



# How China Hijacked the War on Terror: How USA is Responsible for Providing Legitimate Pretext for Ongoing Crackdown on Uyghur's

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## Abstract

The single most important event that pushes back the agenda and struggle of independence of Xinjiang Uighur was 9/11. To punish terrorists the United States of America overlook by declaring a terrorist status to an organization working for the independence of XUAR. The Chinese authorities deceived and manipulated America by compelling it to label Uyghur's movement as terrorist and extremist movement. Due to American overconfidence and negligence, china in a broad sense very much hijacked the war on terror and used it for their own purposes to achieve certain objectives. The Chinese power elites successfully constructed a certain identity of Uyghur minority to achieve goals, spread discourses to convince majority of Han population, and securitized the whole Xinjiang region to legitimize its unlawful, unethical and immoral activities. In true sense the attack of 9/11 provided a pretext for china ongoing crackdown on Muslim Uighur of Xinjiang. The epistemological understanding of this research is interpretive, on the basis of that ontological position of research is subjective in nature to explore the evidences on the understudied research question, and research has adopted analytical research design. As the subject of ontology of this research is the idea of terrorism and how china copied it, is subject to different interpretations, hence subjective. Methodology used in this research has been qualitative in its nature, for this project the qualitative data has been used to provide analytical perspective. The secondary sources include articles, journals, news articles, reports, books, and some well reputed websites.

**Keywords:** XUAR; WAR on terror; Terrorism; Extremism; 9/11; Chinese Communist party

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## Introduction

During the early twentieth century the province of Xinjiang was part of today mainland china but in 1955 the CCP leader Mao Zedong grant autonomy to the province<sup>1</sup>. In the coming decades heavy investments were made in the non-Han region of Xinjiang which raised the standard of living there. But during this whole era the migration of Han population from outside Xinjiang continues to this area. This migration of Han ethnicity changes social dynamics of the Uyghur's society and resulted in forceful evacuation of Uyghur's from their own lands, paving the way for

creating massive unrest across the society. The disparities between Han immigrants and Indigenous people played a significant role in fueling separatist sentiments and movements in the region. Uyghur's had legitimate concerns about their sovereignty and freedoms but had little power to enact change. Often local demonstrations against government policies were suppressed, with state violence intensifying after the events at Tiananmen Square in 1989. On July 5th 2009, a riot in the area of Urumqi got the attention of the international community, an area previously obscure for such demonstrations. But the authorities dealt the protesters with iron fist. The clashes with state police and others

left 1700 protesters injured and 197 were put to death, mostly ethnic Uyghur's. These type of demonstrations was not observed previously in a society dominated by the harsh rulers of CCP, but it was first time, protests occurred in public since 1989. On international level there were calls for more democratization in country which is an alien to adoption of western democracy. The important thing was Uyghur's come out for their due rights but this event also became the symbol of threat in the eyes of CCP, which was preparing itself to counter the growing so called threat of Uyghur's separatism, extremism and terrorism [1]; three evils. Following the 9/11 attacks, the United States launched the global "war on terror", which supported efforts in other countries to dismantle terror organizations. After these incidents the CCP linked Uyghur's separatism issue to a worldwide movement of terrorism rather than an issue that was local in nature. This definition was directly validated by the US government when it classified the Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), an obscure armed group operating in Afghanistan, as a "terrorist organization" and imprisoned Uighur's in the Guantanamo Bay detention camp. Thus America's "war on terror" helped China launch a massive crackdown on the Uighur population, which has gone as far as the imprisonment of 1 million ethnic Uighur's in a "massive internment camp that is shrouded in secrecy", according to the United Nations [2].

## Significance of the Research

As the research discusses, the questions of "How china hijacked the war on terror, and why it hijacked war on terror? To understand these questions, one should understand first, the event of 9/11 and the manipulation and how china dodged Americans to achieve their own objectives.

The research has much significance for the human rights organizations in general and for scholars around the globe studying, how and why china hijacked war on terror. Why millions of Uyghur's artificially linked to terrorism has been put to concentration camps? The research will also use theoretical framework of Post-Structuralism.

## Research Question

1. How China hijacked the war on terror? (Primary question)
2. What are the factors that led China to hijack war on terror?
3. How identities of the Uighur Muslims were created? (secondary)
4. How the identities of terrorism and separatism legitimates the ongoing crackdown over Uighurs?

## Hypothesis

China copied the idea of US creating identity on the basis of different culture by spreading discourses against Uighurs through newspapers and media and securitized them as potential and suspected terrorists putting them in concentration camps.

## Research Methodology

Research methodology refers to the procedures or tactics used to find, assess, process, and analyses information on a topic. To undertake an academic examination of the present literature, this study used a variety of methodologies.

Rather of focusing on statistical data, it examines and assesses existing literature. The study is performed utilizing the qualitative technique. The method which has been used for the collection of data is secondary sources.

The descriptive research style is used in this study because it explains and answers questions about why a particular idea exists. It looks at what has happened in the past and what could happen in the future. It responds to inquiries like "How, What, and Why."

## Theoretical Framework

Post-structuralism talk about the creation of identities, discourses and securitization. It also focuses on relationship between media and power elites and its role in achieving or pursuing an agenda. The power elites of china followed the same model of post structuralism; therefore the said phenomenon can be best explained according to the researcher, through the theoretical framework of post structuralism.

## Discussion

China copied the idea of US creating identity on the basis of different culture (Muslim vs. Han) by spreading discourses against Uighurs through newspapers and media (Global Times and CGTN) and securitized them as potential and suspected terrorists putting them in concentration camps. For the research following literature was consulted, every literature has somewhat mentioned, war on terror but few has described, how china manipulated America in declaring ETIM as terrorist organization, after declaration, how this was used as legitimate frame of work to label every innocent Uyghur's to three evils; Separatism, extremism and terrorism. What role the power elites have played in all this, and how today it is going on. The War on the Uyghur's: China's Internal Campaign against a Muslim Minority by Sean R. Roberts, The Tree That Bleeds: A Uighur Town on the Edge by Nick Hold stock, China 'war on terror' uproots Uighur families, leaked data shows by Al-Jazeera, How 9/11 helped China wage its own false 'war on terror' by Kristian Peterson, China's "War on Terror": September 11 and Uighur Separatism by Chien-Peng Chung in Foreign Affairs China has long been dominated by one culture that is Han culture or ethnicity. The growing separatist sentiment across Muslims of the Uyghur's compels Chinese state to go for crackdown but on what pretext? But thanks to the incident that happened in 2001 in America. It has provided china a pretext and china started its journey of harshness and crackdown against these uighurs. The attacks of 9/11 was provided china with an amazing opportunity, the US president made clear to the world leader; either to take side of terrorists or be with America in this war against terror. The Chinese now provided with the opportunity made very clear their choice and show its commitment with US against terrorism, by voting for the UNSC resolutions, urging to

the world community to show its commitment and cooperate in the war against terror. After this China convinced US to declare ETIM an organization linked to Uyghur separatist issue. Within few months after declaring ETIM a terrorist organization, the previous Chinese state narrative took a tremendous shift. The state of China started to normalize the narrative, that Xinjiang is a battleground to Al-Qaeda based terrorist groups [3]. Prior to 9/11, Chinese authorities had depicted Xinjiang as prey to only sporadic separatist violence. The Sept. 2, 2001 edition of Hong Kong's Chinese language Ta Kung Pao newspaper quoted CCP officials in Xinjiang who stated "by no means is Xinjiang a place where violence and terrorist accidents take place very often," and that the situation there was "better than ever in history."

## Identity Construction

China is majorly a Han dominated country, with having little toleration for other ethnicity. Same is happening with Uyghur, before heavy migration of Han people this place, Muslims were in majority but with the migration, demography has been changed. Han ethnicity now roughly contributes 50% to the Xinjiang population. Demography successfully changed, the next task of the Chinese state was to construct and link Uyghur's identity with terrorism. The identity of Uyghur's as terrorists was constructed. Separatist vs. nationalist. Radical Islamist vs peaceful Hans. Backward culture vs. advanced ideas and many such identities were constructed. The Uyghur's are Turkic ethnic group, which reside in East and Central Asia, primarily in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China. As an article of The Diplomat argues, despite numerous claims that the Communist Party's harsh repressive policies in Xinjiang attribute to a perceived Islam phobia, actually Beijing's attitude towards the Uyghur reflects "what the Chinese authorities are showing is not a distaste towards a religion but an absolute neurosis against a threat; a threat or an exaggeration the world is still unaware of the true facts [4]. The attitude inculcated into laws is quite obvious. There exists duality in the laws of Chinese state. On one side it had banned any type of religious education to children's but on the other side they had allowed Muslims of Hui ethnicity to get educated and perform their other religious ceremonies but are keeping Uyghur away from their religion duties and freedom, which is fundamental in nature. Hui women are allowed to keep veils and other religion obligations but they have banned Uyghur's men even from keeping beards, a sun-nah in Islam. Uyghur's are also often forestalled from obtaining passports to travel abroad, especially to go on their pilgrimage to Mecca. Overall, as Jörg Friedrichs, an Associate Professor of Politics at the Oxford Department of International Development and Official Fellow at St. Cross College, Oxford, argues: "If Hui loyalty to China is sometimes questioned, Uyghur disloyalty is mostly taken for granted", emphasizing on the deep-rooted antagonism against the Uyghur's on behalf of the Chinese State. With the increased restrictions and intrusions in Uyghur's lifestyles on behalf of the Chinese State, the indigenous people adopted the stance that a solution to the 'Xinjiang dilemma' could come only through two possible routes; peaceful protests or violent revolts. Beijing's draconian measures of uniformly treating any expression of dissent as terrorism, and responding to peaceful demonstrations

with a pattern of brute force, including political imprisonment, torture, and disappearance, led to alienation of the population to the point where labels such as 'terrorist' or 'militant' were attached to every Uyghur.

## Spreading of the Discourse

In spreading your voice to achieve certain objectives, power elites spread discourses through media and many sources at their disposal. We will be looking to how the Chinese president in his speech, the most powerful person of China, brush aside everything despite widespread condemnation of what China is doing in Xinjiang from round the world, but rather showed his commitment to do more to eradicate such evils. Xi even praised the authorities for performing well, when he said look everywhere people are living in social harmony he was in particular referring to the Xinjiang after the crackdown on Muslim ethnicity [5,6]. Break their lineage, break their roots, break their connections, and break their origins. Completely shovel up the roots of "two-faced people," dig them out, and vow to fight these two-faced people until the end. Such statements issued by those in power indicate one thing very clearly, we are going to every extent to suppress, voices of freedom, human rights and cultural expression. Families whose children were abroad for study or some other purposes were called and their loyalty in regard to CCP was questioned! The CCP is in a better position to explain what they actually meant by two-faced people. Since Xi Jinping's into power, China has pursued aggressive discriminatory policies against ethnic minorities, consistently on the path of sensitization of those communities, driven by nationalistic mindset. In July 2020 chairman XUAR and party deputy secretary claimed "that violence has been effectively contained" which was linked by CCP to religious extremism and had "laid a foundation for completely solving the deeply rooted problems that affect the region's long-term stability. The authorities are happy for containing so called violence and religious extremism with brutal tactics, in actual they have only silenced Uyghur's, the history will tell whether it was contained effectively or not.

In 2017, Xinjiang Party Secretary Chen Quanguo encouraged officials to "round up everyone who should be rounded up. Chen Quanguo the master mind behind this whole crackdown has given authorities free hand of using every method to stop the growing voices of Uyghur's. It has been reported that, authorities has sent elders of families to concentration camps for re-education as per the official reports of CCP. But independent reports is of the opposite view, by saying that the local officials have detained elders of almost every house/family to detention centers, where they are facing extreme inhumane treatment from the authorities, simultaneously the children of those families have been to Chinese mandarin based schools to brainwash them, and eradicate the memories of being belong to separate culture, traditions, language, and religion. This is grand strategy which has been put to practice in Xinjiang region of China, with the rigorous supervision of CCP in control. Chen Quanguo has been quoted as directing that the centres' "teach like a school, be managed like the military, and be defended like a prison.

## Securitization of the Culture, Identity and Ethnicity

In 2015 national people's congress passed a counter-terrorism legislation which criminalize every aspect of Uyghur's religious expression or any dissent and branded their cultural expression a form of radicalization and linked it to terrorism. The law further gives authorities access to carry any type of digital surveillance, private chats, mobility and even allowed them to record their physical appearances. Due to this law many Uyghur students studying abroad were called and upon arrival were caught, their loyalty in regard to CCP was questioned. Throughout the province on Uyghur's smart phones bugs were especially installed for spying. Moreover surveillance cameras were updated to face recognition level identify individuals in crowded places [7]. The latest strategies adopted by Chinese authorities of putting suspected people for security, cultural or religious reasons is further fueling the situation, as it is leading to disenfranchisement of minorities particularly Uyghur's. Thousands of innocent Uyghur's have been put to harsh conditions for falsely been linked to extremism, and terrorism. In 2016 and 2017, over 90,000 law enforcement personnel were recruited in the region and as many as 7300 heavily guarded check points were installed. Following that move, Xinjiang has come to be recognized as one of the most heavily controlled and monitored regions in the world. The state claims that these are not concentration camps rather re-education camps but the ugly truth is, these camps are not even close to be called re-education camps in a society that respect pluralism and human rights. It's basically an extreme tactic communist party is using to crush the aspirations of Uyghur's for independence, the independence of religion, culture, language and many more. A local police officer who speaks to radio free Asia told that, five different types of people are subject to be admitted to concentration camps. Those, people who did not use their sim cards after registering it, former prisoners, someone having basic fundamental religious belief, and people who have relatives abroad. There is no official data available on the number of detainees, but independent investigations revealed that people ranging from 100, 00 to 800, 00 personnel have been in concentration camps while human rights organization estimated that some more than a million people are currently in these camps. The ultimate and main purpose of setting these camps is ensure the eradication of Uyghur identities so they no longer be able to associate themselves to an ethnicity who is alien in the eyes of CCP. Those people not obeying laws made by authorities are subject to extreme mental and physical punishments which include, beating, suffocation, water boarding, rapes and tortures

as being reported by former detainees. Some say that were forcefully subjected to eat pork, which is forbidden in their religion, an ultimate form of humiliation and embarrassment. Detainees are thought in these concentration camps the propaganda and they have to pay salute and tribute to Chinese president Xi Jinping's.

Dr. Adrian Zenz an expert on Tibet and Xinjiang affairs say about these camps: "Many bids mandate the installation of comprehensive security features that turn existing facilities into prison-like compounds: surrounding walls, security fences, pull wire mesh, barbwire, reinforced security doors and windows, surveillance systems, secure access systems, watchtowers, and guard rooms or facilities for armed police." He argues that these mass camps are indiscriminately subjecting Uyghur Muslims to extrajudicial inhumane, humiliating and brainwashing conditions, supposedly as an attempt of lecturing the detainees how to distinguish 'legitimate' from 'illegitimate' religious practices, traditions and behavior.

Dr. Sean R. Roberts, Director of the International Development Studies Program at George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs and expert on Central Asia and China, has characterized Beijing's perception of the Uyghur's as a "biological threat to society, akin to a virus that must be eradicated, quarantined, or cleansed from those it infects".

As a Kashgar State official reportedly summarizes the major objective of those camps: you can't uproot all the weeds hidden among the crops in the field one by one – you need to spray chemicals to kill them all; re-educating these people is like spraying chemicals on the crops... that is why it is a general re-education, not limited to a few people.

## Conclusion

The research has concluded that, the Chinese state has deliberately targeted the culture and religious identity of Uyghur Muslims by linking them to an already securitized concept of terrorism and extremism which emerges in the aftermath of 2001 attacks on American soil. In this whole framing of the terrorist concept, 9/11 attacks provided to the Chinese states a legitimate pretext to treat Uyghur like aliens. Chinese power elite manipulated in declaring Uyghur separatists a terrorist organization, for achieving certain objectives for the interest of state. The United States of America is more responsible than the Chinese state for the current miserable conditions of Uyghur in concentration camps as it have passed various resolutions with no future in mind.

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