education and Training, 2001.

12 Conversation with Basil Poff, Massey University, 11 May 2006.

13 Ebel and Menon, *Energy and Conflict*, p. 1.

14 *Free Lance-Star*, May 2004, cited in Kolhatkar and Ingalls, *Bleeding Afghanistan*, p. xi.

15 *Manawatu Standard*, 22 August 2007, p. 2.

16 On the search for Prester John see L.N. Gumilev, *Searches for an Imaginary Kingdom: The Legend of Prester John*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. On Western Images of Central Asia see Geoff Watson, '1200–1800 Yillari Arasinda Bati'daki Orta Asya Imaji' in Kemal Cicek (ed.) *Turkler*, Ankara: Yeni Turkiye, 2002, vol. 8, pp. 334–44. An English language version 'Western images of Central Asia 1200–1800' was published in H.G. Guzel, C.C. Orguz and O. Karatay (eds) *The Turks: vol. 2, Middle Ages*, Ankara: Yeni Turkiye Publication House, 2002, vol. 8, pp. 795–804.

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19 C. Rice cited in *The Toronto Star*, 16 September 2006. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.thestar.com/article/96110> (accessed 29 October 2006).

20 F. Starr, 'A partnership for Central Asia', *Foreign Affairs* July/August 2005, p. 164.

21 Kolhatkar and Ingalls, *Bleeding Afghanistan*, p. xii.

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22 Krasner and Pascual, 'Addressing state failure', pp. 153–63.
23 *The Times*, 12 July 1869, p. 8. A later article, reflecting on the invasion of Khiva, suggested Russian progress in Central Asia followed the 'inevitable law of contact between civilized and uncivilized peoples', *The Times*, 17 November 1875, p. 9.
24 See for example, Boulger, *England and Russia in Central Asia*, vol. 1, p. 152.
25 Vámbéry, *The Coming Struggle for India*, p. 63.
26 C. Marvin, *The Russian Advance Towards India: Conversations with Skobeleff, Ignatieff, and other distinguished Russian generals and statesmen, on the Central Asian Question*, Nendeln: Kraus, 1882 [Reprint 1978], p. 130.
27 Marvin, *The Russian Advance Towards India*, p. 206.
28 Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East*, p. 269.
29 Starr, 'A partnership for Central Asia', p. 174.
30 It was also feared that fomenting discontent among the Afghan tribes might inspire a rebellion among Indian Muslims. Vámbéry, *The Coming Struggle for India*, pp. 153–61.
31 G. Watson, 'Representations of Central Asian ethnicities in British literature c.1830–1914', *Asian Ethnicity*, 2002, vol. 3, no. 2, 142–4.
32 Boulger, *England and Russia in Central Asia*, pp. 185–91; and Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East*, p. 159.
33 V.K. Chavda, *India, Britain and Russia: A Study in British Opinion (1838–74)*, Delhi: Sterling, 1967, p. 221.
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43 Kolhatkar and Ingalls, *Bleeding Afghanistan*, p. xiii.
44 Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, p. 28.
45 *Newsweek*, 'A nursery for Jihad', cited in *New Zealand Herald*, 30 September 2006, B 13–14.
46 B. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002, p. 123.
47 Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, p. 196.
48 Saikal, *Islam and the West*, pp. 95–110.
49 Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, p. 25.
50 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th edn, 1875–89, vol. 23, 637; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edn, vol. 26, p. 422.
51 A. Vámbéry, in J. Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 8, Edinburgh: Clark, 1915, p. 885.
52 'Strange to say, the Central Asians are themselves fully alive to the exceptional

position which they occupy in Islam; they are even proud of it, asserting that they are the most rigorous executors of the Ordinances of the Prophet, and the only Muslims whose religious belief has not been contaminated by foreign influence.' Vámbéry, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, p. 887.
53 Vámbéry, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, p. 885.
54 'Women', Vámbéry contended, 'are looked upon as mere chattels and slaves in the hand of a tyrannical master, in spite of the milder views of the Quran and its expounders. They not only cover their faces with a thick, impenetrable veil, but they are literally shrouded in a cloak of greater length and width than their body; and, in order not to attract the covetous glance of men, young girls even have to feign the appearance of decrepit matrons, and very often walk leaning on a stick, as if bowed down by age or infirmities.' Vámbéry, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, p. 885.
55 'This difference becomes still more important when we observe that the spirit of zealots has extended into N. India, and has particularly infected the barbarous mountaineers of Afghanistan. When we hear of the murderous attack by some Pathan or Khaibari on an unoffending British officer, we have always to think of those fanatics, who, anxious to become a *ghazi*, a warrior of the faith, is ready to sacrifice his life for the title of martyr, and for the prospect of a place in Paradise. The existence of such ghazis was formerly reported among the adherents of Shaikh Shamil in the fierce struggle between the Russians and the Lesghians in the N.W. Caucasus but nowhere else in Islam. It is therefore, to the wild influence of Islam of Central Asia that their appearance in the North of India must be ascribed.' Vámbéry, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, p. 885.
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58 Kolhatkar and Ingalls, *Bleeding Afghanistan*, pp. viii–ix.
59 Taliban leaders refused United States requests to extradite Osama Bin Laden on the basis that he was their guest and, under Islamic protocol, such a person could not be asked to leave.
60 Saikal, *Islam and the West*, p. 13.
61 Saikal, *Islam and the West*, p. 1.
62 Saikal, *Islam and the West*, pp. 14–15.
63 Starr, 'A partnership for Central Asia', p. 165.
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65 Akbarzadeh, 'Islam and regional stability in Central Asia', pp. 190–1.
66 S. Akbarzadeh, 'Uzbekistan and the United States: friends or foes?', *Xinjiang and Central Asia into the 21st Century*, Brisbane: Griffith Asia Institute, 2006, p. 119.
67 Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 8, 130–31.
68 D. Christian, 'State formation in the inner Eurasian steppes' in D. Christian and C. Benjamin (eds), *Silk Road Studies IV: Realms of the Silk Roads: Ancient and Modern*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2000, p. 51.
69 Christian, 'State formation in the inner Eurasian steppes', pp. 53–4; and Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, p. 8.
70 Christian, 'State formation in the inner Eurasian steppes', p. 58; see also Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, p. 5.
71 S.A. Mousavi, *The Hazaras of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study*, New York: St Martins, 1997, p. 2.
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73 M. Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab 1707–48*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 12, 103.

74 Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, p. 21.

75 Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, p. 22.

76 Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov, for example, is presented as a reincarnation of Timur. Akbarzadeh, 'Uzbekistan and the United States: friends or foes?' p. 112. See also, K. Nourzhanov, 'The politics of history in Tajikistan: reinventing the Samanids', *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, 2001, Winter, pp. 21–6.

77 J. Fletcher, 'Bloody tanistry: Authority and succession in the Ottoman, Indian Muslim, and Later Chinese Empires', a paper for the Conference on the Theory of Democracy and Popular Participation, Bellagio, Italy, 1978.

78 Christian, 'State formation in the inner Eurasian steppes', p. 64.

79 Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, p. 1.

80 Vámbéry, *The Coming Struggle for India*, p. 128. See also Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, p. 30.

81 *The Times*, 1 May 1871, p. 10.

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83 Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, pp. 7–8.

84 Saikal, *A History of Modern Afghanistan*, p. 36.

85 Mousavi, *The Hazaras of Afghanistan*, p. 95.

86 Saikal, *A History of Modern Afghanistan*, p. 184.

87 Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, pp. 111–21.

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5

Xinjiang and Central Asia Interdependency – not integration

Ann McMillan
Independent Researcher

The theme of the workshop at the Griffith Asia Institute in June 2006 was political and economic integration in the Xinjiang–Central Asian region. The term integration and the connotations that spring to mind with usage of this term do not realistically describe the relationships that exist in this region. In fact, it is my contention that there is an enormous dearth of integration between neighbouring states in this region. This lack of integration between these states is in many ways to the disadvantage of the individual states in that it is hindering progress on numerous fronts such as border procedures, trade, water and electricity, to name but a few, that could go some way towards alleviating the many societal woes that exist in this area.

However, whereas there is a dearth of *integration*, another relationship does exist and that is *interdependency*, and it is this relationship of interdependency that is driving certain agendas in this region. This economic and strategic interdependency that has built up since the 1991 break-up of the Soviet Union between China, specifically the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and several of the former Soviet Union (FSU) states, will be examined in this paper. The initial emphasis will focus on how this relationship of interdependency impacts on the reasoning behind many of the decisions that are made by various governments within the region, and the implications of such decisions. The lack of integration among these states is a drawback to an individual state when it is dealing with a more powerful neighbour and it is this lack of willingness to operate as a group that does to a certain extent benefit one of the major players in the area – China.

Nevertheless, even major players in the region such as China or Russia do not entirely have it their own way. When it 'comes to the crunch', several leaders in the region put their own personal survival and the survival of their regime and power base ahead of any other considerations and it is this attitude and, in some cases, distrust of each other, that thwart what could be a mutually beneficial relationship between all Central Asian states.

The United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) in its 2005 report on human development in the Central Asian region describes the small amount

of integration that does exist in the region as *superficial*, which is an entirely appropriate way of describing the current situation.1 Given this description of the state of affairs within the region, and following on from my initial emphasis, this chapter will go a step further and present a brief overview of how, if interdependency progressed into full integration for all countries within the Xinjiang–Central Asian region, the effects of this integration would bring some degree of benefit to all parties. Not only would the more powerful players in the field such as China and Russia benefit, but the smaller and less powerful states would also enjoy the rewards of such a relationship which would, hopefully, given good governance, flow through to the populace of these countries.

Xinjiang–Central Asia

Before proceeding further, I will briefly explain the reasoning behind my grouping of the Xinjiang Uyghur 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 completely separate, as part of the People's Republic of China. Although the historical aspect is extremely important, my reasoning for the inclusion of Xinjiang and the neighbouring FSU states in this unit is that the interdependency issues at play in this region in the first decade of the twenty-first century are clearly becoming dominant. A relationship of interdependency covering such diverse issues as trade, security and geophysical matters, among others, has been established and impacts on several of the neighbouring Central Asian 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 together, 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. Given this, throughout this chapter I will refer to this relationship as either Xinjiang–Central Asia or simply Central Asia.

To further clarify the point I am making regarding the relationships in Xinjiang–Central Asia, I am not using this term *interdependency* to convey a relationship of total equality between regional states. I do acknowledge that 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 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
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.2

This economic interdependency relationship that has formed in the Xinjiang– Central Asian region is not only contributing to economic development in the western regions of China, in particular the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous region, but also in several neighbouring FSU states. As this interdependency relationship has coalesced and tightened its grip, the 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, primarily emanating from the Uyghur ethnic group, both within Xinjiang and in neighbouring countries. Neighbouring countries, several of which have a substantial number of Uyghur diaspora residing in their countries, have previously taken an attitude of leniency towards them; but this leniency has evaporated 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, is a direct result of the burgeoning economic relationships that have arisen and are continuing to take place within the region.

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.'3 Xing believes that mutually beneficial economic cooperation 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 that, '*to a large extent the stability and prosperity of Northwest China is closely bound up with the stability and prosperity of Central Asia*.'4

Xing's argument is pertinent. China recognized at a very early stage of its economic reform that in order to progress not only the economics of the north-west, but also of the rest of China, it needed to expand economically into the Central Asian region. China also recognized that from the viewpoint of security, it 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 a further incentive for Chinese presence in Central Asia. By developing the western regions, and more specifically Xinjiang, to tie it closer to the centre (as many analysts stated), 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 recognizes 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:

Chinese scholars explicitly articulate the connection between Xinjiang and Central Asia, arguing that China's policy to expand economic cooperation 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.5

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.

China, in its relationship with neighbouring states, has been the 'soul of diplomacy' in most instances. Border disputes that were left over from what is now two centuries ago have been amicably (to some) agreed upon. However, not all have been happy with decisions taken by the various government leaders, which has led to ongoing tensions both within and without states, and one of the issues that have provoked dissent within the states involved in the interdependency relationship is border demarcation. In the introduction to this chapter I referred to China as being the beneficiary of a lack of integration and coordination between states in Central Asia. The border demarcation and water diversion of transboundary river systems is one such instance, and a very important instance, where the former FSU states may have produced a better outcome, especially where the diversion of the Ili and Irtysh river systems by China is concerned, if matters had been negotiated as a unified group, including the involvement of the other affected party in that particular instance of water diversion, Russia, rather than as individual states.6 However, it is the specific issue of the border agreement between

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China and Kyrgyzstan that will be addressed in this instance because of its ongoing relevance.
Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan have all been involved in high-stakes negotiations to define their respective borders. Strong-arm politics, economic pressures, shadowy backroom deals, nationalist sentiments, public dissatisfaction and an environment of mutual mistrust have marked this process.7
Although border demarcation issues in the region have been resolved to some extent, and certainly China has put a lot of effort into attempting to solve its long-standing border disputes, all may not be quite as cut-and-dried as initially thought.
The demarcation of the China–Kyrgyzstan border is one such instance in which, because of the way it was negotiated, the result has been dissatisfaction within Kyrgyzstan. In early 2003, a power struggle took place between the executive and legislative branches of government in Kyrgyzstan and the parliament deputy Azimbek Beknazarov was arrested on abuse of power charges. This charge, according to some sources, seemed to disguise the real problem, which was that Beknazarov had been a vocal critic of the Kyrgyz government's decision to cede large portions of the Kyrgyz territory to China, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. His committee rejected two Chinese–Kyrgyz agreements signed in 1996 and 1999 respectively that called on Kyrgyzstan to transfer about 125,000 hectares of territory to China in order to settle a territorial dispute.8 The territory in question borders the south of Xinjiang, and is in the south of Kyrgyzstan in the Uzengi–Kuush Valley that is situated between the provinces of Issyk-Kul and Naryn.
Although this land deal between the former President Akayev of Kyrgyzstan and the Chinese government did not pass through the Kyrgyz parliament in what would normally be termed the correct procedure, the local people affected by this loss of land to China were not concerned because the land was of poor quality (or so I was informed). It may well be that the land is of poor quality, not easily accessible from the Kyrgyz side and seemingly sparsely populated, if at all, but it has what China is seeking from wherever they can access it, and that is water. This territory has large volumes of fresh water in mountain glaciers.9
It did appear at the time that the border demarcation issue was being used by political opponents of the former Kyrgyz president to generate unrest, since protests did not start in the disputed area, but were instigated in a remote province of the Jalal-Abad region of Kyrgyzstan in Aksy by the local member of that region, Azimbek Beknazarov, who is a very vocal critic of the territorial concessions. Concessions made in border negotiations can be rich fodder for political oppositions (in those Central Asian states where opposition groups are allowed to operate), and this has served to further constrain the latitude of governments to compromise.10 The main problem with the Chinese/Kyrgyz demarcation agreement is that a so-called 'backroom deal'

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took place without the authority of the parliament or the wishes of the people being taken into account.

Akayev's administration and legislators had long been at loggerheads over the delimitation of the country's border with China. The confrontation began brewing in May 2001, when legislators discovered the administration's intention to transfer territory to China.11 MPs contended that, while the 1996 agreement was ratified by the previous parliament, officials kept the 1999 amendment secret. Opposition deputies also maintained that under Kyrgyz law, ratification of such border agreements required a two-thirds majority of votes.12

According to the then opposition leaders, the 10 May 2002 session of the Legislative Assembly – during which the lower house ratified the land transfers – lacked the necessary two-thirds majority. They also say the government violated other procedural requirements by not making available to MPs specific information concerning the transfer, including topographical maps.13 Government officials told local media that Kyrgyzstan could not risk incurring China's wrath by reneging on the deal. During the 10 May parliamentary session, for example, the then pro-governmental deputy Turdakun Usubaliev portrayed China as a 'sleeping dragon'. Akayev, who attended this session, hinted that China would exert military pressure on Kyrgyzstan in the event that parliament did not ratify the treaties.14 Thus border demarcation is seen as another instance in which China has achieved an outcome that on the surface appears to be all to China's benefit rather than an equitable solution for all concerned. There is real unease in Central Asia from many sectors that China is overriding any objections, whether it be in matters such as water diversion or border demarcation, and that the Central Asian neighbouring states are unable to achieve equality in these matters.

In March 2005 Kyrgyzstan experienced the ousting of its president of 14 years, Askar Akayev, in the 'Tulip Revolution'. Flawed elections, corruption and general discontent with his leadership among other matters – including, once again, dissatisfaction with the outcome of the delineation of the Kyrgyz–Chinese border – led to Akayev's downfall. However, whereas the border issue will continue to surface on a regular basis, especially when it suits a political purpose, it is unlikely to cause a major rift between Kyrgyzstan and China simply because Kyrgyzstan's needs from China now and in the foreseeable future far outweigh anything China could possibly require from Kyrgyzstan. Apart from that, the country's current president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, seems certain to continue Akayev's balancing act of being amenable to both Russia's offer of friendship and prospects of improved cooperation with China.15

Trade with China is increasingly significant to all the states in the region, but its economic presence is largest in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Kyrgyzstan hopes to be a gateway to China because both are members of the World Trade Organization. Yet the Kazakhs and the Kyrgyz understand there is no way that the future of their countries can be fully separated from that of

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China. And there is little indication that they have become more nervous about China in the past few years.16

In fact, the opposite seems to be true. Both countries appear a bit more comfortable in their ability to manage the relationship with Beijing, which they see as sometimes requiring concessions on their part, as was the case with delineation of their borders. The long-term relationship with China could prove more problematic than the one with Russia: China's potential power seems almost limitless, and the needs of its growing population could overwhelm those of the Central Asians. For the short term, however, China's posture toward the Central Asian states appears generally supportive of the goals of these state's leaders,17 especially given the importance China places on stability in the Xinjiang–Central Asian region.

How significant is Xinjiang?

The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is extremely significant to China. Not only is it 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 much-needed energy resources in order to fuel China's economic development. At the same time, it 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. The inlet through Xinjiang provides an added source for energy supplies, and as an outlet, it not only functions as a trade route, but it also offers additional security to China if, for any reason whatsoever, such areas as the Taiwan Strait become unusable.

Furthermore, as the director of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Organization Department in Xinjiang has stated:

The stability and development of Xinjiang bear on the stability and development of the whole country. We must recognize 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.18

In 1991, the disintegration of the Soviet Union produced five new countries in Central Asia – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – with a total population of 57 million people. New borders carved up the region like a jigsaw puzzle. They interrupted trade and other human links and weakened critical but vulnerable region-wide water and energy systems. The severing of supply connections for industry and agriculture, the flight of many skilled Russians, the drying up of subsidies from Moscow, and the disappearance of the central administrative apparatus of the Soviet Union led to a dramatic economic collapse. This brought about a significant

increase in poverty, severely weakening the region's human development and human security.19 Nevertheless, the break-up of the Soviet Union also led to the opening of Central Asia's previously closed borders with China, Iran and, eventually, Afghanistan. This opening up of borders holds the potential for reviving the historic trade routes through Central Asia, for sending the region's rich energy resources to world markets, and for establishing dynamic trade and communication links between the region and the rest of the world. But if the potential is to be captured it requires the Central Asian countries to work together cooperatively towards a common future.20

Xinjiang borders four former Soviet republics: Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and a small sliver of Russia, as well as four other countries: Mongolia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. On the east and south-east lie China's Gansu and Qinghai provinces and the Tibet Autonomous Region.21 Xinjiang's geopolitical location is its most salient feature. During the Cold War, it shared a long border with the Muslim underbelly of the Soviet Union; now it has eight neighbours, several of which provide a buffer zone between it and Russia. It is the site of China's nuclear tests and accommodates a heavy military presence.22 The combination of geography and security have a major influence on government policies in this region, and in recent years this has been emphasized in the 'Go West Strategy', a government policy which is directed towards more government funding for this region, but also calls for private investment from a variety of sources.

The difference now is that the burgeoning interdependency relationship in the Xinjiang–Central Asian area in the first decade of the twenty-first century is possibly tilted more heavily towards the economic sector than the security sector. This is not because the security aspect has been downgraded; it is simply because the economic development, for China especially, and Xinjiang more specifically, is essential in maintaining the overall growth of the Chinese economy, and therefore the modernization of the Chinese state. The Chinese government is placing a considerable amount of emphasis on economic growth providing stability. China has previously exercised control over the trade routes in this region, and this is still highly relevant to the situation today, where China appears to be very much in control of this interdependency relationship, and two of the vehicles of control are economics and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a vehicle that is starting to show its teeth. Although many commentators in the past, and even today, have written off this organization as being of no significance, this is an erroneous viewpoint. The SCO has slowly but steadily progressed to the point where it has the opportunity to turn into a substantial and influential organization given the extension of the present six member states – China, Russia,

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Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – to extend observer status, leading to possible membership in the future, to Afghanistan, India, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan.

The SCO has stated that regional economic cooperation is one of its main tasks. The SCO covers territory totalling 30.17 million square kilometres, the population totals 1.5 billion, and the total gross domestic product surpasses US$1.5 billion. While China has advantages in textiles, household electrical appliances and telecommunications, the other members of the SCO have advantages in metallurgy, chemical industry, mechanics, energy sources, space and aviation industry, animal husbandry and various other raw materials. At this stage, China does have an advantage in trade matters as the other member states are all transitional economies from centrally planned to market-oriented, and are also different from each other in their economic strengths and trade regimes.23

Matthew Oresman stated that many believed that the US deployment to bases in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan would undermine the need for the SCO, but China and Russia had both invested serious political capital in this project and were therefore unwilling to let it fade away; they both see the SCO as an essential component of their plans for the region.24 The establishment of the secretariat in Beijing and the anti-terrorism centre in Tashkent indicates the importance China and Russia have placed on this organization.

China and Russia continue to solidify their commitment to Central Asia, with China holding its first ever combined military exercise with Kyrgyz border forces in October 2002, and Russia committing new assets to the Kant air base in Bishkek which is the spearhead for the SCO's rapid reaction forces.25 Following a meeting between the Kyrgyz Defence Minister Esen Topoyev and representatives from the General Staff of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, which took place in August 2003 in Kyrgyzstan, China agreed to provide military and technical aid to the Kyrgyz army 'in the form of logistical equipment' and further agreed that the Kyrgyz military would continue their training in Chinese higher military educational establishments in the next few years, and that Beijing would continue to allocate resources from the country's budget for this purpose.26 China's accession to the 2001 SCO treaty stipulates its membership of a collective security organization, thereby legalizing for the first time the projection of Chinese troops beyond China's borders if one of the other signatories requests its support.27

In 2003, both China and Russia increased efforts to dissuade the Uzbeks from further expanding US ties. This may be one of the reasons why the long-planned opening of the Regional Anti-terrorist Centre in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, was scrapped. On 4 September 2003, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Aleksander Yakovenko confirmed plans that the centre would be relocated to Tashkent, Uzbekistan's capital.28 This was following a visit to Uzbekistan by Russian President Vladimir Putin, where he held talks with Uzbek President Islam Karimov. This visit was seen as being significant

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because the meeting was Putin's first visit to Uzbekistan since Karimov contracted a strategic partnership with Washington in 2001.29 SCO members had originally planned to establish the anti-terrorism centre in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek. Karimov's successful effort to get it moved to Tashkent is one of the signs that his regime – having spurned most regional security initiatives, and generally shunned Russia, especially after throwing in its lot with the US in the wake of 11 September 2001 – re-examined the wisdom of putting too many eggs in one basket.30 Karimov at this time did a complete turnaround in his attitude towards Russia. Previously he had made countless speeches demeaning Russia, but in his speech during the 2003 visit of the Russian president, he virtually made a public recantation in Putin's presence. An emphasis in his speech was that an old friend is always better than a new one.31

Of course, in recent times in Uzbekistan, the Andijan incident has taken place, leading to the subsequent termination of the US air base lease. Because of the ongoing repercussions of the Andijan incident and its importance in prevailing political considerations in the area and its possible impact on neighbouring states, an overview of the incident is necessary.

On 10 May 2005, media sources reported that approximately 4,000 people had gathered outside the courthouse in the eastern city of Andijan to protest in support of 23 residents who were on trial for being members of a religious extremist group, Akrimiya.32 On 13 May, the events in Andijan become worldwide news.33 During the night of 12 May a group of up to a hundred men reportedly attacked a police building and military barracks in the city, seizing guns in the process. They then entered the city prison and freed the 23 defendants, together with hundreds more prisoners. The attackers then took over the Hokemiyat (government building). The following morning crowds estimated to be up to 10,000 congregated in the central square, expressing support for the 23 defendants and airing grievances.34 According to a Human Rights Watch report, eyewitnesses said that, later that evening, the crowd was fired upon by military units and army snipers using heavy-calibre machine guns. Unverified accounts claim that up to a thousand people died in the killings. The Uzbek government has denied that troops fired on protestors, insisting that only terrorists were targeted and that civilians were killed by the terrorists.35

Following the incident, a group of US senators visited Uzbekistan and called for an independent investigation to be carried out by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), of which Uzbekistan is a member. Further demands also came from NATO and the EU. Uzbek authorities set up their own investigation.36 The investigation by the Uzbek Prosecutor-General Office concluded that the Andijan events were planned and implemented by foreign destructive forces. In August 2004 these destructive forces, with the involvement of international terrorist and religious extremist organizations such as the Islamic Movement of Turkestan, Hizb-ut Tahrir and one of its branches, the Akrimiya, planned to carry out acts of

terror in May 2005 with the aim of seizing power and overthrowing the constitutional order.37

Here we have a very brief outline of the incident giving two very different points of view as to what happened in Andijan from the Uzbek government perspective and the outside perspective, which in the main consists of various US and European bodies. I would like to add another viewpoint to this discussion, which is the viewpoint of Shirin Akiner, published in a Silk Road Paper as an independent assessment.38

Akiner was in Uzbekistan shortly after the occurrence of the Andijan incident and took the opportunity to go to Andijan in order to ascertain what may or may not have occurred there on 13 May 2005. She was in Uzbekistan in order to deal with organizational matters arising from the cancellation of a conference which had been due to take place later that month but had been aborted in reaction to reports of violence in Andijan.

The main points that Akiner makes are:

- It was a carefully prepared attack, not a spontaneous demonstration;
- This was not a demonstration by peaceful civilians, but by armed men with some degree of military training;
- The action was planned for a Friday to possibly give it a religious overtone;
- Some of the insurgents were local, but many were from other places in Uzbekistan and neighbouring countries;
- Considerable amounts of foreign currency (US$) were allegedly found on some of the insurgents.39

To attempt to further clarify certain questions that have arisen as a result of actions either taken or not taken by the Uzbek government, I will bring in comment from S. Frederick Starr in his introduction to Akiner's Silk Road Paper.

Starr asks the obvious question as to why the differences between the different accounts of the incident have not been settled by a high-level international fact-finding commission, drawn from public citizens and experts with a proven record as dispassionate observers, when such a proposal was made by both the European Union and United States but summarily rejected by the Uzbek government.40

As Starr quite rightly points out, Tashkent's rebuff of this proposal seems the height of irrationality, and self-defeating besides. Nonetheless, given what had happened previously, the decision taken by the Uzbek government has a certain logic. A year previous to the Andijan incident an Uzbek citizen, 35-year-old Andrei Shelkovenko, who had been imprisoned for Islamic extremism, died while in police custody. Human Rights Watch and other organizations immediately disseminated reports asserting categorically that he had died under torture. Most western papers carried these reports.41

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Meanwhile, however, another international group on the ground in Tashkent, Freedom House, proposed that the government of Uzbekistan establish a non-partisan commission of international experts to look into the charges. This proposal the Uzbeks duly accepted. A commission was formed; among its members were the Chief Forensic Pathologist of the government of Ontario and three-times US Ambassador Victor Jackovich. The commissioners were given full access to evidence, including to Shelkovenko's body, which had to be recovered from Human Rights Watch, which had illegally hidden it in order to 'protect the evidence'.42

The commission found absolutely no evidence to support the claim that Shelkovenko had died under torture and much evidence that he had long suffered from a life-threatening medical condition. Yet not one major western paper that had carried the earlier story published an update or revision. For its part, Human Rights Watch attacked the commission as a gang of Uzbek toadies. Starr believes that this previous matter, for better or worse, is the likely reason for which Tashkent now rejects calls from Brussels and Washington for an international commission.43 The writer of this chapter also concurs with Starr's conclusion and finds it fully understandable from the viewpoint of the Uzbek government that they would have extreme reluctance in allowing a commission to be set up given the experience of the Shelkovenko investigation.

Before ending this brief discussion of the Andijan incident I would like to refer back to a point Akiner brought up: the issue of large amounts of American dollars being found on some of the insurgents. For several years there have been rumours of outside bodies, namely NGOs or those associated with NGOs, funding groups of mainly young men in the Central Asian region for whatever purpose they, the NGOs, think fit. Following 'colour revolutions' in Central Asia and Eastern Europe in recent times, governments in Central Asia have taken action against many NGOs – closing down or restricting their operations. Governments in the region, rightly or wrongly, are of the opinion that many of the NGOs and associated entities are the source of much of the unrest in the region.

To conclude this part of the discussion, the question arises as to whether or not such perceived interference by NGOs, be it true or not, has an impact on all the states within the region. Since a primary focus of this chapter is on the interdependency between China and Central Asian states, it would be expected that what has been occurring in Central Asia and elsewhere in relation to NGOs would be closely watched by the Chinese government. Certainly, in China, the government has heightened scrutiny of NGOs following the 'colour revolutions' and this has impacted on local NGOs within China as can be seen by their reluctance to comment on the November 2005 toxic spill into the Songhua River. The editorial in the *China Development Brief* summarizes the situation very succinctly in stating that

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the atmosphere in China is not helped by a statement put out by the US State Department in which it declares its intention of 'promoting democracy' in Iran by funding NGOs. Whatever vision of democracy the State Department has – and it appears to be a simplistic vision, uncomplicated by much historical understanding – it is a marvel that they cannot see the harm their antics cause to the organic development of civil societies across Russia, China and Central Asia.44

Martha Olcott also comments on this type of perception when she makes the comment that 'they' (meaning the Central Asian states) fell further at odds with Washington during the second administration of George W. Bush, when the rhetorical thrust of US foreign policy became focused on supporting 'democratic revolutions' and 'freeing the world's citizens from tyranny' – policies that could be construed as targeting countries in the region, and potentially even Russia and China.45

The democratization ideals embodied in the Bush administration's foreign policy have arguably undermined American national security by alienating many governments in Central Asia and elsewhere in the Islamic world that might otherwise be receptive to strengthening ties with the United States. Central Asia, for one, is a more unstable place at present than before Washington championed its regime-change agenda, and leaders in the region now view the American government not as a force for stabilization, but as a dangerous agent of chaotic change.46 This is one of the reasons why integration between countries within the Central Asian region has not progressed. Many of the leaders are too focused on protecting their 'patch' of territory and power base.

However, the realization must be there among the majority of these states that this is the only way forward if they wish to raise the standard of living in their countries and stabilize the region. As set out in the introductory section of this chapter, interdependency certainly does exist and in this discussion the interdependency between Xinjiang and neighbouring Central Asian countries has been established; who benefits from this state of affairs has been assessed, and the lack of integration has been commented on. Because integration needs to happen for the benefit of all of the states in the Central Asian region, an overview of the prospects for this to happen will next be considered.

Integration – what prospect?

To attempt to get an understanding as to why there is very little in the way of integration in Central Asia, a reasonable starting point would be to take a view from the top down; in other words, to look at the role of the presidency.

Strong presidencies emerged from the institution of the Communist Party's First Secretary in each republic at the end of the Soviet era. Presidential elections took place in all the new states shortly after independence, but their competitiveness was severely circumscribed. Subsequent presidential

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referenda, constitutional changes and presidential elections were designed to increase and consolidate the power of the chief executive. Even those regimes that had initially liberalized the political and/or economic spheres in the early post-Soviet years increasingly followed the more autocratic political model of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. According to constitutional scholars, by 1996, all the Central Asian regimes had become 'super-presidential' systems, in which the president and his administration (the 'apparat') control political decision-making while the parliament and courts are only nominally independent.47 Thus we have seen situations occurring where in matters such as border demarcation, especially in reference to the Kyrgyzstan/China border, lack of transparency and consultation with the appropriate authorities has been deficient.

A direct holdover from the Soviet system and political culture is the centralized level of control with which the Central Asian presidents seek to manage domestic political and economic systems and relations with their neighbours. Although the ideological belief in communism has all but disappeared, the belief in the need for state-directed and state-managed economic activity has persisted. The presidents characteristically have a high level of distrust of their counterparts in the region, despite a significant number of shared interests. They have worries that their neighbours' actions – whether in the area of political liberalization or economic reform or security measures – will impede the security, sovereignty and legitimacy of their own state and regime.48

The Central Asian presidents' general perspectives on key foreign policy issues have varied substantially, while shaping the framework within which they view issues of regional cooperation and integration. As has been referred to previously, the Uzbek leadership had since the early 1990s been opposed to a Russian presence on Uzbek territory before an about-face, and most recently Uzbekistan has turned even more towards Russia in an apparent reversal of external political direction. At the same time, it has favoured bilateral regional relations over multilateral approaches, and generally has not played a lead role in any of the regional institutions, including the SCO, while hosting the SCO's regional anti-terrorism centre in its capital city of Tashkent.49

The UNDP-HDR-CA report which is cited throughout this chapter, when discussing integration within the Central Asian region, as previously pointed out, uses the term 'superficial'. It attempts to quantify, within the report, the impact in terms of economic losses and gains, and the number of people involved, in these states' not cooperating and integrating. When regional cooperation problems are discussed, benefits for the country are considered to be benefits for everybody in the country. As the report points out, it is difficult to understand why governments and other stakeholders fail to cooperate. However, one must not ignore the multiplicity of interests within countries, which imply that benefits for a country are a net result of gains for some and losses for others. The resulting position of the country's

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leadership may not coincide with the interests of those who benefit from cooperation.50

It is necessary to distinguish cooperation's winners and losers. The position then adopted by a country's leadership depends on who – the winners or the losers – is currently in power. This explains also why some pro-cooperation agreements are poorly implemented. Those who conclude the agreements (national government officials) could be interested in cooperation, while those implementing them (local officials) may stand to lose out and therefore sabotage the agreements, deliberately or unwittingly.51 Who are the winners and losers from cooperation? As cooperation brings increased efficiency, transparency and long-term gains, winners would be those who are competitive, who are poor (because cooperation lowers prices and creates jobs), and who have a long-term perspective.52 Losers would be rent-seekers of all kinds – corrupt government officials, businesspeople preserving their monopoly and/or economizing on environmental protection, and unskilled workers fearing competition from migrants.53

What way forward for integration?

To quote the UNDP:

The main external role in the regional integration process of Central Asia can be played by Russia, China and the major international technical assistance agencies operating under the aegis and in close cooperation with the UN. At the same time, Afghanistan and Iran are the most appropriate and strategic transport bridges to the global economy.54

For geographic, linguistic and historical reasons, the position taken by the UNDP is entirely practical and logical while also possibly being, at the present time and in the foreseeable future, especially as far as transport bridges are concerned, rather optimistic.

The most important economic partner for the Central Asian republics is Russia. It has fewer language and cultural barriers than others, and offers a vast market, a haven for job seekers, a centre for higher education and a source of investment capital. An active partner bilaterally, Russia is engaged in most of Central Asia's regional organizations.55

The second most important regional economic partner is China. With China engaged in an intensive search for new sources of energy to fuel its rapid economic growth, its capital investment in Central Asia's energy sector has grown rapidly. In addition, China's interest in having stable neighbours has kindled its engagement in Central Asia's economic and political future. Both China and Russia are key security partners for the region, mainly through the SCO, which addresses the region-wide problems of terrorism and illegal trafficking in drugs and weapons.56 As mentioned previously, the SCO

also gives China the mechanism to counter separatist movements both within its borders and in neighbouring states.

The growing sense of mutual security interests and the utility of the SCO in addressing those interests have opened up a basis for greater trust and cooperation in other areas. There is an opportunity now to build on the shared perception of a need to address common security concerns and on the recognition that economic cooperation is an important ingredient in fostering better regional development, security and stability.

However, hindrances to further economic reform and regional cooperation and integration have emerged from the presidential institutions, from powerful business interests linked to governments, and from the middle and lower levels of the public administrations and security services.57

These obstacles are closely related to problems of political and economic governance. The formal governmental institutions and the widespread informal networks and interest groups have developed a symbiotic relationship that benefits from the status quo, at least in the short term. In one country, Kyrgyzstan, the political economy has already led to the completion of a vicious cycle in which these powerful interest groups have exploited their privileged positions, avoided accountability, and repressed competition and opposition, to the point where the opposition reacted in a radical manner and overthrew the regime. Unstable social and economic conditions threaten to bring political instability and regime breakdown unless the underlying problems are addressed. The collapse of the Kyrgyz regime and recent violence in Uzbekistan to differing degrees and in different ways demonstrate this process.58

Before summarizing this chapter, the possible scenarios for what may occur in the Central Asian region as put forward by the UNDP-HDR-CA report are worth noting. The report distinguishes five scenarios according to three major characteristics of cooperation and integration: openness of borders, quality of regional institutions, and scope – breadth and intensity – of cooperation. The five scenarios include a *pessimistic* scenario, where the region takes a step back in all three dimensions with very little if any cooperation; a *status quo* scenario, which perpetuates the current relatively low-key approaches; a *cluster* scenario, where some countries in the region cooperate and integrate, but others more or less isolate themselves from their neighbours; a scenario of *proactive cooperation*, with many more open borders, stronger regional institutions, and a broad-gauged scope of cooperation that is also intensive in some areas; and a *deep integration* scenario, where borders are fully open for trade, capital and labour, there are strong regional institutions, and the scope of cooperation is broad and deep across the board (approaching that of the European Union, for example).59

The UNDP-HDR-CA report does not regard the pessimistic scenario as likely for Central Asia in the foreseeable future. While some countries, in particular Turkmenistan, can afford to follow this approach for some time to come, due to their energy resources and their access to markets outside

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Central Asia, the costs of this isolationist scenario for the region would be severe in terms of economic stagnation, poverty and political instability and conflict. All indications are that the Central Asian countries, with the possible exception of Turkmenistan, do not see isolationism as a desirable scenario. The status quo option is more likely, but it too has high costs from risks and forgone benefits, which appear to be appreciated at least by some of the countries in the region. This leads to two possible alternative scenarios in the foreseeable future: the cluster and proactive cooperation scenarios. Under the former, some of the countries would cooperate and integrate more with each other and the rest of the world. This would most likely involve Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, if we extrapolate from the current trends in virtually all important areas – trade, transport and transit, water and energy, border management and social sectors. In contrast, Uzbekistan and especially Turkmenistan remain for now on a more isolationist path.60

A special area for cooperation is national and regional security – impetus on this issue has been gathering recently in Central Asia and this is where an organization such as the SCO can lead the way. However, there is a risk with the current joint concerns about regional and national security in Central Asia. In the wake of the 'colour revolutions' in Georgia and Ukraine, and the forceful removal of the Kyrgyz government by protestors in March 2005, followed by the violent events in Uzbekistan in May 2005, Central Asian governments have perceived their countries' stability and their own survival threatened by the growth of civil society, by opposition movements, and by radical and terrorist forces from inside and outside their borders. This has led governments, mutually supportive of each other and backed by China and Russia, to clamp down on these perceived and real political threats. While this may help maintain short-term stability, it will not help to build the kind of transparent, accountable and honest government structures that are essential in the longer term for a stable, peaceful, integrated and cooperative region that will bring some degree of benefits to all the states in the Xinjiang–Central Asian region.61

Conclusion

China's influence adds a very important new geostrategic dimension to Central Asian relations. China is not yet dominant in any single Central Asian country, nor is it yet comparable in stature to the Russians by tradition and history, or to the US presence. Nonetheless, China's steady expansion of regional involvement with the SCO is a geopolitical watershed. China, in effect, is returning to the region as a major player.62

China has not allowed the US move into the Central Asian region to disrupt its agenda. It knows that internal stability within China is essential, and China's development of the western regions, especially Xinjiang, and its progression into Central Asia has progressed at a very rapid pace. Notwithstanding the rapidity of China's progression in the Xinjiang–Central

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Asian region, and its seeming dominance in diverse areas in this region, there has been a relatively soft approach from China. They are not taking an aggressive stance. In fact, in many regards, they have been very conciliatory, or have given the appearance of being so. This has been evident when negotiations on such issues as border demarcation or access to energy have taken place, while keeping in mind that, in most instances, the Chinese have obtained their objective. Their primary purpose at the present time is to attain and preserve internal stability, and for a vast country such as China, with its large and diverse population, this is not an easy goal.

China has economic might. This economic might is being used in a way that benefits its Central Asian neighbours. Chinese money and expertise is flowing into the economies of its neighbours in the Xinjiang–Central Asian region. For Central Asia, Chinese investments bring needed capital and technical knowledge, and Chinese development assistance offers trade credits and investment capital.63

China has achieved what it set out to accomplish. It has extended its influence into Central Asia. New trade routes have been opened, additional sources of energy have been obtained, and last, but not least, China has gone a long way towards suppressing, and obtaining the cooperation of other countries to suppress, separatist movements both within and outside of Xinjiang. This relationship of economic and strategic interdependency in Xinjiang–Central Asia is such that governments involved in this relationship are making decisions based on this relationship. To a certain extent, this is in China's favour at the present time, although, as pointed out in the introduction, it is not completely one-way as the neighbouring states have what China needs to expand, and that is energy resources. Superficial integration is not the way forward; neither is the present state of interdependency. While interdependency has certainly brought benefits to all of the states engaged in this relationship, it has also produced decisions by individual governments that may rebound on both participating parties in the future. Integration, in its fullest sense, could and should produce a more balanced and beneficial climate of cooperation. However, for this to happen regional organizations need to lead the way and this is where a 'home-grown' organization such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, for one, could play a pivotal role.

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6

Uyghurs in the Central Asian Republics Past and present

Ablet Kamalov
Central Asian Resource Center, Kazakhstan

Uyghurs have communities in almost all of the newly independent Central Asian Republics varying from the largest one in Kazakhstan to the smallest group in Tajikistan. With the exception of Uyghurs living in the Ili Valley borderlands, which were annexed by the Russian Empire in the nineteenth century, who finally found themselves in present-day Kazakhstan, most of the Uyghur communities in Central Asia were formed as a result of Xinjiang's (East Turkestan) geographic proximity and migrations caused by internal events in the Uyghur homeland as well as international relations. Two main regions densely populated by the Uyghurs in Central Asia until recent times were the Semirechye Valley in present Kazakhstan, and the Ferghana Valley (Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan). These two main Uyghur groups in Central Asia were made up respectively by the northern Uyghurs (Taranchi) from the Kulja region and those who migrated from Kashgaria, the southern realm of East Turkestan. These two communities differed not only in the regional representation of the Uyghur population in their homeland, but also in the history of their establishment.

For the Semirechye Uyghurs the starting point of their population's growth was the Russian occupation of the Ili Taranchi (Uyghur) Sultanate in 1871 and the resettling of the Sultan family from Kulja, a capital of the Sultanate, to the Russian citadel of Verny (the present city of Almaty, Kazakhstan). However, the first major regional population movement across the Qing–Russian border occurred in 1881–4 when large numbers crossed over to avoid the Qing imperial armies reoccupying the Qing portion of the Ili Valley. Part of the provision of the Treaty of St Petersburg concluded between the two empires included the Qing ceding a portion of the western Ili Valley to Russia for the resettlement of Chinese Muslims and Uyghur refugees. The return of the Kulja area to the Qing was accompanied by the resettlement of a considerable number of Uyghur families who feared reprisals and chose not be reintegrated into the Qing Empire. The resettlement of the Uyghur farmers was organized by the Russian administration in 1881–4.[1] By 1884 more than 45,000 Uyghurs had moved from the Kulja area to the Russian portion of the Ili Valley. In the Russian portion of the Ili Valley (Semirechye), the Uyghur migrants founded the town of Yarkend and

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approximately ninety smaller settlements (*qishlaq*).2 Six districts (*volost'*) were established for the Uyghur migrants in Yarkend, Aksu, Charyn, Koram and Karassu, and four settlements in Verny. From this time the Uyghurs have been one of the three main ethnic groups in the Russian portion of the Ili Valley along with the Kazakhs and the Russians.

The formation of an Uyghur community in another part of Central Asia, the Ferghana Valley, differed from that of the Semirechye area. Unlike the migration to Semirechye, which took place within a couple of years and involved a significant number of Uyghurs, the migration to the Ferghana Valley was characterized by an infiltration of small groups of Uyghurs moving from Kashgar, Aksu and Yarkand. The motives for their migration were not only political, such as Chinese expansion and the struggle of different religious groups, but also economic, such as shortage of lands and trade relations. By the middle of the nineteenth century, ancestors of the Ferghana Uyghurs had established a number of settlements along the Kara Darya and Naryn rivers in the eastern part of the Ferghana Valley. Here, as well as in Semirechye, the Uyghur immigrants established settlements in accordance with their kinship patterns. By the end of the nineteenth century a relatively small group of Uyghurs also moved further from Semirechye to the Mary region in present Turkmenistan and settled in the village of Bairam-Ali.3

Uyghur migrations across Central Asian frontiers

The size of the Uyghur population in Russian Central Asia was very much affected by other migrations across Central Asian frontiers.4 As a result of the upheaval of the Bolshevik Revolution an Uyghur migration (*köch-köch*) back to China occurred in 1918, when a group of militia led by Commissar Murayev organized a mass extermination of the Uyghurs in the Semirechye region. Bayanday and Tashken-saz were two local villages where significant numbers of Uyghurs were killed because of the perception that they were anti-Soviet. The soldiers were allied with the emerging Red Army. Families heard of the violence and packed up their belongings and moved to the agricultural villages across the Republic of China border in order to avoid a Bolshevik terror against Uyghurs, apparently in collaboration with the White Russians. Local Uyghur families in Kazakhstan still speak of that year as *atu yili* or 'the year of the shooting/killing' that was part of the local violence initiated by the Bolsheviks. The shooting became known generally as '*Atu*' and during the Soviet period this theme was a closed one for public or official discussion.

In the late 1920s through to the early 1930s there was another population shift of Uyghur and Kazakh families from the USSR to China. These families were escaping the terrors of Stalin's regime against the kulaks or prosperous peasants along with many other Turkic peoples across Central Asia. As is well known, at that time millions of Kazakhs died of starvation, which was a natural outcome of the policy of forced collectivization pursued by the Soviet

regime in the agricultural sphere. Many individuals who moved to China nonetheless kept their Soviet identification papers in the hope or anticipation of themselves or their children returning to their villages and homes. Indeed, Soviet archival materials show that the period between 1930 and 1931 was the peak of such migration of the Uyghurs from the USSR to Xinjiang.

In 1932 Sheng Shicai, the Han Chinese warlord in Xinjiang, with the help of Soviet troops, defeated a Chinese Muslim army that had besieged the city of Urumqi. For the rest of the 1930s the Soviet influence in Xinjiang grew so comprehensive that some scholars believe it became actually a semi-colony of the Soviet Union.5 The Soviet government sent instructors and advisors, including many Uyghurs and Kazakhs, to Xinjiang in virtually every field. At the same time, Central Asian higher education institutions helped train Uyghur specialists for the Xinjiang economy. The heyday of the Soviet penetration in Xinjiang came later with the establishment of the pro-Soviet East Turkestan Republic (ETR) in the three districts of Xinjiang adjacent to Soviet Kazakhstan – those of Ili, Altai and Tarbaghatai, in 1944–9.6 This short-lived republic was handed over to the Chinese Communists when they came to power in 1949.

The last large-scale migration of Uyghurs to Soviet Central Asia was that of the 1950–62 period. Approximately 60,000 to 100,000 Uyghurs and Kazakhs migrated to the then Soviet republics in Central Asia during that decade. According to some estimates, of this number 35,000 to 40,000 were Uyghurs. The majority of these people crossed the border in May 1962. This notorious exodus of 1962, known as 'the 29 May incident', was a logical outcome of deteriorating Sino-Soviet relations. When it became obvious that this deterioration of bilateral relations would finally lead to the rupture of diplomatic relations, before leaving Xinjiang the Soviets arranged a political action, which was to demonstrate the failure of the Chinese national minorities policy and cause internal problems for Chinese rule in Xinjiang. In supporting the migration of Uyghurs from Xinjiang in the early 1950s, the Soviets also satisfied their own labour needs created by the Virgin Lands Project in northern Kazakhstan. In 1962, however, the labour needs had been met and the Uyghurs were allowed to settle in Alma-Ata and its environs instead. Only a handful of Uyghurs were sent to northern Kazakhstan but, unable to adjust, they finally moved to Semirechye. After 1963 the Soviet–Chinese border was closed and did not open again until the late 1980s.

Soviet policy toward Uyghurs

The primary goal of the Soviet policy towards neighbouring countries was to create a zone of friendly, pro-Soviet regimes along the border of the Soviet Union. The same goal was pursued by the Soviets in Chinese Central Asia. When this policy succeeded in this region in the 1930s with the establishment of the dictatorship of Sheng Shicai, the Soviets played a controversial role in the life of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. On the one hand, it was the Soviet

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military force that helped suppress anti-Chinese rebellions of the Muslim population and eliminate the Turkic Islamic Republic of East Turkestan (TIRET, 1932–3) in the south of the province. On the other hand, the Soviets encouraged the local government to accept the Soviet model of national policy stimulating development of the Uyghur nation (*millät*). For implementation of this national project in Xinjiang the Soviets had to render special state support to their own Uyghur communities. The 1930s marked commencement of the wide-scale cultural and educational development of the Soviet Uyghurs. Soviet scholars in Central Asia designed and the Publishing Houses printed textbooks in the Uyghur language for Xinjiang students. Central Asian universities, especially Central Asian State University (SAGU), trained Uyghur specialists for Xinjiang. Such Uyghur cultural institutions as the Uyghur Theatre, first set up in Uzbekistan, then moved to Alma-Ata, and newspapers and magazines were published in Uyghur to propagate the Communist ideology among the Uyghur population of Xinjiang. This external need also thus promoted the institutional development of Uyghur culture in Soviet Central Asia, where the cultural centre gradually moved to Alma-Ata, the capital city of Kazakhstan. In 1937 the Uyghur district (Uyγur rayoni) was also established on the territory bordering with China.

The need for institutional support for Uyghur culture in the Soviet Union increased with the proclamation of the East Turkestan Republic (ETR) in the three westernmost districts of Xinjiang in 1944–9. The Soviet Uyghurs as well as other Turkic peoples were actively used by the government in providing military, economic and cultural support to this pro-Soviet regime.

The Soviet Union instituted a special policy toward Uyghurs after 1949, when the Uyghurs' homeland became part of Communist China. Initially, during the era of Sino-Soviet friendship, this special attitude was necessary to support the cultural development of the Uyghurs in friendly China. During the last three decades of the USSR, Soviet treatment of its Uyghur population aimed to show the superiority of Soviet national policy over the Chinese attitude toward their own ethnic minorities. The cultural achievements of Soviet Uyghurs were widely publicized, and special governmental efforts were undertaken to support Uyghur education and culture. As a result of this policy, a wide network of Uyghur cultural institutions was established, especially in Kazakhstan and its capital city of Alma-Ata. These institutions included a full secondary education system in the Uyghur language (the only non-titular nationality in Kazakhstan which had a secondary education system in its own language), mass media in Uyghur (five Uyghur newspapers, magazines, radio and television broadcasts), Uyghur theatre, and the Uyghur music theatre and dance groups. In addition, there were Uyghur departments at some institutions of higher education and in the main publishing houses (including that of the Kazakhstan Academy of Science), an Uyghur section at the Association of Kazakhstan Writers and the Ministry of Education, an Uyghur group at the Pedagogical Research Institute and a special section of Uyghur studies at the Academy of

Sciences of the Kazakh SSR. The latter was transformed in 1986 into the Institute of Uyghur Studies. Some Uyghur cultural institutions also existed in Uzbekistan. Among them was an Uyghur radio station, broadcasting programmes to Xinjiang, and an Uyghur music and dance group, as well as a Department of Uyghur Studies at the Institute of Asian and African Studies (formerly the Department of Oriental Studies) at Tashkent State University. The special attention paid to Uyghurs in Kazakhstan is also illustrated by the appointment of Uyghur Communist Ismail Yusupov as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan from 1961 to 1964.7 As T. Rakowska-Harmstone noted, Yusupov's tenure as Kazakhstan's First Secretary was 'an unusual departure from the placement pattern in Central Asian republics, according to which the position is reserved for a member of the republic's titular nationality. Yusupov was removed along with Khrushchev; as is well known, the new leadership attempted initially to improve Sino–Soviet relations.'8

Although providing Uyghur cultural institutions with special support, the Soviet authorities never recognized Uyghurs as an indigenous people of Soviet Central Asia and avoided giving them any administrative autonomy. This attitude was reflected in Soviet scholarship on the origins of the Uyghurs. Drawing a new ethnic map of Central Asia in the 1920s, the Soviet authorities made official historiography responsible for the justification of new policies in Central Asia. From that time on, 'ethnogenesis' became a main topic in Soviet historiography. Theoretical works and official histories of republics, in particular, substantiated the idea of the indigenous origin of titular 'nations' and their historical right to the territory of the republics. While official Soviet historiography described the titular ethnic groups of Central Asian Republics as indigenous peoples, Soviet writings on Uyghur history were different, considering east Turkestan as the historical homeland and ethnic territory of the Uyghurs and considering them immigrants from that region.

The only exception was the period of the existence of the East Turkestan Republic, when the leaders of the Communist party of Kazakhstan seriously discussed a possibility of establishing the Uyghur autonomy oblast within the Kazakh SSR. On February 1947 the Central Committee of the (Bolshevik) Communist party of Kazakhstan submitted to the Central Committee of the All-Union (Bolshevik) Communist Party a proposal on establishing the Uyghur Autonomous oblast, which would include the territories of the Panfilov and October regions of the Taldy-Kurgan oblast and the Chilik, Enbekshi-Kazakh, Uyghur, Narynkol and Keghen regions of Alma-Ata oblast. An Uyghur autonomous oblast was proposed to resolve the following problems: a) to revive the Uyghur Socialist culture and oppose claims of inequality of the Uyghurs; b) to accelerate economic development of the Uyghur region bordering the Ili region of Xinjinag, which was a centre of the national liberation movement of Muslims in China; and c) to influence the three million Uyghur population of Xinjiang and activate their national liberation movement, orientating it toward the Soviet Union. The Uyghur

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population constituted 20 per cent of the whole population of the planned autonomous oblast comprising 23,000 people. The capital of the proposed oblast was to be the town of Panfilov (Jarkent/Yarkend).9

Although this proposal was not approved by Moscow, it nevertheless undertook some additional measures for the case of implementing such a plan. Some influential Soviet historians who were responsible for the creation of an Uyghur national history raised a problem of an Uyghur 'trace' in the history of Semirechye. For example, A.N. Bernshtam published an article on the Uyghur epigraphic texts from the region. Another special historical work on the ancient and medieval history of the Uyghurs was also written by him at the same time, but published later, in 1951.10 Published in Uyghur with Arabic script, it was addressed specifically to Uyghur readers in Xinjiang. However, by the time of its publication the political situation had changed dramatically and there was no longer a need for such a book, which was considered extremely nationalist by the Xinjiang authorities, and the Soviets had to withdraw all copies and stop printing further editions. This book became one of the main contributions to the Uyghur nationalist concept of their history. It is important to note that the widespread idea of Uyghur autonomy within Kazakhstan which circulated among the Uyghur intellectuals in Soviet Central Asia was first proposed by the Kazakh Communist leaders.

With the Communist takeover in China the idea of Uyghur autonomy within Kazakhstan lost ground and very soon nobody remembered it. Hence no discussion of Uyghur autonomy within the Soviet Republics was allowed and the Soviet authorities prohibited any deviation from the official concept of Uyghur origin in historical writings. When Uyghur historian Malik Kabirov, during the perestroika period in 1987–88, took pains to prove that Uyghurs were the native people of Semirechye, his unpublished manuscript on this issue 'The Uyghurs as autochthonous people of Semirechye', was officially criticized by the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, Gennady Kolbin, who accused him and all other Uyghur intellectuals of Uyghur nationalism. The Soviets instead encouraged studies on the Uyghur migrations from China to the Russian Empire, the major contribution to which was ironically made by the same historian, Malik Kabirov, who in 1951 had published his research on the history of the Uyghur migration to Semirechye at the end of the nineteenth century. At the same time, any other 'neutral' topics on Uyghur history and culture were welcome, such as the ancient and medieval history. Of special importance for Soviet propaganda were publications on the social and cultural achievements of the Uyghurs in the USSR. The propaganda nature of academic and popular writings on Uyghurs is witnessed by books such as *The Revived Uyghur People* (Mashur Ruziev) or *The Blossoming of Uyghur Culture* (M. Khamrayev), whose objective was to demonstrate that only in the Soviet Union were the Uyghurs able to revive their culture and have it blossom.11

Soviet policy towards the Uyghur communities in the Central Asian republics was determined by the particular character of Sino-Soviet relations. The

Soviet Union used its Uyghur communities as a means of manipulating its political interests in Xinjiang. Although the promotion of Uyghur culture was made in the context of general Soviet policy on nationalities, the Chinese factor had an impact on the special attention paid to Uyghur institutions by the Soviet government. Looking at the establishment of Uyghur cultural institutions or at significant Uyghur events in Soviet Central Asia in conjunction with Sino-Soviet relations reveals a direct correlation between them. Such a correlation can be seen, for instance, in the development of Uyghur Studies in the USSR.

Uyghurs in the Central Asian Republics

Kazakhstan

The largest group of Uyghurs in Central Asia is in Kazakhstan. According to the census of 1999, Uyghurs made up 210,300 or 1.4 per cent of the total population of the republic (14,953,000). The Uyghurs are densely situated in the south-eastern part of Kazakhstan, mainly in Almaty oblast, where they inhabit the Uyghur, Chilik, Enbekshi-Kazakh and Panfilov districts, and in and around the city of Almaty itself. Uyghurs rank seventh in population among the ethnic groups of Kazakhstan after the Kazakhs, Russians, Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Germans and Tatars. Between the census of 1989 and 1999, the number of Uyghurs in Kazakhstan increased by 15.9 per cent from 181,000 to 210,300. This increment is less than that of Kazakhs (1,488,200 or 22.9 per cent), but higher than those of other substantial ethnic minorities (Kurds and Dungans showed the highest percentage).

The infrastructure of Uyghur cultural institutions still exists in a modified form. The Kazakh government continues to support secondary education in Uyghur and Uyghur cultural institutions. At present, there are 64 Uyghur schools in Kazkahstan, totalling 21,000 Uyghur pupils. Of these, 15, including three schools in the city of Almaty, are 'pure' Uyghur, 31 are mixed, and the remainder only have Uyghur groups. Cultural and educational institutions and mass media are represented by Uyghur musical theatre, Uyghur teachers training groups at Abai State University in Almaty, an Uyghur teachers' college in Jarkent (Panfilov), a newspaper, *Uyghur avazi* (Voice of Uyghurs, formerly *Kommunizm tughi* [Communist Flag]), and half an hour of television programming per week as well as some radio programmes.

Kyrgyzstan

In 1999, according to the official data, 46,733 Uyghurs lived in Kyrgyzstan, or about one per cent of the total population of the republic (about five million). Their communities were located in two regions of Kyrgyzstan; one in the north and one in the south, with different cultural traditions. The Uyghur population in the northern part of the country totalled 32,300 people,

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distributed in the oblasts as follows: Chu – 14,706, Talas – 166, Naryn – 527, Issyk-kul – 3,969, and the capital city of Bishkek – 12,932. A smaller number of Uyghurs, 14,433, inhabited the southern districts, with the largest group in Osh oblast (10,352), a smaller one in Jalal-abad oblast (3,776) and the smallest group in Batkend oblast (305).12 The Uyghurs of northern Kyrgyzstan consist of two subgroups, those of the Issyk-kul region, who were originally migrants from Kazakhstan and China in the 1950 and 1960s, and those of the capital city of Bishkek and its environs (the villages of Lebedinovka, Pokrovka, Malovodnoye, etc.) who came from Kulja and Kashgar during the last wave of migration. In southern Kazakhstan, Uyghurs live in Osh oblast. Together with the Uyghurs of Andijan vilayet of Uzbekistan they comprise a special group of Ferghana Valley Uyghurs.

During the Soviet period there were no Uyghur cultural institutions in Kyrgyzstan, and the cultural needs of the local Uyghurs were served by institutions located in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. As the links between Central Asian Uyghur communities weakened after the demise of the Soviet Union, this practice also ceased. More recently, some private Uyghur newspapers and the Uyghur Department at the Kyrgyz University at Bishkek have been established. At present, Uyghurs also have their own public and cultural organizations in Kyrgyzstan.

Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, Uyghurs live in the Ferghana Valley and the Tashkent region. In the Ferghana Valley they are concentrated in the Pakhtabad district of the Andijan vilayet and the city of Andijan. The overwhelming majority of Ferghana Uyghurs, as mentioned above, are descendants of migrants from southern Xinjiang (Kashgaria). In both parts of the Ferghana Valley, belonging to Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, Uyghurs have been under the strong cultural influence of Uzbeks. Uzbekization of Uyghurs was facilitated by cultural and linguistic ties. Both Uyghur and Uzbek belong to the same Qarluq subgroup of the Turkic linguistic family. In addition, it should be noted that people of different ethnic groups in Uzbekistan were forced to change their official nationality to 'Uzbek' under pressure from the local government, and many Uyghurs fell victim to this policy, which is even more pervasive in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. The process of assimilation of Uyghurs in this republic was also hastened by the absence of favourable conditions for the development and preservation of their language. The only school with instruction in Uyghur existed in Kashgar-qishlaq in the Karassu district of Osh oblast in Kyrgyzstan in the 1940s, and was closed long ago. Today, only secondary education in Uzbek and Kyrgyz gives Uyghur students the opportunity to continue on to higher education and jobs.

The process of Uzbekization of the Ferghana Uyghurs was already strong during the Soviet period. Scholarly expeditions under the direction of G. Sadvakasov, organized in the 1960s by linguists of the Section for Uyghur

Studies, Academy of Sciences of the Kazakh SSR, revealed the prevalence of bilinguism among the Uyghurs. Describing the linguistic situation in the village of Kashgar-qishlaq, Sadvakasov concluded that its Uyghur population consisted of those Uzbekicized, those mixed, and those who preserved their spoken Uyghur.13 Though there are still groups of people, mostly elderly, who identify themselves as Uyghurs in both parts of the Ferghana Valley, these Uyghurs are no longer linked with their ethnic relatives in other parts of Central Asia and are at risk of disappearing.

At the moment there are no official statistic data available on the Uyghur population of Uzbekistan. President Islam Karimov openly declared that there is no Uyghur population in Uzbekistan in order to avoid problems with China, which is becoming a strategic partner of his regime. However, the census of 1989, just before the collapse of the Soviet Union, gave a total number of Uyghurs in this republic as 23,000, including 14,009 (39 per cent of all Uyghurs of this republic) in Andijan oblast, 7,964 (31 per cent) in Tashkent oblast, and 1,107 (22 per cent) in the capital city of Tashkent.14

Turkmenistan

The smallest group of Uyghurs in Central Asia is in Turkmenistan. The history of the Uyghur community in Turkmenistan commenced with the migration of a group of 272 Uyghur families (1,308 people from Semirechye to the oasis of Murgab) in 1890. Those Uyghur families settled at Bairam-Ali. During the first years of Soviet power, some Uyghur schools were opened in Bairam-Ali and its vicinities. The process of assimilation of Uyghurs by the Turkmen majority has resulted in a lack of population growth. According to unofficial information provided by the Uyghur cultural centre of Turkmenistan, the number of Uyghurs in the early 1990s reached 1,400. In Bairam-Ali, the Uyghurs comprised 1.6 per cent of its population (704 people). Some groups of Uyghurs also live in Mary and the village of Turkmen-kala. The Turkmenistan Uyghurs are the most isolated group of Central Asian Uyghurs, who have practically lost all ties with Uyghur communities in other parts of Central Asia. It is obvious that this situation is likely to lead to the disappearance of the Uyghur language in Turkmenistan.15

Tajikistan

There are no significant numbers of Uyghurs in modern Tajikistan. It is known that there is a small Uyghur community in the capital city of Dushanbe, which has an Uyghur cultural association.

Uyghur long distance nationalism in Central Asia

During the Soviet period, the Central Asian republics differed primarily in terms of culture, while economic, social, and political conditions did not

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differ from republic to republic. This resulted in a quite similar development of all Uyghur groups dispersed in Central Asia, with local variants related to linguistic and cultural surroundings only. Today, the Uyghur communities in independent Central Asian nation states are becoming more and more isolated from each other, in large part due to the breakdown of the traditional communication system. Separated by custom control posts, different currencies and immigration regulations, as well as suffering from economies in transition, the Central Asian Uyghur communities are being forced further apart.

There is, however, a shared trend within all Uyghur communities, which induces the governments of different countries to form a common attitude toward the Uyghur communities. This is a restoration of ethnic links between the Central Asian Uyghurs and their ethnic relatives in the historical homeland – Xinjiang (East Turkestan). After the long period of separation from Xinjiang, when all relationships between the Soviet Uyghurs and Xinjiang were interrupted, perestroika saw an improvement in Sino-Soviet relations and state borders became open for commerce and mutual visits. This restored links between Central Asian Uyghurs and their ethnic brethren across the border. These links, however, were different for two main groups of local Uyghurs in Central Asia, at least in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, namely *yärlik* (locals) and *kälgänlär* (immigrants of the 1950s and 1960s). Returning to the last wave of Uyghur migration to Soviet Central Asia, one should admit that it played an essential role in the particular development of the social and cultural life of Soviet Uyghurs concentrated mostly in Kazakhstan, and is, therefore, of great interest from the standpoint of diasporic studies.

Uyghur migrations in the 1950s and 1960s injected new life into the Uyghur communities in Soviet Central Asia. Culturally, it was particularly significant for Soviet Uyghurs since numerous Uyghur intellectuals migrated to the USSR and became leading specialists in their fields. Among them were well-known writers, journalists, scholars, artists, musicians and teachers. The brochure *Uyghur Writers of Kazakhstan* published by the Pushkin State Library of Kazakhstan in 1982 provides information on 34 Soviet Uyghur writers, including 24 contemporary ones. Among the latter, 11 had migrated during the 1950s and 1960s, the most prominent of whom was Ziya Samadi, a writer who had been Minister of Education in the Xinjiang government in the 1950s.16

Of great importance was the fact that numerous officials of the East Turkestan Republic, including some of its leaders and many senior officers (including State Secretary Abdurauf Makhsum, Minister of Education Ziya Samadi, General Zunun Teipov and others) also migrated to the USSR, strengthening support among the local Uyghur community for independent East Turkestan. The anti-Chinese feelings of the Uyghur migrants were used by the Soviets when Sino-Soviet relations cooled. For example, one of the activists, Yusufbek Mukhlisi (1920–2004), was allowed to conduct anti-Chinese activity by distributing his newspaper *Shärqi Turkestan avazi* (Voice of East Turkestan) and appealing to the UN and other international

organizations asking to settle the 'Uyghur problem'. The growth of anti-Chinese feelings among the Uyghur intellectuals led them to establish political organizations to support the struggle for East Turkestan's independence.

Yusufbek Mukhlisi's activities were, if not encouraged, then at least not objected to by the KGB. His newspaper was compiled manually. Its first issue in the form of a photocopied leaflet came out in 1979. Later on, in the early 1980s, many other Uyghur intellectuals started supporting the newspaper. Among them were the ETR activists, such as the ETR People's Hero Ghani Batur, Generals Zunun Teipov and Marghup Iskhakov (of Tatar origin), a journalist of the Uyghur Radio of Tashkent called Abdulla Baratov, and even a well-known philologist, Professor Murat Khamrayev.17

The initial stage in the history of Central Asian Uyghur organizations starts with the establishment of the first Uyghur organization in Soviet Kazakhstan, which was the United National Revolutionary Front of East Turkestan (UNRFET), set up in 1984 by Yusufbek Mukhlisi. This was an informal organization without a membership system, but for the Soviet situation it was still an extraordinary event, which could not occur without the tacit support of the authorities. The goal of the organization was quite radical: 'a restoration of the Uyghur state on the territory of the so-called Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.' Activities of the UNRFET nevertheless involved a handful of individuals, mostly former ETR leaders and officers, but did not acquire a wider support even among local intellectuals, who, although they sympathized with its goals, did not join it.

One of the most striking features of the early stage of the Uyghur political movement in Central Asia was open discussion in local Uyghur newspapers in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on issues very important for Uyghurs as a nation. Among such issues was that of the name for the Uyghurs' homeland. Uyghur nationalists have always rejected the Chinese name of their homeland – 'Xinjiang' (New dominion) – referring to its colonial implications. However, the discussion was not on whether or not an official name was acceptable to Uyghurs, but rather on the appropriateness of the names 'East Turkestan' and 'Uyghurstan'. The leaders of the 'Uyghurstan Azatliq Tashkilati' (UAT or 'Organization for the Freedom of Uyghurstan'), formed in 1982, especially Hashir Vahidi, advocated the name 'Uyghurstan' in their writings, while Yusufbek Mukhlisi stood for 'East Turkestan'. At first glance, the discussion seemed ridiculous, since the talks were about a country that was a part of China and had the official name of the 'Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region'. However, the arguments were not accidental. On the one hand, they were symptomatic of the new contemporary stage in the Uyghur nationalist movement in Central Asia, where pan-Turkic ideology was fully eradicated in the course of the Communist rule on both sides of the border and ethnic priorities became most important against pan-Turkic ones. On the other hand, it was a continuation of analogical discussions held in Xinjiang in the early 1950s when Uyghur nationalists, especially those from the Ili region, i.e. the former ETR activists, demanded that their homeland be named the

'Uyghurstan Autonomous Region'. Mao Zedong did not approve the name, referring to the continuation of a revolutionary struggle for which the name was not ostensibly beneficial.

The 1990s discussions of the name 'Uyghurstan' among the Uyghur intellectuals had a slight difference from that of the previous period in the fact that it was opposed to another 'separatist' name: 'East Turkestan'. This kind of discussion was not new either. It is sufficient to mention the clash between two groups of Uyghur nationalists in Xinjiang in the 1940s: the pro-Soviet ETR leaders advocated the Uyghur national idea based on the Soviet model of national policy, while pan-Turkist leaders backed by the Chinese Nationalist government of Goumindang perceived the Turkic peoples of Xinjiang as a united Turkic nation.

During the 1990s discussions, proponents of the name 'East Turkestan' referred to the necessity of gaining support for their struggle from other Turkic peoples, for which the name 'Uyghurstan' seemed quite unsuitable. On the contrary, proponents of the name 'Uyghurstan' put forward several arguments such as:

1 the name 'Uyghurstan' does not mean that the Uyghur state the name implies is exclusively a state for Uyghurs; the name 'Uyghurstan' simply stresses that Uyghurs are indigenous inhabitants of this territory and in this sense it is of extreme importance for the struggle for self-determination;

2 the name 'Uyghurstan' does not restrict the interests of other peoples; on the contrary, it imposes on Uyghurs a serious responsibility for guaranteeing their interests; as for the statehood of other Turkic peoples of Central Asia, they have already gained their independence in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan;

3 the name 'Uyghurstan' is important to oppose the menace of the assimilation of Uyghurs by Chinese colonizers;

4 those thinking that the name 'Uyghurstan' is not known in the world should remember that the names 'Kazakhstan', 'Kyrgyzstan', 'Uzbekistan', etc. were not known either, but at present the world community recognizes these as the names of nation states.

The discussions on the name of the Uyghur homeland were less important for the Uyghur diaspora outside Central Asia, especially for the Uyghurs in Turkey, where adherence to pan-Turkism is much more important and determines the success of Uyghur organizations. Nevertheless, such discussions in Central Asia had their impact on international Uyghur organizations with the representation of the Central Asian Uyghur. As a result, the East Turkestan (Uyghurstan) National Congress convened in 1999 in Munich accepted this compromise name with 'Uyghurstan' in parentheses.

Liberalization of Soviet society, beginning with perestroika, opened another stage in the history of Uyghur political movement: the emergence of legal

public organizations. In Kazakhstan such organizations came to being following the decree of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR from 14 April 1989, 'On the procedure of establishment and activity of amateur public associations'. A series of Uyghur cultural centres have been set up across Central Asian republics from 1989 to 1991 on the initiative of the Communist Party Central Committees.18 These centres addressed the problems of the cultural revival of the Uyghur nationality by working exclusively on enlightenment and cultural issues such as the establishment of new Uyghur schools or Uyghur groups at schools and the holding of cultural events etc. By 1991 Uyghur cultural associations, like the analogical organizations of other ethnic groups, had been established in almost all Central Asian republics. Thus, during the second period, by the Soviet demise in 1991 there were two different types of Uyghur organizations operating in Kazakhstan: legally operating cultural–educational organizations working on local problems of Uyghur communities and non-registered political organizations propagating the independence of East Turkestan.

The third period in the life of Uyghur organizations in Central Asia starts with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Central Asian republics. From this point Uyghur associations in the different republics faced a problem of disintegration and a need to work in accordance with the local political atmosphere in their home countries. This made important a coordination of activities of the different Uyghur Associations previously separated geographically, but now also politically. This task was to be pursued by the Inter-Republican Organization of Uyghurs (IROU), the first inter-state Uyghur organization in Central Asia, established in Almaty on 26 January 1992 at a meeting attended by 300 representatives of different Uyghur cultural centres. The IROU was an organization based on associated membership of existing cultural organizations in various republics and regions of Central Asia. It declared cultural-enlightening work among Uyghurs as its priority task, distancing itself from the political struggle for independence of their historical homeland. Such orientation of the organization did not find support among some Uyghur leaders, especially former ETR activists, who opposed the programme and tactics of the new Association and stood out for another alternative political organization.

The first meeting of the new organization called Uyghurstan Azatliq Tashkilati (UAT or 'Organization for the Freedom of Uyghurstan') was held on 20 June 1992 in Almaty and gathered about 700 people, including representatives from all the Turkic republics of Central Asia, as well as those from Turkey, Germany and China. As was usual for such kind of meetings, it was also attended by Kazakh officials. The initiative for the establishment of the UAT belonged to the prominent Uyghur political activist Hashir Vahidi (1922–98), who was elected its leader. According to the documents approved by the First Congress of the UAT, it considered its main aim as 'a promotion of restoration of Uyghurstan's independence', using exclusively political tools in its activity. The latter was a distinguishing feature of this

organization, which unlike Yusufbek Mukhlisi's organization, declared its adherence to non-violent forms of struggle.

Of the three Uyghur organizations with their different goals, status and tactics, the most legitimate was the IROU, representing all groups of Uyghurs and not having a political purpose, while the other two organizations represented mostly the older generation of the new 1950s and 1960s immigrants from Xinjiang. The IROU, registered in Kazakhstan, had to change its status after the government issued two new decrees in 1995 and 1996. The latter, called 'On public associations', confined permitted public associations to three categories only, namely republican, regional and local ones.19 The inter-state character of the IROU was changed to a republican one. The change of status did not affect the organization's activeness. It very soon became an active member of the international network of world Uyghur organizations, including the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO). Its representatives partook in the work of the First World Congress (*Kurultai*) of Uyghurs (Istanbul, December 1992), the International Organization of the Uyghur Youth (Munich, November 1994), the Fourth Session of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO) (The Hague, January 1995), etc. Participation in such activities became the grounds for a split in the IROU leadership. As a result, in 1995 a new organization, the Association of Culture of Uyghurs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, broke away from the IROU, which itself was reorganized on 2 December 1995 into the Regional Public 'Association of Uyghurs', the head of which remained Kaharman Khojamberdi.

After the Kulja events of 1997 the three Uyghur organizations of Kazakhstan came to agreement and established the United Political Council (UPC). It aimed at the prevention of any split in the Uyghur movement and the working out of joint actions of all Uyghur public organizations in order to draw the attention of the world community to the 'Uyghur problem'. The attempts at consolidation of Uyghur immigrant organizations were successful and resulted in their participation in the working out and discussion of documents on the international coordinating centre of the Uyghur movement, namely that of the National Centre of 'East Turkestan' (Turkey, 1998) and the East Turkestan (Uyghurstan) National Congress (Germany, 1999).

With the growth of authority and influence of the Association of Uyghurs other immigrant organizations in Kazakhstan joined it, reducing their own activities. For example, in 1997 the Association of Uyghurs and the Organization for the Freedom of Uyghurstan merged. Despite wide support from local Uyghur communities, the Association of Uyghurs finally had to terminate its activities due to the obstacles created by local authorities no longer willing to harbour Uyghur political organizations striving for an independent East Turkestan. The last attempt of its leader Kaharman Khojamberdi to reanimate political activities was the setting up of an 'Uyghurstan Party' in 2003 in Almaty. Since local legislation would never permit this type of organization, it did not apply for registration and

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operated illegally for a short time until the authorities undertook serious measures to stop it. As a result, Khojamberdi was fined by the authorities for his 'illegal activities'. This marked the end of the third period in the history of Central Asian Uyghur organizations which was characterized, on the one hand, by the extreme increase in anti-Chinese political activism of the Uyghur immigrant and local organizations and leaders, and, on the other hand, by the increasing Chinese pressure on Central Asian governments to suppress any separatist organization striving for the independence of East Turkestan. The elimination of Uyghur separatist organizations in Central Asia was possible due to the use of a very effective tool – the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (founded as the 'Shanghai Five' in 1996). As members of this organization, Central Asian states had an obligation to assist China in fighting Uyghur separatism. This was done using both legal methods (legislation) and the liquidation of Uyghur leaders (some Uyghur leaders, such as H. Vahidi, N. Bosakov and D. Samsakova were killed in unclear circumstances, and local authorities have never announced the results of investigation of the cases).20 After the American tragedy of September 11, the local authorities, following the Chinese government, also contributed greatly to the portrayal of Uyghurs as extremists and terrorists.

At present, Uyghur organizations still exist in the two Central Asian Republics – Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Those based in Kazakhstan include such cultural associations as the Society of Culture of Uyghurs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which stemmed from the IROU in 1995 (chairman: Farkhad Khasanov), the Association of Uyghur Businessmen, Entrepreneurs and Agricultural Workers (leader: D. Kuziev), the Nazughum Foundation (head: the daughter of murdered Dilbirim Samsakova), the Union of Uyghur Youth of Kazakhstan (leader: A. Turdiev) and the Uyghur Cultural Association (chairman: A. Shardinov). Most of these organizations focus on the resolution of economic, social and cultural and national problems of the Uyghurs living in the republic.

Organizations based in other republics have never been radical in their agenda. There is no information on Uyghur organizations in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. More active are the organizations in Kyrgyzstan: the Uyghur Association 'Ittipaq' (R. Abdulbakiev), the Uyghur Information-project Centre on Central Asia (N. Kenjiev) and the Human Rights organization 'Democracy' of the city of Bishkek (T. Islam).

Some of the present leaders, for instance F. Khasanov in Kazakhstan and N. Kenji in Kyrgyzstan, even propagate the idea of collaboration with the Chinese government in resolving the Uyghur communities' problems. With the death of the most prominent Uyghur immigrant leaders of the older generation such as Ju. Mukhlisi, H. Vahiidi, S. Abdurakhmann and so forth, such collaborationist ideas do not meet serious opposition, although they are not supported by local Uyghurs either. Another trend in Uyghur public life in Kazakhstan is the growing influence of businessmen, who try to control all cultural activities among the local Uyghurs. One such businessman,

D. Kuziev, has already succeeded in doing this using both his financial and political position, though most of the Uyghurs have expressed doubts about his intentions.

Conclusion

The Uyghur communities in present Central Asian states were formed mostly in the late nineteenth century as a result of the political relations between the two Empires – the Russian and the Qing empires. The Soviet government used local Uyghurs in their policy toward the neighbouring Xinjiang province of China populated by their ethnic brethren. Economic and political interests prompted the Soviet authorities to develop Uyghur cultural and educational institutions in Soviet Central Asia, primarily in Kazakhstan where the majority of the Central Asian Uyghur population lived. This resulted in the establishment of a number of cultural institutions in Kazakhstan.

For about three decades of the Soviet–Chinese hostility Soviet Uyghurs were totally separated from their historical homeland. The improvement of Soviet–Chinese relations during the perestroika period restored the ties, broken for a long time, intensifying mutual visits of Uyghur families and cultural exchanges between Uyghurs of both sides of the border. The break-up of the Soviet Union and independence of Central Asian nations inspired Central Asian Uyghurs, especially the immigrants of the 1950s and 1960s, to undertake political activities aiming at independence for their homeland – East Turkestan (Xinjiang). The Uyghur separatist movement in the Central Asian republics, mainly in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, reached its peak in the mid-1990s, but with the establishment of the Shanghai Five organization in 1996 (which became the SCO in 2001), under strong Chinese pressure Central Asian governments had to suppress all local Uyghur political organizations. Today Uyghur public organizations in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are exclusively confined to the spheres of culture, education and the socio-economic development of Uyghur communities.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Central Asian Uyghurs lost their common political and socio-economic space and became isolated from each other, forming separate communities in the newly independent Central Asian states. Moreover, the Uyghur culture lost special support from the state, and this new situation led to confusion and disillusionment when Uyghurs became merely an ethnic minority. At present Central Asian Uyghur communities are experiencing all the economic difficulties of the transition period that all new states undergo. These difficulties in Central Asia, as well as ethnic clashes in their homeland (East Turkestan/Xinjiang), have put pressure on Uyghur populations on both sides of the border, resulting in the migration of Uyghurs to Europe and North America and the emergence of small Uyghur communities there.

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Notes

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20 Some of these cases are discussed by B. Bekturghanova, *'Uygurskiy ekstremism' v tsentralnoi Azii: mif ili realnost? (sotsiologizheskii analiz problemy) ['Uyghur extremism' in Central Asia: myth or reality? (sociological analysis of the problems)]*, Almaty: Kompleks, 2002.

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Xinjiang and Central Asia since 1990

Views from Beijing and Washington and Sino-American relations

Colin Mackerras
Griffith University

This chapter explores how China and the United States have viewed Xinjiang and the Central Asian region since 1990, but with the main attention paid to the period since the 11 September 2001 incidents in New York and Washington. It gives a good deal of focus to the ways in which developments in the situation in Xinjiang and Central Asia have impacted on the interrelationship between China and the United States. Both China and the United States consider Xinjiang to be part of China, though China with far more passion than the United States. In the context of this chapter, Central Asia is defined as the contemporary nation states Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, all of which were republics of the Soviet Union until that enormous state collapsed at the end of 1991. This treatment takes two particular events as particularly important to the world as a whole and the Central Asian region in particular: the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 and the September 11 incidents of 2001.

The ethnic composition of the Central Asian region, including Xinjiang, is immensely complex. The most populous of the Central Asian states is Uzbekistan, with an estimated mid-2007 population of 27.78 million. A 1996 estimate put the proportion of Uzbeks in the population at 80 per cent, with Russians at 5.5 per cent and Tajiks at 5 per cent.1 In China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, non-census estimates for 2005 put the number of Han Chinese at 7.9566 million, which was 39.58 per cent of the total Xinjiang population of 20.1035 million. The Uyghurs were 9.2350 million, or 45.94 per cent of the total, with the remainder belonging to the Kazakh, Hui (Sino-Muslim), Kyrgyz, Mongolian and other ethnic groups.2 Kazakhstan's 1999 census showed 14,953,000 people, among whom 53.4 per cent were Kazakhs and 30 per cent Russian.3 Tajiks are the majority in Tajikistan (population in the 2000 census: 6.1 million) and Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan (1999 census: 4,822,938).4 The Kazakhs, Uyghurs, Kirgiz and Uzbeks are Turkic ethnically and linguistically and the overwhelming majority believe in Islam. The Tajiks speak an Iranian language and are also Islamic. It follows

that the majority of the people of the Central Asian republics of concern to this chapter and Xinjiang are Muslims, the vast majority being Sunni.

The flow-on from the collapse of the Soviet Union

The collapse of the Soviet Union altered the power arrangements in Central Asia fundamentally. Instead of the Soviet Union, China faced to its west a number of independent countries. Although their governments were initially the same as what had been in place under the Soviet Union and they still remained close to the Russian Federation, they all had their own individual interests. Moreover, though to very different extents, they began to be influenced by the kind of Islamic fundamentalism (Islamism) that was already a strong enough force in Afghanistan to lead to an Islamist regime's taking power in the capital Kabul in 1994 and again, after being expelled, in September 1996, with a considerable extension of their territory and broadening of control in 1998. Meanwhile, the borders between Xinjiang and Central Asia began to be opened in the late 1980s, leading to an expansion of trade and cultural dealings, but also in the interchange of criminal activities like the smuggling of narcotics and arms and the spread of Islamist terrorism. China is particularly concerned with the spread of Uyghur separatism due to open borders and Islamist terrorism.5

Although the Soviet Union had been in decline for some time, among other factors because it was unable to cope economically with the arms race imposed by the United States' Reagan Administration of 1981 to 1989, the actual Soviet demise at the end of 1991 left the United States very visibly as the world's only superpower. Both China and the United States continued to push for cordial mutual relations, but there were deep-seated conflicting interests over economic, strategic and ideological matters, especially trade, Taiwan and human rights. In the 1990s, Sino-American relations were extremely unstable and media and popular views of each country in the other became quite negative. In the United States, the 'China threat' syndrome increased in influence quite markedly,6 while among Chinese writers, the view that the United States was already or was seeking to become the world hegemon was quite normal, even prevalent.7

In many ways, the period from 1990 to 2001 was not a particularly good one for the Central Asian countries. Although this was when they won or obtained independence as nation states, it also saw economic stagnation and political instability. There were many tensions in relations among the countries of Central Asia, as well as with Russia. Tajikistan experienced a four-year civil war that ended with a peace accord only in 1997, and even then outbreaks of violence persisted and national unity remained elusive, warlords and Islamists retaining control over most of the country's territory. Kazakhstan has very large reserves of crude oil, and America, South Korea, Germany and other countries invested in the country to explore and develop the oil and gas fields, build pipelines and develop infrastructure. For

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example, in August 1998, the German engineering company Siemens signed a large deal to build a telecommunications network across the country, while the same year a Belgian company agreed to build a domestic gas pipeline that would help overcome serious gas shortages. However, one serious problem was that, though the United States was very keen to undertake investments that suited its interests, it did all it could to block any energy exports from Central Asia either through or to Iran,8 which is an important country for all states of the region.

As a balance, 'all the Central Asian states dramatically improved their relations, trade and investment with China'.9 This trend coincided with China's increasing concern about energy as its economy boomed during the 1990s. In 1993 China became a net importer of crude oil, and in 2000 imports reached 60 million tons, compared to production of 200 million tons.10 By the end of 2006, China was importing about 40 per cent of its oil.11 In April 1994, during a visit to Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Mongolia, Chinese Premier Li Peng called for a new 'Silk Road' that would include infrastructure like a network of roads and railways, trade and economic collaboration and various strategic issues. For example, he signed an agreement on the 1,700km Sino-Kazakhstan border and one for a Turkmenistan–China–Japan gas pipeline.12 Much of the trade and infrastructure network eventuated, though the gas pipeline proved abortive at this stage.

As far as China was concerned, the emerging situation in Central Asia was thus quite positive, but also had its dangers. Economically and politically, it had great advantages. It was quite receptive to American economic advances there, and one specialist notes that in the 1990s China still saw the American role 'as a stabilising influence on Russia's great power ambitions'.13 Certainly, China preferred the emerging situation as preferable to the Soviet threat that had dominated the earlier period and the United States was not yet a strategic presence in Central Asia. However, there was one important exception. It did not want any American interference in human rights issues or American support for separatism in Xinjiang. Moreover, with Turkey very friendly to the United States, the strong growth of Turkish influence could become dangerous from China's point of view, especially given the ethnic links between Turkey and many of the peoples of Central Asia.14

The Shanghai Five and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

In April 1996, the presidents of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan met in Shanghai to discuss matters of mutual interest. Initially called simply the Shanghai Five, this group followed up this first meeting with annual conferences in the capitals of the four former-Soviet countries. In June 2001, also in Shanghai, the presidents of the four countries expanded their group to include their Uzbekistani counterpart, and formally established the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

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The first meeting agreed to build military confidence in the border areas, while the second one, held in April 1997 in Moscow, agreed on mutual reduction of military forces in border areas. The 1998 meeting was held in the Kazakhstan capital Alma-Ata (now called Almaty and no longer the capital). It expanded concern to other matters as can be seen from Article 5 of the joint statement issued on 3 July 1998:

The parties are unanimous that any form of national splittism, ethnic exclusion and religious extremism is unacceptable. The parties will take steps to fight against international terrorism, organized crimes, arms smuggling, the trafficking of drugs and narcotics, and other transnational criminal activities and will not allow their territories to be used for the activities undermining the national sovereignty, security and social order of any of the five countries.15

This agreement was the basis of the Chinese phrase 'the three evils' (*sanhai*), these being separatism, extremism and terrorism. The following year saw an agreement to set up in Bishkek a centre to coordinate anti-terrorism activities. Of course the agreements include the general idea of promoting trade.

Islamism in Xinjiang and Central Asia

As Article 5 of the Alma-Ata declaration suggests, the governments saw a growth of Islamism in Xinjiang and the countries of Central Asia during the 1990s. Ahmed Rashid writes that 'the floodgates of the Islamic revival' in Central Asia opened in 1989,16 that being the year the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw from Afghanistan, signalling the defeat of the invasion it had undertaken at the end of 1979. While Islamic revival is by no means the same as the rise of Islamism, under the conditions prevailing in Central Asia, the former could easily facilitate the latter, especially in the light of what was happening in Afghanistan.

Probably the two most prominent Islamist groups in Central Asia in the period leading up to September 11 were the Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (Party for Islamic Freedom) and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. The first of these stands for setting up an Islamic state in a united Central Asia and Xinjiang and eventually among all Muslims. Ahmed Rashid claims that, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, it had become 'the most popular, widespread underground movement' in the three Central Asian countries of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.17

Among the former Soviet republics, the country to be most seriously affected by Islamism was Uzbekistan. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan was formally set up in 1998, although as early as 1990 an Islamist group had established a mosque in a town in Uzbekistan with the sign 'Long Live the Islamic State' displayed outside.18 The Islamist threat reached its height on 15 February 1999 when terrorists exploded several massive car bombs in the

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capital Tashkent, in an attempt to assassinate Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov. Although they failed, they succeeded in killing at least thirteen people and injuring over a hundred. Not surprisingly, they also provoked Karimov into even fiercer crackdowns than he had undertaken before.19 On 25 August 1999, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan issued a call to jihad against the Karimov government and declared that it would establish an Islamic state.20 The cycle of terrorism and repression appeared to be getting worse.

In Xinjiang, an Islamist uprising led by Uyghur Zahideen Yusuf took place in April 1990 in Baren Township near Kashgar in the south-west. Western journalist Michael Winchester learned from one of Zahideen's enthusiastic supporters that the leader had taken his inspiration from the idea of the 'holy war' (jihad) being practised in Afghanistan by the mujahideen who had just inflicted a humiliation on the Soviet 'infidel invader'.21 This uprising led on to a whole series of disturbances in Xinjiang, especially in Kulja (which the Chinese know as Yining) in 1997. The Chinese suppressed all these disturbances violently, believing them to be separatist in intent.22 Uyghur identity feelings and resentment against Chinese rule undoubtedly had their own dynamic. However, it also seems likely, as one journalist suggests, that there were connections between the rise of Islamism in Central Asia and the situation in Xinjiang:

The newly independent Central Asian states bordering Xinjiang inspire Uighur [Uyghur] separatists. They have also become sources of weapons, money, training and places of refuge. Foreign Islamic missionaries now target Xinjiang's Muslims, and Uighurs are starting to take part in armed Islamic movements abroad, from Afghanistan to Uzbekistan and even Chechnya.23

The impact of September 11 and the 'war on terror' on Sino-American relations

The September 11 incidents resulted in an immediate American-led 'war on terror', to use the oft-repeated phrase of its principal proponent, United States President George W. Bush. The first stage of this war was a military invasion of Afghanistan, which overthrew the Islamist regime there late in 2001. The person Bush held responsible for September 11 was the Islamist Osama bin Laden, a Saudi national who had taken refuge in Afghanistan but whom, despite much effort, the American forces and their allies failed to capture.

China, Russia and the newly independent Central Asian states expressed their strong support for the war on terror, leading to a temporarily quite strong joint concern over Islamist terrorism. As we saw earlier, most of these states were already involved in their own war against terrorism, which preceded Bush's war on terror and mattered greatly to them. The United States used the war on terror to establish a military presence in several of the

Central Asian countries. Within five months of September 11, there were United States bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, while Tajikistan allowed the Americans to use military facilities on its territory.24

This was the first time in history that the Americans had moved militarily into Central Asia. The Chinese impact had been growing there since the fall of the Soviet Union, but this was traditionally within the Russian sphere of influence. Despite its improved relations with the United States, China could scarcely be other than nervous about this new potential threat on its western borders. And as for Russia, the new rivalry in an area that not long before had actually been part of the same state can only have been extremely unwelcome.

The immediate aftermath of the September 11 incidents saw the United States, China and Russia on the same side in a major conflict for the first time since World War II. In the first instance, China was proactive in supporting the American efforts against terrorism. Actions included:

- Voting for an anti-terrorism resolution in the United Nations Security Council;
- Supporting Pakistan in its pro-United States efforts against Osama bin Laden;
- Providing intelligence information on terrorist networks and activities in the region; and
- Freezing the accounts of terrorist suspects in Chinese banks.25

For its part, the United States helped the Chinese against separatism and terrorism in Xinjiang.26 When the United States Department of State issued its report on terrorism in May 2002, the first since September 11, it was very positive about China. The report accepted the link China was claiming between terrorism and separatism and implied that China's concern over two groups it had declared terrorist was understandable.27 Perhaps most importantly, towards the end of August 2002, the United States Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, announced at a news conference in Beijing that the United States had frozen all assets belonging to a body called the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) because of its activities as a terrorist organization, the United Nations following the American lead soon afterward. In January 2002, the Chinese government had issued a long document, claiming numerous terrorist activities in Xinjiang by 'East Turkestan' separatist groups, ETIM being foremost among them.

By early in 2003 uneasy signs were beginning to appear that seemed not to bode well for the quasi-partnership between China and the United States over the war on terror. In November 2002 Hu Jintao replaced Jiang Zemin as CCP general secretary and the following March as state president. It seems that Hu is somewhat less well disposed towards the United States than Jiang, but correspondingly more pro-Russian. Perhaps more important was the American-led war in Iraq, which began in March 2003. The Hu Jintao leadership was opposed to this war right from the start. China was alarmed

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about the implications of an invasion of a sovereign country against the wishes of its government, without any authorization from an international body like the United Nations, where the United States had refused to put the issue of war to a vote after realizing it would lose. The Chinese Islamic Association immediately put out a statement, strongly condemning the United States and its allies for choosing war over diplomacy. Association Vice-President Ma Liangji, also the imam of the great mosque of Xi'an, condemned the war as 'an incursion of Iraq's sovereignty'.28

The continuing violence in Iraq, the exposure of the falsity of the initial *casus belli* that former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was storing weapons of mass destruction for potential use, and the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal were all factors that hardened Chinese opposition to the war. Among ordinary Muslims in China, the war in Iraq has intensified anti-Americanism, many equating it with a war against Islam itself.29 The war in Iraq was also one of the many factors that gave the Chinese government grounds for criticizing the United States' human rights performance. In view of the constant American inclination to denounce China for human rights abuses, the opportunity to counter-attack on similar grounds is always welcome to the Chinese government.30

Another sign of the decline in Sino-American relations over the war on terror was that, when China issued its first-ever list of Uyghur terrorist groups and leaders at the end of 2003 and appealed to the international community for support against them, the United States reacted with deafening silence. Moreover, in April 2004 the National Endowment for Democracy, an American government-funded body, gave $75,000 to the Uyghur American Association, which advocates independence for Xinjiang. This was the first time the National Endowment had taken such a step and China reacted angrily.

In July 2005, the SCO held its annual meeting in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan since the end of 1997. Its declaration repeated the member states' determination to resist and conquer separatism, terrorism and extremism, but also noted an improvement in the situation in Afghanistan. What this meant was that members of the coalition might no longer need troops to be stationed in Central Asia, since the original rationale for them was to assist in opposing terrorism in Afghanistan. The declaration requested that 'respective members of the antiterrorist coalition set a final timeline for their temporary use of … objects of infrastructure and stay of their military contingents on the territories of the SCO member states'.31 The United States response to this demand was that it would take up the issue of American presence with the relevant countries. Kyrgyzstan demanded that the Americans pay a higher price to retain their Manas base outside the capital Bishkek, and China and Russia continue to want it removed. Uzbekistan, by contrast, did demand American withdrawal. There is some irony in the reality that Taliban influence in Afghanistan appears to have gathered some momentum since the 2005 meeting, with the result that

the rationale for the American bases may not have declined as much as the SCO thought it would. In the meantime, political instability continued to affect at least part of the region. In March 2005, Kyrgyzstan underwent a revolution that removed President Askar Akayev from power. In Uzbekistan, disturbances in May the same year failed to topple Islam Karimov, with whom China had moved to improve relations. The new Kyrgyzstan authorities are still willing to belong to the SCO. On the other hand, China may not be very happy to see popular revolutions that overturn political orders in Central Asia, because of the danger that the separatist forces still active in Xinjiang could use them to their own advantage. A popular revolution in Xinjiang that overthrew the current political order would be complete anathema to China.

Another change was the death, in December 2006, of Turkmenistan's Saparmurad Niyazov, who had been president of the country since it came into existence in 1991. Although Chinese leaders had got on well with Niyazov, they were not so enamoured of the extreme personality cult he sponsored and enjoyed, since it was reminiscent of the out-of-fashion years of Mao Zedong. They were quite capable of dealing with the successor regimes.

Because of its unprecedented oil boom, Kazakhstan has loomed very large as a power in Central Asia with great significance in Sino-American relations. Both China and the United States have done their best to woo and maintain good relations with this large Central Asian country. As of 2008, Nursultan Nazarbayev has been president since Kazakhstan's independence in 1991. There have been several prime ministers. Among these, Karim Masimov was appointed in January 2007 and it is especially interesting in that he is a Uyghur who can speak Chinese very well and is reputed to be favourably disposed towards China.

Early in May 2006, United States Vice-President Dick Cheney made a visit to Kazakhstan with the aim of trying to coax Astana more into its geopolitical orbit. Given the deteriorating relationship with Uzbekistan, uncertainty over the American base in Kyrgyzstan and a renewed Russian and Chinese confidence vis-à-vis Central Asia, such a move makes sense from Washington's point of view. Just before going to Astana and meeting with President Nazarbayev, Cheney had strongly criticized the Russians for trying to use energy as a political weapon. Despite its political and strategic importance, Cheney's visit was mainly economic and will be considered further below. Nazarbayev visited Washington in September 2006 and Beijing in December. Both visits boosted bilateral ties between Kazakhstan on the one hand and the United States and China on the other. The latter visit resulted in a range of agreements on science, culture, trade, energy, border controls and labour migration. 'Before leaving Beijing, a visibly optimistic Nazarbayev told the press that China and Kazakhstan had finally eliminated all their border problems and laid a solid foundation for mutual trust and friendship.'32

The mid-June 2006 SCO meeting, held in Shanghai, saw an important

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factor very unwelcome to the United States and with the potential to damage Sino-American relations, namely the presence of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The United States includes Iran in George W. Bush's 'axis of evil' and among the main sponsors of terrorism. Along with other powers, especially those of the West, the United States is doing all it can to prevent Iran from developing nuclear energy, even though it is claimed to be for peaceful purposes only. Both China and Russia have been much less enthusiastic for sanctions against Iran designed to prevent it from developing nuclear power. China, in particular, has been trying to develop relations with Iran and flatly denies the American claim that it is sponsoring terrorism. When questioned early in June about the invitation for Ahmadinejad to attend the meeting in Shanghai, SCO Secretary General Zhang Deguang responded: 'We cannot abide other countries calling our observer nations sponsors of terror. We would not have invited them if we believed they sponsored terror.'33

The United States has some reason to be concerned about the growth of the SCO, which has been much more successful and influential than it had expected. It continues to be very hostile to Islamist terrorism, but its 2005 and 2006 meetings make it abundantly clear that the SCO is taking a more overtly anti-American line than was earlier the case.

The Uyghurs and terrorism outside China: Guantanamo Bay

One way in which Islamist terrorism has affected Sino-American relations is the way both Chinese and American authorities have regarded Uyghurs involved in violent fighting outside China itself. In the case of those Uyghurs whom American forces have captured and detained, the issue of American refusal of Chinese requests to repatriate detainees has also impacted on bilateral relations.

When the United States Department of State issued its report on terrorism in May 2002, it had the following to say:

China has expressed concern that Islamic extremists operating in and around the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region who are opposed to Chinese rule received training, equipment, and inspiration from al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other extremists in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Several press reports claimed that Uyghurs trained and fought with Islamic groups in the former Soviet Union, including Chechnya.34

In January 2002, the Chinese government spelled out its main 'concern' in some detail. It named Hasan Mahsum as the leader of ETIM and accused Osama bin Laden of colluding with him to stir up a holy war in Xinjiang, 'with the aim of setting up a theocratic "Islam state" in Xinjiang'. It went on:

The terrorist forces led by bin Laden have given much financial and

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material aid to the 'East Turkistan' terrorists. In early 1999, bin Laden met with the ringleader of the 'East Turkistan Islamic Movement' [Hasan Mahsum], asking him to 'coordinate every move with the "Uzbekistan Islamic Liberation Movement" and the Taliban', while promising financial aid. In February 2001, the bin Laden terrorists and Taliban leaders met at Kandahar to discuss the training of 'East Turkistan' terrorists. They decided to allocate a fabulous sum of money for training the 'East Turkistan' terrorists and promised to bear the funds for their operations in 2001. Moreover, the bin Laden terrorists, the Taliban and the 'Uzbekistan Islamic Liberation Movement' have offered a great deal of arms and ammunition, means of transportation and telecommunications equipment to the 'East Turkistan' terrorists.35

Interviewed on Radio Free Asia just after the Chinese government issued this report, Hasan Mahsum flatly denied receiving institutional, let alone financial, support from al-Qaeda but refused to condemn violence, commenting that 'any rational human being has the duty to fight against invaders to protect his homeland'.36 However, an American newspaper report issued about three years later gives a different perspective. It claims that ETIM Deputy Chairman Abdula Kariaji 'confirmed in an interview what China has long alleged: ETIM formed a relationship with Mr bin Laden before the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001'.37 By 2004, Hasan Mahsum was dead: Pakistan military forces had killed him in October 2003.

The American administration seemed in broad agreement with the Chinese view on terrorism in Afghanistan. However, there were also areas of disagreement. These seem to have gathered momentum in severity, even causing tension between the two countries.

One of them was over the rich Uyghur businesswoman Rebiya Kadeer. Touted as a minority woman who could succeed in the socialist Xinjiang, she even became a member of China's National People's Congress. However, she turned against Chinese policy after a violent clash in 1997 between youthful demonstrators and the police, and her husband had meanwhile fled to the US. In 1999 Kadeer was arrested for revealing state secrets to foreigners and sentenced to eight years' imprisonment. Released in March 2006, she went to the US, where she has developed a reputation as a human rights, democracy and independence activist. Like the Dalai Lama for Tibetans, Kadeer charges China with undermining Uyghur culture: 'our cultural and traditional values are being deteriorated', she is quoted as saying. 'This is a moral crisis for the Uighur people.' The Chinese authorities regard her as a terrorist, an accusation to which she pleads guilty, but in a sense very different from how China's leaders understand the term: 'If I terrify the Chinese government, then yes, I am a terrorist, and long may it last.'38 Although her fame is very far short of the Dalai Lama's, her influence is on the increase, especially in the United States. She has attracted the attention of President George W. Bush, who in mid-2007 praised her in a speech and met her during a conference in

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Prague. China reacted by calling the meeting 'blatant interference' in Chinese affairs.39 She has definitely become a thorn in the flesh of Sino-American relations.

Another area of disagreement between the American and Chinese government views was the issue of Uyghur prisoners in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, where despite the successful Cuban revolution of 1959 the Americans had retained a military base, setting up a prison camp for Islamist terrorists. In essence, the problem between China and the United States was based on the fact that, though the two countries shared concerns over terrorism and agreed that Xinjiang was part of China, the United States was much less worried than China about separatism in Xinjiang and far more concerned to uphold its particular view of human rights, and was more subject to influence from the Uyghur diaspora.

After the American-led coalition overthrew the Taliban government in Afghanistan in November 2001, 22 Uyghurs were captured along both sides of the Afghanistan–Pakistan border and transferred to Guantanamo Bay. There the American authorities imprisoned them without charge as terrorist suspects and enemy combatants who had links with al-Qaeda and thus posed a threat to the United States and American lives. The Chinese authorities demanded their extradition on many occasions, but the United States refused on the grounds that they would face persecution or unacceptably inhumane treatment if sent back to China.

Late in 2003 the Pentagon decided that seven of the Uyghurs were enemy combatants and should continue in detention, but that the other fifteen were innocent or only low-risk terrorists whose target was the Chinese government, not the United States. The trouble was, however, that the State Department refused them entry into the United States. It approached numerous other countries to give them asylum, all of which initially rejected them. In August 2005, the fifteen were transferred from cells to Camp Iguana, where conditions are considerably better, but they were 'still surrounded by a fence', being allowed virtually no contact with the outside world and given no idea when their 'legal limbo' would end.40

For five of them this limbo ended in May 2006, when Albania agreed to give them asylum. As the five flew off to Tirana, the Pentagon declared that its main objective was 'to resettle the Uyghurs in an environment that will permit them to rebuild their lives', and that Albania would give them such an opportunity. On 9 May 2006, just a few days later, China reacted angrily, lodging formal complaints against both the United States and Albania for contravening international law, and demanding that Albania hand over the men as terrorist suspects. Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao declared that 'These people accepted by the Albanians are by no means refugees but terrorist suspects, and so we think they should be returned to China.'41

As it turned out, the experiment to send these five men to Albania turned out very badly. By the middle of 2007, two points were clear about the experiment. Firstly, Albania was clear that it would not take any more

Uyghurs. This meant that all those remaining in Guantanamo Bay had no escape other than to remain where they were or return to China, because no other country had signalled any wish to take them. Secondly, the five Uyghurs had been extremely unsuccessful in adapting to their new home. They were reduced to remaining 'in a squalid government refugee center on the grubby outskirts of Tirana, guarded by armed policemen'. They expressed themselves even more desperate than they had been in Guantanamo Bay, because hope of a better future had evaporated. They could not even get work permits, let alone jobs, without knowing Albanian, and this proved very difficult for them.42

China, the United States, Russia and Central Asia: the energy factor

China's rapidly growing economy depends on the availability of oil and other forms of energy. China and the United States have become major rivals for oil supplies available from Central Asia, especially Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is quite happy to deal with both countries. In an interview with *Tribune* towards the end of 2006, Kazakhstan Energy Minister Baktykozha Izmukhambetov described both China and the United States as 'strategic partners'.43 Xinjiang is already taking a major role in China's domestic energy production. The west-to-east natural gas pipeline linking the Tarim Basin in Xinjiang with Shanghai is highly significant for China's long-term energy security. Already Xinjiang is among China's main oil and gas producers and is likely to become China's energy base during the twenty-first century.44

Given China's growing dependence on foreign oil, it is not surprising that energy has become a central factor in China's foreign diplomacy in recent years. It has aroused American and other Western ire by being quite happy to deal with states the United States regards with hostility, such as Iran and Sudan. Among the reasons for China's policy its need for energy supplies ranks high.

The energy factor has loomed large in the complex web of interrelationships in the Central Asian region. Russia holds the world's largest reserves of natural gas, but the main exports go to Europe, none of them to China. However, among numerous agreements Russian President Vladimir Putin signed with Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao during a state visit he made to Beijing in March 2006, one pledged two natural gas pipelines costing up to US$10 billion. These were to be built within five years and will potentially be able to provide China with vast amounts of gas, enough to cause concern in Europe that its own gas supplies might be affected.45 Another Putin–Hu agreement promised a feasibility study on building a spur line to China from a crude oil pipeline to be built from eastern Siberia to the Pacific Ocean. Russia's earlier agreement to build this pipeline would make Russian oil readily available to Japan and had caused some disquiet in China, which felt left out of the deal and disliked anything that would yield energy benefits to

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Japan. Although in March 2006 the Russian and Chinese leaders issued a statement that 'bilateral relations are at an unprecedented level of development',46 Chinese concern over the Russian eastern oil pipeline may not be completely quietened, since there remains doubt over whether Russia can fulfil its pledge on the two gas pipelines to China, and the agreement to build the oil pipeline to the Pacific appears to carry more weight than a mere feasibility study for the spur line to China.

Both for China and the United States, Central Asia is becoming more and more important in a new competition that is based less on ideology than on energy. Although this new 'great game' has been developing for some time, it appears to be sharpening as world oil prices rise. Numerous countries are involved, all seeking to ensure their energy supplies, but with Russia and Kazakhstan known as major suppliers of oil.

Iran provides a significant proportion of China's imported oil, and the two countries have agreed on a deal by which China buys Iranian liquefied natural gas in return for permission for a Chinese company to exploit Iran's Yadavaran oilfield. The oil pipeline from West Kazakhstan to West China proposed in the late 1990s is already in use, and on 25 May 2006 it was used to import crude oil into China through a pipeline for the first time in history. It is estimated that some 10 million tons of oil will go through this pipeline from Kazakhstan to China, a figure that will more than double when the 3,000km pipeline is completed in 2011.47 The pipeline was constructed under a 50–50 joint venture between China National Petroleum Corporation and Kazakhstan's KazMunaiGaz, and 'is a strong symbol of Central Asia's integration by transnational projects'.48 At the same time there is a possibility of another oil and a gas pipeline leading from Kazakhstan into China.49

Early in April 2006, Turkmenistan reached a deal with China to sell it large quantities of oil and natural gas for 30 years beginning in 2009. The pipeline that would facilitate the gas sales would go through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to China, with Turkmenistan likely to rely on China to provide finance to build it. The geopolitical implications are extensive, because Russia has always assumed it enjoys a quasi-monopoly on Turkmen gas and may not relish the competition.50

Meanwhile, when Cheney visited Kazakhstan in May 2006, he 'waded into a messy geopolitical struggle for energy and influence in the countries of the former Soviet Union, rapidly becoming one of the world's largest-producing regions'.51 In essence, this 'messy geopolitical struggle' sees the United States trying to woo Astana away from traditional allies like Russia and to win Kazakhstan's favour against its neighbour and America's enemy Iran, which is also keen to exert influence in the region. The United States wants to direct potential pipelines through countries it can trust or where it can exert control. These include Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Certainly, it does not want pipelines that would make it necessary for Central Asian oil to go through such countries as Russia or Iran. And, within the context of high and rising world oil prices and the continuing booming Chinese economy, the United

States would like to limit China's influence in Central Asia and even oil imports from the region. The new 'great game' over energy is likely to be a major factor determining Sino-American relations and the overall strategic situation in the Central Asian region for the foreseeable future.

Conclusion

The great China and Central Asia specialist Owen Lattimore once called Xinjiang the 'pivot of Asia'.52 And there is still discussion over whether the phrase is appropriate to describe the area, as shown in at least one other chapter in this book. I argue that the phrase can in some ways be applied not just to Xinjiang but to the Central Asian region as a whole. Two factors have added weight to the region's geopolitical significance. These are:

1 It has gained great importance as a source of energy in a world where energy is assuming as critical a role as we are witnessing in contemporary times; and

2 Central Asia has become involved in the war on terror.

Of the two major events of focus in this chapter, the fall of the Soviet Union and the September 11 incidents, the former is much the more important for the Central Asian region. While the countries of Central Asia were part of the Soviet Union their strategic and economic influence was much more crucially determined in Moscow than has been the case since then. It was the fall of the Soviet Union that released some of the main forces that have made the region so influential in the Asian political economy. It appears, for instance, to have been Soviet decline and disintegration that allowed Islamism to rise in the region as quickly as it did. There was a war against terrorism in Central Asia well before September 11.

Yet this is no reason for underestimating the impact of this latter event. While it was much less important for Russia and China than the Soviet collapse, it mattered more to the Americans. And it was they who invaded Afghanistan, thereby involving the region in the war on terror. This invasion has itself crucially altered the geopolitics of Central Asia by bringing American military influence into a region where it never existed beforehand.

From an economic point of view, I again argue that the fall of the Soviet Union was more important than September 11. It was Soviet collapse that brought economic involvement in Central Asia both from China and the United States. Although the rise of energy politics was not new in the early 1990s, it has certainly gathered momentum on a big scale since then, with enormous, far-reaching and probably long-lasting repercussions in the entire Central Asian region.

The impact on Sino-American relations has been multifaceted. In some ways involvement in Central Asia has improved the relationship, but in other ways it has created tensions that did not exist before. The fundamental factor

for more positive relations has been a shared concern to defeat terrorism. The war on terror has greatly increased American fear of Islamist terrorism and hence diverted some of its negative concerns over China, such as human rights and the rise of China. The factors pointing in the opposite direction include tensions over the war in Iraq and the Uyghur prisoners detained in Guantanamo Bay, and rivalry over energy and influence in Central Asia.

This chapter has focused on just a couple of major factors in Central Asia with the potential to affect Sino-American relations and the geopolitics of the region into the twenty-first century. Many other factors are at play that may turn out to be even more important in the future. These include HIV/AIDS, which two writers claimed in 2004 was already spreading in Xinjiang 'like a whirlwind'. They believed it would pose a greater immediate threat to Beijing's control of Xinjiang than Uyghur militancy or terrorism.53 And narcotics and water are among issues that have wide-ranging implications for the societies, economies, politics and international relations of the Central Asian region. Other chapters take up these crucial matters.

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8

Central Asia's domestic stability in official Russian security thinking under Yeltsin and Putin

From hegemony to multilateral pragmatism

Kirill Nourzhanov
Australian National University

After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the Russian leadership did not perceive Central Asia as an important area in its foreign relations. The Atlanticist stance of President Boris Yeltsin and his Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, suggested that Moscow's priorities would aim at integration with the rich, enlightened and democratic West. The newly independent Central Asian republics were looked upon as *aziatshchina*, an area of alien Asian values, and a developmental black hole, from which Russia ought to isolate itself. Regional threats were to be dealt with in the spirit of liberalism, using international norms and institutions. As Kozyrev put it in December 1992,

We must prevent a drift to 'Asiaticism' [*aziatshchina*] … We must draw the region in the CSCE [Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe] process with all its lofty principles … Russia's goals and interests demand ensuring that our international environment is not 'Asiaticism' but the CSCE area with its democratic standards and market rules, or all that is inherent in European political culture.1

Taking issue with such statements, the Kazak President's adviser, Umirserik Kasenov, asked: 'Where does this snobbish Europe-centrism and condescending attitude towards Asia come from? And are Central Asian states inanimate objects in the hands of Russia that it can give away or not give away?'2 Yeltsin's ministers inclined to give an affirmative answer to the latter question. The pro-Western orientation of the Kremlin was complemented by the residual imperial mentality. The Russian government took it for granted that Central Asia would continue to defer to Moscow no matter what. The weight of history and innumerable cultural, economic and military ties sustained this conviction. Boris Yeltsin personally found it difficult to deal with the regional heads of state as the leaders of sovereign independent nations.3

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The line of complacency and neglect was further reinforced by Moscow's desire to rid itself of the fiscal burden inherited from the Soviet period. In 1989, the all-Union budget financed the Central Asian republics to the tune of US$25 billion. In 1992, direct and indirect subsidies from Moscow to the region amounted to approximately US$9 billion, or 5 per cent of Russia's GDP.4 The country's shrinking economy could ill afford such expenditure.

By the mid-1990s the situation had altered dramatically – Central Asia had moved to the forefront of Russian foreign policy discourse. The change was brought about by a number of factors. Russia's honeymoon with the West was over. Idealistic expectations of a harmonious alliance with the West had given way to the primacy of the 'national interest' – defined in a tantalizingly vague manner, it nonetheless dispensed with the 'romantic, infantile pro-Americanism'5 of the previous years. The Central Asian leaders quickly developed a taste for sovereignty and ethnonationalism, and proved to be remarkably adroit at bypassing the former 'Big Brother'. Within Russia, influential groups with specific interests in the region coalesced and made their voices heard. The most important of these were the military, the so-called national-patriotic political parties, and corporate entities, especially oil companies.

Finally, and most significantly, Russian policy-makers had realized that the southern republics of the former USSR formed an integral part of their country's security zone. As an astute observer commented at the time, 'The motive, as in the past, is fear – not so much of a rival great power, but of disorder. The Russians are concerned that turbulence in those regions, if not checked, could creep north.'6 Both 'democrats' and 'national-patriots' in Moscow now agreed that maintaining peace and stability in Central Asia formed Russia's vital interest. Leaving the region, with which Russia shared the longest land frontier in the world (an unfortified and porous frontier at that), simply was not an option.

This consensual view has survived until the present day. At the same time, over the past decade substantial differences have persisted among the Russian political elite over the practical model that Russia ought to follow for the purpose of maintaining stability in Central Asia. Major points of contention can be summarized as follows:

- What are the main factors of instability in Central Asia?
- What instruments does Russia have to maintain order in the region?
- Should preference be given to stability over good governance in dealing with the local regimes?
- How can bilateral, regional and multilateral approaches to security be harmonized?
- Under what circumstances can Russia become militarily involved?

These questions do not take into account diversity within the region; nor

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do they reflect the complexity of geopolitical competition in Central Asia. Nonetheless, they accurately represent the ongoing discussion in the Russian political establishment, which has been striving to elaborate an *overarching* cogent policy towards this region *without* linking it rigidly to Russian–US relations or some other area of 'high geopolitics'. A Russian academic, writing in 1996, referred to relations between Moscow and the newly independent states of Central Asia as a 'collection of uncertainties'.7 We can now proceed with an examination of how successfully these uncertainties have been rectified by the Russian leadership over the past decade.

Boris Yeltsin and the magic wand of integration (1994–2000)

The first concise document outlining the Russian understanding of threats to Central Asian security appeared in September 1994. Entitled *Russia-CIS: Does the West's Position Need Correction?*, it was prepared by the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and published under the signature of its Director, Evgenii Primakov.8 The report highlighted the following factors of insecurity applying to Central Asia:

- tensions between ethnic Russians and the eponymous populations
- inter-state and ethnic conflicts
- proximity of Afghanistan
- involvement of Iran and Turkey
- encroachment by the 'leading countries of the "far abroad"' (i.e. the USA and, possibly, China)
- deterioration of the socio-economic situation
- Islamic extremism

It also suggested a solution to all these problems – reintegration with Russia under the aegis of the Commonwealth of Independent States (the CIS). The success of this project 'would lead to stabilization, democratization, the advancement of reform', while its failure 'will be accompanied by an intensification in authoritarian and undemocratic trends. The criminalization of society, the infringement of ethnic minorities' rights, and mass violations of human rights will be additional destabilizing factors.'

The SVR report was merely a position paper, a statement of intent by a group of intelligence officers and analysts influenced by the recrudescent ideology of Eurasianism. However, after Primakov's promotion to head the Foreign Ministry in January 1996, its main clauses were incorporated into the official state policy. The Russian National Security Blueprint enacted by presidential edict in December 1997 stated that 'The deepening and development of relations with CIS member states is a most important factor promoting the settlement of ethno-political and inter-ethnic conflicts, ensuring socio-political stability along Russia's borders, and ultimately preventing centrifugal phenomena within Russia itself.'9 It also referred to the attempts by

third parties to limit Moscow's influence in Central Asia as an explicit threat to its national security. Despite routine declarations about the equal and voluntary partnership within the CIS, Yeltsin's integrationist project in the second half of the 1990s had all the features of a hegemonic alliance. The Central Asian countries were to be corralled into a political and military bloc where they would cede part of their sovereignty. In return, the Kremlin promised security and economic prosperity. The willing participation of the Central Asian leaders was taken for granted. Their carefully worded objections and alternative projects of integration, such as Nursultan Nazarbyaev's 1994 proposal of a Eurasian Union, were ignored as mere opportunistic attempts to carve a better deal within the impending Commonwealth. Even the disastrous war in Chechnya did not spoil official Russian triumphalism: 'Moscow indeed has the levers required for the creation of a new type of "velvet empire", based on financial, economic and military dependence of the post-Soviet states on Russia.'10

Rudderless and Sailless: the failure of the CIS solution

The results of Yeltsin's strategy for stability in Central Asia were disappointing (to say the least). Multiple CIS summits and feverish activity of its bureaucratic structures, sponsored and directed by Moscow, led to few concrete results. As of mid-1999, '90 per cent of more than 2,000 documents signed within the CIS framework remained scraps of paper. The inner problems of the Commonwealth have not been solved, on the contrary, they continue to aggravate.'11 The impulse for integration failed to mitigate any of the factors of instability in Central Asia.

The economic sphere

The main reason for this failure was economic. The key element in Yeltsin's plan to create a prosperous common market consisted of so-called financial– industrial groups (FIGs). By bringing under one roof remnants of the highly integrated and specialized Soviet industry, they were supposed to evolve as efficient transnational corporations, especially in hi-tech areas such as the nuclear and aerospace industries and power generation. The idea was still-born. Very different legal regimes (especially property laws), unavailability of start-up capital, obsolete equipment and direct competition for markets overseas resulted in a paltry 20 FIGs being established across the CIS between 1994 and 2000 (by comparison, Western corporations set up 2,000 affiliates in the CIS over the same period).12 Russian trade with Central Asia plummeted, especially following the financial crisis of 1998. In 1999, its exports to the region amounted to US$1.67 billion, registering a 2.5 fold decrease compared to 1996.13 The situation with imports was not much better.

Private investors from Russia by and large ignored Central Asia. One study estimated the volume of Russian investment at less than 10 per cent of the

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total foreign direct investment in the region of US$8 billion between 1996 and 2000.14 This figure in itself was completely inadequate as far as the development needs of the region were concerned. An all-out trade war between Russia and Kazakhstan in 1999 destroyed the last illusions about Moscow's self-ascribed role as a locomotive of joint economic renaissance.

The only meaningful economic activity that tied Russia and Central Asia throughout the 1990s was the endless cycle of politically motivated debt write-offs and trade subsidies from Moscow.15 One author assessed the value of such 'economic gifts' at 0.7 to 1 billion US dollars a year.16 This was enough to elicit token loyalty from the local leaders, but insufficient to expedite an economic breakthrough in the region.

The political sphere

Political integration did not occur at all. To the contrary, the second half of the 1990s was marked by the growing disregard of Moscow's policy preferences within the CIS on the part of the Central Asian elites. Yeltsin tried to check this trend by signing bilateral agreements with the Central Asian leaders. The Declaration on Eternal Freedom and Alliance between Russia and Kazakhstan initialled in July 1998 was a typical document. It contained a bombastic pledge that 'the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation as good neighbours take upon themselves to consider in full measure each other's lawful interests in the political, economic, military and other areas'.17 The vagueness of the formula and the absence of a practical implementation mechanism made such pronouncements useless.

By that time all Central Asian countries had evolved neo-patrimonial sultanistic regimes, which jealously guarded their sovereignty and professed to follow their unique path of political development. They reacted nervously to attempts by the Kremlin to position itself as the custodian of liberal values and chief mediator between governments and opposition groups in the region.18 Turar Koichuev, President of the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences and advisor to Askar Akayev, publicly condemned the perception of Central Asian societies as 'modern feudalism' and 'Asian absolutism' current in Russia.19 In July 1994 the leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan formed the Central Asian Union (CAU), a virtual entity whose only purpose was to let Russia know of their displeasure when it overstepped the line.

Gradually Moscow abandoned its high moral ground on democracy and authoritarianism. After 1993 Boris Yeltsin could hardly claim to be an accomplished liberal himself. The course of events in the region demonstrated that, contrary to the conviction prevalent in the West (and among the Russian Atlanticists), the absence of representative and accountable government *was not* a serious security risk. The peoples of Central Asia were not pining for democracy and liberty; they were primarily interested in order and economic survival.20 Finally, the civil war in Tajikistan during 1992–97, where the Yeltsin government initially supported one faction on the strength of its

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implied democratic credentials, demonstrated that ideological affinity is not always the most efficient factor for sensible foreign policy aimed at stability.

Having given up its commitment to Western-type democracy, Moscow did not generate any ideal type of political system for the post-Soviet space. In the meantime, Central Asian presidents displayed remarkable creativity in this area, tapping into the vast intellectual tradition ranging from Plato to John Stuart Mill to justify their rule. President Emomali Rahmonov of Tajikistan eventually came up with a fascinating dictum, 'Democratic political fundamentalism runs contrary to the basic freedom of the individual', while his Turkmen colleague modestly proclaimed: 'I, as the Head of State, have assumed the responsibility for the fate of my people … Political pluralism would threaten, if not destroy, the internal harmony for which our country is renowned.'21

Russian officials ended up putting a premium on the political status quo over democratic and representative government in Central Asia. Their position became purely reactive, accepting whatever experiments the regional potentates conducted on their populations, so long as they didn't rock the CIS boat. This became evident in 1995, when the presidents of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan extended their tenure in office without going through the charade of elections. The smooth retention of power by the incumbents wouldn't have been possible without acquiescence from Moscow. In a series of bilateral meetings and negotiations, Boris Yeltsin decided not to bring up the issue of ethnic Russians in Central Asia – the most vocal critics of authoritarian and exclusionary rule in the region.22

As already discussed, discrimination against ethnic Russians and Russified members of titular nationalities was identified as one of the most important factors of instability in Central Asia by policy-makers in Moscow. The 1993 Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation listed 'the suppression of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests' of compatriots as an 'external military danger' which may trigger the deployment of armed force against the offender. Thus, it is quite remarkable that the Yeltsin government did excruciatingly little throughout the 1990s to improve the situation. The litany of grievances emanating from the region was extensive. The physical and psychological pressure to leave was compounded by draconian linguistic legislation, restricted access to government positions and tertiary education, day-to-day abuse, and cultural blockade. A Kazak journalist observed in 1998:

Over the past 3–4 years the unified information and cultural-psychological space of Russia and Kazakhstan has been contracting like chagrin skin. This causes strong discomfort and feelings close to despair not only amongst Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians, but also amongst a significant portion of the Kazak population brought up on Russian literature and culture.23

'The number of people ready for armed struggle against the illegal regime [of

Nazarbayev] is on the rise,' opined one of the leaders of the Russian community in Kazakhstan, and added that 'the leadership of Russia has the right to restore constitutional order in Kazakhstan just like it does in Chechnya.'24 Moscow's response was to arrest a few chauvinist hotheads on its territory and push for dual citizenship, which the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan easily rejected. The juggernaut of ethnocratic politics continued to roll on.

The military and security sphere

Its economic and political weakness notwithstanding, Russia was uniquely positioned to create and lead a military alliance that would contribute to stability in Central Asia. It succeeded in convincing all the region's countries except Turkmenistan to join the CIS Collective Security Treaty (CST). This document provided for collective defence, non-aggression, non-violent conflict resolution, and joint efforts to counter threats to 'security, territorial integrity and sovereignty' involving member states. In practice, the CST meant Russia's military hegemony, which was highlighted in its 1993 Military Doctrine: 'The interests of the security of the Russian Federation and other states belonging to the CIS may require troops (forces) and resources to be deployed outside the territory of the Russian Federation.'25 Turkmenistan did not join the CST, yet concluded separate agreements with Moscow sanctioning the deployment of Russian border guards on its soil.

Like so many other CIS agreements, the CST remained largely on paper. Its only success in Central Asia was a peacekeeping operation in Tajikistan, which put an end to the hottest phase of the civil war in that country in the autumn of 1992. Even here the success was relative, because the low-intensity warfare continued for five more years. Russia did not emerge as a universal protector and conflict arbiter in the region. Throughout the 1990s Central Asia remained a zone of interstate tension. Disputes over borders, enclaves, resources such as water and hydrocarbons, perceived historical injustices and minorities, which often went unreported and unnoticed by the rest of the world, had the potential to escalate into an all-out war.26 That they didn't was by no means owing to Russia's presence.

The ultimate test of the CST efficiency came in 1999 when a group of insurgents associated with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) crossed the frontier from Afghanistan (patrolled by Russian border guards) and made a raid through Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to the Ferghana Valley. Russian officials denied military assistance to the government of Kyrgyzstan, which allowed the insurgents to escape and return again the next year. The impotence of the CST was accentuated by Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the treaty in May 1999.

The failure of Yeltsin's military strategy in Central Asia stemmed from the miscalculation of threats to the region. Russia's apprehensions about the expansionist intentions of foreign powers proved utterly unfounded in the

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eyes of Central Asians. Writing in 1996, Nazarbayev's national security adviser attacked the 'myth of the Chinese threat' propounded by Moscow and continued:

The Central Asian countries have no manifestations of pan-Turkic and pan-Islamist solidarity … Iran is not and will not be a source of military threat for the states of Central Asia … contacts with NATO are expanding, and joint programmes are being realized in the security sphere.27

Even the Taliban regime in Afghanistan turned out to be a straw bogeyman. Moscow was preparing to defend the region from an external aggression by another state. When it didn't eventuate, Russian services were no longer needed, and the Kremlin had little to offer to the local regimes by way of mobile and professional forces capable of dealing with the real danger of Islamist insurgents.28

Another area where Russian performance in securing stability in Central Asia was below par involved transnational organized crime, especially drug trafficking. Multiple agreements on combating narcotics were signed within the CIS, but hardly any of these went into effect. Russian border guards who stayed in Turkmenistan and Tajikistan until 1999 and 2005 respectively turned out to be helpless in stemming the ever increasing flow of drugs from Afghanistan. Most significantly, the emergence of powerful drug lords in Tajikistan following the 1997 power-sharing agreement in that country occurred with Russia's connivance.29 Extremely high levels of addiction, an HIV epidemic putting strain on the already struggling health systems, rampant criminality and endemic corruption have been some of the more pernicious effects of the narcotics business in the region, undermining its stability.30

Russia has been hit by drugs originating from Afghanistan as well. Eighty per cent of heroin consumed in Russia comes through Central Asia. The official (and much understated) number of addicts in the country has risen fourfold since 1990, and seizures of heroin have increased from 6.5kg to 2,093kg between 1995 and 2000.31 In a fit of panic and desperation, the Russian Government Commission on Combating Narcotics in 2001 suggested abandoning the unwinnable fight in Central Asia and erecting a *cordon sanitaire* on the border with Kazakhstan.

In sum, the official Russian strategy of maintaining peace and stability in Central Asia based on integration of the CIS under Russian hegemony could not and did not work. From the start Russian understanding of security threats and the means to counter them was at variance with the vision of the Central Asian leaders. Russia did not have sufficient financial, technological or even military resources to carry out the role of a universal protector and benefactor in the region. Moscow's insistence on the exclusivity of its sphere of national interests, exacerbated by the reappearance of Cold War-like paranoia about US activities around the Caspian basin, denied it an option

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of sharing the load with other parties. Interestingly, some Russian observers towards the end of the Yeltsin period began to intimate that the West was encouraging Russia to follow its existing flawed policy: 'The West is interested in Russia's sinking deeper into the ungrateful, laborious and unpredictable job of maintaining an acceptable level of stability in Central Asia.'32 The implication was that while Russia exhausted itself acting as a gendarme in the region, Western powers would reap economic benefits from its vast natural resources. While such conspiracy theories did not gain much currency in the Kremlin, Russian policy-makers were in dire need to rethink their approaches to Central Asian stability as the twenty-first century dawned.

The 9/11 interlude

As Vladimir Putin assumed the presidency of the Russian Federation, nothing suggested a dramatic change of course. In 2000 three important documents outlining the new leadership's vision for the Near Abroad and Central Asia in particular were published. They showed a great deal of continuity with the preceding era, and at the same time demonstrated a shift in accents and priorities. Attempts of other states to 'weaken Russia's positions' in sensitive regions including Central Asia were identified as a national security threat in the National Security Concept. This time around it was the USA and NATO, and not Iran and Turkey, who were named as the main culprits. The change of guard among the 'bad guys' was not Putin's initiative. It simply captured the mood of the last years of Yeltsin's presidency.

The Foreign Policy Concept continued to refer to the CIS as the best mechanism to implement the national security tasks of the country, with a special emphasis on settling conflicts in the former Soviet republics. However, it also spoke about 'different-speed and different-level integration', which was a subtle departure from the one-size-fits-all attitude of Boris Yeltsin. The Military Doctrine played down the possibility of direct foreign aggression. It singled out a 'humanitarian intervention' bypassing the UN and international law as the most likely conventional military threat – an obvious allusion to the NATO campaign in the Balkans in 1999. It then proceeded to name terrorist structures and extreme separatist, nationalist and religious organizations, combined with transnational drug and arms trafficking syndicates, as the greatest danger for Russia and its allies. The Doctrine envisaged the creation of Russian military bases abroad to ensure prompt reaction to the threats outlined above. This clause was not present in the 1993 Doctrine. Thus it appears that on the doctrinal level Russia's official assessment of factors of instability in its 'soft underbelly' became more realistic and calibrated, while retaining its hegemonic tenor.

One circumstance did set Yeltsin and Putin apart rather dramatically. The former could never overcome the mentality of a tsar or a General Secretary, clinging instinctively to the fading imperial grandeur. The latter, a quintessential technocrat with no ideological baggage of Soviet-style politics, could

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adapt to the changing situation rapidly and map out a new course that was in synch with the wishes of the region's leaders, resulting in a much more informed and nuanced approach to stability in Central Asia. As Martha Brill Olcott has observed, Putin started by 'winning favour with his Central Asian colleagues by treating each of the region's presidents more like his equal than Yeltsin had ever done'.33

However, the opportunity to break away from the Procrustean bed of musty doctrines as far as Russian policy in Central Asia was concerned did not arise from listening to the 'philosopher-kings' of the region. It came in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the USA. Overcoming the age-old stereotypes and resistance from the conservative military-intelligence circles, Putin opted for close cooperation with the Bush Administration to ensure stability in Central Asia. The period between late 2001 and March 2003 was a rare juncture when all Central Asian states, Russia and the USA were in agreement about the security needs of the region and worked in unison to destroy Islamic radicals and normalize the situation in Afghanistan.

The joint declaration of Putin and Bush after the Moscow summit on 24 May 2002 read:

In Central Asia and the South Caucasus, we recognize our common interest in promoting the stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all the nations of this region. The United States and Russia reject the failed model of 'Great Power' rivalry that can only increase the potential for conflict in those regions. We will support economic and political development and respect for human rights while we broaden our humanitarian cooperation and cooperation on counterterrorism and counternarcotics.34

Now it was the USA's turn to carry out the 'ungrateful, laborious and unpredictable job' of policing the region. NATO troops were deployed in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. So long as Washington objectively contributed to stability in Central Asia, the Kremlin was prepared to forgo its erstwhile efforts at hegemony: 'Tashkent's decision to place itself squarely under the patronage of Washington, accompanied by the deployment of American forces in Uzbekistan, was accepted by Putin.'35 Simultaneously, the Russian leadership disengaged from the CIS project. The process had reached its natural conclusion by 2005, when Putin announced that the organization 'was created for a civilized divorce … If somebody expected of the CIS any particular achievements in the sphere of economy, in political, military cooperation, then, naturally, this did not happen because this could not happen.'36

A highly influential Moscow-based think tank, the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (CFDP), released a discussion paper entitled 'New Security Challenges and Russia' in November 2002.37 Praising Putin for using effectively the 'fortuitous opportunity' accorded by the War on Terror (a feat that it

ascribed to CFDP's sage advice), it recommended further pragmatism and selectivity in relations with the Near Abroad. It also provided a new assessment of threats to stability in Central Asia. In addition to the obvious dangers of terrorism and extremism, it focused on the notion of 'failing states'. However, far from attributing this failure to the lack of democracy as the West was wont to do, it argued that the incumbent regimes were losing control owing to traditional 'pre-globalization' factors. A former official from the Presidential Archive in Kazakhstan, who later became an adviser to the Russian Duma, deciphered this rather vague message: 'One should clearly understand that in today's Central Asia the determining factor of power consists of clannish tribalism … The trend is towards an organic morphing of the formal presidential republics into the informal khanates.'38 His advice was to support the incumbents, albeit in a pragmatic manner, without onerous long-term commitments. A similar suggestion came from a former Russian diplomat in Tashkent:

Obviously, we should not borrow American tactics of emphasis on the human rights issue yet we should not reject contacts with prominent opposition leaders. Normally, in Central Asia opposition is latent, therefore we should use our contacts with the regional and clan figures.39

Putin took all this on board. References to 'political development and respect for human rights' continued to appear in his speeches; yet they began to mean something quite different from the Western liberal interpretation. The ultimate result was the correction of the security condominium with the US in Central Asia.

In search of a pragmatic balance: the democracy redux and multilateralism

In 2003 signs began to appear that the Central Asians were not happy with the US performance as a guarantor of stability. While all five nations endorsed the US-led campaign in Afghanistan in 2001, only Uzbekistan welcomed the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. All others joined ranks with France, Germany and Russia in calling for the cessation of violence and UN involvement. Their reasoning was straightforward: the war in Iraq would undermine the process of normalization in Afghanistan. The Taliban may have been ousted from power, but in the opinion of the Central Asian leaders security threats associated with radical Islamist groups and drug trafficking had not been fully resolved and had in fact gained in acuteness. The head of the Institute of Strategic Studies (KISI), a top think tank attached to the President of Kazakhstan, summarized these sentiments:

If the campaign in Iraq becomes prolonged, in all likelihood the situation in Afghanistan will be put even more in the background. And this is

fraught with a series of negative outcomes … inevitably affecting the situation in the Central Asian region.40

Furthermore, the Bush Administration repeated the two mistakes of Boris Yeltsin. Despite calls for a 'Marshall Plan for Central Asia' inside the US and the region, its attempts to create a security system in Central Asia were not accompanied by a large-scale programme of economic development. An even bigger blunder was the American policy-makers' conviction that they had the right and the ability to prescribe the rules of domestic politics to the local elites.

The ruling elites of the region tolerated, absorbed and deflected criticism by the West of their dubious record of human rights violations, suppression of civic freedoms, and endemic corruption. This was the price they were prepared to pay for security. However, when Washington started to export its preferred model of liberalization, directly contributing to regime change in the former Soviet Union, its image as a harbinger of stability quickly turned into that of a major source of instability. A chain of so-called 'Coloured Revolutions' began in Georgia in 2003, continued in Ukraine in 2004, and finally reached Kyrgyzstan in March 2005. None of them represented a mass spontaneous movement aimed at destroying corrupt authoritarianism. Using the discourse of democracy, factions from the already existing elite came to power without the slightest desire to change the rules of the political game. Even President Islam Karimov started to have second thoughts about the utility of a strategic partnership with the United States: 'Because it did not take into account the situation on the ground, the rapid democratization that was ever more persistently demanded by Uzbekistan's Western partners carried with it the risk of severe destabilization.'41

The riots in Andijan in Uzbekistan in May 2005 were also interpreted by the Central Asian leaders as an attempt at a *coup d'état* inspired from abroad. In the assessment of KISI, 'The events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan demonstrated how destructive an abrupt change of power can be. Indeed, these experiments showed the extent to which the West is expediting the spread of the "coloured revolutions".'42 The panic mood of the Kazakh leadership in anticipation of the upcoming presidential elections, which might have been used to trigger yet another coup, seeped through a statement from a high-ranking Kazak official from the department of the State Chancellor: 'The ruling elite, acting not in the interests of staying in power but in the interests of ensuring national security and territorial integrity of the state, not only has the right but is obliged to use coercive means at its disposal.'43

The concerns of the Central Asian leaders were shared by Russia. The common perception of the 'coloured revolutions' as a threat formed a new pivot for Moscow's thinking about regional stability. In his state of the nation address in April 2005, Putin made a programmatic statement: 'Russia should continue its civilizing mission on the Eurasian continent. This mission consists in ensuring that democratic values, combined with national interests, enrich and strengthen our historic community.'44 Thus the USA was denied a

monopoly on interpreting what constitutes 'democratic values', and a message was sent to the Central Asian leaders that they can count on Russia's understanding and support in their historically distinct Eurasian path of state-building.

The Putin doctrine?

The operationalization of the new 'Putin Doctrine' for Central Asia is still under way.45 As always, there are various schools of thought and interest groups debating the most practical ways to ensure stability in the region in the changed conditions. Nonetheless, an official consensus on the nature of threats has been reached. It has been well captured by Gennadii Chufrin, an influential academic close to the Kremlin:

The events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have confirmed that challenges to the existing order in the Central Asian countries stem not just from the forces of Islamic extremism and international terrorism, but also from the USA, which has embarked upon the path of the export of democracy and direct support of the 'coloured revolutions'.46

Chufrin continued his analysis with a list of factors that make the region vulnerable to these threats:

- poverty
- fragmented elites
- military weakness

Stanislav Chernyavsky, Deputy Director of the 1st Department (the CIS countries) of the Foreign Ministry of Russia, has spelled out basic principles of addressing domestic sources of instability in Central Asia as follows:

The Russian strategy must rest on sound pragmatism stemming from the country's relatively limited foreign-policy resources. These resources must concentrate on key areas, above all, on security, the creation of favourable conditions for economic growth, and the protection of the rights of Russian citizens and ethnic Russians living in the region.47

Pragmatism, deference to the opinion of the Central Asians, and multilateralism involving international partners (insofar as it does not undermine stability) are the catch cries of the emerging Russian line for the time being.

The economic sphere

Poverty reduction is regarded as a key element of the overall strategy to maintain order in the region. Unless it is accomplished, combating such ills as

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narcotics, extremism and terrorism would be futile. In sharp contrast to the Yeltsin period, forced economic reintegration is not on the Kremlin's agenda. Projects such as the Eurasian Economic Commonwealth (EurAsEC) and Single Economic Space (SES) are extremely slow-moving and boil down to the harmonization of trade tariffs. Investment from Russia is a much more efficient tool. Again, unlike the 1990s, the flow of capital to Central Asia does not pursue the goal of political hegemony and is not orchestrated by officials: 'the only sector in which we found much evidence of Russian government involvement in foreign investment decisions by Russian companies was in the energy sector, and even here investments appear to have been driven by corporate rather than government motives.'48

The congruence of interests of the newly confident and cash-rich Russian business, the Kremlin and the Central Asian leaders has led to impressive results. The arrival of RusAl, RAO EES, and Gazprom in Tajikistan has injected US$2 billion into its struggling economy as of 2006, and will ensure a dynamic development of the impoverished republic's core industries, i.e. aluminium production and hydropower generation, for decades to come.49

Another area where Russia could make a difference for many Central Asians living in poverty is labour migration. There are some one million guest workers from the region staying in Russia at any given time, and their remittances are vitally important for sustaining a decent quality of life back home.50 While on a visit to Tajikistan in 2003, Putin pledged to expedite and regularize labour migration and improve living conditions for migrants, primarily through reducing red tape and police arbitrariness.

The political sphere

Vladimir Lukin, a veteran of Russian diplomacy and presently the country's Human Rights Commissioner, has mapped out Moscow's official attitude to domestic politics in Central Asia:

Russia's experience of dealing with Central Asia is unique in many respects; therefore, the Russian Federation should encourage the secular regimes there by working toward good-neighbourly relations in the region and practical approaches to the social and economic problems, the main catalysts of regional instability. We should bear in mind, however, that excessively harsh domestic policies preferred by some of the regional regimes as well as thoughtless 'games at democracy' are fraught … with outbursts of radicalism and extremism. Our encouragement of the openly authoritarian regimes should be conditioned by their step-by-step movement toward a more open and less repressive government.51

In order to allay the fears of the incumbent rulers about the extent and content of Moscow's pressure, as well as the speed of the required change,

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President Putin has put in place important caveats and intimated that political exchange would go both ways:

We would like to achieve synchronization of the pace and parameters of reform processes under way in Russia and the other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States. We are ready to draw on the genuinely useful experience of our neighbours and also to share with them our own ideas and the results of our work.52

All things considered, the Russian leader has spoken in favour of a gradual authoritarian withdrawal towards some form of guided (limited, electoral, etc.) democracy.

Moscow has undertaken steps to preclude the use of alleged voting irregularities as a trigger for regime change. One major innovation has been the creation of a plethora of international election observer missions under the auspices of the CIS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). As one Russian official has explained, 'Unfortunately, the activity of [Western] observers is being increasingly used both by opposition forces within a particular state and by foreign "champions of democracy" as a tool for exerting political pressure within that country.'53

Since 2000, the Kremlin has tried for the first time to project 'soft power' across Central Asia in earnest. The Russian-sponsored Slavic Universities in Bishkek and Dushanbe are now prestigious tertiary institutions churning out future elites. The former was chosen by 186 out of 200 top school leavers in Kyrgyzstan to continue their education in 2003.

In May 2005 an inconspicuous non-profit organization called the Institute of Eurasian Studies (IES) was registered in Moscow. Its chartered objective is 'to restore and develop cultural, humanitarian and educational ties among the former republics of the USSR, belonging to the historic Eurasian space.'54 The IES appears to have unlimited (if opaque) funding. It has set up local branches not only in capital cities but also provincial towns in Central Asia. Its activities include cultural events, scholarships, building up libraries – as well as giving friendly advice to the region's officials on constitutional law and public administration – and developing modern civic society. It also supports moderate opposition, such as the Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan. The IES regularly commissions high-quality sociological surveys, which enables it to monitor public opinion on the ground closely. The spectrum and depth of the IES operations approximate those of the USAID-sponsored NGOs – perhaps it has been designed as a counterweight to the latter.

Moscow has acknowledged the importance of proactive work with ethnic Russians in the Near Abroad. A special department has been set up within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs towards this end. According to its director, 'Russia's strategic goal is aimed at turning its compatriots into law-abiding citizens of their countries, enjoying full rights and actively promoting

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Russia's interests.'55 Between 2002 and 2005, the relevant appropriation in the federal budget increased by 235 per cent.

The military and security sphere

Moscow's multilateral approach to maintaining Central Asia's stability is most salient in the military/security area. It currently operates two military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the status and responsibilities of which are clearly defined. Speaking about the latter, the Duma's Defence Committee Chairman, Mikhail Babich, named 'the protection of the most important objects in Tajikistan, assistance to the armed forces of that country in case of an armed conflict and/or an incursion by terrorist or bandit groups from adjacent territories' as the Russian troops' main tasks.56 This is precisely the guarantee that the local leaders wished to hear, lest the IMU raids of 1999 and 2000 occur again. At the same time, Babich denied the possibility of opening other bases in the region, although such provisions exist, for example, in the 2004 Agreement on Strategic Partnership between Russia and Uzbekistan.

In general, bilateral and region-wide military pacts involving Russia and the Central Asian states (such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization) are much more concrete and businesslike in tone than their predecessors in the 1990s. The above-mentioned 2004 Agreement prioritizes the deliveries of Russian armaments, training of Uzbek officers, and joint exercises.

Moscow's strategy since 2001 has been to share policing duties in Central Asia with the USA and China. The former retains a base in Kyrgyzstan, and the latter is a dominant member of the SCO, which has a counterterrorist and intelligence component. This arrangement has generated fierce internal criticism in Russia. Sergei Karaganov, CFDP Chairman of the Board, defended Putin's current policy, citing commonality of interests in securing the region. He also attacked 'the parrots of the Cold War who, because of senility, stupidity or self-interest keep croaking on both sides about a "fight over Central Asia" and see in each step a "victory" or a "defeat"'.57

Dealing with China

Pragmatic engagement with China has been a hallmark of Putin's strategy in Central Asia. When anxiety about Beijing's intentions is observed among the top brass in the Russian army and security establishment,58 this reflects wishful thinking on the part of Western analysts rather than the Kremlin's official line. In the words of a top-ranking Russian diplomat, 'one may state that the relations between the two countries have reached an unprecedentedly high level. They have no major irritants, nor is the emergence of any such irritants on the cards in the future.'59

The emerging Sino-Russian compact in the region is grounded in the complementarity of objectives and threat perceptions. China's strategic interests

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in Central Asia have been clearly formulated: containment of separatism in Xinjiang; securing Central Asia as a stable and friendly rearguard; and promotion of trade, especially in energy resources.60 So long as Beijing does not go beyond this essentially conservative agenda Moscow has no problems with any of the above. Indeed, its position concerning the Uyghur question has been very close to that of the Chinese government, which expedited the creation and continuous functioning of the SCO.61 In 2000, Russia handed over two Uyghur mujahideen captured in Chechnya to the Chinese authorities.

The SCO's consensual treatment of Uyghur separatism, Chechen insurgency and Central Asian Islamist opposition as elements of a global terrorist network found its institutional embodiment in 2004 when the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) was launched under its auspices. Situated in Tashkent, it is charged with tracking regional terrorist activities, sharing intelligence and advising members about counterterrorist policies. In March 2006 RATS held its first anti-terrorist exercises in Uzbekistan with all SCO member-states participating.

The success of RATS also highlights the limits of China's power in the region. It is the *only* specialized permanent body of the SCO (apart from a tiny Secretariat) currently in existence. Neither Russia nor the Central Asian republics have been keen to embrace initiatives at greater political, economic and security cooperation floated, rather tentatively, by China. Russia does not want to share fully its newly acquired leadership role, while the Central Asians still feel apprehensive about their neighbour to the East. According to a 2005 sociological survey, 84 per cent of Kyrgyz citizens viewed Russia as a 'friend', while China topped the list of 'enemies' with 23 per cent; 74 per cent of those polled objected to the presence of Chinese troops on Kyrgyz soil under any circumstances.62 The Central Asian countries are happy to pursue free trade and massive development projects with Russia. However, when it comes to opening economically to China, they 'are likely to want to apply the brakes and channel as many benefits as possible through direct bilateral investments for some time'.63

In summary, Russia and the Central Asian states consider China as an important ally in preserving the political status quo in the region against internal opposition (especially of the extremist persuasion) and external pressures for regime change. They grow rich from trade with China, but maintain protectionist barriers. In return, Beijing receives support in its efforts to pacify its troublesome Western provinces. 'China is afraid to encroach on the domineering influence of Russia,' opined its former Ambassador to Moscow, Li Fenlin: 'Taking into account the self-awareness of the region's countries as newly independent states, China has been avoiding actions which might be interpreted as imposing its will upon these countries'.64 It is difficult to predict for how long this balance of interests will persist. A well-informed Kazak analyst has forecast that by 2020 China will eclipse Russia and acquire a hegemonic position in the region, primarily through 'economic and

demographic methods'.65 It is unclear whether Moscow has a contingency plan for such an eventuality.

Conclusion

Official Russian thinking on Central Asian stability has travelled a long way. As a subset of Moscow's general foreign policy strategy, it followed the latter's twists and turns with unfailing regularity. However, with the exception of the first couple of years after the USSR's dissolution, it has been founded on recognition of the fact that order, internal peace and absence of conflicts in this region are vitally important for Russia's own security.

In the final analysis, all the issues covered above can be reduced to one question – 'What does Russia want from the Central Asian republics?' According to Konstantin Kosachev, Chairman of the Duma Committee on International Relations, the answer is 'loyalty, friendship, good neighbourly relations, continued economic ties and secure borders'.66 The present course of Putin's government seems to be well suited to achieve these objectives. However, it is not set in stone; it hasn't even been codified in a concise doctrine. Demands for greater certainty, transparency and continuity in Moscow's official position vis-à-vis Central Asia are on the rise from the region: 'Sooner or later Russia will have to formulate the principal foundations of its policy more cogently ... It cannot regard the countries of Central Asia in the same category as other CIS states. A special approach is required here.'67 Whether Russia stays the present course, lapses into neo-imperialism or withdraws into isolationism depends on many internal and external factors, which warrant separate and thorough investigation beyond the scope of this study.

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9

‘Glocality’, ‘Silk Roads’ and new and little ‘great games’ in Xinjiang and Central Asia

Michael Clarke
Griffith Asia Institute

Don McMillen began this volume by outlining an analytical framework of ‘glocality’ that he suggested was implicit to the essays of all contributors. It is now timely to revisit this idea not only in the context of the specific issues explored and analysed by each of the contributors but also to explore the broader themes that link what on the surface might appear to be disparate papers with discrete concerns. His suggestion to begin thinking ‘glocally’ about the various geopolitical, political, economic, diplomatic and cultural issues that were the focus of the contributors highlights the pre-eminent theme that binds all the preceding essays together – the ‘apparent seamlessness between the macro and the micro affairs of actors within Central Asia and Xinjiang’ and their subsequent impact on regional and global ‘fields’. In this process, however, one particular issue appears to frame all others – the issue of identity. What is striking in contemporary Xinjiang and Central Asia, and is borne out in the contributions to this volume, is the simultaneous existence, evolution and development of forms of identity from the individual to state to regional levels that often pull in opposite directions.

One of particular importance, which the contributors have touched on in significant detail, concerns conceptions or visions of ‘Central Asia’ from both outside and inside the region itself. Much of the period since the watershed moment of the Soviet collapse of 1991 has witnessed attempts by both the newly independent states of Central Asia and the dominant external players, Russia and China, to come to grips with the political, economic and strategic consequences of this development. Questions raised explicitly and implicitly in this regard have concerned, for example, whether one can speak of ‘Central Asia’ as a region, whether Xinjiang or Afghanistan are rightly encompassed by the term, whether ‘Central Asia’ is the ‘pivot’ or ‘periphery’ of world history and whether ‘integration’ is occurring between Xinjiang and Central Asia. Yet these questions are asked from an external perspective in an attempt to establish knowledge of the region from the outside-in. A number of contributors have dwelt upon this theme at length, particularly those concerned with the approaches of the dominant external powers in the region, Russia, China and, in the post-11 September 2001 period, the US, and those concerned with a long-term historical perspective of the region’s place and

role in world history. Indeed, the contributions of James Millward, Geoff Watson, Colin Mackerras and Kirill Nourzhanov have highlighted the central role that such a re-visioning of the region by dominant external powers has played in shaping their policies toward the region.

Complementing these approaches have been those contributions that have sought to provide a perspective of the region from within. In this respect Ann McMillan and Ablet Kamalov's chapters have dwelt at length upon such issues as the underlying economic and political interdependency of Xinjiang and Central Asia and the changing approach of the Soviet Union and the Central Asian states to the Uyghur diaspora in Central Asia. These contributions highlight not only the increasing interconnectivity across the region but also the impact of developments at the micro-level on the macro-level and vice versa. Thus the chapters in this volume encompass perspectives that address, in Don McMillen's phrase, the 'little and great "games"' that are currently being played out in Xinjiang and Central Asia. Prior to turning to discuss the significant interconnections between these little and great games in Xinjiang and Central Asia it is useful to explore how the concept of 'glocality' can be effectively deployed to help us develop new perspectives and understandings of the region's geopolitical, economic and cultural 'realities'.

The dynamics of 'Glocality' in contemporary Xinjiang and Central Asia

'All experience is local … We are always in place, and place is always with us.'1

Drawing on the scholarship of Roland Robertson and Robert Holton, Don McMillen reminded us in his thoughtful introduction that many of the dominant themes of post-1991 developments in Xinjiang and Central Asia addressed by the contributors – from great power politics, radical Islamism, terrorism and ethnic nationalism to economic modernization – encompass actors and actions that are often simultaneously local and global in origin and effect.2 More importantly, the reality of 'glocality' – the syncretic interpenetration of the 'global' and the 'local' – raises to the forefront the salience of identity for scholars and other observers interested in developing an understanding of contemporary Xinjiang and Central Asia. This dynamic operates at least at two levels: the state level and the societal level. With respect to the state level, what emerges from the accounts of the dominant external actors here, Russia, China and the US, is that the respective governments bring to the table distinct visions or conceptions, firstly, of what the region currently *is*, and secondly, predispositions as to what it *should* be in the future. Moreover, these visions and predispositions are embedded within ongoing global debates and discourses about the shape and content of international 'order' that impinge directly upon Xinjiang and Central Asia, most notably those surrounding the 'War on Terror', radical Islam and democratization.

Simultaneously, such dynamics and debates also play out at the local,

societal level within the states of Central Asia and Xinjiang; witness the 'Tulip Revolution', the Andijan Incident and the activities of Uyghur advocacy organizations in Central Asia and beyond, for example. In this regard the reflection of Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks regarding the importance of identity, noted in the opening chapter of this volume, is significant:

We live in the conscious presence of 'difference'. In the street, at work and on the television screen we constantly encounter cultures whose ideas and ideals are unlike ours. That can be experienced as a profound threat to identity … Religion is one of the great answers to the question of identity. But that, too, is why we face danger. Identity divides. The very process of creating an 'Us' involves creating a 'Them' – people not like ourselves.3

While Rabbi Sacks' reflection is directly concerned with one particular form of identity – religious identity – it nonetheless rings true not only for political, cultural and social identities within a given nation state but also across nation states. Indeed, Geoff Watson's chapter in particular identified the lingering predisposition of external actors, particularly Western ones, not only to objectify the region and its peoples in civilizational terms but then to use this as a justification for intervention in the region. That is to juxtapose their self-identity against that of the perceived other in Central Asia. Thus, the discourse of Social Darwinism and 'oriental despotism' of the late nineteenth century justified British and Russian attempts to 'tame' Central Asia and its peoples, while the contemporary post-Cold War and post-11 September 2001 discourse of 'state failure' and 'Islamic fundamentalism' has guided the West's re-engagement with and reintervention in Central Asia.

However, it is useful to note here that classical sociologists such as Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead argued that identity, particularly self-identity, is a reflected concept.4 Thus, according to this view, 'we understand the social "meaning" of our behaviours and words as we imagine how others are imagining us. The self develops through our perceptions of others' perceptions.'5 This not only has implications for how external actors view the region and their actions toward it, but also for those 'within' the region itself and for their actions toward external powers. Thus, the development of the 'looking glass self', in Cooley's terms, is not unidirectional in the context of Central Asia either in the contemporary period or historically. For example, Michael Clarke's chapter clearly highlighted how 'Central Asia' was distinguished on the basis of the enduring perception of the divergent life-ways of the pastoral nomadic peoples living 'inside' the region from the sedentary and agricultural life-ways of those living 'outside'. Of particular importance here is Mead's conception of 'significant others', which are defined as those with whom we have important relationships and whose 'imagined' perceptions of us are particularly influential.6 As a number of chapters in this volume have demonstrated, Xinjiang and Central Asia have had numerous

'significant others' throughout history, from the relationship between the nomadic pastoralist and the sedentary civilizations of the Eurasian core and periphery, to the imperial states of Russia and the Qing, through to the contemporary web of relations between independent Central Asia and Russia, China and the US. While Meyrowitz's assertion that 'place is always with us' remains in many respects a major factor in identity formation in contemporary Xinjiang and Central Asia, what appears to be novel in the era of 'glocality' is that this sense of place and identity is often no longer the sole definer of communities. 'Glocality' in many respects may be defined by this unbinding of place and identity. As Meyrowitz suggests:

We are now more likely to understand our place, not just as *the* community, but as one of many possible communities in which we could live. We are less likely to see our locality as the center of the universe. We are less likely to see our physical surroundings as the source of all our experiences.7

This dynamic in the context of contemporary Xinjiang and Central Asia may perhaps be seen in the resurgence or revitalization of Islam as a unifying force or rallying point for opposition and as a vehicle through which to challenge the existing political and social orders. The post-11 September 2001 revelations of an, albeit small, Uyghur presence in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan and Chinese government charges of Uyghur collusion with radical Islamists in Central Asia suggests the continued potential for cross-border interactions beyond the control of the state.8 Meanwhile, in key Central Asian states such as Uzbekistan, much of the last decade has witnessed the existing political order increasingly being challenged by the growth of radical Islamist organizations, both violent and non-violent, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT).9 However, it is important not to overstate this point in the Xinjiang and Central Asian context, as the region's history as a 'crossroads' between Europe and Asia has often had multiple identities and multiple reference points for those identities beyond that of Islam.10

Nonetheless, post-9/11 dynamics suggest that Uyghurs in Xinjiang may increasingly look beyond their immediate region, toward Western Europe and the US, for models of political activism and to establish support for Uyghur autonomy or independence in Xinjiang. Instructive in this respect, and emblematic of the 'glocality' outlined by Don McMillen's chapter, was the response of prominent Uyghurs to the 'Tulip Revolution' in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. As noted by a number of contributors, China had exerted considerable influence on former Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev since the early 1990s to keep a tight rein on the Uyghur émigré community in Kyrgyzstan. However, with his removal from office in March 2005, Uyghurs hoped for greater freedom to promote the pro-separatist cause.11 Although the Tulip Revolution's effect within Xinjiang is difficult to gauge at this juncture, it

appears at the least to have served an exemplary purpose for the Uyghur. Such sentiment was expressed by perhaps the most prominent Uyghur dissident now exiled in the US, businesswoman Rebiya Kadeer. Kadeer stated that, 'When I heard the news about what happened in Kyrgyzstan, I was so excited ... Whatever happens to our brothers and sisters in Kyrgyzstan affects people in East Turkistan', clearly embedding Xinjiang and the Uyghur struggle for independence from Beijing within the context of the contemporary 'struggle' for 'democracy' in Central Asia.12

More alarmingly for both the remaining authoritarian rulers of the Central Asian states and the governments of Russia and China was the perceived role played by the US government in the last of the so-called 'Colour Revolutions' in Kyrgyzstan that had also swept through Ukraine and Georgia.13 While Washington denied that its programme of 'democracy promotion' in Central Asia was aimed at subverting either Russian or Chinese influence, it can hardly have been surprised at the adverse reaction of both these powers to events in Kyrgyzstan.14 Such a perception on the part of the remaining Central Asian rulers and Russia and China was of course reinforced by the subsequent outbreak of the Andijan Incident in Uzbekistan in May 2005. As noted by Ann McMillan, the Uzbek authorities clearly blamed US government-funded organizations for contributing in part to the unrest of May 2005 while one external observer, Shirin Akiner, clearly questioned the prevailing opinion in many Western media and government circles that the Andijan Incident was a cognate of the 'Tulip Revolution'.15

As these and other issues addressed by contributors demonstrate, the majority of developments in Xinjiang and Central Asia encompass the interpenetration of the truly 'global' and 'local', with a resulting cross-cutting of influences, interests, interpretations of events and outcomes for all actors engaged in the region. In this sense it is possible to suggest that Xinjiang and Central Asia at present can be conceived of as simultaneously the 'pivot' and 'periphery' in world history as it is simultaneously assailed by multiple external powers and influences, while itself being a source of major dynamics. It is at once an actor and acted upon on the historical stage. As argued in Michael Clarke's chapter, historically Central Asia as a region has often been defined by the nature of its relationship to major civilizations on its periphery, most particularly those based in Russia and China. Therefore it is necessary to address the interaction of the region with its 'significant others', with a particular emphasis on the ways in which these external powers have framed their interests in Xinjiang and Central Asia through their own overarching visions of 'Central Asia'.

The 'great games' of Central Asia's 'significant others': China, Russia and the United States

As noted above, 'significant others' are those with whom we have important relationships and, more importantly in the context of this section, those

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'whose imagined views of us are especially powerful'.16 As explored by a number of contributors such as Geoff Watson, James Millward, Colin Mackerras and Kirill Nourzhanov, the 'imagined' views of Xinjiang and Central Asia that have come to dominate Western/US, Chinese and Russian thinking about 'Central Asia' have had a significant impact in both defining their interests and shaping the exercise of their influence in the region. Moreover, the dominant views of the region held by these three 'significant others' also shape to a significant degree the 'field of play' upon which local actors interact with 'global' processes. Ultimately, all of the various issues explored by the contributors, from Central Asia's role in world history to Beijing and Washington's view of Central Asia, concern politics. In this regard, however, Levy suggests that:

Globalization is probably the first major event that is reflexively thought of at the same time as, or even before it is lived. Billions of people are now discussing what the world is, what it is becoming, what it should and should not be, and what we can do to make it fit our desires. Unsurprisingly, these intense discussions are mainly about politics. All of the most pressing global issues involve politics, such as environmental sustainability, economic regulation, cultural diversity, good governance, fair development, desirable solidarity, ethical values, global law enforcement and international justice, representation and legitimacy.17

Levy's suggestion is that in the contemporary era the location of 'politics' – wherein these questions are resolved or contested – is no longer certain or indeed bound to the territorial nation state. Simultaneously, however, 'the substance of the spatial objects involved matters, and this substance has a very strong historical dependence'.18 As we have seen throughout the chapters of this volume, the 'substance' of contemporary 'Central Asia' does indeed matter and this has clearly been shaped by the region's history. This, I suggest, is particularly important to consider when exploring the 'imaginings' of Russia, China and the US in the Central Asian context.

China's problematic 'Silk Road'

James Millward's exploration of the historiographical and political implications of Xinjiang's position at the crossroads of Eurasia was particularly illuminating in outlining the parameters of China's 'imagining' of both Xinjiang and Central Asia. He argued persuasively in his chapter that there is a clear disjuncture between Chinese conceptions and deployment of the Silk Road metaphor and international (generally Western) commentary on the Silk Road, which may point to a number of permutations regarding the future exercise of Chinese influence in Central Asia. Indeed, his chapter suggests that China increasingly conceives the Silk Road, to which Xinjiang is seen as being central, in nationalistic terms reflecting China's identity as a

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'rising power'. In particular, Millward's discussion of the discourse surrounding Silk Road 'sites' and Uyghur *muqam* points toward the possible re-emergence of a Chinese conception of world order that sees, in Mark Mancall's famous phrase, 'China at the centre'.19 Moreover, Millward has argued that such a conception of the Silk Road equates the openness of China under the Tang Dynasty (618–907) with today's post-Deng China and its attraction to the people of the world, who are drawn to a dynamic and vigorous world power.20

Thus, as Millward argued, 'China represents Xinjiang and the Silk Road as a *stage on which China plays the leading historical role.*' Suggestive of China's purpose is the historically selective nature of its Silk Road discourse, whereby the region's recent Islamic past is downgraded in favour of highlighting the Buddhist and pre-Buddhist antiquity and Han (206 BCE–220 CE) and Tang period sites. This selectivity is generated by the fact that the interconnectivity between China and Central Asia which lies at the heart of the Silk Road metaphor has presented China with both opportunities and challenges in the context of Xinjiang since 1991 that it has sought to manage through a programme of development and an active foreign policy in Central Asia.21 Thus the clear distinction between Western and Chinese conceptions of the Silk Road is that, for the former, it is conceived of as a trans-national bridge linking civilizations, while for the latter, it is increasingly conceived of in national terms that reinforce current Chinese sovereignty over Xinjiang.

However, what does this entail for the practice of China's foreign policy and influence in Central Asia? Colin Mackerras's chapter concerning the 'view' of Xinjiang and Central Asia from Beijing and Washington, and the region's overall impact on Sino-US relations, offered an analysis and discussion that complements the insights of James Millward's chapter. It is clear from Mackerras's discussion that two major and interrelated factors stimulated significant anxiety in Beijing regarding the Chinese position in Xinjiang. First, the collapse of the Soviet Union ultimately presented China with both opportunities and challenges. The relative retreat of Russian power and influence in the immediate post-Soviet period was undoubtedly received as a welcome development given the long-standing tensions along the Sino-Soviet frontier. However, the subsequent emergence of five independent states in Central Asia, three of which shared borders with Xinjiang, held a number of potential threats to China's position in Xinjiang, not the least of which were the example of the achievement of independent statehood and the potential for cross-border ethnic affinities to translate into support for Xinjiang's restive ethnic minorities. Second was the re-emergence of Islam as a political force in Central Asia, but also in Afghanistan, which held the potential to spread among the Muslim ethnic groups of Xinjiang. As Mackerras noted, such an outcome came to pass in the Chinese government's perception with the outbreak of 'Islamist' inspired unrest in Xinjiang throughout the 1990s.22

China's key interests with respect to Central Asia in the 1990s therefore revolved around securing its frontiers with the new Central Asian republics

and ensuring internal security within Xinjiang. These interests were also increasingly complemented by an attempt to broaden the 'reform and opening' strategy implemented under Deng Xiaoping's leadership to facilitate greater Xinjiang–Central Asian trade and accelerate the economic modernization of the region in order to placate ethnic minority opposition to Chinese rule.23 Key to this programme was the establishment of constructive relationships with Central Asia, in particular Xinjiang's immediate neighbours Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Thus China's Xinjiang-centric concerns provided the bases for Beijing's foreign policy in Central Asia and contributed to the establishment of the multilateral 'Shanghai Five' in 1996 and its subsequent transformation into the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 2001.

Indeed, Sino-Central Asian relations benefited significantly from the convergence of interest between Beijing and the various Central Asian capitals with what became known in the official statements of the Shanghai Five and SCO as the 'three evils of separatism, extremism and terrorism' – that is, Uyghur opposition in Xinjiang and radical Islamism in Central Asia.24 These issues were of course raised in prominence with the events of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent US invasion of Afghanistan. As Mackerras notes, the injection of an unprecedented US political, military and economic presence in Central Asia after 2001 was a contradictory development for Beijing. While the US emphasis on combating 'terrorism' was beneficial to China's interests within both Xinjiang and Central Asia, the establishment of close US–Central Asian relations, largely at the expense of the SCO, was not.

In terms of Beijing's approach to the region, however, Mackerras concludes that the consequences of the Soviet Union's collapse, in comparison to those of 11 September 2001, remain more important although the latter event has certainly resulted in the reconfiguration of the region's geopolitics. In this latter respect, the advent of a major US presence has arguably exacerbated existing great power competition around such issues as energy security. Nonetheless this more recent development has permitted Beijing to deploy the discourse of terrorism more forcefully both internally and externally. In this latter respect, Mackerras and other contributors have noted that China's cooperation in the US-led 'War on Terror' has resulted in an acknowledgement from Washington that China's claims to be combating terrorism in Xinjiang are not totally spurious, and has led to an improvement in Sino-US relations. The picture that emerges from Millward and Mackerras's contributions regarding how China perceives Xinjiang and the bases of its foreign policy and interests in Central Asia is a complementary one. James Millward's conclusion that the Chinese attempt to 'internationalize a peculiar narrative' of Xinjiang's history discloses 'a profound anxiety' on behalf of the provincial and national authorities that informs Beijing's foreign policy in Central Asia is reinforced by Colin Mackerras's overview of China's approach to Central Asia since 1991. Indeed, both contributors reveal that China's position both in Xinjiang and in Central Asia is characterized by a profound

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paradox or contradiction. As both note, China's position in Xinjiang is arguably more secure and consolidated than at any other time in its recorded history of relations with the region. Yet this is coupled with an acute sensitivity and anxiety over its current sovereignty over Xinjiang that stems not only from the relatively recent consolidation (1949) of Chinese rule but ultimately its position as *the* Eurasian 'cross-road'.

Russia's 'near abroad'

Meanwhile, as Kirill Nourzhanov demonstrates, after some early indecision and debates between those advocating an 'Atlanticist' orientation toward Western Europe and those stressing the natural, and historically informed, 'Eurasian' strategic orientation of the country, Russia has increasingly framed its approach to Central Asia in neo-imperial terms. During the early 1990s with the ascendancy of the 'Atlanticist' orientation in the Kremlin, he noted that the region was largely looked upon as 'an area of alien Asian values and a developmental black hole' from which Russia had to isolate itself. This approach in effect amounted to a benign neglect of Central Asia. Yet this situation changed rapidly by the middle of that decade as the government of President Yeltsin became disillusioned with the 'Atlanticist' strategic option as efforts to establish closer ties with Western Europe and the US failed to yield adequate benefits. Moreover, a return to a 'Eurasianist' orientation was also encouraged by contemporaneous developments in Central Asia such as the escalation of the Tajik civil war, continued instability and warlordism in Afghanistan, the deterioration of Central Asian economies, the rise of radical Islamism and the 'encroachment' of regional (Turkey, Iran) and extra-regional powers (China, US). As noted by Nourzhanov, Russia's re-engagement with Central Asia was determined by fear – a fear that the instability and insecurity that had come to characterize the region could 'creep' northward if left unchecked. Thus, this dynamic in important respects revisited the imperial discourse surrounding Russian expansion into the lands of the present Central Asian states during the late nineteenth century. This is now, however, recast in contemporary rhetoric with Russia promoting 'integration' of the region within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as the solution to the 'instability' and 'insecurity' that is deemed to characterize Central Asia. Indeed, as Nourzhanov demonstrates, Russia's political, economic and military/security strategies toward the region under Yelstin, particularly after Evgenii Primakov's promotion to the head of the Foreign Ministry in 1996, were framed at the rhetorical level by the assertion that only greater engagement and integration with Russia on the part of Central Asia could ensure both Russia's legitimate security concerns and lead to 'stabilization', 'democratization' and 'reform' amongst the Central Asian states. Beyond the rhetoric, however, Russian policy throughout the 1990s clearly privileged the maintenance of the political status quo and stability in Central Asia over any high-minded promotion of 'democracy'.

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As with China, the events of 11 September 2001 intervened to significantly alter Russian policy toward Central Asia. As Nourzhanov highlights, however, Russia had also recently experienced a change in leadership with the ascent of Vladimir Putin to the presidency, which also impacted on the Kremlin's response to events in Central Asia. Putin's 'pragmatism' resulted in close Russian cooperation with the Bush administration's invasion of Afghanistan and stabilization of Central Asia from 2001 to 2003. However, US political, economic and military penetration of Central Asia, and the development of close relationships with individual states such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, was also a contradictory development for Moscow. Certainly Washington's assumption of responsibility for ensuring stability and security, including the destruction of the Taliban and the various radical Islamists that it had harboured (e.g. al-Qaeda, IMU) in Central Asia served Russia's immediate security interests, while the significant strategic reorientation of the region toward the US (and the West more generally) ultimately weakened Russia's position. However, as a number of contributors note, from 2003 onward Washington's increasing efforts to pressure its new Central Asian partners to undertake political reform and 'democratization', and the impact of the invasion of Iraq, undermined the US position as Central Asian leaders bridled at the former suggestion and questioned the effect of the latter upon the security situation in Afghanistan. These dynamics, as we have seen across a number of chapters, resulted in the reassertion of Russian and Chinese influence, with the former felt largely through the regeneration of bilateral ties and the latter through the revitalization of the SCO. The Central Asian estrangement from Washington reached an apex in 2005 with the third of the so-called 'Colour Revolutions' sweeping Kyrgyzstan in March and the outbreak of the Andijan Incident in Uzbekistan in May. The leaders of Central Asia thus began to perceive the US no longer as a 'harbinger of stability' but as 'a major source of instability', resulting in a questioning of their relations with the US in favour of closer relations with Moscow. According to Nourzhanov's analysis, Russia now perceives that challenges to the existing order in Central Asia not only stem from radical Islamism and international terrorism but also the role of the US itself through Washington's promotion of 'democracy and human rights'. However, he also notes that while Russian foreign policy elites subscribe to the notion of the dangers of 'state failure' in the region as much as their Western counterparts, this is blamed not so much on the lack of 'democracy and human rights' but upon the 'traditional' 'clannish and tribal' nature of Central Asian politics.

Thus, while Russia under Putin ostensibly criticizes the West (the US in particular) for its imperialist promotion of 'democracy', it nonetheless has itself returned to a theme that has clear continuities with Russia's own imperial past (both Tsarist and Soviet), with President Putin asserting in 2005, for example, that Russia should continue in its 'civilizing mission' on the Eurasian continent. Therefore the Russian imperative to project its influence and secure its 'near abroad' remains framed not only by its contemporary

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political, economic and strategic interests but also by major historical legacies. In the future, both Russia and China would prefer to define Central Asia according to the extent of 'stability'.

The West's 'black hole'

The West's and in particular the US approach to Central Asia across the 1991 to 2007 period has largely fallen into two clear phases: pre- and post-11 September 2001. As S. Frederick Starr noted in his 2005 piece in *Foreign Affairs*, the US throughout the 1990s suffered somewhat from 'attention deficit' with respect to Central Asia and Afghanistan.25 Indeed, prior to 11 September 2001, US and Western attention to Central Asia was often fixated upon discrete issues directly impacting on Western interests rather than upon the trajectory of the region's development as a whole. For example, Western concern focused sporadically on issues surrounding the fate of former Soviet nuclear weapons and materials in Kazakhstan in 1992/3, the 'pipeline politics' surrounding the Caspian Basin between 1996 and 1998 or the human rights 'outrages' of the Taliban in Afghanistan after 1996.26 Such a lack of direct US, and indeed Western, engagement with the region during this period could be accounted for on the basis of a number of factors such as geographical remoteness, relative inaccessibility and a degree of ignorance of the region's history and culture.27

Yet, perhaps most importantly, as President Clinton's Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott asserted in a 1997 address, the US had no compelling interest in Central Asia that would drive it to become a competitor in the 'new great game' for political and strategic influence in the region.28 Indeed, he stressed that a situation in which the region became the sight of a geopolitical arm-wrestle between major external powers such as Russia, China, Iran and Turkey would be the worst possible outcome for the region and argued that 'Our goal is to avoid and actively discourage that atavistic outcome.'29 Nonetheless, Talbott framed US goals toward the region in now all too familiar terms, suggesting that Washington sought the 'promotion of democracy, the creation of free market economies, the sponsorship of peace and cooperation within and among the countries of the region and their integration with the larger international community'.30 As one observer noted, this resulted in an 'unspoken but obvious conclusion: the United States would be willing to help with economic development and democratization, but most of all it would like to keep the region from becoming an American problem'.31 By the close of the 1990s, however, Central Asia and Afghanistan had increasingly become characterized as something of a quagmire of 'failing states', ethnic conflict, authoritarian rule and radical Islamism in which the US should avoid becoming ensnared.32

The events of 11 September 2001 of course intervened to make such an approach untenable for the US and made the region very much an 'American problem'. The contours of US intervention in Afghanistan and

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the establishment of close political, economic and military ties with the Central Asian states are now well documented, as are the effects of these developments for the geopolitics and domestic politics of the region.33 But what has been of greater interest, given the context of the discussion presented here, is how the US 'imaginings' of Central Asia have affected its approach to the region.34 As Geoff Watson identified in his chapter, the relative neglect of Central Asia and Afghanistan by the West resulted in the resurfacing of familiar tropes and 'imaginings' of the region in policy circles, scholarly treatments and the popular media. Whether the region has been imagined as a 'black hole',35 a geopolitical 'cockpit of terrorism and ideological confrontation'36 or as part of the 'non-integrating gap' of the global system,37 the implication is that the region remains to a large degree 'outside' of the trajectory of 'modernity' – which is largely framed in Western terms. Here we see a resurgence of a theme of some antiquity where, for the 'civilized' societies that surround the Eurasian core, Central Asia is identified as that amorphous and incomprehensible place, 'from whence all bad things come'.38 Indeed, we have seen that in the contemporary period it is not marauding, bloodthirsty barbarians on horseback bent on conquest and destruction that emanate from Central Asia in such perceptions but rather stateless Islamic radicalism/ fanaticism and authoritarian political regimes that present at once an anomaly and a challenge to the dominant Western narrative of history.39

In contrast to current Russian perceptions, however, the Bush administration placed the blame for the parlous state of the region largely upon the failure of the Central Asian states to consolidate, in the words of the 2002 US National Security Strategy, the 'single model for national success: freedom, democracy and free enterprise'.40 Thus, what we see here is a geopolitics defined not only by the spatial and geographic relations of the region defined as 'Central Asia' to other such bodies/regions but also increasingly by the content, or more correctly the perceived content, of that body/region. A clear example of the importance of this process can be seen in the furore surrounding the souring of US–Uzbek relations after the May 2005 Andijan Incident, whereby the self-identity of the US as a promoter and upholder of 'democracy and human rights' was explicitly juxtaposed with that of a 'corrupt' and authoritarian Central Asian state. Some critics of US policy in this respect have suggested that the Bush administration in effect should have downplayed such concerns in order to consolidate the 'strategic partnership' with Tashkent.41 S. Frederick Starr, for example, argued that Washington's failure to do so resulted in a strategic blunder:

As US and European pressure increased in the area of democratization and human rights, both Russia and China were able to dangle before Tashkent alliances based on a less rigorous standard in these areas, yet promising greater rewards than were forthcoming from Washington. Both were pursuing long-term strategic objectives, which they could present as less threatening to Tashkent than the US's preoccupations.42

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As noted by another observer, however, such a 'realist' critique of US–Uzbek relations ignores the 'real-world' importance of identity in the context of the 'great game' among the 'great' and 'little' powers in Central Asia.43 As we have seen throughout a number of contributions to this volume, from China's attempt to 'nationalize' the Silk Road metaphor to Russia's re-embrace of the concept of the 'near abroad' as central to its security, images and identity (both of self and other) matter. With respect to the US position in Central Asia it is useful to conclude by noting Heathershaw's argument that the US is 'understood as a qualitatively different actor in the region than Russia or China' due to the fact that it 'is an "outside" actor that must downplay its outsiders' expectations and representations and construct an illusion of "partnership"'.44

Xinjiang and Central Asia in the era of 'glocality': back to the future?

It will be recalled that Michael Clarke noted in his chapter Denis Sinor's judgement that the definition of what constituted 'Central Asia' throughout history was the *relative* economic and cultural standard of the area and not its absolute content.45 Thus, for Sinor and other scholars of the region, it was the geographically and ecologically determined 'life-way' of nomadic pastoralism that generated its 'centrality' and importance in world history from antiquity until the latter centuries of the second millennium CE. As Clarke demonstrates, once the nomadic pastoral 'life-way' of the various Turco-Mongolian peoples of the region was weakened and ultimately controlled by the expansion of the centralized sedentary states of imperial Russia and China, 'Central Asia' was effectively 'removed' from the processes of interaction and interconnectivity with the civilizations on the Eurasian periphery that had characterized its existence since antiquity. Thus 'Central Asia', in S.A.M. Adshead's terms, became a site of the 'convergence' of geopolitical, political, economic, military, religious and cultural pressures and structures generated from outside of the region (i.e. from Russia and China), rather than as a site of 'diffusion' of such processes.46 Such a theme of convergence for Adshead was also aligned to a change in function for 'Central Asia' in world history. In contrast to early periods of history where the region had been an *active* diffuser of political, economic, religious/cultural and technological processes and dynamics, the region since at least the sixteenth century by his reckoning had gradually become a *passive* recipient of dynamics from external civilizations. However, as Clarke suggests in his contribution, Central Asia, understood as consisting of the five post-Soviet Central Asia states, Xinjiang, Afghanistan and Mongolia, has re-emerged since 1991 simultaneously as both a diffuser and recipient of broad geopolitical, political, economic and cultural developments. Moreover, this assessment is reinforced by the analysis and discussion of the other contributors which clearly highlight that the region is once more characterized by a

high level of interconnectivity and interaction with the civilizations on its periphery as it was prior to the twentieth century.

Nonetheless, as a number of contributors have noted, the nature of this interconnectivity and interaction is of a different order to that referred to by scholars such as Sinor or Adshead. As discussed above, this reconnection of 'Central Asia' with world history – in the sense of becoming once more an independent actor therein – takes place in the context of an international system arguably in a state of flux in a number of important senses from the 'rise' of 'new' great powers such as China and India, the renegotiation of state–society relations under the pressures of globalization to heightened concern with 'trans-national' threats posed by terrorism, pandemics and environmental disasters. In the Central Asian context that has been our focus, such issues are clearly prominent and important. Yet what emerges from the discussions presented throughout the volume and in this concluding chapter is that 'Central Asia' is once more defined by the *relative* political, economic and cultural standards of the region. Thus we have seen how the major external actors in the region – Russia, China and the US – have structured their responses to developments in the region since 1991 on the basis of distinct 'imaginings' of its content. Indeed, for all of these external actors their connections with and approaches toward Central Asia are framed to a significant extent by their juxtaposition of their self-image against what they perceive Central Asia to be defined by. As we have seen, the region is perceived by Moscow, Beijing and Washington as being characterized by Islamic radicalism and authoritarian and/or 'weak' or 'failing' states that inherently threaten their interests and security.

Finally, what of the region itself, of the various peoples that inhabit Xinjiang and Central Asia? Given the analysis and discussion presented by the contributors here, what may be increasingly important and significant for the development of the region in the near future is the interaction of what Don McMillen referred to as 'contending glocalities' with the imperatives of not only the three great powers noted above but also the governments of the five Central Asian states themselves. The region is arguably replete with numerous political, religious, ethnic and social identities that are competing with the governments of the region and the great powers for the loyalties of the peoples of Central Asia from radical movements such as HT or the IMU to 'civil society' groupings or organizations seeking to embed the region within global discourses of 'democracy' and 'human rights'. Thus, while one may suggest that Flashman has 'returned' to Central Asia, in the sense that external powers are once more explicitly jostling for strategic and economic advantage, they must now contend with the interests and imperatives of not only the independent governments of the region but also increasingly with those of the diverse populations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turmenistan, Afghanistan and Xinjiang.

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