

International Social Support and Intervention:

The Uyghur Movement

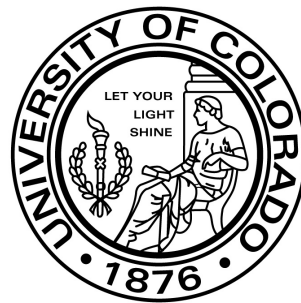
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Defense Date: April 3rd, 2017

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In consideration of the country's history and current day policies, China is undeniably no stranger to violating human rights, especially for the sake of government interests. Since the 1990's, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), locally and historically recognized as East Turkestan, in northwestern China has been experiencing rising ethnic tensions between the ethnically Turkic- Muslim Uyghur population (one China's 55 ethnic minorities) and China's majority population, the Han. These tensions are rooted in China's economic and geopolitical interests in Xinjiang as a region that holds an abundance of natural resources and is strategically located, bordering eight countries. Since the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949, China, formally recognized as the People's Republic of China (PRC), officially claimed the region as Chinese territory and has accelerated efforts to fully integrate Xinjiang and accomplish its interests. This has involved rapid infrastructure development and renovation, incentivizing Han Chinese to migrate to Xinjiang from other parts of the country. In the process, Muslim- influenced architecture specific to Uyghur culture has been destroyed and Han Chinese have flooded the job market in which they are favored when acquiring positions.

Such changes have inflamed strife among the Uyghurs, resulting in an increase in Uyghur organized separatist activity within Xinjiang and other parts of China. While the PRC has made great efforts to integrate Xinjiang, the Uyghurs are pushing for an independent state and are not willing to assimilate with

Chinese society. The PRC's reaction to separatism has worked to combat unrest through "Strike Hard" campaigns that have been consistent for nearly 20 years and specifically target all Uyghurs in order to eliminate any potential threats. The East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) has been the only Uyghur separatist group officially recognized. While awareness of the organization has persisted since the 1990's, it was not until the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorists attacks in the United States that the PRC began identifying the ETIM as "radical Islamic terrorists". Since then, there have been correlated increases in human rights violations against the Uyghurs that have included evasive religious restrictions, restrictions of movement outside of Xinjiang, as well as forced life imprisonment and executions for those even suspicious of being tied to separatist activity.

The XUAR is not the only region in China that has and is undergoing a rise in ethnic tensions, separatism, and state authorized human rights violations against specific ethnic group. In the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) discontent brought out by the Buddhist-Tibetan population is deeply comparable to the Uyghurs of Xinjiang. Like Xinjiang, Tibet was forcibly claimed as Chinese territory upon establishment of the PRC and has since fought for self-determination. In recent years, China has invested in the development of Tibet which has been causal for an influx of Han Chinese tourism and migration to region; worrying the Tibetan people that their traditional culture is slowly deteriorating. In 2008, Tibetan separatists in the TAR brought out mass violent protests against the Chinese state. In response, the PRC has been accused of using excessive force

against the Tibetans and has since enacted heavy religious restrictions as well as forced life imprisonment and executions for those connected to activist or separatist activity.

Despite extremely similar circumstances of oppression of the Uyghurs and the Tibetans, there is one distinction that sets the two cases apart. Thousands of organizations and individuals globally have contributed greatly to the Tibetan cause financially and morally, which has sparked an international campaign advocating for Tibetan autonomy. On the other hand, most individuals in the world have probably never even heard of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, let alone have advocated for them. So why is it that the Tibetans have attracted international attention and social support, as intervention, while the Uyghurs have remained detached and invisible?

The purpose of this thesis is to note that the Turkic-Muslim Uyghurs of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, better known as East Turkestan, have been repressed by Chinese authority for centuries but have received little to no international recognition or assistance. The central question is why are organizations, countries, and individuals not socially supporting, as intervention, the Uyghur movement in Xinjiang. In order to approach this question, this thesis will seek to analyze which factors determine why organizations, countries, and individuals choose, of if they are even able to choose, to intervene, directly or indirectly, in conflict. In this, analysis will work to determine and define intervention in particular regard to the case of the Tibet in order to understand if

that same social support and intervention exists in the case of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. This thesis will then analyze the methods of protests that Tibetans and the Uyghurs use to defend and promote their movements against Chinese oppression. Ultimately, the case of Tibet will act as a control in order to understand which strategies of protests in social movements are successful in attracting international social support and intervention. Additionally, the global media's influence will be taken into account through analysis of overall coverage and depictions of both the Uyghur and Tibetan movements.

This analysis of protest methods will only cover protests from and since 2008 due to the significance of protests in contemporary day. This significance is particularly relevant in regard to the internationalization of global media and its increasing capabilities to obtain information regarding global issues and abilities to expand the scope of global audiences' that then are able obtain that knowledge and information for themselves. Therefore, overall international awareness and perceptions of the Uyghur and Tibetan movements can be measured; thus, drawing into overlying question of why the Uyghurs in Xinjiang are not attracting significant international attention in their social movement against Chinese oppression.

Literature Review

Overview:

While matters in China's northwestern Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) have been critical, it has not been until recent years that significant research has been released regarding the issues that reside in the

region. Researchers in the field have released several pieces that analyze China's interests in Xinjiang and the policies and actions that allow China to maintain strong control in the region. In Xinjiang, human rights violations of the Uyghur population, who are native to the region, have existed since China officially claimed East Turkestan (now Xinjiang) when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was established in 1949. Violations have intensely increased since the 1990's in correlation with development in the region and more prominent instances of terrorism organized by Uyghurs (Clarke, pg. 280, 2008). The CCP strategically presents China as a unified national front in the light of the international community, comprising the country's 56 ethnic minorities under *Zhonghua minzu* (the Chinese people), to depict the Chinese body politic as both "national" and "multinational" (Bovingdon, pg. 41, 2016). However, the Uyghurs of Xinjiang demonstrate behavior that contradicts China's exalted multicultural national face, as they have been tied to violent up-rise against the government; who has often characterized the violence as radical Islamic terrorism (Chung, pg. 8, 2002). In this characterization of "Islamic terrorism", the Chinese government has implemented policies that restrict religious freedom and have enacted campaigns, such as the "Strike Hard" campaign in 2001, that crack down on violent terrorism in Xinjiang by targeting Uyghur individuals (Clarke, pg. 129, 2015).

Regarding the reasoning why Uyghurs are represented as radicalized Islamic terrorist by China, there are gaps in research concerning China's

relations with Western entities. It has been examined that following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, China began categorizing Uyghurs as Islamic terrorists (Steel and Kuo, pg. 2, 2007). This examination correlates the depiction Uyghurs to the specific concern that the United States has stated concerning global Islamic terrorism (Brooks, pg. 7, 2011). Thus, it is implied that by categorizing Uyghurs as Islamic terrorists, especially after the horrific event of 9/11 when fears of terrorism were peaked, the United States would have no concern to assist Uyghurs. However, this research lacks explicit analysis of diplomatic documents or trade agreements between China and the United States. This aspect of research is essential to understand if there was an alteration in the relations between the two countries, when China began naming Uyghurs as Islamic terrorist, and which specific changes there were. There is also a gap in research concerning the United Nations standing on terrorism and human rights in China. Specific UN documentation on China must be analyzed to understand if there have been any responses from the UN, which responses were made or not, and why?

China's hold on Xinjiang is pivotal for economic development. Xinjiang retains a rich abundance of natural resources, including oil, coal, and natural gas, and is also critically located, bordering much of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan), as well as Pakistan, Russia, India, and Mongolia (Hayes and Clarke, pg. 1, 2016) Research has covered the substantial importance regarding China's trade relations, specifically concerning Central

Asia. With Chinese direct investments in Central Asia reaching \$250 billion (USD) in 2012, the country is seeking to strengthen these ties and its presence in the region through further development of oil and gas pipelines in Xinjiang to connect China to the region (Tukmadiyeva, pg. 87, 2013). While this research is important for analyzing the outer shell of the relations between China and Central Asia, it is biased in that it lacks explicit research regarding the direct perspective of the Central Asian countries and other bordering countries views of China's intent to invest in their countries. This would require further research of these countries' foreign policies and trade agreements with China. This issue in this is that such information may be difficult to acquire, setting a limitation of potential analysis.

Since the 1980's, China has also sought modernization in Xinjiang. Research notes that modernization development projects in Xinjiang have included renovation of urban hubs that are centers of traditional Uyghur culture. This not only destroyed traditional culture, but also displaced thousands of Uyghurs and influenced mass Han migration to the region (Clarke, pg. 129, 2015). This literature draws on an underlying cause for the recent rise ethnic tension in Xinjiang. However, it lacks personal opinion from Uyghur individuals regarding the Han migration as well as, personal stories of those who have been displaced due to the renovations. Censorship does not allow Uyghur individuals to openly discuss their dissent against the Chinese government. Nonetheless, some work has been attempted to analyze Uyghur social media usage to

uncover “hidden transcript” tied to Uyghur individual activism against Chinese oppression (Clothey, Koku, et. al., pg. 871, 2014). This research provides potential insight to personal Uyghur opinions and experiences but it is limited because the analysis only relies on inferences upon the context of what may or may not be “hidden transcript”. Therefore, it cannot be heavily relied on.

Theoretical Literature:

Due to China’s government censorship, research on the Uyghurs in Xinjiang is still very fresh and not extremely developed. Much of the research that has been released has focused on understanding the exact issues in Xinjiang and which factors are causing these issues. Dr. Michael Clarke, arguably the most active researcher of Xinjiang, has stated several theoretical arguments regarding Uyghur terrorist activity, China’s human rights violations against the Uyghurs, and potential consequences for the future. The most frequent argument is that the Chinese government itself has caused the rise of terrorism due to the country’s implemented policies and actions in Xinjiang (Hao and Liu, pg. 225, 2012) Clarke builds on this argument by stating that China has used the international concern for terrorism to its own advantage to continue campaigns that crack down on Uyghur separatism, allow further repression of the Uyghur population, and ultimately accomplish government interests in the region (Clarke, pg. 544, 2010).

Clarke examines that China ignores undermining motives for violence and is quick to jump to categorizing these violence as radicalized Islamic terrorism; which he states is an international trend toward Muslim populations and groups.

The analysis behind his argument sound, but there is a significant gap in applying this international trend to the reasoning behind international actors' decisions to intervene in conflict that involves depicted "Islamic" terrorism. This signals a potential application of the idea 'Islamophobia' in regard to global ethnic conflict and intervention. Erik Bleich does a thorough job examining various definitions of Islamophobia in current day societies and how there is a wide variation in how the concept is perceived. Going back on research that regards the United States' concern for global Islamic terrorism, Bleich states that the concept of Islamophobia was developed by political activists to draw attention to rhetoric and actions targeting Islam and Muslims in Western liberal democracies (Bleich, pg. 180, 2012). With this idea, the concept of Islamophobia touches on the potential analysis regarding Western liberal democracies' perceptions of Islam and Muslims as a whole on a global scale. Therefore, the concept of Islamophobia could be applied to the analysis of why Western actors' do not intervene in or socially support ethnic conflict that is characterized by terms such as 'Islamic' or 'terrorism' based on rhetoric used by Western governments and media sources when discussing conflicts that involve Muslim communities.

Through Jörg Stolz's definition of Islamophobia, analysis regarding intervention in terms of Islamophobia holds more grounds as he states, "Islamophobia is the rejection of Islam, Muslim groups and Muslim individuals on the basis of prejudice and stereotypes. It may have emotional, cognitive, evaluative, as well as action-orientated elements (e.g. discrimination, violence)."

(Stolz, pg. 548, 2005) With particular focus on “action-oriented elements” used in Stolz’s definition, there is potential to explain non- intervention by international actors in the Uyghur conflict as discriminatory and even China’s actions towards the Uyghurs to begin with. Through the lens of Islamophobia when examining violent outbreaks, specifically in Muslim communities, a better understanding of why countries act the way they do concerning such outbreaks may exist based on their discriminatory rhetoric regarding Muslims; ultimately, having the potential to be applicable to the specifics of the case in Xinjiang.

Research has noted that the hostility and resistance that exists in Xinjiang may jeopardize the government’s core interests in the region. Hao and Liu state that these specific issues challenge government authority and its ability to maintain stability in the highly sensitive region (Hao and Liu, pg. 206, 2012). These claims seek to clarify much of the reasoning behind China’s harsh policies in Xinjiang, but deeper analysis regarding China’s human rights violations should be questioned in the context of regional stability. It raises the question: why are violations rationalized as means of stability or which potentials are there for backfire? Clarke contributes to this argument by stating that because the Chinese government does not properly confront problems with the Uyghurs, the influence of Islamic terrorism in Xinjiang may become a reality. Additionally, he adds that the Chinese government’s strategy to present the Uyghurs as Islamic terrorists may also begin to negatively affect China’s foreign relations (Clarke, pg. 127, 2011).

Clarke focuses more specifically on the implications this may have on China's foreign relations towards Central Asian countries. However, he does little to draw on implications concerning relations with United States or other Western entities. He notes that in 2002, the United States Bush administration labeled the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) in Xinjiang as an official international terrorist organization (Clarke, pg. 271, 2008). Clarke states that this label skews the actual situation that exists in Xinjiang because China had intentionally pushed for the terrorist organization to be internationally recognized. This claim is useful to lay out China's imprecise presentation of Uyghurs in Xinjiang. There has been an abundance of research and global recognition, particularly in the West, that regards China's human rights violations in the ethnic conflict of Tibet. While the unrest in Tibet falls under similar circumstances as Xinjiang, the Tibetan movement has not been categorized as terrorism. Clarke states that the effect of the 9/11 attacks presented states with an excuse to categorize separatist movements as 'terrorism' in order to justify repression (Clarke, pg. 130, 2013). As previously noted, the Chinese government began referring to Muslim Uyghurs as radicalized Islamic terrorist but could not do that same in reference to the Buddhist Tibetans. This signals further analysis concerning religious affiliations of ethnic movements and how those affiliations affect outside perceptions of people. This again touches on further analysis concerning the concept of 'Islamophobia' in concern to the Uyghurs of Xinjiang.

Chapter 2

Background and Historical Context of the Uyghurs

Background

In China's northwestern region lies the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), otherwise known, locally and historically, as East Turkestan, the borderland of eight countries including much of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan,) as well as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia, India, and Mongolia. With over 20 million people that reside within its borders, Xinjiang province encompasses about one-sixth of China's overall territory (Bhattacharji, 2009). In regards to culture, religion, tradition, and language, Xinjiang is remarkably distinct from much of China, as it contains over a dozen of China's fifty- six ethnic minorities, mainly of Central Asian descent, including the Kazaks, Kyrgyz, Hui, and others. The overwhelming majority population of this array is the Uyghurs, making up about nine million of the total population (Uyghur American Association, 2012).

The Uyghurs are native to Xinjiang and, like many of the other populations within region, are ethnically Turkic and Muslim. Unlike the rest of China, they speak the Turkic language of Uyghur, also known as Turki, which has an ancestral dialect that has existed for over 1200 years (Millward, pg. 235, 2007). After several reforms of the language throughout history, the Uyghur language has molded into an Arabic scripture, though, it is distinct from many other Arabic scriptures in Central Asia and the Middle East (Millward, pg. 235, 2007). The Uyghurs are Sunni Muslim and practice a relatively relaxed form of Islam, being that they do not have any overtly strict norms regarding women's head- dress,

men's drinking habits, and other things that pertain to strict Islamic norms (Fang, 2005).

Xinjiang, or East Turkestan, has been in and out of the control of China for centuries, the more significant periods from 18th to the 21st century. In 1949, upon the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the People's Republic of China (PRC), China officially claimed the region as a Chinese province. Due to the overt distinctions culturally and linguistically between the majority of China's populations and Xinjiang's populations, the PRC declared that province should be considered as autonomous and in 1955, renamed it the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). While the government's declaration of Xinjiang as a self-governing body presents a sense of independence for the Uyghurs, extreme demographic changes up to current day present something completely different.

Mass migration of the Han majority of China has dramatically increased in Xinjiang. Since 1949, the population of Han Chinese in Xinjiang has increased from a mere 6% to 42%, only a few points behind what used to be an overwhelming majority population of Uyghurs at 44% (Wani, pg. 220, 2014). The drastic increases of migration in Xinjiang, especially in the 1990's, has been the root for increasing ethnic unrest and separatism among Uyghurs, as it is also the source for immense inequality between Han Chinese and Uyghurs. In specific regards to employment, the migration of Han has and continues to flood the Xinjiang job market, in which Han are often much more favored in being hired for

positions opposed to the Uyghurs and other minorities (Howell et. al., pg. 136, 2011).

The Chinese government highly incentivizes the mass migration of Han Chinese in order to fully integrate and achieve their economic and geopolitical interests in Xinjiang. As Nicolas Becquelin states, Xinjiang province is economically atypical to the majority of China's provinces. The XUAR is abundant in oil, natural gas, and coal resources and it is the only province that has GDP per capita higher than the national average (Becquelin, pg. 359, 2004). Additionally, Xinjiang has almost always been recognized for its geopolitical strategic interest, as it is China's only connection to Central Asia and the Middle East; two regions that the government heavily invests in. In addition to the incentivized migration of the Han, the Chinese government is also investing in Xinjiang infrastructure renovations that destroy traditional Turkic architecture. There are also investments poured into oil and gas pipeline developments that connect to Central Asia (Tukmadiyeva, pg. 87, 2013). These further economic developments have been government mechanisms to repress ethnic unrest of Uyghurs while strengthening security and cooperation with Central Asia and other bordering countries (Clarke, pg. 128, 2005). Nonetheless, these strategies set to calm the fire have instead fueled it, resulting in a rise of violent Uyghur separatism in the province and throughout the country.

Not long after the 9/11 attacks on United States in 2001, the PRC released its first publication on January 21, 2002, stating that Uyghurs were radicalized

Islamic terrorists supported by Osama Bin Laden (Clarke, pg. 130, 2015). The publication claimed that between 1990 and 2001, East Turkestan terrorist units had been responsible for over 200 attacks that involved explosions, assassinations, crimes of poison and arson, and barrages against police and government officials (Clarke, pg.130, 2015). The East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) has been the only Uyghur separatist group officially tied to these violent terrorist outbreaks and while awareness of group has existed since the 1990's, the publication of 2002 presented an inaccurate and exaggerated depiction of the ETIM and Uyghurs as a whole. Islam is certainly a key symbol in regard to the identity of the Uyghurs, but it is not necessarily the motive for their unrest. As political scientist Christopher Cunningham notes, it is not to say that the ETIM and other Uyghurs have not used violent terrorist tactics but in reality these tactics do not resemble Islamic jihadist organizations such as al Qaeda (Cunningham, pg. 28, 2012). It is more than evident that the motives behind Uyghur violent separatism are in line with economic inequality, cultural preservation, and oppression. Nonetheless, in 2002 the U. S State Department and the UN Security Council listed the ETIM as an "international terrorist organization" (Clarke, pg. 131, 2015).

With the global recognition of "Islamic terrorism" in China, the PRC has accelerated repression and human rights violations against the Uyghurs as means of counter-terrorism. The PRC has particularly used methods of cultural and religious repression combined with incentivizing Han migration for the

purpose of removing the Uyghurs and, thus, their opposition to the government completely. Chinese government policies in Xinjiang have excluded Uyghur language from their education, increased surveillance of Muslims during religious holidays, such as Ramadan, and have banned certain cultural festivals that hold religious weight; there have also been closures of mosques and arrests of imams (mosque prayer leaders) because they promote so called “religious extremism” (Holdstock, pg. 2, 2014).

Between 2001 and 2005, human rights organizations stated that the PRC implemented amendments that resulted in the arrests of thousands of Uyghurs for crimes of ‘illegal religious activities’, ‘teaching of the Koran’, ‘political offenses’ and other activities that the state has criminalized as threats to national security (Clarke, pg. 550-551, 2010). With more recent attacks brought out by Uyghurs, such as the 2014 Kunming train knife attack in Yunnan province, the PRC launched campaigns that deployed more security forces to Xinjiang and increased detainment and killing of Uyghurs alleged to be tied to terrorist activity (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Additionally, the government has often denied documentation and identification cards that allow Uyghurs to travel outside of Xinjiang. Most recently, the Chinese authorities have begun specifically confiscating passports from all Uyghurs of Xinjiang in order to prevent the spread of terrorism (BBC, 2016).

As far as international recognition goes in terms of these human rights violations, many human rights groups have reported and criticized the Chinese

government's treatment of the Uyghur population including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Uyghur Human Rights Project. Even in a hearing prepared for U.S government's Committee on Foreign Affairs, it was noted that the Chinese government has harshly persecuted the Uyghurs throughout history. The hearing also shed light on the injustice against the Uyghurs in the statement, "Although Muslim, we will learn that the Uyghur men and women are not Jihadees but are peace loving people who seek religious liberty and are proponents of democracy." (U.S Government Printing Office, pg. 3, 2009)

Despite this awareness, there has been no effort made by the U.S government to pressure China for the human rights violations against the Uyghurs. There are several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that are working to raise awareness of the Uyghurs and advocate for their human rights. However, due to the new NGO Management Law enacted by the Chinese government, set to go into effect in 2017, it will be extremely difficult for NGOs to function within China if they are even approved to enter the country to start; thus, further reducing the leverage of outside NGOs and other outside influences regarding the issue. Other than establishing the ETIM as a terrorist organization in 2002, the United Nations has yet to press further on conflict in Xinjiang. It can be assumed that with China as one of the permanent 5 members of the UN Security Council, giving the country veto power over executive decisions, the UN

has no ability to confront China concerning the treatment of the Uyghurs to begin with.

***History of China and its Reign Over Xinjiang and the Uyghurs
18th to 20th century***

Throughout history, East Turkestan, or Xinjiang province, has been in and out of the grip of Chinese imperialist control. The most notable periods can be recognized as the mid 18th century into the early 20th century under the Qing dynasty, and the mid 20th century up to present day under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Nearing the end of the 1750s, Qing dynasty forces, under the Qianlong emperor, marched into Xinjiang to conquer the Zunghar Empire (Zungharia), the previous rulers of much of the Xinjiang region for the bulk of the 17th and 18th centuries. While Chinese officials at the time believed much the region to be worthless, the Qianlong emperor advocated the take over for security purposes, arguing that troops could be positioned to poise threat from the north of China; a strategic issue for many preceding dynasties (Millward, pg.96, 2007). During this stage, Chinese power over the region was not for the means of integrating the land into inner China but more so for imperialist strategy; meaning that there was no forceful population assimilation or territorial embodiment (Clarke, pg. 266, 2008). Nonetheless, unrest from within Xinjiang brewed.

As in most imperialist rulings, the populations from within Xinjiang felt exploited by locally posted officials. Into the 19th century, unrest resulted from Turkic- Muslim populations whom were not primarily Uyghur but more so from the

Central Asian Khoqand populations. This ultimately led to a reform of Qing technique and policy in Xinjiang that focused on authority from within. By the mid 1830's, the Qing, under the Daoguang emperor, initiated efforts to extend Han colonization, land reform, and establishment of agricultural colonies run by the military (Clarke, pg. 267, 2008). By the 1864, tensions burst, resulting in several rebellions against Qing rule brought out by Tungan, Hui, and Uyghur populations throughout Xinjiang; ultimately diminishing Qing control in Xinjiang. As James A. Millward notes, the 1864 rebellions are now often recognized as a part of the Uyghur independence movement (Millward, pg. 117, 2007).

Following the rebellions and collapse of the Qing, in 1865 the reign of Xinjiang was obtained by Ya 'qub Beg, of Khoquandi dissent instead of Uyghur. During his time of rule, Ya 'qub earned recognition of Russia and Britain as he sought to establish balance of power geopolitically. Nonetheless, in 1877 Ya 'qub Beg's regime fell and the Qing retained control with a new military led by General Zuo Zontang. Under this reestablished rule, Xinjiang was officially conceived as a province of China in 1884. From that point, the Qing made continuous efforts in pursuing full integration of Xinjiang. New policies were laid out in order to link Xinjiang to China politically, culturally, economically, and ideologically (Clarke, pg. 268, 2008). This increased a push for Han migration and forceful cultural assimilation of the various populations of Xinjiang, mainly of Turkic- Muslim dissent. Even though the Qing dynasty collapsed in 1911, the mark that it left on

Xinjiang for whomever the following ruling body of China would be was significant.

Even during the nearly 40 year- long span of broken and warlord ruled China, known as the Republican Era, Xinjiang was widely perceived as Chinese territory. Nonetheless, resistance from within Xinjiang did not appease. Following the fall of the Qing dynasty, repercussions of their re-conquest and of Han migration were seething. At the time, in the eastern part of the region, Uyghur farmers were active in their dissent for unfair labor treatment and taxing compared to Han settlers. Yang Zengxin (Han), known for his brutal governance, was the particular warlord of the time that ruled the region (Millward, pg. 180, 2007) While Uyghur rebellions regarding the matter had been frequent since 1910 when the Qing was in control, they carried on under Yang Zengxin's rule where he cracked down hard, killing two leaders of the rebellion and nearly two hundred Uyghurs (Millward, pg. 170, 2007). This event can be viewed as the start of boldly drawn ethnic boundaries and a sense of nationalism among most Turkic populations within Xinjiang. This sense of nationalism was particularly displayed in the push for more modern Islamic education, to which Uyghurs and other Turkic- Muslims developed a new curriculum to enhance their scientific and modern knowledge while also educating on their religion and Uyghur language (Millward, pg. 171-6, 2007). The push for modern education symbolizes a sense of self- identity and determination from the imperialist control that had ruled the region for over a century.

Modern History: 1949 to Present

In 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Mao Zedong was established, ending the forty- year span of the Republic of China. Along with the establishment of the new regime, Xinjiang was officially and firmly claimed as Chinese territory despite the strengthened nationalism of Uyghurs and other Turkic- Muslims. Previous to 1949, Xinjiang was ruled more locally, as seen under the Yang Zinging leadership. However, the CCP, who was relatively unfamiliar with the Xinjiang region and the people within it, approached Xinjiang with techniques that asserted more state power. Thus, the state worked to diminish ethnic minority elites and began more secured integration of Xinjiang into China (Clarke, pg. 278, 2008). However, the government did understand that the people of Xinjiang, most substantially the Uyghurs, were culturally and linguistically unique to the rest of China and believed that a system of a theoretical autonomy would be suitable along with their current approach (Millward, pg. 242, 2007). Thus, in 1955, Xinjiang was renamed Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).

While this step of autonomy depicts a sense of independence for Uyghurs in their self- governance, it may be better understood as a strategy by the Chinese government to calm or even distract dissent of Uyghurs and other minorities while the government maintained an imperialist grasp on the region. During the nearly thirty- year span under Mao Zedong's rule, unrest was brought out by Uyghurs and others ethnic groups in Xinjiang in relation to the harsh national policies of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution

(Cunningham, pg. 11, 2012). Policies of the Cultural Revolution harshly oppressed religion and ethnic varieties within all of China. As a result, Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities were banned from speaking their ethnic language, wearing their traditional clothing, and eating cultural specific food. Additionally, mosques and religious texts were destroyed and religious leaders were violently persecuted (Cunningham, pg. 11, 2012).

Following the end of the harsh cultural repression of the Mao era, China, under Deng Xiaoping, went through a phase of much lighter cultural controls for the purpose of laying down new national reform policies. The lift of cultural repression seemingly produced an increase in appeals from Uyghurs and ethnic minorities for more political autonomy from the state. With the combination of the seething unrest from Uyghurs and the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Chinese state developed an anxiety concerning Islamic resurgence internally (in Xinjiang) as well as externally in Afghanistan and the newly established Central Asia (Clarke, pg. 128, 2015). From that point, the government has enacted economic policies and investment, internally and externally, in order to appease ethnic tension in Xinjiang and ensure security along borders. Instead, these “reform and opening up” policies resulted in a counter effect as the severity of unrest by Uyghurs increased to clear displays of separatism throughout Xinjiang and in Beijing (Cunningham, pg. 12, 2012). Nonetheless, into the 2000’s, the government proceeded to implement strengthened economic reforms, such as the “Kashgar Dangerous House Reform” that displaced thousands of Uyghurs.

Additionally, in order to subdue violent separatist activity, the government also implemented “Strike Hard” campaigns specifically designed to targeting Uyghur individuals (Clarke, pg. 129, 2015).

Chapter 3

International Intervention: The Tibetan and Uyghur Movements

For hundreds of years, the Chinese state has done what it has pleased with East Turkestan (Xinjiang) and the people within its borders. From its conquer, its establishment of the region as a Chinese province, destruction of Turkish cultural architecture, rapid development of infrastructure, resource extraction, and oppression of an entire population, China’s grasp around Xinjiang has remained intransigent. Even with constant dissent and rebellion within Xinjiang against the Chinese state throughout history, it is clear that no matter what the Uyghurs do, they will never be able to overcome the state’s policies and repression on their own. Since the 1990s, occurrences of Uyghur separatist activity have increased greatly in correlation with an increase in economic policies and investment in Xinjiang. Nonetheless, this increase in activity may also be drawn to modern day advancements that have increased the ability for international actors to obtain information on issues and conflicts abroad and in turn, be more likely to intervene and assist in those situations.

The technological advancements that have arisen in the past 30 years or so have been the most significant advancements in regards to how the global community is able to communicate and interact. With the Internet and its ability to expand the reach of media sources and information, individuals and groups on

the periphery that may have been previously viewed as insignificant or simply just unknown, now have greater opportunities to have their voices heard. To press further and more particularly, individuals and groups under conditions of oppression by the state in which they reside now have the opportunity to gain support in their social movements from various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations (IGOs), other countries, foreign individuals and groups, and other various actors. Therefore, advancements in technology have allowed the term 'intervention' to take on new forms by expanding the distribution of information regarding oppressed populations as well as individuals' ability to contribute financially or by continuing to spread awareness of the issue. In this respect, technological advancement may certainly hold some responsibility in providing the fuel that has driven Uyghur movement in recent years.

Nonetheless, as Clifford Bob notes in his book *The Marketing of Rebellion*, "winning [NGO] support is neither easy nor automated but instead competitive and uncertain." (Bob, pg. 4, 2005) This point thus crops up the questions, who, as in which individuals, groups, or populations, receive support in their social movements and how are they able to obtain it? In terms of the Uyghurs and their movement against Chinese state oppression, this question is central to understanding why the Uyghurs have remained mainly ignored by the international community despite the increase of internationalization regarding foreign intervention. In order to gauge the Uyghurs' historical and current state of

oppression under China, it is key to analyze the Uyghurs neighbors to the south, the Tibetans, and their movement against Chinese policies and oppression.

Regarding historical context of political oppression enacted by the Chinese state, the two cases of Tibetans and of the Uighurs hold very distinct similarities. Upon establishment of the PRC, the Communist party, under Mao Zedong, carried out operations to expand Chinese territory and claim Tibet. By 1951, the PRC annexed Tibet, dissolving the former political system and forcing Tibetans to assimilate under Chinese governmental authority. While Tibet, like Xinjiang, has been declared an autonomous region by the Chinese state, the government has imposed various policies to increase reform and development, incentivize Han-migration to the region, and diminish Tibetan culture, ethnicity, and religion. Such impositions have triggered continuous organized separatist activity from the Tibetans against the Chinese government. The Chinese government has since categorized the Tibetan separatism as terrorism (Tanner et al., pg. ii, 2016). Like Uyghurs, Tibetans have been severely affected by the various “Strike Hard” campaigns brought out by the government to eliminate any threats to central authority (Tanner et al., pg. 43, 2016). In addition, the Chinese government implemented a more comprehensive counterterrorism law, increasing abusive policies in Tibet and Xinjiang and furthering human rights violations in both regions (Tanner et al., pg. iii, 2016).

As stated by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2014, “In terms of national security, the approaches to Tibet and Xinjiang work the same, and the objectives

are also the same.” (Human Rights Watch, 2017) In turn, the Tibetan and Uyghur movements to fight against Chinese state oppression are also very similar in terms of their approaches and objectives. In retrospect, when viewing the repressive circumstances of the Uyghurs and Tibetans, it is quite difficult to differentiate the two situations apart at all. Nonetheless, there is a hindering factor that sets the two cases apart and that is international intervention.

When comparing the Tibetan and the Uyghur movements, Bob’s claim noting that obtaining international support in social movements is competitive and uncertain is displayed clearly. Despite their extremely similar circumstances to the Uyghurs regarding history, oppression, and actions against the state, the Tibetan movement has attracted significant attention from various international actors and individuals, sparking an international campaign to advocate for Tibetan independence from China. However, the Uyghurs and their movement have remained virtually unnoticed by much of the international community that has supported Tibetans so vigorously. Thus, the question arises: why have the Tibetans been able to attract international support while the Uyghurs have not?

To begin to work toward answering this question, the term intervention itself must be analyzed in order to understand why intervention is a significant factor in regards to the differences of the Tibetan and Uyghur movements against Chinese oppression. Through this analysis, it will become clear that the term intervention holds more ground than what it has generally been defined as; and that the cases of the Tibetans and Uyghurs are unique due to the international

standing of China, the country that oppresses their populations. This international standing extremely restricts the way in which other international actors are able to interact with China, ultimately limiting the Uyghur and Tibetans' paths toward liberation. However, despite such restrictions internally, the Tibetan movement has proved that by expanding the scope in which intervention is defined, international assistance may subsist and ultimately, influence the power of a social movement.

Intervention

State and IGO

Political theorist Michael Walzer notes the basic principle of intervention, "that states should never intervene in the domestic affairs of other states," because it, "threatens the territorial integrity and political independence of invaded states," (Walzer, pg. 86, 2015). In other words, the basic international principle of state sovereignty solidifies a state's protection from foreign intervention in domestic affairs. Nonetheless, interventions have and continue to occur by reason that those interventions are justified in order to discontinue or change the course of action or policies in another state (Snyder, pg. 192, 2010). Walzer builds on this stating that when human rights violations exist within a state and various members within that state are fighting for self-determination against the killings or enslavement of political opponents, national minorities, and religious sectors, then foreign intervention may be the only way to end such violations (Walzer, pg. 101, 2015). While such conditions may justify intervention,

third-party states still hold the power of choice to which they can decide where and which countries they will intervene.

Within the international community, the basic assumption can be made that all states will act upon self-interest and make choices that ensure their own benefits in the immediate future and the long run. In clarification of such an assumption, we turn to the idea of economic interdependence as strong driving force of interest that affects the decision making of states. To start, economic relations have a strong effect of increasing the attention that a state has for the domestic affairs of a valuable trading partner that it holds (Stojek, pg. 231, 2015). Studies have found that the more economically interdependent a state is with a trading partner, the more likely they will be to support that trading partner in conflict. In fact, the increased level of economic interdependence that a state has by one standard deviation from its average level increases the likelihood of a state intervening on the side of their trading partner by 74% (Aydin, pg. 1104, 2008). This factor regarding “the side” that a state will choose when deciding to intervene is crucial in particular to the case of China. It can be implied that China, as the world’s greatest exporter, holds many international relationships with countries that are economically interdependent upon it. Thus, this infers that if China is involved in any dispute, they are more likely to receive interventional support on their side of the dispute.

Nonetheless, it must be firmly noted that in the case of interstate disputes, if a third-party state holds strong economically interdependent ties with both sides

of a conflict, there is a clear reduction in the likelihood that a state will intervene in the conflict at all, let alone takes sides in the dispute (Aydin, pg. 1104, 2008). However, this factor would not necessarily apply to a state's decision to intervene in another states domestic affairs and conflicts.

Another factor of analysis in regards to understanding where states choose to intervene concerns a third- party intervener's political ties and interests. Arguably the most sound and developed theory concerning intervention, international conflict, and international relations as whole is the Democratic Peace Theory. The theory essentially states that based on historical patterns, democratic governments are very likely to maintain peaceful relationships with other democratically valued countries and not with authoritarian governments (Hook et. al., pg. 2, 2010). In the interpretation of this theory, it can be assumed that a democratic state will be more likely to intervene in a country with an authoritarian regime.

However, Democratic Peace Theory is not the only politically driven factor for determining intervention or nonintervention in another state's domestic affairs. The political power and affiliations of a regime, democratic or authoritarian, not only keys into the decision making of third-party states to intervene but, more importantly, their ability to do so to begin with. This is distinctly apparent in the case of China and the political power that it holds as a Permanent 5 (P5) member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). As a member of the P5, China is essentially ensured veto power regarding any UNSC decision. This factor not

only limits the UN's power as a third-party intervener itself but also all countries that are politically affiliated with the UN, as it is the institution that often politically legitimizes interventions (Snyder, pg. 204, 2010).

NGO and Individual:

Defining Intervention in the case of Tibet and Xinjiang

Based on the politically and economically driven norms and restrictions regarding the decision making process of intervention in another state's conflict or affairs, it is clear that the likelihood is low that a state or IGO such as the UN will directly intervene in China. However, intervention still plays a key role of influence in both the Tibetan and Uyghur movements but it comes in a form that has not often been recognized or even properly defined. This kind of intervention may be simply put as the social support and attention that a political/social movement of a group or population obtains from the international community, particularly from NGOs and individuals. While this form of intervention may not seem as significant as a direct intervention would be from a state or IGO, it has the power to empower a movement, knowing that their voices are heard, and can influence foreign governments to speak out for and support those movements as well. This ultimately could push for resolution of the conflict with favor falling on the side of those pushing social movements against government repression and unfavorable policies.

In the United States and much of Europe, it is not uncommon to see posters, bumper stickers, t-shirts, or other various forms of, in a sense, 'advertising' that advocates for Tibetan independence from China. Arguably, the

most common is *Free Tibet*, an NGO campaign that started in the United Kingdom in 1987 and has since expanded its reach globally (Free Tibet, 2017). The campaign states that, “We campaign for an end to China’s occupation of Tibet and for international recognition of Tibetans’ right to freedom.” (Free Tibet, 2017) In doing so, the campaign works to vocalize accurate and up to date news concerning Tibet via social media and other media sources, lobby political leaders by providing evidence of human right violations of Tibetans, taking donations to financially support the Tibetan movement, and internationalizing propaganda, such as selling various degrees of merchandise, to drive international support for Tibetans. While the *Free Tibet* campaign may be the most commonly seen and recognized, it is just one example. There are other NGO campaigns advocating Tibet including the *Tibet Fund*, *Tibet World*, *The International Campaign for Tibet* (ICT), and several others working for the same principles and defense for Tibetan freedoms.

While Tibet is still undergoing repression and human rights violations brought out by the Chinese state, the international recognition solidifies much more strength for their movement against Chinese oppression than the Uyghurs’ movement. For example, various political leaders have spoken openly and communicated directly with the Dalai Lama, the political and religious figurehead of Tibet, despite Chinese discontent with the arrangements. Just this last year, former U.S President Barack Obama privately met with the Dalai Lama, for the fourth time that the two had met, to discuss, as CNN reports, “a range of issues,

including human rights,” (Liptak, 2016). The Chinese government strongly opposed the meeting as the Chinese foreign minister Lu Kang declared, “The Chinese side reiterates that Tibetan affairs fall within China’s domestic affairs, and no foreign country has the right to interfere. If the US arranges such a meeting, it will send a wrong signal to the separatist forces trumpeting “Tibetan Independence”, and jeopardize China-US mutual trust and cooperation.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2016) The White House spoke out to reassure that Obama had, “reiterated the longstanding U.S position that Tibet is a part of the People’s Republic of China and the United States does not support Tibetan Independence.” (Arnold, NPR, 2016)

Despite such a statement, it is important to note that the meeting between Obama and the Dalai Lama took place in the White House Map Room, where U.S presidents often meet with foreign leaders and heads of state (Arnold, NPR, 2016). Thus, such a meeting was extremely significant in that it signifies recognition of the Dalai Lama as a political figure and representative of Tibet, indicating a sense of independence from China. This not only contributes to the credibility of the Tibetan movement but also pressures the Chinese government by drawing a greater audience to the situation going on in Tibet. However, no such steps or significant meetings have taken place in concern of Chinese oppression over the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. The Uyghurs, like the Tibetans, have been able to attract various NGO supporters such as *Uyghur Human Rights Project* (UHRP), *World Uyghur Congress* (WUC), *Uyghur American Association*

(UAA), and others. Such NGOs advocate for the same values and mission for the Uyghurs as the many Tibetan NGOs advocate for Tibetans. The UHRP states that their mission is, “to promote human rights and democracy for the Uyghur people and to raise awareness of human rights abuses that occur in East Turkestan,” (Uyghur Human Rights Project, 2012) These Uyghur advocate NGOs also, like the Tibetan NGOs, provide news updates, reports, and briefings of the implications of Chinese policies in Xinjiang as well as the human rights violations transpire. Donations are also accepted on the organizations’ websites along with tabs to connect through social media.

This thus raises the question, if the Tibetan and Uyghur movements have both been successful in obtaining NGO support that is significant to raising awareness, funding both movements, and lobbying political leaders, why is there still less attention paid from international political figures and leaders in concern to Xinjiang? A crucial factor to consider in this regard is the role of importance that individuals play when rallying for a political or social movements abroad. While both the Tibetan and Uyghur movements have NGO support, only the Tibetans have truly been able to attract an extended range of support from individuals all over the world. Throughout Europe specifically, public protests have flared in past years coinciding with the current Chinese president Xi Jinping’s visits with European heads of state. In 2015, Xi was welcomed to the United Kingdom to meet with Queen Elizabeth II and former Prime Minister David Cameron as the first Chinese leader to visit the state in 10 years. While President

Xi discussed flourishing relations between China and the UK, several hundred protesters took the streets of London in protest of China's human rights violations against Tibetans (Financial Times, 2015). Even more recently, in January 2017, President Xi visited Switzerland for the World Economic Forum, sparking mass protests demonstrated by Tibetan and Swiss nationals. Thirty- two people were detained for incompliance of police instructions and violating security (The Telegraph, 2017).

Such protests not only signal international public discontent, specifically within Western countries, for China's human rights violations, but also discontent of their own political leaders who have agreed to associate with China's leader regardless. Public support is essential to state leaders' abilities to push for their own endeavors in running a country. Thus, if the public wants their leader to take notice of an issue, domestically or internationally, or does not approve of the that leaders actions regarding a certain issue, that leader will be more likely to take a stand. Therefore, individual social support holds great strength in contributing to the power of social movements and the entire concept of intervention. While NGOs have power in raising awareness and advocacy for social movements, large- scale individual social support holds the true strength to influence political leaders to take a stand on foreign issues. When people see foreign leaders taking notice in their social movements, they will feel empowered. Thus, this empowerment categorizes international social support as intervention.

Chapter 4

Comparative Analysis

Influences, Tactics, and Media Coverage of the Tibetan and Uyghur Social Movements

Following the years under Mao Zedong, especially during the Cultural Revolution where activity of resistance, demonstrations, and revolts brought out by Tibetans and Uyghurs remained very low, the amount of Tibetan and Uyghur protests has since become more and more numerous. Particularly since 2008 when China hosted the summer Olympics in Beijing, protests and violence spurred from both populations and have since remained relatively frequent. In March of 2008, Tibet's most significant uprising since 1959 occurred when Tibetan monks publically raised the banned Tibetan flag, chanting prayers for independence and the return of the Dalai Lama. Those peaceful protests then erupted into violent riots throughout Tibet and other provinces that involved gasoline bombs that had burned down a police station (The New York Times, 2008). Just north in Xinjiang, the Uyghurs were also very active in protesting against the Chinese state, particularly targeting the police with homemade explosives and knives (Wong, 2008). Later on in 2009, a mass Uyghur riot broke out in the Xinjiang capital of Urumqi and was stated to be "the largest ethnic clash in China since the Tibetan uprising in March 2008." (Wong, 2009)

In coherence with increased international attention that was brought to China at the time of the Olympics, it only makes sense that both groups would more largely and significantly erupt into mass demonstrations of dissent of the Chinese state. With continuous and sustained consciousness of China and its

role in the international community, eyes have remained locked on the country's actions domestically and internationally. This aspect has certainly cued into the activity of the Tibetan and Uyghur movements in their fight against Chinese oppression and in obtaining international attention. Nonetheless, the Tibetan and Uyghur movements have key differences that play a role in how often recognized and how they are perceived, particularly by foreign media sources. Thus, while many other violent and peaceful Uyghur and Tibetan demonstrations have taken place before 2008, only protests from and since 2008 will be analyzed for the purpose of understanding various degrees of tactics of protests used to attract foreign attention as well as the media's coverage and depictions of the events.

This chapter will first go over several compelling protests brought out by both the Uyghurs and Tibetans in order to understand the similarities and differences to which both populations act out against Chinese repression. In addition, media sources from Western countries, due to their power and influence, will be analyzed in order to draw into how often Tibetans and Uyghurs are covered and how they are portrayed to foreign audiences. A final analysis will be comprised for the purpose of understanding how Western media sources depict Tibetans and Uyghurs to an international audience. In doing so, it will draw into the influence of the various tactics and methods of Uyghur and Tibetan protests as well as the influence that the Chinese government and media may have in the citations made by Western media sources.

Tibetan Protests

On March 10th, 2008, the start of the 2008 Tibetan Uprising, nearly 500 Tibetan monks took the streets of the Tibetan capital of Lhasa demanding that five monks, whom had been detained in the previous year, be freed (Smith Jr., pg. 11, 2010). Chinese security forces surrounded those monks, moved them back to their monastery, trapped them, and cut off their access to food or water (Smith Jr., pg. 11, 2010). Meanwhile, several other monks from another nearby monastery took to the streets holding the Tibetan flag, which has been officially banned in China, and began chanting for Tibetan independence. Within minutes, the monks were detained by police and severely beaten (Smith Jr., pg. 12). In the following days and weeks to come, hundreds of Tibetan individuals and monks from all over Tibet and surrounding provinces, such as Sichuan, attempted demonstrations, broke out into ethnic conflict against Han Chinese, and burned down hundreds of shops, offices, police centers, and homes (Smith Jr., pg. 13, 2010). By March 15, Lhasa was put into a military lockdown, but monks and other Tibetan civilians persisted, as they continued to burn shops, various vehicles, and violently clashed with Han settlers in the region. The military response to the eruption of protests was violent and devastating. Hundreds of Tibetans, particularly monks, were detained, severely beaten, or shot dead by Chinese forces.

While protests from the uprising lingered on for several months, within the initial month of March alone, the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) recorded that nearly 200 Tibetan protests occurred and over 2000 arrests were made all

over China (Central Tibetan Administration et. al., pg. 167 & 169, 2014). Over the course of the entire uprising, over 140 identified Tibetans were killed either from being shot, tortured, beaten to death, executed, or from suicide (Central Tibetan Administration et. al., pg.168, 2014)

Since the 2008 uprising, Tibetan protests have continued to occur. In 2010, hundreds of students protested against Chinese plans to eradicate the Tibetan language from schools, government controls over the practice of Tibetan Buddhism, the continued Han migration into Tibet, and the policies that prohibit possession of photos of the Dalai Lama (Wong, 2010). In 2013, and later on in 2014, hundreds of Tibetans participated in peaceful gatherings for prayer to honor and appeal for the release of a Tibetan Lama that had been imprisoned by Chinese authorities (International Campaign for Tibet, 2014). In 2015, peaceful protests arose in Nyagchuka, Tibet to honor the death of a Lama who died during his imprisonment in Chengdu, Sichuan. While the protest was peaceful to start, violence broke out when local police began severely beating some protesters who then charged a local government building. Eventually, Chinese authorities began firing tear-gas over the crowd as well as possibly firing gunshots (International Campaign for Tibet, 2015). The most recent protests in Amchok, Tibet involved local Tibetans demonstrating against construction and mining on the Gong-Ngon Lari Mountain, a place considered holy to the Tibetan people. Again, Chinese authorities took forceful action, beating and arresting several protesters (International Campaign for Tibet, 2016).

Self-Immolation

In the many other protests throughout the years, Tibetans have shown to be persistent in peaceful, collective protests. However, the most significant and attention-grabbing protests have derived from an individual level. In the resistance, Tibetan monks and individuals have been self-immolating as protests, meaning that they are setting themselves completely on fire. Since 2009, the Free Tibet campaign has stated that over 140 identified people have self-immolated, the peak year being 2012 when more than 80 cases were recorded (Free Tibet, 2016). Those whom have set themselves on fire have often left letters behind voicing strong discontent against Chinese repression and have shouted out, while burning, for Tibetan independence, the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet, freedom from human rights violations, Tibetan unity, and language, religion and cultural preservation. (Free Tibet, 2016) One of the most recently identified cases occurred in 2016 by the 18-year-old monk Kalsang Wangdu, who, witnesses noted, cried out for "Tibet's complete independence." (Radio Free Asia, 2016) The prior year, in 2015, a 27-year old monk named Sonam Topgyal, left behind a letter stating that, "Chinese authorities repress [Tibetans] with their violent and brutal law, by demolishing our religion, tradition and culture and causing environmental devastation. Meanwhile, people absolutely have no freedom of expression nor can they convey their grievances." (Free Tibet, 2016)

The automatic assumption gathered from the symbol of the Tibetans' self-immolation protests is that Chinese policies and repression have been an absolute catastrophe to the Tibetan way of life and overall cultural and ethnic

preservation; and that there is a crucial need of assistance to end such a crisis. In addition, self-immolation is most often perceived as a nearly complete tie to Buddhism. John Whalen-Bridge notes that there are deeper complexities to the practice of Buddhism that may contradict self-immolation as true and proper Buddhism (Whalen-Bridge, pg. 82, 2015). The foundation for Buddhist teachings and practice is laid out in the Buddhist doctrine called *The Four Noble Truths*. This doctrine highlights the essential concept of 'suffering', in which it is stated that on one's path to enlightenment in Buddhist practice, one must know the truth of suffering, the truth of cause of suffering, the truth of the end of suffering, and the truth of the path to reach the end of suffering. Three roots of evil are also stated in Buddhism, being greed and desire, ignorance and hatred. Thus, the path to reach the end of suffering, one must essentially be mindful, patient, non-violent and ultimately, selfless.

On such grounds, complications and controversy arise from self-immolation, some of which Whalen-Bridge argues. For example, self-harm in terms of self-immolation is considered to be violent and unethical motivated by Buddhist standards because these protest regard politics, anger, and intolerability (Whalen-Bridge, pg. 81-121, 2015). Nonetheless, from the broader perspective, it cannot be denied that because Tibetan Buddhist monks are essentially the sole beings that have set themselves on fire as protest to Chinese repression, self-immolation may easily be, and often is, depicted as a symbol derived from Buddhism.

Uyghur Protests

In July of 2009, hundreds of Uyghur massed together throughout Urumqi, the capital city of the Xinjiang, to protest government killings of Uyghur migrants working in a factory in Guangdong province the previous month (World Uyghur Congress, 2011). According to witnesses from Amnesty International, protests began peacefully but sharply turned violent when Chinese authorities used excessive force against Uyghur protesters such as severe beatings, firing of tear gas, and gunshots aimed directly into crowds (Amnesty International, 2009). Following the police excessive force, chaos broke out in which Uyghurs are alleged to have targeted Han Chinese by beating and throwing rocks and bricks (Eimer, 2009). There have been 197 official deaths recorded, mainly of Han Chinese, according Chinese authorities (World Uyghur Congress, 2011). However, Rebiya Kadeer, the head of the World Uyghur Congress located in Washington stated that the death toll has been greatly misrepresented.

According to unconfirmed reports from Uyghur families and community leaders, The World Uyghur congress estimates that the death toll of Uyghurs may have actually been in the thousands (Cha, pg. 1, 2009) In addition, Amnesty International has pressed the Chinese government for an open investigation of the 2009 Urumqi unrest due to the excessive use of police forces and torture, the sudden disappearances of Uyghurs, executions without fair trial and because the official death toll count is extremely questionable (Amnesty International, 2010).

Since 2009, multiple incidences of protests, peaceful and violent, have erupted from the Uyghur communities in Xinjiang and other provinces in China. In

2013, the most significant year for protests since 2009, there were at least six recorded outbreaks. In June, protesters in Xinjiang's Turpan prefecture stormed a police station and other government offices after tensions had been on the rise due to continuous government sweeps of Uyghurs homes that resulted in the disappearance of many Uyghur individuals (Buckley, 2013). In this protest, 27 people were reported dead, mainly Uyghurs but also some police. Days later, hundreds of Uyghurs took to the streets of Khotan, Xinjiang, peacefully marching through the city in protest of the arrest of a religious leader and forced closure of a local mosque (Radio Free Asia, 2013). Demonstrators were then blocked by police forces where nearly 200 Uyghurs were arrested, 15 people were shot dead, and 50 others were injured (Radio Free Asia, 2013).

In October of 2013, five people were killed and nearly 40 were injured in Beijing's Tiananmen Square when two Uyghurs crashed a car into a large crowd before bursting into flames (BBC, 2013). The Chinese government claimed that the attack coincided with Uyghur-language video released a group known as the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) that had purportedly taken responsibility for the attack (Radio Free Asia, 2013). However, native Uyghur speakers and representatives of the World Uyghur Congress have come out and said that the statement in the video says no such thing and that the government's claim is "baseless" (World Uyghur Congress, 2013).

Knife- Attacks

In 2014, Uyghur individuals at a train station in the city of Kunming, Yunnan, carried out a mass knife attack that resulted in the deaths of 29 people

and injury of nearly 130 (Gracie, 2014). While this was one of the most severe cases of knife usage, there have been several other Uyghur involved incidences that have involved the usage of knives. A year following the incident in Kunming, 50 people were killed in a knife attack at a coalmine in the Aksu prefecture of Xinjiang. Nine Uyghur individuals are alleged to have carried out the attack and those who fell victim include police officers, security guards, and other miners, mainly of Han Chinese descent (Radio Free Asia, 2015). In that same year as the coalmining attack, a young Uyghur man was also found to have stabbed the head of Xinjiang Township to death (Radio Free Asia, 2015). The most recent knife attack occurred on February 14th, 2017 in Pishan county Xinjiang when five people were killed. Chinese officials have not released any official information regarding the incident but Human Rights Watch gathered Internet users' responses to the incident that stated that Uyghurs were responsible (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

The attacks brought out with the use of knives clearly show tensions from Uyghurs reaching a violent breaking point. Gun usage by Uyghurs in their protests and attacks is essentially nonexistent due to the extreme difficulty of attaining such weaponry. Uyghurs have also used homemade bombs but knives have certainly been the most frequently used weapons in the majority of violent outbreaks. While this simply can be tied to the fact that it is much more easily obtainable as weapon, knives may also have closer cultural ties. Traditionally, blacksmithing of agricultural and in-home tools such as hatchets and knives has

been a common practice and symbol of Uyghur culture (Karimova, pg. 9, 2016). It is also a deeply engraved belief that knives have the power to keep away bad dreams and omens (Makinen, 2014). While the harsh violence that has been carried out by some Uyghurs and the deaths that have resulted cannot be considered rightful or condoned by any means, these attacks evoked with the knife usage may have deeper meaning to Uyghur traditional expression.

Observations

As seen in both the Tibetans' and Uyghurs' situations, protests most often sparked in response to Chinese oppressive policies and actions such as restrictions on religion, traditional practices, and language, as well as the imprisonments, disappearances and killing of individuals from both populations. It can also be gathered that protests from both populations have most often started peacefully before turning violent due to excessive force brought out by police and other Chinese forces. In both cases, Han migration was a focal point of discontent and frustrations; ultimately resulting in violent ethnic clashes brought out by Tibetans and Uyghurs against Han settlers. Traditional elements and beliefs were also found to be rooted in the methods of protests used by both Tibetans and Uyghurs, as seen in self-immolation protests of Tibetans and the usage of knives by Uyghurs.

Based on these observations, Tibetan and Uyghur protests were found to have many similar elements in their tactics and methods of protest. The most notable of these similarities is violence. By Chinese standards, this violence of both Tibetans and Uyghurs falls under the definition of terrorism. According to the

first section of the Chinese counterterrorism law, implemented in 2015, the definition of terrorism includes:

组织，策划，准备实施，实施造成或者意图造成人员伤亡，重大财产损失，公共设施损坏，社会秩序混乱等严重社会危害的活动的；

“Organization, planning, preparation, or implementation of activities that cause or intended to cause property damage, damage to public facilities, societal chaos and critical endangerment to society;”

(Xinhua News, 2015)

Based on this definition, the Tibetan protests that included burning shops, vehicles, homes, and other properties are also considered to be ‘terrorism’ by Chinese government standards. Additionally, as noted in the previous chapter, China’s counterterrorism law applies to both Uyghurs and Tibetans due to the organized violent activities that have caused Chinese societal disorder and damage to public and private property. Nonetheless, despite the similar actions of violence and categorization as terrorists by the Chinese government, Tibetans are rarely, if ever, referred to as terrorist while Uyghurs are often characterized by the term. This factor is crucial to the understanding of why Tibetans have been successful in obtaining international social support while the Uyghurs have not. In this respect, it is necessary to push further on how Uyghurs and Tibetans are characterized and perceived in their social movement, especially by Western media sources and societies.

The Role of the Media

Coverage and Depictions of the Uyghurs and Tibetans

Arguably, the media is the most important and powerful actor when it comes to rallying international social support and influencing intervention for social movements of oppressed populations. The media's continuous internationalization is ever-increasing in its capabilities to obtain information regarding global issues and its abilities to expand the scope of global audiences' that then are able to obtain that knowledge and information for themselves. With such broad advancements and expansion of reach, the media may even hold more power in international relations than most governments, IGOs, or NGOs. This role of the media is no different when it comes to the Uyghur and Tibetan social movements and their differing successes in attracting international social support and intervention. Through the media's overall coverage and depictions of Uyghurs and Tibetans, people may hold varying degrees of awareness for one movement opposed to the other or may have misconstrued perceptions due to the differing portrayals. Because of the power and influence of Western states, organizations, and individuals, the most read and viewed media sources from the mainly the United States and Europe will be analyzed. No Chinese media sources will be under analysis due to heavy bias and propaganda used to portray Tibetans and Uyghurs as enemies to Chinese national stability and society.

Methodology for tracking media coverage will be operated through media source website search engine results. In order to track and gauge media

coverage of the Tibetan and Uyghurs social movements, basic key words will be searched on media website search engines and then results will be taken into account. Key words that will be used include: *Tibet* Xinjiang* Tibetans* and Uyghurs/Uighurs**. It must be noted that in the use of such key words, not all results may pertain specifically to events of the Tibetan and Uyghur movements against Chinese oppression, protests, or other violent outbreaks. Thus, the central purpose is to simply measure total coverage in order to understand the general degree of awareness regarding both regions and populations.

The Western media sources considered in this section were chosen on the basis of having relatively high Internet traffic as well as high credibility based on levels of trust by Western societies. The chosen sources include: *The New York Times*, *CNN*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Economist*. According to a study conducted by Pew Research Center that measured trust levels of news sources based on ideology groups, all of the previously listed media sources were found to be more highly trusted than distrusted by both liberal and conservative ideology groups (Mitchell et. al., 2014). In addition, media sources such a *The New York Times*, *CNN*, and *The Washington Post*, were all ranked among the top 15 most popular news websites measured by average monthly visitors/audience (Olmstead et. al., 2011). The *BBC* was also ranked in the top 15 most popular news websites and is also among the most trusted media sources. However, BBC's search engine limits 350 results per search so proper data could not be collected. The *Economist* was chosen on the sole basis of

being an extremely credible UK media source for news concerning international politics and governments (Mitchell et. al., 2014).

Results of Total Western Media Coverage

	<i>Tibet*</i>	<i>Xinjiang*</i>	<i>Tibetans*</i>	<i>Uyghurs/Uighurs*</i>
<i>The New York Times</i>	14,284	1,327	2,501	810
<i>CNN</i>	558	264	387	193
<i>Washington Post</i>	1,485	411	1,308	543
<i>The Economist</i>	53,200	14,700	27,500	4,441
Total	69,527	16,701	31,696	5,987

Overview of Results

According to the data collected regarding total Western media coverage, it is seen that overall, the key words *Tibet** and *Tibetans** assumed far more coverage than the key words *Xinjiang** and *Uyghurs/Uighurs**. For each of the considered media sources individually, the results for the key words Xinjiang and Uyghurs/Uighurs never out-weighed the results for the key words Tibet and Tibetans. In consideration to coverage on province, Tibet has been covered over 4 times more than Xinjiang. For coverage of the two populations, Tibetans were covered over 5 times more than the Uyghurs. In accordance to the results of The New York Times, Tibet was covered nearly 11 times more than Xinjiang and Tibetans were covered twice as much as that of Uyghurs. In regard to total the

New York Times' total coverage, Tibet and Tibetans were covered nearly 8 times more than Xinjiang and the Uyghurs.

Media Depictions of the Uyghurs and Tibetans

Selected source for analysis: *The New York Times*

In 2015, The New York Times surpassed one million online subscribers, which placed it as the most subscribed news organization in the world (Baquet, 2015). With the drastic change of political climate in the United States, The New York Times has experienced an even more inflated growth of subscribers, exceeding three million total subscribers digitally and in print (Pallotta, 2017). Due to its high volume of subscribers and relatively high total coverage of the Uyghur and Tibetan movements, The New York Times will be more deeply analyzed in regard to understanding the media's depictions and portrayals of both populations. In order to do so, the same key words previously used (Tibet, Tibetans, Xinjiang, Uyghurs/Uighurs) will be plugged into The New York Times search engine and sorted by relevance. The first few pages of results will be examined according to the vocabulary used in article titles and the first few sampled sentences of the articles displayed on the results page. In addition, a few selected articles will be examined more in depth on the basis of portrayals and relative citations in those articles.

Article Titles and Sampled Sentences

Tibetan Depictions

Based on the basic descriptions of article titles and sampled sentences, the most frequently published topics that regarded Tibet and Tibetans referenced self-immolations protest. Regardless if a reader has no background knowledge of

the Tibetans' history of oppression under Chinese rule, coming across such a title or description is emotionally shocking. By definition, immolation means sacrifice and is, as assumed, self-inflicted, most often resulting in death or extremely detrimental burns. The aspect of 'self-infliction' paired with the extremity of the use fire as the self-harming factor creates a sense of sympathy for the reader. Self-immolation protests represent a drastic measure/extent that these Tibetan humans are willing to take for the purpose of protesting against the causing force; that of which is China. Additionally, the idea of 'self' means that other humans are not being harmed in the process of this form of protest; ultimately, ruling out some sense of morality that the action is wrongfully harming others for a purpose. Essentially, the media, by frequently publishing such material, emphasizes this sense of sympathy when illustrating the Tibetans in their coverage.

Additionally speaking on the emphasis of sympathy, other words that seemed to frequently occur to some extent concerned human rights, Buddhism, repression, autonomy and independence, Chinese crackdowns, Tibetan prison sentences, and the Dalai Lama. The broad inference that can be drawn from this selection of vocabulary is that the Tibetans are structurally abused by China as an outside force. Even though the Chinese state has declared Tibet as an autonomous province, vocabulary usage of 'autonomy' indicates difference from the central state and 'independence' indicates there is a need for Tibetans to break free of China's authority. 'Chinese crackdowns' and 'repression' clearly display that there is harm that is imposed upon the Tibetans, and 'human rights'

or 'rights' infer the severity of that harm. As a religion that is often perceived as very peaceful, the reference of 'Buddhism' in these articles symbolizes that Tibetans are a peaceful and non-violent population. In addition, reference to 'Dalai Lama', who, himself, is Tibetan, symbolizes the same perceptions as Buddhism does in coherence to the Tibetan population because he has been internationally recognized for winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 for speaking on peace, love, tolerance, compassion, and non- violence. Furthermore, the Dalai Lama, while a religious figurehead for Tibetan Buddhism, has also taken up the role as a political figurehead for Tibet and has been treated accordingly by various national leaders.

Uyghur Depictions

The search results regarding Xinjiang and the Uyghurs found that the article titles and sampled sentences emphasized the topic of violence. The word 'violence' itself was frequently referred to in several article titles and the majority of sampled sentences. Other words that seemed to frequently reoccur also related to violence, such as death, kill, attack, and rioting. In addition, there were many articles that focused on sentences of imprisonment and death of Uyghurs convicted by the Chinese state for participating in violent activities. Based off of many of these article titles and sampled sentences, the Uyghurs are depicted and emphasized to be an out of control and highly violent ethnic group that acts out in their resentment against the state. As stated previously, Tibetan self-immolation protests create a sense of sympathy for the reader because they are self-inflicted acts in protest. The Uyghurs on the other hand are more dubiously

described as violent rioters. For the readers, this creates a sense that Uyghurs are immoral as they inflict harm on others for a purpose. In this respect, the background of the Chinese inflicted harm and oppression upon the Uyghurs becomes blurred and misconstrued.

While violence was certainly the most emphasized topic among the many articles, the most frequently attributed word in the search results of Xinjiang and Uyghurs was 'ethnic'. In these results, the word ethnic was most often described in terms of 'ethnic violence', 'ethnic hatred, resentment, or tension', 'ethnic minority or group', or 'ethnic rioting', when referring to the Uyghurs. While the use of 'ethnic' when describing Uyghurs makes sense as they are considered a Chinese ethnic minority, it would be expected that the Tibetans, also considered a Chinese ethnic minority, would also be described by the same terms. However, in the search results for Tibet and Tibetans, the word 'ethnic' was very rarely used to describe the Tibetans or any situation involving Tibetans; they were always stated by their proper name as 'Tibetans'. The Uyghurs were more frequently described by the term 'ethnic' than the proper name of their population. In this respect, the Uyghurs are in a sense dehumanized due to the lack of specificity in the usage of their populations' proper name. Within the context of someone who may be glancing over these article titles and sample sentences, they may form a misconstrued perception of the Uyghurs as just a random Chinese ethnic group that happens to be acting out violently for no particular reason.

To build off of this observation, Uyghurs were often described as a “Turkic-speaking Muslim minority”. While this is certainly an accurate description, it is key to turn back to the search results for Tibetans whom were never once described as a “Tibetan-speaking Buddhist minority”. Tibetans were never once described as a minority or ethnic group but, as previously mentioned, were always stated by the proper name of their population. In addition to the search results of Uyghurs and Xinjiang, vocabulary such as ‘autonomous’, ‘independence’, ‘human rights’, ‘rights’, or ‘repression’, were not used at all in any article titles or sampled sentences. Unlike the results for Tibet and Tibetans that showed frequent reoccurrences of these vocabulary descriptions, the Uyghurs’ background of Chinese repression is again blurred and in this, they lose a sense of sympathy from the reader. Instead, readers see the words such as ‘terrorism’, used in several results, and the entire purpose for Uyghur violence gets tied to one aspect that falsifies the entire Uyghur movement; instead of considering it as one that is motivated to defeat Chinese oppression.

Based on this rhetoric that emphasizes Uyghur violence and washes out their identity by stating them as a Chinese ethnic group and minority, the idea of Islamophobia may hold grounds in the context. While the Uyghurs have certainly exemplified violence and have acted out in this violence towards others, by blurring their background and identity, readers develop a misconstrued perception that because the Uyghurs are violent and Muslim, their purpose for violence must be radicalized Islamic terrorism. Referring to Jörg Stolz’s definition,

“Islamophobia is the rejection of Islam, Muslim groups, and Muslim individuals on the basis of prejudice and stereotypes. It may have emotional, cognitive, evaluative, as well as action-orientated elements (e.g. discrimination, violence).” (Stolz, pg. 548, 2005) Viewing the basic outline laid out in the media’s given article titles and sampled sentences regarding Xinjiang and the Uyghurs, it is clear that all of the these perspectives of Islamophobia (emotional, cognitive, evaluative, and action-oriented elements) in some way apply.

To start, action- orientated elements of violence are emphasized then triggering emotional elements due to death caused. This then moves to cognitive elements that Uyghurs, a Muslim group, caused this harm; thus generating fear. This is an aspect directly tied to rhetoric that is Islamophobic as *phobia* is defined as fear. In terms of the evaluative perspective, misconstruing adjectives were used to evaluate Xinjiang and the Uyghurs as ‘troubled’, ‘volatile’, and ‘hateful’. One evaluation that particularly stood out was a sampled sentence that stated, “Uyghurs *resent* what they call discrimination by Han.” (Wong, 2009) The use of word *resent* emphasizes the idea of hatred, which dims the sense of struggle that the Uyghurs endure and even gives off a sense that they are malicious. Such evaluative descriptions distort the Uyghurs population as an oppressed and absolutely discriminated against population. All in all, based on these outlined article titles and sample sentences, readers do not initially obtain the knowledge that the Uyghurs are oppressed and instead associate them as violently motivated by Islam and terrorism.

Selected Articles

Digging deeper into the media's portrayal of both Uyghurs and Tibetans, it is important now to press on further analysis into the entirety of specific articles. These specific articles will be selected based on the frequency of topic reoccurrence in search results. As previously stated, the most common topics that occurred for *Tibet* and *Tibetan* results regarded self-immolation while the results for *Xinjiang* and *Uyghurs* appeared to focus more on violence. In coherence to such patterns, specific articles that focused on these topics will be more thoroughly dissected. The selected articles include: *5 Tibetans Are Said to Die In Chinese Police Custody (Buckley, 2014)*, *China Say 5 Killed in Attack at Communist Party Office in Xinjiang (Hernández, 2016)*, *Tibetan Student Burns Himself to Death in Protest (Levin, 2014)*, and *Beijing Increases Security in Xinjiang (Buckley and Jacobs, 2013)*.

5 Tibetans Are Said to Die In Chinese Police Custody (Buckley, 2014)

The content of this article focused on the killings that Chinese officials had brought out against Tibetans following a protest. The first thing that was apparent in this article was the source that was cited. Tibetan residents stated to have been killed by Chinese forces "according to the exiled Tibetan government". Here, it is seen that, within the first paragraph, Tibet is immediately recognized as a separate political entity from China because of the identified Tibetan government. This Tibetan administration is cited several more times throughout the article in reference to other Tibetan deaths, imprisonments, suicides while imprisoned, and self-immolations protests. In addition, Tibetan advocacy groups

such as Free Tibet and the International Campaign for Tibet were also cited regarding Chinese actions and policies against Tibet.

From these attributes as the central source of information for this article, the rhetoric is clear in its insinuation that Tibet should be considered independent from China. It is also clear in stating Chinese oppression against the Tibetan people through violence and detainment for unarmed and peaceful protests.

Tibetan Student Burns Himself to Death in Protest (Levin, 2014)

This article discusses the most frequently published topic regarding Tibet, self-immolation. Similarly to the previously selected article concerning Tibet, Tibetan advocacy groups were the main source of information along with other human rights organizations and *Radio Free Asia*, a non-profit Asian broadcasting organization that is funded by the United States. In these citations, Chinese news sources were never mentioned in providing information. It was stated that a Tibetan student from Gansu province in China self-immolated in front of a police station and that Chinese authorities denied the student's body to his family following their request. Again, the rhetoric of this article sympathizes with Tibetans in their self-sacrifice against Chinese rule and oppression and it only includes information from sources that are not only outside of China but are also advocates for Tibet.

China Say 5 Killed in Attack at Communist Party Office in Xinjiang (Hernández, 2016)

Unlike the past two articles, within the first sentence of this article the Chinese state media source *Xinhua* is immediately cited. Within the first few paragraphs, the Uyghurs are depicted as a violent Muslim minority that have

devised and brought out terrorists attacks in China. These characterizations of terrorism, Islamic extremism, and violent attacks were almost always followed by the reference to the Chinese media source. Within the one page of the article, Xinhua was cited more than 5 times, solely depicting Uyghurs as a violent group motivated by extremism and coordinated by jihadist groups. The Uyghur advocacy group the World Uyghur Congress was cited in only once in only one instance through the whole article that countered those claims.

It should be noted that Xinhua news is the official press agency of the PRC meaning that it directly monitored and controlled, along with all blogs and social networks, by the Chinese Communist Party (Reporters Without Borders, 2016). In addition, it is the largest Chinese news agency thus, making it the most influential and referred to news source. In regard to overall freedom of press, China ranked 176th out of the 180 countries covered in the report; ranked lower than many African and Middle Eastern countries and ranked just higher than countries such as Syria and North Korea (Reporters Without Borders, 2016) Therefore, when it comes to groups that challenge Chinese central authority, the media sources will certainly propagandize what the Chinese government wants it to. This has held in the cases of both Uyghurs and Tibetans.

Therefore, in the regard to the frequent citations of Xinhua news in this article, it is only predictable that the Uyghurs would be portrayed as violent terrorists; this is what the Chinese government wants them to be perceived as. While many people in Western countries may have the understanding that

China's press is not free and is heavily biased for government preferences, the fact that a renowned Western news source such as The New York Times is citing a Chinese news source does make it seem like the information is credible. In this regard, readers may develop the belief that Uyghurs are solely motivated by violent Islamic terrorism.

Beijing Increases Security in Xinjiang (Buckley and Jacobs, 2013)

Similar to the previous article regarding Uyghurs, Chinese state run news media sources were the central source of information included in this article.

Within the first two paragraphs, the article recorded that, "accusations in official media" stated that, "shadowy extremist group have orchestrated unrest among Uighurs." Additionally stated was, "One state-run newspaper sought to link an increase in violence in Xinjiang to Uighurs who were said to have trained in war-ravaged Syria." This article then further presses on this claim by directly citing *The People's Daily*, which is the English translation for Xinhua news, in their claim that "100 Uighurs had gone to Syria to join rebel forces," in order to, "improve their fighting skills and gain experience in carrying out terror attacks." Due to such accusations, Chinese authorities enhanced security in region.

These allegations draw Uyghur violence to groups outside of China in order to shape the Uyghurs as motivated by factors, particularly Islamic terrorism, that do not have to do with Chinese oppression. By the end of this article, it is mentioned that experts and Uyghur advocacy groups believe that these claims by the Chinese government and media are unclear. One expert, Rohan Gunaratna, a professor at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, noted that, "a

dozen [Uyghurs] tried to enter Syria but it was unclear how many had succeeded.” In addition, he stated that the Chinese news source had exaggerated the claims. While this section indicated misconstrued information provided by the Chinese news source, these counter claims were not mentioned until the last paragraph of the article. In this respect, the majority of this article highlights the Chinese allegations that Uyghurs are Islamic terrorists in training in one of the most current day, internationally recognized countries torn by radicalized terrorism.

Chapter 5

Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

Discussion

Throughout history, discontent and strife has been persistent from the Uyghur population in Xinjiang province. Even before the CCP took over in 1949, establishing the PRC, the Chinese state has continuously worked to forcibly rule and integrate Xinjiang into China for the purpose of achieving their economical and geopolitical interests. With increased integration has come increased Uyghur opposition. This opposition has resulted in excessive government crackdowns, severely violating Uyghur human rights with kidnappings, forced imprisonments, torture, and frequent killings and executions.

When human rights violations exist within a state and a particular political opponent, national minority, or religious sector has been fighting for self-determination against the oppression and killings of a their people, intervention is necessary and justified. The Uyghurs certainly fit this position that requires intervention. However, due to the fact that China is the country that is inflicting

these human rights violations, it is no surprise that intervention has not taken place in the case of the Uyghurs. As one of the world's largest economic powerhouses, too many countries are extremely dependent on China for trade and are not willing jeopardize the relationship by intervening in China's domestic affairs. Even more significantly, China's powerful political position in the international community as P5 member of UNSC means that the country holds veto power in any UNSC decisions for intervention. This ultimately rules out any chance of intervention from the UN itself, or any country affiliated with the UN. Therefore, it may seem that the Uyghurs have no chance of receiving any form of foreign intervention in their movement against Chinese oppression.

Nonetheless, the case of the Tibetans brings in an entirely new perspective to the concept of intervention. While the Tibetans are also an extremely oppressed population within China, they have been successful in obtaining international social support in their movement against Chinese repression. This paper has addressed the idea of social support as a form of intervention due to its ability empower social movements. When populations, particularly from Western countries, socially support an issue abroad, they have the ability to pressure their own leaders to take a stand and speak out for those movements publically. As discussed, many U.S leaders have spoken out about China's actions in Tibet and have directly met with Dalai Lama to discuss issues of human rights violations. While leaders have not directly made moves to ensure that China changes its actions in Tibet, the fact that such executives are

mentioning anything at all is significant to the empowerment of Tibetan movement; ultimately, because it goes against China's rule and preferences.

U.S leaders have rarely, if at all, publically discussed China's actions in Xinjiang and the human rights violations that have taken place against the Uyghurs. However, this does not mean that the U.S government is unaware of the Uyghurs. In a hearing prepared for the U.S government's Committee on Foreign Affairs, it was acknowledged that the Chinese government has harshly persecuted the Uyghurs throughout history. Additionally, the statement was made that, "Although Muslim, we will learn that the Uyghur men and women are not Jihadees but are peace loving people who seek religious liberty and proponents of democracy." (U.S Government Printing Office, pg. 3, 2009) It must be emphasized that this hearing was not presented publically. It can be inferred from this statement that even though the U.S government acknowledges the Uyghurs as an oppressed population that is not motivated by Islamic terrorism, the government will not speak publically about the issue because it is not pressured to do so by the U.S population.

This paper has worked towards understanding why the Uyghurs have been ultimately unsuccessful in obtaining the same the degree of social support that the Tibetans have, despite their extremely similar circumstances of being ruled and oppressed by the Chinese state. The most important factor that explains this lack of support for the Uyghurs is the role that the global media has played in covering and depicting the Uyghurs and their social movement. In the

analysis of the media, it was found that the media has covered the Uyghurs far less in comparison to the coverage of Tibetans. This ultimately distinguishes that there is overarching lack of awareness of the Uyghur movement in many Western populations. On the other hand, the Tibetan movement has received a compelling amount of media publicity, indicating that there is a high amount of awareness of their movement in Western populations. Furthermore, the way in which the global media portrays the Uyghurs to international audiences was shown to denote an even more powerful indicator of why Uyghurs do not receive international social support.

Before touching on the results from media depictions, it is important to refer to the analysis regarding the both Uyghur and Tibetan approaches and tactics to protesting Chinese oppression and promoting their social movements. Based on protests that have taken place since 2008, both Tibetans and Uyghurs were found to have lashed out violently in protest to Chinese actions and in ethnic contention against the Han Chinese. Additionally, both populations are considered to be terrorists by Chinese standards due to their violent actions in protests.

However, it is only the Uyghurs that have been strongly portrayed and emphasized as violent terrorists by the global media. As the Uyghurs are a Muslim population, these depictions have ultimately misconstrued the Uyghurs' background and motives for protesting against Chinese oppression. Instead, the impression that is given off is that Uyghurs are acting out for the purpose of

radicalized Islamic terrorism. This aspect of the global media's portrayal is an essential contributor to the reasoning behind the Uyghurs' inability to obtain international social support in their movement. In the majority of Western countries, Islamic terrorism is a deeply embedded fear of the populations. The Chinese government itself has taken notice of this fear and has used it to its own advantage. Following the 9/11 attacks in the U.S, the Chinese government began categorizing and propagandizing the Uyghurs and their actions as Islamic terrorism even though Uyghur resistance had persisted for decades, and even centuries, prior. The global media's emphasis of the Uyghurs as violent terrorist has played into the Chinese aim to distort the Uyghurs' identity and motives.

With the media's continuous publications and emphasis on this distorted identity and motive of the Uyghurs as violent terrorists, international audiences are unable to gain the true understanding of the Uyghurs' background and identity; and are instead keyed into the deeply embedded fears of their society. Therefore, populations particularly from Western countries will feel no need to socially support the Uyghur movement. In this lack of support, Western political leaders will never feel pressured to speak up publically about the issue. On the other hand, the Tibetans, whom the media has continuously highlighted with sympathy and has never publicized them as terrorists, will likely continue obtaining international social support; and thus, further empowering their movement against Chinese oppression.

While these findings and interpretations hold weight, it is important to note that limitations exist within this study. To start, only Western country media sources were considered in regard to overall coverage of the Uyghurs and Tibetans. While this was set on the basis that Western populations have the power to influence their government, and their governments in turn can influence other countries, this aspect limits the entire scope of *international* social support to one set of countries. Additionally, *The New York Times* was the only media source that was examined in regard to the depictions of the Uyghur and Tibetan movements. This in turn creates a sense of bias because it does not take into account the differences that may have existed in other media sources' depictions.

In terms of interpretation, one could argue that the Uyghurs could be considered to be Islamic terrorists. The East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), made of mainly Uyghurs, has been categorized as an international terrorist organization. This ultimately implies that the media's depiction of Uyghurs is not far off from the truth. However, it must be made clear that the Uyghurs are an oppressed population in China and the Uyghurs members of the ETIM do not represent an entire population. Another argument that could be made is that international social support is not a significant form of intervention. While the Tibetans have been successful in obtaining international social support, nothing has truly been done directly to change the course of the population's oppression. It can only be inferred that international social support may hold future implications in the case of Tibetan movement, but it ultimately unclear.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to draw attention to Uyghurs of Xinjiang province, a population that has been oppressed by China for centuries and yet, has received little to no recognition or support. In this, the central question has been, “why are organizations, countries, and individuals not socially supporting, as intervention, the Uyghur movement in Xinjiang?” While it can be argued that there is no way to even begin to support oppressed populations in China due to the country’s power and standing in the international community, the case of Tibet in this study highlights a different argument by expanding the concept of intervention. Additionally, the examination of both the Uyghur and Tibetan movements contributes to literature regarding the influence of global media and its ability to shape the perceptions of entire populations and societies.

By expanding the concept of intervention to cover the idea of international social support, suggestions can be made regarding issues of defending populations within powerful, oppressive countries such as China. China’s power and standing in the international community makes it nearly impossible for other countries to deal with issues, particularly human rights violations, within China’s domestic affairs. The case of Tibet signals that with the mass social support from Western country populations, Western leaders can be pressured to speak out on issues abroad, even when they involve China. This aspect suggests a strategy to overcome the barrier that China has regarding the country’s domestic affairs. When marginalized or oppressed groups or populations feel that they are heard and supported in their movement, especially by foreign political leaders, they are

empowered because it means that people from all over the world are also fighting for their cause. While the outcomes regarding the Tibetan movement are somewhat unclear right now, there is potential in this research of international social support to explain the current and/or future successes, or failures, of social movements from all over the world.

The support that Tibet has obtained more significantly keys into the important role that the media plays in rallying support as well as how it portrays Muslim populations. The Uyghurs and Tibetans are two populations within China that have been severely harmed by China's oppression and forceful integration. However, the media does not highlight this central factor for both populations and instead portrays the Uyghurs as violent terrorists. In regards to social support, the media's coverage and depictions of the Uyghurs has ultimately stunted the Uyghurs' ability to obtain international social support to fight Chinese oppression. This contributes and draws on implications for research regarding the global media's influence and ability to shape perceptions regarding Muslim populations in general. By forming these perceptions, the media, in this case, has shown that instead of building social support for an oppressed population, it can do the exact opposite; particularly if that population is Muslim.

With the current global political climate, especially concerning the fear of terrorism and 'Islam', it is the responsibility of the global media, particularly the media from Western countries, to be extremely mindful in how it portrays Muslim communities and populations. Stigma against Muslims seems to be ever-

increasing, establishing a global divide between what is seen as West and what is seen as Islam. The case of the Uyghurs clearly displays the idea of 'Islamophobic' rhetoric used by the media. In return, the entire Uyghur population that has been fighting to end Chinese rule and oppression for centuries has been tied a single identity and motive, terrorism.

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