

# CONFLICTING ETHNICITIES

*Locating the Local in the Global*

*Edited by*

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59. ICG, 'Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Balochistan', op. cit., p. 3.
60. Sanaullah Baloch, 'Undoing the Damage', *Dawn*, 31 March 2008.
61. Abdul Hayee Baloch, cited in Adeel Khan, *Politics of Identity*, op. cit., p. 123.
62. ICG, 'Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Balochistan', p. ii.
63. The interviewee wanted to remain anonymous.

# 10

## China's Policies and Practices towards Ethnic Uighurs in Xinjiang and the Impact of Modernization/ Globalization on Ethnic Identity

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This paper has three major thematic components. One, it discusses the People's Republic of China's policies and practices towards her ethnic/religious minorities in general and Uighurs in Xinjiang in particular. Of China's 55 odd ethnic nationalities, three consider themselves as nations and therefore their ethnos, ethnonyms and ethnogeneses are quite strong, both in its primordial as well as its contextual/circumstantial sense. Chinese state and the Chinese Communist Party have failed to denationalize (or nationalize) and 'Hanize' them. These three nationalities are Tibetans, Uighurs and Mongols. Tibetans and Mongols follow Buddhism while the Uighurs of Xinjiang are believers in Islam. This statement of mine needs a small caveat. In the last three decades or so, the Mongols and the Hans have achieved considerable levels of mutual reconciliation and Mongols may well be the next candidate for assimilation. The second focus of this paper is on the ethnos and ethnogeneses of Uighurs living in Xinjiang. China's policies in Xinjiang and Tibet can be frankly described based on ethnocide. As a reaction to and in response to the ethnocide, the Tibetans in Tibet and Uighurs in Xinjiang are engaged in preserving, inventing and reinventing their respective ethnogeneses. In the last several decades this titanic struggle between

ethnocide and ethnogeneses has assumed serious and explosive dimensions. My focus here is primarily on Xinjiang. Any reference to Tibet if any, is in the nature of supporting and substantiating my arguments pertaining to the ethnic tangle in Xinjiang. The third and the last section of this paper is somewhat autonomous and still profoundly related to the protean theme of ethnicity. As the world is modernizing and globalizing fast what could be the possible consequences—intended as well as unintended—of this on the germane question of ethnicity. Instead of marshalling abstract, empty and bookish arguments on this problematic, being a student of Chinese society and polity, I have situated and contextualized my thoughts and comments almost exclusively on China theme.

Xinjiang (earlier called Sinkiang) is gifted with an extremely important geographical location. Much of Xinjiang's strategic significance whether it is a 'pivot' or a 'paw' is due to this dominant factor. It is a very resource-rich province of China containing significant reserves of oil, gas, coal, timber and several critical metals needed for China's economic growth. It is also China's western gateway to reach her several important neighbours. Some of these immediate neighbours are China's good friends and even allies while few others are her competitors and even potential rivals. Xinjiang is also China's entry point to Europe and West Asia and therefore has unprecedented potential in terms of trade, travel and communication. It is fast becoming a modern replay of the old historical Silk Route. Speaking in the idiom of strategy syndrome, Xinjiang occupies the position of a nerve-centre of central Asia. The above-mentioned attributes of Xinjiang are not the focus of this paper.

Instead, I propose to look at the province as a rich laboratory and a problem area for China's policies and practices towards her ethnic and religious minorities. Xinjiang is also China's Moslem face to her Central Asia neighbours in particular and to the Islamic world in general. The main burden of my thesis is that the Uighur people there are facing a tough fight for preserving their religious and cultural identity. It is a titanic fight for survival. The Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese state are systematically focused on 'Hanizing' and forcefully 'assimilating' the Uighurs there.

China is a relatively homogeneous state. Approximately only 10 per cent of its 1.4 billion people belong to non-Han stock while the remaining 90 per cent are Hans. Since 90 per cent of China's population are Hans, one should resist the temptation of concluding that China as a nation is a unified and united entity. The reality is far from this. I shall return to this theme of China's homogeneity and national unity later in my paper. Minority people in China number around 130-40 million. Of the 55 recognized minorities of China, the most prominent are Chuang (Korans), Mongols, Tibetans, Uighurs, Kazaks, Kirghis, Moslems (Huis), Uzbeks, Dais, Bais, Kawas, Yie and several others. Out of China's 31 odd provinces, minority nationalities are scattered over 15 or so. Several provinces like Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Yunnan, Gansu, Guangxi are heavily peopled by minority people. It is significant to remember that Chinese state registers and recognizes her citizens as a member of the ethnic groups and this ethnic identity of people is stamped on their residence registration papers (*hou-kou*) and passport. Technically speaking, ethnicity is a part of one's identity in China. Religious belief is never mentioned in the census or on the *hou-kou* documents.

A careful look at the ethnographic map of China would make it clear that these 10 per cent people of China, numbering between 130 and 140 million and belonging to 55 odd ethnic minorities occupy 50 per cent plus space of China's land mass. Huge chunks of these areas are deserts, mountains, and rivers which makes them hard and inhospitable. Added to this, these areas are the frontiers and borders of China which are sensitive and therefore vital to China's foreign policy formulators and even important from defence and strategic points. The implications are crystal clear. The loyalties of these 'frontier' people to Beijing's regime becomes one of the categorical imperatives for China. Most of these people occupy the space loosely referred as 'outer China' differentiating them from 'inner China'. To restate this fact in terms of ancient, medieval and even modern history, these areas were added and readded to the Chinese empire by Mongol (Yuan dynasty) and Maichu (Ching) rulers of China. It stands to reason to argue that Beijing ought to keep these minorities satisfied and in good humour. Antagonizing these people resulting in

their estrangement and alienation is no longer an option available to China since she harbours the ambition of becoming a global player.

Ethnic minorities can be defined as groups holding together by ties of common descent, language, religious faith and cultural distinctiveness feeling themselves to be different and distinctive from the majority of a given political entity. It is this emotive (self-ascriptive) sense of 'togetherness' and 'ancestry' which gives them a personality and identity of their own. Also, it is this sense of 'belonging' which makes them feel 'us' and 'them' a category of distinctiveness and differentiation'. It is pertinent to note here that while the differentiation of class and profession is easily mutable, the identity marks of ethnicity are not. Ethnicity has two major dimensions of identity. The major part of this identity is primordial while residual is situational or/and contextual. In the subsequent pages of this paper, I shall have more occasions to comment on these two major components of ethnic identity.

Commenting on the dynamics of relationship between the dominant ethnic groups (nation) and the ethnic minority or minorities (nationalities), social scientists worldover have a near consensus about the theoretical matrix. These two competing and therefore alternative frameworks are that of integration and assimilation. Integration is the process whereby ethnic minorities while retaining their indigenous and primordial characteristics, start shifting their political activities, expectations and even loyalties to a new centre, that is, towards the nation. Conversely, an assimilated nationality would actually merge and comb with the dominant/ruling nationality. Once assimilated, it would cease to exist as a separate group. If, only integrated, it would not cease to exist. The ethos of integration expect the ethnic minorities only to re-cast and re-orient their feelings of sub-nationalism to a political corporate centre. An assimilationist approach is totally opposed to the very idea of sub-nationalism. Normally, coercion of one kind or another is always associated with the policy of assimilation while the major burden and thrust of integration is partly through persuasion and partly through social and economic incentives. These incentives, more than personal, are based on economic entitlements and development. Anthropologists rightly associate assimilation with racist psyche and even with racism. The

old concept of 'melting pot' symbolized the pathos and pathology of assimilation. In a democratic and forward looking polity the concept of 'melting pot' is being replaced by what the historian Carl Degler called the 'salad bowl' approach. The ethos of 'salad bowl' syndrome respect cultural, ethnic and religious pluralities with their diversified variables.

In the last six decades or so the policies and practices of the Chinese communists towards her minority nationalities have undergone several twists and turns. A small comment on the pre-1949 policy matrix. During the Jiangxi Soviet, a young idealist Mao—literally in the theoretical footsteps of Marx, Lenin and Sunyat-Sen—declared that all the minority nationalities (after the liberation) shall be granted the 'right of self-determination' including the right to secede. Even this did not motivate and entice the minority people to join Mao's plank of revolution. The overwhelming number of China's minorities kept aloof from the Chinese communist revolution and no wonder, then, the Chinese communist revolution was almost a Han affair and the Revolution's geographical spread remained confined to what is loosely referred to as 'Inner China'. After coming to power in October 1949 the Chinese Communist Party realized that 'self-determination' for ethnic minorities was neither viable nor desirable. Accordingly, the 'self-determination' policy paradigm was immediately replaced by 'autonomy' syndrome.

Beginning 1949 (October 1949 when China became the Peoples Republic of China), four distinct phases can be discerned about China's policy towards her ethnic minorities. From 1949 to 1956-7 the Chinese communists adopted the policy of integration towards her minorities. Flexibility, caution and pragmatism were the watchwords. The minority areas were granted autonomy in substantive degrees. Special Autonomous Areas were carved out. Cultural, linguistic and religious differentiations were tolerated and even encouraged. Tibet was treated as a special case, to be handled softly. In 1957-8 this policy was suddenly reversed. With the onset of the People's Commune, Great Leap Forward and General Line (the so-called, Three Red-Banners of Mao) which constituted the first major phase of Mao's radicalism, the party and the state adopted a tough posture towards ethnic minorities. In 1957 Mao, under

the impact of his Permanent Revolution theory, announced that the 'Nationality question is basically a class question'. The policy implications were obvious. Between the Chinese state and the ethnic minorities, the dynamics of class struggle would apply. This phase was frankly based on assimilationist parameters. Han 'Chauvinism' was no longer the evil. Instead, sub-nationalism or 'local nationalism' was identified as the problematic. Local nationalism was equated not with centrifugalism but with 'separatism'. The religious and cultural distinctiveness of the minorities were frowned upon. A state policy of heavy Han migration to select minority areas, specially into Inner Mongolia, Yunnan and Xinjiang was unfolded. The idea behind this policy was to outnumber the minority people in their own locale. Large number of Han cadres, technicians, specialists, semi-specialists, skilled and non-skilled workers and retired army (PLA) people were transferred and settled in minority areas. The study of Chinese language (Mandarin) was made obligatory in most minority areas.

The third and the most tragic phase began with the Cultural Revolution in 1966 and continued till the death of Mao in 1976. This phase was frankly based on forcible and violent assimilation of minority nationalities. Suppression, control, domination and ruthless absorption became the salient characteristics of this phase. Mao's so-called Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) was a catastrophe for the entire Chinese nation and for the minority nationalities, it was a tragedy of unprecedented magnitude. Minority people were treated as if they were the class enemies of the Communist Party and the Chinese state. China's post-Mao leaders in their well-known assessment of this period (Resolutions on Certain Questioning of History) in 1981 characterized this period as the phase of 'feudal and fascist dictatorship'.

To be very concise and concrete, the five policy measures proved to be disastrous and deadly for the ethnic minorities during this period (1966-76).

- (a) Most of the top and even middle level leaders in minority areas were purged and replaced. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution Wang Enmao was in power in Xinjiang, Zhanggu

- hua in Tibet, Ulaftu in Inner Mongolia, Yan Hungyan in Yunnan and Wangfeng in Gansu. Wang Enmao was holding the highest party and the military office in Xinjiang. Ulaftu was the chairman of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Republic as well as the chairman of the State Council's Nationalities Affairs Commission. By the end of the first year of the Cultural Revolution all except Wang Enmao were removed and replaced by hard-liners. Eventually, Wang Enmao too was forced to go. The purges of the minority cadres at the middle levels was a heavy one. In certain areas (Mongolia, Yunnan) 70-80 per cent of the local minority cadres were replaced. The purged cadres were replaced either by Han cadres or by hard-liners of the minority people.
- (b) The territorial sanctity of the minority areas was violated and tempered. The Inner Mongolian Autonomous Republic was dismembered and several parts of the province were amalgamated with Jehol, Gansu and Suiyan. A large number of Tibetans were forced to settle down outside Tibet.
- (c) A deliberate and systematic policy of settling Han people into the minority areas was planned and executed by the state. Mongols were reduced to a hopeless minority in Inner Mongolia. For four million Mongols there were 10 million plus non-Mongols (mainly Han people) in Inner Mongolia. In Yunnan, the several minority people were greatly outnumbered by Hans. The Xinjiang Autonomous region with its majority of Uighurs, Kazaks, Kirghis and Uzbeks (all Moslems of Turkic origin) were heavily targeted by Han migrants for settlement. China's largest minority people—the Chuangs (Koreans) were outnumbered almost three to one in Guangxi province. Tibet was the only minority area which was spared from this flux.
- (d) The religious practices, the social and cultural customs, the food, the folklore, the local language and the literature of the minority people were ridiculed and attacked. The Red Guards (school and college children in their early 20s who could not even correctly write Marxism-Leninism in Mandarin language) entered the minority areas to 'exchange revolutionary experience' made Buddhist temples, pagodas and Islamic mosques—all centres of

worship and reverence—as the main focus of their anger. Several internationally famous, religious monasteries and pagodas in Tibet and Mongolia were completely or substantially destroyed. Out of the 2,300 plus Buddhist temples and pagodas in Tibet, nearly 2,000 were destroyed. The destruction of the famous Ganden monastery in Tibet at the hands of the Red Guards is a well-known episode. The Red Guards in Tibet had dug out the dead remains of the 5th through 9th Panchen Lamas, dismembered them, threw the remains on the streets of Xigaze and Lhasa. Panchen Lama's last public ceremony was to formally reopen the (destroyed) Great Stupa and perform the burial ceremony of (5th through 9th) the Panchen Lamas at Xigaze. In Xinjiang several mosques were burnt and destroyed. Pig's meat was tied around the necks of Moslem clergymen (*imams*) and they were paraded on the streets in Urumchi, Kashgar and several other cities of Xinjiang. The religious symbols of minority people were characterized as the 'tail of feudalism'.

The ethnic-specific features of the minorities were refuted and ridiculed. Jiang Qing, Mao's wife and her radical associates (the Gang of Four) had ordained that minority nationalities are 'no better than foreign invaders and aliens'. She also opined that their 'culture had an outlandish flavour'. The radicals reasoned that since China has already achieved socialist transformations, then, why the special characteristics of the minorities to be recognized and preserved? In a word, during the chaotic ten years of Cultural Revolution, the whole country went through a traumatic time but for the minority peoples of China—particularly Inner Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang—this trauma and humiliation was doubly cruel.

This paper is not about the so-called 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' and its pernicious and tragic affects in China. Since the 1990s any comment and critical discussion on Maoism and his cultural revolution is a forbidden area of research and public discourse in China. Mao's acts of omissions and commissions once fully exposed and documented would put to shame even Stalin and Pol Pot.

The Third Plenum of the 11th Central Committee of the CCP formally bade goodbye to Mao's radical policies. With the process of de-Maoization and Deng's market-based reforms, a whole series of new policy initiatives on various domestic and international policies were unfolded. Pertaining to ethnic minorities, Hu Yao-bang's visit to Tibet in 1980 was the turning point. The 'left' and 'radical' policies on minorities were replaced by liberal and flexible measures. The new leadership candidly accepted the mistakes (rather blunders) of the Cultural Revolution period and a new beginning was sought to be made to assuage the injured feelings of the ethnic minorities. The individual wrongs done to the minority nationality leaders were sought to be undone. A large number of dismissed cadres—both dead and alive—were 'rehabilitated' politically. The 1982 Constitution incorporated several new formulations and clauses assuring minority people that the state would respect their autonomy. If Mao and his radical cohorts quoted Marx in support of the Cultural Revolution, this time, Deng and his supporters also quoted Marx to justify their new initiative. The science of quoting Marx against Marx has been fully mastered by a section of academia oriented ideologues of the CPC. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences with its academic contingent of tens of thousands plus salaried experts excel in this. These social scientists work on government/party assigned 'policy priority' subjects. They do not and cannot function as independent and objective think-tanks. For this role, they shall have to wait the arrival of democracy and liberal ethos.

The oftquoted phrase of Karl Marx (reference to his letter dated 5 March 1852 to J. Weydemeyer) that the 'existence of classes is of much shorter duration than of nationalities and after withering away of the former the latter will remain in existence for a long time' is being printed and reprinted by the Chinese media. Lenin has also been quoted in support of this flexible policy initiative towards minorities. Lenin's comment in his ('Left Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder') (1920) that 'national distinctions will continue to exist for a long time to come even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a world wide scale' is being quoted frequently. Once, I asked a senior professor at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing whether they were not aware of these



famous quotes of Marx and Lenin and why they did not underline these quotes earlier? Of course, he was conspicuously silent.

This liberal and relaxed policy paradigm—openly based on the dynamics of integration—is being observed in China except in two provinces—Tibet and Xinjiang. Inner Mongolia has been a huge beneficiary. In Tibet and Xinjiang the ethnic minority scenario has much worsened in the last two to three decades. The Chinese state and the CCP have adopted much harsher and oppressive ways to tackle the problematic there. In the following few paragraphs, I shall be attempting to state the fact-sheet in Xinjiang.

For the last three decades or so, the ethnic conflict between the Uighurs and Han Chinese state in Xinjiang is visible, demonstrative and self-evident. The data-wise details with fatal casualties have been listed in several publications and hence I need not repeat them here. A careful counting of these figures lead me to believe that this ethnic conflict has claimed the lives of several thousand people with hundreds executed by the state. There have been unpteen number of clashes between Uighur protestors and the para-military forces of the state. There have also been communal clashes between Uighurs and the Hans there. Acts of terror and bomb blasts have also added to this figure. Of those executed, some of them publically in the presence of thousands of onlookers, almost all of them (except a handful), were Uighurs.

Also, in the last three decades or so, an academically rich corpus of well-documented and richly researched scholarly works on Xinjiang and its problematics have emerged. Publications based on research/fieldwork undertaken in Xinjiang and researcher's proficiency in Uighur language and Mandarin have enriched both the information and knowledge on and about Xinjiang. As a result of this, Xinjiang is no longer an under-researched and 'little known' area. Academic as well as journalistic interest on Xinjiang continues to be on the upswing.

There is a near-consensus among the scholars that a volcano-like situation is developing there. If the fault-lines are not corrected promptly there, the volcano may erupt anytime. Uighurs are a mistreated, humiliated and an alienated minority there. On the contrary, if one believes the Chinese state/party narratives on

Xinjiang, then, except the fact that a handful of Uighur terrorists taking inspiration from outside indulging in acts of sabotage and violence occasionally, there is no other important problem in Xinjiang. These official narratives are based on propaganda and make-belief. Occasionally, all governments world over indulge in telling lies. In a democracy since there are multiple checks and counter-checks, the lies and untruths spoken by the governments get exposed in the public domain. The Chinese—both the party and the government—have converted this task of telling lies into a fine art. For 40 years or so, I have been telling my Chinese politics students that for getting at the bottom of things and to have a realistic and correct picture of China, it is not enough to read between the lines but one should learn to read 'against' the lines. China's official discourse on her ethnic tangle in Xinjiang and Tibet is a good example of this.

Xinjiang continues to be in a flux because the state has escalated its levels of dominance and suppression over Uighurs, who in turn continue to be resentful and restless. Occasionally, a microscopic minority of separatists and practitioners of terror among Uighurs resort to violence. New facts and new grounds of disaffection and discrimination are being created almost everyday. What could be the likely consequences is difficult to foresee. One thing is clear, the situation is far from 'tranquil'. Uighurs have a long list of grievances and it appears that a lot of these grievances are genuine. These grievances can be grouped in four major categories. They are produced and reproduced when China acts: (a) as an empire; (b) when China attempts to assimilate the Islamic minorities there civilizationally; (c) when China's narratives and policy instruments forcefully herd the Uighurs towards the Grand project of nation-building; and finally; (d) when Hans through the method of migration/influx continue to change the demography and population mix of Xinjiang. All these four phenomena which constitute the basic elements of the ethnic tangle in Xinjiang needs some observations and some qualifications.

The historically traditional relationship between the frontier people of Xinjiang, Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet and to a great extent Yunnan with China has been that of an empire and its tributaries. In times when the Chinese empire was weak and in decline, these frontier people asserted and repeatedly reasserted their independence. Even

during the Chinese centre's strong position, these frontier people were never 'governed' by China. It was an indirect rule through proxy. This is the historical meaning of expressions like 'Inner China' and 'Outer China'. A careful look at the demographic map of China of the seventeenth century would persuade one to the fact that China's territory, then, was just 50 per cent of its present one. This is also true that these frontier areas were added earlier by Hans and later crucially to the Chinese empire by the non-Han dynasties. This conquest or reconquest of these frontier non-Han people were achieved by Yuan (Mongol) and Ching (Manchu) dynasties. That was one important reason why Chiang Kai-Shek and Mao Ze-dong in their youthful revolutionary times had promised them the right of self-determination including right to secede. It is an entirely different issue that both of them, otherwise antagonistic in many ways, went back on their respective promises.

The communist government of China denies vehemently that China is behaving like an empire towards these frontier people. Notwithstanding this denial, patterns of China's behaviour and superpower intents and ambitions make it explicit enough. What is implicit is much more than enough. I have no hesitation in saying that for these frontier people of Xinjiang—I surmise the case of Tibet and Mongolia is not much different—China is still behaving in the mould of an imperial and majestic power. China is treating Xinjiang as its most prized colony. It reminds one of the British description of India as the 'jewel in her crown'. Xinjiang is more than a jewel in China's crown. Its importance goes much beyond its geo-strategic position in Central Asia when Owen Lattimore had termed it as a 'pivot' of Asia. A secured and fully assimilated Xinjiang could be a 'pivot' of China's energy security. It is becoming the main source and the main transport conduit for the energy needs of China. In turn, China's candidacy for major global power depends on the fulfilment of China's energy requirement. China has to take cognizance of the fact that Xinjiang is the Islamic face of China and China's energy security heavily depends upon the Islamic world. It is in China's own interest to treat the people of Xinjiang with little compassion and benevolence.

Hypothetically, granting the fact that after China's conquest or reconquest of Xinjiang, now it is a part of Chinese empire, even then, a careful perusal of China's governance—more of a misgovernance—of Xinjiang is a classic example of internal colonialism.

China is a civilization and the learned and the knowledgeable Chinese look at their country civilizationally. She has a rich and proud legacy. This is perfectly correct. This is their civilization belief that Confucian China does not need Western style democracy. May be, but this is a half truth or may be, not true at all. There is a healthy debate going on this issue within and outside China. Supporters of authoritarianism are invoking Confucianism and opining that China is better without democracy. The votaries of democracy including the Chinese protagonists inside China, are producing counter-arguments stating that democracy is a universal value and no longer a culture-bound habit. One Chinese intellectual who is an engaged supporter of democracy told me that contemporary China has gone much beyond Confucianism in many other critical aspects of socio-economic life. Even culturally, China is qualitatively different and even contrastive to many core values of Confucianism.

The Han's civilizational pride prompts China's policy makers and implementers to Sinicize and Hanize the Uighurs in Xinjiang. It is a strong belief of many Chinese that whosoever came to China and settled there, whether he was a foreigner or a 'barbarian', was eventually sinicized. This statement has a considerable element of truth in it. The Mongols and subsequently the Manchus—both foreigners and 'barbarians'—came to China as conquerors, settled down and finally were sinicized and even Hanized. Contrary to this argument and to the Han's delight, the Uighurs of Xinjiang also view themselves civilizationally. The Uighurs of Xinjiang—even the non-Uighur Muslims there—have a strong sense of ancestry. It is true that the expression 'Uighur' went out of circulation for about five centuries until it was revived in the 1930s. The Islamic identity of Uighurs is reasonably strong. Discounting the religion factor proportionately, the other markers of their ethnic identity are extremely robust and solid. During the period when the word 'Uighur' was out of vogue, the ethnogeneses of Uighur generated and

regenerated in resistance to their political opponents and cultural ethnociders—struggle produced by praxis—assumed somewhat primordial character. Between 1950s and 2009, Uighurs in praxis with Hans and Chinese state have produced tons of ethnogeneses. Without taking Huntington very seriously at the global level, what one is witnessing in Xinjiang (more so in Tibet) is a clash of 'civilizations'. Without extrapolating this argument further, it is enough to say that the Uighurs too have a strong civilizational 'hang over'. In terms of 'imagining' national identities, the Moslem population of Xinjiang, particularly Uighurs, view themselves as a part of the ancestry of the Ottoman civilization. Present Turkey which is divided, sick and a part of Europe is not a model of course. That is the reason why Uighur nationalism is inward and not outward looking.

The Uighurs strongly feel that the Han's attempts to suppress their language and literature and to impose Chinese language on them is a civilizational project. One Uighur academic argued with me, with a sense of conviction, that a slow but sure way to 'kill' any ethnic group is to 'kill' its mother tongue. The literature, folk tales and myths based on and propagated through their language would automatically wither away. In reaction, most of the 20,000 mosques in Xinjiang, have developed the facilities to teach Uighur, Arabic, Persian and even select Urdu to the Uighur boys and girls. Uighurs are taking this as a civilizational challenge. One Uighur intellectual argued with me that 'If I must learn Chinese for career advancement' then why should I not master English, the language of globalization which the several hundred million Mandarin speaking Hans are also learning? Also, more and more Uighurs are going to Haj and coming back with a strong Islamic identity. It seems that radicalized and political Islam is making a slow but sure entry into Xinjiang.

From the 1880s onwards, China's march towards nation-building began. There is no escape from this fact. As a nation China is young. In fact, she is a nation-in-making like India. In this article, I have argued that Mao (1949-76) had replaced culture with ideology. His attempts to substitute culture with ideology (in this case Marxism-Maoism) failed. Present-day reformist leadership has replaced ideology with nationalism. Nationalism is the ideology of nation state and nation-building. The anti-imperialist edge of Chinese

nationalism is practically over. She is no longer an aggrieved and dissatisfied power. The internal rough edges of nation-building enterprise have sharpened. This is clearly reflected in China's handling of her minorities, cultural, religious, ethnic and political. Instead of respecting and celebrating their diversities, China feels that they are at odds with her nationalism. Then, no wonder, China does not make meaningful distinctions between 'autonomy', 'separatism' and 'splitism'. Demand for autonomy is not a demand for separatism and secession. In the name of 'historical materialism' from 1949 till the 1980s disciplines like sociology, psychology, political science and management disappeared from the Chinese academic syllabus and public domain. Chinese scholars lost almost half-a-century of scholarship in these branches of social sciences which alone can help China to tackle her ethnic tangle.

Finally, the phenomenon of mass Han migration—in fact an influx—into Xinjiang has already produced a Han majority there. Turkic Islamic minority people, fear that they have 'lost their homeland' already. It is a feeling of having been swamped and submerged. There is a heavy smell of internal colonialism in this. No amount of sophistry on the part of the Chinese state can justify this.

The fact sheet on Xinjiang, based on the above-mentioned four policy dynamics, Xinjiang is a split province whose population has become highly polarized. To put this in simple social science language, the Uighurs of Xinjiang are economically poor and are the have-nots. Politically, they are powerless. The real political power in China belongs to the Communist Party and the representation of minorities—in this case Uighurs—is negligible. Culturally, they feel subjugated. They are among the 'wretched of the earth' described by Franz Fanon. One Uighur intellectual—half Uighur and half Marxist—told me in Beijing that the power holders in Beijing and Xinjiang should read Karl Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* where the author diagnoses the phenomenon of 'human alienation' under capitalism. I tried to correct him that the author of *Manuscripts* had till then not become the Marxist of *Das Kapital*. The Uighur intellectual wouldn't listen to me. He concluded that 'in his mind there is still a bit of Marx (not Marxism of Mao) but in his heart there is Uighur ethnicity.'

## Ethnocide and Ethnogenesis of Uighurs in Xinjiang

Speaking in simple vernacular, ethnocide means extermination of a culture. It is a planned systematic and symmetrical (as opposed to asymmetrical) destruction of the cultural identities of an ethnic group. The cultural identity of an ethnic group involves its native language and literature, religious rituals, belief systems, ceremonial symbols, myths, customs, etc. An extreme example of ethnocide may even involve relocation/displacement of an ethnic group from its homeland to reservation. Even without resorting to relocation, and pushing ethnic groups to an isolated corner on the periphery, the same goal can be achieved by a massive migration of dominant groups to select and strategic areas. The Chinese state in Xinjiang has adopted the latter strategy to achieve its goal. The story of Han migration into Xinjiang has been discussed in parts of this paper. Few observations on the theme of ethnocide and ethnogenesis are called for.

Ethnocide cannot be achieved in one stroke. It has to be a process and quite often a long drawn one. It is a truism that the most enduring and ubiquitous trait of any strong ethnic group is its language, culture, rituals and religious beliefs. In fact, the strength and the distinctiveness of any ethnic group with strong ethnos (ascriptive psychology of differentiating between 'us' and 'others') depend on this identity marker. These markers may be described as germane and primordial. Therefore, the policy goals of ethnocide are precisely to considerably weaken them. If these marks of identity refuse to weaken and are waning fast, then they have to be erased and demolished. The philosophy of ethnocide is based on a racial psyche of the dominant ruling nationality group. This tendency to ethnocide also emanates from a feeling of strong ethnocentrism. I shall return to the theme of Chinese ethnocentrism later.

Ethnogenesis is normally a reaction against ethnocide. If the ethnos of an ethnic group are very strong and enduring and the levels of self-esteem are high and it is in a position to mobilize the collective resources of its group or succeeds in mobilizing international opinion in its favour, then a clash between ethnocide and ethnogenesis become almost unavoidable. In those cases, where the identity marks of any

ethnic group are weak, somewhat artificially acquired (not innate and organic) and therefore malleable, such a community offers itself for assimilation. Out of 55 odd ethnic minorities of China numbering 130-40 million people, many have been integrated/assimilated in Han collectivity. The largest minority people of China—the Chuang of Korean origin—numbering about 20 million have been substantially, if not fully assimilated. The Manchus, Dais, Yis and many smaller groups have also been acculturated in the Han national mainstream.

Three nationalities of China consider themselves as separate nations and are offering strong resistance to Chinese attempts to eliminate them. These are the Tibetans (Buddhist faith), the Mongols of Inner Mongolia (also of Buddhist faith) and the Uighurs, the Turkic Moslems of Xinjiang (Islamic faith). Tibetans and the Moslems of Xinjiang, in particular Uighurs, are offering a tough resistance to the Chinese policy of ethnocide. In Tibet it is a life and death struggle between survival and extinction. Dalai Lama's singular contribution apart from spreading the message of non-violence universally has been that he has immensely succeeded in empanelling the demand for Tibetan autonomy on international agenda. Since the focus of this paper is neither on Tibet nor on Mongolia, I propose to confine myself exclusively to Xinjiang.

As stated earlier an ethnic minority whose ethnos is weak and is only a prototype of its social mannerism, starts 'melting in the pot'. When subjected to the policies of ethnocide. It may not only offer itself for integration but it gets even ready for assimilation. Quite often it becomes more Christian than even the Pope, as the saying goes. This is what has precisely happened with the Manchus. This is also happening, slowly but surely to China's minority nationalities in Yunnan. Shih Shirpann offers an excellent laboratory for this case study. As stated above, the total population of Moslems (called Huis) in China is around 22 million. Of this, 12 million are Huis. These 12 million Huis speak Chinese. All of them read and write Mandarin. What is equally important, is that all of these 12 million Huis profess faith in Islam. Several components of their ethnos have either become weakened considerably or have waned or/and are still in the process of withering away. Of course, eating pork is taboo for

them. They are spread over nearly 14 provinces of China. In a way they are 'scattered'. A good number of them do not have access to mosques because of around a total 23,000 mosques in China, 20,000 alone are located in Xinjiang. Many Huis do not observe the month of Ramadan. It is believed that a good number of them offer *namaz* at home at least twice a day, once in the morning and again in the evening. These 12 million Huis (of non-Turki origin) whose mother tongue is now Mandarin have been substantially integrated into the Han mainstream. Still occasionally some incidents of friction and even conflict do arise. For example, about 1,000 Huis in the late 1980s and early 1990s were killed in ethnic clashes in the province of Yunnan.

The ethnics of 10 million Moslems (of Turkic origin) in Xinjiang are qualitatively different from the remaining 12 million Huis of China. Uighur, originally it is believed, was the name of one of the tribes who came to Central Asia some 2,000 years back. It is believed by many anthropologists and historians that the Chinese word *Hue* or *Hui* was originally the transliteration of the word Uighur. Also, the language that the Uighurs spoke belonging to one of the main Turkic family language group—was also called Uighur. What are the implications of these two important facts? The ethnics of the Uighurs had a linguistic and a primordial (albeit tribal) foundation. Once settled in Turkestan (the name Xinjiang, in Chinese language means new territories was coined only in the eighteenth century) the geographical locale became another important identity mark. The Uighurs started describing themselves as 'oasis people' for the simple reason that they settled around and near the several hundred oases carved out by the flowing waters of the glacial mountains of basins. Almost 2 millennia back, abandoning a nomadic life, the Uighurs settled for agriculture around those oases and started calling themselves oasis people. Religion as one of the markers of their ethnic identity was added somewhat later. To begin with, the Uighurs were strong believers in Shamanism which was replaced partially by Machenianism of a Persian variety. When Buddhism was actively travelling on the Silk Route they become Buddhists along with Mongolia and Tibet. The 1,000 magnificent temples in Xinjiang are still a living testimony of Buddhism in this region.

Beginning from the tenth century onwards, a good number of them were converted to Islam. This process of conversion to Islam was slow but spontaneous. It took more than 300-400 years for Islam to acquire a near total sway over the entire region. Oasis identity and Islamic identity were not at odds with each other. Of this 10 million Moslem population of Xinjiang around 8 million are Uighurs and the remaining 2 million are Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kirghis and Tatars who also speak their own native languages like Uzbek and Tajik belonging to the Turkic language family. It needs to be mentioned here that these 2 million non-Uighurs do not have a very cordial and intimate relation with the Uighurs. This is not to say that they are in a warring relationship. However, these 2 million non-Uighur Moslems and the 8 million Uighurs have failed to offer a joint resistance to the Chinese efforts to ethnocide Xinjiang. Beijing's policy of divide and rule is also paying rich dividends. Moreover, the non-Uighur Moslems are also displaying anxieties and concerns against the Uighur's hegemonistic tendencies. Notwithstanding this silent but real schism, the non-Uighur Moslems are also devout believers and practitioners of Islam.

The Islamic identity of Uighurs is getting stronger by the day for the last 50 years or so. Partly it is a commensurate reaction against the Han policy of ethnocide. Uighurs are busy inventing and reinventing their ethnogeneses. This whole process of reinventing their ethnic identities is not only extremely challenging but it demands creativity as well. In case of the Tibetan people, efforts at preserving and reinventing their Tibetan identity has been a success. The local resistance of the Tibetan people (based on non-violence and passive resistance) and Dalai Lama's 'charismatic' leadership have proved immensely productive. Of these two basic factors Dalai Lama's leadership has received a lot of public attention and scholarly scrutiny. Unfortunately, the passive and non-violent resistances of the Tibetan people living in Tibet and outside Tibet (more Tibetan people are living outside Tibet in China than in Tibet) have not received the attention of academia interested in Tibetan affairs.

A few comments on the ethnogeneses of Uighurs of Xinjiang. Since Xinjiang was made a Chinese province under the Manchus there always has been serious and in fact intractable problems between the Hans and the Uighurs. Mao promised them the 'right of self-

determination' Jiangxi (Kiangsi) Soviet (1934-9). Once the Chinese Communist Party came to power in October 1949, the promise of 'right of self-determination' was changed to 'autonomy'. The period from October 1949 till 1957 was the golden period of China's ethnic minorities. Trouble started brewing during the period of the 'Hundred Flowers' (1957) when Mao offered the Chinese people the right to comment, criticize and even articulate their grievances against the government and the party openly. The mainstream leadership of Uighurs openly articulated its demand for a separate space for Uighurs. Even a section of Uighur elites went to the extent of reminding Mao about his solemn promise of 'self-determination' to Xinjiang. Chinese people openly demanded freedom and democracy. What was the result? Mao's 'Hundred Flowers' started wilting within a hundred days and the Chinese Communist Party had to launch a 'rectification' and 'anti-rightist' campaign.

In his quest for 'revolutionary immortality' under the rubric of 'permanent revolution' and as a consequence of Sino-Soviet schism which led Mao to believe that the Soviet Union under Nikita Khrushchev had 'betrayed' revolution Mao launched his policy of Three Red-Banners. It was a race towards hastened transition to socialism and even communism. This style of communism proved a disaster for China. The 1958-61 famines claimed a whopping human toll of nearly 30 million people. This unprecedented famine proved more catastrophic for minority areas which had a weak economy and underdeveloped agriculture.

As a consequence of famine and Sino-Soviet schism, about 70,000 Uighurs, Kazakhs and Kirghis crossed over to the neighbouring Soviet Union. To avoid collectivization of livestock, millions of animals were slaughtered and consumed by Xinjiang farmers in their oasis locales. Economically things got stabilized and became normal by 1962-3. China regained the 1957 levels of production. Mao's radical 'impetuosity' instead of waning started ascending greatly. This was articulated in the form of the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' (technically 1966-9 but ideologically 1966 till Mao's death in 1976).

Mao's so-called 'Cultural Revolution' degenerated into a prototype of civil war within the Chinese Communist Party and within China.

The Chinese Communist Party under Deng's leadership in 1981 termed the Cultural Revolution as Mao's 'feudal fascist rule darkest in Chinese history'. Let me not waste time on the narratives of the Cultural Revolution and exclusively focus my comments on the disastrous impact of the Cultural Revolution on minority areas of China and Xinjiang in particular.

In 1962 in an important interaction with a delegation of American blacks visiting China, Mao made an extremely consequential statement on the problematic of ethnic nationalities. He said, 'The ethnic minority question in the ultimate analysis is a question of class struggle'. The implications were clear and categorical. If the dynamics of class struggle are to apply between the Han's and ethnic minorities of China, then it can be resolved and won only through force and ethnocide. This policy of ethnocide was fully put to test at least in three ethnic minority areas, viz. Inner Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang. All the moderate leadership (in Communist Party as well in the government) was replaced by hard-liners. Millions of young school (senior secondary) and college students were sent (to use sinologist's vocabulary 'rusticated') to minority areas to 'exchange revolutionary' experiences with the masses. Mao's wife Madam Jhang Qing, in her famous statement proclaimed 'When China has already socialism (she said very soon China shall attain communism), then why these ethnic and minority distinctions? Mongolia and Xinjiang were the hardest hit during the Cultural Revolution. China's policy towards these three ethnic minorities—Mongols, Tibetans and Moslems in Xinjiang was clearly based on ethnocide. In certain critical situations when minorities in these three provinces resisted, the policy started assuming certain features of genocide.

Mao and Maoism ruled China till 1976, a period of approximately 27 years. From 1976 (both Zhou En-lai and Mao died in 1976) till 1978-9 China was in a flux and this period was a sort of interregnum. 1979 onwards, Deng Xiao-ping and his reformist associates inaugurated a new epoch (in fact, a new age) in China. China under Mao's revolution and China under Deng's reform are in fact two Chinas based on different reasonings and premises. Beginning from December 1978 till date China has undergone several kinds of transformations—economic, social, cultural, and

ideological and foreign policy shifts. What a contrast between the so-called revolution and structural reforms? Even on the question of policy shift towards ethnic minorities, this paradigm shift is visible. It is more accommodative towards those minorities who are willing to integrate/assimilate in what China calls the 'national mainstream' which frankly amounts to 'Hanization'. This accommodative and flexible option is not available to the Uighurs of Xinjiang and the Tibetans of Tibet. It is also true that the Chinese state has made unprecedented heavy investments in Tibet and Xinjiang which has resulted in higher economic growth and a higher per capita GDP. However, the policy matrix on the ethnic problematic pertaining to Tibet and Xinjiang continues to be based on ethnocide.

In my analysis above, I was referring to the China-centric mindset of the Chinese elites. Right from the ancient time when the Han dynasty and Confucianism had acquired political and cultural roots in China, the concept of a China-centric mentality started shaping. The very concept of a 'middle kingdom' emanates from China's collective consciousness that China is the reference point of civilization. Those who are 'outsiders' are either 'barbarians' or fit candidates to be 'civilized'. The concept of *Han Ren* (Han man) is as old as the Han dynasty but the concept of *Han-minzu* (Han nationality) is a late nineteenth-century phenomenon. This shift from Han Ren to Han-minzu started evolving when China started developing the consciousness of a nation. The shift from civilization to empire and finally to nation is merging into a hybrid form of superpower ambition which China's present leaders believe is well within its striking distance. Let me offer a new name to this national aspiration of China and in the absence of a better expression (at my command) I call it 'Han ethno-centrism'. China's ethno-centrism is so strong that the space vacated by the decline (some say withering away) of ideology (Marxism-Maoism) is being filled up by this ethno-centrism. If the one ideology which has not declined and weakened in China in the last hundred years or so, it is Chinese nationalism. In fact, after the disintegration of the USSR and the rest of the socialist/Marxist world, this psyché of China-centric nationalism is getting stronger. On occasions, this syndrome does not hesitate to acquire chauvinistic, aggressive and even expansionist overtones.

It is this format of militant nationalism which prevents her from distinguishing between autonomy, separatism and independence. In my considered opinion Tibetans and Uighurs are demanding, as of today, only a meaningful autonomy so as to preserve their cultural identity and self-esteem. May be only a handful of elements among the Uighurs do dream for national independence but their number can be counted on one's fingers. For China any demand for autonomy and dignity by these two nationalities, Uighurs and Tibetans, is perceived as a call for separatism.

A few more comments on China's ethno-centrism. In contemporary parlance, the term 'ethno-centrism' remains in use as a reference to culturally-biased judgement. *The Dictionary of Anthropology* (Barfield 1997, p. 55) defines ethno-centrism as 'the belief that one's own culture is superior to others'. The diversities of language, culture, rituals, festivals, and symbols of non-Han ethnic groups are viewed as irritants, funny and even as new fangled ideas to an ethno-centrist. Tolerance towards 'other's' diversities and their identity marks are objects of ridicule and scorn rather than of celebration. Ethno-centrism and democracy do not make good partners. Chinese elites view them as 'thesis' and 'anti-thesis'. Synthesis to the Chinese is a complete victory of anti-thesis over thesis. Hanization of these 'diversities' is the ideal solution. Unless this 'Hanization' or 'nationalization' of these 'backward' and 'uncivilized' nationalities is achieved, China's ethno-centrism is incomplete. So runs the argument in Beijing, at times stated covertly and at times overtly.

As stated above, the strong feeling of this Middle Kingdom syndrome, referred to here as ethno-centric psyché, has been a protean theme of China's ascriptive narratives of herself. This thought permeates all the three essential ideological constructs, viz., China as a civilization, China as an empire and China as a nation. I am strongly of the opinion that these are the only three meaningful and real approaches to understand and evaluate China. China as a civilization, China as an empire and China as a nation (in fact, a nation in the making) are the only useful and viable categories for the sinologist studying China. An ideological approach alone; albeit Marxism, Leninism never made any sense to understand China. That is one main reason why Marxist and Leftist analyses of

China (from 1949-76) proved completely off the point. In the entire recorded history of China, very glorious and rich otherwise, of the last 5,000 years, there have been only four historic occasions when this China-centric pride of the Hans was challenged. The first time was when Buddhism from India intellectually and philosophically 'invaded' China. In its long glorious history, China for the first time was contrasted with a thought that some other country (other than China) can be equally civilized. Buddhism found an easy and wide acceptance in China. The second occasion when China's national pride was humbled was in sixteenth century when Mongols, successfully breaking through the Great Wall defeated China and established the first non-Han dynasty and ruled for years. The third occasion when China felt slighted was when Manchus came from Manchuria, again crossing and breaking through the 'Great Wall' conquered China and established the Ching (in Chinese it means pure) dynasty which was overthrown by the 1911 Revolution of China. This shocked China both as a civilization and as an empire. The last occasion when China felt 'humiliated' was when the Western capitalist/colonial powers (beginning with the First Opium War) converted China into a 'semi-colony'. When Buddhism permeated China, it was a civilizational shock. However, the Mongol and then Manchu conquest of China was a shock to the Chinese Empire. Civilizationally, both the Mongols and the Manchus were much inferior to the Chinese civilization. It was because of their sense of civilizational inferiority that Manchus subsequently offered themselves for assimilation and became a part of China's civilizational mainstream. The present leadership of China is determined that China shall not face such shame anymore. This concern of China is absolutely justified.

One more small but pertinent comment on ethnocide and ethno-genesis. As stated above, ethno-genesis is substantially—if not invariably a reaction against ethnocide. This contest and the confrontation between the two is a fight for survival and extinction. The stakes are very high. This conflict produces winners and losers. The winner walks away with everything and in return the loser relinquishes almost everything including his identity and self-esteem. If the contest is based on the matrix of 'Integration' then both the contestants are winners but since ethnocide is based on the matrix of



total assimilation and absorption, the ethnic minority is a sure loser. For the dominant group, it is a quest for glory and pride, but for an ethnic minority, it is a titanic struggle for survival. If the ethos of the ethnic group are innate, organic and authentic and therefore not a part of their acquired mannerism and if several other factors are favourable, then the ethnic group has a chance to remain floated.

As of today, it would be professionally hazardous to comment whether the Uighur and several other Turkic Islamic ethnic minorities will swim or get drowned in the coming 4-5 decades. Dr. C. Gladney and several other distinguished scholars have done groundbreaking academic research on the Xinjiang problematic. Many of these scholars, in particular Gladney, opine that the chances of surviving the ethnogenesis by the Uighurs are reasonably strong. In a significant research work based on intensive and extensive fieldwork on Uighurs, Gladney has produced a very convincing proof of enduring ethnic identity of Uighurs.

Ethnogenesis is a continuous act of regeneration and reinvention. It demands creativity and imagination. It cannot be achieved by dogmatic and a sectarian element of leadership in any ethnic nationality. If an ethnic group successfully modernizes the core traditional value markers and rituals which deserve to be modernized, then it is strengthening the roots of its ethnogenesis. In this sense ethnogenesis of Uighurs in the last half a century have incorporated new and living tissues in their cultural tapestry. Ethnogenesis is much more than updating the traditions. In fact, all the traditions of an ethnic minority which claims to be living and dynamic need not be modernized. Periodically, with an intervention of decades and centuries, an honest assessment should be made about the traditions and legacy of the group's identity. The retrogressive, the backward looking and undemocratic (more so anti-democracy) corpus of legacy should not be and in fact cannot be updated. Only the robust, forward looking and egalitarian component of the group's legacy qualifies to be taken up for ethnogenesis. Every great universal *dharma* contains a hugely rich tradition of compassion and equity oriented values. These values and traditions qualify to be reinvented. The fact of the matter is that this intellectual enterprise called ethnogenesis can be achieved only by saints, sults and social reformers.

Any great civilization or a religious system which periodically fails to produce such great minds is surely heading towards its decline. This innovating mission of updating and renovating the ethnic culture relevant and acceptable to the believing groups cannot be performed by NGOs and other well-meaning collectivities. An innovator and an inventor is much more than an angry agitator. A mind (and soul) full of quest and genius alone can be an innovator. Innovating and reinventing culture and tradition requires extraordinary skill and qualities of investigation and synthesis. A Martin Luther King, a Vivekananda, a Gandhi and a Dalai Lama alone can achieve this stupendous task. The concept of non-violence is as old as the hills. However, the way Gandhi and later, Martin Luther King and Dalai Lama revived and in fact reinvented non-violence and compassion speaks volumes of the science and art of creativity and regeneration.

Let me illustrate my argument by giving a concrete example of one such rich reinvention of tradition by the Uighurs in the last couple of decades. Uighurs in particular and several other ethnic groups of Islamic faith in Xinjiang used to have the tradition of *Mashraf*. This ritual, in the good old days had multiple objectives. It was an occasion for celebration when a young Uighur male graduated to adulthood. The entire tradition fell in disuse and even when used was reduced to a prosaic and dull family ritual. Its social, moral and religious content got divested. This traditional form of *Mashraf* had almost disappeared in Kazakhstan during Stalin's purges in the late 1930s. However, in the valley of Xinjiang this tradition escaped total declination but suffered a considerable decline even there. During the Great Leap Forward (1958-62) and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-76) it had practically disappeared in Xinjiang also.

In the face of Han ethnocide, the Uighur religious elites and community leaders decided not only to revive *Mashraf* but also to update and reinvent it. Now, there is a rich, varied, socially relevant and authentic scholarly literature available on the theme of *Mashraf*. A reinvented and revived *Mashraf* is no longer an old family affair to begin and end with a family feast. Every *mahalla* (segregated locality) in Lee Valley and other parts of Xinjiang richly peopled by Uighurs have created a network of *Mashrafs*. An average *Mashraf* is organized in a group of 30 (or even more) male Uighurs. This

group of Uighur youth is called *Ottuz* or *Oghul*. In folk parlance it is referred to as 'thirty sons' (normally it has more than 30 youths). A Mashraf gathering normally on a weekend starts around 6 p.m. and lasts till 10 p.m. The old tradition of teaching to the new adults about their duties and obligations to the family and the community is conducted. There is also dancing and singing. The dimension of music and romance has been added (love themes based on *ashiq* and *mashoog* from Indian movies pirated through Pakistani traders). Also a one-hour religious discourse on Islam and its egalitarian traditions is delivered by learned scholars. Finally an event of Mashraf ends with a rich and ethnic Uighur feast. These Mashraf events are taking the form of community participation which promotes a communitarian and an altruist face of Islam thus solidifying and cementing the Uighur ethnos. When it was revived in Lee Valley in the 1980s in the wake of Deng's reforms to liberalize religious practices, one of the foci of those Mashrafs was to wean away the Uighur youths from drug and alcohol which was spreading like a virus in Xinjiang. (Xinjiang has the largest percentage of HIV positive patients in entire China.) Soon, it developed into an occasion of social and religious reform and an instrument of acculturation of Uighur youth to Islam. A young Uighur who does not participate in Mashraf is considered uncultured and even uncouth. The Chinese state and the Xinjiang Communist Party leaders were not happy about the revival of Mashraf, notwithstanding the stronger revival of religion and even religiosity throughout China.

The revival and reinvention of Mashraf which eminently qualifies to be a good illustration of ethnogeneses could not have gone unnoticed by Chinese authorities. In 1994 at Kulджа the largest city in the Lee Valley, a group of intellectuals, students, traders and community leaders assembled to debate the 'fate of their people and the nation'. The meeting decided to have a big gathering of several thousand at a Mashraf. Such gatherings were gaining currency and sports activity—soccer in particular—was getting acceptability in Lee Valley. In fact, these Mashraf gatherings had started assuming the form of a sort of grassroot movement of cultural solidarity with subdued political undertones. At the same time the movement was 'creating a sense of national unity among young Uighur men who

were finding in Islam an empowering world view and alternative'. Mashraf was emerging as a small challenge and thus an alternative both to Confucianism and Marxism.

In mid-August 1995 Xinjiang's annual football match of Mashraf was decided to be organized. When the organizers approached the authorities for permission, they were told to deposit 50,000 Yuan as fee. The organizers collected this amount and approached the local authorities, who now raised the fee to 100,000 Yuan. The organizers even then agreed for this raise and decided to collect this amount partly through donation and partly through the sale of tickets. The authorities now flatly refused the permission to hold the football match. What was more astonishing was that the authorities on 14 August 1995 with the help of the local police removed all soccer goals from football fields of all the schools in the city. When the Uighur youths protested against this policy of highhandedness of the police and authorities, the police used force against demonstrators, arresting many and injuring hundreds. The authorities dubbed the proposed football Mashraf as an expression of Uighur nationalism and 'separatist' aspirations. It was this pent-up resentment of Uighur youths which exploded in February 1997 when several thousand Uighur youths carrying banners (with verses from the Koran written on it) organized a protest march. The authorities suppressed it with even greater force. May protesters were shot dead by the police. Hundreds died, thousands were injured and several hundreds were sent to jail. Within a month the 'judiciary' of Xinjiang awarded 'execution' to about a dozen youth by dubbing them splitters'.

This paper focuses on the ethnocide policy of the Hans and the Uighur's attempts of resistance by consolidating and even reinventing its ethnogenesis. In the last two decades two epoch-making events have occurred in world politics which have hugely impacted the processes and content of ethnocide and ethnogenesis in Xinjiang. Paradoxically, neither the Hans Chinese nor the Uighurs of Xinjiang are the author of these two events but both are facing its brunt. In the 1990s, the USSR and several other communist countries met with disintegration and dissolution. Here I am not concerned with the causes of this collapse. The collapse of the Soviet Union and many communist countries was the most ideologically

and politically consequential event of the later half of the twentieth century. This collapse was an internal and authentic one. Obviously, it was a multi-causal phenomenon. There were several serious fault lines in the system which instead of being repaired in time and re-fixed continued to get complicated. From the point of view of a serious debate on the ethnicity problematic, two major fault lines should be mentioned. These two fault lines had and continue to have an intimate and decisive impact on ethnicity. One, the democracy deficit relationship between the dominant ethnic majority and the minority ethnicity. Second, the Soviet Union had serious historical, linguistic, religious and ethnic distortions produced by the ethnocidal policies of Stalin. In other words, the Marxist discourse and action programme to resolve the ethnic problematic was basically flawed. One USSR has resulted in the birth of fifteen independent countries called CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States). Yugoslavia, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and several other communist countries also went the Soviet way. There were many fault lines in these communist states. I do not propose to comment on those fault lines. One common fault line in the USSR and several multi-ethnic communist countries was the systematic wrong handling of nationalities problematic. Stalin's brutal policy based on force and ethnocide was responsible for disintegration on ethnic/nationalities lines. It is not a coincidence that Soviet Union which appeared to be an impregnable monolith till it started crumbling has disintegrated along its historical, religious, linguistic and ethnical fault lines. The fifteen CIS states are the consequences of those fault lines. Several other so-called communist countries in eastern and central Europe—Yugoslavia, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria also split along the racial, linguistic, religious and ethnic fault lines on the Soviet pattern. The CIS, three Central Asian Republics—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan—share common borders with Xinjiang (the other states which have a common border with Xinjiang are Russia, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India). This disintegration of the Soviet Union and several other Soviet bloc countries along the historical, religious, cultural, linguistic and ethnic fault lines has taught several important lessons to the Uighurs and other Moslem nationalities of Xinjiang. It would be an

academic folly to argue that China shall go the Soviet way. China has successfully graduated out of the unpleasant and disastrous legacy of Marxism and Maoism. While in Soviet Union, the non-Russians constituted almost 50 per cent of the total population and hence had a numerical weightage on the ethnic tangle. Notwithstanding the fact that China—both as a civilization and as a nation—is much more homogeneous, the emergence of these states on the common borders of Xinjiang has rekindled a hope among the Uighurs that in an event of China's disintegration they would redeem their dreams of having an independent Uighurstan. To put it bluntly, the fact of Soviet Union's disintegration and the emergence of the three Islamic states of CIS on the borders of Xinjiang, have emboldened the Uighurs of Xinjiang to dream of a similar destiny. I repeat, it would be an act of foolishness and supreme ignorance (about China) to argue that China will go the Soviet way. Conversely, to argue that China is an absolutely impregnable monolith of unity and strength and therefore totally immune from such an eventuality is to believe the surface and ignore the sub-terranean reality. China has several serious fault lines. As a student of Chinese politics I can enumerate these fault lines of China clearly visible to the sinologists. The emerging middle class of China numbering 300 million people plus are demanding more transparency and freedom. They are repeatedly articulating their demand that the government be accountable to the people for their acts of commission and omission. The increasing gap between the haves and have nots has already crossed tolerable thresholds. The regional imbalance between the developed parts of China and backward regions has emerged as a major point of discord. The all-pervading corruption and nepotism in the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party has acquired Olympian heights. The credibility and legitimacy of both the party and the government have touched the lowest depths. In a word, Mr. Democracy is giving a knock at the gates of the Middle Kingdom.

The second major event which again has neither been authored by the Hans nor by the Uighurs but has a huge bearing on the ethnic tangle in Xinjiang is the epochal event of 9/11 in the United States. The Islamic terrorist attack on America has generated a near universal alert against terrorism. Radical/political Islam is the butt

of this disapproval and alert. A strong and effective world opinion has emerged and continues to emerge that in several countries, the Muslim populace radicalized by political Islam is becoming problematic. In a reductionist way, a deductive logic from this belief is spreading the message that Moslems in those societies where they constitute a meaningful minority are trouble-makers. China has successfully exploited this argument within China and even outside it. The Chinese authorities are busy propagating through policy speeches and public discourses on ethnicity that Muslim Uighurs of Xinjiang are the wrongdoers and not the victims. On this count, Chinese state propaganda is both intensive as well as effective. Several Uighur organizations operating outside China have been declared unlawful bodies both by the US and the UN. This has been a serious setback to Uighur's legitimate demands for autonomy and justice. Fortunately for China, since there is not much of political/ radical Islam in Xinjiang, there are not many ethnic soldiers there. Since there is no democracy there, there are not many political entrepreneurs among the Uighurs who can think of practising identity politics and mobilize their brothers for a political change. The option is not available to the Uighurs of Xinjiang. This option is not available to the Hans either.

To conclude, both the contestants, the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese state on the one hand and the Uighurs of Xinjiang on the other, suffer from democracy deficiency. Inherently, there should be no major incompatibility between the Islamic commitment of Uighurs and democracy (on account of the fact that there is no radical/political Islam among Uighurs) in Xinjiang. For China, opting or not opting for democracy is a civilizational choice. China's capacity to conceive and conceptualize out-of-box thinking is impressively amazing. The way China, under Deng's leadership, cast away the straightjacket of Marxism and Maoism speaks volumes of her capacity to rediscover and reinvent herself. This paradigm shift which occurred in the 1980s and continues to consolidate and expand its reach has no parallels in history. China has learned and continues to learn a lot of new lessons from her competitor and also her role model, viz., the United States. Instead of treating her minorities as subjects she has to learn how to treat them as citizens.

Nepal has embarked upon the twenty-first century with an agenda of restructuring the states in the form of inclusive democracy. A number of epochal events placed Nepal on the road of a new destination. These were the unprecedented mass uprising of April 2006 (known as the *Jana Andolan II*) in which 3 to 4 million people in a country of 23 million participated directly; a decade long civil war (1996-2005) between the security forces of the state and the guerrillas of the Communist Party of Nepal, Maoists or CPN-Maoists, culminating in the mainstreaming of the former insurgents into a system of peaceful multiparty competition. The April 2008 elections to the Constituent Assembly (CA) were followed by negotiations among the competing ideologies and interests with a task of framing a new constitution in the spirit of the goals of *Jana Andolan II*; and demise of monarchy—an institution that had long been considered as a symbol and substance of national unity and nationalism of Nepal—in May 2008. Above all, there has been the rise of ethnicity—visible in the emergence of ethnic and regional movements in the post-1990 democratic space backed by international conventions and communities and geared up by ethnicization of politics and politicization of ethnicity. This has brought in a paradigm shift in Nepal's nation-building project from that of assimilation into the fold of dominant hill castes' culture, to accommodation of social

This can happen only with the aid and advice of Mr. Democracy. In the end, the Uighur population of Xinjiang can be divided into three broad opinion groups. One extreme end is a miniscule minority of radicalized/politicized Islam who are pleading for Uighur's right of self-determination in the proposed form of Uighurstan. This group is pleading for a confrontation and clash with the Hans and the Chinese state. The second opinion group consists of those Uighurs who have been substantially converted to the idea of integration in the Han mainstream. This group finds opportunities as well advancement through the modicum of reconciliation. This group is also in a hopeless minority. The huge middle consists of those people who will be satisfied if the Chinese state confers upon them genuine autonomy in the field of language, culture and religion. By and large this huge middle belong to the secular persuasion. If the ground situation in Xinjiang continues to worsen. I am afraid the Islamic fundamentalism may start gaining an upper hand at the cost of the secular middle.