
The Partnership of Stability in Xinjiang: State–Society Interactions Following the July 2009 Unrest

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ABSTRACT

Most analyses of central government policy in Xinjiang focus on “the Uyghur problem”. This article demonstrates the coexistence of a significant “Han problem” in Xinjiang, and thereby throws a different light on relations between center and periphery in China. Central government reactions to the Ürümqi riots in July 2009 suggest that stability among the Han population of Xinjiang is the center’s primary objective, and that this stability is seen to be facilitated by a particular style of development. Furthermore, state–society interactions in the immediate aftermath of the 2009 riots show that Han in Xinjiang perceive themselves to possess collective—if limited and contingent—influence. This perception is the product of the mass frame through which, I argue, the Han mainstream view their relationship with the central government. I call this mass frame “the partnership of stability”.

Once in every generation, without fail, there is an episode of hysteria about the Barbarians.¹

The violence of the riots in Ürümqi on 5 July 2009 (the “7/5 incident” or “7/5”) reinforced Han stereotypes of Uyghur people in Xinjiang. A Xinjiang-born Han businessman related to me the story of “a little Uyghur girl whose role was to pick up a brick and smash the skulls of Han people lying beaten on the ground—to make sure that their brains were splattered”. He continued, his voice breaking with anger and disgust, “What do you say? A little 13-year-old girl! This whole ethnicity is animal! They’re animals.” Stories of children involved as both perpetrators and victims of violence were deployed by all sides, but all of the stories remain unconfirmed.

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1. J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 8.

Following the same response-pattern as 9/11 in the Anglo world, the post-7/5 shock quickly turned to indignation, anger and fear. Vigilante anti-Uyghur counter-riots occurred two days later, but Han anger against the Uyghur rioters was soon eclipsed by anger at the (perceived) languid response of the security forces,² and in particular at Xinjiang's first-in-command, Secretary of the Xinjiang Communist Party Committee (CPC) Wang Lequan (王乐泉).

Less than two months later, on 3 September, following reports of (assumed Uyghur) assailants using infected hypodermic needles to attack Han women, children and the elderly, crowds of Han people gathered outside the offices of the Xinjiang government to demand Wang Lequan's resignation. The Han protesters' basic complaint was that he had failed to protect them and their property—had failed to “maintain stability” (*baochi wending* 保持稳定). The protestors were on the same piece of politically-sensitive ground—Ürümqi People's Square—where state security forces had first cracked down on the initially-peaceful Uyghur protests on 5 July.³ In contrast, there was no police action to disperse the Han protesters of 3 September, despite their direct challenge to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) top representative in Xinjiang. Moreover, they appeared to get their way. By 5 September, the Ürümqi Party Secretary, Li Zhi (栗智), and the Ürümqi police chief, Liu Yaohua (柳耀华), had been removed from their positions;⁴ in late April 2010, Wang Lequan was reassigned to serve as Vice-secretary to Zhou Yongkang (周永康) in the State Commission for Political and Legal Affairs.⁵ The incoming Party Secretary, Zhang Chunxian (张春贤),

2. Uyghurs were not the only perpetrators of violence on 5 July 2009. James Millward and Radio Free Asia both cite reports of state security forces using lethal force against Uyghurs through the night of 5 July. See James A. Millward, “Introduction: Does the 2009 Urumchi Violence Mark a Turning Point?”, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (2009), pp. 352–54; Radio Free Asia, “A City Gripped by Fear”, 6 July 2009, <http://www.rfa.org/english/multimedia/VideoXinjiangUnrest-07062009141835.html> (accessed 10 June 2011); Radio Free Asia, “A Day of Violence in Urumqi”, 6 July 2009, <http://www.rfa.org/english/multimedia/SlideshowUrumqiRiot-07062009121840.html> (accessed 10 June 2011).

3. The demonstration on 5 July began as a peaceful affair, demanding a thorough and transparent government investigation into the Shaoguan incident on 26 June, in which two Uyghurs had been killed by Han mobs. James A. Millward, “Introduction”, pp. 351–52; China News Online, “Xinjiang pilu da-za-qiang-shao-sha baoli fanzui shijian dangri fazhan shi-mo” (Xinjiang Announces How the Illegal Beating, Smashing, Looting, Burning and Killing Incident Developed), *Chinanews*, 6 July 2009, <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/news/2009/07-06/1762907.shtml> (accessed 26 March 2012). For video footage of the Shaoguan incident that circulated among Uyghurs in Xinjiang before 7/5, see “Chinese Commies Massacre Uyghur Innocent Workers 3”, YouTube, 29 June 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6uN32RSb92w&feature=related> (accessed 30 March 2012). For an example of the video footage of the 5 July riots that circulated in Xinjiang in the second half of 2009, see “Uyghur Mobs Killing Chinese clip 2 of 3. July 5, 2009 Urumqi, Xinjiang, China”, YouTube, 22 August 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQZVY7wDxTY> (accessed 27 March 2012).

4. “Zizhiq mianqu Li Zhi Wulumuqi shi wei shuji zhiwu: Zhu Hailun jieren” (Autonomous Region Dismisses Li Zhi as Ürümqi Party Secretary: Zhu Hailun Takes Over), *Ku'erle wanbao* (Korla Evening News), 7 September 2009, pp. 1, 11.

5. *Zhongyang zhengfa weiyuanhui*, which deals, among other things, with internal social stability. Xinhua, “Xinjiang weiwu'er zizhiq dangwei zhuyao lingdao tongzhi zhiwu tiaozheng” (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Party Committee Adjusts Leaders' Duties), Online, 24 April 2010, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2010-04/24/c_1253737.htm (accessed 30 November 2011).

brought with him a raft of state capital investment, subsidies and preferential policies clearly aimed at integrating Xinjiang into the rest of China and benefiting, and thus placating, the Han population.

These events raise important questions about the interplay of interests between various levels of the state (including both Party and government) and the various social groups that they claim to represent. Why were the direct criticisms of Wang Lequan tolerated? Was the replacement of Wang Lequan a tacit acknowledgement of these criticisms as legitimate, and thus a symbolic rectification by the central Party? Does the role and position of Xinjiang within China somehow modify the authoritarian state–society relations prevalent in (most of) the rest of the PRC?

In this article, I propose that the above questions are best addressed by paying attention to a particular “mass frame” that helps to structure social life in contemporary Xinjiang. Mass frames are defined by William Hurst as “coherent worldviews shaped in large part by the *structurally rooted* collective life experience of social groups”.⁶ Hurst distinguishes mass frames from other forms of collective action frames—for example, of the type deployed by “rightful resisters”⁷ or “moral economy” protesters⁸—by noting that the latter emphasize the *agency* of individuals and/or social groups involved. Mass frames, then, are ever-present and structural, and consciously-produced frames⁹ are episodic and strategic. These types of frames can coexist—indeed, social actors engaging in strategic framing often draw upon the discourses, practices and assumptions of a mass frame. The social group outlined by the mass frame that I concentrate on here is a subsection of the Han in Xinjiang, the Han mainstream.¹⁰

THE HAN PROBLEM

The Han mainstream in Xinjiang view their relationship with the central Party and government, including their mutual obligations, through a mass frame that I

6. William Hurst, “Mass Frames and Worker Protest”, in Kevin J. O’Brien (ed.), *Popular Protest in China* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 71. Emphasis in original.

7. Kevin J. O’Brien and Lianjiang Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

8. Elizabeth J. Perry, “Chinese Conceptions of ‘Rights’: From Mencius to Mao—and Now”, *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2008), pp. 44–45.

9. For more of these, see Andrew Mertha, *China’s Water Warriors: Citizen Action and Policy Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), pp. 65–93; Hung and Stephen Chiu, “Voices of Xiagang: Naming, Blaming, and Framing”, in Thomas B. Gold, William Hurst, Jaeyoun Won and Li Qiang (eds), *Laid-Off Workers in a Workers’ State: Unemployment with Chinese Characteristics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 95–114.

10. “Han mainstream” is my own term, based on fieldwork observations and dozens of discussions with Han in Xinjiang that touched (either directly or indirectly) on perceptions of identity and inclusivity/exclusivity *vis-à-vis* other Han people. However, it is not a translation of a term (such as *zhuliu*) that is in use among Han in Xinjiang to describe themselves.

term “the partnership of stability”. Central to the production and reinforcement of this mass frame are state discourses, past and present. The keywords of the state discourse indicate the roles that Han in Xinjiang are portrayed as playing, and the context in which they operate: they are “border supporters” (*zhibianzhe* 支边者) and “constructors” (*jianshezhe* 建设者) who “contribute” (*gongxian* 贡献) to nation-building in an “ethnic region” (*minzu diqu* 民族地区)—or, more suggestively, a “special region” (*teshu diqu* 特殊地区)—that is “remote” (*pianyuan* 偏远) and both culturally and physically “barren” (*huang* 荒), requiring “leapfrog development” (*kuayueshi fazhan* 跨越式发展) to “catch up” to eastern China. Key structural elements of this mass frame include: continuing dependence on preferential policies and subsidies from central coffers;¹¹ an urban industrial economy that remains state-dominated;¹² a culture of “organized dependence”¹³ that extends beyond the work unit; and the existence of a significant “other” in the Uyghurs. The partnership of stability holds that the Han mainstream do their part by occupying the border region and by accepting the Party as the best solution for a multi-ethnic, increasingly stratified China, and the government as the Party’s administrators. In return, they expect that what is being built in Xinjiang is being built in the first instance for them, regardless of the official policies granting special privileges to minorities.

The rising proportion of Han in Xinjiang is helping to drive the region’s progression from what Gaubatz calls a “frontier of control” (military occupation) towards a “frontier of settlement” (Han civilian occupation).¹⁴ Long-term occupation is the basis of the Uyghur claim to Xinjiang. Demographic change towards a Han majority in Xinjiang weakens such claims through a *fait accompli*. Employing the language of a democracy that does not exist in Xinjiang, a number of Han people have confidently stated (in my presence, but not always entirely for

11. James A. Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia 1759–1864* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 58–75; Nicolas Becquelin, “Xinjiang in the Nineties”, *The China Journal*, No. 44 (2000), p. 80; Liu Yong, “An Economic Band-aid: Beijing’s New Approach to Xinjiang”, *China Security*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2010), pp. 41–54.

12. Calculated from Xinjiang Statistical Bureau (ed.), *Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook* (Ürümqi: Xinjiang University Publishing House, 2010), section 3-18; National Bureau of Statistics (ed.), *China Statistical Yearbook* (Beijing: China Statistical Publishing House, 2010), section 4-2. See also “Guo zi wei xie 120 jia yangqi mouhua chanye huanjiang: Wang Yong, Zhang Chunxian chuxi bing jianghua” (SASAC Organises 120 Central SOEs to Assist Xinjiang through Industry: Wang Yong and Zhang Chunxian Attend and Give Speeches), *Xinjiang ribao* (Xinjiang Daily), 21 August 2011, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64093/117005/15469161.html> (accessed 17 January 2012).

13. Andrew Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

14. Gaubatz describes frontiers of control as characterized by settlers staying close to fortified urban centers; they are primarily trade and transport corridors, and any agriculture is a subsistence, rather than a profit-making, venture. Frontiers of settlement are characterized by settlers moving out into the surrounding regions, establishing agricultural and extractive industries and, often, “disrupt[ing] local settlement and subsistence”. Piper Rae Gaubatz, *Beyond the Great Wall: Urban Form and Transformation on the Chinese Frontiers* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 21.

my consumption) that “separatism is not an issue, because we [Han] outnumber them [Uyghurs], so if it came to a vote, we would win”. In this way, sinification (or de-ethnicization) is a key part, or even *the* key part, of the process of integration.

CCP policy adviser Ma Dazheng (马大正) voiced a common view among the leadership when he wrote that “Hans are the most reliable force for stability in Xinjiang”.¹⁵ My own three years of fieldwork¹⁶ in Xinjiang and research into the history and development of “the Corps” (*bingtuan* 兵团)¹⁷ confirms that this assumption is also long-standing and entrenched at all levels of the Han socio-political strata. The *bingtuan* was officially established in 1954 as an overwhelmingly Han-populated¹⁸ network of self-supporting military-style agricultural colonies charged with defending the border and opening “wasteland” for agriculture. By the early 1970s, the organization as a whole required increasing subsidies from Beijing, and in 1975 *bingtuan* farms and enterprises were handed over to local authorities.¹⁹ Deng Xiaoping (邓小平) chose to resurrect the *bingtuan* (as a political entity) at precisely the time that large numbers of Han who had been “sent down” to Xinjiang were clamoring to return to eastern China. Recalling the institution’s central role in the Han settlement of rural Xinjiang, Deng Xiaoping called the *bingtuan* “the nucleus of stability in Xinjiang”.²⁰ Thus, one Han person on the ground in Xinjiang has, especially at times of Uyghur unrest, a higher political value to the central government than a Han person of equivalent economic worth and cultural level who lives in central or eastern China because, by the simple fact of their existence, the Han person in Xinjiang also performs a vital function: occupying Xinjiang.

The logical extension of Chinese policy-makers’ assumption that there is a positive correlation between a high Han population and socio-political stability in Xinjiang is that stability *among* these Han is of paramount importance. As the Han population of Xinjiang grows in both relative and absolute terms,

15. Quoted in Gardner Bovington, “Autonomy in Xinjiang: Han Nationalist Imperatives and Uyghur Discontent”, *Policy Studies*, Vol. 11 (2004), p. 27.

16. I lived in Ürümqi from December 2001 until August 2002, and in Korla from July 2007 to September 2008 and from February 2009 to February 2010.

17. *Xinjiang shengchan jianshe bingtuan*, rendered into English as “Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps”.

18. In 1954, the *bingtuan* was 96 per cent populated by Han while Xinjiang as a whole was below 7 per cent Han. *Xinjiang Bingtuan Statistical Yearbook* (Beijing: China Statistical Publishing House, 2007), section 3–4; Xinjiang Statistical Bureau (ed.), China Data Online, “Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook 1955–2005” (Ürümqi: Xinjiang University Publishing House, 2005), Vol. 1, section 2–3.

19. James D. Seymour, “Xinjiang’s Production and Construction Corps, and the Sinification of Eastern Turkestan”, *Inner Asia*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2000), pp. 171–93.

20. Shugang Li and Hanlin Wang, “Deng Xiaoping dui Mao Zedong tunken sixiang de zhongda gongxian” (Deng Xiaoping’s Great Contribution to Mao Zedong’s “Stationing Troops to Guard the Border and Open the Wasteland” Theory), *Bingtuan dangxiao xuebao* (The Journal of the Bingtuan Party School), Vol. 85, No. 3 (2004), p. 7; Thomas Matthew James Cliff, “Neo Oasis: The Xinjiang *Bingtuan* in the Twenty-first Century”, *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (2009), pp. 83–106.

and simultaneously becomes increasingly stratified, both the difficulty and the imperative of maintaining socio-political stability among the Han also grows. In saying this, I am challenging the widely-held assumption among scholars and observers that the central government perceives “the Uyghur problem”²¹ as the primary threat to social and political stability in Xinjiang, and thus to the center’s ability to achieve its socio-cultural, political and economic objectives in the region. I claim that the “Han problem” is more central.

I divide Han in Xinjiang into three groups—the Han élite, the Han mainstream and the Han subaltern. There are not hard boundaries between these groups. The three factors which most clearly define them are: 1) socio-economically valuable links to the state—these include both informal personal relationships with power-holding individuals within the state and formal employment relationships (*zaigang* 在岗) with viable urban work units; 2) potential for mobility; and 3) time of migration.

Time of migration has a strong influence on the strength and extent of local networks, including connections with lower levels of the state. “Early” migration—pre-1990s—is also an important factor, because of the implied entitlement due to “border supporters”. Earlier migrants, however, tend to be less spatially mobile, because they are more likely to be lifetime state employees and to have fewer connections with central and eastern China—popularly referred to in Xinjiang as the “inner lands” (*neidi* 内地).²² As a result, they are less likely to be economically independent outside of Xinjiang. The potential mobility of a given group acts as an incentive for the authorities to create favorable conditions for members of that group, in order to get them to stay in Xinjiang. The social categories that I present here are thus network-based but not entirely network-dependent.

The Han élite are a relatively small and economically powerful group. They always have close formal and/or informal links with the state, but time of migration varies. To a large extent, their high-level connections with the state obviate the need for a broader network of lower-level local connections. This group includes large-scale business owners or investors, and the permanent employees of central SOEs. The former, and their capital, are highly mobile; the latter, being tied to the work unit, are less so. The Han élite play important roles in Xinjiang—they may attract in-migration by stimulating economic activity and/or act as role models for the rest of the Xinjiang population. Although they are culturally and economically influential, they are not disruptive, because it is against their interests to be so.

21. The most comprehensive single volume on contemporary Xinjiang, S. Frederick Starr (ed.), *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), was accompanied by a policy paper called *The Xinjiang Problem* (S. Frederick Starr and Graham E. Fuller, *The Xinjiang Problem* [Baltimore: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 2004], pp. 16, 74, 75), which stated explicitly “What Uyghurs Should Do” and “What Beijing Should Do”—incorrectly posing “the Uyghurs and the Chinese State” as the only “key players in Xinjiang”.

22. The term *neidi* discursively positions Xinjiang and Xinjiang people on the “outer”.

The Han mainstream can be split into two groups—those with ongoing state employment (regardless of migration status) and/or strong informal links to the state, and those with *only* early migration status or *only* spatial mobility: in short, those who are “inside the system” (*tizhi nei* 体制内) and those who are “outside the system” (*tizhi wai* 体制外). The Han mainstream includes those who identify as “old Xinjiang people”—those who were either born in Xinjiang or who settled in Xinjiang before the 1980s—along with small-scale entrepreneurs and other settlers from *neidi*. For an individual to be considered a part of the Han mainstream, at least one adult member of their immediate family must hold a Xinjiang-based household registration (*hukou* 户口). Both “old Xinjiang people” and more recent in-migrants can be either inside or outside the system, depending on the nature of their employment. “Old Xinjiang people” claim primary credit for developing Xinjiang over the past 60 years and the hardships and self-sacrifice that this entailed. Recent in-migrants are positioned as their successors. When Han elsewhere in China are reminded of the pioneers and constructors, past and present, who have helped/are helping to secure Xinjiang’s place in the PRC, they are reminded of the Han mainstream.²³ This rhetorical positioning, along with the Han mainstream’s size, diversity and local social networks, means that, as a group, they are both influential and potentially disruptive.

The Han subaltern in contemporary Xinjiang are recent in-migrants without any valuable links to the state, and for whom the move to Xinjiang has failed to raise their relative socio-economic status substantively.²⁴ This group consists of the sojourning seasonal migrant workers from inland China and the *bingtuan* underclass—relatively recent in-migrants without full *bingtuan* membership. The former are highly mobile, but the latter are effectively immobilized by their *bingtuan hukou*. Unlike full *bingtuan* members (who are “old Xinjiang people” and members of the Han mainstream) and rural people elsewhere in China, the *bingtuan* subaltern are effectively tenant farmers locked into a debt cycle. If they default by leaving the *bingtuan*, they have nowhere to go back to. Although essential as an occupying and/or labor force, these subaltern groups have little influence over others in Xinjiang. The Han subaltern are the most potentially disruptive group among the Han, because they have so little to lose.

Relative stability amongst the Han mainstream is seen as a pre-requisite for stability in Xinjiang more broadly, because some disaffected Uyghur or Han subaltern groups may take advantage of unrest among the Han mainstream to create their own commotion. Although subaltern Han groups have little or nothing

23. Official, quasi-official and popular discourse, in the form of leaders’ statements, television dramas and cultural production, for example, point consistently to the historical contribution made by the state-sponsored migrants in the 1950s, ’60s and ’70s.

24. Han settlers in Xinjiang generally experience a relative rise in status. Military officers and bureaucratic cadres posted to Xinjiang during the Mao era were typically promoted one level. Incoming non-*bingtuan* settlers are often granted land packages which provide an income far in excess of what they could earn in *neidi*.

in common with Uyghurs, demonstrations and uprisings are contagious.²⁵ This would put the authorities in the unenviable position of trying to contain instability among multiple interest groups, all with different, or even competing, demands. The mere threat of Uyghur unrest makes the maintenance of stability amongst the Han mainstream that much more important.

The Need for “Instability”

The perceived threat of instability allows for, and is produced by, a discourse of securitization which has both economic and political aims and consequences.²⁶

Economically, the “instability declaration”, or securitization, aims to attract funds from higher levels of government. Certain government and public security institutions within Xinjiang are dependent upon the perception of instability for their livelihood. In Xinjiang, the *bingtuan* “needs instability” to secure continued funding from the center. James Seymour offered his interpretation of a Xinhua report that called for the whole nation’s “support and understanding” for the *bingtuan* mission: “If you want us to defend China against the forces of central Asian nationalism, you should be willing to pay for the service.”²⁷ Both Xinjiang Han people and the Xinjiang government leverage the discourse of instability in a similar way, and the 7/5 incident helped to increase drastically the political-economic value of the “instability card”. Within days, many “old Xinjiang people” were confidently proclaiming that “this is a good thing for Xinjiang—the central government will sit up and take notice”. Politically, securitization grants an excuse to have troops on the streets and to curtail normal freedoms, with the acquiescence of the Han population. The perception of a destabilizing “other” in the Uyghurs also produces ethnic solidarity amongst the Han, and promotes Han political loyalty to, and dependence on, the center. In these ways, the perception of instability is a political resource.

On the other hand, state actors may at times choose to downplay instability. State actors make declarations about stability to attract people and investment back to Xinjiang and/or to stop them from leaving, to create a “feel-good factor” within Xinjiang and thus stimulate consumption (including, especially, real estate consumption), and to make leaders appear to be successful in producing (or enforcing) and maintaining stability. Thus, in Xinjiang, stability as a concept and an aspiration is inextricable from the perceived threat of instability. The threat of instability and its counterpoint, the assurance of stability, are valuable tools in

25. Especially under authoritarian regimes. An example from Chinese history is the series of Muslim rebellions of the mid-19th century, which erupted in various locations across Yunnan, Gansu and Xinjiang. More recent examples include the breakup of the Soviet Union and the early 2011 “Arab Spring”.

26. The term “securitization” was coined by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

27. James D. Seymour, “Xinjiang’s Production and Construction Corps”, p. 185.

Xinjiang, not because ethnic violence is necessarily around the next corner, but *rather* because, in the Han imaginary, that possibility is ever-present.

HAN DISCONTENT

The outpouring of popular anger directed against Wang Lequan in the aftermath of 7/5 was an unprecedented event in Reform-era Xinjiang. Provincial-level leaders across China are very rarely considered permissible targets of criticism.²⁸ Wang Lequan had been in the top position in Xinjiang for 15 years—a contravention of the standard CCP practice of regularly rotating high-level cadres to prevent them from building up local networks. The cadre exchange system did not apply to Xinjiang because, for as long as Wang Lequan maintained stability in Xinjiang, he was the right man in Beijing's view. Aided by his connections with powerful figures such as Zhou Yongkang, Wang Lequan's implementation of continuous "Strike Hard" (*yanda* 严打) campaigns in the early 2000s made his political career. In the highly securitized political atmosphere of Xinjiang, there was no space for open criticism, despite extensive Han dissatisfaction with Wang Lequan and the provincial-level government of Xinjiang since well before the summer of 2009.

Wang Lequan was infamous for his cronyism. Popular perception among Han people in Xinjiang was that a "Shandong clique" dominated the politics of the Autonomous Region and that Shandong-based businesses were provided with lucrative contracts—for projects that could easily have been done by Xinjiang-based businesses. One common story involved compressed-earth pavers: "Why do we need to bring dirt from Shandong?" was the rhetorical ending to this story when first told to me by a third-generation *bingtuan* person. "Hasn't Xinjiang got any dirt of its own? We have heaps of dirt. Look around you—*there is dirt everywhere in Xinjiang*." The hurt pride in the speaker's voice, and specifically the reference to Xinjiang as dirty, highlights the inferiority that many Xinjiang Han feel with respect to the developed regions and people on China's eastern seaboard.

In April 2009, an anonymous post made on a web forum by a government employee from Tacheng²⁹ expressed a feeling of resentment, common among people in Xinjiang, at being left behind the economic advances of the eastern seaboard cities. The post referred to the comparative salaries of government workers across

28. Sun Liping, a professor of sociology at Qinghua University and recognized expert on in/stability in China, stated in December 2010: "The establishment of a market economy tends to diffuse social unrest—whereas in the past, social unrest would lead to direct action against the government, things are different now: tensions between labor and capital are directed at capital, against employers and development zone bosses and perhaps, at most, the local government. Unrest is never targeted at higher levels of government, such as provincial governments". Sun Liping, "Sun Liping Discusses Social Stability in China" (2010), http://shanghaiist.com/2007/11/09/sun_liping.php (accessed 4 December 2010).

29. Northwest Xinjiang, bordering Kazakhstan.

China as proof that Xinjiang was being neglected by the central authorities, and exploited by its corrupt and ineffectual leadership: “[The authorities] are an interest group, concerned only with their own ‘stability’”.³⁰ The writer put stability in quotation marks as a mocking reference to the most commonly heard political aphorism in relation to Xinjiang: “social stability is a prerequisite and guarantee of Xinjiang’s development”.³¹ The government employee went on: “There’s no way they’ll look after [us here at] ground level; only if it affects their own stability will they give us an increase [in wages], and even then that won’t keep up with costs [of living] . . .”³²

Immediately after 7/5, a retired “Third Front” factory worker surmised hopefully that 7/5 may provide the opportunity for the center to “punish [Wang Lequan] for his crimes”, and gave two reasons for a change of leadership:

One: In China, there is a policy to change leaders often to prevent them from building up a network of cronies and entrenching corruption; he is long overdue. Two: Xinjiang people are disappointed with Wang Lequan because, before he came, our salaries used to be among the highest in China, but now we are among the lowest, and our extra benefits have also shrunk in comparison.

The worker’s nostalgia for a bygone era of relative privilege has its basis in official wage figures. The average wages of state employees in Xinjiang fell from 17 per cent above the national average (sixth highest) in 1978 to 21 per cent below (fourth lowest) by 2008. The steepest decline was between 2004 and 2008 (a fall of 11 percentage points relative to the national average), which meant that the sense of relative deprivation was at a high point in 2009.³³

Just as this man was not alone in his nostalgia, neither was he alone in the accuracy of his predictions. Indeed, the general feeling among the many Han to whom I spoke in the second half of 2009 was not only that Wang Lequan *should* go, but also that, sooner rather than later, he *would* go. Xinjiang Han became increasingly confident of the strength of their case against Wang Lequan as

30. “Xinjiang gongwuyuan zhang gongzi xiaoxi” (Xinjiang Public Servants’ Salary Raise Information), Baidu Tieba Chatroom, 2008, <http://tieba.baidu.com/f?z=312919295&ct=335544320&dm=0&sc=0&rn=30&tn=baiduPostBrowser&word=%20per%20centB8%20per%20centB7%20per%20centBF%20per%20centB5&pn=30> (accessed 4 May 2011).

31. Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, *White Paper: Development and Progress in Xinjiang* (21 September 2009), http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-09/21/content_12090477_8.htm (accessed 4 May 2011).

32. “Xinjiang gongwuyuan zhang gongzi xiaoxi”.

33. Data compiled from Ministry of Labor (ed.), *China Labor Statistical Yearbook* (Beijing: China Statistical Press, 1990), p. 87; Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Statistical Bureau (ed.), *Xinjiang 50 Years 1955–2005* (Beijing: China Statistical Press, 2005), pp. 394–95; Ministry of Labor (ed.), *China Labour Statistical Yearbook* (Beijing: China Statistical Press, 2009), section 4–3. One reason offered for this fall in wage rank was the phasing-out of subsidies for remote and hardship postings, known as *dicha butie*, which some of my informants say were a significant proportion of their total income in the early 1990s.

the events and aftermath of 7/5 temporarily, but radically, altered the discursive space of Xinjiang.

With 7/5, Wang Lequan failed on his principal pledge (stability) and could thus be held to account for his other transgressions—whether real or imagined. A local businesswoman who grew up on the *bingtuan* explained:

Wang Zhen (王震)³⁴ had a high-pressure policy towards Uyghurs, but Wang Lequan's policies, over the years, have caused Uyghurs to become insufferably arrogant, and to be impolite and disrespectful towards Han people . . . so this has given rise to the slogan shouted by the Han people on 7 July: "If the government won't take action, we will take action ourselves".³⁵ For a long time, the leaders of Xinjiang have not educated or conditioned the Uyghurs [to the Han way of life and social norms].

The Han in Xinjiang are not like Shanghai people—"wa wa" wimpy crybabies. If you hit me, I'm not going to just sit and take it, I am going to hit you back . . . and it was not until the Han took to the streets [on 7 July] that the government realized that the situation was serious.

Until that time, they were just sitting on their backsides thinking that it wasn't a problem—"we have it under control, we can suppress the Uyghurs any time". So now all Xinjiang people are criticizing Wang Lequan—every day on TV speaking bullshit . . .

That's not to say it's only Wang Lequan who is to blame, but it's mainly him. Why? Because in China the Party Secretary is the top leader—he has the power to move troops into action, so he should take 90 per cent of the blame!

He can say what he likes, it's high time he stepped down.

Wang Lequan's stability guarantee failed on two related fronts. On the first front, Wang Lequan failed to guarantee to Han settlers and to the center that the Uyghur "natives" would not rise up and threaten the settlers' lives or livelihoods, or the economic functioning of Xinjiang as a whole. On the second front, Wang Lequan failed to guarantee to the center that the Xinjiang Han would not leave Xinjiang in droves, or protest and act in destabilizing ways—either of which threaten central power in Xinjiang, far more so than Uyghur rioting in and of itself.

34. The PLA commander who "peacefully liberated" Xinjiang in 1949, and was known for his hard line towards ethnic unrest.

35. "Zhengfu bu zuowei, women lai zuowei!"

THE FALL OF WANG LEQUAN

Wang Lequan's removal in late April 2010 was seen by many Han in Xinjiang as a sign that the central government really did care about their opinions and their livelihood. The political capital that the center gained in Xinjiang by removing him also gave the incoming Zhang Chunxian an immediate public relations advantage, since Zhang was, and still is, seen as a representative of the Party center. However, such opportunistic sympathy is by no means a given. In the PRC, even non-violently expressed popular discontent with official actions has not necessarily led to greater intervention by the government to address the protesters' demands, and has on occasion led to a brutal crackdown.³⁶ Unrest in Xinjiang has generally been treated even more harshly. Gardner Bovingdon shows that, even in the more forgiving period from 1980 to 1997, protesters' demands were partly or fully met in only four instances, two of which can be considered of relatively little significance. The atmosphere became increasingly intolerant over the 1990s and into the 2000s, as Wang Lequan's hard-line approach dominated.³⁷

In July and August 2009, the Han public came to perceive open criticism of Wang Lequan as permissible, and created a "political opportunity" with ongoing significance to the political economy of Xinjiang. Yongshun Cai writes: "Political opportunities are not necessarily predetermined in popular resistance; they may be created or even perceived rather than real".³⁸ Perceptions about the safety of open protest were shaped by Han peoples' pre-existing understandings of the partnership of stability, by social networks both horizontal and vertical, and by the media.

Several China scholars have pointed to frames as important influences on the outcomes of popular resistance.³⁹ Stability is one of the most powerful frames in the contemporary PRC since, in CCP rhetoric, stability is a necessary condition of development, development ensures stability, and both are seen as essential to

36. The peaceful resolution of a large-scale protest in Wukan, Guangdong, was hailed as a "new model", testifying to the assumed use of force by the authorities. Yu Jianrong terms this reflexive resort to force "rigid stability". See Jianrong Yu, "Rigid Stability: An Explanatory Framework for China's Social Situation", *China Elections and Governance* (27 May 2009), <http://chinaelectionsblog.net/?p=12932> (accessed 19 January 2012); Willy Lam, "The Grim Future of the Wukan Model for Managing Dissent", *China Brief*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2012), pp. 3–5. On earlier cases, see Andrew Mertha, *China's Water Warriors*, pp. 65–93; Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, *Rightful Resistance*, p. 12.

37. For an extensive discussion of protest in Xinjiang, see Gardner Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 105–34 and Appendix.

38. Yongshun Cai, *Collective Resistance in China: Why Popular Protests Succeed or Fail* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 87. Cai cites Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper and Jaswinder Khattri, "Caught in a Winding, Snarling Vine: The Structural Bias of Political Process Theory", *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1999), pp. 27–54.

39. Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, *Rightful Resistance*; Elizabeth J. Perry, "Chinese Conceptions of 'Rights'"; Andrew Mertha, *China's Water Warriors*; Eva Hung and Stephen Chiu, "Voices of Xiagang".

maintaining the Party's hold on power.⁴⁰ A shift in emphasis from one to the other can indicate a shift from a hard-line approach (stability first) to a more moderate approach (development first), or vice versa. The stability frame is both more complex and more powerful in peripheral regions of China which have high non-Han populations that are perceived to have separatist tendencies. In Xinjiang, Wang Lequan made “stability overrides all” (*wending yadao yiqie* 稳定压倒一切) his governing maxim and, by doing so, made stability the standard on which his administration was judged.⁴¹

Mertha writes that, in contemporary China, “activists of all stripes have managed to wriggle their way into the policy-making process and even help shape policy outcomes. They have succeeded in part because they have understood and accepted the general rules of the game of policy-making under the rubric of ‘fragmented authoritarianism.’”⁴² Han people in post-7/5 Xinjiang, in particular the protesters of 3 September 2009, can be considered activists, in that they have sought to influence high-level political decisions which they perceive to have a direct effect on their lives but over which they had (and have) no formal influence. They understand and accept that the rules of the game are based on stability as the “number one responsibility” for cadres at all levels,⁴³ and that they themselves are seen by the center as the key agents of stability in Xinjiang. That is to say, the rules of the game in Xinjiang, although (like elsewhere in China) flexible within a range, are delineated by the partnership of stability. The casual attitude exhibited by many of the protesters in the square on 3 September shows that they felt secure that there would be no crackdown by the security forces.⁴⁴

Social networks were an important factor in creating a sense of political safety among the protesters. Yongshun Cai shows that social networks are a “political asset” in China. Horizontal social networks (among social peers) increase the likelihood of collective resistance and promote group solidarity; vertical social networks (between resisters and agents of the state) increase the chances that the resistance will be successful by helping resisters to exploit any fractures within

40. See Qinggang Li, “The Force Behind Leadership,” *China Daily*, online, 1 July 2011, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/cpc2011/2011-07/01/content_12814074.htm (accessed 28 November 2011); “Fazhan shi diyi yaowu, wending shi diyi zeren” (Development Is the Number One Task, Stability Is the Number One Responsibility) (8 July 2005), CPPCC News Online, <http://cppcc.people.com.cn/GB/34952/3528323.html> (accessed 15 November 2011).

41. “Wang Lequan jiangshu Xinjiang 90 niandai fenlie douzheng: ceng bei lie ansha mingdan” (Wang Lequan Tells of the Fight against Separatism in the 1990s: A List of Violent Incidents in the Past), *ChinaNews.com*, 2 February 2008, <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/news/2008/02-20/1167713.shtml> (accessed 20 November 2011).

42. As Mertha notes: “the ‘fragmented authoritarianism’ (FA) framework, first proposed in 1988, has remained the most durable heuristic through which to study Chinese politics”. Andrew Mertha, “‘Fragmented Authoritarianism 2.0’: Political Pluralization in the Chinese Policy Process,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 200 (2009), p. 996. For the original concept, see Kenneth Lieberthal and Michel Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures, and Processes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

43. See, for example, CPPCC News Online, “Fazhan shi diyi yaowu”.

44. Video footage of 3 September demonstrations in Ürümqi, my own collection.

the state, by signaling the likely response of the security forces and by leveraging state agents' "moral responsibility to help the people with whom they are connected".⁴⁵ A former classmate who is now a bureaucrat, police officer or news editor is the ideal kind of "vertical" connection. There are many such people among the "old Xinjiang people" who constitute a significant proportion of the Han mainstream. Cai concludes that such relationships "blur the boundaries between the state and society in China and make political participation, or the way citizens exercise political influence, more subtle and perhaps more effective".⁴⁶

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN CREATING POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY

Immediately after the 5 July violence, the government attempted to isolate Xinjiang by cutting off the Internet, text messaging services and international calls. A Xinjiang-wide intranet was set up, which initially had only one web address available—the government-run Tianshannet. The severing of inter-provincial lines of communication was extremely disruptive to business and social life, causing unknown millions of yuan of lost revenue for Xinjiang-based businesses both large and small⁴⁷ and creating widespread resentment among the population. These disruptions were framed within the discourse of securitization as a sacrifice that was necessary to prevent "law breakers" (*bu fa fenzi* 不法分子), understood to mean Uyghurs, organizing "further instances of violent criminal activity".⁴⁸

However, the main reason for the Internet blackout in Xinjiang was government fear of Han criticism and rumor-mongering—more than fear of Uyghur violence. Very soon after the 5 July riot, a concerted anti-rumor campaign was launched with the slogan, "Don't Believe Rumors; Don't Spread Rumors; Don't Start Rumors: Trust in the Party",⁴⁹ and it was also made clear to the public that the punishment for spreading rumors was 5–10 days in jail.⁵⁰ In late July, the top central propaganda official Wang Chen (王晨)⁵¹ visited Xinjiang and, at a meeting

45. Yongshun Cai, *Collective Resistance in China*, p. 88.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

47. Damian Grammaticas, "Trekkling 1000 Km in China for E-Mail", BBC News, 11 February 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8506601.stm> (accessed 1 December 2011).

48. "Xinjiang jinri qi quanmian huifu hulianwang yewu" (Xinjiang's Internet Service Fully Restored), news.china.com.cn, 14 May 2010, http://news.china.com.cn/txt/2010-05/14/content_20038848.htm (accessed 12 May 2011); "Yongxin shouhu jiankang kaifang de wangluo huanjing" (Diligently Protect a Healthy and Open Internet Environment), Tianshannet, 14 May 2010, http://xjts.cn/news/content/2010-05/14/content_4972409.htm (accessed 14 January 2012).

49. "Bu xin yan; bu chuan yan; bu gen yan: xiangxin dang".

50. "Zui han sanbu yaoyan bei ju 10 tian" (Drunk Man Gets 10 Days Jail for Spreading Rumors), *Ku'erlewanbao*, 13 July 2009, p. 6.

51. Wang Chen was at that time Vice-Minister of the Central Propaganda Department, Director of the State Council's News Office and Director of the External Propaganda Office.

with provincial leaders and media personnel, emphasized the media's important role in "guiding public opinion" by "transmitting the just voice (*zhengyi zhi sheng* 正义之声) of the Party, government and the masses".⁵²

The state's attempts to stifle popular discourse were not entirely successful. First, information and rumor from other parts of China still got through to people in Xinjiang, and a feeling among Xinjiang people that they were being kept in the dark lent a sometimes undeserved aura of truth to information from outside the firewall. Information that apparently originated with "a friend" in the security services or government was treated with hushed reverence. Some Han people read the blackout as a confirmation of instability in Xinjiang: a second-generation Xinjiang oilfield worker said: "After 7/5, everybody was without the Internet, and they all realized, '[Xinjiang] is not stable, still not stable'". In this way, measures to combat instability actually fueled a sense of instability in the population.⁵³ In this repressive context, small signals took on great significance.

The anti-Uyghur riots that occurred on 7 July were both a response to and further evidence of the increasingly popular perception that "the government is useless".⁵⁴ The immediate publication (on the morning of 6 July) on Tianshannet of pictures of murdered Han helped to consolidate popular Han support for the anti-Uyghur vigilantes.⁵⁵ An informant telephoned me late in the evening on 7 July and, without greeting me, he declared, "the Han people have stood up!" It was a conscious reference to Mao Zedong's well-known declaration that "the Chinese people have stood up", understood to mean throwing off the tyranny of oppression from both within the country (the Kuomintang) and from outside (the imperialist powers of Japan, Europe and the United States). My informant similarly implied that the Han of Xinjiang will suffer oppression (by Wang Lequan and his allegedly pro-Uyghur policies) and humiliation no longer. This

52. The logic here is that, since the Communist Party is the party of the masses, it speaks for the masses. In this case then, "the masses" are conceptually distinct from the "public" whose opinion the media is supposed to be guiding. Xing Li, "Zhongxuanbu lingdao zai wo qu weiwen diaoyan" (Central Propaganda Ministry Leader in Xinjiang to Convey Sympathy and Conduct Investigation), *Xinjiang ribao*, 1 August 2009, p. 1.

53. The phenomenon of anti-instability measures producing greater instability is noted in a Qinghua report on stability maintenance. See Social Development Research Group, "New Thinking on Stability Maintenance: Long-Term Social Stability Via Institutionalised Expression of Interests" (13 May 2010), originally published in *Nanfang zhoumo* (Southern Weekend) on 14 April 2010, <http://chinaelectionsblog.net/?p=5220> (accessed 16 May 2011).

54. "The government is useless" became one of the lines being chanted by Han protesters in early September. See Tania Branigan, "New Mass Protests and Violence Break out in Urumqi, Witnesses Claim", *The Guardian*, 3 September 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/sep/03/urumqi-china-new-violence-new-claims> (accessed 29 November 2011).

55. Examples of these images can be seen at "Ethnic Clashes in Urumqi, China", Boston.com, 8 July 2009, http://www.boston.com/bigpicture/2009/07/ethnic_clashes_in_urumqi_china.html accessed (30 March 2012). These extremely graphic images were taken by police photographers and published on the front page of Tianshannet, a government news portal. They were later released by the Xinjiang regional authorities at a media conference on 7 July, but they had been removed from the front page of Tianshannet by mid-morning on 8 July.

sense of collective agency—“if the government won’t take action, we will take action ourselves”—was later to count against Wang Lequan.

Also a double-edged sword was the evidence cited in support of the widely-reported assertion that the 7/5 riots were a premeditated act of violence designed to sabotage ethnic unity. Intelligence apparently gathered in the ten days prior to 5 July undermined the Xinjiang-based authorities. The official central line, released by Xinhua in both English and Chinese⁵⁶ on the morning of 6 July, read:

According to the government, the World Uyghur Congress has recently been instigating an unrest (*sic*) via the Internet, calling on supporters “to be braver” and “to do something big”.

On Saturday evening, information began to spread on the Internet, calling for demonstration (*sic*) in the People’s Square and South Gate in Ürümqi city. On Sunday, Rebiya called her accomplices in China for further instigation, according to the government statement.⁵⁷

This attempt to prove the involvement of “separatist elements” outside China to avoid the 7/5 riots being framed as a domestic problem was read by Chinese people in Xinjiang as evidence of the incompetence of Xinjiang cadres and security services. Video footage, including some which apparently came from a surveillance camera operated by the Ürümqi security forces and depicted daytime street scenes of Han being attacked by Uyghur men and women, also emphasized the poor response time of the police on the day. These videos circulated illegally in Xinjiang through late 2009, and are now available on YouTube.⁵⁸ Stories and rumors, already rampant, were bolstered by this sort of evidence. The information that was reported in the media was thus interpreted in the context of the information that was not officially reported. A young English teacher explained:

Ten days ago, on 28 June, all the evidence that something was going on and about to happen in Ürümqi was available—lots of discussions on the Internet; the police

56. “Wulumuqi fasheng da-za-qiang-shao yanzhong baoli fanzui shijian” (Violent Criminal Incident in Urumqi: Beating, Smashing, Looting and Burning), Sina.com (Chinese), 6 July 2009, 新闻30分 (CCTV News Half Hour), <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/p/2009-07-06/042318160186.shtml> (accessed 11 April 2011).

57. “Civilians and Armed Police Officer Killed in Northwest China Violence”, Xinhua, 6 July 2009, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-07/06/content_11658819.htm (accessed 20 November 2011).

58. For an example of some of the surveillance camera footage of the 5 July riots that circulated in Xinjiang in the second half of 2009, see “Uyghur Mobs Killing Chinese” (see above, note 3). For an example of the footage that I heard described but did not see while in Xinjiang, see “Raw Footage—Uyghur Terrorists Killing Innocent People in Xinjiang”, YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7g44LGLXjYs&feature=related&has_verified=1 (accessed 27 March 2012). I am indebted to David O’Brien for these links.

even listened in on Rebiya calling her brother to arrange this . . . this was reported in the Bayinguoleng Daily on or about 11 or 12 July.

So everybody in Xinjiang has the right to call Wang Lequan and the government to account over what they were not doing, and should have been doing to prevent this . . . [The security forces] didn't realize it was this serious . . . this was their mistake; they were caught off-guard.

A cartoon in the *Korla Evening News* (*Ku'erle wanbao* 库尔勒晚报) on 29 July 2009 expressed these feelings in a satirical form. The rhyme was titled: "Carrying out duties in this manner". It was accompanied by a picture showing two cats watching a group of mice feasting and playing right under their noses, but on the boundaries between their two districts. Both cats are saying: "It is your jurisdiction".⁵⁹

The retired "Third Front" factory worker, quoted earlier, lamented:

In the past we had one very strong point, as Mao Zedong said: "The people you call will come, those who come will fight, those who fight will win". At present, the fighting spirit of the militia and the armed police is greatly lacking. They say, "I haven't received any orders to move, so I don't move . . ." The great generals of the past were great generals because they did not wait for orders from above—they made war when the opportunity to make war successfully arose. Not like today.

On 13 July, the central government announced a series of 24 "provisional measures concerning the accountability of high-level Party and government cadres", effective immediately. Item seven stated that high-level cadres would be "held accountable" by "instructing them to make a public apology, suspending them from work whilst their case is investigated, having them voluntarily taking the blame and resigning, or ordering them to take the blame and resign, and/or [unilaterally] removing them from their post(s)".⁶⁰ The announcement was seen in Xinjiang as a direct response to the governance failures exposed by the riots of 5 and 7 July, and policy positioning for the eventual removal of Wang Lequan. A former local government employee said: "Altogether, there were eight items (*sic*), which were especially focused on cadres at county level and above. We counted that Wang Lequan is guilty of five of them."

59. Kuanhong Wu and Yuexin Jiang, "Ru ci ganhuo" (Carrying Out Duties in This Manner), *Ku'erle wanbao* (Korla Evening News), 29 July 2009.

60. People's Daily Online, "Guanyu shixing dang-zheng lingdao ganbu wen ze de zanxing guiding" (Regarding the Implementation of Provisional Measures to Hold High-Level Party and Government Cadres Accountable), *People's Daily*, 13 July 2009, available at <http://renshi.people.com.cn/GB/9639591.html> (accessed 7 December 2010).

Despite the best efforts of the center, criticism inevitably began to slip sideways, from Wang Lequan and the Xinjiang authorities to the Communist Party and system more broadly. A common story held that Wang Lequan was drunk on that day, and he was not answering his mobile telephone. Since nobody lower down in the hierarchy dared make the decision to suppress the rioting Uyghurs, it was well into the evening by the time the order was given. My Han interviewees criticized what they saw as a system that rewarded only obedience, not initiative, where the population had no right to choose their leaders, and where those with power or powerful connections could get away with anything. Some compared China unfavorably to America or Australia in these respects. Many made the point that this system had a direct impact on their daily lives, because it extended into the workplace and into the micro-economic functioning of society. With large numbers of officials sent to investigate the situation in Xinjiang, and informants hyper-sensitive to any signs of unrest, the center cannot but have been well aware of this growing discontent.

Hu Jintao's (胡锦涛) visit to Xinjiang between 22 and 25 August emphasized the distance that the Party center was attempting to put between itself and the besieged Wang Lequan. Wang Lequan is considered by some to be a Hu ally, or even protégé,⁶¹ yet China Central Television images of the visit, which monopolized the prime-time national news (*xinwen lianbo* 新闻联播) for two consecutive days following Hu's return to Beijing, did not feature a single handshake between the two men. Their meeting—at the airport on Hu's arrival—was dealt with in one sentence and Wang Lequan's absence from the rest of the hour-long TV reports was noticeable.

Only days after Hu left Xinjiang, the first reports of stabbing attacks with hypodermic needles appeared. The ensuing rumor-mill caused a near-hysterical reaction amongst the Han people in Xinjiang. By early September in Ürümqi, increasing numbers of people were reporting to hospitals with physical ailments that they attributed to unseen Uyghurs who lurked in public places with poisoned syringes. Han vigilantes took to the streets once again, and had to be forcibly prevented from marching on the Uyghur area of town. Up to 10,000 people (overwhelmingly Han) gathered to demand security guarantees⁶² and Wang Lequan's resignation. One protester said: "We are here in People's Square peacefully. We are just giving the government some advice." Others threw plastic bottles and called for his execution.⁶³ The advice to get rid of Wang Lequan was clearly meant to be heard by the central government.

61. Willy Lam, "The Xinjiang Crisis: A Test for Beijing's Carrot-and-Stick Strategy", *China Brief*, Vol. 9, No. 15 (2009), pp. 2–4.

62. ChinaView, "Crowds Demand Security Guarantees in Urumqi after Hypodermic Syringe Attacks" (4 September 2009), Xinhua, http://news.xinhuanet.com/video/2009-09/04/content_12000507.htm (accessed 27 November 2011).

63. Tania Branigan, *New Mass Protests*.

The unrest in Xinjiang and the continued perception of instability prompted capital flight and Han emigration, and hit the regional economy very hard. Tourism, one of Xinjiang's most important industries, shut down almost completely just at the onset of the summer high season. Over 98 per cent of all tourists cancelled their trips by mid-July, causing immediate losses of an estimated 1 billion yuan.⁶⁴ Small business suffered badly from the lack of tourists, the communications blackout and the negative economic mood. Many Han people to whom I spoke in the second half of 2009 expressed their desire to leave Xinjiang, often commenting bitterly: "I love Xinjiang, but this business, 7/5, has made me want to leave. One can't live a peaceful life here." Prospective buyers of new apartments began to look elsewhere in China and, although the listed prices did not drop much, sales volumes in both Ürümqi and Korla dropped sharply.⁶⁵ Construction work slowed or stopped. A real estate executive told me that some work units had been ordered by the city government to buy up multiple floors of new apartment buildings and offer them to employees at a discount. These work units apparently included ex-state enterprises that would not usually offer such benefits. By keeping advertised housing prices stable, the intervention helped to maintain a façade of economic confidence in Xinjiang and to protect the interests of people who already owned new apartments—both important factors in attracting and keeping population. Similarly, the local purchasers of these apartments made a *de facto* commitment to staying in Korla, because they were not permitted to sell the apartment within three (sometimes five) years, and the oversupply of similar new apartments kept rents down. According to a well-connected informant in the Industrial and Commercial Bureau (*gongshangju* 工商局), many Han entrepreneurs in Ürümqi held fire sales and fled back to the east coast within weeks of 5 July. Xinjiang's economy, he claimed, "has been put back at least five years by this [riot]—even if the central government works really hard to direct investment into Xinjiang and restore investor confidence".

These events and interactions show that the Party center's concern about levels of satisfaction and social stability among ordinary Han people in Xinjiang, already at a premium to *neidi*, was heightened in post-7/5 Xinjiang. Internalizing

64. Projected losses for the year came to 5 billion yuan. See Xinhua, "Hefty Subsidy Sought to Salvage Xinjiang Tourism", *China Daily*, 16 July 2009, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009xinjiangriot/2009-07/16/content_8436842.htm (accessed 1 December 2011); Xinhua, "Travel Agencies Suspend Group Trips to Xinjiang", *Global Times*, 11 July 2009, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/www/english/truexinjiang/tourism/guide/2011-04/445484.html> (accessed 1 December 2011).

65. The information on Korla comes from my own observations and interviews; for Ürümqi, see "Wulumuqi qian 7 ge yue shangpinfang chengjiaojia tongbi zengzhang jin er cheng" (Commercial Housing in Ürümqi Rises 20 per cent in Previous Seven Months), *Ku'erle wanbao*, 10 August 2009, p. 2; "Wulumuqi qian 8 ge yue shangpinfang chengjiaojia mei pingfangmi 3457 yuan" (Ürümqi Commercial Housing Averages 3457 Yuan/m² in Previous 8 Months), *Ku'erle wanbao*, 15 September 2009, p. 2; "9 yue Wulumuqi yidi gou fang jiaoyi liang hui wen" (Housing Sales to Non-Ürümqi Residents Stabilize in September), *Ku'erle wanbao*, 19 October 2009, p. 2.

the state discourse that Xinjiang is a “special region” and that they played a nationally-important role in its integration, these Han people demanded “special” treatment. The shifts in central policy towards Xinjiang—most noticeably those subsequent to the replacement of Wang Lequan—demonstrate how these calls were answered.

ZHANG CHUNXIAN’S “NEW ERA”⁶⁶

26 April 2010: Immediately on being appointed Secretary of the Xinjiang CPC, Zhang Chunxian drove his car to Shaoshan⁶⁷ and stood looking up quietly and in reverence at the statue of Mao Zedong. Thus, he bade farewell to Hunan and, shortly afterwards, flew over 3200 kilometers to Ürümqi to begin his journey of governing Xinjiang.⁶⁸

By the time Wang Lequan was replaced by Zhang Chunxian in late April 2010, the Party and state machinery was already working on the first stage of a renewed drive at the integration of Xinjiang. “More than 500 officials from 64 departments ha[d] been sent to towns, villages, schools and companies in Xinjiang to inspect social situations and collect people’s suggestions, amid efforts to study how to improve the livelihoods of residents and promote ethnic equality and unity.”⁶⁹ The leading edge of the “new approach” to governing Xinjiang is the “pairing assistance” (*dui kou* 对口) scheme, under which provincial-level administrative units in eastern China provide specific regions in Xinjiang with massive injections of cash and in-kind support, plus technical and administrative assistance. The *dui kou* money, an estimated 10 billion yuan in 2011 alone, is for investment in agriculture, industry and mining, construction of large-scale infrastructure projects, improving “people’s livelihoods” and social welfare, and improving housing in

66. Since Zhang Chunxian took office, the PRC (media and government) discourse about Xinjiang is that it has entered a “new era” (*xin shiqi*). See Chuanguo Zhang, “The Population Problems in Xinjiang and Its Controls in the New Stage”, Chinese Academy of Sciences, 1 October 2009, <http://www.csscipaper.com/socialsciences/demography/22674.html> (accessed 27 November 2011); XUAR Department of Culture, “Qiantan xin shiqi xuyao Xinjiang jingshen” (A Brief Discussion of the New Era’s Need for Xinjiang Spirit), (25 October 2011, <http://www.qzgw.org/templet/dangwei/ShowArticle.jsp?id=122703> (accessed 27 November 2011).

67. Mao Zedong’s birthplace.

68. He Zhanjun, “Zhang Chunxian zhili Xinjiang yi nian: pingjun budao 3 tian jiu you yi xiang huimin zhengce chutai” (Zhang Chunxian’s First Year of Governing Xinjiang: for Each Less-than-three-day Period Since He Took Office, an Average of One Policy to Benefit the People [of Xinjiang] Has Been Announced), Xinhua, 24 April 2011, <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/14562/14467759.html> (accessed 11 May 2011).

69. “Chinese Central Government to Step up Support for Xinjiang: Senior Leaders”, Xinhua, 31 March 2010, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-03/31/c_13231387_2.htm (accessed 11 May 2011).

rural and *bingtuan* areas.⁷⁰ With its explicit purpose to transform administrative culture and social relations, the pairing assistance scheme epitomizes the logic of integration.⁷¹

Internet and Media

One of the first (and most significant) things that Zhang Chunxian did when he took office was to reconnect Xinjiang at the same level of Internet service as the rest of China. “Re-opening” the Internet had to be Zhang’s privilege—it served to distinguish him from his disliked predecessor, and was meant to show that he was in control, that he was bringing Xinjiang back on the path to real stability, and that he was therefore not afraid of opening lines of communication. On the first anniversary of 7/5, he made a conspicuously “informal” tour of Xinjiang—going down to “ground level” and talking to ordinary people—to reinforce that signal.⁷² His own microblog on qq.com,⁷³ although only open for two weeks, helped to reinforce his image as a receptive “people’s man” and to position him as a new generation of modern CCP leaders who are in tune with social trends and the needs and desires of the population. Zhang Chunxian used the publicity generated by his micro-blogging to “urge [the] timely handling of people’s appeals” by local officials,⁷⁴ implying an acceptance of the public consensus that Xinjiang officials, especially local officials, had been slow to respond to people’s needs. Thus, the “Internet card” was one of the first of a series of tools aimed at helping Zhang to establish his claim to be a moral and competent leader having the center’s support and the best interests of the people at heart. Regular positive write-ups in the local and national media have continued to drive this point home to the Han public of Xinjiang.⁷⁵

70. China Government Administration of Economic Growth, “Zhili Xinjiang: kaipi xin silu” (Governing Xinjiang: A New Approach), *Lingdao zhengce xinxi* (Leadership and Policy Information), Vol. 21 (31 May 2010), pp. 24–25; Hu Yue, “Hand in Hand: China Unveils a Partner Assistance Program to Propel Xinjiang Toward Economic Prosperity and Social Stability”, *Beijing Review*, Vol. 23 (10 June 2010), http://www.bjreview.com.cn/business/txt/2010-06/07/content_277403.htm (accessed 15 May 2011).

71. Liu Yong, “An Economic Band-aid”, p. 46.

72. He Zhanjun, “Zhang Chunxian zhili Xinjiang yi nian”.

73. People’s Daily Online, “Xinjiang Party Chief Opens Microblog to Better Hear Public Opinions”, People’s Daily Online, 4 March 2011, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90882/7307711.html> (accessed 11 May 2011).

74. Xinhua, “Xinjiang Party Chief Urges Timely Handling of People’s Appeals”, CRIEnglish.com, 18 March 2011, <http://english.cri.cn/6909/2011/03/18/1461s626951.htm> (accessed 12 May 2011).

75. As well as works already cited above, see Liangbing Xie, “The Party’s Top Ranking Blogger”, *Jingji guancha bao* (The Economic Observer), 10 January 2012, <http://www.eeo.com.cn/ens/2012/0110/219390.shtml> (accessed 17 January 2012); “Xinjiang Government Addresses Problems Facing Businesswomen”, *Women of China*, 12 January 2012, <http://www.womenofchina.com.cn/html/report/3784-1.htm> (accessed 17 January 2012).

The Post-7/5 Support Package for Xinjiang

Zhang has massive resources at his disposal, and has announced “an average of one policy to benefit the people [of Xinjiang] for each less-than-three-day period” since he took office. The primary objective of these policies is to “improve the government’s image” in the eyes of the people, which is seen as essential to ensuring the CCP’s overriding objective: “maintenance of [CCP] rule through stability” (*changzhijiu’an* 长治久安).

The positive tone of the Xinhua report assessing Zhang Chunxian’s first year in office signals that the brief period, post-7/5, of allowable overt dissatisfaction in Xinjiang ended with Wang Lequan’s reassignment. The report stated, among other things, that his “political intelligence” causes him to realize the necessity of sweeping out the old “lazy government” (inescapably associated with Wang Lequan), and bringing in a “new wind” of “effective” and “industrious government”.⁷⁶ Responding directly to the widespread public criticism that the government “cherishes acting according to ritual . . . drinking, feasting and dancing”, the report drew a line between Zhang Chunxian’s administration and that of Wang Lequan: “no colorful ribbons fluttering in the breeze, no drums and gongs making a clamor, no long and tedious speeches . . . just a few cadres, a few work unit representatives, very few media and a brief, 15-minute ceremony”.⁷⁷

The policies or policy outcomes that the CCP has effected in Xinjiang since Zhang Chunxian took the reins have had two main goals: to integrate Xinjiang with the rest of China, and to placate the population of Xinjiang. Specifically, “integration” policies have included:

- declaring a Special Economic Zone (optimistically dubbed “the Shenzhen of the West”) in the iconic Uyghur-heartland city of Kashgar and elevating the Economic and Technology Development Zone in Korla (also in relatively underdeveloped South Xinjiang) to national level;⁷⁸
- massive investments in fixed infrastructure (for example: upgrading roads throughout Xinjiang; rural airport construction and upgrading; irrigation and drinking water networks; and a proposed railway linking Xinjiang to Tibet via Qinghai);⁷⁹

76. He Zhanjun, “Zhang Chunxian zhili Xinjiang yi nian”.

77. *Ibid.*

78. “Zhongyang jue ding zai Xinjiang Kashi she jingji tequ” (The Central Government Decides to Build a Special Economic Zone in Kashgar, Xinjiang), news.163.com, 21 May 2010, <http://news.163.com/10/0521/08/676ORIAO0001124.html> (accessed 14 May 2011); Lu Na, “S. Xinjiang’s First National Economic Zone Established” (19 April 2011), http://www.china.org.cn/china/2011-04/19/content_22396350.htm (accessed 15 May 2011).

79. “Xinjiang Builds Rural Roads for 1.2 Million Farmers”, People’s Daily Online, 30 March 2011, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/98649/7335453.html> (accessed 15 May 2011); “Xinjiang to Build Six More Airports by 2015”, eChinacities.com, 21 January 2011, <http://www.echinacities.com/urumqi/city-in-pulse/xinjiang-to-build-six-more-airports-by-2015.html> (accessed 14 May 2011); Li Mu,

- setting preferential policies (for example, tax exemptions, rent waivers and business subsidies) to attract private investment from inland China and abroad;⁸⁰ and
- massively increased investment (1 trillion yuan over 2011–15, doubling that of the previous Five-year Plan) by central SOEs.⁸¹ The investment is directed by SASAC⁸² under Wang Yong (王勇), whose philosophy is that state control of key industries helps to consolidate “the CCP’s ruling Party status.”⁸³

“Placating” policies have included:

- supplying natural gas to households in Xinjiang⁸⁴—as a response to the widespread complaint that Xinjiang’s natural resources are being exploited for the benefit of eastern China, but with precious little benefit to the people (Han or Uyghur) of Xinjiang;⁸⁵

“China to Set up First Desert Airport in Xinjiang” (12 February 2011), <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90882/7285830.html> (accessed 15 May 2011); “Xinjiang Begins Construction of 18 Water Conservation Projects”, People’s Daily Online, 3 April 2011, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/7339222.html> (accessed 15 May 2011); “New Railway to Cut Short Trip between Capital Cities of Tibet, Xinjiang”, Xinhua, 6 March 2011, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-03/06/c_13764216.htm (accessed 19 July 2011).

80. The American security and surveillance equipment supplier Honeywell is one of the foreign companies to take advantage of this new “openness”, and the perception of social unrest in Xinjiang. See “Honeywell Opens New Office in Xinjiang, China”, *Asia Today*, 26 April 2011, <http://asiatoday.com/pressrelease/honeywell-opens-new-office-xinjiang-china> (accessed 15 May 2011). For preferential policies, see Xinhua, “Foreign Trade More Than Triples in China’s Xinjiang”, *Global Times*, 14 February 2011, <http://business.globaltimes.cn/china-economy/2011-02/622556.html> (accessed 15 May 2011); China Government Administration of Economic Growth, “Zhili Xinjiang”; Xinhua, “China’s Xinjiang Eases Rules for Foreign Investment to Boost Inbound Investment”, People’s Daily Online, 22 March 2011, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90778/90861/7326839.html> (accessed 15 May 2011).

81. “Centrally Administered SOEs Urged to Promote Economic Development in Xinjiang”, Xinhua, 20 August 2011, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-08/20/c_131063327.htm (accessed 19 November 2011).

82. State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (Guowuyuan guoyou zichan weiyuanhui).

83. Yong Wang, “Wang Yong zai quanguo dangjian yanjiuhui guoyou qiye dangjian yanjiu zhuanwe weiyuanhui chengli dahui ji diyi nianhui shang de zhici” (Wang Yong, Inauguration Speech at the First Annual Meeting of the Party Building in State-Owned Enterprises Professional Committee, Under the National Party Building Research Association), Guo Zi Wei Xinxi Zhongxin (State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission Information Centre), 2010, <http://www.sasac.gov.cn/n1180/n1566/n259715/n263898/7529629.html> (accessed 5 February 2011).

84. For example, see “Xinjiang cheng shen tianranqi ru hu mingnian zhongdian shi nanjiang huanwang jianshe” (South Xinjiang to be Focal Point of Construction of Natural Gas Residential Supply Network Next Year), Tianshannet, 28 December 2011, http://www.tianshannet.com/news/content/2011-12/28/content_6457879.htm (accessed 27 March 2012); “Dushanzi qu Ruijing, Meihao xiaoku tianranqi ru hu gongzuo tongzhi” (Work Notice on Supply of Natural Gas to Homes in Ruijing and Meihao Districts of Duzhanzi Area), Dushanzi Online, 1 March 2012, <http://www.ds.zc/news/bulletin/2012/31/1231172631A38FJH5FA19GAAG4980H.asp> (accessed 27 March 2012).

85. See, for example, “Xinjiang People, I’m Sorry, Thank You”, *Tewpiq*, 3 July 2008, <http://www.thenewdominion.net/209/xinjiang-people-im-sorry-thank-you/#comment-2481> (accessed 14 May 2011).

- resources tax reform, from a fixed volume-based calculation to a variable, and much higher, price-based calculation.⁸⁶ The reform significantly raises the amount that local governments in Xinjiang receive in taxation revenue;⁸⁷
- training and re-employment programs for Xinjiang college graduates—both Han and Uyghur;⁸⁸
- cleaning up the ranks of Party and government administration—including the dismissal and imprisonment for life of at least one county-level leader for corruption;⁸⁹ and
- re-centralizing, at the level of the Autonomous Region, the financing of subsidies, basic income guarantees and performance bonuses to “grass-roots” employees in non-profit state institutions⁹⁰—including, for example, teachers, sanitation workers and local paramilitary leaders, but focusing on local-level cadres. This pay rise will apparently cost the Xinjiang government 1.3–1.8 billion yuan per year, and is wholly funded by income from the new resources tax.⁹¹

A Limited Partnership

While some of these new policies also promise Uyghurs more access to education and training and to employment, the policies least popular with Uyghurs remain in place. Potentially beneficial policies are overshadowed by the ongoing project to dilute and reshape Uyghur culture so that it accords with the CCP's vision of the role of ethnic minority culture in a unified and harmonious China. Unpopular policies include the destruction of the old city of Kashgar and its sinified reconstruction; the continuation of “bilingual education” (*shuangyu jiaoyu*)

86. “Resource Tax Reform Helps Local Government”, Xinhua, 4 June 2010, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/video/2010-06/04/c_13333541.htm (accessed 19 July 2011).

87. For example, in 2009 crude oil was taxed at 28 yuan per metric ton, but is now taxed at 5 per cent of the value. Even at the low end of the price spectrum (4800 yuan per metric ton), this means a tenfold revenue increase from crude oil alone. The new tax regime came into force on 1 June 2010 for oil and natural gas, and Xinjiang was on track to net 5 billion yuan from taxing resources in 2011. “China Overhauls Natural Resource Tax: the Pockets of Local Governments Are Bound to Swell Quickly Due to the Natural Resource Tax Overhaul”, Caixin, 21 June 2010, <http://english.caixin.cn/2010-05-21/100146123.html> (accessed 18 November 2011); Xinhua, “China's Xinjiang to Earn Five Bln Yuan in Resource Tax in 2011”, *Global Times*, 10 November 2011, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/NEWS/tabid/99/ID/683296/Chinas-Xinjiang-to-earn-5-bln-yuan-in-resource-tax-in-2011.aspx> (accessed 18 November 2011).

88. Shao Wei and Mao Weihua, “Training Program to Boost Employment in Xinjiang” (26 March 2011), http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/bizchina/2011-03/26/content_12231521.htm (accessed 15 May 2011).

89. “NW China Official Sentenced to Life for Taking Bribes”, China Daily, 30 March 2011, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-03/30/content_12251513.htm (accessed 15 May 2011).

90. *Shiye danwei, dangzheng bumen*.

91. “Xinjiang shishi gongwuyuan gongzi gaige: 8 yue zhang gongzi” (Xinjiang Implements Public Servants' Salary Reform: Raise Due in August), fabang.com, 29 July 2010, <http://www.fabang.com/a/20100729/172413.html> (accessed 18 November 2011); Xue Zhang, “Xinjiang shixing jiceng ganbu gangwei butie deng 4 xiang zhengce” (Xinjiang Implements Four Policies to Support Grass-roots Cadres) (3 September 2011), <http://www.shache.gov.cn/ReadNews.asp?NewsId=4149> (accessed 18 November 2011).

双语教育); coercive Uyghur labor migration to factories in eastern China;⁹² and severe restrictions on religious practices and other expressions of Uyghur ethnic identity.⁹³ Uyghurs also continue to suffer disproportionately weak representation in the political and administrative systems, and discrimination in a private job market dominated by Han employers.⁹⁴ While those Uyghurs who are already, or opt to become, inducted into the Han economic and cultural system may benefit from this renewed focus on Xinjiang, those who resist induction or are not able to access the opportunity for induction are likely to feel at least as dissatisfied as in recent years. It will be increasingly easy for young Uyghurs to be sinified, and increasingly difficult for them to resist being sinified. The CCP project in Xinjiang has time on its side.

It is not only non-sinified Uyghurs who are discriminated against in Xinjiang's "new era". Non-government employees of all ethnicities, the vast majority of whom have not received pay rises, are finding life increasingly tough because of rapid inflation—especially for essential items like food and housing.⁹⁵ Apartment prices in Ürümqi are rising at the highest rate in the nation, and prices in Korla have almost doubled since early 2010.⁹⁶ Han "inside the system" are the main

92. Informants who visited and lived in south-west Xinjiang confirmed that the practice of coercive Uyghur labor migration to eastern China continued into 2011. For an analysis of the policy, see Steve Hess, "Dividing and Conquering the Shop Floor: Uyghur Labour Export and Labour Segmentation in China's Industrial East", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (2009), pp. 403–16.

93. For an in-depth and damning report on the lack of religious freedom in Xinjiang, see Human Rights Watch, "Devastating Blows: Religious Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang", Vol. 17, No. 2 (C) (2005), http://www.hrchina.org/sites/default/files/oldsite/pdfs/Xinjiang_Report.pdf (accessed 1 December 2011). A more recent report by the Congressional Executive Committee on China suggests that the situation has worsened. See Voice of America, "Religious Freedom Worsens In China" (21 September 2011), <http://www.voanews.com/policy/editorials/Religious-Freedom-Worsens-In-China-130288573.html> (accessed 1 December 2011).

94. Zang Xiaowei found in a 2005 survey that, on average, even relatively well-educated urban Uyghurs in Ürümqi received an income 21.8 per cent less than their Han counterparts, and in the non-state sector (where there are no positive discrimination policies) this figure was 52 per cent. In the same survey, Zang also found that there was no statistically significant difference between Han and Uyghur employment prospects in the "redistributive" sector (government and public organizations), but that there was an ethnic difference in both state and private enterprises. Xiaowei Zang, "Affirmative Action, Economic Reforms, and Han–Uyghur Variation in Job Attainment in the State Sector in Urumchi", *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 202, No. 1 (2010), pp. 344–61; Xiaowei Zang, "Uyghur–Han Earnings Differentials in Ürümqi", *The China Journal*, No. 65 (2011), pp. 152, 155.

95. At time of writing in early 2012, inflation without salary growth is a China-wide phenomenon, but is even worse in Xinjiang, where official inflation was running at 6.9 per cent per annum, significantly above the official national level of 5.4 per cent. Food was the hardest hit, running at 14.8 per cent nationwide and, according to my informants, well over that in Xinjiang. This is recognized as a potential future cause of social instability: in late August 2011, the Xinjiang government offered low-income residents a temporary subsidy to help offset the massive inflation. See China Radio International, "Xinjiang Residents Subsidized in an Effort to Offset Inflation", *Xinhua*, 29 August 2011, <http://english.cri.cn/6909/2011/08/29/195s655726.htm> (accessed 18 November 2011).

96. Data from Korla are from my own research; for Ürümqi, see "China Housing Boom Spreads to Smaller Cities", *Bloomberg News*, 23 June 2011, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-06-22/china-housing-boom-s-spread-to-smaller-cities-poses-dilemma-for-government.html> (accessed 1 December 2011).

beneficiaries of 7/5. The lowly position of the Han *bingtuan* underclass has not changed, and is not likely to change without major structural upheaval in the *bingtuan*. As posited at the beginning of this article, even the Han mainstream are a privileged group *only as long as* they continue to perform their role of occupying Xinjiang. Outside Xinjiang, people holding a Xinjiang household registration feel like an underclass. While there are preferential policies for people to move to Xinjiang, there are many social and structural restrictions on the spatial mobility of Xinjiang people, both within China and internationally. It can be quite difficult for Xinjiang people to get a Chinese passport, even as it is fast becoming a mere formality for residents of metropolitan eastern China. Second, there is discrimination against Xinjiang people in inland China.⁹⁷ For example, Xinjiang Han people are often tarred with the same brush as Uyghurs by being restricted—by government regulation—to certain hotels in a given city or, even in the absence of this regulation, being refused occupancy once the hotel receptionist sees that they are from Xinjiang. In addition, their status as “outsiders” and migrants leads to wage and social discrimination. Xinjiang Han thus possess what we might call a spatially-mutable value—a value that decreases sharply as they move east. New central policies towards Xinjiang aim to raise the attractiveness of the periphery and thereby both to attract new settlers from the core region and to retain the old ones.

CONCLUSION: PARTNERS IN (IN)STABILITY

Most studies of Xinjiang touch on social and political stability in the region, and almost all of them presume that the central government is focused on dealing with “the Uyghur problem”. Liu Yong, for example, criticizes the central government’s response to 7/5 as “an economic band aid”, saying that the measures will not be effective in addressing Uyghur discontent and quelling dissent.⁹⁸ I contend that the central state conceives of the problems in a different way. Recent policies in Xinjiang have not focused on winning over the Uyghur population. Rather, the massive injection of funds into Xinjiang and the paired assistance program are intended to make the region attractive to Han and accelerate cultural change in Xinjiang. That means privileging Han people and Han ways of doing things.

A pattern of recentralization emerges here, suggesting a worthwhile direction for future research. The intensified state capitalism characterized by the increased investment from central SOEs and certain aspects of paired assistance can be seen as an explicit recognition that Xinjiang’s economy needs greater direct

97. Until 2011, Xinjiang high school graduates were not allowed to apply to universities in Hong Kong and Macao. “Hong Kong, Macao Universities to Admit Xinjiang Students”, Xinhua, 22 May 2011, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/culture/2011-05/22/c_13887871.htm (accessed 19 July 2011).

98. Liu Yong, “An Economic Band-aid”.

central involvement and guidance. This is also evident in the general tone of the Han mainstream, whose centralizing entreaties to Beijing were cultural as well as political and economic. A guiding slogan of the new Autonomous Region CPC articulates the motives of this recentralization from the perspective of frontier governance: “If the grass roots are stable, then the whole of Xinjiang is stable; if the whole of Xinjiang is stable, then the whole country is stable.”⁹⁹ Part of this program involves standardizing and increasing the bonuses of grass-roots cadres and controlling the funds from the provincial level in Xinjiang. Taken together, these political–economic measures aim to strengthen both formal and informal governance structures by redirecting loyalties in Xinjiang—from the grass roots to Ürümqi, and from the periphery to the metropolis.

A broader implication of my argument is that ethnic conflicts are not just about ethnicity. Han actors in post-7/5 Xinjiang expended at least as much energy on *intra*-ethnic maneuvering. The Han focus was on how the central and provincial-level authorities would handle their demands; for them, the primary and continuing role of the Uyghurs in the drama was as providers of instability. This intra-ethnic focus is evident in a late 2010 comment from an “old Xinjiang” woman who had been highly critical of the CCP a year earlier:

Since [early 2010] there have been many changes, the Party has been providing many good things for the people . . . This is a direct result of 7/5. The CCP cares about the people. The CCP is good—it is the new secretary, he is good. The new secretary is good.

The Han demands, and the upward focus of their attention, were guided by the assumptions of the mass frame that I term the partnership of stability. Bruce Gilley has recently suggested giving less attention to society in discussion of China’s politics. However, although “impressive state opportunism” doubtless played a large part in Wang’s removal, my analysis suggests that it is too early to “kick society back out.”¹⁰⁰ Attention to “the critical and dominant role of the state in China’s politics” need not, and ought not, overlook the role that societal actors can play in determining outcomes.

99. Xue Zhang, “Xinjiang shixing jiceng ganbu gangwei butie deng 4 xiang zhengce”.

100. Bruce Gilley, “Paradigms of Chinese Politics: Kicking Society Back Out”, *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 20, No. 70 (2011), p. 529.