

T.R.

ISTANBUL SABAHATTIN ZAIM UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE EDUCATION INSTITUTE

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**CHINA'S XINJIANG POLICIES: A STUDY ON
CHINESE DYNAMICS AND SANCTIONS POLITICS**

MA THESIS

Muhammet Alperen TAMGAÇ

Istanbul

February-2024

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Muhammet Alperen TAMGAÇ

Supervisor

Asst. Prof. Dr. Hasan AKSAKAL

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THESIS APPROVAL

This study has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for MA Degree in Political Science and International Relations.

Supervisor Asst. Prof. Dr.Hasan AKSAKAL

Member of jury jury Asst. Prof. Dr. Ömer TAŞGETİREN

Member of jury Prof. Dr. Çağdaş ÜNGÖR

Approval by

.....

Prof. Dr. Erhan İÇENER

Director, Graduate Education Institute

DECLARATION OF SCIENTIFIC ETHICS AND ORIGINALITY

This is to certify that this MA thesis titled “**China’s Xinjiang Policies: A Study on Chinese Dynamics and Sanctions Politics**” is my own work, and I have acted according to scientific ethics and academic rules while producing it. I have collected and used all information and data according to scientific ethics and guidelines on thesis writing at Sabahattin Zaim University. I have fully referenced, in both the text and bibliography, all direct and indirect quotations and all sources I have used in this work.



Muhammet Alperen TAMGAÇ

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ABSTRACT
**CHINA’S XINJIANG POLICIES: A STUDY ON CHINESE
DYNAMICS AND SANCTIONS POLITICS**

Muhammet Alperen Tamgaç

Master, Department of Political Science and International Relations

Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Hasan AKSAKAL

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This thesis aims to examine the factors affecting the conflict that emerged in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The most important part of this study is the examination of what kind of a stance is taken based on the reasons that push China to its policies towards the Uyghurs. This study is also essential for multilateral exploration of the consequences of the involvement of more than one country in the events in Xinjiang. Building on the literature review conducted in this context, the thesis questions were tried to be answered: How does China's exceptionalist nature affect the Xinjiang issue, what results can the sanctions imposed against this problem yield, and how does China cope with the pressure on it? The research methodology of the study includes collecting qualitative and quantitative data through NGO reports, news, academic articles, and books. According to the thesis findings, China's exceptionalist past and character have been an important factor affecting its policies in Xinjiang. However, sanctions have failed to have a significant impact, and China has come to the fore in world politics by trying to eliminate this failure with the new bloc it is trying to create.

Keywords: China, Uyghurs, human rights violations, sanctions, Xinjiang

ÖZET
ÇİN’İN ŞİNCAN POLİTİKALARI: ÇİN DİNAMİKLERİ VE
YAPTIRIMLAR POLİTİKASI ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME

Muhammet Alperen TAMGAÇ

Yüksek Lisans, Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler

Danışman: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Hasan AKSAKAL

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Bu tez, Çin’in Şincan Uygur Özerk Bölgesi’nde ortaya çıkan çatışmaya etki eden faktörleri inceleme amacı taşımaktadır. Bu çalışmanın öne çıkan önemli kısmı Çin’i Uygurlara uyguladığı politikalara iten sebepler üzerinden nasıl bir cephe alındığının incelenmesidir. Bu çalışma ayrıca Şincan’da yaşanan olaylara birden fazla ülkenin dahil olmasının getirdiği sonuçların çok taraflı olarak keşfedilmesi için önemlidir. Bu bağlamda yapılmış olan literatür taramasının üzerine inşa edilerek tez soruları cevaplandırılmaya çalışılmıştır: Çin’in istisnacı doğası Şincan sorununa nasıl etki etmektedir, bu soruna karşı uygulanan yaptırımlar nasıl sonuçlar verebilmektedir, ve Çin üzerindeki baskı ile nasıl başa çıkmaktadır? Çalışmanın sahip olduğu araştırma metodolojisi, STK raporları, haberler, akademik makaleler ve kitaplar üzerinden nitel ve nicel veri toplanmasını içermektedir. Tez bulgularına göre, Çin’in istisnacı geçmişi ve karakteri Şincan özelinde gerçekleştirmekte olduğu politikalarını etkileyen önemli bir faktör olmuştur. Bununla beraber yaptırımlar önemli etki gösterme konusunda başarısız olmuş, Çin bu başarısızlığı oluşturmaya çalıştığı yeni blokla dağıtmaya çalışarak dünya siyasetinde ön plana çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çin, Uygurlar, insan hakları ihlalleri, yaptırımlar, Şincan

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UN **United Nations**

CCP **Chinese Communist Party**

GDP **Gross Domestic Product**

XPCC **Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps**

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The influence of human rights on international relations is unprecedented since no other norm, aspect, or entity has managed to produce something ubiquitous and used in the daily political atmosphere this much. Stemming all the way back to the year 1948, which was its birthday, the main idea was to spare humanity from repeating the same disastrous mistakes of World War II, which claimed millions of innocent lives through uncountable atrocities. The same egregious errors of the past built the backbone of human rights by making them a worldwide norm. Even though human rights are universal and should permeate all societies, most of the world's population lives where human rights are in decline (Vásquez et al., 2021). The erosion of human rights is further exacerbated by intertwined and interwoven reasons such as the rise of authoritarian governments, the COVID-19 pandemic, corruption, economic insecurity, etc.

Furthermore, with these recent developments, it has reached a certain point where the most immersive instances of abuses of human rights are concomitant with China's policies regarding the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Amnesty International Report, 2022). China's policies concerning the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region notably revolve around utilizing its geostrategic location, arable lands, and rich natural resources (Zhou & Zhang, 2021). To use the region's economic and geostrategic potential, China has resorted to a crackdown on the Uyghur population (Maizland, 2022). Scholars believe that the general reason behind Sinization policies, along with the promotion of migration of Han Chinese to the region and even the allocation of immense financial resources to the area, revolve around "domesticating" it and ultimately integrating it into the rest of the country (Trédaniel & Lee, 2017). Hence, China's political, cultural, and economic attempts to reshape the region by force have drawn backlash from NGOs, erudite scholars, sovereign states, and especially human rights monitors. The global community's response "piled up" beyond the point of condemning China, whereas there have been many instances of joint sanctions. Even though the reaction of the global community is on point, its ineptitude when it comes

to alleviating the conditions in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region or even having a positive effect on China's policymaking process constitutes a contradiction. Typically, such specifically targeted counteractions would at least ease the burden, if not efface it. However, the case of China proves itself to be distinct and unique because of its multidimensional nature and its “unyielding” stance against sanctions from the “free world”. Sanctions from around the world pile up against China and specifically Chinese authorities. Still, the intensity and instances of human rights violations in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region do not visibly diminish but increase (Zenz, 2022). This unnatural interaction is linked to an unbalanced political power scale between parties, and growing economic relations also contribute to this problem. The financial ties between China and the West have evolved to form a complex economic interdependence. This complex interdependence complicates the situation in Xinjiang as economic coercions lose momentum due to the abundance of financial resources of all parties.

1.2. Thesis Subject

The policies implemented by the People's Republic of China in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region are criticized by sovereign states, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and human rights organizations for causing severe human rights violations. As a result of China's policies, Uyghur Turks are allegedly subjected to discrimination, ill-treatment, and arbitrary arrests. The explanations for why the Chinese side continues these policies are made through the West's interpretation of China, and efforts are being made to put China under pressure through sanctions. The lack of impact that sanctions seek to produce raises questions about whether the sanctions are symbolic and whether they achieve their purpose. On the Chinese side, evaluating sanctions and taking counter-action makes the problem even more complicated.

This study aims to investigate the reasons that led China to its policies in its region, away from a Eurocentric approach. Identifying these reasons will help shed light on why China continues to defy the West with its policies in Xinjiang. In addition, the magnitude of the effects of the sanctions on the level of bilateral relations and their reflections on China will be examined. A more comprehensive evaluation will be possible by investigating the measures taken by China to continue its policies in the

Xinjiang region. Investigating the effects of sanctions will contribute to understanding to what extent the attitude of states towards the problem in the area has a concrete impact. Examining the activities of the Chinese side on this issue will reveal how determined China is to continue its policies and will also shed light on how the Chinese authorities interpret the sanctions.

1.3. The Purpose of the Thesis

Human rights are considered one of the elements that form the basis of the international order. The perpetrators of violations in this area are considered among the main enemies of the international order. While human rights violations generally occur in Third World countries, they are also frequently mentioned in the context of China, which is currently rising as the new superpower. Human rights violations in China clearly pose a challenge to the international system. This situation inevitably makes the world public ask why the Chinese government is boldly challenging the international order and testing the current global system by continuing its policies without interruption.

This thesis aims to evaluate Xinjiang policies in a multilateral way through the unique cultural interpretation brought by Chinese exceptionalism and, accordingly, to examine the projection of the sanction policies applied against China in a multilateral way. Exploring the Chinese side's interpretation of the practices and developments in Xinjiang, testing the effects of sanctions, and analyzing why and how this challenge to the current international order occurred will constitute an essential part of the thesis. Another aim of the thesis is to identify and analyze the Chinese side's policies to cope with international pressure on Xinjiang. The impetus behind the last objective is to pinpoint the political shift that the Chinese spearheaded in the international arena.

1.4. The Rationale of the Study

Preserving human rights has become one of the cornerstones of the global political agenda. Countries are becoming more prone to using sanctions to regulate their affairs with each other. Examining the nature of sanctions is crucial for understanding the dynamics between nations. Hence, sanctions emerged as a highly scrutinized area of international relations. However, due to their nature, the examination of sanctions has

revolved around dynamics where the imposing country is affluent, and the imposed one is comparatively in a disadvantaged state. In the case of China, these mainstream dynamics turn into an unprecedented issue where both sides have robust capabilities. Thus, diving into Chinese dynamics concerning sanctions is concomitant with dissecting this unparalleled phenomenon.

Examining the Chinese cultural impetus behind its Xinjiang policies is imperative to grasp the problem collectively. This thesis examines the core reasons contributing to the Chinese dispute with the international system. Understanding the evolution of the Chinese mindset is crucial to understanding the historical pivots. Analyzing cultural manifestations and pivotal historical developments within China will provide an elaborative and foundational framework for understanding the experiences of Chinese rationale. This Chinese rationale started and intensified the problem in Xinjiang, which inevitably led to an ethnic conflict.

Understanding the intensity of the effects of sanctions is concomitant with understanding whether or not a resolution is nearby concerning the stalemate in Xinjiang. In addition, the analysis of the impact of sanctions will also illuminate the international community's enthusiasm and capability to deal with global uncertainties and conflicts. Building on that, this thesis focuses on the success of sanctions on Chinese decision-making cadres. The success of these sanctions can be evaluated by examining their impact on China. The thesis also seeks to address the underlying factors that influence the severity of the effects of sanctions against China.

Lastly, the thesis consolidates its scope by evaluating the Chinese reaction. Evaluation of the Chinese response will provide valuable data for understanding the phenomenon as a whole. Understanding how and why the Chinese are forming a multilateral reaction will give insight into the future of the problem in Xinjiang. Hence, the findings of this thesis will combine the past, the present, and the future to provide the primary incentive manifestation behind Xinjiang. The main goal of this thesis revolves around providing a framework that could be used to develop a better and long-lasting solution to the dilemma.

1.5. The Significance of the Study

The events taking place in the Xinjiang region of China are seen as the most enormous human rights violations in the world. These violations caused outrage in Western public opinion, and the Xinjiang issue gained importance as a critical research topic at the international level. The facts that come to the fore in elucidating the problem have complex cultural and economic ties that cannot be understood through Eurocentric and stereotypical references. Evaluating the cases through the Chinese lens will make it possible to gain insight into the subject and contribute to the literature. By correctly contextualizing concepts and issues, a bridge will be built between the humiliation and exclusion that China has experienced since the 19th century and how its current policies have shaped it, thus providing historic integrity from the past to the present. In this way, how China's political attitude towards the West shapes its political culture, the increasingly critical geopolitics of Xinjiang, and the cultural harmony and conflict issues of the Chinese world will be presented in an integrated way to the social sciences literature in Turkey.

1.6. The Research Questions and The Hypotheses of the Study

1.6.1. Thesis Questions

1. What is the place of China's cultural, historical, political, and economic exceptionalism in Xinjiang policies?
2. Do human rights sanctions have significant effects in China?
3. How does China respond to increasing risks and pressures, and to what extent does this determine China's role in world politics?

The process of obtaining the corresponding answers to those questions will revolve around assessing the already published literature about the subject. Hence, a bridge between the questions shall be erected.

1.6.2. Thesis Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were created following the purpose of the thesis.

1. A unique sense of security has emerged through China's exceptionalism, and Xinjiang policies have been developed on this level.

2. In the Chinese context, international sanctions over human rights have no chance of having a significant impact.

3. China aims to distribute risks and pressures through the economic and political rapprochements it has established; It tries to change the balances in the international system through a functional anti-Western discourse against Western-centrism.

China's exceptional culture, which was the source of exceptionalism, has become the primary tool regarding the construction of China's victimhood, which legitimized policies within Xinjiang. Building on this pretext, China has not felt the effects of the sanctions and is trying to elude future attempts by spearheading a new bloc. The hypotheses of this thesis are comprehensively examined through the experiences of the Chinese, where old wounds of their empire decline still influence new policies.

1.7. Research Methodology

This section examines how the data collection was done regarding this thesis while highlighting why this method would bring dependable and consistent information. This study embraces qualitative and quantitative approaches to understand the problem comprehensively. Furthermore, accessible studies and reports, especially about Chinese culture and history, sanctions, and their effects on China, were also employed to form interpretations to enhance the insight into the problem.

This thesis utilizes discourse analysis, content analysis, and historical research to provide the necessary data for qualitative data collection. The historical research method uses data from government publishings, academic articles, and reports to lay the foundation for the specified concepts. Discourse analysis is chosen to examine the statements of essential Chinese personages, which can give valuable insight. Content analysis is determined to obtain quantitative and qualitative data from government statistics, other academic research, reports, and prominent NGO statements. Discourse analysis helps uncover necessary information that sometimes can't be found in research papers. Evaluating discourses and practices will enrich the study and help build a standard connection regarding troubles in Xinjiang. On top of this, considering the statistical data is paramount when it comes to analyzing the success of sanctions.

In line with this thesis, due to its egregious human rights violation allegation, Xinjiang stands out from other regions where human rights violations occur due to its severity,

and it was picked as the focal point of this thesis. A diverse portfolio of actors and ideas plays a pivotal role regarding the evolution of the problem in Xinjiang, such as the British Empire, the U.S., the revolutionaries, etc.

Regarding the data collection, this thesis endorses a secondary sources approach, using materials such as reports, books, academic articles, government statements, and official statistics that revolve around Xinjiang's characteristics, Chinese exceptionalism, the evolution of the problem in Xinjiang, and China's reactions to sanctions. Evaluating different data and sources, this thesis intends to provide a framework for a permanent resolution in Xinjiang and academic research on the conflict along with comparable present or future conflicts.

This study employs an inductive approach to analyze the collected data. After building the collected data on quantitative and qualitative pillars, a pattern is being tried to be pinpointed before reaching a general conclusion. Clarifying this perplexing event while also going through previous studies constitutes the primary goal of this thesis, along with a specific emphasis on characteristics of Chinese exceptionalism. The ultimate analysis of this thesis is built upon the dissection of complex interactions and their outcomes.

1.8. The Outline of the Study

The thesis will be constructed into six chapters, where each chapter will explain its corresponding subtopic regarding problems in Xinjiang. The general framework of the study is given in **Chapter 1**, along with the research goals, objectives, and scope. This chapter also covers the outline, hypotheses, and what limits the study. This chapter is the basis for the thesis to ensure consistency. **Chapter 2** examines the origin of the culture of anti-Westernism and occidentalism, unique and developed by China. This chapter discusses the exceptional aspects of China that were not found in any other country before and after the revolution. This part aims to contribute to the relevant literature on where China's policies are stemming from.

Chapter 3 is devoted to analyzing the multilateral characteristics of the region. After obtaining foundational information about Xinjiang, the chapter dissects China's actions in the Xinjiang region, including its historical, social, and economic aspects. In **Chapter 4**, the reactions that developed in world public opinion and the sanctions

that emerged as a result of the decisions taken by the states, the effects of the sanctions, and China's reactions to them are examined in the context of the political and economic structure that China is trying to create. The examination of sanctions against China within this chapter forms the backbone of this study.

The study's final findings are analyzed and compiled in **Chapter 5**. This summary comes to life after a sharp analysis and debate about the data. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the subject by showing the influence of Chinese cultural characteristics on the issue.

1.9. The Limitations of the Study

Several factors prove to be restricting the scope of this research. China's half-closed society severely limits the amount of research about Xinjiang. It is hard to reach resources that give detailed information about problems in Xinjiang. Most available resources, especially official ones, are written in English, leaving little to no room for exploration due to my inability to speak Mandarin. Furthermore, the inability to visit China significantly damages this study's range since it gravely diminishes the chance to obtain primary sources. What further limited this study was that it was impossible to interview participants to get fresh information due to their rejections, primarily from safety concerns. Contacting the Uyghur community in China was also out of the question since access to the internet in China is heavily monitored and regulated.

Xinjiang's dynamics are not thoroughly examined, and the Chinese preserve its veil of mystery government. There is a gap regarding the Chinese activities within the region, which causes the source of allegations against China not to be scrutinized enough. However, using the available material helped to shrink the gap to a certain extent. Hence, a diverse source portfolio was created to compensate for the gap. Altogether, the study endeavors to maneuver within the borders of its limitations. The results of this study should be evaluated within these parameters while stressing the need for more research concerning Xinjiang to fill the gaps further.

CHAPTER II

THE ROOTS OF CHINESE EXCEPTIONALISM

2.1. Introduction

Exceptionalism refers to the idea that a deviating phenomenon should be dissected within its own terms rather than resorting to mainstream approaches or other analysis methods (Shafer, 1999). Based on this, China has always enjoyed an elevated position as one of the oldest civilizations. China dominated Far Eastern politics, its unique culture aroused curiosity, and its inventions, such as gunpowder, the compass, etc., helped the Europeans to colonize. With such a unique history and culture, China must be sociologically and historically analyzed to map its everchanging but unique identity. The mapping process has to describe China in a Chinese way to obtain crucial but local information. Hence, mapping out the Chinese identity shall provide the necessary impetus for exploring how China illustrates its history through its own eyes. Therefore, the first chapter's analysis will initially focus on extraordinary manifestations of Chinese culture. Determining what kind of social values constructed the Chinese worldview will provide the impetus behind their interactions with different nations before their acquaintance with Europeans. Analyzing how the Chinese interacted within their sphere of influence is essential to understanding the magnitude of what they inevitably lost and their national trauma. Speaking of national trauma, the evolution of the Chinese identity can't be examined thoroughly without mentioning the Century of Humiliation, where foreign powers subjugated Imperial China and exploited its riches. The Century of Humiliation directly contributed to the modernization of China as leading scholars began thinking about the source of their painful decline. China's detrimental interaction with the Europeans not only denigrated its pride but also laid its weakness bare. The output of this interaction must be considered as it directly spearheaded China's modernization from a monarchy to a republic in 1911. Ideas about breaking the shackles of its oppressors and unifying the nation were permeating Chinese society in the post-republican revolution era, and they laid the foundation for future assimilationist policies under the auspices of nationalism. Despite these efforts, the situation in China continued to worsen, and communist movements became the flagbearers of anti-western sentiment through their interpretation of communism, which was heavily influenced by Chinese values and

national trauma. The junction point of communism and Chinese values must also be analyzed to lay the foundation of the CCP's brutal policies toward the Uyghur community. Building on this, the examination of the marginalization of the Uyghur community is imperative to understanding security issues in Xinjiang and their respective outcomes. Hence, to deliver a basis for this thesis, altogether, Chinese identity, Chinese nationalism, Chinese communism, Chinese Anti-western sentiment, and occidentalism, the marginalization of the Uyghur community will be dissected in this chapter to present what makes the case of China an unprecedented one.

2.2. Chinese Historical and Cultural Identity

China's identity, having one of the oldest and most distinct cultures in the history of mankind, should be dissected through its own views instead of a Eurocentric approach due to its sui generis values, characteristics, and features. The screening of this distinct phenomenon should start with analyzing the dissimilar elements that are behind the scenes. Chinese historical concepts play a pivotal role in developing this view, which can't be placed in any mold of standard classification. To begin with, in the eyes of the Chinese, there is a worldview (Tianxia) where China has always been at the center of the world both geographically and culturally, which makes China and Asia inseparable, and this leads to a sense of responsibility for the Chinese (Westad, 2015:5). But this does not mean that the Chinese identity is static because it changes through interactions with the "outside world" (Gries, 2004:40). Furthermore, cultural ethnocentrism called "Huayiguan" dominated the Chinese Society and elevated its own status way above the status of the "others" (Westad, 2015:30-31). The elevated position of culture-based ethnocentrism is so potent that even the early invaders "became Chinese" and barbarians outside of the walls paid tribute to "civilization" and these practices bolstered not only the idea of Chinese civilization being superior but global as well (Gries, 2004:47). This classification of the nonChinese was also in effect after Europeans and the Chinese made the first contact which promptly led to Europeans being stigmatized as "new wildlings" since they were born outside of the Chinese civilization and did not try to challenge the Chinese identity (Westad, 2015:32). Altogether, this self-reflection which revolves around the centrality and the sense of ethnocultural superiority has shaped the Chinese identity, way of life, and interactions with others. The Chinese identity is undoubtedly correlated with the

Chinese worldview but is also “locally universal”. For instance, the identity “Chinese” is given to all ethnic minorities such as Uyghurs, Tibetans, Mongolians, and other ethnic groups that live within the boundaries of the People’s Republic of China while not stressing the consent whether they accept this identity or not (Guo, 2004:14). The reason behind this is that the Chinese civilization and being Chinese are intertwined, different sides of the same coin, and resemble a melting pot-like social structure where one does not need to be Han or renounce their ethnic identity to consider themselves Chinese (Guo, 2004:67).

Confucianism, an ancient Chinese quasi-religion, made significant contributions to Chinese culture and identity. For two millennia, Confucian ideas such as “benevolence”, “propriety”, “filial piety” and “loyalty” regulated daily life and laid out the moral framework for the Chinese (Mishra, 2012:150). In terms of longevity and vitality, it surpassed Islam to the point where it not only influenced the daily life of the peasantry but also the actions and relations of the Chinese imperial Court (Mishra, 2012:30). Leaving no room for equality among nations, the Confucian system was leaning towards hierarchy where the emperor was a middle man between earth and heaven (Krasner, 2001:177). Unlike the Western system, where treaties hold binding powers among nations, societal norms, rules, and ceremonies were used to regulate relations between the Middle Kingdom and tributary states (Krasner, 2001:178). In this context, tributary states had to obey and act according to Chinese cultural characteristics, such as following the Chinese calendar, if they wished to pursue closer relations (Krasner, 2001:178). The tributary system might seem explicitly based on an economic exchange between the corresponding parties. Still, it also had the authority to designate political power to rulers of the tributary states (Krasner, 2001:178). The Chinese emphasized and assured peace and mutual benefit for those who would accept to get under its political domain so that they could play by their rules and called it “share the fortune of peace” (Zhang, 2011:308). This idea was further consolidated through China’s “benevolent pacifism,” which stresses anti-war rhetoric by asserting China only wages war when no alternative is left (Zhang, 2011:311). The impetus behind Confucian-based pacifism is directly affiliated with centrality, as China was responsible for preserving order and harmony in Asia (Zhang, 2015:). Because of these, this Confucian structure over its tributaries was not contested by tributaries as it was highly revered (Kang, 2019).

China's distinctiveness and exceptionalism have been molded into various political rhetorics to regulate its approach to global affairs. One of these rhetorics is called "harmony with difference," and it highlights the diversity among nations, but instead of labeling it as a hardship to overcome, sovereign nations of the globe should recognize it and endeavor to find common interests, approach with multilateral views, broaden consensus and pursue development in the international arena (Zhang, 2011:9). This view implies that the Chinese are neither alienating themselves from cooperation with other sovereign nations nor supporting assimilation or erosion of national values for the sake of internationalization. Neo-Confucianism also plays a pivotal role in international and domestic affairs. Xi Jinping, the incumbent general secretary of the CCP, once stated that Confucianism played a crucial role in the culture's exceptionalism (Zhao, 2018:323). Drawing impetus from this exceptionalism, Confucianism's influence on Chinese foreign policy has led to the construction of an official narrative where China's position is the victim who is the voice of reason and peace in conflicts or disputes (Zhao, 2018:324). One of Confucianism's core tenets, "Not imposing something on someone else you don't want for yourself," has been a cornerstone of China's foreign policy (Zhao, 2018:326). This stance can be seen in Xi Jinping's speech in 2014 when he said:

Second, respect civilizations of all countries and nations. Civilization, ideology, and culture in particular, is the soul of a nation. If a country or nation does not cherish its own ideology and culture, if it loses its soul, no matter which country or which nation, it will not be able to stand on its own. A country or nation must recognize and respect others' ideology and culture while valuing and preserving its own'' (Jinping, 2014).

It is classifying the imposition of the international order of the Europeans, especially when it comes to human rights, as cultural imperialism has become a cornerstone of the Chinese narrative. Implementing this tenet mentioned above in foreign affairs has been immensely helpful. China can invoke it when it pursues positive relations and encounters quarrels and criticisms with and from other nations (Zhao, 2018:326-327). Domestically, Confucian ideas provide a framework where the ruler has the moral high ground as legitimacy and absolute power to do as they please.

2.3. Century of Humiliation

The first tangible baby steps of the Sino-Western trade can be observed after the 16th century although both Ming and Qing dynasties preserved a harsh anti-foreign trade policy which prevented the penetration of this new trade pattern into the deep parts of China (Zhong, 2010:99). Concomitant with its ethnocultural superiority view, trading with the Europeans was not different from trading with the barbarians beyond the Great Wall (Zhong, 2010:87). Having the most impact among other western nations, the British had started to show interest when it came to securing a full penetration to the Chinese Market in the last 18th century (Zhong, 2010:87). This interest grew further as Britain's experience with the Industrial Revolution proved to be rather beneficiary as the national production capacity skyrocketed which encouraged the bourgeoisie to look for fresh sources to produce and sell more (Ti et al., 2021:58). Through this search, the exceptional tea of the Chinese and the inveterate tea habit of the British formed an uneven trade relation where it favored the Chinese and had the potential to drastically influence the social order and government revenues in the United Kingdom (Zhong, 2010:87). To tip the scales of this trade-related "irregularity", the British gradually began to favor selling copious amounts of opium to China so that this conundrum could be dealt with (Zhong, 2010:88). The detrimental effects of this opium on Chinese society were quickly noticed by the Qing Court and it quickly illegalized its trade while also destroying copious amounts of it which caused the First Opium War due to jeopardizing British interests (Lu et al., 2007). Even though the physical reason behind the casus belli was based on opium, the already existing clash between the Chinese Sinocentric worldview and the Westphalian views of the West was essential (Chan, 2014:866). Although the Treaty of Nanjing ended the First Opium War, the Qing court signed successive treaties with the Western powers that gave even more capitulations (Chan, 2014:866). Moreover, Shanghai, being one of the biggest port cities, saw an autonomous political entity controlled by foreigners where the ethnic Chinese were treated as second-class citizens as they had no civil rights and endured exorbitant taxes (Krasner, 2001:181). Despite these terrible developments, as a coping mechanism, the Chinese rulers put their faith in the port system to hinder foreigners from diving deep into the Chinese land (Krasner, 2001:181). Unfortunately, the opposite became the norm since Westerners slowly began to strangle China by occupying revenue-producing governmental functions such

as customs administration (Krasner, 2001:180). Not satisfied with the results of the First Opium War despite many capitulations, France and the United Kingdom waged another war to consolidate the transportation of Opium to China and gain more access to the Chinese market (Lu et al., 2007). With its defeat in the Second Opium War, the Qing court had to capitulate even more. Among these capitulations, one of the gravest was about acquiescing to give authority to the British to send a permanent representative to Beijing, which was inimical and alien to the Sinocentric worldview (Krasner, 2001:180). Considering that the Chinese always preferred to keep the “savages” at bay from their pinnacle of civilization, this development must have had a devastating effect on their worldview as they let “White savages” venture around the Forbidden City. Even though the Century of Humiliation started in the 19th century during the Qing Dynasty’s rule, the collective shame peaked in the early 1900s with various separatist movements appearing in Mongolia and Tibet along with the imperial ambitions of the Japanese Empire into Manchuria during the republican era, exacerbated with the collapse of the Qing Court which resulted in losing control over a third of its sovereign territory (Kaufman, 2010:5). Europeans attempt to divide China into small and several influence zones defined this period in China’s history (See Figure 2.1: A Political Cartoon About Carving Up China below).



Figure 2. 1: A Political Cartoon About Carving Up China

The Century of Humiliation is considered a shameful period where the detrimental interaction between the Chinese and the West started right after China’s infamous defeat in the First Opium War and the concession of Hong Kong to the British subsequently in 1842 (Gries, 2004:46). This period traumatized the Chinese as it

damaged its views of the outside world by not only inflicting military damage but also making them realize that another civilization claims a similar global worldview (Gries, 2004:47). Westerners, thanks to their military victories, turned China into a semi-colony where different nations tried to grab a piece for themselves. Cheap labor and a big market made China a popular venue for foreigners. But with the arrival of more and more foreigners every day, the existing social and economic order was devastated by capitalism and Christianity as the former deteriorated peasant handicraft production, common trade routes, and the latter brought grave social tensions since the locals saw missionary activities as “heathenistic” and “degenerate” (Karl, 2010:3). It is no surprise that China has always wanted its culture and order intact due to its ethnocultural superiority. Unlike Korea or Japan, where there are small Christian communities, China never went under the Protestant influence as much as they did. Chinese Christians, missionaries, and Christianity, in general, were frowned upon gravely, which put a dent in its spread (Westad, 2015:69). The first tangible signs of intolerantness of the Chinese society with regard to “Western Elements” in their homeland grew exponentially to the point where a group named Boxers (aka The Righteous and Harmonious Fists) revolted in 1899. The revolt was against foreigners (especially missionaries) as they were deracinating and denigrating Chinese beliefs and practices (Mishra, 2012:174). Even though Westerners suppressed the rebellion, the influence of the Boxers permeated Chinese society. For instance, even Sun Yat-Sen, the founding father of the Republic of China (1912-1949), started to criticize the Western way of life and economic imperialism at one point, even though he was influenced by Western ideas (Mishra, 2012:230).

The Century of Humiliation, which lasted more than 100 years, is considered to have ended with the proclamation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 (Zhang, 2011:309). The Century of Humiliation has given the CCP legitimacy in the eyes of the people. Due to the national trauma, historically speaking, the long-term goals of the Chinese oscillate between vanquishing internal and foreign foes and constructing a capable homeland, as this has been the main impetus for revolution, reforms, and the CCP. Thus, the absence or destruction of the CCP would mean the abandonment of these goals and China plunging back into chaos or even being subjugated by foreign powers once again (Guo, 2004:34). Therefore, there is a direct link between turmoil (Luan) and recollection of the Opium Wars, the Japanese invasion, and the warlord era

(Guo, 2004:36). The CCP, under the chairmanship of Mao, did not stress the suffering that much to come up with a “Victor Narrative” (Gries, 2004:136). Just like past humiliations and because of this victimhood, China might go through the same shameful period or even be divided lest it becomes weak or technologically underdeveloped (Guo, 2004:34).

2.4. Chinese Nationalism

The last decades of the Qing rule of Xinjiang saw attempts to integrate the region with the rest of China. The integration process was both political and social. The political side of this integration was spearheaded by replacing prominent Manchus and Mongols with Han soldiers and bureaucrats (Thum, 2018:3). The social side of the integration was based on inaugurating Confucian thought schools and coercing the Uyghurs to attend, which in return solely infuriated the attendees (Thum, 2018:3). But, with the collapse of multiethnic empires, nationalism’s rise in the 20th century and the idea of nationhood can be observed in revolutionary-born states. This 20th-century style transition from an imperial state to a nation-state can also be observed in Chinese history. The Wuchang Uprising led to the Xinhai Revolution, which ended the 268-year-old Qing dynasty. The revolutionaries replaced The monarchy with the Republic of China. Even though there was a transition, the 1911 revolution also sparked separatism and ethnic nationalism, especially in areas where a particular group held the majority (Wang & Thomas, 2016).

The new republic was based on cooperation and unity among the people to “bring their lands and their people together” even though an intense ideological clash was still happening between ethnic, social, and ideological groups (Wang & Thomas, 2016). Sun Yat-Sen himself, the founder of the Republic of China, stated that all national and territorial aspects of Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Uyghur, and Tibetan in China should become one to surmount this conflict in his declaration in 1912 (Wang & Thomas, 2016). The revolutionaries spearheaded a new nation-building process to bolster their efforts. First of all, with the consensus among the revolutionaries, “sovereignty belongs to the people” began to echo within the young republic and furthered its sovereignty (Wang & Thomas, 2016). This motto stressed transferred authority and aimed to prevent political fractures in China by constructing a common stance. The young republic also inherited its toppled dynasty’s multilateral relations

and continued implementation and preservation of “regional autonomy for ethnic minorities” for it was a “required compromise” (Wang & Thomas, 2016). This “compromise” facilitated the construction of a national identity that includes the minorities mentioned above. Even though progressive steps were taken to be more inclusive for minorities, the tide gradually turned. The revolutionary government slowly became thoroughly Han-centered while using Han nationalism against the remaining influence of the “Manchurians” (Wang & Thomas, 2016). Even Sun Yat-Sen believed that the founding “Republic of Five Nationalities” principle should be abrogated in favor of a singular “Chinese nation” (Zhonghua Minzu) where all nationalities should be compressed into one identity to further integration (Wang & Thomas, 2016). Furthermore, as can be observed with other revolutions, the “us vs. the others” narrative placed “feudal units” as the enemies of the new order (Wang & Thomas, 2016). It would be no surprise to form a correlation between this narrative and ethnic minorities getting affected by it disproportionately.

Like how the Chinese identity evolves, Chinese nationalism develops through significant developments within and outside China. After the defeat of the Kuomintang (Nationalists) and, subsequently, the proclamation of the People’s Republic of China, Chinese nationalism experienced a change. Unsurprisingly, humiliation by foreigners fueled and influenced this “new” Chinese nationalism (Mishra, 2012:276). During the early days of the revolution, the idea of nationalism used to explicitly revolve around conserving the revolution’s endeavors, fighting against imperial or feudal oppression, supporting the new democracy, backing the working class, bolstering the camaraderie between China and Russia, and striving for a better socialist future (Guo, 2004:29). But in contemporary times, the idea shifted towards reunification with Taiwan or amending the extraordinary political system of Hong Kong as it would be considered unpatriotic to think otherwise (Guo, 2004:30). China’s historical experience with foreigners is still a hot topic and a prominent manifestation of its public memory (See Figure 2.2: Demonstrators in Shanghai Shout Nationalist Slogans Near Japan’s Consulate in 2012 to Mark the 1937 Invasion below).



Figure 2. 2: Demonstrators in Shanghai Shout Nationalist Slogans Near Japan’s Consulate in 2012 to Mark the 1937 Invasion

The CCP tries to propagate a distinct, nonetheless evolving, type of nationalism to embed its vision in the minds of ordinary citizens. State nationalism, which is indoctrinated via the CCP, is associated with putting the existence of the state in the middle of its discourse by claiming that “the state is the byproduct of the nation’s will” which asserts that the state needs the support of the ordinary citizens and in return, the state creates the idea of nationhood (Guo, 2004:17). According to its views, the nation is a political-territorial entity and its integrity can only be protected by preserving a robust socialist state (Guo, 2004:17). To continue this bilateral relationship, the CCP tries to blend national consciousness and socialist consciousness together so that a civic identity that is based on citizenship and a national identity that is based on shared history and culture can come to life (Guo, 2004:47). The main goal of this indoctrination is correlated with bringing up a new generation that is educated, ardent, and destined to bring China back to its glorious days (Guo, 2004:26). Even though this might imply that if an individual fully embraces the ideas of the state they might be categorized as “normal”. However, according to the Chinese state nationalism, the people make up one side of the coin, and the other side of the coin is made up of the citizens of the People’s Republic of China and “the descendants of the Yellow Emperor” together (Guo, 2004:24). The trichotomy shows that even though state nationalism does not embrace cultural distinctiveness as much as its counterpart does, both are influencing while also challenging each other. For instance,

state nationalism can't stress traditional culture, especially Confucianism, because, in the eyes of the revolutionaries, it is obsolete, backward, feudalistic, and not "enlightened" by socialism as there is already no civic nation in the class concept (Guo, 2004:47). But this does not mean the state forbears from drawing a line between the nation and citizens nonetheless. Therefore, there is a clash between state nationalism and cultural nationalism. This clash has evolved to a point where the foundation of the state and the nation differ substantially. Therefore, a new challenge appears for the CCP in finding a middle way between upholding cultural Chinese identity and Chinese socialist identity (Guo, 2004:47-48).

2.5. Chinese Communism

With the Communist victory against the Kuomintang and the People's Republic of China declaration, Mao found a blank canvas to paint as he desired. Hence, like its cultural interpretations, the Chinese way of interpreting and implementing communism shows distinct differences from its counterparts. To begin with, instead of directly following the Soviet Union or deliberately entering its sphere of influence, Mao spearheaded radical amendments to Marxism. Undoubtedly, the Chinese Communists took inspiration and help from the Soviets but were also afraid of the possibility of Soviet influence penetrating their party (Karl, 2010:301). Determined to surmount this predicament, Mao took "countermeasures" to ensure that neither the CCP nor China would fall under the influence of the Soviet Union, which can be observed mainly in Eastern Europe. Mao's purge of Moscow sympathizers and declaration and renunciation of Moscow dogma, Comintern, and Stalinism consolidated its independence from the Soviet bloc (Karl, 2010:47). Securing its autonomy from the Soviets, Mao moved on to reinterpreting Marxism. Mao's interpretation combines Marxism and Chinese history, which more or less leads to the "Sinification of Marxism" (Karl, 2010:53). Therefore, Mao Zedong Thought is a byproduct of applying Marxism to the dark parts of Chinese history to find a long-lasting solution to perennial problems that stemmed from former governments' ineptitude which led to the Century of Humiliation (Karl, 2010:53). The way Mao stressed courage, self-sufficiency, sacrifice, and the power of humans made the CCP and Chinese Marxism different and independent (Westad, 2015:287). Furthermore, Mao's emphasis on Marxism and Chinese history, culture, and revolution became so

widespread that it became a required reading matter (Karl, 2010:67-68). Combining the independence of the Party and a way to show the masses the solution to the Century of Humiliation, Chinese Marxism became a successful means of uniting and mobilizing the masses (Mishra, 2012:312). Even though cultural ideas such as Confucianism dominated Chinese society, the post-revolution period saw a 180-degree turn. Mao's revolution had nothing to do with divine order/faith, as it was a belief to thoroughly change the circumstances that would change the system altogether (Karl, 2010:118). This idea was the impetus behind classifying the old ways as backward or savage without renouncing the centrality behind the Chinese identity and culture. The centrality played a pivotal international role since revolutionary China advertised itself as the epicenter of a global-scale revolution, which was the impetus behind China's support regarding overseas communist movements (Zhang, 2011:310).

For Maoism, revolutionary consciousness and activity are inseparable concepts from each other to the point where the regime goes on a witch hunt to separate "the people" who embrace these concepts from counter-revolutionaries who oppose them, the regime dehumanizes counter-revolutionaries somewhat by doing this (Karl, 2010:74). Those who uphold the values of the revolution have the right to citizenship and democracy. Still, it is ultimately the opposite for those who don't accept these values. Democracy for revolution-accepting citizens is a right, but what makes this type of democracy so different from its counterparts is the fact that it is bereft of any mention of elections or parliamentary procedures, which is associated with the "bourgeois" or "old" type (Karl, 2010:74). Mao, in his own words, claimed that "bourgeois democracy, bourgeois republic, and Western bourgeois civilization have all gone bankrupt in the eyes of the Chinese" (Mishra, 2012:276). On the other hand, this "new" democracy is concomitant with united revolutionary masses, centralized rule, and lastly, the participation and contribution of "the people" (Karl, 2010:74). The identification of "the people" brought a dichotomy along. Even though "the people" can avail themselves of these "democratic opportunities", a brutal dictatorship is employed to deal with the "non-people" (counter-revolutionaries) through coercive and violent means (Karl, 2010:74-75). The only type of redemption for these "non-people" to be regular citizens revolves around re-education and reform by "the people" if they want to participate in a socialist nation (Karl, 2010:74-75). Those who criticized the ways of the new regime had foreign links and still refused to change their

practices were severely beaten and sent to prisons or camps (Karl, 2010:299-300). The CCP's stance can be interpreted as ideological measures to consolidate the revolution. The representation of the people is symbolized through the four stars around the big star on the flag. The groups excluded from this representation are not only counter-revolutionaries but also “nonyellow” groups. This distinction shows that merely adhering to the tenets of the revolution will not suffice for every individual in China since there is also an ethnic background when it comes to post-revolution. Because of its grandiose social engineering, Mao's legacy and influence on Chinese understanding of communism constitute a fundamental part of the Chinese narrative (See Figure 2.3: A Mural Depicting Mao's Leadership in the Revolution below).



Figure 2. 3: A Mural Depicting Mao's Leadership in the Revolution

Historically speaking, the Uyghur community's interaction with Post-revolution China's understanding of communism has not been pleasant. The first years of the post-revolution favored the Uyghurs as the CCP cadre assumed it was crucial to gain the support of the locals to consolidate its control over Xinjiang (Laruelle et al., 2014:220). Even though religious freedom was the focal point, it did not mean freedom from reach. The authorities thoroughly monitored religious activities because the central government's control over Xinjiang was not always absolute since religious leaders habitually used Islam as a source of legitimacy during insurrections (Laruelle et al., 2014:220). Despite the robust monitoring, religious opinion leaders spearheaded several conflicts during the early years of the post-revolution as they rejected Chinese Socialism (Laruelle et al., 2014:220). To make matters worse, as pragmatists within the

CCP gradually lost influence, they were replaced with hardliner Maoists who abandoned this tolerant treatment of minorities in favor of a much harsher view that aimed to destroy religion and precipitate assimilation (Laruelle et al., 2014:221). In this regard, the CCP's socioeconomic reconstruction projects did not yield beneficial results for the Uyghur community as they damaged the Uyghur way of living physically and spiritually. Notably, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution opened grave wounds for the Uyghurs. For the Uyghurs, these movements were not only alien and exclusively carried out by the Han but also they aimed to thoroughly change socio-economic interactions in favor of Maoism while also propagating assimilationist policies that coerced the Uyghurs to act according to the Han culture's norms (Thum, 2018:9). Respectively, the Great Leap Forward, spearheaded by Mao himself, was an economic campaign which aimed to catch up with the great powers of the West through big construction projects which would be built with labor not equipment or modern supplies (Rossabi, 2022a:52). The inflated production numbers and mismanagement led to severe food shortages and starvation (Rossabi, 2022a:53). Unfortunately, the Great Leap Forward brought harm to Xinjiang through food shortages but what exacerbated the situation was the fact that the Han majority north received food shipments from already imperiled Uyghur majority South, and because of that mainly, the Uyghurs were egregiously affected by the shortages (Rogers & Sidhu, 2016:114). Moreover, even though a significant amount of grain was transported to the region, most of the transports were intended to ameliorate the imperiled conditions of the Han exclusively (Rogers & Sidhu, 2016:114). To make matters worse, the continuous influx of Han migrants during the famine changed pastureland to fit their agricultural plans, which economically alienated the animal husbandry-based locals (Rossabi, 2022a:55). Regrettably, discrimination during food shortages and economic alienation were not the only problems Uyghur community had to combat as the authorities did not spare religious aspects from this wave of harm. The Religious Reform Campaign was another Chinese initiative that targeted the religious elements of the Uyghurs during this period. The goal of this campaign was to inflict as much damage as possible on religious practices and places (Thum, 2018:9). It saw essential developments such as the annulment of the Chinese Muslim Association, the annihilation of traditional Uyghur education, a total ban on Islamic publications and organization altogether (Acharya & Gunaratna, 2023)

Mao eventually blamed the disastrous results of the Great Leap Forward on party members who leaned towards liberalism and spearheaded another Project officially called the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (Rogers & Sidhu, 2016:115). The Cultural Revolution was when the leading figures of the CCP waged war against the “four olds” which were culture, customs, old thoughts, and practices (Honig, 2003). This period revolved around destroying what was considered “old” and backward,” and regrettably, Uyghur values were harshly damaged. The Uyghur culture was also suppressed by banning ethnic music, marriage ceremonies, dances, etc. (Rogers & Sidhu, 2016:115). The war against the old inflicted deep wounds on the memories of the Uyghurs as they were subjected to humiliating implementations such as being forced to eat pork (Ching, 2005:193). The heyday of the Cultural Revolution led to slim to no religious practices, conversion of the holy places, destruction of religious material, and an end to Islamic schooling (Thum, 2018:10). Mao’s new cult of personality became the new deity to be worshipped by the masses while his Little Red Book became a holy scripture that contained his message (Ching, 2005:198). Apart from dealing with the “old ways,” the movement led to purges, and in Xinjiang, the purge targeted the local Uyghur political leaders and more than 110,000 Uyghur civil servants (Rogers & Sidhu, 2016:115).

The Hundred Flowers Campaign (1956-1957) was a political move to promote constructive criticism regarding the CCP’s imperfections (Kraus, 2011:249). The impetus behind this initiative was that Mao believed class conflict on a large scale had become obsolete, and the party should adjust its interference with cultural issues due to the end of the revolutionary process (Kraus, 2011:250). The campaign in Xinjiang started as solid ethnic criticism from the Non-Han against the increasing number of Han migrants to Xinjiang, the lack of genuine autonomy, and the disproportionate representation of the Han in critical positions (Rossabi, 2022a:50). However, it seems that discussions that blossomed during this campaign were nothing like Mao anticipated as they did not reflect the CCP’s supposed self-reflection, it led to the Anti-rightist Campaign where the party cadre would continue to further its control over culture, primarily through constraining intellectuals (Kraus, 2011:249). In general, the reaction against the influx of criticisms would occur through purges (Wu, 2015:317). Particularly in Xinjiang, instead of providing constructive criticism for the party, elites of the former regime began to push for a Muslim identity and dissent against Han

nationalism (Wu, 2015:311). Furthermore, continuous criticism also targeted the “autonomy” of the region, alleging that Han representation in critical positions is disproportionate while menial work-related areas are left for non-Hans (Wu, 2015:318). Gradually, the harsh level of criticism reached a point where locals started to argue that party members with Han ethnic backgrounds couldn’t pinpoint what was good for other groups and that different ethnic groups should be allowed to form their respective organizations for politics (Wu, 2015:317). In response, the party elites ditched their tolerant behavior towards minorities while believing the party should not have waned its efforts to combat local nationalism (Wu, 2015:318). The party elites interpreted this criticism by their party members against the standards of autonomy in Xinjiang as treachery against the homeland since they viewed it as a legitimizing factor that could be used to restore the independent Uyghur state (Wu, 2015:318). Suspected of harboring nationalist ideas or being too close to the Soviets were the reasons behind a purge that targeted the Uyghur officials (Thum, 2018:9). On a more typical level, individuals who voiced ethnic interests, the region’s distinct features, decentralization of the CCP were publicly marked and assaulted (Wu, 2015:320)

In 1979, China started implementing a one-child policy in which a static child quota would be assigned to families, and any family exceeding this quota would be punished (Zhang, 2017). The demographic goal was to adjust the population growth rates under viable levels to reach 1.2 billion around 2000 (Cai & Feng, 2021). Apart from demographic purposes, increasing the quality of life and accelerating economic modernization of the Chinese economy through improving GDP were other goals to be reached (Cai & Feng, 2021). Even though the Han had to obey the one-child policy so population growth could be tamed, the Uyghur community was granted exemption from this policy (Rossabi, 2022b). But, in the ’90s, another initiative was started to limit the birthrates of the Uyghur community by limiting their number of children, but it is believed that the authorities endeavored to coerce the population to have children way below the designated number (Rogers & Sidhu, 2016:117). Furthermore, the Uyghurs were forced to register so that they could have a baby, and those who did not register but got pregnant nonetheless were forced to abort their unborn children, along with forced sterilizations (Rogers & Sidhu, 2016:117). The central government’s attempt to control Uyghur birth rates might seem like a subject that is exclusively bound to yield demographic results, but in reality, it is a multilateral aspect. First of

all, the Uyghur community's unanimous opinion about birth control methods significantly differs when compared to the Han community's interpretation (Smith, 2002:161). Having children has religious connotations for Uyghurs, and they oppose the central government's family planning policies (Smith, 2002:161-162). It appears that birth control-related policies not only upset Uyghurs but also physically and mentally affect them in a negative way (Smith, 2002:162). Apart from these, these standards detrimentally affect Uyghurs' familial relations and the economic structures they rely on to the point where their religious affiliation could diminish (Rudelson, 1997:106).

The Uyghur community slowly began to act against these unfair treatments and marginalization attempts through protests and riots in the '90s. Both sides encountered each other in big demonstrations such as Baren, Ili, Yining, and all of the examples were brutally suppressed with the aid of the armed forces (PLA) while paving the way for more crackdowns (Rogers & Sidhu, 2016:119). The central government used this as a legitimizing factor to blame culprits by coining the term the "Three Evils," which consisted of separatist insurgents, terrorists, and religious extremists (Rogers & Sidhu, 2016:119). In 1996, a new campaign to exterminate the Three Evils was initiated, increasing the number of arbitrary arrests and waning civil rights (Rogers & Sidhu, 2016:119). As the social conflict and civil unrest continued to grow, the situation caught the international community's eye, which prompted a backlash. The CCP has developed various defense mechanisms to counter diplomatic pressure from sovereign states, human rights monitors, etc., about its policy regarding the Uyghur community. Despite never rejecting the idea of human rights, Chinese authorities state that human rights can't be used as a pretext to interfere with another nation's domestic affairs (Rogers & Sidhu, 2016:129). To consolidate this claim, Chinese authorities add that the interpretation of human rights is affected by cultural differences among nations, and because of that, different variations can't be forced on China as it would be cultural imperialism (Rogers & Sidhu, 2016:130). Another commonly used defense mechanism revolves around highlighting the past or present human rights violations, such as slavery, of the nations that criticize China on behalf of poor human rights conditions (Rogers & Sidhu, 2016:129). To double down on this, Chinese authorities assert that human rights are not in impeccable condition in developed nations, and they are bereft of moral high ground to criticize China in this manner freely (Rogers &

Sidhu, 2016:130). Furthermore, Chinese authorities also state that the attempts to criticize itself are politically motivated and two-faced as there are ignored countries with much worse human rights conditions (Rogers & Sidhu, 2016:129). Lastly, for Chinese authorities, the assessments of the foreign observers are innately flawed as they do not thoroughly grasp what is going on in Xinjiang (Rogers & Sidhu, 2016:130). It seems that China's unique ethnoculture and occidentalism play a pivotal part when it comes to rejecting the human rights interpretation of the West. Furthermore, the usage of cultural imperialism and subsequent rejection of the values of the West implies that these terms invoke the terrible trauma and memories of the Century of Humiliation, which is why China prefers to keep them at bay.

2.6. Chinese Antiwestern Sentiment and Occidentalism

Occidentalism refers to how non-Western nations grasp and describe the West on their own terms (Wang, 2005). Therefore, Occidentalism reflects the connection between the dominance of the West in politics and the West's understanding of cultural differences while also creating hierarchical and divided concepts (Coronil, 1996). The same characteristics can be seen in Chinese Occidentalism as it was invariably influenced by historical developments where the Chinese were defeated by the same "barbarians" against whom they claimed superiority. These "barbarians" defeated the middle kingdom, forced the emperor to sign insulting unequal treaties, brought "degenerate" world-views, a heathenistic religion, economic imperialism, and copious amounts of opium, which brought social and economic turmoil, and treated the Chinese as second-class citizens in their own country. The abrupt change that came with the Westerners showed the Chinese their country's decline and laid the foundations of Chinese occidentalism. This realization proved a painful reality for a nation that always considered itself the pinnacle of civilization led by the "son of heaven" (Tiānzǐ). The treaties they signed with the Western powers siphoned the riches of China while also being shackled. The Chinese political elites started referring to signed treaties with the victors as "unequal treaties" where China was bereft of means to pursue its interests under the limits of international law as it was deemed untenable and unfair (Wang, 2003). Despite the grave situation, the Chinese did not seriously challenge the status quo. However, after the Communist victory in 1949, the new regime started employing more radical approaches to deal with the foreigners and

their remaining influence. The former regime, Kuomintang, embraced the foreign culture and wanted to be associated with it, but its successor wanted to eliminate any remnants of China's connections with the outside world deliberately and decisively to make sure no foreign influence could challenge the authority of the CCP (Karl, 2010:297-298). The foreigners who refused to leave China were apprehended and subsequently sent to labor camps (Karl, 2010:299-300). Christianity was not spared from the radical purge initiated by the Chinese Communists either, as the Party's views regarding religion became less and less tolerant. By revolutionaries, Christian activity was exterminated in China through the expulsion or apprehension of the missionaries and the expropriation of educational and medical institutions that once belonged to Christians (Westad, 2015:326). The post-revolution period was not when the Chinese were ready to break bread with Westerners. The fact that the West, especially the USA, backed the Kuomintang with their inclusive aid during the Chinese Civil War only fueled the anti-western occidentalism of the Chinese. Furthermore, the fact that the Allies never invited China to either of the postwar conferences or treaties exacerbated the anti-western sentiment substantially, even though China suffered heavily against Japanese aggression. Most likely as the last nail in the coffin, the attempts of the West to isolate the People's Republic of China by recognizing the Republic of China (Taiwan) as the sole representative of the Chinese nation further stimulated this animosity. Due to these developments, Chinese anti-western sentiment has grown so potent that to define an entity as Chinese, its opposite must be labeled as an occidental, which is a contrasting other (Gries, 2004:33). For instance, it is no surprise that the Communist regime reacted extremely concerning international law by claiming that it was a means of the imperialists to oppress the downtrodden further and prevent a global communist revolution (Chan, 2014:892). Apart from "not trusting" the oppressors and their tools, Sinocentrism plays a pivotal role when it comes to anti-western sentiment as it would be considered shameful and self-contradictory for an allegedly superior civilization to follow the way of the Westerners (Zhang, 2011:311). Therefore, the Chinese elites believe that the international system is made by and for the Westerners, which means any involvement of China, regardless of how it pursues its interests, indirectly contributes to and preserves this Western status quo and any attempts from the organizations within this system to "guide" China is merely the young brother of the "unequal treaties" (Kaufman, 2010:14). The accumulated confidence from relocating itself once again to a prominent international actor propels

the Chinese to look for a new system where China can be seen as an alternative against the West (Xu, 2012:119). The modern interaction between the West and China produced a hostile ground for and by both parties. On the one hand, the CCP is in favor of amplifying and utilizing this anti-western sentiment as the original ideology that once held the nation together is not as efficient as it used to be and needs a modern substitute, but it is also a remarkable tool to make the people turn their focus from domestic issues to international ones (Xu, 2012:114). On top of this, economically speaking, most Chinese believe that the West endeavors to jeopardize China's economic ascension through protectionism, which erects economic obstacles (Xu, 2012:119). On the other hand, the West's endeavors to label China an adversary in lieu of a partner exacerbate political problems such as human rights issues, the South China Sea, etc. (Xu, 2012:120).

The collective anti-western sentiment of the Chinese gradually continued to increase in modern times. Drawing its impetus from a traumatic history, various technological and political developments unequivocally contributed to this sentiment. Gaining momentum, the Chinese isolated themselves from the West, which started in 1949 and ended thanks to the Sino-U.S. rapprochement (Üngör, 2016). Despite the rapprochement, respectively, the 90s and 2000s proved to yield pivotal cornerstones regarding this. Still growing at that period, anti-western sentiment reached a distinguishable point where several Chinese citizens in Belgrade, along with the Chinese embassy, fell victim to NATO's bombardment, and it triggered mass demonstrations that mainly targeted the US diplomatic missions (Xu, 2012:110-111). However, the 2000s showed an evolution in Chinese anti-western sentiment. This time, the overseas Chinese diaspora also participated in pro-China demonstrations in their respective countries on a vast scale (Xu, 2012:112). Furthermore, the usage of the Internet skyrocketed when it came to provoking anti-western sentiment and communicating with familiar individuals to organize together (Xu, 2012:112-113). The development of media tools and the flag-bearing attitude of the Chinese media have made significant contributions when it comes to inciting this hatred. On a more local level and as a reflection, the Chinese media, amplified by censorship, follows demagogic narratives where distorted and opinionated perspectives play pivotal roles with substantial levels of aggression (Xu, 2012:117). The media outlets in China are prone to congratulate China on its rise while belittling the West for its descension

(Lehman-Ludwig et al., 2023). On the other hand, on an international level, the international media outlets' cherry-picked and biased reporting is another substantial factor regarding this imbroglio, as the increasing anti-western sentiment continued in the 2000s. Two significant developments amplified what the Chinese have been feeling for a long time. The first one is affiliated with the Tibet riots in 2008, where the Western media misportrayed the development due to bias (Xu, 2012:110). The analysis of the 2008 Tibet riots was a perception management campaign, as the investigation was heavily distorted through cropping and editing the footage (Xu, 2012:126). The same pattern was visible regarding the analysis of the Urumqi riots in 2009, as the blame was put on the central government along with similar distorted footage (Xu, 2012:126). Furthermore, before the 2008 Olympic Games had not even started, the Western media began to write a commentary on how Beijing's hosting of the Olympics was similar to Nazi Germany's hosting in 1936 and how the West should use the Olympics to teach China a lesson regarding its abysmal human rights records (Xu, 2012:125). Similar criticism also permeated the international community's agenda during the 2022 Winter Olympics (See Figure 2.4: A Political Cartoon Criticizing China Over the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics below).

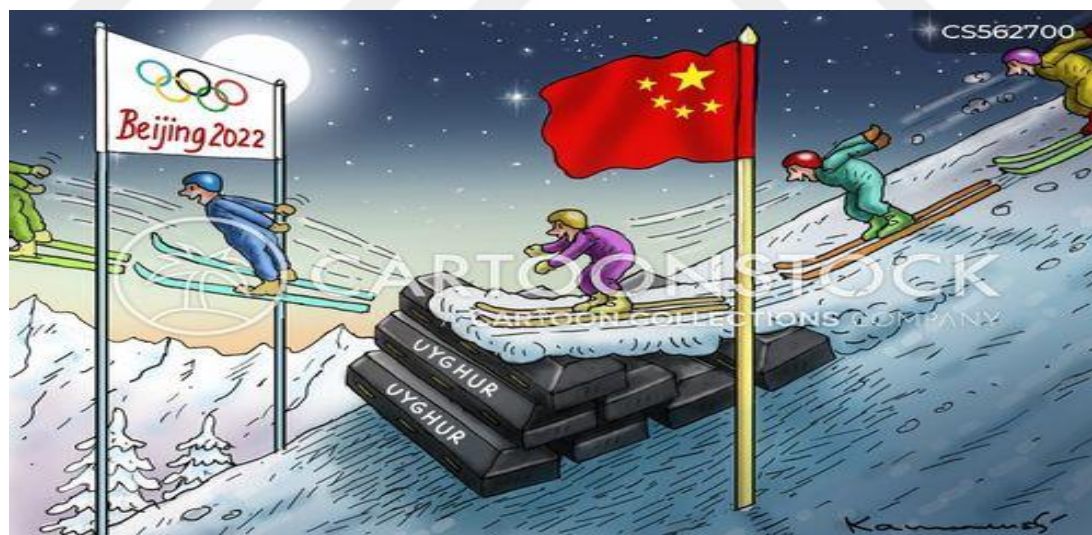


Figure 2. 4: A Political Cartoon Criticizing China Over the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics

Moreover, in modern times, the reciprocal accusations about the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic have done wonders when it comes to stirring anti-western sentiment in China. (Lehman-Ludwig et al., 2023). Most Chinese claim that Western media outlets use rhetoric that is related to the Cold War, along with white chauvinism,

to the point where unreliable waves of information separate the Western vox populi from realizing what is genuinely going on in China (Xu, 2012:124). This causes the gap to widen to the point where the Western media gradually becomes more aggressive towards China (Xu, 2012:124).

Born out of the horrors of the Century of Humiliation, amplified by anti-western sentiments, the Chinese have constructed a national goal of rectifying the shortcomings of the past while carrying the Chinese civilization to an ascended position where it rightfully belongs. Recalling its 5000-year-old culture and history, which catalyzes it to become a more significant actor and lays the framework, legitimizes the propulsive force behind it (Carrai, 2020:1-2). Xi Jinping, the propulsive force behind this idea, started referring to a “China Dream” about their policy direction (Xiaoming, 2015:226-227). The Chinese Dream, contrary to the American Dream, is a shared dream for the country and the people but also not something new as old leaders collectively pursued it since the mid-1800s (Xiaoming, 2015:228). As China secured its position in international affairs, especially at the dawn of the 2010s, the usage of discourse proliferated simultaneously, which covertly underlines the genuine global ambitions of the Chinese (Xiaoming, 2015:228). The first cornerstone of this dream in foreign affairs is about preserving and furthering a peaceful international atmosphere to continue its modernization, and because of that, elites push a national image that states how China advocates for joint development and peace for the globe (Xiaoming, 2015:229-230). Correlatively, in the eyes of the Chinese elites, it is imperative to secure supply lines and routes, FDIs, and fresh markets for Chinese goods so that economic growth can be guaranteed in the future (Xiaoming, 2015:230). Apart from economics, the Chinese take concrete action to show that they can’t be ignored in international affairs. Thus, the Chinese proactively use their permanent membership in the UN Security Council, participate in peace-keeping missions, provide economic aid to emerging nations, organize anti-piracy operations, etc. (Xiaoming, 2015:231). The Chinese also started building up their naval capabilities to accomplish these tasks efficiently, gain a foothold in essential regions, and secure their interests overseas (Xiaoming, 2015:231). Building up the naval capabilities is not the only instance where the Chinese used their hard power-related abilities to shape the politics according to their interests as they kept employing similar tactics in their region (Xiaoming, 2015:231-232). China’s neighborhood is rather diverse as it neighbors

various countries through land borders and maritime borders, but also through political affiliations since big powers such as the US have a foothold in the region (Xiaoming, 2015:232), which unequivocally makes China's regional affairs intertwined with its global affairs. Regardless, the Chinese have been taking concrete actions to pursue the Chinese dream; for instance, China has become more assertive regarding territorial disputes, and others interpret the Chinese attitude as aggressive in the region (Xiaoming, 2015:234). But for now, the Chinese elites require more resources to build up their soft power capabilities and persuade their neighbors to guarantee their peaceful rise (Xiaoming, 2015:234). China's neighbors also made substantial gains from China's economic ascension, and the Chinese leadership is dedicated to capitalizing on their financial leverage when it comes to pursuing closer relations with their neighbors (Xiaoming, 2015:233). As China's attempt to build its hard and soft power capabilities ramps up, its manifestation of occidentalism and approach to the international order experiences drastic changes. China has become a flagbearer that unifies nations that are either not as privileged as the Western nations or cast away from the grace of the West through institutionalized networks such as BRICS, Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Breslin, 2013:617). The propagation of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence lays the groundwork for China and its sidekicks to reverse the effects of the international order as norms are generally imposed on sovereign nations (Breslin, 2013:617). Altogether, the Chinese authorities aim to get into the system and benefit from it but also aim to destroy this system because of its injustice and wish to transform it.

2.7. The “Enemy” Within

The CCP encountered substantial resistance and distrust while trying to reach remote regions such as Xinjiang, Tibet, and Qinghai (Westad, 2015:316). Communists' already ongoing relationship with Muslims was in bad shape due to Communists considering traditional leaders as inimical to the revolution as they wanted to influence the oppressed peasants, workers who had no land, and slaves who were all under the influence of these aforementioned traditional leaders (Westad, 2015:317). The local resistance and clash of ideas produced an interaction similar to the colonizer-colonized exchange. As the Europeans “legitimized” their colonial ambitions by creating stereotypes with the aid of “Mission civilisatrice,” a similar pattern can be observed

within China. The Chinese narrative revolves around praising Han as the one who is “in charge of civilizing”, thus being superior, whereas Uyghur identity is “culturally backward”, “inferior” and set to breed security problems (Tobin, 2019:304). The Chinese ethnocultural centrism targets Uyghurs as they are closely associated with the “old barbarian foes” of imperial China, which fuels the narrative that China and Chinese identity are threatened by these “Turkic fifth column” with the aid of Western foes (Tobin, 2019:303). But this does not mean the ethnic difference is the only factor, as mosques being monitored by the authorities with high levels of surveillance covertly shows how much the leaders are aware of the Islamic roots of this identity clash (Anthony, 2011:56). The fact that Hui are treated way better since they are culturally Chinese despite being predominantly Muslim (Laruelle et al., 2014:221) shows that this can’t be correlated with religious differences. Therefore, despite Uyghurs being classified as Chinese, their identity is closely associated with turmoil and violence, undermining the Chinese identity (Zhonghua Minzu) altogether (Tobin, 2019:301-302). Therefore, it is expected that the Uyghurs should “become like Han” and imitate their way of life so that their security threat potential can’t be disseminated. To learn the Han way, Uyghurs are sent to inner cities to learn how to “modernize” their lives and encourage their fellow compatriots to do the same when they return to Xinjiang (Tobin, 2019:305). On the other hand, the ones who do not wish to accept the fruits of Chinese identity and revolution attempt to do so through violence. Chinese authorities believe that Uyghur violence is influenced by the “three evils” which are separatism, terrorism, and extremism (Tobin, 2019:306). The official description of violence in Xinjiang is a byproduct of a “just fight” that aims to preserve the shared, civilized identity against culturally external threats and Western human rights that all aim to deal a blow to China’s indivisible unity and rise in the international arena (Tobin, 2019:303). As stated in the last sentence, Chinese occidentalism plays a pivotal role in the construction of a correlation between the survival of Uyghur identity, may it built on linguistic, ethnic, and cultural terms, and the goals of the enemies in the West that wish to destabilize China through supporting the preservation of this “unusual identity” (Tobin, 2019:318). One of the fundamental goals of the CCP revolves around stopping political disintegration by crushing separatist activities in Xinjiang and wherever these activities might appear in the future (Guo, 2004:43). The 9/11 attacks against the Americans proved to be quite helpful for the Chinese as the official “containment protocol” regarding Uyghurs was introduced

for the first time (Anthony, 2011:56). Altogether, an ambivalent sentiment appeared due to nonChinese characteristics of the Uyghur community despite being accepted and seen as Chinese by the Han.

The marginalization of the Uyghur community within China is furthered not only by domestic developments but also by external developments. As the Chinese authorities opened up China, the Uyghurs began to travel internationally and exchange religious ideas with other Muslim communities (Laruelle et al., 2014:226). But because of this interaction, the CCP started to form an interpretation in the 2010s that its Muslim citizens are significantly dispositioned to be influenced by transnational jihadi organizations, especially those operating in the Middle East and Southeast Asia (Greitens et al., 2020:11). It must be stressed that this influencing process is not exclusive to its Muslim citizens who are living within China but also its diaspora as well. In the eyes of the Chinese, the inclusion of the Muslim diaspora makes the threat multilateral and more dangerous. The reasoning behind this is that not only could these people get radicalized and return to China to commit terror attacks, but they also could target the Chinese population and the Chinese interests in overseas countries (Greitens et al., 2020:36). In the late 2010s, newly taken chauvinist countermeasures to prevent such a spillover focused on closely monitoring the scattered diaspora and the population within to make sure that they do not come into contact with one another detrimentally (Greitens et al., 2020:36). Undoubtedly, this further marginalized the Uyghur community by elevating the “risks they collectively carry” from “a domestic nuisance” to “shackles” that can hold back China from reaching its desired position in global affairs. This interpretation consolidates its impetus by revitalizing the bad memories of the Century of Humiliation and the already established national paranoia of a siege mentality.

Economically speaking, Uyghurs face another wave of marginalization in their own autonomous zone in economic terms. Historically speaking, economic marginalization slowly ramped up during the first years of the post-revolution period. Due to the tumultuous history of the region that stems from religious differences, the central government endeavored to economically cripple the Uyghur elites by initiating a land reform project which indeed sapped their economic strength (Laruelle et al., 2014:221). This land reform did not exclusively target the property of the Uyghur elites but also expropriated mosques and other religious places, inhibiting religious

institutions from taxing the locals (Laruelle et al., 2014:221). The effects of the changes mentioned above may seem like single-track measures to deal with possible Uyghur insurrections, but they brought a new religious monetary system. As sources of income were more squeezed, the elite Uyghur clergy became more dependent on the system, which helped the Chinese to allocate financial resources to “well-behaving” members of the clergy while economically clamping down on those who challenged the new socialist system (Laruelle et al., 2014:221). In contemporary times, the economic side of the official narrative believes that the unrest in Xinjiang will gradually wane once the economic conditions improve, and this is why the CCP wants to ameliorate living standards by investing heavily in the region (Liu & Peters, 2017:266). Hence, the CCP began a new investment project called “Great Leap West” so that the Uyghur community could assimilate more through economic development (Liu & Peters, 2017:266). Even though the official goal revolves around lifting the Uyghurs from poverty, the results say otherwise. Furthermore, the financial opportunities disproportionately benefit recently arrived Han immigrants (Liu & Peters, 2017:267). The Han dominate key positions and production centers in Xinjiang while leaving little to no place for the Uyghurs to participate in the economy (Bhattacharya, 2003). To confirm this, the CCP’s drafted document called “Document No. 7.” officially states that Hans must be transported to Xinjiang so that they can hold pivotal positions while also asserting that no cultural or social rights should be given to the Uyghurs (Rogers & Sidhu, 2016:119). Even though the economic alienation of the Uyghurs is a foundational impetus, the financial outline of the region further contributes to this imbroglio. Xinjiang’s economic production mainly revolves around processing natural resources and transporting the corresponding processed materials to the rich and developed Eastern parts of China, which frustrates the already impoverished Uyghur community (Bhattacharya, 2003:). To make matters worse, aside from this mass difference in wealth distribution, the continuous influx of Han migrants and subsequent demographic change is the underlying reason why Uyghurs believe it is another form of perpetuated colonialism (Liu & Peters, 2017:266-267). Lastly, the Chinese government uses the economic prosperity in Xinjiang as a carrot and stick that either rewards or isolates groups or individuals based on their eagerness to conform (Laruelle et al., 2014:225). This discrimination not only fuels the already existing “us vs. them” dichotomy but also makes it multidimensional, as the conflict is not merely an ethno-religious difference between two communities.

2.8. Conclusion

The Chinese understanding of ethnocultural superiority shaped their interaction with the outside world. This superiority legitimized their ambitions in the Far East and further helped them expand their sphere of influence. China's focus on being the only civilization on earth that is surrounded by "savages" shows how they used to build their identity, modern and civil. Their exceptional Confucian ideas spread across the continent to the point where they became the basis for forming extraordinary relations with neighbors who accepted their political, spiritual, and moral superiority and centrality. It is clear that Imperial China, at its peak, was a force to be reckoned with in the Far East and enjoyed this privileged status. China continued enjoying this status without realizing its decline and the rise of colonial powers. Unfortunately, China's unlucky "date" with the British Empire brought destruction to itself. Its vast market and authentic riches made the British Empire's mouth water, which brought war to its peaceful shores along with opium addiction. Other colonial empires did not want to stay aloof. Eventually, the mighty Middle Kingdom was carved into exclusive economic zones while its citizens were suffering from poverty and drug addiction. To make matters worse, China was beaten by "white savages" that they had not seen before. These people successfully opposed Imperial China's traditional way of conducting affairs and destroyed what was conventional and invaluable to it. Altogether, the level of national humiliation was so intense since they lost their dominant position so notoriously and abruptly. Understanding the level of shame by Westerners is imperative to understanding the sensitivities of Chinese society and the coping methods they developed for this predicament. As one of the coping methods, the revolution of 1911 brought a modern sense of nationalism to China. Nationalism was instrumentalized as an antidote to curb the decline and unify a country on the verge of disintegration. Even though things did not start egregiously for the Uyghurs with the nationalists, the tide gradually turned. The nationalist government sewed the seeds of racial profiling and constructed the foundation of the national minority policies of Modern China. Even though they failed to change the grim situation in China, the relics of the nationalists were able to be seen even after the communists took over in 1949 since they continued similar assimilationist policies. What changed was that the communists combined their distrust of Westerners with radical socio-economic campaigns to shape the region according to their beliefs. Chinese policies

and racial profiling marginalized the Uyghur community in a multilateral way. As this marginalization raised international awareness, China started experiencing flashbacks about its Century of Humiliation and became forced to maneuver accordingly. Hence, this case became big enough to influence domestic and international Chinese policies.

China continued to have a closed economy, where it experienced minimal economic growth. Chinese economy preserved its Marxist characteristics until Deng Xiaoping, an influential statesman, spearheaded economic reforms to open up the Chinese economy. The transformation of the Chinese economy is as unique as its culture, where it embraced a market economy with immensely authoritarian political characteristics. Calling it “socialism with Chinese characteristics”, it invented its own pretexts, methods, dynamics, and goals. Opposing the Washington consensus, it became the second-biggest economy worldwide and proved an effective Chinese bargaining chip.

CHAPTER III

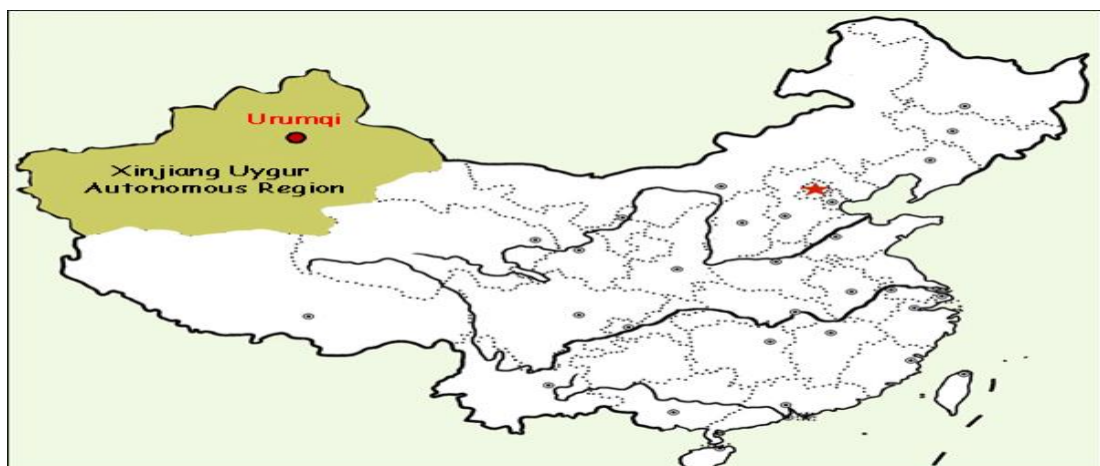
THE STORY OF XINJIANG

3.1. Introduction

China's northwest Xinjiang region is regrettably associated with turmoil and chaos. To pinpoint the problem effectively, the region should be analyzed historically, demographically, economically, and politically. Hence, what makes this region's turmoil special will be highlighted. After going through the characteristics of Xinjiang, the topic of sanctions should be examined as the next abutment to build a bridge between issues. In modern international relations, sanctions have become a frequently used instrument to regulate affairs between nations. Unpacking the contemporary relationship between sanctions and human rights is a prerequisite for understanding how sanctions emerged as a frequently used tool. The word sanction might evoke economic change-related connotations, but the sanctions' spectrum is quite diverse. To analyze the nature and expected result of sanctions against China, breaking down this spectrum into its different manifestations while giving tangible examples is needed to provide a basic understanding. After pinpointing the different types of sanctions, their effects on targeted countries should be mapped as a basis for comparison. Furthermore, China was not sanctioned the first time due to the problem in Xinjiang. Thus, the history of sanctions against China will reveal what troubles it experienced, which also contributed to its anti-western sentiment. After examining the history of sanctions concerning China, inquiring into the accusations against the regime on behalf of its policies in Xinjiang is essential to understanding the conflict between parties and Chinese goals within the region. An analysis of the history of sanctions in modern China is necessary to construct a background before moving to the pretext of what the international community accuses China of. Lastly, the relationship between Xinjiang and the interdependency is also needed to avoid overlooking China's economic might.

3.2. The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is located in the northwestern part of China. (Mackerras, 2013). Geographically speaking, the region makes up one-sixth of the entire country (Becquelin, 2000). The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is among the five autonomous regions in the People's Republic of China, along with Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, and Tibet. Unlike the rest of the autonomous areas, this one is geographically far from Beijing and mostly non-urban (Griffin, 1986). The political administration of the region is quite deviant from its formal name since the area is empty of genuine autonomy. This derives from the central government's administrative authority over the regional government since it is the central government that either rejects or approves the provincial government's policies and appoints the top executives who are not elected at all (Primiano, 2012). Furthermore, most of the regional government's budget is directly linked to the central government's economic policies (Becquelin, 2004). Historically, the provincial government has been heavily dependent on the central government regarding subsidies for a long time (Segal et al., 1995). Therefore, the relationship between the regional government and the central government resembles an “internal colony” where the central government holds the reins, as is the case in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region since the central government heavily influences both the administration and economy (Sautman, 2000). The relationship between the central government and Xinjiang appears quite intense despite the geographic distance (See Map 1: A Map of China And Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Zone).



Map 1: A Map of China And Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Zone

Uyghurs are considered an ethnic minority in the People's Republic of China and predominantly dwell within the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Zone. Their religious affiliation is concomitant with Sufi Islam, and they speak a Turkic dialect in general (Chung, 2002:8). Demographically speaking, being the autochthonous nation of the land, Uyghurs make up only 43% of the overall population in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Clarke, 2010). But demographic numbers experienced a shift over the years. Moreover, Uyghurs made up more than 75% of the overall population in 1949, but in recent years, as mentioned, they only make up 44% of the people, along with the Han Chinese making up 40% of the total population (Liu & Peters, 2017). Other minority ethnic groups such as Kirghiz, Mongol, Dongxiang, Tajik, Xibo, Manchu, Uzbek, Russian, Tibetan, Zhuang, Daur, Tatar, Kirghiz, and Hui as they make up the two most significant minority communities (Toops, 2004). According to recent formal data, the total population of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region was 25.85 million in 2020, where the Han Chinese made 10.92 million in number and ethnic minorities made 14.93 million in number (*Full Text: Xinjiang Population Dynamics and Data*, 2021).

3.2.2. The Economy of The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

Before the decisive Communist victory in 1949 vis-a-vis the Chinese Civil War, the economy of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Zone predominantly revolved around agriculture (Starr & Wiemer, 2004). The economy did not catch a noticeable acceleration for a long time as it further deteriorated because of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, respectively (Starr & Wiemer, 2004). The economy picked momentum after two critical milestones. The first one was the creation of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps. The Corps was authorized to take complete control and modernize the economy in every aspect possible, and it allocated resources to processing goods of agriculture, mining minerals, producing steel, and even generating human capital by educating students (Starr & Wiemer, 2004). The second one was directly associated with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The dissolution was concomitant with the termination of the erstwhile trade framework between the Soviet Republics, which brought numerous trade partners, a gigantic wave of liberalization in the newly founded countries, and, more importantly, an economic vacuum that was quickly filled with Chinese initiatives (Starr & Wiemer, 2004). With these auspicious developments by the Chinese side, Deng Xiaoping's

southern tour in 1992 boosted the already stimulated capital flows and international trade in the region by authorizing the regional government to inspect border trade, foreign exchange and travel, investment, etc. (Starr & Wiemer, 2004). Altogether, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region considerably benefitted from Deng Xioping's reforms, its production, and geostrategic potential, and historical developments as it, on average, displayed 10.2% growth and even exceeded national development rates occasionally (Chaudhuri, 2010). Recently, in 2021, the economy of the region experienced a 7% GDP growth rate while annually reaching approximately ¥1.6 trillion (\$236 billion), and GDP per capita reached ¥61,725 (\$9136) (Statistical Bulletin on National Economic and Social Development of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in 2021, 2022).

Even though most of the region is rural, it is rife with natural resources such as natural gas, oil, salt, iron, and coal (Mackerras, 2013). Aside from energy resources, various minerals such as tungsten, molybdenum, copper, nickel, chrome, zinc, iron, gold, coal, etc. can also be found in the region and are being processed there (Falkenheim & Hsieh, 1999). For instance, the area being rich in natron saltpeter concomitantly boosts potassium nitrate-based fertilizer production in the People's Republic of China as it is a formidable supplier of this amenity on the international scale (Hali, 2020:6). But the region is vibrant and lucrative when it comes to generating energy resources. For instance, the area holds 40% of total coal reserves, 22% of total petroleum reserves, and 28% of total natural gas reserves. Furthermore, what makes investing in energy in the region so lucrative is that oil deposits are scattered in nondeep reservoirs, and since coal reserves consist of less sulfur in the region, the resources possess high quality in general (Yin, 2015). Energy production is of paramount importance when it comes to the region's economy. For instance, thanks to the West-East Gas Pipeline, more than 12 billion cubic meters of natural gas are transferred from the region to highly populated areas with high energy demand. In 2021, 24 billion cubic meters of locally produced natural gas were transported from the region through pipelines in total (Statistical Bulletin on National Economic and Social Development of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in 2021, 2022).

The region serves a geostrategic position as it possesses arable and fertile lands and a frontier regarding trade (Lei, 2016). The region's fertile lands are vital for cotton cultivation as the central government recognized the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous

Region as a leading production ground (Chaudhuri, 2010). For agricultural usage, in 2021, 2506.07 thousand hectares were used for cotton cultivation, 1135.25 thousand hectares were used for wheat cultivation, 1110.26 thousand hectares were used for corn cultivation, 113.17 thousand hectares were used for oilseeds cultivation, 47.58 thousand hectares were used for sugar beet cultivation respectively (*Statistical Bulletin on National Economic and Social Development of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in 2021*, 2022). The annual yield for the crops mentioned above was 10.1265 million tons for corn, 6.3975 million tons for wheat, 5.1285 million tons for cotton, 4.6223 million tons for sugar beet, and 544 tons for oilseeds, respectively (Statistical Bulletin on National Economic and Social Development of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in 2021, 2022). Even though various crops are being cultivated in the region, cotton production draws the most attention as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is responsible for 90% of overall cotton production in the People's Republic of China (Gale & Dale, 2022).

The region's economic potential is also directly correlated with its geographic position as it acts as a coupler between the People's Republic of China and the Belt and Road Initiative members. The region's geostrategic importance derives its significance from possessing two cities (Urumqi and Khorgas) as last stops with regard to the Belt and Road Initiative's land route before leaving the People's Republic of China (Debata, 2016). It is geographically close to essential trade partners such as the Russian Federation, but the central gimmick revolves around connecting the People's Republic of China with the rest of the Belt and Road Initiative's members logistically (Hayes, 2019:37). Moreover, the region is also being utilized for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) since the area is where the corridor starts and is connected to the Gwadar port of Pakistan. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor alone is projected to bring \$45 billion worth of infrastructure investment to the region (Hali, 2020:4). The Project alone is more complex than just laying railroad tracks since it also consists of highways, gas and oil pipelines, fiber optic cables, etc. (Hayes, 2019:38).

Sector-wise speaking, in 2021, the primary industry made up 14.7% of the total GDP by generating ¥235 billion (\$34 billion), the secondary industry made up 37.4% of the total GDP by generating ¥596 billion (\$88 billion) and lastly, the tertiary industry made up %47.9 of the total GDP by generating ¥766 billion (\$113 billion) (Statistical Bulletin on National Economic and Social Development of Xinjiang Uygur

Autonomous Region in 2021, 2022). In 2021, international trade-wise speaking, the total trade volume reached \$24.298 billion, with a 13.7% growth from last year. The region's total exports reached \$19.712 billion, and imports reached \$4.587 billion, leaving a \$15.125 billion trade surplus (Statistical Bulletin on National Economic and Social Development of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in 2021, 2022). The XUAR's biggest trading partners were the Republic of Kazakhstan, with a \$10.535 billion trade volume and a decrease of 3.6% in trade compared to last year, Kyrgyz Republic with a \$5.365 billion trade volume and an increase of 272.1% in trade compared to the previous year, Russian Federation with an \$858 million trade volume and a decrease of 51% in trade compared to last year and lastly the United States of America with a \$372 billion and a 61.3% reduction in trade compared to the previous year respectively (*Statistical Bulletin on National Economic and Social Development of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in 2021, 2022*).

3.2.2. The Controversial History of The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Zone

Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region has a tumultuous history where the region experienced conflict after conflict. The Maoist era sowed the seeds of the ongoing fraction between two communities by implementing disastrous policies such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. During the Great Leap Forward, the initial religious tolerance towards minorities transformed into full-blown religious persecution (Bovingdon, 2004:19). Islamic values of the Uyghurs were interpreted as “a hindrance towards collectivization and homogenization” and promptly turned into a target (Bovingdon, 2004:19). With the religious persecution, the Uyghurs became victims of state violence while enduring reeducation, extreme levels of violence, and other forms of injustice (Harris, 2019). But it was during the Cultural Revolution when the central government's desire to eliminate any religious differences was piqued, and not only the religious structures such as mosques and graves were targeted but also abstract personal religious tenets such as headscarves, abstinence from pork, etc. were also targeted either by forcing people to either stop doing what the tenets advice or start doing what the tenets forbid (Bovingdon, 2004:22). Even though after Mao Zedong's death Deng Xiaoping's era displayed loosening its grip on the Uyghurs, it was only a short-lived joy. To make matters worse, the central government stepped up its control over Islam after the Barren Incident of 1990 by breaking apart “unauthorized religious conventions”, liquidating suspected imams, indefinitely

terminating the construction of new mosques, and linking any religious activity and position to the approval of its authority (Bovingdon, 2004:33). The Baren Incident paved the way for the discourse of “prolonged religious solidarity can spearhead and bolster the Uyghur separatism, therefore it must be controlled” (Bovingdon, 2004:31). With all these unfortunate developments the absence of peaceful interreligious affairs and also severe religious persecution inflamed the violent dissent within the region.

Although the conflict between the Uyghur and the Han Chinese was not exacerbated out of the blue, the mutual history between these two groups had a few breaking points that led to detrimental developments. One of the breaking points is directly related to linguistic issues and the central government's approach. Initially, the preservation of minority languages and cultures was guaranteed by the constitution, and these endeavors were even promoted by establishing local autonomies so that a sense of national unity could be found (Dwyer, 2006:7). It was around the mid-1980s when the central government amended its cultural preservation policy to an undisguised assimilation policy that revolved around limiting the realm of the Uyghur language and subsequently elevating the status of Mandarin throughout the education system altogether (Dwyer, 2006:38-39). Certain developments, such as the implementation of a Mandarin-based language proficiency test obligation to those who wish to get a higher education and the elimination of academics who specialize in studying and teaching the Uyghur language, detrimentally skyrocketed the unemployment rates of the Uyghurs (Dwyer, 2006:41). As the linguistic autonomy of the Uyghurs started to shrink and the socioeconomic status of the Uyghurs became worse because of the aforementioned “education reforms”, the two communities grew away from each other more and more (Dwyer, 2006:41).

Ethnicity-based socioeconomic differences between Uyghurs and the Han Chinese also contributed to the dilemma as more and more Han Chinese migrated to the region and unequivocally changed the demographic character of the area detrimentally, contributing to the already sky-high tensions within the region (Chung, 2002:12). The contempt between the two communities stems from religious, ethnic, and cultural reasons. Still, the discrepancy in living standards and access to prestigious jobs deepened the polarization between the two communities. For instance, not only the political power in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Zone is in the hands of the Han Chinese, leaving no room for self-determination for Uyghurs, but representation in

prominent positions, such as being a civil servant, is out of the question for Uyghurs as minority quotas do not consider the density of Uyghur population and only leave a tiny percent for them regrettably (Hasmath, 2018). Due to this economic inequality, most Uyghurs live in rural areas and lose their representation in big cities due to continuous migration to rural areas, whereas their Han compatriots generally live in gentrified neighborhoods and urban regions (Hasmath, 2018). The disproportionality of access to social amenities between two communities clouds the possibility of amicable social affairs, fuels the violence within the region, and perpetuates the colonizer-colonized discourse. The Uyghurs' subordination and the Han Chinese's over-representation in key bureaucratic positions can be considered the last nail in the coffin regarding interethnic relations (Bovingdon, 2004:28).

After its incorporation into the People's Republic of China in 1949, unrest and violence were rife but it only started to gain attention from the international community in the 1980s when the country was newly opening itself to the outside world and the same attention peaked after the 9/11 events and the subsequent invasion of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan by the United States of America (Millward, 2004:10). The proliferation of Uyghur separatism in the '90s was also directly linked to the dissolution of the Soviet Union as the Uyghurs wanted to emulate the independence which former Soviet republics gained after the collapse of the Union (Chung, 2002:8). Even though it was the aforementioned grave events that shed a light on the conflict within the region, it must be remembered that the intensity of violence within the area contributed to this development as it was rife in the 90s and early 2000s with a wide range of frequent bombings, nonpeaceful protests, assaults against law enforcement, abductions of civil servants, assassinations, etc. (Millward, 2004:18-21). Between 1990 and 2001, 200 attacks took place in the region that killed 162 people and injured more than 440 people (Chung, 2002:8). But even then, the official Chinese discourse was bereft of terms such as ethnic separatism, religious extremism, and subsequently terrorism before the events of 9/11 (Trédaniel & Lee, 2017). Furthermore, the central government took one step further and classified various violent incidents according to the new narrative after the events of 9/11, even though these events mentioned above took place in the 90s (Trédaniel & Lee, 2017). To overcome this problem, the central government initiated a counterinsurgent policy called "Strike-Hard" to deal with violence in the region, the first instance seen in 1996 (Trédaniel & Lee, 2017). The

declaration of this policy constituted the first legal framework of the campaign against the Uyghurs.

3.3. Sanctions

Interaction between nations is as vital as blood circulating throughout one's body. As blood circulation ensures every organ functions correctly by distributing necessary materials, the interaction between states carries out the same vital task as its "biological counterpart". International trade boosts the annual growth rate, improves living standards for ordinary people, diminishes poverty, and integrates with the world ("*Stronger open trade policies enable economic growth for all*", 2018). Consistent and high-yielding trade with international partners ensures stability, prosperity, and a flourishing society. Apart from internal politics, access to global economic trade also bolsters a country's position in the international arena. A state's dominating economy can be utilized to fuel indispensable resources for its hard power-building process or be instrumentalized to influence other sovereign states (Nye, 2011). Hence, in a globalized world where interdependence among states is off the hook, access to global trade is crucial simply because it directly relates to enhancing or diminishing a state's capabilities and significance. In modern times, the imposition of sanctions generally revolves around punishing or "correcting" a specific and "erring" behavior or stance of the corresponding country by "tampering" with its well-being (Mcgee, 2004). But apart from changing unwanted conduct that violates international law or order, it might also be used to preclude capabilities for an unwanted behavior that is foreseeable or deter other countries from following an undesirable similar path (*Sanctions*). Hence, sanctions revolve around consolidating the status quo in general.

By its contemporary definition, sanctions are political paraphernalia that are employed by sovereign states to further their foreign policy by influencing another third-party state's behavior, especially in situations where resorting to tangible acts of aggression is out of the picture or conducting mainstream diplomatic negotiations is bound to yield egregious and unsatisfactory (Abughris, 2021). The history of sanctions initially goes back to the 5th century BC (Abughris, 2021). Even though the history of sanctions goes way back, it wasn't until the era of the League of Nations and its successor, the United Nations, that their legal aspect came to life (Davis & Engerman, 2003:189). For most of its history, sanctions targeted a country's fighting capabilities. But it must

be noted that like its “legal evolution,” it also experienced an “ontological evolution” where its footprint gradually grew towards a larger sphere. However, specifically after the Second World War, the range of sanctions developed into going after national interests in diverse means such as consolidating democracy, preserving the environment, bolstering human and labor rights, stressing nuclear nonproliferation, liberating occupied cities/territories, etc. (Davis & Engerman, 2003:190). For instance, sanctions might preclude the transfer of arms or other combat-related paraphernalia, technology, various goods, software, loans, and credit, or might take a direct approach by freezing assets of prominent figures, imposing travel restrictions on shot calling individuals, and lastly introducing extra procedural steps for certain companies with regards to trade. Furthermore, the need to impose sanctions can derive from combating cyber-attacks, terrorism, nuclear proliferation activities, human rights violations, the annexation of foreign territory, and deliberate destabilization of a sovereign country (Different types of sanctions, 2022). Hence, sanctions might differ by nation or the severity of the situation, but the ultimate goal is impeding a specific or overall ability. The variety of these variables makes sanctions a diverse phenomenon of international relations. Sanctions can be categorized into economic sanctions, such as trade and financial, diplomatic, military, transportation, sports, and travel.

Trade sanctions are, by definition, political tools that focus on the trading capabilities of the targeted country by either limiting or completely blocking its financial relationship or interaction with the corresponding country (Masters, 2019). Temporarily or permanently precluding the exports or imports of the connected state is directly related to inflicting damage to its purchasing capabilities when it comes to obtaining materials, goods, or services that it is generally bereft of (Davis & Engerman, 2003:190). This goal can be pursued by erecting trade barriers or tariffs. For instance, the government of the United Kingdom describes trade sanctions as “any prohibition that targets the import, export, transfer, making available, acquisition of goods and technology or the provision or procurement of services related to goods and technology or the provision or procurement of certain non-financial services” (UK sanctions, 2022). In the contemporary world, certain ongoing sanctions of the European Union regarding the Russian Federation fall under the subcategory of economic sanctions. The European Union severely halted the import of crude and refined oil, coal, steel, timber, liquor, etc., in hopes that the overall capability of the Russian Federation could

be thwarted (EU sanctions against Russia explained, 2022). However, it must be noted that the effectiveness of trade sanctions is waning since it is becoming more and more challenging to limit international trade while globalization is offering more and more alternative trade options which were more inflexible, static, and “immobilized” in the past (Davis & Engerman, 2003:195).

Financial sanctions are, by definition, “restrictive measures imposed on persons, entities, and bodies to curtail their activities and exert pressure and influence on them” (International Financial Sanctions). Like trade sanctions, financial sanctions target economic capabilities more specifically. Specifically, financial sanctions target legal and natural persons. This means they can be imposed on individuals, corporations, groups, organizations, etc. Possible economic sanctions include freezing assets or bank accounts of the designated third party and putting restrictions on investment or general financial transactional activity (UK sanctions, 2022). Moreover, denying credits and loans or adjourning debts are also utilized and are concomitant with this category (Lopez & Cortright, 1997B). Financial sanctions are generally employed to target culpable third parties that contribute to either challenging the world order, committing crimes against humanity, engaging in human rights violations, etc. For instance, in the wake of the Russo-Ukrainian War, the SWIFT ban for Russian and Belarussian banks is imposed was by the European Union to prevent them from generating or collecting international payments (EU sanctions against Russia explained, 2023). Hence, they are severely hindered from acquiring foreign currency or assets or transferring assets since the lack of the SWIFT system complicates international transactions, constituting an example of financial sanctions on a large scale (EU sanctions against Russia, explained 2022). On a more specific scale, one of the latest extended sanctions of the United States of America against the Islamic Republic of Iran includes individuals and entities that partake in the sales and shipment of Iranian petroleum, petroleum products, and petrochemical products in an effort to bypass ongoing sanctions (Treasury targets financial and shipping facilitators of Iranian petrochemicals and petroleum sales, 2022). As displayed, the scale is more specific and precise so that the financial sanctions can fill the pitfalls of their “extensive counterparts”.

Transport sanctions, by definition, encompass constraints that revolve around the ownership, registration, or movement of vessels, land vehicles, ships, aircraft, and commercial planes. They might also target the usage of airports, harbors, and ports

(UK sanctions, 2022). This pressure approaches another country and contextualizes itself by stressing the logistical background of the corresponding country's trade relations with the rest of the world. Since navigation through the sea, air, and land is a *sine qua non* with regard to concluding trade between two parties, the severed physical connection also almost nullifies all attempts to communicate, interact, receive, and relay information. For instance, the transport sanctions that the European Union imposed on the Russian Federation target the road transport sector by banning road transport operators, the air transport sector by both closing the European Union's airspace and a total ban on planes regardless of whether being private or commercial, maritime transport sector by closing its ports to all Russian vessels (EU sanctions against Russia explained, 2023). Consolidating the already ongoing trade and financial sanctions, the goal is to efface "physical patches" that can be used to bypass restrictions on trade and transportation.

Travel or immigration sanctions are, by definition, comprehensive measures to prevent blacklisted individuals or groups from entering, transiting through, or remaining within a country (Noorda, 2014). It can be implemented by completely halting visa procedures indefinitely, as it was in the case of the United States of America vis-a-vis Executive Order 13769 (Pyle et al., 2018), or suspending visa agreements as it currently can be observed in the case of the European Union's decision with regards to indefinitely suspending the visa facilitation agreement with the Russian Federation (Council adopts full suspension of visa facilitation with Russia, 2022). The decision was intended to isolate the Russian Federation on a tourism-based scale, which, hypothetically, would negatively influence the Russian *vox populi* and put the government in a disadvantageous position.

Military sanctions, generally known and displayed as arms embargos or cessation of military training and assistance (Bossuyt, 2012), are, by definition, prohibitions that aim to preclude weapons, ammunition, and other combat-related paraphernalia from either entering or departing from the targeted country (Types of sanctions, 2023). Even though most sanction types indirectly target a country's use of force capabilities, this sanction directly tries to curb a state's hard power capabilities on a domestic and international scale. For instance, the United Nations arms embargo on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea experienced an expansion from an embargo on exports of major arms to and imports, excluding small arms and light weapons, from the

Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 2006 to a total embargo that encompasses all types of firearms, including the small arms and light weapons that were exempted previously, which took place in 2015 (Un arms embargo on North Korea, 2016). With the expanded sanctions, in the case of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the expected goals center around precluding the central government from crushing dissent, committing heinous human rights violations, aiding and abetting other rogue states, initiating a purge within high-ranking offices, and other activities that require brute force to conduct thoroughly. Military sanctions are especially concomitant with countries that are either rife with civil unrest or internal disturbances, terror attacks, an ongoing civil war, military governments (junta), gross human rights violations, nuclear proliferation, and affiliation with illegitimate warfare. For instance, it is expected that the Federal Republic of Germany will impose an arms embargo on the Republic of Union of Myanmar due to the junta government, the Syrian Arab Republic due to the ongoing civil war, the Islamic Republic of Iran due to its developing nuclear program, the Russian Federation due to its condemned attacks in Ukraine, the Federal Republic of Somalia due to its chaotic internal atmosphere (List Of Embargoed Countries).

Diplomatic sanctions are, by definition, countermeasures that are taken to manipulate the targeted country's bilateral or multilateral relations by engaging in political withdrawal at different levels, which in return aims to isolate and delegitimize governments (Maller, 2010:61). Contrary to their counterparts, diplomatic sanctions do not target the corresponding country's economy, military, or vox populi. In contrast, they try to put pressure on the regime's international recognition, prestige, affairs, and overall image to the world. General instances of ways of severing bilateral diplomatic relations can be closing an embassy, pulling back the accredited ambassador, and suspending the recognition of the targeted government's legitimacy (Maller, 2010:62). An example of a general diplomatic sanction can be the stance of the United States of America after the Taliban insurgency that took place in 2021. According to the United States Department of State, "The United States has not yet decided whether to recognize the Taliban or any other entity as the Government of Afghanistan or as part of such a government" (U.S. relations with Afghanistan, 2022). On the other hand, specific instances can occur through declaring a diplomat as persona non grata or implementing an entry ban for high-ranking officials or politicians within the targeted country (Bossuyt, 2012). Diplomatic envoys are entitled to certain exemptions from a

country's national law that allow them to represent their country more freely (Hill, 1931). With the power vested in Article 9 Section 1 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the receiving state can declare a diplomat a *persona non grata*, which would nullify his or her privileges and force him or her to return to his country which ultimately would leave a negative impact on the corresponding country's international affairs.

Sports sanctions are, by definition, restrictions that aim to preclude the participation of teams at a major sports event such as the World Cup or the Olympic Games and host other sports tournaments to increase isolation and pressure further on the targeted country. Banning national athletes from international sports competitions is concomitant with the characteristics of this type of sanction (Bossuyt, 2012). These countermeasures occasionally show disapproval against regimes, administrations, and governments condemned by hampering their interaction with international sports activities (Chhichhia, 2008). These sports events' charm is that they offer many economic benefits (Daniels & Norman, 2003). For instance, they create more job opportunities, encourage the government to invest more in infrastructure, and bring more capital by attracting tourists worldwide (Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010). Therefore, sports sanctions debar the targeted country from availing themselves of these opportunities. In the case of the Russian Federation, in the wake of the war, the consensus of the representatives of 37 countries called for excluding the Russian Federation's sportsmen from participating in international sports events. Subsequently, this led to the adaptation of a ban on Russian athletes from the Beijing 2022 Winter Paralympics and "relocation of the Union of European Football Association's (UEFA) 2021-2022 Men's Champions League final from Saint Petersburg to Paris" (Goretti, 2022). Furthermore, the Republic of Rhodesia had difficulty getting recognition from other sovereign states and was subjected to a sporting boycott for 14 years (Little, 2011:193).

3.3.1. General Impact of Sanctions

Implementing sanctions might lead to different economic, political, or social outcomes. It must be reiterated that the type, severity, and a country's exposure time to sanctions might lead to a different aftermath. The type of sanctions corresponds to the field it aims to influence and undermine. Moreover, economic sanctions try to deter sovereign nations from following an unsolicited foreign policy by "leaving a

permanent mark’’ on their gross domestic product. In contrast, military sanctions try to leave a similar ‘‘mark’’ by displaying a similar deterrence by impeding a nation’s ability to use force to pursue domestic or international goals. In contrast, diplomatic sanctions aim to leave a ‘‘mark’’ by denigrating and disparaging a nation’s international affairs, transport sanctions try to influence the transportation of goods and services by disturbing logistical connections, financial sanctions try to impair cash flow by targeting banks, corporations, financial accounts within banks, etc.

Economically speaking, trade sanctions can pave the way for economic deterioration. For instance, they can lead to a spike in inflation, a much lower trade volume, a shrunk total gross domestic product, a decrease in the gross domestic product per capita, and more widespread poverty among the public (O’Driscoll, 2017:3). Altered bilateral trade relations leave different magnitudes of a footprint on the targeted country. For instance, in the case of the Russian Federation, it is assumed that the cooperated joint sanctions will lead to at least a 3.4% decrease in the country’s GDP by the end of 2022 (Impact of sanctions on the Russian economy, 2023). In the case of the Iraqi Republic during the Ba’athist era, the corresponding sanctions after the invasion of the state of Kuwait decimated the country’s gross domestic product by more than two-thirds of it, which resulted in outrageous prices, sky-high unemployment rates, an exodus of proficient laborers, an increase in school drop-out levels (O’Driscoll, 2017:3). At present, in the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the prospect of the termination of oil sanctions against Iran is anticipated that it will lead to a 3.7% increase in per capita welfare (Ianchovichina et al., 2016). Even though these examples show the effects of joint sanctions, sanctions of the United Nations cause damages more ferociously than their counterparts. On average, getting sanctioned by the United Nations generally results in a 2% decrease in the corresponding state’s annual GDP growth rate, whereas inclusive sanctions that include embargos exacerbate the effect by decreasing the annual growth rate by 5% on average (O’Driscoll, 2017:5). Moreover, economic sanctions alter states politically. First of all, they make targeted regimes ‘‘tense up’’ which leads to a surge in state-sponsored repression (O’Driscoll, 2017: 6). Repressive acts such as suppressing the opposition, crushing dissent, engaging in purges, precluding the flight of opponents, etc. become more and more frequent. This can happen through abusing sanctions as both a means and a pretext to cull political participation. For instance, as sanctions lead to scarcity, the ruling group can take

possession of the distribution of already meager resources to cripple the opposition by excluding them from fair access (Peksen & Drury, 2010). This can be observed in the case of the Republic of Serbia during the Milošević administration, where the opposition was incapable of pursuing their objectives due to restricted access to supplies controlled by the administration per se (Allen, 2008). In either case, whether it is the Islamic Republic of Iran or the Republic of Serbia, the sanctions were instrumentalized to prevent both actors from making their respective visions come true under the guise of protecting the international order.

Aside from their direct effects, trade sanctions can also decrease life expectancy. This can occur via overloading a state's healthcare system, which is directly correlated with medical goods and services scarcity. The shortage of medicine, surgical equipment such as scalpels, forceps, clamps, retractors, suction tubes, or other medical equipment such as defibrillators, respirators, MRI scanners, and electrocardiography monitors can trigger either incapacitation of the healthcare system in the corresponding country or result in widespread inaccessibility to modern medicine in general. This can significantly endanger groups that suffer from chronic illnesses, the elderly, disabled people, infants, or victims of severe accidents. For instance, the cost of health services in the Islamic Republic of Iran increased with the paucity of medicine, source materials for pharmaceutical production, and other medical paraphernalia, which is directly correlated with the sanctions the country is facing (Roshan et al., 2015). Aside from its indirect toll on life expectancy by debilitating healthcare services, economic sanctions can detrimentally affect the environment by forcing industrialized countries to switch to less modern production that pollutes the environment more than their state-of-the-art counterparts. For instance, aside from their burden on the Iranian healthcare system effects, inaccessibility to functioning and modern technology is directly correlated with increased carbon footprint and greenhouse emissions, making the Iranian people more susceptible to long-term diseases (Roshan et al., 2015). In this case, crippling the Iranian healthcare system was merely a facade to cover the West's attempt to deal with the state's "rogue behavior".

Financial sanctions affect the targeted country in both the governmental and market spheres. A free market economy debilitates fiscal stability by reducing capital, which takes a toll on investment finance and the supply of credit, and it aggravates a government's ability to maneuver by making it hard to arrange government

expenditures adequately (Murshed, 2020). For their effect on investment, by raising finance costs, limited access to foreign markets' financial resources discourages investment and diminishes domestic economic activity (Pestova & Mamonov, 2019). Furthermore, financial sanctions make it rather expensive to control the flow of capital in and out of the country, which forces companies to allocate more resources to transaction costs (Heydarian et al., 2022). Altogether, financial sanctions create a hazardous economic environment within a country to reduce the eagerness to invest (Heydarian et al., 2022). For instance, the joint financial sanctions against the Russian Federation due to the annexation of the Crimean peninsula in 2014 led to diminishing foreign direct investment (Gurvich & Prilepskiy, 2015). These joint sanctions against the Russian Federation might be implemented under the pretext of violating international law and the UN charter, but in reality, containing the spillover of Russian *raison d'état* over its political borders incentivized states to collaborate.

Financial sanctions also make it harder to acquire loans or aid from multilateral fiscal organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), etc. (Tostensen & Bull, 2002). What makes the termination of loans and credits from these international organizations a big deal is that the interest rates of the International Monetary Fund for developing or underdeveloped countries are almost negligible (IMF lending, 2022), and the World Bank follows the footsteps of its counterpart (WB loan average interest rate by country, 2023). The inability to acquire cheap loans and credit from reputable sources lowers the development rate by deepening the liquidity deficit in the country. For instance, the case of the United States of America's financial sanctions against Russian companies after the Russian Federation annexed the Crimean peninsula in 2014 shows that they caused the targeted companies to become inept when acquiring foreign borrowings (Keerati, 2022). Furthermore, the United States of America's financial sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran hindered its capacity to borrow funds to support its oil development enterprises (Torbat, 2005). Combined with the lack of foreign investors, the inability to borrow leads to a capital discharge. Due to this capital discharge, the targeted country gradually runs out of foreign exchange reserves (Heydarian et al., 2022). Lastly, similar to trade sanctions, financial sanctions cause a spillover that negatively affects the intensity of goods and services since the international flow of capital is reduced, as this was a palpable outcome of various German financial sanctions (Besedeš et al., 2022). It must be noted

that the financial sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation, in this case, were instrumentalized to covertly curb the Iranian nuclear program by severing a potential money source and containing a possible Russian spillover, respectively.

Militarily speaking, sanctions might lead to a scarcity of arms, ammunition, combat vehicles, unmanned aerial vehicles, spare parts, food rations, energy, medical equipment, etc. The lack of the items mentioned above makes it harder to conduct operations, wage or continue the war, use force to pursue *raison d'état*, and start a crackdown on the opposition, making using force to reach milestones a more arduous way of conducting politics. For instance, in the case of the Russian Federation, the joint sanctions by the Western allies due to the war in Ukraine have led to a severe decrease in hypersonic ballistic missile production due to the scarcity of semiconductors and other various supply shortages, which incentivized the country to look for other suppliers such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or the Islamic Republic of Iran even though they are inept of supplying state of the art supplies as their western counterparts can (The impact of sanctions and export controls on the Russian Federation, 2022). Furthermore, without the means to supply semiconductors, the Russian Federation's capability to produce next-generation early warning systems staggers, and its military aviation program becomes vulnerable as they allegedly salvage commercial planes to counter this problem (The impact of sanctions and export controls on the Russian Federation, 2022). The war in Ukraine might have been used as a pretext to impose the abovementioned sanctions against the Russian aviation sector.

Diplomatic sanctions can negatively affect bilateral relations between two countries by targeting high-level visits, diplomatic missions, and recognition of sovereignty. Even though the first two measures mentioned above show disapproval, the last one is generally taken to wipe the slate clean. Getting recognized as the sovereign government of a territory is vital because it is concomitant with the transfer of diplomatic missions as they enable trade and cultural relations (Carroll, 2018). Diplomatic action is synchronous with displaying eagerness when solving conflicts among states (Krain, 2014). Hence, the absence of diplomatic relations harms cooperation, negotiations, and especially economic affairs between states (Carroll, 2018). For instance, the trade between the United States of America and the Syrian

Arab Republic experienced a severe fall, especially after 2011, when the trade volume shrunk by more than 95% in only one year (Trade in Goods with Syria, 2022). It must be noted that the United States of America, during the Obama administration, withdrew the recognition of the Assad administration and formally recognized the Syrian Opposition Coalition as the righteous representative of the Syrian nation in 2012 (Dwyer & Hughes, 2012). As seen from this example, the absence of formal relations, with the help of targeted sanctions, leads to a gigantic shrinking of economic ties. Thus, the targeted regime becomes more of a pariah since diplomatic sanctions consolidate the isolation of the targeted regime (Krain, 2014). Lastly, it must be noted that, like how it is conducted, the effects of sanctions are also bilateral. In the case of diplomatic sanctions, the imposing party is also negatively affected. The imposing party can experience a loss of intelligence, scarcity of communication, high levels of misperception, and less effective economic sanctions due to having no foot on the land (Maller, 2010:61).

Transport sanctions leave consistent logistical connections vulnerable, and trade volume inevitably diminishes as logistical connections are disrupted. Therefore, similar to trade sanctions, they do it directly, while transport sanctions indirectly target trade flow by ensuring that the circulation of goods and services is interrupted. Specifically, aviation bans are critical since the sector is closely linked to other delicate industries, such as agriculture (Gordon, 2011). The effectiveness of aviation bans can be seen in Libya, where the ban ravaged the country's agricultural production and imports, leaving the country in a precarious position regarding food security (Gordon, 2011). Therefore, aviation bans debilitate logistics and leave various sectors defenseless, especially those requiring constant and fast connections with international third parties. Even though an aviation ban is more connected to its logistical aspect, it also decreases global mobility as a byproduct. For instance, the Russian Federation is also experiencing a dangerous diminishment of international passengers due to the European Union's joint decision to close airspace (The impact of the war in Ukraine on the aviation industry, 2022).

On the other hand, maritime transport is also susceptible to sanctions since it is the most used means of international logistics. For instance, in the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the sanctions against ports and even terminal operators decimated the sector by increasing risks such as increased ship fuel and insurance prices both for

Iranian ships and other ships that use Iranian ports (Zarbi et al., 2019). The overall situation became much riskier as Iranian container cargo traffic diminished due to more and more logistics companies suspending their service to the country since they did not want to be blacklisted by the United States of America under the pretext of evading sanctions (Zarbi et al., 2019). As can be seen from this instance, the intensity of the flow of goods and services wanes due to the insurmountable problem of immobilized logistics operations.

Travel sanctions and their aftermath display a different pattern than other sanctions. Even though travel sanctions cannot inflict significant damage like their counterparts, they are assumed to mainly demonstrate symbolic and psychological importance (Tostensen & Bull, 2002). But this does not mean that travel sanctions are bereft of producing tangible outcomes. Travel sanctions specifically excel compared to their counterparts when states want to deal a blow to the targeted state's tourism industry. For instance, after the Camp David Accords, several Arab countries imposed travel sanctions on the Arab Republic of Egypt, which had detrimental effects on the Egyptian tourism sector (Seyfi & Hall, 2019). Therefore, it must be stressed that travel sanctions are inimical to tourism revenue since they are the only large-scale effect of this type of sanction.

Sports sanctions not only affect the teams that are targeted but also lead to economic and political effects. For instance, Rhodesia's isolation from the rest of the world was consolidated thanks to the sports sanctions against the state (Little, 2011:203). On the other hand, economically speaking, it can cut off sports and tourism revenue, hindering a state's development. For instance, in the case of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the country was unable to capitalize on tourism and other income that would derive from hosting the tournament due to its inability to take necessary security measures, which claimed the lives of many Sri Lankan sportsmen in 2009 (Yousaf, 2018). Lastly, sports sanctions also aggravate a country's negative impression by depriving it of hosting an international platform to fix its image by displaying its true colors. For instance, after the 2009 attack on the Sri Lanka national cricket team and subsequently the imposition of sanctions, the lack of sports tourism detrimentally affected the Islamic Republic of Pakistan with regard to the failure to ameliorate its negative image due to having no mainstream international platform to do that (Yousaf, 2018).

3.3.2. Human Rights

Human rights are based on a moral interpretation that human beings should treat each other brotherly, and no entity, regardless of its manifesting authority, should violate this bond (Perry, 2020). Human rights cover a vast area, such as freedom of conscience, right to life, freedom of association, freedom from slavery and forced labor, freedom from torture or degrading treatment, the right to recognition and equal treatment before the law, the right to privacy, the right to work, the right to education, the right to marry and have a family, the right to have an education, the right to a nationality, freedom from arbitrary arrest and exile, freedom of ownership of property, freedom of speech, freedom of rest (Universal declaration of human rights). Furthermore, since no state or authority grants human rights, this makes them a ubiquitous phenomenon of international relations (What are human rights?). Regarding their tenets, equality is one of the main pillars that promises human rights for everyone, and human rights do not “see” skin color, religion, language, and other ethnic or cultural projections. Hence, the first article of the declaration states that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”(United Nations). Equality constitutes the basic tenets of human rights since the rights are intended to serve all human beings. Having surmounted a “barrier” among human beings, human rights associates itself with another tenet that revolves around preserving human dignity. Preservation of human dignity constitutes another pillar among its counterparts. According to the United Nations, the reason behind upholding innate human dignity as one of the main pillars is that “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world” (United Nations). Human rights' last distinguishing characteristic is that it offers a “safe haven” from oppression and persecution.

Human rights hold an unprecedented place in international affairs due to its legal status. Human rights are affiliated with jus cogens, leaving no space for any nation to derogate them (Charlesworth & Chinkin, 1993). To combat derogations, the international system formed international jurisdictional bodies such as the International Criminal Court to try human rights violators, and many attempts can be seen in infamous cases such as the trial of Al Bashir (Al Bashir Case). Moreover, the inability to derogate human rights has shaped international politics and formed unique

reactions to human rights-violating actors or states. For instance, despite allowing states to enjoy state immunity so that bilateral relations can be consolidated, a commonly referred customary international law, it can't be invoked in specific cases where a state commits human rights violations (Caplan, 2003). Especially as the Cold War ended, international politics grew fond of sanctions as they became a widely used tool to accelerate democratization and advance human rights (Lopez & Cortright, 1997A).

3.3.3. History of Sanctions Against China

Historically, China has always been a point of interest, as it possesses one of the oldest cultures, religions, history, and languages. It was the motherland of textile, porcelain, tea, gunpowder, paper, printing press, compass, etc. Because of its riches, Ancient China drew attention from all over the world, especially from the European powers, throughout history. These powers tried to gain as much leverage and capitulation as possible. For instance, one of the most notable examples of this aspect can be traced back to the 19th century when the British Empire waged war against Imperial China to deal with its trade deficit (Kalıpcı, 2018:293). Ultimately, with the established decisive British victory over the Chinese, both sides signed the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, which led to the British acquiring various leverages from the Chinese, such as the allocation of Hong Kong to the British to spearhead settlement and trade, authorizing the European to use ports of Guangzhou, Amoy, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai, acknowledging the extraterrestrial rights of the citizens of Britain in China, etc. (Kalıpcı, 2018:298). With the British's political, economic, and social achievements, an era began where the Western powers started to display great efforts to either avail themselves of China's riches or keep China at bay instead.

After its proclamation on October 1st, 1949, the People's Republic of China's bilateral relations with the Western powers directly revolved around the ideological standing of corresponding countries, as the Cold War had already started in 1949 after the declaration of the Truman Doctrine. Under such conditions, formal relations of the People's Republic of China with other countries were heavily influenced by the stances and countermeasures of the leaders of the Eastern Bloc and the Western Bloc, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the United States of America, respectively. In the wake of the start of the Cold War, the People's Republic of China's bilateral relations with the United States of America were already shaky due to its assistance of

the Kuomintang against the communists during the Chinese Civil War. Furthermore, the declaration of the Truman Doctrine had already impacted the politics of the United States of America by envisaging and actively pursuing the containment of communism worldwide (Ivie, 1999). Being another nail in the coffin, this development more or less sealed the fate of bilateral relations between the countries mentioned above for nearly three decades. Altogether, these milestones paved the way for more sanctions from the American bloc against the Chinese.

In contemporary terms, one of the first and most significant acts of sanctions against modern China fell under the subcategory of diplomatic sanctions and was spearheaded by the United States of America as it refused to recognize the People's Republic of China as the sole representative of the Chinese people and continued to acknowledge the Kuomintang in exile in Taiwan for almost three decades instead (Gunter, 2020). Certain developments, such as the People's Republic of China's direct involvement and support of the Korean communists and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea afterward, the endeavors of the Chinese Nationalists' lobby within the United States of America impeded the establishment and lack of formal relations further beyond (Gunter, 2020). Political isolation, economic isolation, and social isolation also came together. For instance, to consolidate the People's Republic of China's isolation, on the 17th of December 1952, the United States of America imposed crucial financial sanctions against the People's Republic of China as it blocked the entirety of Chinese dollar deposits in all American banks (Cain, 2020). From 1949 to the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989, aside from the nonrecognition policy, the United States imposed and modified more than 30 diverse sanctions, such as several trade sanctions, travel sanctions, military sanctions, and financial sanctions against the People's Republic of China (Rennack, 1997).

The Tiananmen Square Massacre was a political repression of pro-democracy protests by the Chinese Communist Party that resulted in a bloody suppression by the People's Liberation Army on July 4th, 1989 (Li & Drury, 2004). The historical incident's background can be traced to the pro-democracy political movements within the country that rallied for political liberalization and communication between the people and the state (Rennack, 1997). As the movement amassed more and more numbers and spread to other big cities, the central government slowly became keener and keener to employing physical force to disperse the crowds, which ultimately led to executions,

massive arrests, and even a mass witchhunt for sympathizers (Rennack, 1997). Due to its brutality and severity, the figureheads of the international community were outraged and imposed multilateral sanctions against the People's Republic of China. The United States of America did not hold back and suspended military and high-level government exchanges, loans and credits, and export licenses, as well as the trafficking of weapons (Rennack, 1997). On the other hand, Canada canceled all mutually planned events, crossed a \$60 million development fund out, suspended mutual immigration facilitation services, and stopped defense programs with the People's Republic of China (Gecelovsky, 2001). Furthermore, the European Union (the European Economic Community then) suspended high-level meetings and terminated military cooperation (Baker, 2002). Most importantly, the EU indefinitely banned member states from engaging in arms trade with the People's Republic of China during the Madrid summit on June 26-27 (Bräuner, 2013). Even today, the European Union maintains its arms embargo against the People's Republic of China (Frequently Asked Questions on EU-China Relations, 2017). Moreover, Japan also sided with its strategic partners in the West by halting its economic aid to the People's Republic of China (Katada, 2001). Due to the Tiananmen incident, the intensity of joint sanctions worldwide considerably changed the People's Republic of China's understanding of *raison d'état* as it became more aware of the international community's red line.

3.3.4. Allegations Against The Chinese Regime

Amnesty International's "Like We Were Enemies In A War" report, which uses satellite images, leaked confidential government documents, witness and victim testimonies as a source of data, endeavors to highlight the conflict in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Zone.

According to the report, the act of publicly displaying religious or cultural orientation, such as growing a beard, wearing a veil, making minors study scripture or fast, constructing temples, and going on unapproved pilgrimages became severely restricted under the pretext of "De-extremification Regulations" which were promulgated in March 2017 (Amnesty International, 2021:27). Furthermore, according to the testimonies of the witnesses, the government's hostility against the practice of Islam is further embodied by putting a ban on giving children non-Han and Islamic names, adhering to a religious diet such as not consuming pork or alcohol, fasting, attending religious funerals, and making a wedding revolve around "religious

connotations”(Amnesty International, 2021:30). Any item that displays religious context such as holy books, media such as films and photographs, or artifacts such as a crescent is forbidden to possess especially in households, and if any of the aforementioned items are found to be in possession, they are expropriated by the authorities (Amnesty International, 2021:33). Witnesses assert that, to curb religious affairs, the authorities use Orwellian measures such as mass monitoring and surveillance, law enforcement forces, mass propaganda means such as government brochures, and detention. Aside from the systematic oppression of Uyghurs’ right to conscience, the intentional devastation of religious venues exacerbates the situation more. The report, with the help of satellite images, asserts that more than 16,000 mosques have been ravaged and left to rot (Amnesty International, 2021:34). All of these developments correspond to a clear violation of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which secures freedom of religious orientation and worship.

After the religion-based micro chapter, the report continues with giving detailed information about the mass surveillance system that is being used by the Chinese authorities. It is asserted that to control the Uyghurs, a superb design is being used which uses facial recognition cameras, biometric data collection techniques, periodic home searches, frequent checkpoints, and “spontaneous interviews” with the ménages (Amnesty International, 2021:35). Aside from electronic surveillance, according to the report majority of the data about the Uyghurs are being gathered through “invasive home interviews” where a cadre stays with a former detainee’s family to monitor their daily activities lest they show or continue with “unfavorable behavior”. During those visits, no respect for privacy is shown as cadres check whether the family stays home, take unsolicited pictures of the family members, check homework, especially about language and ideology classes, and teach them the correct way if necessary (Amnesty International, 2021:38-39). This constitutes another possible violation under Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which secures privacy.

The report highlights another discriminatory measure that precludes freedom of movement for Uyghurs. Former detainees and their families or even just suspicious individuals are prohibited from traveling outside of their neighborhoods (Amnesty International, 2021:40-41). If an individual wants to travel outside their “designated

venue”, they would need to get a permit from the corresponding local government officials (Amnesty International, 2021:41). This covers both in and out of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Zone. To make matters worse, the restrictions are not only limited to domestic travel but have also expanded to cover international travel. According to the “Restrictions on Leaving or Entering China” subsection, along with other ethnic groups, Uyghurs are forced to give up their passports, and only a meager number of Uyghurs can receive them back (Amnesty International, 2021:46). This makes it almost impossible for an ethnic Uyghur to seek asylum or even leave the People’s Republic of China by their own means. Altogether, these measures qualify for two accounts of violation of freedom of movement and the right to seek asylum, secured by Articles 13 and 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, respectively.

The act of arbitrarily detaining Uyghurs in the region is also included in the subsequent chapter of the report. It is asserted that Uyghurs are prone to be arbitrarily detained even without the presence of a crime or offense (Amnesty International, 2021:48). It is alleged that roughly 1 million ethnic people have been arrested since 2017 (Amnesty International, 2021:48). To make matters worse, their right to a legal representative is denied, and probable cause regarding their detention is more likely to be never disclosed to them during their arrest (Amnesty International, 2021:48-49). It is believed that getting flagged as an “extremist”, “suspicious”, “untrustworthy” or even “terrorist” is sufficient enough to be arbitrarily detained, and these terms are being used by the authorities in the broadest sense possible (Amnesty International, 2021:55). According to the testimonies of the former detainees, spending time abroad, being in touch with foreigners, using illicit mobile applications such as WhatsApp, violating the government’s family planning policies, showing a religious affiliation in public, or even possessing religious material is concomitant with getting flagged as the labels mentioned above (Amnesty International, 2021:55). The flagging is not exclusive to those who commit these “offenses”, but also their family members as well under the pretext of “guilt by association”(Amnesty International, 2021:57). Furthermore, during detention, violence, and other forms of ill-treatment are believed to be rife (Amnesty International, 2021:58-59). With all these practices, there is a possible ground for violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Articles

5,9,10,11 that revolve around freedom from torture, freedom from arbitrary arrest, right to a fair trial, and right to presumption of innocence, respectively.

The report continues with the conditions in internment camps where detainees have to pay the penalty for their unlawful acts. The report directly states that every former detainee's testimony involved grave violence and other forms of derogatory treatment committed against them (Amnesty International, 2021:98). According to the report, ill-treatment takes place in two different areas, which are physical and psychophysical. Physical ill-treatment at camps prioritizes the amassment of stress on a detainee's body. It is expressed in the report that a direct form of physical ill-treatment generally occurs during interrogations or punishments (Amnesty International, 2021:101). Moreover, various compliance paraphernalia, such as electric batons and pepper sprays, are employed to maximize physical pain during punishments or interrogations (Amnesty International, 2021:103). When it comes to psychophysical ill-treatment, according to testimonies, it appears that not only regular torture and physical violence are the vicissitudes of daily life but also psychophysical harm as detainees are subjected to deliberately created inhumane conditions rather frequently. Types of this psychophysical harm at camps include sleep deprivation, unsanitary conditions, uncomfortable and prolonged stress positions, inadequate provision of food and water, protracted solitary confinement periods, the looming threat of violence, precluded inmate visits, especially by family members, exceeding the legal detention period, constant exposure to images and sounds of fellow detainees being tortured, forced participation with regards to "re-education" (Amnesty International, 2021:98-100). The data presented in this chapter is enough to lay the groundwork for two accounts for violating the right to life, security, and freedom from torture, as these are protected by Articles 3 and 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, respectively. The conditions within those camps are considered so severe to the point where they evoke memories of terrible atrocities of the past (See Figure 3.2: A Political Cartoon About Human Rights Violations in China below).

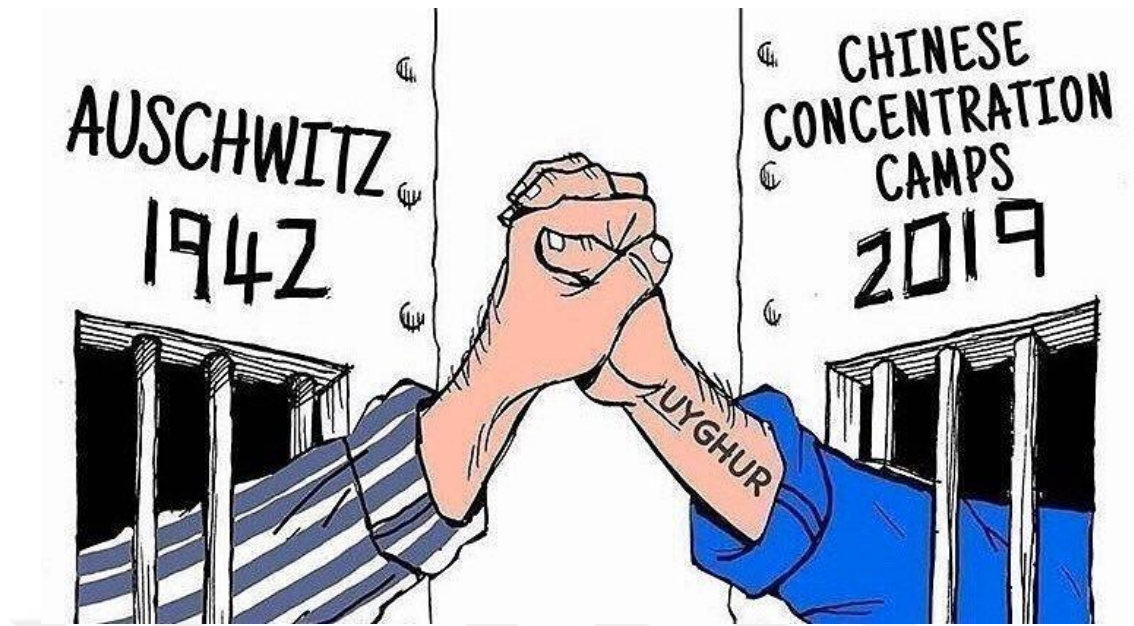


Figure 3. 2: A Political Cartoon About Human Rights Violations in China

The subsequent chapter deals with the intensity of allegations concerning forced labor. It is alleged that detainees have to meet skill-based requirements to be released, but the training process for detainees revolves around below-average wages, constant fear of further physical violence, a hostile work environment, and egregious working circumstances and is ultimately bereft of consent from detainees themselves (Amnesty International, 2021:126). Furthermore, it is asserted that displaying any involuntary behavior would qualify for redetention, but the restriction of movement is ubiquitous regardless of a detainee's decision to comply since, even at work, it is hindered (Amnesty International, 2021:128). Acquired witness testimonies confirm the severity and prevalence of forced labor as they highlight how they were forced to work at various production centers such as textile factories, tea factories, shoe factories, etc. (Amnesty International, 2021:128). Due to the alleged practices, it is possible to state there is a clear violation of Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which assures free choice of employment and protection from unequal pay, unfavorable work conditions, and discrimination.

3.4. Xinjiang and Complex Interdependence

The study of international relations emerged as a field to observe, analyze, and interpret the relations and interactions among numerous sovereign states. For a while, the primal interactions between states were based on continuous anarchy and

competition in which only the strongest was able to prevail, and this understanding was classified as realism. Even though realism provided a basic understanding, its influence on international relations permeated for a long time. As humanity entered the Age of Enlightenment, more and more complex and inclusive theories started to bloom. For instance, at that time, liberalism brought a new approach to international relations thanks to denouncing power politics by endorsing cooperation, institutionalism, and democracy. As the Industrial Revolution spread from Britain to mainland Europe, the interpretation of terms “conflict” and “struggle” were reinterpreted by Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx according to the needs and societal position of the proletariat. As observed from the respective backgrounds of the theories mentioned above, an approach reflects its time’s demands, developments, and essential aspects. It is no surprise that Marxism emerged at a time when the working class had to endure terrible living and working conditions, and liberalism emerged at a time when leading scholarly figures started to debate about egalitarianism and limited government. The evolution of international relations is directly concomitant with its corresponding timeline.

The three waves of globalization contributed to diverse fields such as communication, transportation, and trade. The interaction between nations skyrocketed due to how easy it became to communicate and travel. With the stimulated intensity, commerce between countries slowly surmounted the geographical boundaries in their vicinities and reached places it had been unable to do before. Therefore, globalized exchange indirectly boosted and spread industry-based production lines worldwide regardless of whether a country possesses heavy industry. Countries bereft of natural resource processing capabilities became raw material suppliers for countries with processing capabilities. The dynamic between these two types of countries creates an interdependency where generally, the industrialized one that is poor in terms of natural resources has a high demand for them, and the nonindustrialized one is willing to sell raw resources for a low price as it is bereft of means to process them anyway. Even though this may seem one-sided between nonindustrialized nations and industrialized nations, interdependency might arise between heavily industrialized nations as they also differ in access to natural resources, workforce, human capital, financial resources, productivity, etc., which can lead to different quantity and quality of production output that they need to exchange with one another. For instance, one party

might be unable to produce certain parts for the final product. In this case, the fact that the People's Republic of China's dependency on the Republic of China (Taiwan) when it comes to semiconductors is so intense that it holds the title of the biggest buyer of Taiwanese semiconductors can be given as an example (Chiang, 2022).

The discrepancy in production and access to natural resources made states more connected. Still, it led to interdependence among them by creating a chain of output according to the capacity of states. The interdependency can be traced back to the 20th century when multinational corporations started amassing enormous wealth, influence, and connections thanks to new means of transportation and communication. Due to corporations becoming pivotal players in the new world order by growing substantially, the existing interdependency among states skyrocketed, with states being dependent on each other and corporations pursuing their interests on a global scale. Corporations such as Apple, Coca-Cola, and Samsung not only started selling their products in different states on an enormous scale but also started using their "host's" workforce, natural resources, labor, agriculture, and infrastructure to produce and sell more of their products there so that they would make their business more lucrative. This level of complexity further expanded the interdependency among nations. As referenced above, the scope and theories of international relations changed according to the pivotal developments of its time. As globalism and liberalism spread worldwide, it would be foolish to overlook the new dynamics of the international system. In today's global system, dependency on one another shapes collective security alliances, common markets, political relations, economic relations, and cultural relations. Moreover, not overlooking these dependency-based dynamics among states when analyzing bilateral relations would fill the possible study pitfalls. Therefore, utilizing an international relations theory that stresses this aspect is paramount.

Complex interdependence theory, in economic terms, formulates that with the increasing trade between nations, a distinct form of dependency becomes the status quo among them. According to Keohane and Nye, interdependence covers areas where reciprocal effects occur among countries or actors (Keohane & Nye, 2012). It assumes that economic interdependence invariably leads to new political horizons between nations (Keohane & Nye, 1973). Keohane and Nye pinpoint that for an aspect to be classified according to complex interdependence, it needs to show multiple channels that bind societies, the irrelevancy of military force, and the absence of hierarchy

among bilateral issues between nations (Keohane & Nye, 2012b). Specifically, unlike realism, complex interdependence theory stresses that intensifying mutual influence from energetic relationships eliminates the possibility of using force (Keohane & Nye, 1973). Nye and Keohane address this stalemate by stating that “for superpowers, the use or threat of force has been a declining asset” (Keohane & Nye, 1973). This aspect is especially imperative since the conflict in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Zone brought the Chinese side and the Western side against each other, but neither side can resort to force as it would assure mutual destruction. But more importantly, the ever-growing trade dynamics between nations highlight the gimmick of the theory. The trade dynamics shape some sovereign nations into global economies and some into national economies and make them act according to a system where global economies attract the majority of the capital flows and still allocate a significant portion of total capital flows simultaneously (Oatley, 2019). The People’s Republic of China, the second biggest economy, is entitled to be recognized as a global economy as it holds its economic capabilities as a bargaining chip for conducting foreign relations. To help this thesis fall under the scope of international relations, interdependence theory will be employed to bolster interaction with the theoretical background of international relations. The imbroglio within the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region has drawn attention from NGOs, governments, and human rights activists, resulting in a widely known awareness of the problem. Because of this awareness and subsequent public protests, governments worldwide have taken the initiative to step up to the plate, transforming the imbroglio into a multidimensional one. Even though informal “coalitions” popped up based on how one “interprets” the developments in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Zone, both sides are empty of implementing tangible policies since such an act would also lead to detrimental outcomes for them in the long run. This “ineptitude” can be traced back to both parties being formidable global economies, being highly dependent on each other economically, and both having a nuclear weapons program. Therefore, this theoretical framework will produce a better insight since this phenomenon is affected not only by local interactions but mainly and naturally by international interactions.

3.5. Conclusion

Politically speaking, since its incorporation into China, Xinjiang has unfortunately become a battleground where communist and Uyghur values frequently. The region's "autonomy" is only in the name of the provincial government, which acts on behalf of the central government in Xinjiang. To make matters worse, Uyghurs are demographically getting replaced by the Han Chinese due to the promoted migration patterns. The already imperiled situation is worsened due to its controversial history, where oppression was quite perceivable. Economically speaking, Xinjiang waited long as a "crude ore" before being processed, thanks to Deng Xiaoping's reforms. The region has a diverse economic portfolio encompasses natural resources, trade routes, and arable lands. Hence, the region's geostrategic value makes it so attractive that losing it would be a tremendous loss for China.

Sanctions have become a powerful tool to uphold the values of the post-WWII international system. Human rights, being one of the founding principles of this system, are trying to be preserved by the members of the international community. Sanctions are frequently preferred in this concern as they are easy to impose and adjust. Different types of sanctions have different outcomes as they target distinctive sectors. Based on the magnitude and range, the severity of consequences fluctuates, and some can even have side effects. China is one of the countries that have experienced the impact of different types of sanctions. Historically speaking, post-revolution China had to endure economic, diplomatic, and military sanctions due to its ideology or policies, which deepened the gap between the West and China.

In contemporary times, regarding Xinjiang, the Chinese government is accused of a wide range of severe human rights violations. Prominent human rights organizations such as Amnesty International assert that Uyghurs are deprived of fundamental rights such as freedom from torture. The international community's response and sanctions against China are constructed upon these allegations. The evergrowing interdependency between countries has a crucial impact on Xinjiang's future.

CHAPTER IV

DEVELOPMENTS ON THE CHINESE SIDE

4.1. Introduction

As the problem in Xinjiang became a more mainstream topic in international politics, the international community gradually expressed dissatisfaction with Chinese policies. The absence of amelioration within the region motivated the international community to shift their requests more tangibly and sternly. Sanctions, born out of this shift, started appearing against China due to their poor human rights records in Xinjiang. How sanctions are distributed based on their types needs to be assessed to evaluate this appearance. This assessment will yield their nature and the international community's level of reaction to allegations in Xinjiang. On the other hand, the effects of sanctions must be assessed by measuring the changes within the sector they target. For instance, economic sanctions' success must be evaluated by examining whether or not they manage to bring drastic and long-term change. Regardless of their effects, China does not favor idly weathering the storm. Hence, encompassing the Chinese endeavors to minimize the adverse impacts is critical to obtaining inclusive results.

4.2. Sanctions Against Allegations

The People's Republic of China's actions towards minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Zone sparked an international rage, and it grew further as more data has been brought into daylight through interviews with whistleblowers and victims of these actions, interpreted satellite images, leaked official documents. The international community was quick to condemn and impose sanctions subsequently against the Chinese regime in Beijing. The range of sanctions against Beijing on account of what is happening in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Zone proved quite diverse, including trade and financial, diplomatic, military, transportation, sports, and travel sanctions. Compared to other sanction-imposing states, the United States of America leads by the magnitude and frequency of initiatives it takes against China. According to the Uyghur Human Rights Project, as of April 2023, in total, the United States of America has implemented 117 punitive sanctions, 11 investment bans, five laws, and four separate sanctions against the Xinjiang Construction and Production Corps in

response to alleged grandiose human rights violations by the Chinese authorities (U.S. sanctions list, 2023). The economic might of the U.S. is correlated with the most vigorous counteraction against the Chinese policies in Xinjiang (See Figure 4.1: A Political Cartoon About the “Magnitude” of Sanctions below).

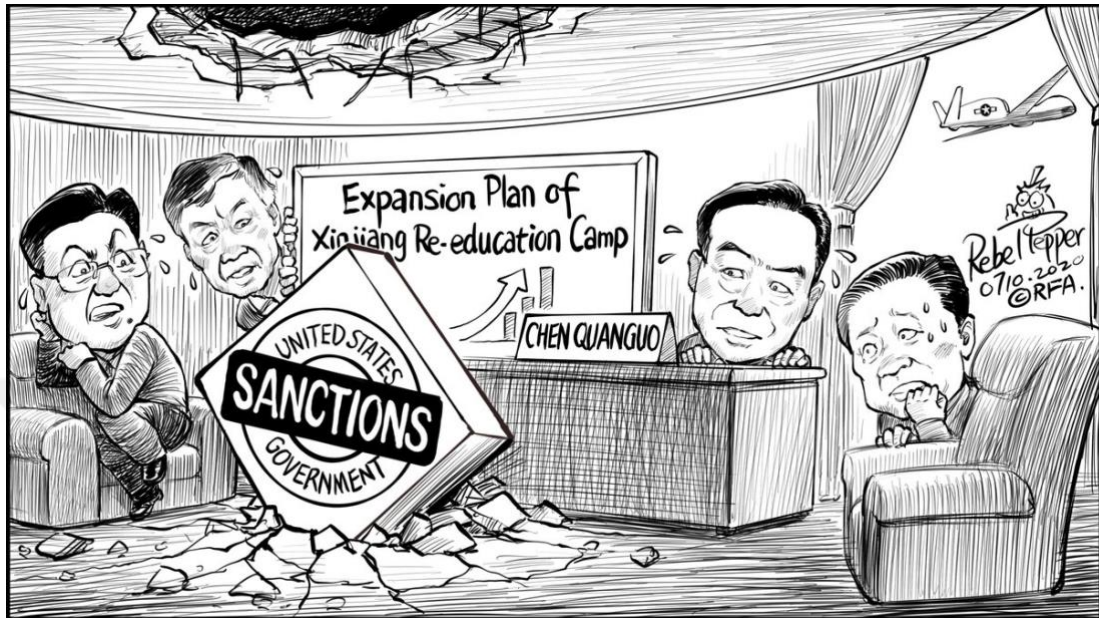


Figure 4. 1: A Political Cartoon About the “Magnitude” of Sanctions

A substantial bulk of sanctions against China falls under the subcategory of sanctions against individuals. These sanctions target Chinese leadership, influential businesspeople, high-ranking officials, etc. The number of targeted individuals is relatively high as a vast human resource pool is needed to control Xinjiang and carry out the operations. Therefore, countries try to deal a blow to these pools while also sending a collective warning to the rest of the population by specifically targeting suspected individuals. For instance, on March 1st, 2021, the European Union came up with new sanctions against the People’s Republic of China after 32 years gap on account of human rights violations, and they targeted four individuals who are Zhu Hailun, Wang Junzheng, Wang Mingshan, and Chen Mingguo and one entity which is the XPCC (EU agrees first sanctions on China in more than 30 years, 2021). The individuals mentioned above and the entity are believed to be culpable with regard to various activities such as mass detention and surveillance, indoctrination, and arbitrary arrest and, therefore, subject to visa bans and freezing of assets and funds (EU agrees first sanctions on China in more than 30 years, 2021). Other than targeting decision-makers, the West also focuses on crippling the surveillance capabilities of the Chinese

as Xinjiang gradually keeps turning into an Orwellian nightmare with constant monitoring. For instance, on the American side, on March 28th, 2023, the U.S Department of Commerce Bureau of Industry and Security sanctioned Luopu Haishi Dingxin Electronic Technology Co, Moyu Haishi Electronic Technology Co, Pishan Haishi Yong'an Electronic Technology Co, Urumqi Haishi Xin'an Electronic Technology Co, Yutian Haishi Meitian Electronic Technology Co under the pretext of aiding Chinese authorities with maintenance and development of high-technology surveillance in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Zone (Additions to the Entity List; Amendment To Confirm Basis for Adding Certain Entities to the Entity List Includes Foreign Policy Interest of Protection of Human Rights Worldwide, 2023).

On the other hand, some sanctions against China are purely symbolic as they have no tangible grounds to stand on. For instance, During the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, a collective diplomatic boycott was spearheaded by the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand with the reason being what is happening to Uyghurs and this collective action led to these countries mentioned above forbearing from sending diplomats and official representatives (UK and Canada join diplomatic boycott of China winter Olympics, 2021).

The only type of sanctions against China that has the potential to trigger a tangible reaction is to try to target the economic production capabilities of Xinjiang. Perhaps one of the most considerable sanctions against China from the European Union came in May 2020 as a countersanction. The European Parliament voted to suspend the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment as retaliation after Beijing reacted to the Union's Uyghur-related sanctions with countersanctions (McElwee, 2023). Even though it is impressive to suspend an agreement that took seven years to form (Nicolas, 2022), the American side has imposed more economic sanctions that differ in frequency and magnitude compared to its European counterparts. Chronologically speaking, one of the most substantial sanctions of the Americans started with the Uyghur Act of 2019, which not only urges partners of the U.S to stand by the nonrefoulement of the Uyghurs but also puts forward a restriction concerning technological goods so that the technical pillar of the repressive measures against the Uyghurs can be alleviated (Szadziwski, 2019). In the succeeding year, on December 2, 2020, U.S Customs and Border Protection issued a Withhold Release Order, which would authorize the border customs to seize any cotton products that are produced

under the auspices of the XPCC under the pretext of using slave labor (CBP issues region-wide withhold release order on products made by slave labor in Xinjiang, 2021). Moreover, to continue dealing a blow to the cotton industry in Xinjiang, the U.S Customs and Border Protection released numerous “Withhold Release Orders” which terminated U.S imports of cotton and cotton products from entities that are accused of capitalizing on forced labor in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Zone (Gale & Dale, 2022). Believing that labor-related allegations are not exclusive to the cotton industry, in December 2022, the Biden administration signed H.R 6256, also known as The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, into law, but what is iconic about this development is that H.R 6256 not only imposes restrictions on suspected individuals but also puts forward a total ban on any import from entities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Zone that is affiliated with forced labor, transportation of units of forced labor, the Chinese government’s forced labor programs (H.R.6256, 2021). Other than legislative bodies, In 2020, the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI hereinafter), a non-profit group that promotes cotton cultivation, stopped its licensing activities in Xinjiang on the grounds of potential labor abuse (Remington, 2020).

4.2.1. Effects Of Sanctions on China

As can be seen in the sanctions of the U.S., sanctions against China are overwhelmingly focusing on targeting suspicious individuals through either travel bans or assets. For a country with such a significant public sector, targeting suspected government officials with the hope of “making an example out of them” falls relatively short as the Chinese possess immense human resources. For a country with an estimated number of more than 56 million government employees (Tabeta, 2023), targeting high-ranking officials is as good as taking coals to Newcastle, as they can easily be replaced with one another. If tangible sanctions fail to change the problem, naming and shaming can’t be considered a viable strategy, regrettably. The subject of individual sanctions has turned into a spiral where both sides retaliate against one another continuously without breaking a sweat.

The sanctions against the cotton industry fared slightly better than their counterparts as they caused notable changes, but only in the short run. For instance, the tariffs and license suspension caused grievous damage as total export numbers plummeted by 97% in 2020 compared to 2019 (Li et al., 2023:65). This was the only negative outcome that detrimentally affected Xinjiang’s cotton as sanctions and BCI’s

suspension failed to disrupt cotton production permanently and collectively. Despite the grievous damage inflicted on the Chinese cotton production companies, the cotton export numbers slowly but steadily healed over the years as they came close to 2018 numbers in about two years while also lowering cotton imports (Li et al., 2023:65). Furthermore, even under periling circumstances, not only China's cotton production has seen positive and consistent numbers but also Xinjiang's share in total cotton production rose to 90% in 2022 (Li et al., 2023:66). Other than production, sanctions also failed to bring a change to trade volume drastically and collectively. For instance, despite the alleged sanctions and crippling WRO against the XPCC, which produces a third of Xinjiang's cotton (Churchill & Fromer, 2020), Xinjiang's exports to the US saw a %113 rise to a total of US\$64.4 million in the first quarter compared to 2020 even with the lack of cotton products (Bermingham, 2021). Lastly, Xinjiang's GDP also saw a positive development rate of 7% while increasing the yield of all three sectors in 2021 (Xinjiang registers robust economic growth in 2021, 2022). From these numbers, it is safe to assume that even nonsymbolic sanctions are bereft of bringing a long-term chance. To make matters worse, the short-term changes in cotton production should not be exclusively associated with sanctions. One must be careful of exclusively associating decreased cotton export numbers with tariffs or suspensions as the central government's unorthodox methods to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak, such as initiating a total lockdown, invariably damaged production lines. Considering this and subsequent recoveries, the impact of sanctions against Xinjiang's production capabilities is even less effective than they might be perceived.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection is a governmental body that enforces the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act by detaining any product believed to be produced through forced labor. In only one year, it seized approximately 4300 shipments from China with a value of \$1.3 billion (CBP continues to set global standard in fight against forced labor one year of Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act Implementation, 2023). But when we analyze Xinjiang's recent foreign trade patterns, we see something that defies Western sanctions. It appears that, in only nine months of 2023, the foreign trade volume of Xinjiang increased by 48.9% to 287.3 billion yuan (approximately 40.2 billion U.S. dollars) (Xinjiang Foreign Trade up 48.9 PCT in first 10 months, 2023). But what makes this rather interesting is the fact the increased trade volume between Xinjiang and Belt and Road Initiative countries made up %94 of the new data while

placing Kazakhstan in the first place (Xinjiang Foreign Trade up 48.9 PCT in first 10 months, 2023). Lastly, instead of agricultural products, high-value products such as electric cars and solar cells constitute the basis of Xinjiang's exports (Xinjiang Foreign Trade up 48.9 PCT in first 10 months, 2023). This shows that Xinjiang is more economically aligned with its neighboring countries and One Belt One Road Initiative-affiliated countries rather than economic partners in the West. Also, primary products do not hold much value regarding cross-border trade, as Xinjiang dominates through its products with high added value.

4.3. China's Response Footprint

The official responses from the Chinese government are directed through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and generally revolve around denouncing the corresponding legislation (Szadziewski, 2019:). For instance, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wenbin remarked in 2022 that what is problematic in Xinjiang can't be correlated with human rights abuses or ethnoreligious differences, whereas combating extremism and terrorism constitutes the problem (China refutes US report on Xinjiang-related issues, 2022). Wenbin also stated that the U.S. conducts black propaganda for a country that is "blind to its own human rights record" by coming up with lies to "smear, sanction and suppress China" and continued its remarks by assuring that China will do anything to preserve its sovereignty (China refutes US report on Xinjiang-related issues, 2022). On a legislative level, China has taken numerous initiatives to "warn" undecided entities so that they do not choose the "wrong path" in the future. One of the first anti-sanction initiatives appeared in 2020 when the Ministry of Commerce came up with the "Unreliable Entity List" which gave the authorities the right to impose restrictions on any person or company that pursues detrimental policies to the wellbeing of China and so far several companies have been subjected to this initiative (Malkawi, 2023). This initiative discouraged business entities from getting on the wrong side of China by threatening them with restrictions on continuing their business in and with China (Malkawi, 2023). It can be observed from this initiative that China utilizes its market volume to persuade third parties to follow the Chinese rhetoric instead of the Western one. Furthermore, "Rules on Counteracting Unjustified Extraterritorial Application of Foreign Legislation and Other Measures" is another initiative that was also taken by the Ministry of Commerce in 2021 (Malkawi, 2023). This initiative requires any

Chinese business person or company restricted from continuing economic activities with a third non-sanctioning party due to U.S. sanctions to inform the Chinese authorities (Malkawi, 2023). The authorities may aim to persuade the corresponding parties not to comply with sanctions by collecting necessary information. Regardless, it is highly likely that the goal behind collecting this information revolves around pinpointing who is with and against China, which could be used against them as a pretext to pressure. Lastly, In 2021, China started another initiative called the Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law, which allows them to retaliate proportionately against any sanction that aims to harm citizens or organizations by freezing their accounts or restricting their businesses in China. What differentiates this from other initiatives is that any Chinese business entity can claim damages due to sanctions in a court of law (Malkawi, 2023). It appears that Beijing also wants to build its protection of national companies on a legal basis.

The tangible efforts to minimize the adverse effects of sanctions are taken quite seriously in China. The Chinese try to keep the profits, employment, and stability in Xinjiang through government-backed initiatives. For instance, the cotton industry in China is quite competitive when it comes to the global cotton market due to its outstanding quality and affordability, and thanks to the substantial American demand, the cotton exports from China to the U.S. contributed substantially to the American side's massive trade deficit to the point where they resorted to protective tariffs (Li et al., 2023:62). To preserve this competitiveness, the Chinese authorities take inclusive precautions when it comes to weathering the storm. For instance, BCI's suspension of licensing gave life to similar domestic and national regulations that imitate its predecessor's qualifications, safeguarding employees' rights, preserving natural resources, etc. (Li et al., 2023:63-65). This shows that China is eager to consolidate its branding as it has done marvelous work with other forms of branding, such as Huawei, Alibaba, etc. As the pearl of China's endeavors to develop the country, foreign influences and their corresponding agendas put Xinjiang's capabilities to the test. China keeps its eyes skinned regarding economic sanctions and tries to alleviate their potential toll on the region's economy by ensuring that Xinjiang has enough financial backup to endure the storm. Originally started in 1997 and reinforced in 2010, China is paying close attention to the "pairing assistance" program to pool necessary resources to Xinjiang by utilizing "central and state organs, centrally administered

state-owned enterprises, and 19 provinces and municipalities” (China pools resources to help Xinjiang achieve moderate prosperity, 2021). The central government’s attempts to keep Xinjiang’s economy afloat despite sanctions can be seen in financial aid numbers. For instance, the state-owned enterprises, provinces, and municipalities within the pairing assistance program invested 315 billion yuan in Xinjiang between 2019 and 2021 (China pools resources to help Xinjiang achieve moderate prosperity, 2021). The central government does not only depend on the program mentioned above as it continues to mobilize all economic means at its disposal. Other than this, to appease international investors and keep them from withdrawing investments, Chinese authorities have found unorthodox “resources” to help them maximize profits and deal with economic pitfalls. According to Hong Kong Watch’s report in 2022, mainstream and transnational companies that are predominantly Western receive Uyghur “employees” to coercively work at their disposal under the auspices of the central government (Patterson et al., 2022). Forcefully, allocating Uyghurs who are not fairly compensated, even not compensated at all generally, to work for these companies keeps the expenses low while providing them with a consistent workforce. Another maneuver the central government plans to take revolves around building a new free trade zone in Xinjiang (Cash, 2023). The long-term plan assumes bolstering international trade and interconnectivity between important production centers within China and Xinjiang, with hopes to bring in more investors (Cash, 2023). Furthermore, the plan to construct a free trade zone also has a projection for persuading trading countries to use the Chinese Yuan instead of U.S. dollars (Cash, 2023). It appears that constructing an appealing economic scheme counters the severity of economic sanctions by appealing to the financial interests of “free” nations (See Figure 4.2: A Political Cartoon About the Failure of Sanctions below).



Figure 4. 2: A Political Cartoon About the Failure of Sanctions

Among other responses, the Chinese reaction to individual sanctions can be considered something based on reciprocity. As keywords such as “countersanctions against discrimination” appear when building rhetoric, the Chinese try to go for one-for-one regarding individual sanctions. For instance, China sanctioned four U.S. individuals, which banned them from entry and doing business while also freezing their assets, after the U.S. sanctioned four Chinese individuals (China takes reciprocal countermeasures against U.S. sanctions, 2021). The same rhetoric can be seen when Chinese authorities urged the U.S. to “mind its business” and stop meddling with China’s domestic affairs (China takes reciprocal countermeasures against U.S. sanctions, 2021). Moreover, it appears that China gradually shifted its focus regarding countersanctions as it overwhelmingly targeted countries before 2020, and individuals afterward and individuals started making up the most significant subgroup (Ghiretti, 2023). This abrupt change in the pattern shows that China no longer prefers to target political or economic relations by imposing sanctions against countries. In contrast, it enjoys allocating its focus to high-ranking individuals instead.

4.3.1. China Attempts on Building a New Bloc

China’s rise in the 21st century influenced global politics and brought neo-Cold War aesthetics to the table. But this time, in contrast to the Cold War era, the new tensions are not defined based on differences in economic ideology. In contrast, they revolve around a nation’s interpretation of the international system. Generally, those who favor the global system can be considered allies or satellites of the hegemonic world order built by and for Europeans. On the other hand, those who oppose the hegemonic order are generally the ones who were humiliated and colonized by the same Europeans. Even though grave crimes against non-European nations, such as colonization and slavery, ended years ago as these nations also gained their corresponding independence, Europeans’ actions took a detrimental and enormous toll on these nations’ future as they are undeniably plagued with poverty, conflict, tyrants, corruption, exploitation, etc. The majority of these unlucky nations are regrettably still in a disadvantaged position, and global problems such as pandemics, terrorism, and food crises affect them disproportionately when compared to the developed World. Moreover, when they want to solve the issues of their nations, they still have to play

by the rules and institutions of the Europeans. For instance, they have to voice their opinions in the UN General Assembly, go to the IMF or World Bank to ask for financial help, go to UNESCO to get international legal protection for their historical sites, etc. This has caused the oppressed nations to accumulate a grudge against the Western-dominated hegemonic order and a wish to break free from it so that they can develop their systems. As China gradually strengthens its political position, it becomes a political “star” with a “gravitational force”. With this gravitational force, China’s rise and its own invoked rhetoric have become not only an inspiration for the oppressed nations but also a unifying voice. This phenomenon should not be considered something new as it showed its first steps during the Cold War when China was trying to stress this “historical common ground.” (Üngör, 2011). When growing economic relations between China and disadvantaged nations are combined with the shared anti-western sentiment, a new quasi-bloc political entity appears in the international political arena; even though there is no cultural or religious common ground between China and these disadvantaged states, the wish to rebel against the system binds them together. China uses this association to minimize the risk by expanding the blast radius to other countries. In 2019, 22 countries collectively signed a letter that condemned and pushed China to cease its human rights violations in Xinjiang and delivered it to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (Westcott & Shelley, 2019). When analyzed, it is seen that 22 signatory countries are either directly geographically located in the West or geographically far from the West but ideologically close to it, such as Japan and Australia (Westcott & Shelley, 2019). After this letter, as a retaliation, 37 countries came together to sign and deliver another letter to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, but this time, they collectively rejected human rights violation-related allegations and even congratulated China for its contribution to the field of human rights (Berlinger, 2019). What makes this support so unique is that among supporters, there are actors that either directly challenge the Western world order, commit grave human rights violations, or even the ones that have a Muslim-majority society. For instance, Syria and North Korea, being two of the signatories, continue to challenge the international order, whereas the Democratic Republic of Congo, being another signatory, is egregiously abysmal with human rights (Human rights in democratic republic of the Congo), and there is even a Turkic and Muslim majority signatory country such as Turkmenistan among 37 countries (Berlinger, 2019). China, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, diplomatically

stated its appreciation of the letter and stressed the diversity of the signatories (China appreciates 37 foreign ambassadors' joint letter supporting Xinjiang policy, 2019).

4.4. Conclusion

A different picture emerges due to the evaluation of sanctions against China. As most of the sanctions fall under individual sanctions. Most of the remaining sanctions fall under the category of economic sanctions, while a minute amount falls under the category of diplomatic sanctions. As for their effects, diplomatic sanctions failed to bring a change as they only boycotted the Olympics, not China's diplomatic recognition. On the other hand, individual sanctions are unsuccessful in getting anything to the table since they are bereft of displaying the same effect of naming and shaming due to the illiberal Chinese values and vast working force. Economic sanctions are the only forms that do not experience the same egregious level as their counterparts. Economic sanctions against China met their short-term objectives by debilitating production volume. But the effectiveness of economic sanctions, especially on cotton cultivation, must be taken with a grain of salt as the COVID-19 pandemic opened a few doors, and these detrimental effects were "cured" by the Chinese quickly. The fact that economic sanctions overlook targeting the economic powerhouse sectors in Xinjiang or trade routes diminishes their efficacy even more. Altogether, sanctions do not have enough strength to change China or the imbroglio in Xinjiang significantly. China's attempt to build its resilience towards sanctions is vital in understanding why sanctions inevitably blunder. China is taking precautions based on regulating access to its gigantic market. Hence, using carrot and stick, China uses its economic charm to warn those who wish to oppose it. Handling its financial affairs to regulate its foreign matters can be expected from any other country, but China is only using this aspect as a catalyzer. What China is trying to build can be described as a different political, cultural, and economic alternative to the modern World order. China does not offer an ideological bloc; it only combines the hatred of the subjugated nations with its rise in international politics to show that the oppressed countries will not be forced to play by the rules of their former oppressors forever.

CHAPTER V

THESIS FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The last chapter of this thesis focuses on illuminating the findings regarding assessing the situation in Xinjiang. Hence, this chapter aims to explain how the imbroglio emerged, continued, and evolved into something multilateral. This chapter also contributes to the topic by combining the connections between chapters, which helps to stress the complex situation in Xinjiang.

The problem in Xinjiang can be sufficiently analyzed if the dissection method is constructed on a foundation with a multilateral approach. The dilemma must be diagnosed with the help of history, politics, economics, and sociology. Initially, the diagnosis should cover what makes China so unique that its identity can't be explained through mainstream Eurocentric or even Asiatic approaches. To avoid the pitfalls of modern research footprints, Chinese identity must be evaluated through the eyes of the Chinese, not foreigners. This evaluation must consider what caused the Chinese to see their identity so differently than other nations that it became the impetus of their uniqueness. At this point, cultural ideas and their tangible outputs must be considered. On top of this foundation, floors need to be built like the origin story of China's involuntarily coming out of its shell must be analyzed. This analysis should focus on how the Western powers belittled China by forcing it to open for trade and destroying its traditional way of life. China's attempts to break away from the chains of the Europeans in different periods must be analyzed before moving further, as they contributed to the unique Chinese skepticism and how this extraordinary skepticism paved the way for a sui generis Chinese style communism. Building on this floor, the history of Xinjiang and the Uyghur community needs to be evaluated on a cultural, political, and economic basis to provide a firm understanding of the problem. To enrich the research, how the Uyghur community was affected by Chinese politics needs to be examined, along with how the Chinese evaluate the Uyghur identity. With the clash of identities, the appearing sanctions and their effects must be explored, along with how the Chinese react to them.

The severity of the allegations concerning human rights violations in Xinjiang caused public resentment from all over the globe. The contextualization of Xinjiang under hostile terms such as conflict, civil unrest, etc., perpetuated its notoriety and brought

different interpretations of China's regional policies. Western nations utilized their interpretations to resort to harsh sanctions to control China's domestic affairs.

The conclusion will be broken into three points according to the data gathered and the thesis's research questions. These three points will enrich the conclusion.

5.1. Point 1: Distinctive Features of Chinese Culture

The ethnocultural superiority deriving from the culture has invariably contributed to Chinese civilization's prosperity and amassed influence. For the Chinese, China was not merely the center of the world but had the moral authority to regulate earthly affairs as it had done with its vassal states. Imperial China had a flourishing semiclosed society and life within its political sphere through Confucian ideas, enjoying political and economic superiority. China's strict attitude toward foreigners and their wish to trade gradually waned, bringing a humiliating war to their homeland. As the Qing Empire slowly declined, mercantilist European forces intensified their imperialistic appetites and brought their foreign influences with them, causing a foreign, detrimental, and unwanted change the Chinese despised. Calling it the Century of Humiliation, the Chinese sought to reverse the decline and return China to its glorious spot. Like other oppressed nations in the 20th century, China was influenced by waves of nationalism. The Qing dynasty was overthrown by republican nationalist revolutionaries in 1911, and the Kuomintang rose to the top. Even though the monarchy was dealt with, the decline and problems of the past still permeated China. China also had to deal with warlords and separatists at the time, which deepened the existing issues. Founded in 1921 in Shanghai, the Communist Party of China was founded by Chinese communists as an alternative political party to the ongoing problems. As the rivalry between the Kuomintang and the CCP slowly became a conflict, China became imperiled by a bloody civil war. The Chinese Communists, under the leadership of Mao Zedong, triumphed over their adversaries, who were being supported by the West, and spearheaded a new era for China in 1949.

China's distrust of Westerners did not appear right after the revolution in 1949; it was a gradual process. The opium wars not only destroyed the Chinese worldview and pride but also economically carved up the whole country. Even though China did share the same fate with other fully colonized nations, it became a semi-colony where Western nations siphoned China's riches. Left incapable of securing its interests,

China was being crushed under the pretext of the “Unequal Treaties”. For China, Westerners not only made the Chinese bend their knees but also brought their alien way of living along, such as Christianity, international law, the Westphalian system, capitalism, etc. Stemming from this absurdity, the Chinese slowly developed a grudge for Westerners and their understanding of natural order. After the revolution of 1911, the Kuomintang government did not become averse to the interaction between China and the West as it was pretty fond of it. Due to the failures and ineptitudes of the Kuomintang government and their relationship with Westerners, the Chinese masses slowly became more fond of the communists as they promised to deal with sources of problems radically. Even though the Communists ultimately had the upper hand thanks to the support of the masses, their adversary with the Europeans did not come to an end quickly. The Chinese struggle against the Europeans created a terrible impression on the Chinese. The fact that the CCP endeavored rigorously to keep China away from the influence of the Soviet Union shows how much the Chinese did not trust the Europeans despite sharing the same ideological understanding. Despite a decisive victory over the Kuomintang, the tide did not turn. Already, the relations were imperiled since the West actively supported the Kuomintang government in the Civil War and continued to recognize Taiwan as the sole representative of the Chinese nation for nearly 30 years. Plus, due to anticommunist foreign policies, the Western forces continued to pressure the Communist government through various sanctions. With a gap in relations for 30 years, the anti-western sentiment became a core principle in the policies of the CCP and gave it legitimacy. Even after the detente between the U.S. and China, developments such as the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, the Tiananmen Square Massacre, and the misleading attitude of the Western media outlets kept the flame of anti-western sentiment in China alive. Because of that, although socialism innately leaves no ground for nationalism, Chinese nationalism is heavily influenced by the narrative “China vs. Imperialists”. Like the culture, Chinese nationalism is unique as it is an amalgamation of the Chinese struggle against Westerners, triumph through socialism, and inimitable cultural characteristics. For the Chinese, being nationalist means accepting a socialist and shared cultural identity.

5.2. Point 2: Rise and Failure of Sanctions

As China continued to open its society to the rest of the world, the international community noticed the bizarreness in Xinjiang. Thinking that it is a mainstream manifestation of human rights violations, the international community ramped up their reactions to what is going on in Xinjiang. Unlike Iraq, where human rights violations served as a *casus belli*, the use of force is out of the question for the Xinjiang problem as it could lead to nuclear warfare. Hence, the Western world resorted to various sanctions to ease conditions in Xinjiang by putting stress on China. It seems that the Western world anticipated similar results, like sanctioning third-world nations when they decided to sanction China. Using a variety of sanctions, they failed to bring significant changes to China and human rights issues in Xinjiang. That is related to the fact that human rights-related sanctions have no detrimental effects on Xinjiang's development or China's altogether. For instance, economic sanctions, one of the most commonly used sanctions against China, can only inflict short-term damages, only with the "aid" of the COVID-19 pandemic, as China relies on its production capacity and state subsidies to keep the economy of Xinjiang invigorated. Economic sanctions also appear to refrain from targeting Xinjiang's most significant sectors that produce the bulk of GDP. In contrast, they target industries, mainly agriculture, that do not contribute substantially as other high-value-adding industries. At this point, even nonsymbolic sanctions, such as economic sanctions, should be considered symbolic, as they are bereft of changing anything in China. Symbolic sanctions, on the other hand, mainly depend on individual sanctions to deter the Chinese from collaborating with the central government. But, alas, in a country with such a significant and dedicated population that brings one of the most prominent public sector employees, individual sanctions are predetermined to bring no change. Therefore, due to their nature, sanctions fail to get any tangible or significant change to bilateral relations and the imbroglio in China.

5.3. Point 3: China's Avantgarde Precautions

For China, the issue in Xinjiang does not have a binary projection. First, even before the revolution in 1949, Xinjiang already had a tumultuous history, and the name Uyghur was associated with Islamic rebellions. The Chinese historically resorted to assimilation policies to curtail conflict in Xinjiang. Because of that, assimilation

policies have had a long history as they were being implemented even in the imperial era. Even though the revolutionary republic initially refrained from the assimilationist policies of its predecessor, the classic 20th-century style nation-building process slowly influenced the revolutionary government to follow in the footsteps of its predecessor. The pressure on the Uyghur community initially got lighter after the communists bested the Kuomintang in 1949, as the communists believed it was crucial to gain the support of minorities so that a broken China could be unified. Despite such amicable initiatives by the communists, relations between the Han and Uyghurs slowly deteriorated. The deterioration already had a basis as the communists interpreted the Uyghur way of living as counterrevolutionary. Such a label on Uyghurs precipitated a socialist “civilizer and to be civilized” dichotomy, which granted the moral impetus for the communists. Not only were Uyghurs descendants of Turkic tribes that gave imperial China so much trouble that they had to erect the Great Wall of China, but they also adhered to a religion that became the bane of the Chinese authority in Xinjiang and continued with their “primitive” lifestyles, which defied socialist revolution. Adherent predetermined socioeconomic campaigns against Uyghurs were initiated on the pretexts above, which laid the foundation of the “us vs. them” narrative. Campaigns such as the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, the Anti-rightist Campaign, and the One-Child Policy marginalized the Uyghur community by destroying what made their cultures unique. These campaigns collectively obliterated Uyghurs' religious, financial, and political activities thoroughly while also forcing them to assimilate into Han-centered socialist identity. Apart from assimilation, discrimination has also played a substantial role when it comes to marginalization. Even though China has shown immense economic development, the Uyghur community did not benefit from this economic progress as much as their Han countryman did, marginalizing their community further. The marginalization process erected almost insurmountable walls between the Uyghur and Han communities. In return, those walls sparked conflict between the two communities. The demonstrations in the '90s, when the two sides both had losses of life, were not only a manifestation of an act against brutal policies of the central government but also an outcry. The central government saw these developments as a byproduct of backward Uyghur identity and tried to push for a narrative of “dealing with roots of terrorist behavior.”. As the narrative was being propagated, the central government's approach to the Uyghur community gradually became a form of collective punishment. As the policies became more unorthodox, the

international community, mainly Western countries, slowly reacted negatively. But unbeknownst to the international community, their response did not soothe the concerns of the Chinese, as it did quite the opposite. China's old national trauma of being carved up by Westerners under the color of opium can't be disregarded when it comes to explaining why the attitude of the West exacerbated the situation for the Uyghur community. For China, the involvement of its former oppressors when it comes to its policies in Xinjiang not only awakens the old trauma but also pushes China into an overdefensive stance, like how an armadillo rolls into a ball to protect itself from predators. This overdefensive stance is the foundation of China's security complex as it reacts irrationally.

To deal with pressures from sanctions, China follows two patterns, one being domestic and the other being international. Domestically, China pours every resource it possesses into Xinjiang to keep it floating, whether financial or expertise-related. Financially speaking, the amount of monetary aid to Xinjiang shows that China is not backing off from its policies in Xinjiang, as the aid numbers speak for themselves. But China does not only pool money for Xinjiang; it also gathers every expertise at its disposal to combine with financial aid. This shows that China wants to continue developing Xinjiang despite sanctions, but more systematically and sustainably. On a different subject, China is trying to build its brand regarding quality control so that it is less dependent on Western institutions for global recognition of its goods. Apart from dealing with dependence, China wants to spearhead institutions that are not under the influence of the West and spearhead a different path for those who do not define themselves as Western. Moreover, China's attempts to bring legislation into dealing with sanctions show that the Chinese are ready to open a legal pathway for any company that wishes to reimburse their losses due to sanctions. For China, protecting its national companies from the harm of sanctions is a *sine quo non*, as it could dent China's economic rise. On an international level, concerning sanctions, it seems that China decided to play it defensively, as it only reciprocates on a proportionate level when it comes to sanctions and does not overplay its hand by increasing tensions. China uses similar legislation to deter companies from showing anti-China behavior to achieve that. The deterrence is based on threatening global companies from doing business in a big market like China, where approximately 1.5 billion people live. Operating in such a market is so profitable that no company would want to risk losing

that much-anticipated profit. But what makes China's response to the Western sanctions unique is unrelated to what kind of legislation it passes to combat them or how it responds diplomatically or economically, as other nations can take similar approaches. China wants to find common ground between wronged countries and use it as a catalyzer to form a new bloc against the Western world, which would ease the burden on its shoulders. This common ground would be the hostility against the Europeans' hegemony. Most of the world, except Europe and North America, experienced the horrors of the colonial era and continue to feel their vestige as well. The inability to turn the status quo has accumulated bitterness in the minds of oppressed people. China, in this regard, is the only country where a former downtrodden nation not only saves its tarnished dignity but also strongly threatens the unfair system it has involuntarily been placed into. This unprecedented distinction has inspired not-so-lucky countries as they already feel a new connection between them and China due to changing trade volumes since the U.S. gradually loses its title of "number one trade partner". Hence, it would be an incomplete interpretation to assume that only increasing economic interdependence between China and oppressed nations binds them together. As a result of this bind, marginalized and exploited nations gradually become more vociferous when it comes to supporting China and its policies in Xinjiang especially. Not only does this spread the risk for the Chinese face, but it also creates a suitable environment for camaraderie to bloom. A new bloc that threatens the hegemonic order of the West is built upon the ashes of Europeans' crimes and China's ascension in international politics.

5.4. Conclusion

Throughout its tumultuous history, the Uyghurs in Xinjiang suffered state persecution, and the region became known as a quasi-war zone. Unfortunately, the conflict and dilemma in Xinjiang has a deep and dark past with multiple layers. Decades of Chinese attempts to assimilate Uyghurs and eradicate their culture, traditional way of living, religious devotion, language, affluence, and dignity are the primary sources behind the conflict. As the conflict started getting out of hand, the Chinese resorted to collective punishment and turned Xinjiang into an open-air prison for the Uyghur community. This collective punishment became so severe that it stirred up the international community.

What influences the Chinese to pursue this atrocious collective punishment method revolves around a complex theme where the Chinese develop a siege mentality-like stance. One of the main reasons why China describes the period between 1840 and 1949 as the Century Humiliation revolves around the destruction of invaluable Chinese values and the system in which China was at the top. This destruction showed the ever-growing weakness of the Qing empire by forcing it to open up regarding trade and accept Western values, which the Chinese despised. Even though China was never turned into a colony due to its colossal size, its culture was denigrated, its riches were plundered, and its people were put into a disadvantaged and discriminatory position. As a result, the Chinese started contemplating restoring China to its former glory, which became the impetus of the revolution of 1911 and 1949. Because of this shame, the Chinese started associating chaos and turmoil as relics that could begin a shameful period. The Uyghur community's reluctance to conform to Chinese values and identity started the conflict in Xinjiang, and the Chinese took harsh countermeasures and socioeconomic campaigns to deal with the shameful period, and its influences furthered it.

As the problem started appearing on political agendas, mainly Western countries took a robust stance by initially criticizing the Chinese government and calling for abolishing methods. As time passed, there was not a significant change in China's Xinjiang policies. Due to these factors, various nations started imposing numerous sanctions against China. Unfortunately, due to Chinese maneuvers and vast economic capacity, sanctions failed to neither inflict damage to China nor bring a change to the situation in Xinjiang. The mainstream effects of sanctions are not visible in Chinese policy-making compared to disadvantaged countries. China's reaction regarding combatting the impacts of sanctions is not solely a byproduct of its domestic policies and maneuvers. China's rise and defiant policies have shown that a formerly oppressed nation can take control of its own fate and oppose the pressures of its former oppressors. China uses this characteristic to form a newly rising political affiliation where oppressed nations can express their disapproval and contempt towards a hegemonic system that subjugates them and perpetuates the dynamics to consolidate this disadvantage. Nations discouraged from pursuing their fate with a promising future follow the trail China blazes and adhere to a similar rationale to justify their needs. China recognizes its leadership against the Western hegemonic system and

rallies nations to bring change and spread the risk of getting targeted exclusively. Altogether, this new partnership is expected to challenge the liberal international system. Therefore, the failure of sanctions, China's ambitions, foreign affairs, and security sensitivities should be considered before coming up with a solution regarding the problem in Xinjiang.



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Curriculum vitae

EDUCATION:

- **MASTER’S IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**
Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University
2021-Currently
- **BACHELOR OF HUMAN SCIENCES (POLITICAL SCIENCE)**
Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University
2018/22
- **BACHELOR OF HUMAN SCIENCES (PSYCHOLOGY)**
Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University
2016/20

PUBLICATIONS:

- **Afrika’da Yükselen Çin Varlığı: Bağımlılık Teorisi Bağlamında Bir Değerlendirme.**
Büyük Güç Rekabetinin Dirilişi: Abd-Çin Mücadelesine Bakış. Orion Akademi 2022.

EXPERIENCES:

- **Content writer.**
Gençler Ne Biliyor?, Türkiye 2020/21
- **Translator**
Freelancer, Türkiye 2019/20.