

# Xinjiang: China's western frontier in the heart of Eurasia

A special report from the *Australian Alert Service*

If the reader has heard of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in China, it is likely through lurid news media headlines about the alleged abuse and enslavement of its Uyghur ethnic inhabitants. The November 2020 – March 2021 *Australian Alert Service* series of eight articles assembled here, with an appendix of related material from the *AAS*, demystifies what is going on in and around Xinjiang, and why. We expose the Anglo-American fostering of terrorism in Xinjiang and sponsorship of “East Turkistan” separatism.



## Part 1. East-West gateway on the Silk Road

The Great Game and  
Mackinder's 'Heartland'  
From Silk Road to Land-Bridge  
The new Great Game  
The Xinjiang fulcrum

The ancient Silk Road crossed the mountains and deserts of the area of central Eurasia that is today's Xinjiang Region in China. In the 19th century, the doctrine of geopolitics arose from the British Empire's “Great Game” struggle to dominate this region and keep Russia from approaching India. Sun Yat-sen, the father of modern China, envisioned a better future through railway development, an outlook incorporated into President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative today.



## Part 2. The Arc of Crisis

Bernard Lewis and Zbigniew  
Brzezinski  
Geopolitics for the Cold War  
Operation Cyclone – Afghan  
Mujaheddin  
'He who sows the wind...'

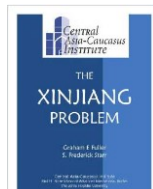


American National Security Advisors Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski revived geopolitics as policy in the 1970s, while the mastermind of an Arc of Crisis in Eurasia was the Anglo-American orientologist Bernard Lewis, also known as godfather of the neocons. Brzezinski wanted to destabilise the Soviet Union even at the risk of nuclear war, by backing Islamist guerrillas to strike at its “soft underbelly” in Central Asia. Thus began Operation Cyclone, CIA funding and weapons for the mujaheddin in Afghanistan.

## Part 3. Xinjiang becomes a target

Mujaheddin fan out  
CIA's 'marvellous' practices  
turned vs China

Foreign fighters came to combat Soviet forces in Afghanistan, 1979-88. They then continued as a presence there and in Pakistan, giving rise to al-Qaeda and turning up in combat from Bosnia to post-Soviet Central Asia to Syria. The CIA considered the mujaheddin operation against the USSR a success, which could be replicated against China. Establishment strategists began to probe ethnic tensions in Xinjiang as a vulnerability, as in the 2003 pamphlet *The Xinjiang Problem* by Graham E. Fuller and S. Frederick Starr.



## Part 4. Pan-Turkism

The Young Turks  
Central Asia between the Wars  
The 'Gladio' template  
Alparslan Turkes and the Grey  
Wolves  
Post-Soviet Pan-Turk revival

Pan-Turkist ideology, which seeks a Turkic-ethnic belt from the Mediterranean to Xinjiang, including a Uyghur entity, stems from a long history of Venetian and British Intelligence meddling in Turkey and Central Asia. Between the World Wars Pan-Turkism was a factor in struggles among British, Chinese, German and Soviet interests in Central Asia. After World War II the CIA used extreme Turkish nationalists, with radical Pan-Turkist views, as assets in the Cold War. From them came “Grey Wolves” terrorism. Pan-Turkist activity rose sharply after the collapse of the Soviet Union.



Continued next page

## Part 5. The Anglo-American-Saudi promotion of violent jihad

Wahhabite education, jihadist training  
The Central Asia blueprint  
Pakistani madrassas recruited Xinjiang Uyghurs



USA-UK-Saudi Arabia-Pakistan support for the mujaheddin fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan included Saudi-funded religious schools in Pakistan, meant as recruitment centres. They preached Wahhabism, the official Saudi form of Islam, which can include a fanatical interpretation of an obligation to kill non-believers; they trained violent jihadists—terrorists. With Chinese cross-border travel restrictions relaxed in 1978, young men from Xinjiang studied at the schools in Pakistan.

## Part 6. ‘Afghan’ jihadist terrorism comes to Xinjiang

The impact of Afghanistan on separatism in Xinjiang  
ETIM in Pakistan and Afghanistan  
Terror attacks in China  
International jihadis call for attacks on Xinjiang  
‘Foreign fighters’ from Xinjiang

Uyghur Islamist radicals in Xinjiang, some of them veterans of Afghanistan, launched disturbances and terrorism around 1990. Leaders of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) visited al-Qaeda chiefs in Pakistan, then set up their headquarters in Afghanistan, fleeing after 2001 when the USA invaded. ETIM leader Hasan Mahsum was killed in Pakistan in 2003. Uyghur separatist terrorism sharply escalated in China in 1996–97 and again in 2014. Al-Qaeda leaders have made solidarity videos for their “brothers in East Turkistan”, while ISIS wanted Xinjiang within its new Caliphate. Thousands of Uyghur fighters joined with ISIS against the Syrian government after 2011.



## Part 7. The ‘East Turkistan’ narrative

China moves to stop terrorism  
Intelligence agencies manipulate diasporas  
The CIA’s Captive Nations  
Project Democracy



Anglo-American strategists seized on China’s counterterror measures, which included mandatory deradicalisation programs and increased surveillance alongside huge investment in the economic betterment of Xinjiang, to drive a narrative of indiscriminate oppression of the Uyghur population. The Uyghur diaspora was targeted to play a role, on the model of the so-called Captive Nations during the Cold War, when the CIA adopted and deployed East European extreme nationalists, some of them ex-allies of the Nazis. Today’s National Endowment for Democracy (NED) plays the part of the Cold War CIA, and promotes “East Turkistan” separatism.



## Part 8. The ‘East Turkistan’ narrative (conclusion)

After the USSR  
Pan-Turk inroads in Central Asia  
Special-purpose NGOs  
The World Uyghur Congress  
The ‘East Turkistan Government in Exile’  
‘Peaceable’ groups whitewash terrorism  
A Belt and Road to the future

Pan-Turkist inroads in Central Asia after 1991 melded with Afghanistan-spawned Islamist terrorism, threatening China as its economic power grew. American “Project Democracy” institutions sponsor numerous Uyghur diaspora organisations. The World Uyghur Congress and the separatist East Turkistan Government(s) in Exile (there are several) claim to be peaceable, but many of their leaders, as individuals and for their groups, have solidarised with terrorists. They uniformly oppose the Belt and Road Initiative, which is raising standards of living in China and abroad. It should be clear, upon honest reflection, that one does not help the Uyghur people by attacking China.



## Appendix

Richard Bardon, “Uighur ‘mass detention’ reports fabricated by US, British propagandists”, AAS, 26 Sept. 2018.

Richard Bardon, “ASPI doubles down on Xinjiang ‘detention centre’ fakery”, AAS, 30 Sept. 2020.

Melissa Harrison, “ASPI: forced labour hypocrites and academic fraudsters”, AAS, 14 Oct. 2020.





## Xinjiang: China's western frontier in the heart of Eurasia

### Part 1. East-West gateway on the Silk Road

By Melissa Harrison and Rachel Douglas

If the reader has heard of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in China, it is likely through lurid news media headlines about the alleged abuse and enslavement of the area's Uyghur ethnic inhabitants. In this issue of the Australian Alert Service, we begin a new series of articles, aimed at demystifying what is going on in and around Xinjiang, and why.

This first article in the series briefly sketches the history of the region of which Xinjiang is part, and its position as the westernmost frontier area of modern China. Its place within China and astride the New Silk Road makes Xinjiang a target for Anglo-American strategists eager to destabilise China and wreck Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative. Subsequent articles will explore the history of "geopolitical" manoeuvring around Xinjiang, from the British Imperial "Great Game" in the 19th century, through the Anglo-American "Arc of Crisis" policy against the Soviet Union during the late Cold War, and up to the present. We will show that human rights concerns have been weaponised against China by outside intelligence agencies who care little for the population living in Xinjiang, but are using the age-old imperial techniques of fomenting ethnic and religious conflicts, separatism and terrorism to disrupt the society of a presumed adversary nation.

On the southern side of the Eurasian landmass, about halfway across it from West to East, the Indian tectonic plate of Earth's crust is gradually moving northward, subducting under the Eurasian plate. Over the past 40 or 50 million years, this collision has thrust up what are now the highest mountain ranges on Earth: the long arc of the Himalayas, reaching from far northeast India, westward to Afghanistan; west and northwest of the Himalayas are the Karakoram Range in China, India and Pakistan, Afghanistan's Hindu Kush, and the Pamirs centred in Tajikistan; and extending eastward from the Pamirs is the Tian Shan Range (Chinese: Mountains of Heaven), in Kyrgyzstan and western China. Between these towering mountain ranges are a few fertile valleys and several high plateaus, some of which are steppe (unforested

grassland) and others large deserts.

These mountains and plateaus have been called High Asia, or the Roof of the World. Located there are small Himalayan countries like Bhutan and Nepal, Afghanistan, three of the four nations of Central Asia proper (former Soviet republics Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and part of Uzbekistan), parts of India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Mongolia, and two provinces of China—Tibet, and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Xinjiang is bisected east-west by the Tian Shan mountains, with the steppe area to their north called Dzungaria or "Northern Xinjiang", while to the south are the Tarim River Basin and the 337,000 km<sup>2</sup> Taklamakan Desert.

Though sparsely populated, this region has played an important role in the economic and cultural history of the planet, as well as being fiercely contested by major powers—Eurasian ones, and outsiders like Britain and the USA—over the most recent several centuries. The ancient Silk Road trade routes between China and Europe skirted the Taklamakan Desert along both its northern and southern edges.

Xinjiang, like adjacent Central Asia, has been populated by various peoples over the ages. Two thousand years ago an ancient Indo-European people called the Tocharians, their language akin to many Indian subcontinent and European tongues, developed agriculture around oases in the Taklamakan Desert. For a thousand years, various nomadic tribes, larger powers based in Mongolia, and Chinese dynasties successively controlled parts of the area. Around AD 1000, Turkic peoples professing Islam moved in, and dominated until the Mongol Empire, having conquered China, began to rampage westward across Eurasia in the 13th century. (As a forerunner of international imperial meddling in central Eurasia, the financier-run city-state of Venice, ancestor of the City of London and Wall Street, provided banking, a slave market, and intelligence services for the Mongol Khans.) In 1209 a small state centred near modern Urumqi in northern Xinjiang and ruled by ethnic Uyghurs, a Turkic people, swore allegiance to the Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan.

In 1759, with the Qing Dynasty's conquest of the Dzungar Khanate, a remnant of the Mongol Empire, the area became a lasting part of China and was named

"Xinjiang", meaning approximately "new borderland".

#### The Great Game and Mackinder's 'Heartland'

As the Qing Dynasty weakened in the 19th century, including under the pressure of Britain's Opium Wars against China, it experienced various uprisings. In Xinjiang, the clashes were not only between the Chinese central government and Turkic



Ancient Silk Road routes (yellow) ran west from Xian (here labelled with an old name, Chang'an), skirted the Taklamakan Desert on both edges, reunited at Kashgar (Kashi), and crossed the mountains to the Fergana Valley, which had overland connections to the Mediterranean Sea. Source: Wikipedia—Kelvin Case (spellings are German).

ethnic groups, but also among the latter. The Dungan Revolt of 1862-77, for example, was led by Yaqub Beg from the Khanate of Kokand in modern Uzbekistan; establishing a breakaway state around Kashgar (Kashi) at the western end of the Taklamakan Desert, he had some Xinjiang Uyghurs in his army, while other Uyghurs allied with the Qing and fought against him. Clashes between different Muslim Sufi brotherhoods were another factor in the uprising. The British and Ottoman Empires both recognised Yaqub Beg's regime and sent their intelligence liaisons to him.

In the 19th-early 20th-century period, another strategic confrontation on the Roof of the World came into play, between the British and Russian empires. Britain was forever trying to expand its control over the continent from its staging ground in India, while British strategists were always fearful about real or imagined Russian designs on India, the Jewel in the Crown of the British Empire. The struggle between England and Russia to dominate this strategically important and resource-rich region became known as the "Great Game".<sup>1</sup>

In 1904 Halford Mackinder, the British geographer and father of so-called "geopolitics", presented *The Geographical Pivot of History* to the British Royal Geographical Society. He proclaimed Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Russia to be the "pivot area" of world geopolitics, also calling it the "Eurasian Heartland". Mackinder declared that whoever controlled the Heartland would command the world.

Mackinder's Heartland theory was highly influential on successive geopoliticians, including American national security advisors in the Cold War like Henry Kissinger (under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford in 1969-75), the man who later said he had "kept the British Foreign Office better informed and more closely engaged than I did the American State Department", and Zbigniew Brzezinski (1977-81 under President Jimmy Carter).

Brzezinski was a Polish-American geostrategist, diplomat, and co-founder of the Trilateral Commission international policy group. As Carter's advisor, he escalated US hostility towards the Soviet Union, including covert Central Intelligence Agency funding and arming of Afghan mujaheddin (anti-Soviet militants). In 1978 he called for stepped-up American activity along an "Arc of Crisis" on the Soviet Union's southern perimeter. Academic allies of Brzezinski churned out books on the potential of Turkic and other Islamic insurgencies to slash up the "soft underbelly of the Soviet Union"; *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State*, for example, appeared in 1983 from Sorbonne Prof. Alexandre Benigsen, one of Brzezinski's mentors.

Kissinger, in his 1994 book *Diplomacy*, insisted that the USA remain focussed on Eurasia even after the Cold War had ended, warning in a mixture of Mackinder's doctrine and the 19th-century European "balance of power" politics he himself adores: "Geopolitically, America is an Island off the shore of a large landmass of Eurasia, where resources and population far exceed the United States. The domination by a single power of either of Eurasia's two principle spheres—Europe or Asia—remains a good definition of strategic danger to America.... For such a grouping would have the capability to outstrip America economically, and the end, militarily."

In *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (1997), Brzezinski wrote that after 500 years as the centre of world power, Eurasia was still "the chessboard on which the struggle for global primacy

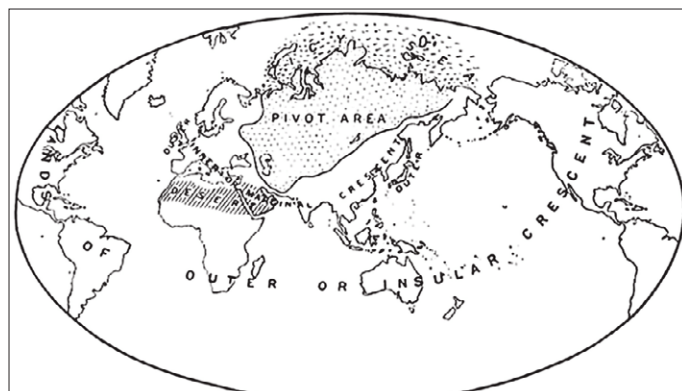


Diagram from Halford Mackinder's *The Geographical Pivot of History* (1904). "Heartland" was his other name for "Pivot Area", while the maritime "crescents" were dubbed by other geopoliticians "the Rimland". Photo: Wikipedia.

continues to be played.... It is imperative that no Eurasian challenger emerges, capable of dominating Eurasia and thus also of challenging America."

On the centenary of Mackinder's influential paper, British historian Paul Kennedy wrote in the *Guardian* (19 June 2004) that Soviet domination of the "Heartland" during the Cold War had revived Mackinder's theories. Now, he added, "with hundreds of thousands of US troops in the Eurasian rimlands and with an administration [of President George W. Bush] constantly explaining why it has to stay the course, it looks as if Washington is taking seriously Mackinder's injunction to ensure control of 'the geographical pivot of history'."

### From Silk Road to Land-Bridge

The ancient Silk Road network of trade routes connected China and the Far East with Europe and the Middle East, starting around 130 BC when China found a link to the Mediterranean Sea via the Fergana Valley in the Pamir Mountains. The caravan routes would develop and fall out of use repeatedly, with the succession of empires at both ends, always traversing vast expanses of difficult terrain. They facilitated world-altering exchanges of art, religion, science and language.

In the 19th century, a major reason for the Great Game and Mackinder's geopolitical doctrine was that American economists and their followers in Russia and elsewhere had begun infrastructure-building projects to revive and modernise these ancient trade routes. If railways were built across Eurasia, that modern, fast means of transport would challenge "Britannia Rules the Seas"—Britain's supremacy in international trade as a maritime "Rimland" power, in geopolitical terms.

Henry C. Carey, economic advisor to American President Abraham Lincoln, promoted such railway construction. Lincoln himself had advocated economic opportunity for all citizens, government-funded infrastructure projects, protection for industry and family farmers, and the first American Transcontinental Railroad (completed in 1869, four years after his assassination). Carey and his circle of American nationalists championed cooperation among sovereign nations on ambitious infrastructure projects, driving the transformation of other countries into powerful industrial nation-states which could improve the lives of their citizens. He envisioned world-wide electrification, industrialisation of Russia and China with thousands of railway lines, and Germany becoming a superpower and America's partner in world development. Carey denounced British imperialism, in particular Britain's policy of destroying China with opium and Britain's "work of annihilation"—the occupation and devastation of India.

Carey's circle directly influenced policy-making in

1. Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim* (1901) popularised the term "Great Game". Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (NY: Kodansha International, 1992) is a thorough history of these 19th-century military and intelligence-agency struggles.



Russia, then led by Lincoln's Civil War ally Tsar Alexander II. A Carey ally proposed to secure the Tsar's support for a Russian-American joint project to construct a railway from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean.<sup>2</sup> By participating in international railway projects, Russia itself would be strengthened and unified.

Alexander II was assassinated in 1881, but Finance Minister Count Sergei Witte, a student of the American System of productive credit,<sup>3</sup> got the Trans-Siberian Railway built in 1891-1916, with a spur into northeastern China added in 1897-1902 under a concession from the Qing government of Imperial China. These projects, together with German plans for the Berlin-to-Baghdad Railway, were Mackinder's nightmare. They helped motivate Britain to instigate provocations and diplomatic manoeuvres, leading to World War I.

But the genie of Eurasian economic development was out of the bottle, and it inspired the best thinkers in China, as well.

The father of modern China, Sun Yat-sen, studied in America in his youth and was inspired by Abraham Lincoln's practical political and economic policies. Dr Sun's 1924 book *Three Principles of the People* was inspired not only by Confucian teachings, but also by the concept of "government of the people, by the people, for the people", presented in Lincoln's famous 1863 Gettysburg Address. This was a connection that "Sun never failed to present, proudly, to any audience".<sup>4</sup>

In the 1920s Sun proposed an immense infrastructure program of railways, roads and river projects for rapid agro-industrial and manufacturing development of all China. He advocated constant improvement of citizens' livelihoods through public infrastructure, scientific progress, and technologically advanced transportation and agriculture, saying, "We must use the great power of the state and imitate the United States' methods."

Like Carey, Sun staunchly opposed British imperial policies, correctly predicting in his book *The Vital Problem of China* (1917) that if China joined the Allies in World War I, "whether the Allies will win or not, China will be Britain's victim." Britain, which financed loans to support Sun's adversaries,<sup>5</sup> divided China up as spoils of war at the post-WWI Versailles Conference.

Reflecting the nation-building beliefs of Lincoln and Carey, Sun wrote: "If we want China to rise to power, we must not only restore our national standing, but we must also assume a great responsibility towards the world. ... If China, when she becomes strong, wants to crush other countries, copy the Powers' imperialism, and go their road, we will just be following in their tracks. ... Only if we 'rescue the weak and lift up the fallen' will we be carrying out the divine obligation of our nation."

Today's China continues Sun Yat-sen's nation-building projects. In 2016 Chinese President Xi Jinping honoured Sun Yat-sen, declaring that Communist Party of China (CPC) members were faithful successors of Sun's revolutionary undertakings, in pursuit of a "rejuvenated China that he had dreamed of".



Sun Yat-sen, father of modern China. Photo: Wikipedia

## The new Great Game

In the 1990s China revived the idea of a "New Silk Road" or "New Eurasian Land-Bridge", made up of ambitious rail and transportation projects. The Anglo-American powers reacted just as furiously against the prospect of sovereign nations cooperating to industrialise the Eurasian Heartland, as when the British

Empire had conspired against Carey's nation-building goals a century prior.

A pivotal conference took place 7-9 May 1996 in Beijing, themed "Economic Development of the Regions along the New Euro-Asia Continental Bridge". Chinese speakers were joined by leading specialists from Iran, Russia and other Eurasian nations to discuss proposals for cooperation on ambitious infrastructure projects of high-speed railways, ports and agro-industrial corridors. Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder of the international Schiller Institute, spoke on "Building the Silk Road Land-Bridge: The Basis for the Mutual Security Interests of Asia and Europe", emphasising that the Land-Bridge could be the backbone of "a grand design for peace through development" and a cultural renaissance.

Also present at that event was Sir Leon Brittan, the former UK Home Secretary under Margaret Thatcher who was then the European Union's commissioner for foreign relations. Eyewitnesses observed Brittan's distress at Zepp-LaRouche's speech and reported that he violated normal diplomatic behaviour in his zeal to disrupt the conference, threatening the Chinese with retaliation if they dared operate outside the global financial markets and the policy parameters of international agencies like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organisation. In November 1996 former PM Thatcher herself travelled to Beijing for a conference on economics, where she inveighed against China for alleged human rights violations and provocatively referred to Taiwan as an independent county.<sup>6</sup>

As China's Land-Bridge policy began to be realised, Gerald Segal of the UK's flagship think tanks, the International Institute for Strategic Studies and the Royal Institute of International Affairs, campaigned against it. In a 1994 article for the New York Council on Foreign Relations journal *Foreign Affairs*, Segal presented a map of China reduced to about half its current size, dividing the rest into independent states of Tibet, East Turkestan (Xinjiang), Mongolia and Manchuria. (Similarly, Brzezinski's 1997 *Chessboard* projected a breakup of Russia into three chunks.) The pompous Segal's favourite theme was China's coming irrelevance; his last article before dying in 1999 was "Does China Matter?" in *Foreign Affairs*. But shortly before the 1996 Eurasian Land-Bridge event in Beijing he came to Canberra to chair a conference, where he demanded a new Asia-Pacific "balance of powers" alliance to contain China.

6. Jeffrey Steinberg, "The Thatcher gang is out to wreck Clinton China policy", *EIR*, 11 Apr. 1997.

2. Anton Chaitkin, "The 'land-bridge': Henry Carey's global development program", *EIR*, 2 May 1997, details these international efforts.

3. Robert Barwick, "The Hamiltonian Revolution", in *Time for Glass-Steagall Banking Separation and a National Bank!* (Australian Citizens Party: 2018) introduces American System principles of national economy. Available at [citizensparty.org.au/publications](http://citizensparty.org.au/publications).

4. Michael O. Billington, "Hamilton influenced Sun Yat-Sen's founding of the Chinese Republic", *EIR*, 3 Jan. 1992.

5. "British interests and Chinese nationalism", UK National Archives, The Cabinet Papers.

In September 2013, speaking in Kazakhstan, Xi Jinping further developed the Eurasian Land-Bridge concept, unveiling his plan for “an economic belt along the Silk Road”. With the addition of the “Maritime Silk Road” concept, which he presented the next month in Indonesia, Xi’s initiative was named “One Belt One Road”, and then the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In the spirit of Henry Carey’s vision, it involves cooperation among more than sixty countries. Following Sun Yat-sen, it entails a vast network of railways, energy pipelines, highways, ports, and other infrastructure in China, connecting to and developing the economic potential of Central Asia. No longer would this area of the continent be Mackinder’s geopolitical “Heartland”, as it would become a linchpin of the “Silk Road Economic Belt”.

China experts can recognise the BRI’s impact as a momentous shift towards new geoeconomic realities, absent in the old Great Game geopolitics. The authors of a 2018 paper, for example, discussed this shift in terms of a “New Great Game”, in which China shapes regional ties that influence the geopoliticians’ “Heartland” region in a primarily geoeconomic strategy—promoting trade, securing energy supplies and building cross-border infrastructure. China has become the largest trading partner of the Central Asia republics, the key region to reconnect Europe and larger Eurasia along the old Silk Road. These authors wrote: “China has built more highways, railroads, and bridges than any other country over the past two decades. Armed with this engineering expertise and construction experience, China has been building an extensive transport and municipal infrastructure projects in some of its Asian neighbours and faraway African countries. ... While the original ‘Great Game’ carried a negative connotation regarding the territories controlled by both the British and Russian Empires, can a new ‘Great Game’ featuring China as the key player produce a different set of outcomes for all parties concerned?”<sup>7</sup>

### The Xinjiang fulcrum

As a crossroad of the ancient Silk Road, Xinjiang has been a meeting place of many different cultures and faiths. It still is, with an ethnically mixed population of diverse religious background: as of the 2010 census, it was approximately 45 per cent Uyghurs, 40 per cent Han Chinese, 6.5 per cent Kazakhs, and 2.5 per cent Hui. The Uyghurs and Kazakhs are Turkic peoples with a centuries-long religious tradition of Islam. “Hui Muslims” is a broad category, covering people of various ethnic origin who generally speak Chinese.

The region is still thinly populated, despite significant immigration of Han Chinese under economic policies of the past 40 years of reforms. Xinjiang’s territory of 1.66 million km<sup>2</sup> has a population of about 25 million: 15 people per square kilometre. For comparison, 83 million people live in similarly sized Iran, a population density of around 50 per square kilometre—more than triple that of Xinjiang.

At the 1996 Beijing Land-Bridge conference, nearly two decades before announcement of the BRI, Chinese official Gui Lintao from the ancient Chinese capital city and Silk Road terminus Xian, set forth a perspective for Xinjiang’s development on the “modern Silk Road”: “The Chinese government has ... enabled a large number of demobilised officials and soldiers, young students, government officials and



The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of far western China is near the centre of the Eurasian landmass. Map: voanews.com

professionals from coastal and inland areas, to join the economic construction in the West. As a result, the Xinjiang railway line has been built up and a number of outposts, buried deep under the desert along the ancient Silk Road, are now shining like dazzling pearls along the Continental Bridge.”<sup>8</sup>

Speaking on China Arab TV in July 2019, Xinjiang regional government official Zhang Chunlin termed Xinjiang “the core region of the Silk Road Economic Belt”. He reported on its infrastructure development: “We have opened 111 [road] routes connecting with five surrounding countries. ... In terms of railways, Urumqi has been connected to the hinterland’s high-speed rail network. The Hami-Ejina and Karamay-Tacheng railways have both begun operation. At the same time, we are building three new railways—the Korla-Golmud, Altay-Fuyun-Zhundong and Hotan-Ruoqiang lines. These three railways will add 2,013 kilometres to the growing regional network. In the past five years, a total of 925 kilometres of lines have been built.... By 2022, the length of railways in Xinjiang will exceed 8,000 kilometres. ... Seventeen cross-border optical cables have been put into service in Xinjiang, connecting China with neighbouring countries such as Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.”

Zhang went on to detail Silk Road “dry ports” for trade with Central Asia and Europe through Kazakhstan, and other cross-border cooperation in industry, people-to-people exchanges, and soft infrastructure like science, medicine, and education. Xinjiang has reduced poverty by nearly 20 per cent and added half a million urban jobs annually in the past decade, according to official figures.

Xinjiang is strategically situated as the main overland gateway to Europe and Central and West Asia, functioning as the BRI’s “fulcrum” and the largest logistical centre of all countries within the BRI. It is the gateway for economic development of the heart of Eurasia.

The current Anglo-American assault against Xinjiang uses relentless propaganda, intelligence-agency-backed “human rights” crusaders and separatist insurgents, with the grim objective of destroying this fulcrum of the Belt and Road Initiative. Just as the British Empire conspired against Henry Carey’s vision, international media today are running a propaganda campaign to justify public censure and economic sanctions against China. British, American and Australian China-hawks aim to derail Xinjiang’s development and threaten its viability as the Eurasian Land-Bridge gateway to sovereign nation-building. Prosperity threatens the obsolete doctrines of geopolitics and balance of power.

7. Xiangming Chen, Fakhmiddin Fazilov, “Re-centering Central Asia: China’s ‘New Great Game’ in the old Eurasian Heartland”, *Nature*, 19 June 2018.

8. Excerpted in *The Eurasian Land-Bridge: The ‘New Silk Road’—locomotive for worldwide economic development*, EIR Special Report, 1997.





## Xinjiang: China's western frontier in the heart of Eurasia Part 2. The Arc of Crisis

By Melissa Harrison and Rachel Douglas

Part 1 of this series, in the AAS of 18 November, sketched the history of the area in central Eurasia that today is China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Sitting astride the New Silk Road, Xinjiang is a target for Anglo-American strategists eager to destabilise China.

For most of three decades beginning in 1990, and particularly 1997-2014, there was unrest in Xinjiang, ranging from the seizure of government buildings by separatists demanding independence for Xinjiang as "East Turkistan", to thousands of acts of terrorism, including car and bus bombings, assassinations of government officials and non-terrorist leaders in the Uyghur ethnic and Muslim religious communities, and attempts to hijack and blow up aircraft. Who were the groups that took credit for these acts? Where did they come from? In Part 2, we trace the Xinjiang destabilisation's relatively recent roots in Anglo-American policies since the 1970s.

The British Empire fought in the 19th century to control the "Roof of the World"—central Eurasia, north of the continent's high mountain ranges. The area was of strategic and economic importance, being traversed by the ancient Silk Road trade routes and famous throughout centuries, even before the discovery of enormous reserves of the fossil fuels and mineral resources used in modern industry, for its deposits of gemstones like jade (Xinjiang) and lapis lazuli (Afghanistan) and precious metals, including gold. But an overriding motive for Britain's engagement in Eurasia's central interior between 200 and 100 years ago was to block extension of the Russian Empire southwards to British India. More than a century of this military and intelligence-agency skirmishing, known as the Great Game, culminated in British geographer Halford Mackinder's doctrine of "geopolitics" and its on-the-ground implementation, World War I. Part 1 showed how the geopoliticians' insistence on the need to control the Eurasian "heartland" was driven by fear that major powers like Germany and Russia—with China potentially joining in—could develop Eurasia through transcontinental railway construction, thus challenging the sea-trade-based economic power of the British Empire.

In the 1970s the Great Game underwent a modern re-branding as the "Arc of Crisis" doctrine.

### Bernard Lewis and Zbigniew Brzezinski

The new version of the old theory was officially launched by Zbigniew Brzezinski in 1978-79, as national security advisor to US President Jimmy Carter. The Islamic Revolution that would oust the Shah of Iran in 1979 was unfolding, but Brzezinski wanted to turn attention to Russia. Under the headline "Iran: The Crescent of Crisis" in *Time* magazine of 15 January 1979, he was quoted from a recent speech, warning that "an arc of crisis stretches along the shores of the Indian Ocean, with fragile social and political structures in a region of vital importance to us threatened with fragmentation. The resulting political chaos could well be filled by elements hostile to our values and sympathetic to our adversaries."

The mastermind of the Arc of Crisis was a more shadowy figure: Bernard Lewis, a British historian of Southwest Asia and

former intelligence officer.

After World War II stints in the British Army's Intelligence Corps and then the Foreign Office, Lewis was based for 25 years at the School of Oriental Studies, University of London. In 1974, at age 57, he transplanted himself to the United States, accepting a Princeton University position with a light teaching load that allowed him maximum time for influencing American foreign policy. The October (1973) War between Israel and its Arab neighbours had just shocked the world, as an oil exports embargo by Arab oil producers sent prices skyrocketing.

Lewis churned out books on the history of Islam, with an emphasis on political aspects and potential conflict with the West. More and more, he promoted his vision of a fracturing of all the countries in the region from the Middle East to India, along ethnic, sectarian, and linguistic lines. Known as the Bernard Lewis Plan, this design was nearly identical to Brzezinski's Arc of Crisis.

Lewis forced the Arc of Crisis onto the agenda of an April 1979 meeting of the secretive Bilderberg Group,<sup>1</sup> just three months after the notorious *Time* magazine cover story. The meeting heard one paper titled "Implications for the West of Instability in the Middle East" and discussed the "arc of instability" from several angles.<sup>2</sup> The presenter of the "Instability" paper cited ethnic tension as a major cause of it, enumerated ethnic minorities within countries across the region, and took note that many of these groups might seek autonomy. The behind-closed-doors discussants zeroed in on fears that the Soviet Union could obtain strategic advantages amid Eurasian instability, as well as such topics as how easy it is to induce American politicians to do something, if it appears to be standing up to Moscow. The aroma of Brzezinski's scheme to turn Islamic ferment against the Soviet Union hung in the air.

In 1982 Bernard Lewis would be naturalised as a US citizen. In 1992 he updated the Bernard Lewis Plan for the post-Soviet period, foreseeing fragmentation and conflict



*Time* magazine's 15 Jan. 1979 cover story led with Zbigniew Brzezinski's declaration on an "Arc of Crisis" and featured an interview with Henry Kissinger and a scenario for the breakaway of "Baluchistan" from Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. The Russian bear, looming over an Islamic crescent across the Middle East, left nothing to the imagination. Photo: Amazon.com

1. "Bilderberg cult plots oil war: *EIR* publishes scheduled attendance at Austrian gathering", *Executive Intelligence Review*, 24 April 1979. The participants' list and information about Lewis's intervention for the agenda change were conveyed to *EIR* by a source in Europe before the meeting took place.

2. A document labelled "Bilderberger Meetings: Baden Conference, 27-29 April 1979" is posted on [wikispooks.com](http://wikispooks.com) under the heading "Bilderberg Conference Report 1979". Its authenticity is not verifiable from that source, but the participant list, texts and discussion summaries are consistent with what *EIR* had reported days beforehand.

throughout the Middle East and eastward into Eurasia.<sup>3</sup> He was so closely identified with scenarios for American involvement in wars in this region, that he is also known as a “godfather of the neocons”, short for the “neoconservative” grouping that led the charge for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. On Lewis’s 90th birthday, in 2006, leading neocon warmonger Vice President Dick Cheney hailed him as the greatest living authority on the Middle East, the Ottoman Empire, and Islam.

Though not present at the 1979 Austrian meeting, Brzezinski was also a member of the Bilderberg Club, while simultaneously promoting his ideas through the Trilateral Commission (TLC). He had co-founded the TLC, which supported several cabinet members to the Carter Administration. Both organisations are extra-governmental frameworks in which powerful financial interests and their political hangers-on regularly convene to thrash out strategies, which may then turn up as government policies in countries where they have control or leverage.

As noted in Part 1, Brzezinski also drew on the work of Sorbonne (Paris) Prof. Alexandre Bennigsen and other academics on the potential of Turkic and other Islamic insurgencies to slash up the “soft underbelly of the Soviet Union”. He was guided by his own ideology as a Polish émigré profoundly hostile to Russia, and as a follower of Mackinder’s geopolitics. Brzezinski’s fanaticism on these issues as a Carter Administration official made many Americans think he was crazy; average citizens called him Woody Woodpecker, while some analysts, alarmed by his geopolitical scenarios, dubbed him “Tweedledum” to his predecessor as national security advisor Henry Kissinger’s “Tweedledee”.

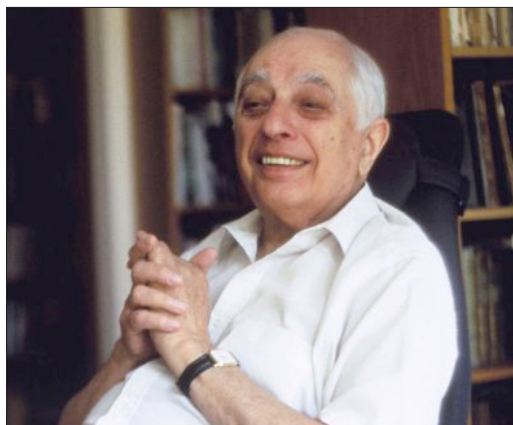
Later in 1979, Brzezinski would organise tangible American aid to Islamist fighters in Afghanistan—known as the mujaheddin—first against a Soviet-allied government that had seized power in April 1978, and then against Soviet forces directly, after they entered the country in December 1979. The weapons supplies and covert support from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) were code-named Operation Cyclone.

### Geopolitics for the Cold War

The 1979 Soviet intervention in Afghanistan came at the end of a tumultuous decade. Its signature event was in August 1971, when US President Richard Nixon was induced by Wall Street interests to end the 1944 Bretton Woods monetary system, instituting floating currency exchange rates to replace the dollar reserve system with the US dollar’s value pegged to the price of gold. The new arrangement opened the floodgates to waves of financial speculation that haven’t ended since then, and the decoupling of finance from real economic development has provoked one economic crisis after another.

In 1973-74 the October War and subsequent oil price shock hugely boosted speculative flows in the so-called eurodollar market—American dollars circulating offshore, including through oil sales. In 1974 nearly every government in Western Europe fell, and President Nixon was forced out of office in the Watergate scandal. The United States was still extricating itself from more than a decade of war in Vietnam, which had caused turmoil at home and helped set the stage for Nixon’s ouster.

In this setting, the New York Council on Foreign Relations



British intelligence orientologist Bernard Lewis (left) and Polish-born US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski were the architects of the Carter Administration’s “Arc of Crisis” policy, which gave rise to modern Islamist terrorist groups out of the mujaheddin insurgents in Afghanistan. Photos: Twitter; EIR

(CFR), little brother of the UK’s Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA or Chatham House), generated, out of its 1971-73 Council Study Group on International Order, a series of strategic studies named “Project 1980s”. One of its major themes was that the time had come for a strategic policy of “controlled disintegration”. Brzezinski’s Arc of Crisis and the Bernard Lewis Plan fit the bill.

What the CFR and allied strategists wanted to forestall above all was any bid to return to US President Franklin Roosevelt’s original conception of Bretton Woods and the post-World War II world: economic development of newly independent former colonies and peaceful relations with the Soviet Union, partner of the USA and its allies in the anti-fascist coalition. With the death of Roosevelt (FDR) in 1945, Winston Churchill and other leading British figures, with their henchmen in the USA, typified by the Dulles brothers (Secretary of State [1953-59] John Foster Dulles and CIA Chief [1953-61] Allen Dulles), engineered the Cold War.<sup>4</sup> They fought viciously against any hint that a US President would revive elements of FDR’s legacy.<sup>5</sup>

Cold War anti-communism had landed the United States in Vietnam, the “land war in Asia”, against which Gen. Douglas MacArthur had sternly warned. The Cold War’s “red scare” hysteria, meanwhile, provided an excuse for Allen Dulles and his CIA, throughout the 1950s-1960s, to nurture certain long-term capabilities, which would be deployed decades later in Eurasia and elsewhere. These included a “stay-behind” network of former Nazi collaborators working under CIA and NATO control in Europe, called Gladio; it ran the period of coup plots and terrorism known as the strategy of tension, in 1970s Italy.<sup>6</sup> Another set of organisations cultivated during these decades were ethnically defined “Captive Nations” and “Unrepresented Peoples”—groups of emigres from the Soviet Union and socialist Eastern Europe.

These capabilities came into play in the 1970s, when the Arc of Crisis policy frowned on any genuine East-West co-operation, like the huge deals West German leaders signed in Moscow in 1978 for the development of Siberia. The advocates of “controlled disintegration” preferred destabilising the Soviet Union, even at the risk of a global showdown and nuclear war. Zbigniew Brzezinski was the man for the job.

4. *The British Empire’s European Union*, Citizens Electoral Council of Australia pamphlet (2016), gives a history of the Cold War’s launch.

5. Anton Chaitkin, “The coup, then and now”, *Australian Almanac*, Vol. 8, Nos. 14-18 (2017), tells this story.

6. Claudio Celani, “Strategy of Tension: The Case of Italy”, *EIR* dossier, March-April 2004; Allen Douglas, “Italy’s Black Prince: Terror War against the Nation-State”, *EIR*, 4 Feb. 2005.

3. Bernard Lewis, “Rethinking the Middle East”, *Foreign Affairs* (New York Council on Foreign Relations), Fall 1992.



There would be a “new and nicer” policy from the Trilateral Commission’s Carter Administration, dubbed “Project Democracy”, the forerunner of “colour revolutions” for regime change, and covert operations would be stepped up to subvert potential adversaries in the tradition of the Great Game, starting with Russia.

### Operation Cyclone – Afghan Mujaheddin

The Soviet-allied People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan, which carried out a coup in April 1978 against President Mohammed Daoud Khan (a cousin of the King of Afghanistan, whom they had supported Daoud Khan in overthrowing in 1973), was soon faced with resistance from various parts of the countryside, while faction fights and assassinations split the PDPA.

Chairing an October 1979 meeting with CIA officials, Brzezinski laid out the case for stepping up aid to these insurgents. According to State Department records, he “stressed the political importance of demonstrating to Saudi Arabian leaders that we were serious in opposing Soviet inroads in Afghanistan and the likelihood that a substantial commitment of assistance on our part would result in increased Saudi willingness to provide support.” The minutes report, “The committee concluded by endorsing unanimously a proposal for [amount not declassified] of additional aid for Afghan rebels, to be provided primarily through Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in the form of cash, communications equipment, non-military supplies and procurement advice.”<sup>7</sup>

On 26 December 1979, the day after Soviet Airborne Troops had landed in the capital, Kabul, and the day before Soviet ground forces moved into the country, Brzezinski wrote a memo to President Carter, motivating stepped-up weapons and other support to the insurgents. He argued explicitly that the USA must play the role Britain had played during the Great Game, to prevent fulfillment of “the age-long dream of Moscow to have direct access to the Indian Ocean”.<sup>8</sup>

Amid debate years later over whether or not the United States had deliberately lured the Soviet Union into Afghanistan, Brzezinski admitted that he had wanted to do exactly that. Asked by a French reporter whether the Carter Administration had wanted to “provoke” a Soviet intervention, Brzezinski replied, “It wasn’t quite like that. We didn’t push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would.”

Asked if he regretted those actions, Brzezinski doubled down: “Regret what? That secret operation was an excellent idea.” This referred to a Brzezinski-inspired secret “finding” by President Carter in July, which served as the go-ahead for aid to the insurgents, six months before the Soviet intervention.

Said Brzezinski, “It had the effect of *drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap* and you want me to regret it? ... [F]or almost 10 years, Moscow had to carry on a war that was unsustainable for the regime, a conflict that bought about the demoralisation and finally the breakup of the Soviet empire.”<sup>9</sup>

Operation Cyclone, lasting 1979-89, was financed at up to US\$630 million a year. Often the funding was matched by Saudi Arabia, for a total of around \$1 billion.<sup>10</sup> Britain’s

intelligence agency, MI6, engaged alongside the CIA’s Operation Cyclone in Afghanistan, in covert training and support for guerrilla operations and, increasingly, radical Islamist fighters.

### ‘He who sows the wind...’

From the middle of the Operation Cyclone period dates al-Yamamah, the \$48 billion Anglo-Saudi oil-for-arms deal, Britain’s biggest arms contract ever, arranged in 1985 by former UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan. Later stages of al-Yamamah were negotiated by Bandar’s close personal friend, Prince Charles. Under al-Yamamah, British defence contractor BAE Systems supplied fighter jets and infrastructure to the Saudi Air Force in exchange for 600,000 barrels of oil per day—one full oil tanker—for every day of the life of the contract, which as of 2005 had netted BAE Systems £43 billion. Beyond that declared profit, al-Yamamah generated a secret US\$100 billion-plus off-the-books slush fund, which was used to finance coups d’état, assassinations, and terrorism—including the creation of the al-Qaeda terror network in Afghanistan and, ultimately, al-Qaeda’s 9/11 attacks in the USA.<sup>11</sup>

It is no secret that Anglo-American cultivation and backing of the mujaheddin in Afghanistan gave rise to al-Qaeda and, later, the so-called Islamic State (ISIS). British author Mark Curtis, in his 2011 book *Secret Affairs: Britain’s Collusion with Radical Islam* (Profile Books: 2010), documented decades of British intelligence collusion with terrorists, including al-Qaeda.

The battlefield support against Soviet forces in Afghanistan was paralleled, and augmented, by a massive Saudi program to build mosques and Islamic schools worldwide, to promote a radical form of Wahhabism, the state religion in Saudi Arabia. This deliberate spread of Wahhabism became a major source of terrorists throughout the Middle East, the Caucasus region, and into Central Asia, as our Part 5 will describe.

Zbigniew Brzezinski didn’t mind. “Do you regret having supported Islamic fundamentalism, which has given arms and advice to future terrorists?” the French reporter asked him in 1998. Brzezinski replied, “What is more important in world history? The Taliban [Islamist radicals in Afghanistan] or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some agitated Moslems or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the cold war?” That is typical geopolitical thinking.

The detrimental outcomes of covert CIA support for terrorist insurgencies were well summarised by American Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard (Democrat of Hawaii) in a January 2017 speech: “Under US law it is illegal for any American to provide money or assistance to al-Qaeda, ISIS or other terrorist groups. If an American citizen gave money, weapons or support to al-Qaeda or ISIS, he or she would be thrown in jail. Yet the US government has been violating this law for years, quietly supporting allies and partners of al-Qaeda, ISIS, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham and other terrorist groups with money, weapons, and intelligence support, in their fight to overthrow the Syrian government. The CIA has also been funneling weapons and money through Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar and others who provide direct and indirect support to groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda.”<sup>12</sup>

### In Part 3: Xinjiang becomes a target.

11. *To Stop a Near-term Terror Attack, Read the ‘28 Pages’!* (2016) and *Stop MI5/MI6-run Terrorism!* (2017) are Citizens Electoral Council pamphlets, containing detailed histories and consequences of al-Yamamah. At [citizensparty.org.au/publications](http://citizensparty.org.au/publications).

12. “*Stop Arming Terrorists*”, 13 Jan. 2017, [gabbard.house.gov](http://gabbard.house.gov).

7. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume XII, Afghanistan*, Office of the Historian, US Department of State.

8. Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Reflections on Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan”, Memorandum for the President, 26 Dec. 1979, held in the National Security Archive at the George Washington University.

9. Interview with *Le Nouvel Observateur* (Paris), 15-21 Jan. 1998, tr. by William Blum and David N. Gibbs. It is online at [dgibbs.faculty.arizona.edu/brzezinski\\_interview](http://dgibbs.faculty.arizona.edu/brzezinski_interview).

10. Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, Yale University Press, 1992.



## Xinjiang: China's western frontier in the heart of Eurasia

### Part 3. Xinjiang becomes a target

By Melissa Harrison and Rachel Douglas

*Parts 1 and 2 of this series, in the AAS of 18 November and 2 December, summarised the history of central Eurasia during the "Great Game" of the British Empire against the Russian Empire in the 19th century, and the rebranding of that policy as an "Arc of Crisis" in the 1970s, when geopolitical schemers such as the British-born orientologist Bernard Lewis and Polish immigrant Zbigniew Brzezinski held sway over American foreign policy. The area in question includes Afghanistan, where the US Central Agency and its British counterpart, MI6, backed the mujaheddin insurgents during the Soviet Union's intervention in that country (1979-88). These increasingly radical Islamist guerrillas were to form the core of the terrorist groups al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIS).*

*Central Eurasia, sometimes called the "Roof of the World"—above the continent's high mountain ranges—also includes China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Sitting astride the New Silk Road, Xinjiang is a target for Anglo-American strategists eager to destabilise China.*

When Bernard Lewis, Zbigniew Brzezinski and their co-thinkers crafted the Arc of Crisis doctrine in the late 1970s, China was not its primary target. The presumed adversary of the United States and NATO was the Soviet Union.

China at that time was barely climbing out from the brutal Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-76), which had ended with the death of Communist Party of China Chairman Mao Zedong in 1976 and the downfall of the group, led by Mao's wife, known as the Gang of Four. Relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Soviet Union were still stalled by the "Sino-Soviet split", a rupture that arose in 1956 from disputes between their respective ruling parties (not without outside influences), peaked in military clashes on the Ussuri River in 1969, and began to be mended only in the late 1980s, in the final years of the USSR.

When Henry Kissinger, as national security adviser to President Richard Nixon, secretly visited Beijing in 1971 to prepare a presidential visit and open USA-PRC relations, the exploitation of China as a potential geopolitical and balance-of-power counterweight to the Soviet Union was a major goal.<sup>1</sup>

After the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union, Anglo-American geopolitical aims shifted somewhat, but the engagement of western intelligence agencies in central Eurasia continued. In line with the so-called Wolfowitz Doctrine of the Bernard Lewis-inspired "neocon" faction in the USA, which held that no country must ever attain as much power as the Soviet Union had possessed, covert operations went forward, aimed at weakening Russia (even while trying to take it over, with raft-loads of City of London and

Wall Street economists descending on Moscow to dictate economic policy).

#### Mujaheddin fan out

Various factions of the Afghan mujaheddin formed the Islamic State of Afghanistan in 1992, which promptly became involved in fighting on what had been Soviet territory in Central Asia: a bloody civil war in Tajikistan, in which Russia defended that newly independent state against an Islamist insurgency.

New economic motives for western involvement appeared, too, as the big multinational oil and gas companies charted plans to lay hands on resources that had been under Soviet control. Another major shift took shape during an interval of instability after Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan (1988), when warlords there stepped up their production and sale of opium. In little more than a decade, Afghanistan by 2001 became the world's leading producer of opium poppy; this marked a transformation of international narcotics and criminal money flows, with shipment routes crossing most of the countries in the region.

Equally important on a global scale, the American- and British-backed mujaheddin began to fan out. As many as 35,000 fighters, according to various estimates, went through mujaheddin training camps in Afghanistan and the mountains of neighbouring Pakistan, starting at the time of the CIA's Operation Cyclone in 1979 (see Part 2). These battle-hardened guerrillas soon began to turn up in coups, massacres of civilians, and other terrorist operations across Eurasia.

In Europe, the break-up of socialist Yugoslavia (which had been non-aligned since splitting with Moscow in 1948) set the stage for ethnic and religious strife to break out in the Balkan Peninsula, the same area where such conflicts had been manipulated by British intelligence and others to touch off World War I. The armed forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a historically Muslim area as a part of the Ottoman Empire until 1922, fought against Serbs from Serbia and from within Bosnia-Herzegovina itself. They were augmented by several thousand "foreign fighters", many of them Islamist guerrillas who arrived from Afghanistan in 1992 to help their "co-religionists". With NATO forces also deployed on Bosnia's side, the mujaheddin and NATO were effectively brothers-in-arms.

In 1994 another major engagement of fighters trained in and around Afghanistan began, in the Russian North Caucasus. This region between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea, north of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, is home to several small, ethnically defined entities, which were "autonomous republics" in the Soviet Union and are now units within Russia.

For years, British intelligence and allied analysts and profilers had predicted that a revolt in the Caucasus, where there had been countless uprisings against the Russian Empire in the 19th century, would destroy the Soviet Union. A chief propagandist for this scheme was Prof. Alexandre Bennigsen of the Paris Sorbonne, one of Zbigniew Brzezinski's mentors.

1. Ray McGovern, "Presumptuous Pompeo pushes preposterous policy on 'Peking'", Australian Almanac, AAS, 9 Sept. 2020. As a CIA Soviet affairs analyst in the 1960s-70s, the author watched "the constant build-up of hostility between Russia and China, and how, eventually, Nixon and Henry Kissinger saw it clearly and were able to exploit it to Washington's advantage".



When, in 1991 amid the turmoil of Soviet disintegration, a group in the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic proclaimed independence, the UN-approved Unrepresented People's Organisation sent a team to monitor elections. Its report appeared in full in the British *Central Asian Survey*, edited by Bennigsen's daughter Marie Broxup. The Chechen separatists also received encouragement and patronage from former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, her ally Lord McAlpine, who conceived a project for a Caucasus Common Market, and the Minority Rights Group of Britain, chaired by Sir John Thomson, former British ambassador to India and to the United Nations. In late 1994, Moscow moved to put down the separatist insurgency by force in the First Chechen War (1994-96).

The Chechen separatists had an extreme militant wing, among whose leaders was a foreign fighter from Saudi Arabia by the name of Khattab, who had fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan with the mujaheddin. Another leader, Shamil Basayev, boasted of having trained in Afghan camps. Basayev said in July 1995: "I was preparing for war with Russia a long time.... Together with fighters from my Abkhazian [separatists within Georgia] battalion, I paid three visits to Afghan mujaheddin camps, where I learned the tactics of guerrilla warfare."<sup>2</sup>

Basayev and Khattab orchestrated mass kidnappings and bombings in Russia, and in 1999 launched the Second Chechen War with an invasion of the Republic of Dagestan (Russian North Caucasus) from Chechnya. They were killed in 2006 and 2002, respectively, in Russian counter-insurgency operations.

### CIA's 'marvellous' practices turned vs China

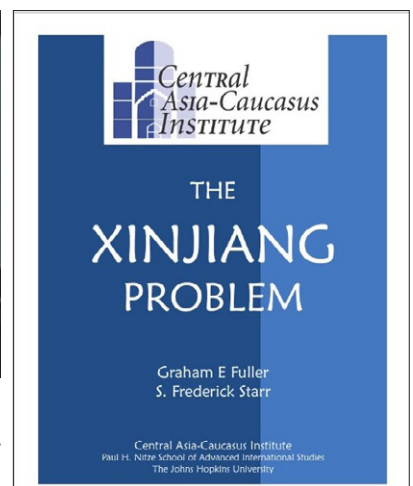
By the mid-1990s, there was reason from the standpoint of the "one superpower" Wolfowitz Doctrine, to aim the Arc of Crisis at China. In 1994-96 Beijing had begun publicity and on-the-ground work for building the New Euro-Asia Continental Bridge. China hosted its historic Land-Bridge conference in May 1996 (see Part 1). The same month, a rail link was opened between Mashhad, Iran and Tejen, Turkmenistan (formerly in Soviet Central Asia), providing an important transcontinental route from the Persian Gulf eastward into China, or from China back westward through Turkey to the Mediterranean Sea and Europe.

What did this mean to the instigators of the Arc of Crisis? Their Afghanistan covert operations were already generating a worldwide expansion of terrorism, but they considered them a success. In 1999 a former CIA analyst declared: "The policy of guiding the evolution of Islam and of helping them against our adversaries worked marvellously well in Afghanistan against the Russians. The same doctrines can still be used to destabilise what remains of Russian power, and especially to counter the Chinese influence in Central Asia."<sup>3</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Arguing along similar lines was Graham Fuller, a twenty-year career CIA officer, who had been its Kabul (Afghanistan) station chief from 1975 until 1978, the eve of



Senior CIA officer Graham E. Fuller (left) wrote this 2003 pamphlet, discussing the potential for veterans of the Afghanistan mujaheddin to spark the radicalisation of Uyghur separatists in Xinjiang, China.



Operation Cyclone. Appointed the Agency's National Intelligence Officer for Near East and South Asia in 1982, Fuller was promoted in 1986 to vice-chairman of the National Intelligence Council, the mid- and long-term strategic thinking body for the United States Intelligence Community.

Declassified CIA memos authored by Fuller reveal that his "suggestions" were to prove highly influential, foreshadowing US military aggression against Syria<sup>4</sup> and the illegal arms deals of the 1980s Iran-Contra affair—the scandalous arrangement for the USA to sell arms to the Islamic Republic of Iran and fund anti-communist guerrillas in Central America with the proceeds.<sup>5</sup> After Iran-Contra was exposed, Fuller left the CIA in 1988 to work at the American "party of war's" premiere thinktank of the post-World War II era, the RAND Corporation,<sup>6</sup> for twelve years as Middle East specialist. He then moved on to teach history at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Starting in 1998, Fuller led a study titled "The Xinjiang Project", which appeared in 2003 as a pamphlet, *The Xinjiang Problem*. Here he assessed the potential of Uyghur ethnic separatist movements, concluding: "It would be unrealistic to rule out categorically American willingness to play the 'Uyghur card' as a means of exerting pressure on China in the event of some future crisis or confrontation.... [M]any of China's rivals have in the past pursued active policies in Xinjiang and exploited the Uyghur issue for their benefit."<sup>7</sup>

Fuller noted that Beijing officials believed foreign Pan-Turkist and Islamist groups were agitating separatist Uyghur factions in Xinjiang already at that time, with wealthy Saudi benefactors funding the dissemination of Wahhabite (Islamic fundamentalist, from the dominant tendency in Saudi Arabia) literature in Xinjiang and possibly arms-smuggling as well.

The CIA veteran of Afghanistan admitted then, in 2003: "The reality is that Uyghurs are indeed in touch with Muslim groups outside Xinjiang, some of them have been radicalised into broader *jihadist* politics in the process, a handful were earlier involved in guerrilla or terrorist training in Afghanistan, and some are in touch with international Muslim mujahideen struggling for Muslim causes of independence worldwide."

4. Graham E. Fuller, "Bringing Real Muscle to Bear against Syria", 14 Sept. 1983, declassified 2008, [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov).

5. Graham E. Fuller, "Toward a Policy on Iran", 23 Aug. 1985, declassified 2013, [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov).

6. "RAND Corp., as MAD as ever, plots Russia's downfall", Washington Insider, AAS, 21 Oct. 2020.

7. Graham E. Fuller, F. Frederick Starr, *The Xinjiang Problem*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 2003.



## Xinjiang: China's western frontier in the heart of Eurasia

### Part 4. Pan-Turkism

By Melissa Harrison and Rachel Douglas

Parts 1–3 of this series appeared in the AAS of 18 November and 2 and 9 December 2020. Our second and third articles recounted the “Arc of Crisis” policy of the 1970s–80s, which was the underpinning of US and British support for the mujaheddin guerrilla groups in Afghanistan, in their war against the Soviet forces that intervened there in 1979 and stayed until 1988. From among the tens of thousands of US- and UK-backed mujaheddin in Afghanistan came a core of radical Islamist terrorists, who formed the al-Qaeda and Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist organisations.

In Part 3 we cited an officer of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), who considered the Arc of Crisis approach a success, stating in 1999: “The policy of guiding the evolution of Islam and of helping them against our adversaries worked marvellously well in Afghanistan against the Russians. The same doctrines can still be used to destabilise what remains of Russian power, and especially to counter the Chinese influence in Central Asia.”

Two apostles of the Arc of Crisis doctrine highlighted in previous articles of this series were Bernard Lewis of British Army Intelligence, the University of London, and Princeton University, and Graham Fuller of the CIA, the State Department, and the Rand Corporation. Lewis was, and Fuller still is, an expert on Turkey. They were writing about modern Turkey and its predecessor state, the Ottoman Empire (1453–1922), even while concentrating on the Middle East and then Afghanistan in the 1970s–80s.

When the world's power blocs and the political map of Eurasia shifted with the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, their attention turned to ways of keeping post-Soviet Russia weak and, slightly later on, of weakening China. Turkey-based organisations professing the ideology of Pan-Turkism (or Turanism, or the Pan-Turanian idea), a notion of uniting all Turkic language speakers into a single state, activated across central Eurasia with the encouragement of these Anglo-American intelligence specialists.

Fuller proclaimed in 1993 that “A huge Turkish belt has now revealed itself, stretching from the Balkans across Turkey, Iran, and Central Asia, up into the Russian heartland of Tatarstan and into western Siberia, deep into western China, and to the borders of Mongolia, comprising in all some 150 million people”, who he said were guided by “the concept of a shared sense of Turkishness”.<sup>1</sup> That characterisation of Turkic ethnic populations implies the dismemberment not only of the USSR, but of Russia itself, and China and Iran—a prospect in line with the “one-empire” or “unipolar” world, which the so-called neoconservative grouping in Washington and London proclaimed at that time.

Bernard Lewis, who had been promoting Turkey's rise as a major regional power since the 1960s, would tell a January 1996 conference of bankers in Ankara, Turkey's capital, that there now existed a “vacuum in the region which Turkey should and must fill”.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the Pan-Turkist networks activated in the post-Soviet years had existed in dormant or semi-dormant form since the end of World War II, when British and American intelligence co-opted fighters from guerrilla groups, of various ethnicity, that had been allied with the Nazis. Their ideology of Pan-Turkism was rooted in the power games of the British Empire.

The 19th-century British Foreign Office's fostering of “Pan-Turkic” and “Pan-Islamic” movements in Turkey had even older precedents, for the Ottoman Empire had been manipulated by outside oligarchical interests ever since its consolidation in the mid-15th century. The Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople (Istanbul), putting an end to the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire (330–1453), thanks to Venice, the world's financier centre of that time. Byzantium and Venice had been closely allied and interwoven for centuries, but the Venetian authorities ignored their pledge to defend Constantinople, and stood by as Sultan Mehmed II besieged and captured the city in 1453. The Venetians had their reasons, in the framework of wanting to disrupt the unification of the Roman and Eastern Christian churches, reached by the Council of Florence (1437–39) on a basis conducive to the development of the Renaissance and nation-states, which would challenge Venetian power. Venice did not, however, relinquish its influence and power in Istanbul; for centuries, the Ottoman Empire's banking, intelligence and administrative apparatus—starting with the *dragomans*, or court interpreters—remained under the control of Greeks and others from Venice and the areas under its control.

The centuries-long relationship of foreign oligarchical operatives to Ottoman Turkey was well captured by Emmanuel Carasso, one of the organisers of the so-called Young Turk insurgency that took over the Ottoman Empire in 1908 and ran it during its final decade. As reported by British journalist Henry Wickham Steed, Carasso was asked at a meeting on the island of Prinkipo in 1913, when the Young Turks were up to their ears in the Balkans conflicts that would soon precipitate World War I, “what he and his like were going to do with Turkey.” Carasso replied, “Have you ever seen a baker knead dough? When you think of us and Turkey you must think of a baker and of his dough. We are the bakers and Turkey is the dough. The baker pulls it and pushes it, bangs it and slaps it, pounds it with his fists until he gets it to the right consistency for baking. That is what we are doing. We have had one revolution, then a counter-revolution, then another revolution and we shall probably have several more until we have got the dough just right.”<sup>3</sup>

1. Graham E. Fuller, “Conclusions: The Growing Role of Turkey in the World”, in *Turkey's New Geopolitics: From the Balkans to Western China* (Westview Press, 1993). A co-author of this Rand Corporation study was Paul Henze, who had been the National Security Council notetaker at a key meeting of CIA and State Department officials with National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski in October 1979 (Part 2 of this series), on escalating military aid to mujaheddin fighters in Afghanistan as an anti-Soviet force.

2. Joseph Brewda, “The neo-Ottoman trap for Turkey”, *EIR*, 12 Apr. 1996.

3. Henry Wickham Steed, *Through Thirty Years, 1892–1922* (Doubleday, 1924). That future *Times of London* editor Steed, a notorious anti-Semite, was rubbing elbows with Carasso, a member of the Donmeh community, shows how geopolitical priorities make strange bedfellows. The Donmeh (“converts”) were descendants of Jews who had fled into the Ottoman Empire upon expulsion from Spain in the 1490s; in the 17th century many became



## The Young Turks

In the 19th century, the “Young X” movements of reformers and revolutionaries, starting with Giuseppe Mazzini’s Young Italy in the 1830s, enjoyed the patronage of the British Foreign Office and other London circles, for whom they served as useful tools to destabilise the continental European powers or set them against each other. Lord Palmerston, in charge of the Foreign Office for most of the time from 1830 to 1851, much appreciated the London-based Mazzini and his projects. The “Young X” groups, typically, aimed to build up an identity based on ethnicity and territorial aspirations (“blood and soil”). Their complaints against the continental monarchies may often have included legitimate ones, but above all they were pawns in British geopolitics.

The Young Ottomans first appeared in 1865 in Paris, soon to ally with Mazzini’s European Revolutionary Committee. By this time the Ottoman Empire, in decline, was known as the Sick Man of Europe. The group achieved a short-lived success with Sultan Abdul Hamid II’s adoption of a constitution in 1876, only for him to restore absolute rule and drive the Young Ottomans underground the next year.<sup>4</sup>

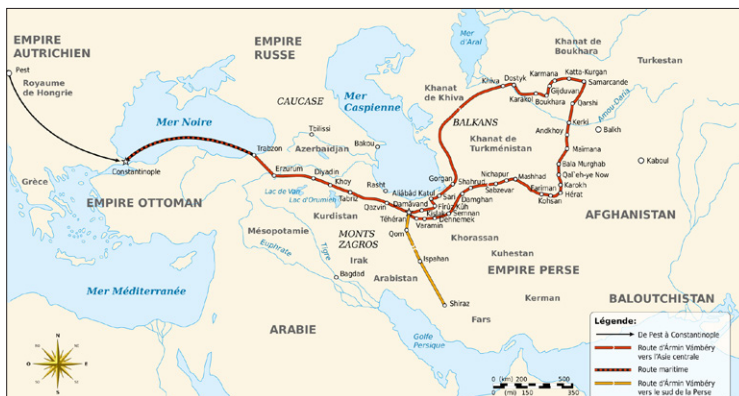
Throughout the last third of the 19th century, a Hungarian Turcologist named Arminius Vambery, on hire to the British Foreign Office, campaigned for Eurasia-wide Turkic solidarity. Vambery briefed Lord Palmerston, during the latter’s last prime ministership and near the end of his life, on the “collision between England and Russia in the distant East”.<sup>5</sup> Vambery had just completed a three-year (1861-64) tour of Turkey, Iran and Central Asia, the territory of the Great Game of Eurasian geopolitics (Part 1). He received honours for his work from the Austrian Emperor and, in 1902, from King Edward VII of England, who hailed his services to England.

Vambery advocated a Polish-Hungarian-Ottoman alliance against Russia (Hungary being part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while Poland was divided between Austria and Russia). A subsumed scheme was that the entire multiethnic Ottoman Empire, including Arabs, Armenians, and various Slavic peoples, should consolidate around a Turkish chauvinist identity, to which the Turkic peoples of Central Asia should also be recruited. This was Pan-Turkism. In 1869 the Young Ottoman newspaper *Hurriyet (Liberty)* fell into line with Vambery’s idea, criticising the Ottoman Empire’s leaders for failure to defend the Islamic Turkic peoples of Central Asia. (These Central Asians spoke Turkic languages, but had never been under Ottoman rule.)

After the Young Ottomans, two decades later, came the Young Turks, who seized power in the Ottoman Empire in 1908, keeping the Sultan on as a figurehead. Key leadership for the Young Turks came from the above-mentioned Carasso, with backing from his friends like Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata, the Venetian financier and political operator who would later become Mussolini’s finance minister.

followers of Sabbatai Zevi, a Jewish mystic, and created a syncretic belief system out of Zevi’s kabbalism and Islamic Sufi mysticism. Several leaders of the Young Turks’ core group, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), were Donmeh from Carasso’s hometown of Salonica in Ottoman Macedonia (modern Thessaloniki, Greece). Carasso was also grandmaster of the *Macedonia Risorta* (Macedonia Resurrected) freemasonic lodge of Salonica, which was under the wing of the powerful *Grande Oriente d’Italia* (Grand Orient of Italy) lodge.

4. Joseph Brewda, “David Urquhart’s Ottoman legions”, *EIR*, 12 April 1996.  
5. Arminius Vambery, *His Life And Adventures Written by Himself* (T. Fisher Unwin, 1889).



Hungarian Turcologist Arminius Vambery, in the pay of the British Foreign Office, and the route of his 1861-64 intelligence mission through Ottoman Turkey eastward into Central Asia. (Map labels in French). Photos: Wikipedia

Also on the scene in Constantinople as the Young Turks movement took shape was Aubrey Herbert, a British aristocrat and intelligence officer. A member of London committees campaigning for the rights of various national entities in the Balkans, Herbert held that “democratic rule” by the Young Turks was the best hope for his beloved Albania (Herbert at one point was offered the throne of Albania).<sup>6</sup> The hero of John Buchan’s 1916 novel *Greenmantle*, a British spy aiding the Young Turks, was modelled on Herbert. T.E. Lawrence (“of Arabia”) identified Herbert as the actual head of the Young Turk insurrection.<sup>7</sup>

The Young Turks launched a policy of “Turkification” of the Empire. Within a few years, the resistance they provoked from Slavic and other provinces touched off the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, which, in turn, served as the short fuse by which World War I was ignited.

## Central Asia between the Wars

People who grew up during or after the four decades of the Cold War (c. 1950-90) internalised a notion of East and West, hermetically sealed off from each other by Churchill’s “Iron Curtain” for that entire time, and even earlier—ever since the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917. That picture of the world is misleading, since in reality there was a constant intersection of political processes and institutions inside and outside the Soviet Union. Since the Russian Revolutions (one in 1905 and two in 1917) themselves had been heavily manipulated by British Intelligence, in particular, even some of the institutions of the new Soviet state were organised by Russian revolutionaries who would work with whatever foreign intelligence agency they found it convenient to do so at a given moment, or even by foreigners directly. The founding of Soviet military intelligence (the future GRU) in 1918 by British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) Captain George Hill, then acting as an aide to Bolshevik War Commissar Leon Trotsky, is an outstanding case.

The implications of such relationships were immense in Central Asia, the scene of constantly shifting borders, power alignments, and intelligence agency attempts from all sides to gain the upper hand.

The Young Turks began to split already during the Balkan Wars. Under Enver Pasha as Minister of War, the Young Turk government brought the tottering Ottoman Empire into World War I on the side of Germany, a move Enver saw as an

*Continued page 9*

6. Daut Dauti, “Britain, the Albanian Question and the Demise of the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1914”, University of Leeds dissertation, 2018.

7. Jeffrey Steinberg, Allen Douglas, Rachel Douglas, “Cheney Revives Parvus ‘Permanent War’ Madness”, *EIR*, 23 Sept. 2005.

## Xinjiang: Pan-Turkism

From page 8

opportunity to wage Pan-Turkist offensives into areas east of Ottoman territory. His campaign through eastern Turkey towards the Caucasus Mountains and Armenia in 1914 ended in disaster at the Battle of Sarikamish, when tens of thousands of Turkish soldiers froze to death in the mountain snows.

Enver nonetheless went ahead to form an Islamic Army of the Caucasus in 1918—already after the Bolsheviks had taken power—in hopes of seizing southern Russia. When the Ottomans capitulated to the Allies in October 1918 (Russia had already withdrawn from the war), Enver was fired and fled to Germany. The other main faction of the Young Turks, a nationalist but not Pan-Turkist tendency led by Mustapha Kemal Ataturk, waged a war of resistance against the Anglo-French occupation, culminating in creation of the Republic of Turkey under his leadership in 1923. Ataturk and his “Kemalists” came to embody a nationalist, but secular and non-expansionist model for modern Turkey. He was its President until his death in 1938.

While in Germany, Enver Pasha sought allies (or useful tools) for his Pan-Turkic vision. One of these was Karl Radek, a Bolshevik figure with an unparalleled record of hob-knobbing with foreign intelligence agencies, who in 1923 would propose to ally with the young Nazi Party against France’s occupation of Germany’s industrial Ruhr region. In 1919-20, Radek was imprisoned in Germany. As some in Berlin toyed with conjuring up an alliance of countries wounded by the British and French in the war—Germany, Russia and Turkey—Radek was allowed a visit from Enver Pasha. Upon Radek’s release from jail, he returned to Moscow and promptly was assigned as secretary of the newly formed Communist International, or “Comintern”.

One of Radek’s first projects was to organise the Congress of Peoples of the East, held in Baku, Soviet Azerbaijan in September 1920. With the failure of the working class to rise up in a revolution in Germany, Lenin and the Bolsheviks had proclaimed the need for anti-imperialist struggle across Eurasia. The Baku conference keynote speaker, Georgi Zinoviev, thundered out an appeal for Islamic *ji*ihad, Holy War, against the imperialist oppressors. The 1,800 delegates were representatives of political groups (and foreign intelligence agencies) from all over the world, among them Enver Pasha.

Of course, the Soviets had in mind an anti-imperialist struggle against British colonies, not the areas the Russian Empire itself had subsumed during the 19th century. Initially, Moscow kept Central Asia organised as a single Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Turkestan, using the name Central Asia had acquired under the Tsarist regime. Only in 1924 did Moscow shift to an administrative division of the region into separate, ethnically defined republics: Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This line of Soviet thinking, marked by the influence of Mazzini’s model, became known as “Stalin’s nationalities policy”; it set the stage for troublesome incidents of ethnic separatism in the USSR’s and Russia’s future.

In 1921 Enver Pasha offered his services to Lenin, to drive into Turkestan and suppress the *basmachi* (“bandit”) movement that had been fighting against the Red Army in Central Asia in the just-ended Russian Civil War. Then, Enver promised, he would establish a Muslim Republic of Turkestan and break through to India to touch off an insurrection against British power there.

Enver Pasha proceeded into Central Asia, but joined the *basmachi* instead of suppressing them. He was killed by the Red Army in August 1922, near modern

Dushanbe, Tajikistan.<sup>8</sup>

British Intelligence had its own agents in post-World War I Central Asia, monitoring and meddling in these processes. Lt. Col. P.T. Ether-ton was posted at Kashgar

(western Xinjiang) as “British Consul-General and Political Resident in Chinese Turkistan”, 1918-24, observing and reporting on the course of the Russian Civil War in Central Asia. He also “co-operated with the anti-Soviet Basmachi guerrillas in Western Turkestan while working to limit the spread of Soviet influence in southern [Xinjiang]”.<sup>9</sup>

Rule over Xinjiang itself was in flux between the wars. The Chinese province’s governor from 1907 to 1928 (bridging the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1912), based at Urumqi in northern Xinjiang, was a Han Chinese named Yang Zengxin, who was knowledgeable about Islam and had strong connections with Turkic ethnic families in the region. Recipient of an honorary British knighthood from the British Indian Government, Governor Yang waged cautious diplomacy with Soviet representatives who would show up in Xinjiang; he sought chiefly to keep defeated White Army forces from fleeing into the province with the Red Army in pursuit.

Greater turmoil in Xinjiang followed the assassination of Yang in 1928, as warlords and rival Sufi brotherhoods clashed. In November 1933 one Sabit Damolla proclaimed the short-lived Turkish-Islamic Republic of East Turkestan (TIRET), based in the far west at Kashgar. It lasted until May 1934. J.W. Thomson-Glover, the contemporary British Consul-General in Kashgar, noted that one of TIRET’s five fundamental policies was “To seek friendly relations with the British Government and to obtain its aid as far as was possible”.<sup>10</sup> Chiang Kai-shek, leader of the Republic of China’s Kuomintang government, believed that Britain was behind TIRET as a separatist project against China. Just two years earlier, in 1931, Britain had looked on without lifting a finger, when Japan invaded Manchuria, at the other end of China.

Sheng Shicai, a Han warlord who governed Xinjiang after the collapse of TIRET, was more amiable in relations with the Soviets, setting the stage for a second “East Turkestan Republic” (1944-49), situated in the north by the Soviet borders and enjoying Soviet support.

Nazi Germany sought to build its own presence in Central Asia and Xinjiang. When the war broke out, Nazi leaders ordered the formation of a *Turkistanische Legion*, comprised of Red Army POWs of Central Asian ethnicities, captured during Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. One of its organisers was Nuri Killigil, a Pan-Turkist former Ottoman general, who happened to be a younger half-brother of Enver Pasha. The Turkestan Legion was deployed primarily in Italy. Several of its veterans were to play an important role in interaction with Anglo-American intelligence agencies after the war.



Young Turks officer Enver Pasha (left) was a fanatical Pan-Turkist, who died in the Soviet Union fighting for his scheme, while his former comrade Mustapha Kemal Ataturk founded the modern Republic of Turkey as a secular, non-expansionist nation-state in 1923. Photos: Wikipedia

8. Peter Hopkirk, *Setting the East Ablaze: Lenin’s Dream of an Empire in Asia* (John Murray, 1984) relates the post-World War I conflicts in Central Asia highlighted in the preceding four paragraphs.

9. Andrew Forbes, *Warlords and Muslims in Chinese Central Asia: A Political History of Republican Sinkiang, 1911-1949* (Cambridge U. Press, 1986).

10. Ibid.



## The 'Gladio' template

A document titled "The Pan-Turanian Idea" was filed in the CIA's archives in 1948, the first year of the Agency's existence, and declassified only in 2005, after fifty years of secrecy.<sup>11</sup> A dissertation by an unnamed German Turkish expert, the paper discussed the Nazis' desire to establish contact networks and alliances in the Turkic areas of Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Balkans, motivated by a plan to dissolve the Soviet Union and replace it with a Pan-Turkic federation, loyal to the Nazis. It asserted that Turanism "remain[ed] alive among all Turkic peoples. The small number of active advocates ... would, if permitted free activity, be of a surity [sic] able to convert the majority of the population for a union of all Turkic states." The document includes a "Map of Projected Federation of Turanian States", stretching from Turkey to Outer Mongolia, which included "East Turkestan"—China's Xinjiang.

Such close attention to abandoned Nazi schemes was typical of British Intelligence and the (future) CIA after World War II, and it extended to personnel. Allen Dulles, the future first CIA head, made a deal with SS Gen. Karl Wolff at the end of the war, "to recycle Nazi and Fascist networks into post-war military and intelligence structures." These came to be called "stay-behind" networks, not because they were Nazi leftovers, but because scenarios called for them to conduct operations under Soviet occupation, were the Soviet Union to invade Western Europe, on the model of British Special Operations Executive (SOE) guerrilla warfare in Nazi-occupied Europe.<sup>12</sup>

The classic version of this plan was "Operation Gladio" in Italy, whose existence was exposed in 1990, when Italian parliamentarians revealed that the network had been responsible for the horrific terrorist attacks and assassinations that ravaged Italy in the 1970s. That period was known as "The Strategy of Tension".<sup>13</sup>

Coinciding with the height of Gladio's activity in Italy, Turkey in the 1970s was rocked by terrorism at the hands of an organisation called the Grey Wolves. This was, together with the military institutions protecting it, essentially the Turkish arm of Gladio. It was the paramilitary branch of the Nationalist Movement (or "Action") Party (Turkish acronym MHP) and operated under the protection of Counter-Guerrilla, a section of the Turkish Army's Special Warfare Department, set up in collaboration with the CIA.<sup>14</sup>

## Alparslan Turkes and the Grey Wolves

Col. Alparslan Turkes (1917-97) founded the MHP in 1969, on the base of the Republican Villagers Nation Party, which he had joined in 1965. MHP's Grey Wolves arm also dates from the late 1960s. By that time, former Nazi-sympathiser Turkes had been an agent of influence of the Cold War-era USA for two decades. The roots of both Turkes and the Grey Wolves run back to before World War II.

The young Turkes admired racist Pan-Turanian adversaries of the Kemalist state in 1930s Turkey. He especially favoured Huseyin Nihal Atsiz (1905-75), who published *Orhun: A Pan-Turk Journal* in 1933-34 and again in the late 1940s, featuring articles on particular areas that should be part of a single "Turkish" state, like Azerbaijan and East Turkestan (Xinjiang). "All of Turkestan and all the Turkish lands are ours!" he proclaimed, alongside theories of "racial unity" based on purity of blood.

11. *The Pan-Turanian Idea*, 1948.

12. Claudio Celani, "Swiss Think-Tank Exposes 'NATO's Secret Army'", *EIR*, 7 Jan. 2005.

13. Claudio Celani, "Strategy of Tension: The Case of Italy", *EIR*, 2004.

14. Daniele Ganser, *NATO's Secret Armies: Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe* (London: Frank Cass, 2005).

Reha Oguz Turkkan, a younger Pan-Turanian who was a great-nephew of Fakhri Pasha, the last Ottoman Commander of the Army, used "grey wolf" imagery as Pan-Turkist symbolism in his journals *Ergenekon* (1938; named for a mythical Turkic homeland in the Altay Mountains of southern Siberia, Kazakhstan and Mongolia) and its 1939-42 successor, called explicitly *Bozkurt* (Grey Wolf). Turkkan's magazines featured the slogan, "The Turkish race above every other race".<sup>15</sup> The Pan-Turkist writer and publisher Atsiz took up the "grey wolves" theme in a popular trilogy of post-war novels. *Death of the Grey Wolves* (1946) was the tale of a failed attempt by a 7th-century Turkic prince to kidnap an Emperor of China. This was followed by *The Grey Wolves Return to Life* and *Mad Wolf*.

In the meantime, Atsiz agitated at the end of the war against any cooperation with the Soviet Union, which was about to defeat the Nazis. In 1944, after fomenting large anti-Communist demonstrations, he was arrested on charges of plotting "to overthrow the government in order to form a state based on racist and Turanist principles."<sup>16</sup> Rounded up with him, jailed and court-martialled was the young Army Capt. Alparslan Turkes. President Ismet Inonu, who had succeeded Kemal Ataturk in 1938, denounced the conspirators: "We are Turkish nationalists, but we are the enemy of the principle of racism in our country... The idea of Turanism is also a harmful and diseased phenomenon of recent times".

Several Turkish authors have described Turkes as an admirer of the Nazis with a network of Nazi contacts, although the Pan-Turanists had their own viciously racist doctrines without having to borrow them from German fascists.

With the death of President Franklin Roosevelt in 1945 and the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, whereby President Harry Truman committed the USA to confrontation with its wartime ally the Soviet Union, Turkey quickly occupied a central place in the Cold War. Denial to the Soviets of free passage through the Turkish Straits between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean was an issue by 1946. In 1951, Greece and Turkey were cleared for membership in NATO, the new Atlantic alliance directed against the USSR.

Now that the Soviet Union was defined as an adversary, Turkish anti-Communist detainees like Turkes were released from prison. In 1947, military cooperation with the USA began, some of it kept secret. In 1948, Turkes was one of 16 Turkish officers sent for military training in America. He completed further officer training back home, graduating from the Turkish Military Academy in 1955. He then served in

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15. Jacob M. Landau, *Pan Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation* (Indiana U. Press, 1995) chronicles the publications mentioned here.

16. Umut Özkirimli, Spyros A. Sofos, *Tormented by History: Nationalism in Greece and Turkey* (Columbia U. Press, 2008).



The Pan-Turkist magazine *Bozkurt* (Grey Wolf), published in 1939-42, used the steppe wolf symbol and the slogan "The Turkish race above every other race". The cover shows in outline the Pan-Turkists' desired empire, including Central Asia and Xinjiang.

various capacities, including as a member of the Turkish General Staff delegation to the NATO Standing Group in Washington.

Turkes co-organised and was spokesman for a violent military coup in 1960. His radio-broadcast speech announcing the takeover emphasised that Turkey's commitment to NATO would not change. He then fell out with fellow junta members on the issue of returning power to a civilian government (he was against it), and was banished to a diplomatic posting in India, returning to Turkey in 1963 to launch a new political career. By 1969 he had founded the MHP, based on his racist Pan-Turkist beliefs now of 30 years' standing. In 1981 it was described by the *New York Times* (accurately, for once) as a "xenophobic, fanatical nationalist, neofascist network steeped in violence".

One project of that first delegation of Turkish trainees in the USA had been to set up a unit called the Tactical Mobilisation Group, which was succeeded in 1965 by the Special Warfare Department and in 1992 by a Special Forces Command. Counter-Guerrilla was subordinate to these agencies, and the Grey Wolves operated under the wing of Counter-Guerrilla.

In the late 1970s, Grey Wolves death squads launched urban guerrilla warfare, committing terror attacks and shootings in a campaign against leftists. Civilians and public officials were among the approximately 6,000 people killed.<sup>17</sup> In 2008 the Turkish news agency Zaman reported that Grey Wolves documents, submitted in a court case, showed that Turkey's National Intelligence Organisation (MIT) had paid regular salaries to Grey Wolves operatives carrying out illegal operations, including violence and political assassinations. Former Turkish Supreme Court Justice Emin Deger opined in the late 1970s, that there was a close working connection between the Grey Wolves, Turkish intelligence, the Turkish military's Counter-Guerrilla, and the CIA.<sup>18</sup>

The Grey Wolves achieved international notoriety in 1981, when its member Mehmet Ali Agca tried to assassinate Pope John Paul II in St. Peter's Square. Estimates of Grey Wolves membership ranged as high as 200,000 registered members and one million supporters, at its peak around 1980.

### Post-Soviet Pan-Turk revival

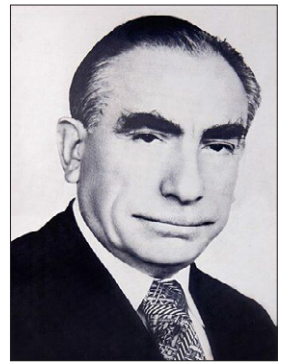
Active as the Pan-Turkists had been on the Turkish political scene since World War II, they and their international support networks went into overdrive when the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991.

In May 1992, a New York conference of the World Turkic Congress heralded the idea of a revival of a "neo-Ottoman" or Pan-Turkic empire. Two hundred participants, including representatives from Turkey, Central Asia and Xinjiang, heard speeches by Heath Lowry, the successor to Bernard Lewis as the premier Turcologist at Princeton University, and Lowry's own mentor, Justin McCarthy of the University of Kentucky. McCarthy gave a keynote straight out of Lord Palmerston's propaganda handbook from 130 years earlier, claiming that Turkey and Turkic peoples must be avenged against Russia for inflicting massacres and genocide against them. A map of the projected Empire of "Turkestan", handed out at the conference, encompassed all of Central Asia and Xinjiang Province, renamed on the map as "Uighuristan".

Additional international organisations advocating the mobilisation of Turkic peoples against Russia were formed in the 1989-91 period of break-up of the Soviet bloc:

*The Quincentennial Foundation*, inaugurated in 1989 in

Istanbul, held a gala in April 1992 in New York, to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Ottoman Empire's acceptance of Jews who had fled Spain. Its organiser, Steve Shalom, from a prominent Ottoman family, said that the Foundation's goal was to foster a strategic deal between Turkey and Israel against common enemies in Eurasia. Quincentennial was founded by Jak Kamhi, a wealthy electronics industrialist who had a business partnership with Tugrul Turkes, son of Alparslan.<sup>19</sup>



Colonel Alparslan Turkes.  
Photo: Historica Wiki-Fandom

*The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO)* was founded in 1991 by Lord Ennals, a former UK Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and activist for Tibetan independence from China, and Dutch international lawyer Michael van Walt van Praag. The UNPO promptly launched support missions to separatists in the Russian North Caucasus. By 1995, its list of 43 "peoples" who needed more representation included the Uyghurs of "East Turkestan", as Xinjiang Province was labelled on UNPO maps. The UNPO's inaugural president was Erkin Alptekin, son of the Uyghur separatist Isa Yusuf Alptekin.<sup>20</sup>

In December 1992, the first East Turkestan World National Congress convened in Istanbul, chaired by Isa Yusuf Alptekin himself. He declared that the dissolution of the Soviet Union indicated that "the time for collapse and dissolution has arrived for the Chinese empire. We expect help from our beloved Turkey, our new republics [in former Soviet Central Asia], co-religionists, and mankind in general, to put a check on China." Alptekin's remarks met with enthusiasm from Turkish government representatives. The Grey Wolves leader, Alparslan Turkes, attended, telling the audience that "Chinese imperialism's repression of East Turkestan must not be tolerated."<sup>21</sup>

In the years 1992-2004, at least eight international congresses, associations, and governments-in-exile were established in pursuit of East Turkestan or Uyghur independence from China. Fifteen or more underground radical organisations, some of them violent, came into being in approximately the same years; they will be discussed in our next articles, in conjunction with the "Islamisation" of East Turkestan separatism.

Alptekin had maintained ties with Turkes for many years. The website of the World Uyghur Congress, formed in 2004 as a successor to the 1992 conference's efforts, continues to celebrate Turkes and promote endorsements of East Turkestan separatism by current leaders of Turkes's MHP party and the Grey Wolves.<sup>22</sup> A 2017 article reposted by the WUC described Turkes as the "immortal leader of the MHP and the Nationalists", "the legendary leader ... who want[ed] to stop the Chinese immigration to East Turkistan". The article claims that "East Turkistan" (Xinjiang) is part of the Turkic world—the "bleeding wound of Turkishness".

*Next: Islamisation of the "East Turkestan" campaign*

19. Brewda, "Neo-Ottoman trap..." (Note 1) includes eyewitness accounts of the 1992 New York conferences.

20. Mark Burdman, "UNPO plans key role in Transcaucasus blowup", *EIR*, 12 Apr. 1996.

21. Joseph Brewda, "Pan-Turks target China's Xinjiang", *EIR*, 12 Apr. 1996.

22. Ajit Singh, "Inside the World Uyghur Congress: The US-backed right-wing regime-change network seeking the 'fall of China'", *The Grayzone*, 5 Mar. 2020.

17. "Turkey: Nation and tribe the winners", *The Economist*, 22 April 1999.  
18. Joost Jongerden, *The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds* (Brill, 2007).





## Xinjiang: China's western frontier in the heart of Eurasia

### Part 5. The Anglo-American-Saudi promotion of violent jihad

By Melissa Harrison and Rachel Douglas

Parts 1–4 of this series appeared in the AAS of 18 November and 2 and 9 December 2020, and 20 January 2021. References to those articles are given in parentheses in this one.

The “Pan-Turkic” movement promoted by British Intelligence in the 19th century (Part 4, section “The Young Turks”) included a “Pan-Islamic” element, as it sought to turn the sultan of the Ottoman Empire, as “caliph”—the steward of Muhammad, into a rallying point against Russia in Eurasia. In 1869 the Young Ottoman newspaper *Hurriyet (Liberty)* criticised the Ottoman Empire’s leaders for failure to defend the Islamic Turkic peoples of Central Asia.

In the Pan-Turkist revival of the early 1990s after the break-up of the Soviet Union (Part 4, “Post-Soviet Pan-Turk revival”), the radical Islamist component was greatly amplified by the results of Anglo-American cultivation and backing of the mujaheddin guerrillas, fighting against the Soviets in Afghanistan in 1979–88 (Part 2, “Operation Cyclone—Afghan mujaheddin”).

#### Wahhabite education, jihadist training

Besides money and weapons, support to the mujaheddin had an organisational side: training camps, negotiation of political alliances, and education. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, which were co-funding the mujaheddin, had major input into all of these aspects. Anything that would feed violent action against the Soviets was fair game, including violent jihad—struggle against those identified as enemies of Islam.

The international sponsors supplied religious literature to schools in 1980s Afghanistan: millions of US government dollars funded textbooks for schoolchildren that were filled with anti-Soviet text, violent images, and promotion of jihad and militant Islamic teachings. The books were designed by the Centre for Afghanistan Studies (CAS) at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, which received US\$51 million in government grants for education programs in Afghanistan in 1984–94.<sup>1</sup> (Another one of its funders, the oil company Unocal, was evidently looking forward to contracts in post-war Afghanistan.) Religious textbooks in languages spoken in Afghanistan also went to madrassas (religious schools) located in Pakistan.<sup>2</sup>

Saudi Arabia, a major partner in funding the mujaheddin, had begun in the previous decade a worldwide program of proselytising with its brand of Islam, called Wahhabism. The deadly consequences of this Saudi campaign are no secret, as is expressed in the title of a report commissioned by the European Parliament’s Committee on Foreign Affairs in 2013: “The Involvement of Salafism/Wahhabism in the Support and Supply of Arms to Rebel



Mujaheddin fighters in Afghanistan, 1987. Many were recruited from abroad and trained at US-organised training camps and/or Saudi-funded religious schools in Pakistan, which also drew participants from Xinjiang, China. Photo: Wikipedia

Groups around the World”.

Saudi Wahhabism dates back to the 18th century, when ancestors of the founding prince of the House of Saud, Abdulaziz Ibn Saud (1876–1953), allied with Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who claimed to preach a pure doctrine of return to the fundamentals of Islam. Today Wahhabism is considered a branch of the Salafi movement, which emerged in Egypt and elsewhere in the 19th century as a fundamentalist tendency within Sunni Islam. Many Salafists have been peaceful and apolitical, but there is a fanatical Wahhabite interpretation of the obligation to kill non-believers and apostates that fits neatly into campaigns to promote violent jihad.

The House of Saud has been interwoven with British Intelligence since its inception. In 1922 then-Secretary of State for the Colonies Winston Churchill put Ibn Saud on the payroll at £100,000 a year, later writing that “my admiration for him was deep, because of his unfailing loyalty to us”. In 1927 King Saud ceded to Britain control over the emerging state’s foreign policy. Meanwhile, the King struck a pact with the Al ash-Sheikh clan, descendants of al-Wahhab, giving them the power to administer and oversee religion and law in the Kingdom. This alliance remains in effect. The powerful Saudi Ministry of Religious Affairs, de facto headquarters of the Wahhabites in Saudi Arabia, has poured billions of dollars, through ostensible charities and other religious institutions, into establishing Wahhabite madrassas and mosques, and cultivating influence, around the world.<sup>3</sup>

The spending spree began in the mid-1970s, when Saudi Arabia was awash in “petrodollars”, proceeds of the manipulated oil-price rise of 1974. It got a big boost in 1985 from the al-Yamamah oil-for-arms deal between Saudi Arabia and UK weapons maker BAE—a personal project of Prince Charles, alongside then-PM Margaret

1. Joe Stephens, David B Ottaway, “From US, the ABC’s of Jihad”, *Washington Post*, 23 Mar. 2002.

2. Ely Karmon, “Pakistan, the Radicalisation of the Jihadist Movement and the Challenge to China”, *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, No. 3, 2009.

3. Glen Isherwood, “Who Is Sponsoring International Terrorism?”, March 2015 Citizens Electoral Council conference presentation, online at <http://cec.cecaust.com.au/2015conference/>.

Thatcher—which created a US\$100 billion slush fund for off-the-books operations (Part 2, “He who sows the wind...”). Estimates of Saudi spending to promote Wahhabism in the three decades after 1975 run as high as US\$75 billion.<sup>4</sup>

The Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation, a Saudi NGO, was banned worldwide by the United Nations in 2004 for “participating in the financing, planning, facilitating, preparing or perpetrating of acts or activities by, in conjunction with, under the name of, on behalf or in support of al-Qaeda” and other terrorist organisations. According to the above-cited Europarlament report, al-Qaeda operatives sitting in leadership positions in such Islamic charities diverted 15-20 per cent of their funds to finance terrorists; in the Philippines, this figure reached 60 per cent.

Tens of thousands of Saudi-financed madrassas were built in Pakistan. During the period of Operation Cyclone, the CIA’s covert funding of the mujaheddin (Part 2), Pakistan was ruled by Gen. Zia ul-Haq, who had overthrown PM Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1977 and had him executed in 1979. Pakistan received US\$3.2 billion in direct aid from the USA, as it became the conduit for Operation Cyclone operations.

Inside Afghanistan in the 1980s, Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) helped to set up several mujaheddin groups, known as the Peshawar Seven after a city in Pakistan near the Afghanistan border, for combat with the Soviet troops. At the same time, Pakistan served as a logistical base for the mujaheddin.

The Saudi-sponsored madrassas in Pakistan operated as anti-communist recruitment centres for jihad against the Soviets, which fed into an array of new operations in Afghanistan and abroad after the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Part 3, “Mujaheddin fan out”). Some of them were Arabs, recruited through Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK, a.k.a. “Afghan Services Bureau”), an organisation with offices in Peshawar and close ties to the ISI. MAK had been founded in 1984 by a group including future al-Qaeda leaders Osama bin Laden (Saudi) and Ayman al-Zawahiri (Egyptian) to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup>

### The Central Asia blueprint

After 1991, the Anglo-American powers turned their attention to the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, as well as the North Caucasus region of Russia itself, seeking to disrupt Russian and Chinese influence in the region and clear the way for foreign control of its energy and other resources. The utilisation of the ex-mujaheddin in these efforts is acknowledged even by Washington insiders like Yossef Bodansky, former director of the Congressional Task



Mujaheddin fighters, trained in Pakistan and deployed in Afghanistan with Anglo-American-Saudi backing in the 1980s, began to threaten surrounding countries in the 1990s. Source: EIR

Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare. In a 2000 article, Bodansky wrote that Washington was conducting “yet another anti-Russian jihad ... seeking to support and empower the most virulent anti-Western Islamist forces”. He described “Washington’s tacit encouragement of both Muslim allies (mainly Turkey, Jordan and Saudi Arabia) and US ‘private security companies’... to assist the Chechens and their Islamist allies to surge in the spring of 2000 and sustain the ensuing jihad for a long time.” Sponsorship of “Islamist jihad in the Caucasus” would be a way to “deprive Russia of a viable [oil] pipeline route through spiralling violence and terrorism”.<sup>6</sup>

Afghanistan in the 1990s also became a major source for the world’s narcotics trade and the associated cash flows, which have become an integral part of the global financial system. It took over from Southeast Asia the status of number one supplier of heroin. The money could be used for financing terrorism as well.

Battle-hardened mujaheddin fighters engaged in coups, massacres of civilians and terrorist operations in Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Balkans throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s. Radical Wahhabite ideology ran rampant, spread through Saudi financing of Wahhabi mosques in Bosnia and Kosovo, and through al-Qaeda and other successor organisations to the mujaheddin.

By 2000, President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan would complain, “Afghanistan has become a training ground for terrorists. If the Afghans themselves were allowed to settle their problems, there would have been peace long ago. Geopolitical and strategic centres are continuing to add fuel to the fire of this war [he was referring to “bandit” attacks in the Afghanistan-Uzbekistan-Tajikistan border area]

4. Paul M.P. Bell, “Pakistan’s Madrassas—Weapons of Mass Instruction?”, Naval Postgraduate School thesis, March 2007, online at [www.hsdl.org](http://www.hsdl.org).  
5. Ramtanu Maitra, “Foreign-Backed Taliban Armies Threaten Central Asia”, *EIR*, 8 Sept. 2000.

6. Yossef Bodansky, “The Great Game for Oil”, *Defense and Foreign Affairs: Strategic Policy*, June/July 2000.



and the end is not in sight.”<sup>7</sup>

The radical Islamist Taliban militia, which seized and held power in Afghanistan in 1996-2001, arose from the Anglo-American-Saudi-supported mujaheddin and their training camps and schools in Pakistan. So did the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), a terrorist group operating in Central Asia, though its founders in 1998 were Uzbek-ethnic veterans of the Soviet intervention force in Afghanistan. The radical fundamentalist group Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT), operating throughout the Middle East and Central Asia from its base in London, supplied much of the manpower for the IMU.<sup>8</sup>

Several nations have moved to restrict Salafism, because of its serving as an ideology for terrorist groups. In 2013, a Russian court banned a Salafi interpretation of the Qur'an (although other versions are permitted), designating it illegal for promoting extremism by asserting the superiority of Muslims over non-Muslims, positive evaluation of hostile actions against non-Muslims, and incitement to violence. Kazakhstan moved to ban Salafist activity after a series of terrorist attacks in 2016. In Germany, Salafist mosques were banned after members were found to be planning terrorist attacks and preparing to travel to Syria to fight for the Islamic State (ISIS).

### **Pakistani madrassas recruited Xinjiang Uyghurs**

American diplomats, meeting in the 1980s in Pakistan with representatives of the Peshawar Seven, saw a map on the wall of their office, on which Soviet Central Asia and Xinjiang were labelled “Temporarily Occupied Muslim Territory”.<sup>9</sup>

According to Graham Fuller, the CIA officer working on Turkey, Afghanistan, and Xinjiang (Part 3), “As early as 1999, a Chinese academic specialist on Xinjiang ... estimated that as many as 10,000 Uyghurs had travelled to Pakistan for religious schooling and ‘military training’. In May 2002, the Chinese government claimed that over 1,000 Uyghurs had been trained in Taliban camps”.<sup>10</sup>

Several events amid the turmoil of the 20th century in both China and the Soviet Union helped set the stage for a relatively small, but significant, number of ethnic Uyghurs—within Xinjiang or living in the Uyghur diaspora—to be pulled into the spreading radical jihad movement after Soviet forces left Afghanistan in 1989. These factors included:

- Cross-border population flows between Soviet Central Asia and Xinjiang, which borders Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Russia. In 1966-76, thousands of Uyghurs fled China to avoid the harsh domestic policies of the Great Cultural Revolution (GCR). The Uyghur population in Kazakhstan, which had been more than 50,000 a hundred years ago, ballooned to above 200,000. The Uyghur diaspora in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan (the population of Tajikistan is not Turkic), as well as in Turkey, numbers tens of thousands in each country. In the other direction, so to speak, Central Asian ethnic groups are heavily represented in the population of Xinjiang; around 2 million Kazakhs live there, for example, despite the fact that Kazakhs, too, emigrated *en masse* from Xinjiang in the tumultuous 1930s and

again during the GCR. The Uyghur diaspora became a platform for various types of agitation in and around Xinjiang.

- As Deng Xiaoping consolidated his power as China's leader in and after 1978, he instituted an Open Door policy, under which many restrictions to both religious activity and foreign travel were relaxed. Beijing saw benefit in encouraging investment from the Middle East (again, this was in the decade of Saudi Arabia's fabulous oil revenues), while it had a shortage of imams and religious teachers for China's Muslims, among whom are not only Uyghurs, but also the just as numerous Chinese-speaking Hui Muslims.

It is also noteworthy that Chinese leaders did not perceive the Afghanistan mujaheddin as a problem for them in the 1980s. With the Sino-Soviet split still in effect, and armed clashes between China and the USSR only a decade in the past, Beijing cooperated with the United States during Operation Cyclone. Claudia Zanardi, an academic researcher, reported that Beijing “subsidised mules and US\$200–400 million worth of weapons to the Mujahidin and the PLA [People's Liberation Army—the Chinese military] had facilities in Peshawar and near the Pakistani border with Afghanistan where it employed 300 military advisers. In 1985, the PLA opened military camps in Xinjiang to train the Mujahidin with ‘Chinese weapons, explosives, combat tactics’, etc.”<sup>11</sup>

Largesse from none other than the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation, the Saudi NGO soon to be banned by the UN, financed mosque construction, schools and scholarships in China in the 1990s. These programs increased the influence of Saudi-brand Salafism and Wahhabism among Chinese Muslims. These fundamentalist ideologies proliferated through Saudi NGOs and preachers who arrived in China, facilitated by a handful of the hundreds of Chinese people who had returned home after studying on scholarship at Saudi universities.<sup>12</sup>

Professor Rohan Gunaratna, a specialist at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, summed up the results 30 years later: “The ideological footprint of Salafism in China is growing. Salafism is an ideological spectrum from the peaceful to the violent. Like elsewhere in the world, the Muslims most susceptible to recruitment by extremist and terrorist groups are those who have embraced Salafism.... Although most Salafists in China are peaceful, increasingly the version of Salafism influencing a growing minority of Chinese is of both religious and security concern.”<sup>13</sup>

Gunaratna says that radical ideology in China is reinforced by an increasingly influential online version, “Cyber Salafism”: “Also called ‘cut and paste Islam’, Cyber Salafists selectively take passages out of context from religious texts and drive Jihadism and Takfirism, a departure from classical Salafism.”

7. See Note 5.

8. Ramtanu Maitra, “Look Who Created the Taliban”, *EIR*, 2 Oct. 2009.

9. Marvin Perry, Howard E. Negrin (eds.), *The Theory and Practice of Islamic Terrorism: An Anthology* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

10. Graham E. Fuller, Jonathan N. Lipman, “Islam in Xinjiang”, in S. Fredrick Starr, ed., *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Routledge, 2004).

11. Claudia Zanardi, “The Changing Security Dimension of China's Relations with Xinjiang”, 31 Mar. 2019, online at [www.e-ir.info](http://www.e-ir.info), citing other academic studies.

12. Mohammed Al-Sudairi, “Chinese Salafism and the Saudi Connection”, *The Diplomat* ([www.diplomat.com](http://www.diplomat.com)), 23 Oct. 2014.

13. Rohan Gunaratna, “Salafism in China and its Jihadist-Takfiri strains”, 18 Jan. 2018, online at [www.mesbar.org](http://www.mesbar.org). 2018. Takfiri are Muslims who accuse other Muslims of being infidels.



## Xinjiang: China's western frontier in the heart of Eurasia

### Part 6. 'Afghan' jihadist terrorism comes to Xinjiang

By Melissa Harrison and Rachel Douglas

Parts 1–5 of this series appeared in the AAS of 18 November, 2 December, and 9 December 2020, 20 January and 3 February 2021. References to those articles are given in parentheses in this one.

#### The impact of Afghanistan on separatism in Xinjiang

The first glimmer in Xinjiang of radical Islamist terrorism, generated out of the Anglo-American-Saudi-Pakistani project of training and deploying radicalised guerrilla fighters against the Soviet Union in 1979–88 (Parts 2, 5), came in March 1981. That month a small group called the East Turkestan Prairie Fire Party popped up near Kashgar (Kashi) in southwestern Xinjiang. In May they raided a government weapons depot in Jiashi, 60 km east of Kashgar, but were soon caught and suppressed. Significantly, the group reportedly said they were “fighters for the Jihad who were going to drive the Chinese out of Eastern Turkestan”.<sup>1</sup>

After the Chinese Revolution ended with victory for the Communist Party of China in 1949, occasional incidents of unrest in Xinjiang had stemmed from various geopolitical shocks: the legacies of the 1930s British-backed and 1940s Soviet-backed East Turkestan Republics; turmoil in the region when remnants of the defeated Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) army, including surviving Hui Muslim military officers, ended up there when the fighting stopped; population flows of ethnic groups back and forth between Xinjiang and Soviet Central Asia because of adverse conditions on either side of the border at various times; and the Sino-Soviet split beginning in 1956. A short-lived Uyghuristan People's Revolutionary Party, promptly renamed the East Turkestan People's Revolutionary Party, appeared in both Kashgar and Urumqi in 1967–68, evidently with some degree of ill-advised Soviet backing as the Sino-Soviet split intensified in those years.

In the late 1980s, there were scattered incidents of student and other unrest in Xinjiang, coinciding with similar events elsewhere in China, leading up to the Tiananmen Square demonstrations of 1989. A sharper turning point in Xinjiang was an insurgency in Baren Township, south of Kashgar, in April 1990.

In the Baren Riot or Baren Rebellion, as it is called, two hundred Uyghur militants armed with weapons and explosives besieged local government offices and fought government troops. There are various reports on how long the siege lasted (from “several days” to “nearly three weeks”), who its leaders were, and where the Uyghur insurgents obtained their weapons (whether locally, or across Xinjiang's nearby short border with Afghanistan).<sup>2</sup>

1. Michael Dillon, *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Far Northwest* (Routledge Curzon, Durham East Asia Series, 2004), a book based on studies initially commissioned in 1993 for the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Dillon's report on the Jiashi incident and the Prairie Fire Party's statement relied on a 1999 history of separatism, published by a Xinjiang Region government publishing house.

2. Composite accounts based on both Chinese radio broadcasts at the time and publications sympathetic to the Uyghur insurgents are given by Dillon and in “China: The Evolution of ETIM”, Stratfor, 13 May 2008;

Where there is no disagreement, is that the Baren Riot was a serious incident, with at least 22 people killed (initial foreign press reports said the toll was as high as 60), and that its participants viewed it as a “jihad” event coherent with the Afghanistan mujaheddin's fight.

It was also in connection with the Baren Riot that the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) began to be mentioned. This is the entity that in 2002 would be listed by the United Nations as terrorist. The USA listed ETIM in 2002 as a supporter of terrorism, upgrading it to the Terrorist Exclusion List in 2004. ETIM was de-listed in November 2020 by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo at the height of the anti-China frenzy in the final months of the Trump Administration. Pompeo claimed that ETIM did not exist.

Singapore academic Rohan Gunaratna, in a January 2018 article,<sup>3</sup> traced ETIM and its successor, the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) to an organisation formed in 1940 by several Islamic scholars and activists, who had identified with the abortive, pro-British Turkish-Islamic Republic of East Turkestan in 1933–34 (Part 4, “Central Asia between the Wars”). Their 1940 project was called Hizbul Islam Li-Turkistan (the Islamic Party of Turkistan or Turkistan Islamic Movement). The Washington think tank Stratfor's history of ETIM/TIP (Note 2) presented the same account of its roots. The 1940 organisers had been imprisoned after attempting uprisings first against Xinjiang warlords and then against the Communists after 1949. Two of them died in the 1950s, but a third, Abdul Hakeem, survived and came out of prison during the relaxation of China's restrictions on Islamic activity in the 1980s (Part 5). He proceeded to set up underground schools for Islamic study, especially near Kashgar.

Gunaratna writes that it was members of this movement, revived in 1988 by one Zeydin Yusup (also written as “Dia Uddin” and “Zeyiddin Yusuf”) with the addition of “East” in its name, who led the Baren Riot. A retrospective on ETIM/TIP posted 18 October 2016 by the Turkish-language *Dogu Turkistan Bulteni* (*East Turkestan Bulletin*) concurred: “Established by Rahimullah Zeyiddin Yusuf in 1988 in East Turkistan, the Turkistan Islamic Movement were the heroes of the resistance against China in East Turkistan on 5 April 1990, ... and continue their jihad in the way of Allah.”

A leading UK-based terrorism expert assessed the Baren uprising as a momentous shift: “What in the 1980s would have translated [as] *just another* ethnic riot gained this time a ‘jihadist’ character”.<sup>4</sup>

*Continued page 9*

J. Todd Reed, Diana Raschke, *The ETIM: China's Islamic Militants and the Global Terrorist Threat* (Praeger, 2010); Rohan Gunaratna, Arabinda Acharya, Wang Pengxin, *Ethnic Identity and National Conflict in China* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Justin V. Hastings (U. of Sydney), “Charting the Course of Uyghur Unrest”, *The China Quarterly*, Dec. 2011.

3. Rohan Gunaratna, “Salafism in China and its Jihadist-Takfiri strains”, 18 Jan. 2018, online at mesbar.org.

4. Pablo Adriano Rodriguez, “Violent Resistance in Xinjiang (China)”, *Historia Actual Online*, 2013. The author, then at the University of Warwick, today works at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.



## Part 6. 'Afghan' jihadist terrorism comes to Xinjiang

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There were unconfirmed hints of a "Pan-Turkic" dimension to the Baren events, as well. Author Michael Dillon (Note 1) reports from the BBC's *Summary of World Broadcasts (Far East)*, that Chinese officials had accused Istanbul-based Uyghur émigré Isa Yusuf Alptekin of involvement. Participants at the 1992 Pan-Turkist conferences in New York (Part 4, "Post-Soviet Pan-Turk revival"), attributed Baren to activation of a Free East Turkestan Movement, which may have been an alternative translation of the East Turkestan Liberation Organisation (ETLO), set up in Turkey in the 1990s.

### ETIM in Pakistan and Afghanistan

Abdul Hakeem died in 1993. One of his students, by the name of Hasan Mahsum, detained in a broad security sweep that followed the Baren Riot, was further radicalised by interaction with fellow prisoners in 1990-91. At the end of 1996, after another brief jailing for pro-separatist activity, Mahsum left China via Malaysia, to seek backing from the Uyghur diaspora in Saudi Arabia. In the first half of 1997 he proceeded to Pakistan and then Turkey in search of support. In 1997 he and Abudukadir Yapuquan reconstituted ETIM once again.

In 1998 ETIM headquarters were shifted to Afghanistan, according to Stratfor's and other histories of the group. There were reports that Mahsum met there, under Taliban protection, with al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and leaders of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU; introduced in Part 5, "The Central Asia blueprint"). It was apparently in the context of these contacts that the group removed "East" from its name and began to go by Turkestan Islamic Movement (or Party), thus implicitly encompassing all of Central Asia rather than only Xinjiang.

ETIM/TIP literature increasingly adopted the "takfiri" attitudes of al-Qaeda, namely denouncing and anathematizing other Muslims.

Gunaratna (Note 3) writes about this period: "ETIM benefitted from the existing vast Taliban al-Qaeda (AQT) infrastructure. The Uzbeks and Uyghurs were the first two Central Asian groups to build a strategic partnership with AQT.... A prominent Egyptian Sheikh, 'Marjon Solim Javhari alias Shaikh Isa, from the time of Taliban's rule in Afghanistan to 2007, taught jihadi knowledge to Uyghur and Uzbek mujahideen in Afghanistan and Pakistan.'... Mahsum operated from Kabul under an Afghan passport and met with Osama bin Laden in 1999. The Afghan Taliban created a dedicated village for the Uyghurs in Jalalabad and al Qaeda provided him a dedicated training facility in Tora Bora.... Uyghurs in Xinjiang travelled into Pakistan through the Karakoram Highway and by flight.... The external Emir of the Khalden Camp, Abu Zubaidah from Saudi Arabia received them at the Islamabad airport and transported them to Afghanistan for training. Mahsum rebuilt the infrastructure in Xinjiang including training bases inside Xinjiang."

Israeli researcher Ely Karmon<sup>5</sup> found credible a Chinese government report that in 1998 "dozens" of ETIM members trained in Afghanistan infiltrated back into Xinjiang and set up secret training cells for bomb-making. Some of



East Turkestan Islamic Movement leader Hasan Mahsum (inset) in 1999 reportedly met with al-Qaeda leaders Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri (above) and subsequently merged ETIM into their terrorist infrastructure. Photos: Screenshot/Wikipedia-Hamid Mir



the resulting ETIM weapons depots were raided by police. Western nations' intelligence reports in 1996, already, indicated that veterans of the mujaheddin in Afghanistan were training "scores" of Uyghur militants in Xinjiang. In 1999, it was reported that Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) agency was training Uyghurs in its schools (Note 4).

After the USA invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 and bombed Taliban and al-Qaeda locations there in the Global War on Terrorism, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, as many as one thousand ETIM cadre escaped and retreated mainly to Pakistan. Mahsum was killed there during a Pakistani military operation in 2003. By 2006, a new leadership of ETIM/TIP, now calling itself primarily TIP, appeared to have jelled around his associate, Abdul Haq al-Turkistani; other sources speculated that the revived TIP was actually the result of a split-off from the IMU (Note 4).

In 2014 a retired American intelligence official told journalists from *Executive Intelligence Review* that Pakistan-based Lashkar e-Tahibi ("Army of the Good"), a militant Islamist group behind the training of terrorists for attacks inside India, had been continuing to train Uyghur jihadists in Pakistan as well.<sup>6</sup>

Another impact of Xinjiang's interface with the Afghanistan mujaheddin was its incorporation into the rapidly exploding international narcotics trade. Afghanistan's opium production rose from 350 tons in 1986 to 4,581 tons by 1999 and, after the USA/NATO occupation of the country, to 8,200 tons in 2007. Like the mujaheddin, Uyghur militants were active in trafficking of this product, which also funded terrorism and fed into the growth of an underground criminal drug mafia in Xinjiang. The region became a transshipment route for Afghan opium and heroin, while domestic illegal cultivation of the ephedra shrub, to produce the stimulant ephedrine, also boomed. Xinjiang became China's region with the fastest rising level of drug addiction.

### Terror attacks in China

The Chinese government reports that between 1990 to 2016 more than one thousand civilians were killed in thousands of terrorist attacks, committed by "East Turkestan" groups in Xinjiang.<sup>7</sup> These attacks included

6. "Xinjiang's Uighur Jihadists and the Wahhabi Empire of al-Qaeda", *EIR*, 18 Apr. 2014.

7. "The Fight Against Terrorism and Extremism and Human Rights Protection in Xinjiang", white paper, State Council Information Office, People's Republic of China, 18 Mar. 2019. Online at [www.gov.cn](http://www.gov.cn). The

5. Ely Karmon, "Pakistan, the Radicalisation of the Jihadist Movement and the Challenge to China", *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (In Asia)*, No. 3, 2009.

bombings, assassinations of government officials and Uyghur and Muslim religious leaders, mass murders, and attempts to hijack and blow up planes.

After the Baren Riot and subsequent crackdown, there were isolated bombings in Urumqi, northern Xinjiang, in 1992 and 1997. Australian scholar Justin Hastings in 2011 used the Global Terrorism Database, maintained by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland, to chart the number of violent incidents in Xinjiang in 1990-2009 (Note 2). He found that the number of targets of such attacks had hovered at five to 10 annually in 1990-96, but then zoomed to 15 in 1997 and above 35 in 1998. These were the years when Hasan Mahsum and others reconstituted ETIM/TIP.<sup>8</sup>

Another strong crackdown on unrest, called by Beijing the Strike Hard measures, brought the number of attacks down to very few in the early 2000s, only for it to surge again a decade later.

Isolated knife attacks occurred in or near Kashgar and Urumqi in 2011-12. In 2013 Jacob Zenn, a terrorism specialist now at Georgetown University, enumerated five incidents in four Xinjiang cities during March-June of that year; several dozen people were killed at that time in ethnic (Uyghur vs. Han Chinese) street fighting, a police station bombing, a raid on a bomb factory, and knife attacks on police.<sup>9</sup>

Three horrific attacks committed in March-May 2014, this time not in Xinjiang alone, were an escalation to a new level of expertise, timing and coordination. On 1 March eight attackers wielding knives and machetes killed 33 people and injured more than 140 at the railway station in the southwestern city of Kunming, Yunnan Province. Two months later, on 30 April, a knife attack and bombing at the Urumqi railway station left three dead and 79 hurt. And on 22 May terrorists drove two SUVs through a marketplace crowd in Urumqi, killing 39 and injuring nearly 100 people. In May 2014, Xinjiang Communist Party chief Zhang Chunxian announced an intensive counterterrorism and anti-extremism campaign, warning that "Violent terrorist attacks have become the most immediate and realistic peril to social stability in Xinjiang."<sup>10</sup>

Chinese official statements often attribute all the attacks to "ETIM/TIP". There were many smaller groups reportedly engaged in some degree of "armed struggle" in the 1990s and 2000s, some of them mentioned only once or twice in Chinese sources, others confirmed by multiple foreign scholars. A 2010 book (Reed & Raschke, Note 4), for example, listed, besides ETIM/TIP and the ETLO, a Uyghur People's Party (based in Kazakhstan, formed in 2001 as a merger of the United Revolutionary Front of East Turkistan and the Uyghur Liberation Organisation), an Islamic Reformist Party, the Tigers of Lop Nor, the East Turkistan National Solidarity Union, the Islamic Holy Warriors, the East Turkistan Opposition Party, and the Eastern Turkistan Grey Wolf Party—all as either implicated in bombings, or advocating "armed struggle"

white paper is valuable not only for its documentation of the terrorist attacks, but as testimony to how Chinese leaders view them. In the present article we have chosen to cite chiefly non-PRC sources on the attacks, because so many readers have formed the habit of dismissing official statements from Beijing.

8. Note 2, Stratfor.

9. "China Claims Uyghur Militants Trained in Syria", Terrorism Monitor, 12 July 2013, Jamestown Foundation (online at jamestown.org).

10. "Xinjiang's Party chief wages 'people's war' against terrorism", *China Daily*, 26 May 2014.



Mourners outside the Kunming railway station following the 1 March 2014 terrorist attack. Photo: AFP/Xinhua/Lin Yiguang

in their propaganda.

### International jihadis call for attacks on Xinjiang

The run-up to the renewed terrorist outbreak in Xinjiang in 2011-14 was marked by a crescendo of calls from international terrorist groups for attacks on Xinjiang. On 6 October 2009 Sheikh Abu-Yahya al-Libi, then al-Qaeda's second in command, released a video titled "East Turkestan: The Forgotten Wound". He denounced "crimes committed by the pagan Chinese" and demanded that all Muslims "stand by their oppressed and wounded brothers in East Turkestan and aid them with everything they can".<sup>11</sup>

Two weeks after the March 2014 Kunming railway station attack, TIP leader Abdullah Mansour spoke with Reuters, apparently by satellite phone from somewhere in western Pakistan. Repeating al-Libi's line that the fight against China was now a universal jihad obligation, Mansour said, "If the fighters of East Turkestan are now fighting with swords, knives, and mallets, our dear Allah will soon give us opportunities to fight the Chinese using automatic guns."

Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, in a 2016 video, praised Hasan Mahsum as a legendary jihadist and Uyghur jihadists as "mujaheddin brothers" fighting against an "atheist occupier"—the government of China.<sup>12</sup> The video showed the Uyghur/"East Turkestan" issue was gaining importance within transnational terror groups, for use as propaganda to whip up the Muslim population in various countries. A 2017 article documented al-Qaeda and Islamic State (ISIS) propaganda calling for Muslims to wage global jihad against Chinese non-believers and revenge alleged deaths of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. In 2014, it reported, ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had extended the boundaries of the would-be Islamic Caliphate to include Xinjiang.<sup>13</sup>

One result of such agitation was an increase of terrorist attacks targeting Chinese expats, particularly in Central Asia.

A 2017 report commissioned from two American experts by the Netherlands-based International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) noted the Chinese government's concern that Xinjiang's separatist movements could become dominated by violent jihadists.<sup>14</sup> The authors

11. Note 6.

12. Thomas Joscelyn, "Zawahiri praises Uighur jihadists in ninth episode of 'Islamic Spring' series", *Long War Journal*, 7 July 2016.

13. Uran Botobekov, "Al-Qaeda and Islamic State Take Aim at China", *The Diplomat*, 8 March 2017.

14. Colin P. Clarke (Rand Corporation), Paul Rexton Kan (U.S. Army War College), "Uighur Foreign Fighters: An Underexamined Jihadist Challenge", ICCT, Nov. 2017 (online at icct.nl).



acknowledged that this scenario could “transform the nature and severity of low-level conflict into a bloodier insurgency”, mirroring the trajectory of the 1990s-2000s conflict in Chechnya, Russia. If this were to happen, “Beijing could soon find itself in the crosshairs of a religiously motivated, battle-hardened crop of returning foreign terrorist fighters—an unenviable position of any nation”.

### ‘Foreign fighters’ from Xinjiang

There are already significant numbers of such fighters, beyond the initial wave into Afghanistan and Pakistan. Already in 2008, an Indian intelligence analyst pointed out two different outlooks among Uyghur activists. One tendency was to emphasise an independent Uyghur homeland—“East Turkestan”. These people, he said, were not necessarily “pan-Islamic” in orientation and did not all accept the jihadist ideology of al-Qaeda. The other was fully on board with al-Qaeda and global violent jihad.<sup>15</sup>

After 2001, 22 Uyghurs were detained by the USA in Afghanistan and subsequently held at Guantanamo Bay. Most were rounded up in or near Taliban camps (Part 5, “The Central Asia blueprint”).

The above-cited 2017 ICCT report detailed a growing transnationalisation of Uyghur terrorist fighters, who had spread into Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Some of them joined local terrorist organisations in Indonesia, while many proceeded to Iraq or Syria. As the report put it, “seemingly under the radar” while most studies of Uyghur activism focused on Chinese domestic policy, China has “figured prominently in jihadi strategy” for the past decade.

With the outbreak of civil war in Syria in 2011 and the obsession of the American and British governments with overthrowing the Syrian government, that country became a new magnet for jihadist terrorist groups, including remnants of al-Qaeda and subsequently ISIS, which had grown out of the Anglo-American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Offshoots of these groups, constantly changing their names, received funding and arms from the USA and UK through various organisational structures. For the American CIA, covert support of “rebel fighters” in Syria became its most expensive operation since Operation Cyclone in 1980s Afghanistan (Part 2).

ETIM/TIP terrorists are present among the 20,000-30,000 foreign militants who have fought in Syria and Iraq.

Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan backed the American operations in Syria from the outset, with Turkey becoming a transit point for international terrorists on their way there. Erdogan, who rose to power as an Islamist politician eager to undermine Turkey’s secular traditions in government, also espouses Pan-Turkist ideology. In 1995, as mayor of Istanbul, he dedicated a park in honour of the Uyghur émigré and Pan-Turkist activist Isa Yusuf Alptekin (Part 4, section “Post-Soviet Pan-Turk revival”). Declared Erdogan, using the Pan-Turkist name for Xinjiang Region, “Eastern Turkestan is not only the home of the Turkic peoples but also the cradle of Turkic history, civilisation and culture.... The martyrs of Eastern Turkestan are our martyrs.”<sup>16</sup>

In 2015 reports emerged in the Turkish and Indonesian press that Uyghur ethnic men from Xinjiang, detained in Indonesia and Thailand, had been travelling as Turkish citizens on passports issued by Turkish embassies in

Southeast Asia. The Turkish newspaper *Meydan Daily* claimed that “more than 50,000 Uyghur Turks came to Turkey with these fake passports from China via Thailand and Malaysia and entered Syria after staying a day in Istanbul”, while the Chinese government accused Turkey of facilitating the shipment of Uyghur Chinese citizens to Syria as “cannon fodder”.<sup>17</sup> The *Meydan Daily* numbers are far on the high end of claims about the number of Uyghur fighters in Syria; other estimates range from several hundred to several thousand.

Unlike other al-Qaeda offshoot groups, which usually consist of lone men, Uyghur fighters often brought their wives, children and parents to Syria, with multi-generational families living in villages and farms after Syrians had been driven out. It was reported in 2018 that 3,500 TIP militants and their families were living in the Syrian village of Zabaqi, with schools established for hundreds of Uyghur and local children being trained to be “little jihadists”.<sup>18</sup> The 2017 ICCT report said that TIP specialises in training child soldiers, as a niche capability. Articles in *The Diplomat* in 2017 reported a propaganda video of Uyghur children interacting with a militant teacher who addresses the Chinese government: “We will come to you to shed blood like rivers and avenge the oppressed”; and an ISIS video in which a Uyghur boy aged eight or nine executed a prisoner with a gun and threatened that every Chinese non-believer would share the same fate.

The ICCT report described other 2016-17 TIP propaganda videos, featuring heroic images of Uyghurs fighting in Syria and songs on a “holy war against infidels”. Uyghur militants were shown burning the Chinese flag and threatening to return home to wage jihad. In other TIP propaganda videos, Uyghur militants promise to wage “holy war” throughout the world.

The late war journalist Andre Vltchek spent several years investigating Uyghur jihadists on the ground in China, Syria, Turkey, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Indonesia, culminating in his 2019 article “March of the Uyghurs”.<sup>19</sup> Vltchek characterised the Uyghur militants as among the most dangerous terrorists in Syria, being “fully trained ... battle-ready, indoctrinated and extremely brutal”. Vltchek interviewed Syrian eyewitnesses to these jihadists slaughtering the local population; the witnesses said the fighters appeared “brainwashed, mad”, and used narcotics as “combat drugs”.

The 2017 ICCT report outlined possible scenarios for Uyghurs in post-conflict Syria, including the inevitability that some fighters will return to China. Uyghurs might intensify jihadist connections or strategic coalitions between terrorist groups in Southeast Asia, or “privatise” their activities for profit, as had already happened with the private military contractor Malhama Tactical in Syria. Guerrilla groups fighting the Assad government hired this company to fight, provide training and “battlefield consulting”. Uyghur militants fought alongside Malhama Tactical in Syria, and the contractor’s leader has suggested China in particular as a country that would “benefit from jihad”.

17. Peter Lee, “Deeper and Darker in the Uyghur-Turkish Passport Mystery”, China Matters blog, 10 April 2015; Ben Blanchard, “China says Uyghurs being sold as ‘cannon fodder’ for extremist groups”, Reuters, 11 July 2015.

18. Steven Sahiounie, “From Idlib to Xinjiang: Uyghur Fighters Trained for Terror”, 21st Century Wire, 26 Sept. 2018.

19. Andre Vltchek, “March of the Uyghurs”, New Eastern Outlook, 21 July 2019.

15. Ramtanu Maitra, “The Uighurs: Britain’s Double-Edged Razor to Cut up China and Beyond”, *EIR*, 11 Apr. 2008.

16. “Istanbul names park for Isa Yusuf Alptekin”, *Eastern Turkestan Information Bulletin*, August 1995.



## Xinjiang: China's western frontier in the heart of Eurasia

### Part 7. The 'East Turkistan' narrative

By Melissa Harrison and Rachel Douglas

Parts 1 – 6 of this series appeared in the AAS of 18 November, 2 and 9 December 2020; 20 January, 3 and 17 February 2021. References to those articles are given in parentheses in this one.

#### China moves to stop terrorism

The terrorist attacks in Xinjiang, especially in 1997-2014, were deadly serious (Part 6, section "Terror attacks in China"). The Chinese government estimated in 2019 that more than 1,000 people had been killed by "East Turkistan"-related groups during the previous three decades. The Global Terrorism Database tally for that time period is approximately the same.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, with a 2013 suicide car-bomb attack in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, for which the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) claimed responsibility, and the deaths of 33 people in the Kunming Railway Station stabbings of March 2014, Uyghur or "East Turkistan" separatist terrorism was no longer confined within the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

In the 1990s and 2000s, the Chinese government response to the attacks had been a series of "Strike Hard" campaigns, aimed against "religious extremist forces", "hardcore ethnic separatists", and "violent terrorists". There were widespread arrests and trials, prison terms handed down, and executions of terrorist leaders like those convicted of planning the Tiananmen car attack. At the same time, the leaders in Beijing evidently hoped that economic improvements under China's Western Development guidelines, issued in 1999, would dampen unrest in Xinjiang.

When Xi Jinping came to power in 2012-13, it was already clear that these measures, even the significant investment of the Western Development program, were insufficient for ending the attacks in and from Xinjiang. The crescendo of terrorist acts up through 2014, as well as a different type of disturbance, the Han vs Uyghur ethnic clash that killed 184 people in Xinjiang's capital city Urumqi in 2009, made it clear that economic development would not deter the instigators.

The new approach adopted under Xi should be contrasted to the so-called Global War on Terror, launched by the US Administration of President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney after the 9/11 attacks in 2001, joined and supplemented by the Tony Blair and subsequent UK governments. Those regime-change efforts, such as in Iraq, Libya and Syria, and aerial bombardment campaigns have destroyed entire nations and fostered the emergence of more terrorists than existed before.

The new Chinese programs were designed to provide



Uyghur separatist terror attack in the Kunming Railway Station, southern China, in 2014. China experienced a wave of deadly acts of terror in 1997-2014. Photo: Screenshot

participants with job skills and employment opportunities, because poverty is recognised as a risk factor for radicalisation. "The development process was accelerated", Schiller Institute analyst Mike Billington summarised in a 2020 article, "while the young people who were being subjected to Wahhabi indoctrination [Part 5, "Wahhabite education, jihadist training"] were brought into education centres, to provide vocational training, civics classes in Chinese law, improvement in the national language where needed, and religious education led by Islamic scholars. They were detained for an average of eight months. As of [December] 2019, all those detained have 'graduated', and the camps are now being transformed into public education facilities. There has not been a terrorist incident in China for the past three years. The Chinese didn't bomb anybody. They arrested and incarcerated the actual terrorists, and they educated the rest of the population, succeeding in ending the terrorist threat within China."<sup>2</sup>

In July 2019 an open letter issued by 37 UN member countries, influential Muslim-majority nations among them, supported Beijing's "counter-terrorism and deradicalisation measures in Xinjiang" undertaken in the face of "the grave challenge of terrorism and extremism". Responding to a complaint earlier that month by a UK- and USA-led group based on unsubstantiated characterisations of the Chinese measures, the governments demanded an end to the "practice of politicising human rights issues".<sup>3</sup>

Eyewitnesses have described dramatic improvements in life in Xinjiang in the past decade, including a reduction of the fear of terrorism. Such reports will not be detailed in this article, but are well worth reading or watching, instead of accepting the mainstream media's depiction of the region as a gigantic network of concentration camps.<sup>4</sup>

1. The GTD, maintained by the National Consortium for the study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland, is online at [www.start.umd.edu/gtd/](http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/). Its total of 978 deaths in terrorist incidents in China, 1990-2019, omits casualties in the Baren Riot of 1990 (Part 6), but includes some attacks that may not have been separatist-related, as well as incidents of clashes between ethnic groups.

2. Mike Billington, "British Creation and Control of Islamic Terror: Background to China's Defeat of Terror in Xinjiang", *EIR*, 10 Jan. 2020; "China Chooses Development and Education, Not War, to Combat Terrorism", 9 Aug. 2019.

3. Richard Bardon, "Muslim countries reject claims of 'cultural genocide' against Xinjiang Uyghurs", *AAS*, 24 July 2019.

4. For example, "Is China committing genocide against Uyghur



Despite the calming of the situation in Xinjiang, China still has reason for concern, as scenarios for Xinjiang-born terrorists to return home should signal (Part 6, “‘Foreign fighters’ from Xinjiang”). The American authors of a 2017 report for the Netherlands-based International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) observed that returning Uyghur Islamist veterans of the Syrian civil war “could be envisioned as shock troops” in a “simmering insurgency” in Xinjiang. They cited remarks by Chinese Maj. Gen. Jin Yinan, a national security and crisis management expert who today is a professor at China’s National Defence University, as evidence of Beijing’s awareness of this danger already in 2012; Jin warned that the TIP had joined the Syrian conflict not only to raise TIP’s international profile, but also “to gain operational experience in order to return to China and breathe new life into the insurgency back home.”<sup>5</sup>

### Intelligence agencies manipulate diasporas

The American, British and allied geopolitical strategists who are bent on conflict with China, and their helpers in the media, seized on China’s counterterror efforts, which involved increased surveillance and security measures, to drive a narrative of indiscriminate oppression of Xinjiang’s Uyghur Muslim population. Even as the situation within Xinjiang calmed down and living standards began to rise, the “East Turkistan” issue was exploited more and more loudly.

Disinformation about Xinjiang is ever more extravagant, as the AAS and others have documented.<sup>6</sup> Most recently Gareth Porter and Max Blumenthal, writing on the Grayzone website, dissected the work of anti-China zealot Adrian Zenz, who testified several times before the US Congress in 2018-19 during the run-up to passage of the *Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020*, authorising sanctions against individual Chinese leaders accused of human rights violations. They found “flagrant data abuse, fraudulent claims, cherry-picking of source material, and propagandistic misrepresentations.”<sup>7</sup>

The same Anglo-American institutions that are leading the anti-China campaign, based on false accounts of repression in Xinjiang, weaponised “human rights” issues long ago, for regime-change goals. The leading ones are Amnesty International, founded in the UK in 1961; Human Rights Watch, created in 1978 to support dissidents in the Soviet Union; and the US quasi-governmental National Endowment for Democracy, the flagship of funding and support for colour revolutions abroad.<sup>8</sup>

In a pattern carried forward from Cold War times, for Xinjiang-related propaganda these agencies utilise a support base within the Uyghur diaspora. The aim is not only to destabilise or even fragment a given country, but also to set “thought rules” for public opinion and political circles

elsewhere—for example, in the USA or Australia.

One of the deadliest examples of this dynamic is Ukraine, a case not only parallel to that of Uyghur émigrés after World War II, but intertwined with it. When the Soviet Union broke up in 1991, millions of Ukrainian citizens—ethnic Ukrainians, Russians, and those of mixed or other ethnicity—advocated preserving close, cooperative relations with post-Soviet Russia. The dominant belief in official Washington, however, was that no true Ukrainian patriot would have that attitude. That myth stemmed from the radical ideology of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), founded in 1929 in Vienna with a base in Ukraine’s far western Galicia region as an insurgency against Polish rule (Galicia had been under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and was assigned to Poland at the end of World War I). The OUN’s organisers held that Ukraine must become ethnically pure and that war against not only Poland, but ultimately Russia was inevitable. OUN leaders Stefan Bandera and Yaroslav Stetsko allied with Hitler in 1941, and near the end of World War II their Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), even as its Nazi erstwhile allies faced defeat, slaughtered tens of thousands of Jews and Poles in the name of ethnic cleansing.

Bandera remained a hero for many post-war Ukrainian émigrés to the USA and Canada. A cohort of Ukrainian diaspora members, sometimes two or three generations removed from immigration, came to hold influential posts in Washington, from which they preached the Banderite hard line of hostility towards Russia. They helped resuscitate the Bandera cult in Ukraine in the 1990s; it then formed the leadership of the 2013-14 US-backed coup against the country’s elected President. In the years that followed, Banderite activists and Ukrainian media under their influence have inculcated in an entire new generation the notion that to be a patriot of Ukraine, one must hate Russia.

Even American academic S. Frederick Starr and career Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officer Graham Fuller, in their 2003 pamphlet *The Xinjiang Problem*,<sup>9</sup> which projected worsening difficulties for China in the region, acknowledged that only a small minority of the Xinjiang Muslim population is pro-separatist. Furthermore, some of the other ethnic groups, like Kazakhs and Hui Muslims (native speakers of Chinese) fear Uyghur domination as much or more than rule from Beijing. Starr and Fuller estimated that separatists were “probably a distant third” behind “assimilationists” desiring to blend fully into Han Chinese culture and “autonomists” seeking more power within Xinjiang, but their evaluation didn’t stop the build-up of separatist campaigning within the Uyghur diaspora under the flag of “East Turkistan”. One result is the creation of a false impression among the uninformed public abroad that the population of Xinjiang, or at least a majority of the Uyghurs, are yearning to set up a separate state.

During the Cold War, political groups of émigrés from the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Central Asia were labelled representatives of “captive nations”. Lobby groups such as the National Captive Nations Committee (in the USA) gained inordinate influence over politicians and the public. Some of their leaders were people who had collaborated with the Nazi armies invading the Soviet Union in 1941, either guided by their own racist, “blood and soil” ideologies or in search of escape from the brutality of Soviet policies of the 1930s, while others had suffered

Muslims? A British-Aussie’s eyewitness report”, *Citizens Insight* ([www.youtube.com/c/CitizensPartyAU/videos](http://www.youtube.com/c/CitizensPartyAU/videos)), 28 Oct. 2020, an interview with Jerry Grey, who lives in China and has bicycled through Xinjiang.

5. Part 6, note 14.

6. Richard Bardon, “Uighur ‘mass detention’ reports fabricated by US, British propagandists”, *AAS*, 26 Sept. 2018; “ASPI doubles down on Xinjiang ‘detention centre’ fakery”, *AAS*, 30 Sept. 2020.

7. Gareth Porter, Max Blumenthal, “US State Department accusation of China ‘genocide’ relied on data abuse and baseless claims by far-right ideologue”, *thegrayzone.com*, 18 Feb. 2021.

8. Rachel Douglas, “Destabilising Russia: The ‘Democracy’ Agenda of McFaul and His Oxford Masters”, *EIR*, 3 Feb. 2012, uncovers the late Gene Sharp’s US Defence Department-funded development of colour revolutions—allegedly non-violent projects which are a form of irregular warfare.

9. Part 3, note 7.



Ukrainian Yaroslav Stetsko (l.) of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists pledged close cooperation with Nazi Germany in 1941. Uzbekistan-born Ruzi Nazar (r.) served in the Nazis' Turkestan Legion in World War II. After the war, Nazar joined Stetsko's Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations, sponsored by MI6 and the CIA. Photos: Wikipedia

under Communist regimes and fled from native areas ravaged by the two World Wars.

Anglo-American strategists who anticipated fighting against their World War II ally the Soviet Union in the not too distant future sought to co-opt Nazi and fascist networks after the war. There was a paramilitary side to these intelligence-agency recruitment programs, as seen in Operation Gladio in Italy (Part 4, "The 'Gladio' template") or British MI6's backing of the OUN in subversive activity in Ukraine well beyond the end of the western Ukraine civil war between Soviet authorities and the remnants of the UPA in 1954.

### The CIA's Captive Nations

There was also a "civilian" side to CIA and MI6 network-building among ex-Nazis and their allies, which fed into covert operations in South America, the Middle East, and Europe, as well as affecting public opinion in the UK and the USA. For example, US Army Counterintelligence attempted in 1952 to block entry into the USA by Gen. Mykola Lebed, the OUN's wartime security police chief, terming him "a well-known sadist and collaborator of the Germans", but was overridden by CIA Director Allen Dulles on grounds that Lebed was of "inestimable value to this Agency in its operations".<sup>10</sup> The CIA went on to establish and fund the Prolog Research Corporation in New York City as Lebed's base of operations, for intelligence-gathering and the distribution of nationalist and other literature inside the USSR. Prolog lasted until 1990, and supplied personnel who headed the Ukrainian section of Munich-based, CIA-funded Radio Liberty, broadcasting into the Soviet Union, in 1978-2003.

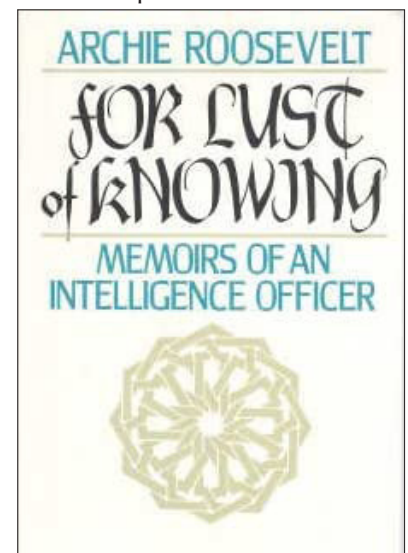
For Central Asia and, eventually, Xinjiang, one of the most important post-war CIA Captive Nations recruits was Ruzi Nazar, an Uzbek born in the Soviet Union in 1917 in a family with roots in the Central Asian Khanate of Kokand (17th-18th centuries).<sup>11</sup> Conscripted into the Red Army (Soviet armed forces) in World War II, he was wounded, escaped in Ukraine, and joined the German forces. Nazar became an organiser of the Nazis' Turkestan Legion (Part 4, "Central Asia between the wars"), which was deployed in northern Italy. He was on assignment in Germany when the war ended, but avoided the fate of many Turkestan Legion veterans—being handed over to the Soviets—and

gradually began to offer his services to the Americans.

In 1948 the Truman Administration secretly initiated a program of covert operations against the Soviet Union. Plans were made for starting up Radio Free Europe (broadcasting to Eastern Europe) and Radio Liberty (to the USSR)—together, the RFE/RL complex. Inaugural CIA Director Allen Dulles coordinated establishment of the Free Europe Committee and the American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism. A group of non-Russian émigrés from the Soviet Union refused to join in Russian émigré-dominated umbrella groups in Europe, which would not endorse the future independence of their native areas from Russia. Already in 1946 Stetsko, who as Prime Minister of a self-proclaimed Ukrainian state in 1941 had pledged to "work closely with the National-Socialist Greater Germany, under the leadership of its leader Adolf Hitler, which is forming a new order in Europe and the world",<sup>12</sup> revived the Committee of Subjugated Nations his OUN had run for the Nazis<sup>13</sup>, as a new Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABN) in Munich for non-Russian émigré activists. Initially backed by British MI6<sup>14</sup> and subsequently by the Americans, the ABN was soon joined by the head of the Azerbaijani National Committee and by Ruzi Nazar.

Nazar was sought out in Munich and recruited to the CIA in 1951 by Archibald Bulloch ("Archie") Roosevelt Jr, a grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt and now an officer of the CIA with particular interest in the Middle East and Central Asia. Archie Roosevelt describes in his memoirs, arguing with more Europe-oriented American officials that the United States should do more against the Soviet Union in Central Asia. At the very outset of the Cold War, three decades before Zbigniew Brzezinski would launch massive support for mujaheddin fighters in Afghanistan (Part 2, "Operation Cyclone—Afghan Mujaheddin"), Archie envisioned the strategy of undermining the USSR on its southern perimeter. In a chapter of his memoirs titled "Turan", referring to the idea of uniting all the Turkic peoples of Central Asia, Roosevelt lamented that American policy-makers had failed to exploit "the subject races of Russia's Asian empire [who] have continued to languish without any encouragement from us."<sup>15</sup>

Roosevelt had already conducted semi-covert reconnaissance in Central Asia right after the war, entering through Xinjiang when the Soviets would not allow him access through Moscow. He



The memoirs of CIA officer Archie Roosevelt Jr, who recruited Ruzi Nazar to the CIA. Both espoused a scenario of creating "Turan", a bloc of Turkic peoples in Central Asia against Russia and China.

12. "Ukraine: Violent Coup, Fascist Axioms, Neo-Nazis", *EIR*, 16 May 2014.

13. Paul Rosenberg, "Seven Decades of Nazi Collaboration: America's Dirty Little Ukraine Secret", *The Nation*, 28 Mar. 2014.

14. Stephen Dorril, *MI6: Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service* (The Free Press, 2000).

15. Archie Roosevelt, *For Lust of Knowing: Memoirs of an Intelligence Officer* (Little, Brown, 1988).

10. Richard Breitman, Norman J.W. Goda, *Hitler's Shadow: Nazi War Criminals, US Intelligence, and the Cold War* (National Archives, 2012).

11. Enver Altayli, *A Dark Path to Freedom: Ruzi Nazar, from the Red Army to the CIA* (London: Hurst & Company, 2017).



convinced Nazar to cross the Atlantic, setting him up in a position at Columbia University in New York City, from where he would provide Central Asia analysis for the CIA. Nazar moonlighted as an analyst and scriptwriter for the Uzbek-language broadcast service of Voice of America.

In 1955 the Asian-African Conference of independent, newly decolonised nations, not attached to either the Soviet or the Anglo-American-NATO bloc, took place in Indonesia, going down in history as the Bandung Conference. It laid the foundations for what would soon become the Non-Aligned Movement, led by Presidents Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia and Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, and India's PM Jawaharlal Nehru. Ruzi Nazar, with covert backing from his CIA employers, wangled an invitation to attend as an observer from "Turkestan" (a country that did not exist). His goal was to push the "non-aligned" countries to denounce the Soviet Union and China as colonial powers. Nazar gave a press conference on the sidelines of the conference, billing himself as a former officer of the (Nazi) Turkestan Legion. At the last moment, he was joined by one Seyit Shamil, who arrived from Turkey representing anti-Soviet people from Russia's North Caucasus.

Shamil had hoped that accompanying him to Bandung would be Isa Yusuf Alptekin, a Uyghur politician who had fled Xinjiang upon the Communist victory in 1949 and lived in Turkey (Part 4, "Post-Soviet Pan-Turk revival"). Alptekin could not travel closer to Bandung than Karachi, Pakistan, being unable to obtain an Indonesian visa. On his return trip, Ruzi Nazar stopped off in Karachi for talks with Alptekin, whom he urged to ally with Tibetans against the Chinese central government.

Alptekin began to identify with the international "captive nations" network. In 1969 he wrote an effusive letter to thank then-President Richard Nixon for continuing to celebrate Captive Nations Week in the USA, and to request the inclusion of "East Turkestan".<sup>16</sup>

Back in the USA in 1956, Nazar made many contacts among Central Asian émigrés and Turks, including Col. Alparslan Turkes (Part 4, "Alparslan Turkes and the Grey Wolves"), then serving as Turkish General Staff liaison to the NATO Standing Group in Washington. Nazar would continue his friendship with Turkes during his (Nazar's) 1959-71 posting in Ankara under diplomatic cover. During that time Turkes was a leader of the 1960 military coup in Turkey, and in the second half of that decade founded the ultra-nationalist National Movement Party (MHP) and its Grey Wolves terrorist arm—both patronised by Turkes's colleagues in the military intelligence agency MIT. Turkes had introduced Nazar to Fuat Dogu, the future head of MIT, already in the USA.

Nazar also maintained close ties with Central Asian staffers at Radio Liberty in Munich and its associated Munich Institute for the Study of the USSR. Isa Alptekin's son, Erkin Alptekin, would work at RFE/RL in 1971-95.

In 1961, right after the coup, Turkes launched a think tank called the Institute for Research on Turkish Culture (known by its Turkish acronym TKAE), roughly modelled on the CIA's Munich Institute. Enver Altayli, an ex-MIT officer who is the biographer of Nazar, asserts that TKAE was funded for years by MIT, to implement Fuat Dogu's scheme to weaken the Soviet Union—"What Turkey could do was to aggravate the nationalities problem." The

historian of TKAE agrees with Altayli that this idea may have come largely from Nazar, for "Nazar was of the opinion that the Soviet Union, despite its ostensible strength, had a soft belly, and that was the nationalities question."<sup>17</sup>

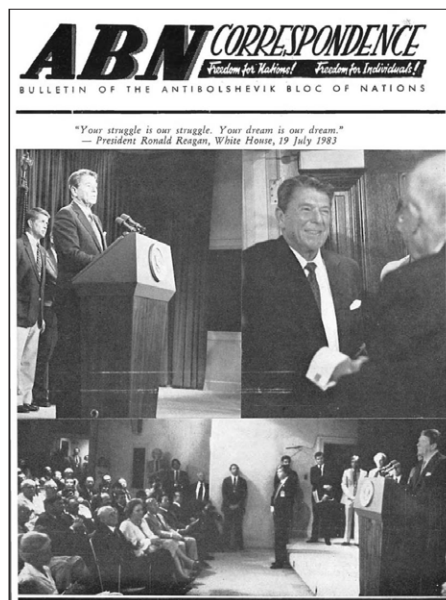
Altayli reports that after his Turkey posting, Nazar became friends with Zbigniew Brzezinski and collaborated with him on *The Soviet System and Democratic Society: A Comparative Encyclopedia* (published in German, 1972). This was five years before Brzezinski would enter government and begin to carry out the Arc of Crisis policy (Part 2).

## Project Democracy

In 1975 a US Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, named the Church Committee after its chairman, brought to light CIA involvement in assassinations of foreign leaders and other secret activity. An array of CIA covert operations were halted. In their place came a reorganisation, begun by National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger during the Nixon and Ford Administrations (1969-75), in which traditional functions of intelligence agencies were replaced with operations centred in the National Security Council (NSC) (like the "Iran-Contra" scandal of the next decade) or other government departments. Under the Jimmy Carter Administration, with Brzezinski assuming Kissinger's job at the NSC, these were cloaked as promoting "democracy" worldwide. Support for democracy—often measured by such criteria as economic deregulation and extreme free-market programs, which ravage the populations that are supposedly being democratised—became an axiom of US foreign policy.

The new orientation was formalised in 1983 during the Reagan Administration, with the inauguration of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and its two affiliated think tanks, one for each of the major US political parties: the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute. Chartered as a quasi-autonomous

non-governmental organisation (QUANGO), the NED is funded by an annual grant from the US Congress—ranging US\$170-180 million in recent years—and distributes money via its own grants to foreign activist groups and NGOs. It functions in parallel with the US Agency for International Development (USAID), a two-decades-old organisation for dispensing foreign aid, which itself also has "democracy



As "Captive Nations" networks were coopted into the new Project Democracy, radical nationalists in ethnic diasporas, like Ukrainian fascist Yaroslav Stetsko, could dictate public opinion about their native countries. Here, the publication of Stetsko's ABN features his staged photo op with President Ronald Reagan in 1983.

17. Ilker Ayturk, "The Flagship Institute of Cold War Turcology", *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, 2017.

16. Isa Yusuf Alptekin, "Memorandum sent to Richard Nixon, President of the United States of America", 12 July 1969, on file at digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org.

offices” as part of its overseas missions. Additional funding to the USAID’s “democracy” programs and the State Department’s own Human Rights Democracy Fund is upwards of US\$200 million annually.

Allen Weinstein, the American academic who co-founded the NED, declared in September 1991, “A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA”. He argued that interference in other countries was more effective if done in the open.<sup>18</sup> In a 2006 report on negative reactions to its meddling around the world, the NED denied that “democracy assistance” was equivalent to “regime change”, but insisted that democracy—defined as they see fit—“has acquired the status of the only broadly legitimate form of government”.<sup>19</sup>

Project Democracy, as the 1970s-80s policy shift became known, co-opted personnel from the Captive Nations networks. At a Washington conference of East European émigré groups in 1983, for example, participants were in a state of high excitement over large sums of money they anticipated coming to them from the new NED. In another 1983 incident, the aged Hitler-admirer Stetsko’s wheelchair was pushed into the vicinity of President Ronald Reagan at a White House Captive Nations Week function, just long enough for a photographer to snap a picture of their handshake for publication in the ABN bulletin.

The NED has funnelled US\$8.76 million dollars since 2004 to activist groups campaigning against China’s policies in Xinjiang; all the publicly identified recipients are Uyghur diaspora groups. According to its published Asia Program and Annual Reports, the NED in 2010 prioritised “the rights of ethnic minorities” in projects focused on “Xinjiang/East Turkistan”. In December 2020, the NED’s Twitter account posted a map on which Xinjiang was labelled as “East Turkistan” and coloured with the East Turkistan flag.

Working side by side with the NED on Xinjiang-related propaganda are Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Both have long records of selectively targeting their human rights campaigns in alignment with British and American foreign policy. Amnesty’s founder Peter Benenson, who had served in the UK’s Intelligence Corps in World War II, spoke of “its ultimate objectives ... being those of Her Majesty’s Governments”.<sup>20</sup> Amnesty’s covert support by the British Foreign Office was exposed in the 1960s. In 2014 more than 100 scholars, including two Nobel Peace Prize laureates and a UN Special Rapporteur on human rights, publicly called on Human Rights Watch to close the “revolving door” through which it shares personnel with the US Government.<sup>21</sup>

Amnesty International also has a record of dubious claims based on unverified reports. Most notorious is the “Kuwaiti babies” scandal during the First Gulf War (1990-91). Amnesty’s December 1990 false accusation, attributed to eyewitness doctors, that Iraqi soldiers had ripped hundreds of premature infants from their incubators, helped to motivate Operation Desert Storm, the move of US forces into Iraq in January 1991. Amnesty retracted the claims in April.

Amnesty has issued two reports on Xinjiang, one in September 2018 and a follow-up in February 2020. Both

18. David Ignatius, “Innocence abroad: The new world of spyless coups”, *Washington Post*, 22 Dec. 1991.

19. *The Backlash Against Democracy Assistance* (NED, 2006).

20. Tom Buchanan, “‘The Truth Will Set You Free’: The Making of Amnesty International”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Oct. 2002.

21. “Debate: Is Human Rights Watch Too Close to US Gov’t to Criticise Its Foreign Policy?”, *democracynow.org*, 11 June 2014.



The National Endowment for Democracy tweets a map of China’s Xinjiang Province marked with the separatists’ “East Turkistan” flag. Photo: Twitter

focus on allegations that ethnic minorities are being arbitrarily detained in the province. The first report was compiled from interviews with residents of Kazakhstan, who said they were unable to contact their relatives who live in Xinjiang. A Kazakh activist group named Atajurt, whose Xinjiang-born leader is known for fiery statements like “If my brother works for the Chinese, if my brother sells himself to the Chinese, I would kill him”, arranged the interviews. The author of the second report was Patrick Poon, Amnesty’s Hong Kong-based China researcher, based on mostly anonymous interviews and a questionnaire “circulated among a closed pool of trusted Uyghur contacts”.

A September 2018 Human Rights Watch report against China’s “campaign of repression” in Xinjiang likewise relied on interviews, arranged by the same Kazakhstan-based activists, with anonymous ethnic Kazakhs who had left Xinjiang.

The Henry Jackson Society, a London think tank named for the late American hawk Henry “Scoop” Jackson, has aggressively engaged on the Uyghur issue to bash China. (It was HJS President Brendan Simms who infamously hailed the “success” of the 2011 US/NATO intervention in Libya, saying: “Democracy can be dropped from 10,000 feet”.) The HJS has hosted several events discussing the Uyghurs, including a January 2019 meeting featuring Enver Tohti, who claimed to have been forced as a surgeon to perform organ-harvesting from Uyghur prisoners in China. His story was heavily publicised in the international media, but two months later Tohti admitted the claim was a hoax.

In Australia, the primary disseminator of reports and allegations of Chinese government human rights abuses against Uyghurs in Xinjiang is the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), a government-funded think tank which also gets funding from the US State Department, the UK government and NATO. We analysed the fraudulent arguments in ASPI’s March 2020 report, *Uyghurs for Sale*, in a previous article.<sup>22</sup>

*Continuation next week.*

22. Melissa Harrison, “ASPI: forced labour hypocrites and academic fraudsters”, *AAS*, 14 Oct. 2020.



### Part 8. The 'East Turkistan' narrative (conclusion)

By Melissa Harrison and Rachel Douglas

Parts 1–7 of this series appeared in the AAS of 18 November, 2 and 9 December 2020; 20 January, 3 and 17 February, and 17 March 2021. References to those instalments, and to subtitled sections within them, are given in parentheses in this concluding article.

#### After the USSR

All the forces identified in this series of articles became more active after the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991. There was a struggle for control of Central Asia's subsoil resources, and, above all, a push by Anglo-American strategists of the geopolitics tradition (Part 1, "The Great Game and Mackinder's 'Heartland'") to prevent either Russia or China from dominating the region. Under the Wolfowitz Doctrine (Part 3), which said that no country must ever attain as much power as the Soviet Union had possessed, Russia was the initial target of covert destabilisation operations; causing trouble for China became a priority as Beijing began its serious economic rise and launched development of the transcontinental New Silk Road in the late 1990s (Part 3, "Xinjiang becomes a target").

The activated elements were several.

*Outright terrorism.* The radical jihadists backed by the USA and UK against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, 1979–88, expanded into a broader movement, generating al-Qaeda and ISIS and affecting dozens of countries (Part 2, "Operation Cyclone—Afghan Mujaheddin"; Part 3, "Mujaheddin fan out"). As we have seen, Uyghur radicals were ultimately recruited into these networks in significant numbers (Parts 5 and 6).

*Pan-Turkism.* Radical Pan-Turkists from Turkey, who have been a bulwark for Uyghur separatism, also blended together with the internationalised mujaheddin. There had been Turkish fighters in Afghanistan in the 1980s, and their presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan in subsequent decades has been plentifully documented.<sup>1</sup> The militant Turkish nationalists' paramilitary arm, the Grey Wolves, with Afghanistan veterans among them, became major players in the trafficking of Afghan heroin as it surged in the 1990s. On the political level, the Pan-Turkist figures who had been active in Turkey and elsewhere in the post-World War II period, including on behalf of the US CIA (Part 7, "The CIA's Captive Nations"), moved to boost their activity in Russia's North Caucasus region and the newly independent countries of Central Asia.

*Special-purpose branches of "Project Democracy"* (Part 7, "Project Democracy"). Alongside major institutions such as the US National Endowment for Democracy, affiliated projects were launched that are of particular importance for Xinjiang. Those are the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO) (Part 4, "Post-Soviet Pan-Turk revival") and the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, which has roots in the Captive Nations groups of the 1950s and later.

*Uyghur diaspora.* The second and third elements, Pan-Turkism and the specialised Project Democracy institutions, combined in efforts to organise the ethnic Uyghur diaspora into an effective lobbying force. Because it, and they, make up the platform for international agitation related to both Uyghur human rights in Xinjiang and separatism favouring a split-off of Xinjiang from China, we will discuss them further

here, before surveying the main Uyghur and "East Turkistan" diaspora groups.

#### Pan-Turk inroads in Central Asia

The Pan-Turkist Turkish National Intelligence Organisation (MIT) friends of Ruzi Nazar, the Uzbek ethnic CIA officer who for decades had promoted an independent "Turkistan" in Central Asia (Part 4, "Alparslan Turkes and the Grey Wolves"; Part 7, "The CIA's Captive Nations"), had laid groundwork in Soviet Central Asia long before the USSR disintegrated. Nazar's acolyte and ex-MIT officer Enver Altayli, in his biography of Nazar, reports that MIT boss (in 1966–71) Fuat Dogu had "launched operations against the Soviet Union", putting Turkey's "valuable stock of experience ... of subversive and conspiracy-based work inside the borders of the Soviet Union" at the disposal of the United States.<sup>2</sup> Already in the late 1960s, Dogu and Nazar organised a secret conference near Istanbul, with attendance "from almost every region of the Turkic world, both from within the Soviet Union and outside it", to study Soviet vulnerabilities on the "nationalities question"—the status of ethnic minorities. Dogu, according to Altayli, believed that most of the USSR's natural resources lay in Turkic lands, and that "the destruction of the Soviet Union would only be possible when these lands broke away from it, and that was what one must work for." Dogu arranged for Nesrin Sipahi, a famous singer of Turkish popular music, to concertise in Baku and Tashkent, which "made the Soviets uncomfortable".

In May 1992 Ruzi Nazar visited now-independent Uzbekistan, his birthplace. Hundreds of people greeted him at the Tashkent airport. He met with President Islam Karimov, the former Communist Party chief in Soviet Uzbekistan. Nazar was then already 75 years old (he lived to be 98, dying in 2015), but his follower Altayli shortly thereafter was reported in the Turkish press to be acting as "chief advisor" to Karimov. *Aydinlik*, a Kemalist newspaper opposed to the Pan-Turkists (Part 4, "Central Asia between the Wars"), identified him as not only an MIT officer, but "former chief inspector of the National Movement Party" (MHP) of Pan-Turkist Alparslan Turkes, adding that he was using "MHP militants as a strike force"—that is, the Grey Wolves—and had also begun covert operations in Chechnya, across the Caspian Sea from Uzbekistan in Russia's North Caucasus.<sup>3</sup> Whether or not every detail of the 1993 Turkish media reports is true, the Pan-Turkists in Turkey surely thought that their time had come.

In those years there was a huge expansion of the network of schools run by the Fethullah Gulen movement into the Central Asian countries, becoming a conveyor for ideas from Turkey and influence from Gulen's CIA friends.<sup>4</sup>

2. Part 7, note 11.

3. "Asil Nadir Said Trading in Russian Uranium", *Aydinlik*, 25 May 1993, translated by the Joint Publications Research Service.

4. Discussion of Fethullah Gulen and his Hizmet movement is beyond the scope of this article. A widely circulated analysis of radical Turkish nationalism and Islamist organisations holds that because former CIA official Graham E. Fuller (the Turcologist and Xinjiang expert) and former Ambassador Morton Abramowitz intervened to help Gulen obtain permanent residency in the United States, he and his movement should be understood purely as CIA assets. This is an oversimplification. Gulen's influence since the 1960s on the desecularisation of Turkish society, clearing the way for Islamists to enter politics, has deeper roots—in the Nurcu tendency that stemmed from the Naqshbandi Order of Sufism (Islamic mysticism). Svante Cornell of the Johns Hopkins Central Asia-Caucasus Institute (CACI), Fuller's publisher, analysed in a 2015 article

1. Brian Glynn Williams, "On the Trail of the 'Lions of Islam': Foreign Fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 1980–2010", *Orbis*, Spring 2011.

Cadre of the Turkish Grey Wolves and its youth branch Nizami Alem (“Universal Order” in Arabic) fought on the side of Turkic Azerbaijan against Armenia in the First Nagorno-Karabakh War (1988-94). They fought on the side of UK-backed Chechen separatists against Russia in the First and Second Chechen Wars, 1994 and 1999.<sup>5</sup> Turkish sources indicated in 1996 that around 1,000 Turkish Nizami Alem fighters were involved in mercenary and volunteer operations in Chechnya, Azerbaijan, Iran, and alongside NATO’s Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia.<sup>6</sup> In 2000 CNN reported estimates that another 3,000-5,000 foreign mujaheddin based in Turkey were ready to pour into Chechnya.

The Pan-Turkist movement set up shop across Central Asia. When then-Prime Minister Li Peng of China toured the region in April 1994 to discuss economic cooperation, leader of the Kazakhstan-based United Revolutionary Front of East Turkistan Yusupbek Muglisi (Mukhlis) told journalists there, “We have decided to use all possible means, including terrorism, to bring about revolution in Xinjiang.” Muglisi was a Uyghur who had fled Xinjiang for Kazakhstan in 1960. He was later to meet with State Department officials in 1996, and announced an “armed campaign” against China in 1997.<sup>7</sup>

A Grey Wolves-linked journalist who frequented Central Asia remarked at that time, “We are now using Kyrgyzstan as a base for operations in Xinjiang, just as we used Turkey as a base for operations in the Caucasus”.<sup>8</sup>

Abulfaz Elchibey, a former Soviet dissident who openly espoused Pan-Turkism, was elected president of Azerbaijan in 1992. His accomplishments included bringing Azerbaijan into the International Monetary Fund and escalating its war with Armenia. Alparslan Turkes visited President Elchibey and supplied him with Grey Wolves paramilitary security units. Elchibey was ousted in 1993 amid disasters in the war. In 1995 a group of officers attempted to reinstate him, in an event dubbed the “Turkish Coup” in Baku, because of the widespread belief that the MHP and Grey Wolves were behind it; then-PM of Turkey Suleiman Demirel got wind of the plot and forestalled it with warnings to Azerbaijan’s leaders.

The Central Asia-oriented Pan-Turkist networks turned up in force, alongside Uyghurs, at the first East Turkestan World National Congress, held in Istanbul in December 1992. One of its organisers was Gen. Mehmet Riza Bekin, a Uyghur officer in the Turkish Armed Forces. He was the nephew of Mehmet Emin Bugra, a leader of the short-lived East Turkistan Republic in Kashgar in 1933 (Part 4, “Central Asia between the Wars”). Bugra left Xinjiang with Isa Yusuf Alptekin in 1949 and worked with him until his (Bugra’s) death in 1965. Bekin emigrated from Xinjiang with his family as a child in 1934, first to Afghanistan and onwards to Turkey, where he received a high-level military education. He served as an artillery officer in the Korean War, followed by various postings abroad, including in 1973 as a staff officer for military planning at the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO), a Cold War (1955-79) alliance of Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and the UK. Bekin retired from the military in 1977, at the age of 52, as a

brigadier general,<sup>9</sup> to concentrate on Uyghur issues. The paucity of detail about his overseas military postings lends credibility to the assertion by Turkish investigative journalist Soner Yalcin, in a biography of Turkish political figure Necmettin Erbakan, that Bekin was an operative of the MIT—a colleague of Dogu and Turkes.<sup>10</sup>

Uyghurs and Pan-Turkists alike, at the December 1992 Istanbul event and in declarations after the death of Uyghur activist Isa Yusuf Alptekin in 1995, went over the top with enthusiastic projections of a triumph of “Turkistan” in Central Asia, against both Russia and China.

*Isa Yusuf Alptekin*, chairman of the Congress and long-time associate of MHP and Grey Wolves leader Turkes (Part 4, “Post-Soviet Pan-Turk revival”): “The time for collapse and dissolution has arrived for the Chinese empire. We expect help from our beloved Turkey, our new republics [in former Soviet Central Asia], co-religionists, and mankind in general, to put a check on China.”

*Alparslan Turkes*: “Chinese imperialism’s repression of East Turkestan must not be tolerated.”<sup>11</sup>

*Erkin Alptekin*, Isa’s son, at his father’s funeral in 1995: “Ten years ago no one believed that the USSR would fall apart. Now you can see that. Many Turkic countries have their freedom now. Today the same situation applies to China. We believe in the not too distant future we will see the fall of China and the independence of East Turkestan.”<sup>12</sup>

*Recep Tayyip Erdogan*, then-mayor of Istanbul and now president of Turkey, dedicating a park to the senior Alptekin in 1995: “Eastern Turkestan is not only the home of the Turkic peoples but also the cradle of Turkic history, civilisation and culture. To forget that would lead to the ignorance of our own history, civilisation and culture. The martyrs of Eastern Turkestan are our martyrs”.<sup>13</sup>

### Special-purpose NGOs

We have written previously (Part 4) about the 1991 founding of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO), initiated by British and Dutch politicians. Its first support missions were for separatists in the Russian North Caucasus, but there was an early and constant emphasis on the Uyghurs of “East Turkestan”. As the UNPO’s first president, Erkin Alptekin gained a rostrum for preaching his Pan-Turkist ideas. The younger Alptekin was a veteran of CIA officer Ruzi Nazar’s Central Asia group at Radio Liberty in Munich (Part 4, “The CIA’s Captive Nations”), and had already made a contribution to the Pan-Turkist cause with the publication of a book in Turkish, *The Uyghur Turks*, in 1978.<sup>14</sup>

Since 2009, the UNPO has conducted joint seminars on Uyghur issues with the NED.

Additional institutional support for East Turkistan separatism came with the formation of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation (VCMF) in 1993. Even more so than the NED itself, this NGO was a direct spin-off from the CIA’s Captive Nations projects of the 1950s. Co-chairs of the National Captive Nations Committee, founded in 1959, were two Ukrainians: Lev Dobriansky and pro-Nazi Banderite Yaroslav Stetsko, Ruzi Nazar’s old friend and colleague from the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (Part 4). Dobriansky

“The Naqshbandi-Khalidi Order and Political Islam in Turkey”, how Gulen and most of the modern Turkish politicians mentioned in our articles arose from various Naqshbandi sub-orders. Despite Gulen’s role in his rise to power, current President Erdogan ultimately declared him a “terrorist” and blames much that goes wrong in Turkey on Gulen. Enver Altayli was arrested in 2016, charged with being a Gulenist.

5. “Russia’s North Caucasus republics: flashpoint for world war”, *EIR*, 10 Sept. 1999.

6. Joseph Brewda, “The neo-Ottoman trap for Turkey”, *EIR*, 12 Apr. 1996.

7. J. Todd Reed, Diana Raschke, *The ETIM: China’s Islamic Militants and the Global Terrorist Threat* (Praeger, 2010).

8. Joseph Brewda, “Pan-Turks target China’s Xinjiang”, *EIR*, 12 Apr. 1996.

9. “Uyghur Leader Dead at 85”, Radio Free Asia, 18 Feb. 2010.

10. Soner Yalcin, *Erbakan* (Kirmizi Kedi Yayınevi, 2012).

11. Note 8.

12. Ajit Singh, “Inside the World Uyghur Congress: The US-backed right-wing regime-change network seeking the ‘fall of China’”, *The Grayzone* (thegrayzone.com), 5 Mar. 2020.

13. Part 6, note 16.

14. Yitzhak Shichor, “Changing the Guard at the World Uyghur Congress”, Jamestown Foundation China Brief, 19 Dec. 2006.



launched the VCMF, with Arc of Crisis orchestrator Zbigniew Brzezinski (Part 2) on its board.

Today the VCMF is the home base of Adrian Zenz (Part 7, “Intelligence agencies manipulate diasporas”), a leading fabricator of false or exaggerated accounts of Chinese policies in Xinjiang.

### The World Uyghur Congress

The 1992 Uyghur conference in Istanbul, with 70 delegates from 14 countries, did not immediately produce a standing institution, but its participants engaged in building organisations throughout that decade. Australia-based Uyghur activist Ahmet Igamberdi, who was elected chairman of a “council” the meeting tried to establish, founded the East Turkistan Australian Association (ETAA) that same year. Erkin Alptekin, from his base at CIA-founded and still US government-funded Radio Liberty in Munich, had already in 1990 founded the East Turkistan Union in Europe (ETUE), the first “East Turkistan” organisation outside Turkey. The ETUE soon spun off the East Turkistan Cultural and Social Association (ETCSA) and an East Turkistan Information Centre (ETIC), both also initially based in Munich. A World Uyghur Youth Congress (WUYC) was established in Munich in November 1996, headed by Dolkun Isa, a former Chinese student activist who had left China in 1994.<sup>15</sup>

In 1998 an East Turkistan National Centre (ETNC) was formed in Istanbul, at a conference this time with 300 delegates from 18 countries. Its head was Gen. Bekin, and its offices were “on loan” from the Turkish government<sup>16</sup>—headed at that time by leaders of the deceased former President Turgut Ozal’s Motherland Party, under President Suleiman Demirel. Ozal, during his Presidency from 1989 until his death in 1993, had been bitten by the “neo-Ottoman” bug,<sup>17</sup> while Demirel, though not famous for Pan-Turkist views, grew fond of rhapsodising about “the Turkic world from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China” in the context of Turkey’s changing ambitions after the Soviet break-up. Turkish diplomats believed Demirel had picked up that slogan in the 1980s from former US National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.<sup>18</sup>

A second international conference of Uyghur diaspora activists in 1999, this one held in Munich, retroactively declared the 1992 gathering to have been the First East Turkistan World National Congress, and declared itself the second. It renamed the ETNC as the East Turkistan National Congress. Erkin Alptekin, once again, headed the revamped ETNC.

In 2004 the ETNC and Dolkun Isa’s WUYC merged, at yet another Munich conference, to establish the World Uyghur Congress (WUC). Erkin Alptekin was its inaugural president and Isa the general secretary. Reflecting post-9/11 (2001) sensitivity to the perils of pushing an agenda that could be seen as Islamist, the WUC from the outset focussed more on Uyghurs’ human rights and boosting Xinjiang’s autonomy within China than on independent statehood for “East Turkistan”. Some members of the ETNC, however, refused to drop their

15. Yitzhak Shichor, “Nuisance Value: Uyghur activism in Germany and Beijing–Berlin Relations”, *Journal of Contemporary China*, July 2013.

16. Yitzhak Shichor, *Ethno-Diplomacy: The Uyghur Hitch in Sino-Turkish Relations*, East-West Centre, 2009.

17. Ozgur Tufekci, “Turkish Eurasianism: Roots and Discourses”, in *Eurasian Politics and Society: Issues and Challenges* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017).

18. Guven Sak, “From the Adriatic Sea to the Great Wall of China”, *Hurriyet* (hurriyetdailynews.com), 12 Aug. 2017.



The separatist East Turkistan Australian Association website shows the map of the Uyghur homeland of Xinjiang Region in China, which they call East Turkistan. Photo: Screenshot

separatist demands; from among them arose the East Turkistan Government in Exile (ETGE).

The WUC and its many spinoffs became the primary source of anecdotal “evidence” of human rights abuses of Uyghurs. The major satellite organisations are the Uyghur American Association (UAA), founded at the First Uyghur American Congress in 1998, before the WUC; the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP), founded in 2004 as a UAA project; and the Campaign for Uyghurs (CUF), headed by former UAA Vice President Rushan Abbas, who had previously worked at Radio Free Asia (founded on the Radio Liberty model in 1994) when it began Uyghur-language broadcasting in 1998.

The WUC, UAA, UHRP and CUF are the main recipients of Xinjiang-related funding from the NED (Part 7, “Project Democracy”), which has funded the WUC since its inception. In 2019 the WUC received the NED’s annual Democracy Award.

Erkin Alptekin’s successor as WUC president, in 2006, was Rebiya Kadeer. As a recent émigré from China, she was positioned to raise the profile of the Uyghur campaigns. Kadeer had taken advantage of China’s lessening restraints on private businesses in the 1980s to build a small laundry service into a department store, which she then parlayed—taking advantage of the lucrative cross-border trade with former Soviet republics after 1991—into a successful large trading company and became rich. As late as 1995 she was a delegate to top official institutions—the People’s Political Consultative Conference and the National People’s Congress. A second husband, Prof. Sidiq Rouzi, ended Kadeer’s privileged status. He emigrated to the United States in 1996 and worked as a journalist for Radio Free Asia and Voice of America. Kadeer was demoted in 1998 for refusing to denounce his activity. These were years in which serious terrorism was on the upswing in Xinjiang (Part 6, “Terror attacks in China”), making Beijing hyper-sensitive to every whiff of foreign interference. In 1999–2000 she was arrested, tried and sentenced to eight years for passing classified information to foreigners. The charges stemmed from her mailing of local Xinjiang newspaper clippings to Rouzi, at a time when such publications were listed as “internal” and not available for foreign subscription.<sup>19</sup>

Released in 2005, Kadeer moved to the United States, where she assumed the presidency of the WUC (2006–17) and the UAA (2006–11), and was President George W. Bush’s guest at the White House on several occasions. The NED newsletter *Democracy* of 24 July 2009 featured Kadeer as the “Mother of the Uyghurs” who “defends rights, deplors violence”.

Dolkun Isa, the WUC’s founding secretary, is its president today. In 2017, the same year as he succeeded Kadeer,

19. Part 6, note 1.

he was also elected vice president of the UNPO. In 2016 Isa had received a human rights award from the Victims of Communism organisation.

In May 2009 the WUC, UNPO and NED co-hosted a conference in Washington on “East Turkistan: 60 Years under Communist Chinese Rule”, with a “Uyghur leadership training seminar” attached to the main event. The WUC and UNPO had held similar seminars in Berlin and The Hague the year before, announced as instructing “present and future leaders of the Uyghur community” on “Self-Determination under International Law”.<sup>20</sup> That Washington event was followed by the Third General Assembly of the WUC, held on US Capitol premises thanks to friendly members of Congress.

### The ‘East Turkistan Government in Exile’

The Uyghur diaspora activists who wanted to campaign more explicitly for an independent “East Turkistan” than the WUC was planning to, made their organisational move a few months later in 2004. They established the East Turkistan Government in Exile (ETGE), at a conference in Washington, DC. The ETGE’s inaugural president was Ahmet Igamberdi, the Australia-based activist who in 1992 had founded the East Turkistan Australian Association (ETAA) and had been a prominent figure at the Istanbul congress that year. The “prime minister” was one Anwar (sometimes “Enver”) Yusuf Turani, head of the non-profit East Turkistan National Freedom Centre (ETNFC) in Washington, which he had established in 1995. Ismael Cengiz, another ETGE leader, boasted in a 2009 interview that the famous Uyghur-Turkish Gen. Bekin had participated in a press conference to celebrate and support the new organisation.

Turani declared his hope “that the United States of America will recognise the just cause of freedom and independence of millions of East Turkistanis”.<sup>21</sup> A US State Department spokesman answered a question about the ETGE on 22 November 2004: “The US Government does not recognise any East Turkistan government-in-exile, nor do we provide support for any such entity.” Turani himself claimed, in a 1999 interview, that his ETNFC had received financial support from wealthy patrons in Saudi Arabia.<sup>22</sup>

The flamboyant Turani currently claims to have been the first Uyghur granted political asylum in the USA, in 1988, although earlier accounts on his own website said that he came to the USA as a student after years of travelling among Uyghur diaspora relatives and other hosts in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, the Soviet Union, Romania, Bulgaria and other countries, with a brief return to Xinjiang in 1986.

In 1999 Turani represented the ETNFC at a meeting with President Bill Clinton, to advocate for “freedom and independence of Eastern Turkistan”, claiming to speak on behalf of “more than 25 million Eastern Turkistanis”. In 1998 Turani visited Taiwan, accompanied by Erkin Alptekin and Tibetan and Inner Mongolian separatist leaders. They met then-President Chen Shui-bian, as well as Taiwan independence advocates.

The ETGE began regular street actions for publicity, like Turani’s 1996 speech in front of United Nations headquarters in New York, after which he cut a star out of the Chinese flag as a symbolic gesture of his “nation’s yearning to liberate themselves from Chinese occupation”.

The ETGE project has been especially prone to interne-



Anwar Yusuf Turani, “prime minister” of the original East Turkistan Government in Exile, speaking at an anti-China protest outside the White House in Washington D.C. in 2006. Photo: Screenshot

cine fights and fragmentation, highlighted by an “impeachment” of Turani in 2006, though he persists in operating as the ETGE. There appear to be four ETGEs at present, of which Turani’s high-profile website and media appearances are one of the most visible, while the people who impeached him retain Igamberdi’s imprimatur as the main ETGE. It enjoys various institutional support in Washington.

Mutual accusations of being “Chinese agents” or terrorist-connected are routine among these groups (the main ETGE has banned Turani for being “connected to the jihadist Turkistan Islamic Party”), but they also overlap frequently. As of 2018, Turani’s daughter Aydin Anwar, who is “foreign minister” of his ETGE, was also a “media and press relations officer” for the East Turkistan National Awakening Movement (ETNAM), founded and headed by the current ETGE’s “prime minister”, Salih Hudayar. Anwar and Hudayar appeared together at rallies in December 2018, and ETNAM thanked her in January 2020 for acting in solidarity through her Save Uyghur Campaign.

In 2019 the ETGE intensified its activity, elevating a new generation of the Uyghur diaspora. Hudayar, then 27, was elected “prime minister”. Born in a family that fled Xinjiang in 2000 after accusations of “Islamic extremism”, he grew up in Oklahoma and served in the National Guard.

Before and after assuming leadership of the ETGE, Hudayar has promoted Uyghurs as an asset for the American military. In 2017 he said they could be used “to preserve US interests in Central Asia and the Asia-Pacific in the long run”, just as the Kurds have been exploited in the Middle East (his comparison). In 2019 Hudayar found hosts eager to give him a platform at the freshly minted, war-mongering Committee on the Present Danger-China (CPDC),<sup>23</sup> where he spoke on 9 April. Frank Gaffney, who had chaired the CPDC’s inaugural conference two weeks earlier, invited Hudayar to speak about China’s alleged persecution of Uyghur and other Turkic peoples the next month at an event hosted by Save the Persecuted Christians—quite an irony, considering that Gaffney is a long-established rabid anti-Islam propagandist and his Centre for Security Policy (CSP) has received large contributions from Robert Mercer, the hedge-fund billionaire who heavily funds the white-supremacist alt-right movement.

The advisory team of Hudayar’s ETNAM includes other “war party” luminaries, such as Muslim Republican activist Zuhdi Jasser, a person highly praised by CPDC participant and former CIA Director James Woolsey and honoured by Gaffney’s CSP. Another ETNAM advisor is Dru Gladney, a China hawk who participated in Graham Fuller’s Xinjiang Project back in 1998-2003 (Part 3).

### ‘Peaceable’ groups whitewash terrorism

23. “Neocons declare war on China”, AAS, 3 Apr. 2019; “Anti-China crazies rampage on Capitol Hill and Wall Street”, AAS, 15 May 2019.

20. “UNPO & WUC Spearheading Uyghur Leadership Training Seminar”, UNPO (unpo.org), 7 Apr. 2008.

21. J. Todd Reed, Diana Raschke, *The ETIM: China’s Islamic Militants and the Global Terrorist Threat* (Praeger, 2010).

22. S. Frederick Starr, ed., *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland* (Routledge: 2004).



The WUC and its spinoffs maintain a pacific façade, opposing terrorism, but frequently whitewash or apologise for it. The ETGE, which though explicitly for breaking Xinjiang away from China also proclaims a “peaceful struggle for independence”, has an even dodgier track record, replete with threats of violence. ETGE co-founder Turani’s current website displays a 1947 “East Turkistan” separatist pamphlet, calling for the formation of “National Freedom Groups”, whose members pledged to achieve independence “by legal and illegal means ... by words and by force of arms” and fight in the interests of people of all races “except the Chinese”. (The Chinese government at that time was not yet Communist.)

The ETGE’s 2004 constitution claimed that the “East Turkistan Republic” has been invaded by “Communist China”, and threatened punishment of “those who have collaborated with the invaders” (the wording has since been updated, but not changed in substance).

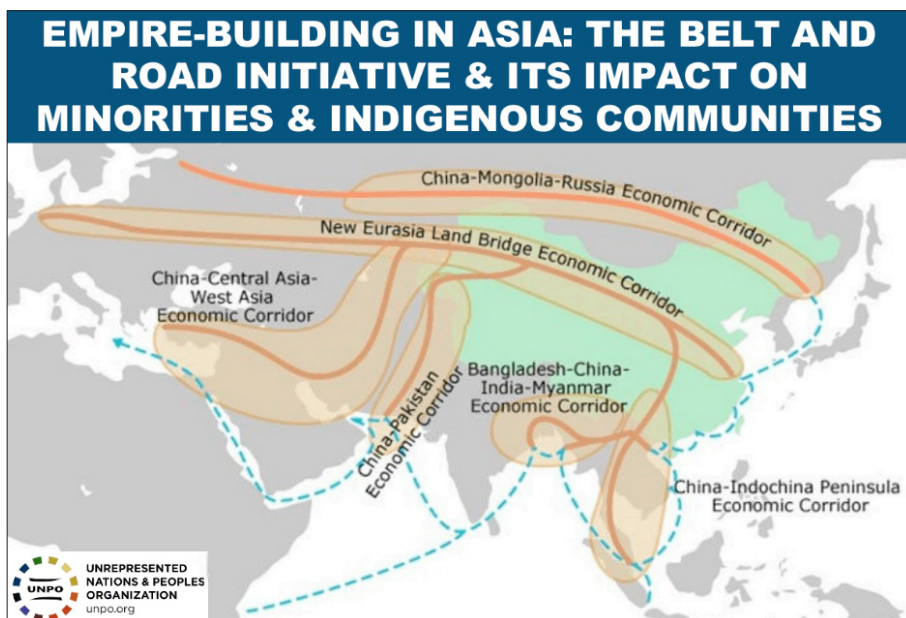
When US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, in a November 2020 parting shot at China, removed the official “terrorist organisation” designation from the East Turkistan Islamic Movement, which with its successor the Turkistan Islamic Party was responsible for major terrorism in the past two decades (Part 6, “Terror attacks in China”), the WUC and the ETGE cheered. WUC President Isa hailed the “historic significance” of Pompeo’s action. ETGE and ET-NAM leader Hudayar, Voice of America reported, “said the State Department decision is equally important for Uyghur Americans who have been afraid of using their preferred term ‘East Turkistan’ instead of Xinjiang lest they be associated with this ETIM group.”

There have been many incidents of individual “peaceful” Uyghur activists surfacing with explicit support for or collaboration with terrorists.

Mehmet Emin Hazret, another prominent figure at the 1992 Uyghur Congress in Istanbul, would go on to found the East Turkistan Liberation Organisation (ETLO), which in its active phase up to 2005 was designated a terrorist organisation not only by China, but also Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In a 2003 interview with Radio Free Asia, Hazret stated that the ETLO would “inevitably” form a military wing to target the Chinese government.

In an undated video-recorded speech, posted to YouTube in 2019, the irrepressible original leader of the ETGE Anwar Yusuf Turani embraced Uyghur jihadists present in Idlib Province, Syria, as his own: “Ten thousand mujaheddin are gathered in Idlib”, he cried, “We brought them from Russia! Now, in Idlib, I can see in the field are my East Turkistani brothers... my soldiers.... They are much better fighters than the Chechens!”<sup>24</sup>

Serious incidents involving Thailand and Turkey have been linked with Seyit Turturk, vice president of the WUC in 2006-16. Turturk also founded the East Turkistan Culture and Solidarity Association (ETCSA), based in Turkey, in 1989. In 2015 the Thai government deported 109 illegal Uyghur immigrants to their home countries, including



The title of this map was the name of a November 2020 conference held by the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation, which has boosted Uyghur separatism since its founding in 1991. Uyghur diaspora groups likewise attack China’s Belt and Road Initiative, which is helping to uplift people’s living standard in China and abroad, as imperial. East Turkistan Government in Exile leader Salih Hudayar in 2019 called on the USA to support “East Turkistan” to “stop China’s BRI almost dead in its tracks”. Photo: unpo.org screenshot.

China. On the day of the deportation, 200 protesters bearing East Turkistan flags attacked the Thai consulate in Istanbul, smashing windows, in an action attributed to the ETC-SA and Grey Wolves units. Turturk was on the scene, telling Reuters on 9 July that they were protesting “Thailand’s and China’s human rights abuses”. A month later, according to the Thailand newspaper the *Nation*, the Bangkok police chief blamed a terrorist bombing that killed 20 people, most of them Chinese tourists, on “the same gang that attacked the Chinese consulate in Turkey”.

In March 2018 Turturk declared that hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs from Xinjiang were ready to enlist in the Turkish army and participate in Turkey’s invasion of Syria, if Turkish President Erdogan ordered them to.<sup>25</sup>

### A Belt and Road to the future

National self-determination is one of the world’s most intractable problems. The United Nations Charter enshrines “friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples”. Again and again, that principle has collided with fanatical ideologies like that of the influential Ukrainian fascist Dmytro Dontsov, who in his book *Nationalism* viewed “nations”—different ethnic groups—as biological species, such that “even two of them cannot be accommodated on one patch of ground under the Sun”. The legacy of the British-backed 19th-century Italian radical Giuseppe Mazzini’s national movements based on a “blood and soil” sense of identity (Part 4, “The Young Turks”), poisoned the minds of generations after him.

If the territorial claims of every identifiable ethnic group were drawn on a map, they would overlap as in the classic case of Greater Bulgaria, Greater Serbia, Greater Croatia, etc. in the Balkan Peninsula, with the result being war. Hence nations have agreed to respect post-World War II borders, even if they originated from unjust geopolitics, like the Anglo-French carve-up of the Middle East in 1916. The prospect

*Continued page 15*

24. Dogu Turkistan Bulteni Haber Ajansi YouTube channel, translated from Turkish for AAS.

25. Abdullah Bozkurt (@abdbozkurt), Twitter, 11 Mar. 2018.

of changing borders has occasioned great hypocrisy: for Anglo-American geopoliticians, for example, the secession of Kosovo from Serbia in 1991 could be approved, but Crimea's declaration of independence from Ukraine and adherence to the Russian Federation in 2014 could not.

The history of large, multi-ethnic countries like the United States, the Soviet Union, or Australia show that tensions within them are complicated by real ethnic or racial prejudices, which get aggravated in times of crisis.

Forty-seven ethnic groups live in Xinjiang. Violence by Uyghur terrorists was directed heavily not only against Han Chinese migrants to the region, but also against the Hui people, another Muslim minority.<sup>26</sup> Memories are generations long, and many of the Hui people who as of ten years ago made up around 3 per cent of Xinjiang's 25 million population fear the prospect of being ruled by the Uyghurs. Fierce fighting in the region during the 19th century involved Uyghur-Hui disputes, as well as clashes between different Naqshbandi Sufi brotherhoods. Furthermore, contrary to a racist Australian Uyghur leader who posted on Facebook this year that "the indigenous people of East Turkistan have called East Turkistan their home for over 10 thousand years [before] Evil China even existed", there is not a strong tradition of nationhood in Xinjiang; a 2004 study found that fragmented "oasis identities"—loyalty to a much smaller home area within the region—were the most prevalent.<sup>27</sup>

Yet the problems of the Uyghur population of Xinjiang can and must be solved. The principled basis for that is the 1648 Peace of Westphalia's principle of acting "for the advantage of the other", also reflected in 19th-century US President John Quincy Adams's idea of a community of principle among nations. And a national idea can be based not on blood and soil, but on betterment of life for all—whether among nations, or within multi-ethnic ones. Chinese President Xi Jinping calls this a "win-win" approach.

What is *not* a solution is promotion from the outside of "national" consciousness by people who don't really give two hoots about the population of the target area, but only want to exploit them for their own geopolitical and economic aims. Many members of the Eurasian diasporas came through the tumult of the 20th century with deep wounds, whether that be the experience of Australian Uyghur leader Ahmet Igamberdi, who spent six years at forced labour and 10 years

in prison at the height of Maoist repressions in China, or the psychological damage obvious in Uzbek émigré Ruzi Nazar, who ten years after the Nuremberg Trials of the Nazis still found it appropriate to advertise his rank in the Nazis' Turkestan Legion as a reputation-boosting element of his biography (Part 7). The diaspora has been cruelly exploited as well.

Anglo-American geopolitician and father of the neocons Bernard Lewis (Part 2) argued in an influential 1976 article for *Commentary*, "The Return of Islam", that the western, Westphalian concept of a nation-state did not apply in Islam, because "Islam from the lifetime of its founder was the state, and the identity of religion and government is indelibly stamped" in the minds of the faithful. With that, Lewis was justifying his own hostility towards the legacy of Kemal Atatürk's statecraft in Turkey, and his preference for a world of clashing non-nations that could be dominated by Anglo-American power centres.

Bernard Lewis's way leads to permanent war. Under circumstances where the whole world is threatened with descent into a new dark age, yet China has been its sole engine of economic growth in the past decade and a half, while cultivating scientific optimism in its education policies and a commitment to promoting classical culture, a strategic posture that exploits the Uyghurs of Xinjiang for attacking China is nothing short of insane.

Was Beijing's tough program for stopping terrorism perfect? Of course not. Even people well-disposed towards China criticise the treatment of Uyghurs after the Urumqi ethnic riots of 2009, comparing it to the ethnic profiling of people of Middle Eastern origin by US law enforcement after the 9/11 attacks. A Russian Sinologist, one of the first to argue that Xi Jinping's Belt and Road policy is positive for Russia, explains: "Beijing's policy in Xinjiang has more than one side to it, as we say. The excessive harshness towards Muslims is a fact, which has become particularly evident in very recent years. But it has an explanation, and I believe that is China's overall mobilisation in the face of the Cold War with America that has started."

Alongside Beijing's anti-poverty programs, Belt and Road infrastructure-building is transforming life in Xinjiang for the better, but the Uyghur diaspora and "East Turkistan" organisations consistently condemn it as a mechanism of "occupation".

As for the alleged defenders of human rights, it should be clear that one does not help the Uyghur people by attacking China.

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26. Isabelle Cote, "The enemies within: targeting Han Chinese and Hui minorities in Xinjiang", *Asian Ethnicity*, 2015.

27. Note 22, article by J. Rudelson.



## APPENDIX

### Additional articles from the *Australian Alert Service*

# Uighur ‘mass detention’ reports fabricated by US, British propagandists

By Richard Bardon

Tales of the Chinese government’s detention in “internment centres” of up to a million members of China’s Uighur Muslim minority do not derive from a United Nations report, as many Western human-rights activists, geopolitical pundits, and the Australian government and Labor Party opposition seem to believe. The Chinese government has indeed greatly tightened security in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region—the large but sparsely populated province in China’s northwest bordering Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India—in response to terrorist activity by Uighur (also spelled Uyghur, Uygur) separatist groups allied with al-Qaeda and the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS); and thus Uighurs are subject to greater suspicion and scrutiny than the region’s other ethnic groups. But the UN did *not* report the mass incarceration of Uighurs, nor has any evidence of such been presented. Furthermore, almost all reports of human rights abuses in Xinjiang originate with Western media outlets linked to the US State Department or British Intelligence; and/or with organisations funded by the US government to promote regime change in China.

Australian Shadow Foreign Minister Sen. Penny Wong said in a 12 September press release that “Labor is deeply concerned by continuing reports of the mass detention of China’s minority Uighur population and other violations of human rights, including those outlined by members of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination [UNCERD] in Geneva earlier this month.” Welcoming Foreign Minister Marise Payne’s confirmation the previous week that Australian officials had raised the issue with their counterparts in Beijing, Wong called upon the government to go farther and “use Australia’s membership on the UN Human Rights Council, in coordination with other members, to continue to pursue this issue with the Chinese Government.” In an interview with ABC Radio National two days later, she reiterated: “we’ve seen a human rights report, a report from the [UNCERD], that does raise some real concerns.”

First, it must be said that Labor’s “deep concern” for human rights would be more convincing were it not itself guilty of systematic human-rights abuses against refugees and asylum seekers—a matter in which it marches in lockstep with the Liberal-National coalition.<sup>1</sup> But in fact, as Ben Norton and Ajit Singh had already shown in a [23 August article](#) published by investigative journalism



China’s Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Source: RFA

website The Grayzone Project, no such UN report exists.

“A spokesperson from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) confirmed in a statement to the Grayzone that the allegation of Chinese ‘camps’ was not made by the United Nations, but rather by a member of an independent committee [the UNCERD] that does not speak for the UN as a whole”, they wrote. “That member happened to be the only American on the committee, and one with no background of scholarship or research on China.” The American rep, Gay McDougall, made the allegation on 10 August during a review of China’s compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (periodic reviews being one of the Convention’s terms, to which all 179 state parties are subject). Like Sen. Wong, Ms McDougall declared herself “deeply concerned” at “credible reports” of Uighur “internment camps”—but failed to name a source for these reports. The OHCHR noted McDougall’s concerns in its official news release on the China review; and the UNCERD later catalogued them, along with China’s denials, in its concluding observations published 30 August (not in early September as Sen. Wong mistakenly said). But neither the UNCERD nor any UN body levelled any accusations. Nonetheless, immediately McDougall made her remarks, British press agency Reuters rushed out an

1. “Australia’s treatment of refugees is a crime against humanity”, AAS 5 Sept. 2018.

inflammatory article headlined “UN says it has credible reports that China holds million Uighurs in secret camps”, which was echoed throughout the mainstream Western media. “The impression readers were given was that the UN had conducted an investigation and had formally and collectively made such charges against China”, Norton and Singh wrote. “In fact, the UN had done no such thing. ... The report by Reuters is simply false.”

### Propaganda organs

Reuters’ propagation of this anti-China scare story is likely no coincidence. One of the largest news agencies in the world, Reuters was long ago taken over by British Intelligence—during World War One its managing director, Roderick Jones, was also head of the Ministry of Information’s Department of Propaganda. Its ties to the Establishment are not so open these days, but it remains the go-to “respectable” press organ for smear campaigns against any country upon which the Anglo-American war party trains its gunsights, China included. The British Establishment seeks good relations with China for its own part, so as to cement the City of London’s position as the gatekeeper of financial exchanges between China and the West.<sup>2</sup> But its post-Brexit “Global Britain” strategy (or as some in Whitehall call it, “Empire 2.0”) also entails alienating China from as many nations as possible—especially the “former” colonies of the British Commonwealth, Australia chief among them—so as to preserve the “rules-based international order” of neoliberal globalism, and suppress China’s win-win model as embodied in the world-spanning Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure program.<sup>3</sup>

As for McDougall’s “credible reports”, Norton and Singh wrote that they seem to have been drawn from a recent paper by “activist group” the Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD), which is headquartered in Washington, DC—at the same address as Human Rights Watch, a pseudo-Non-Governmental Organisation which “has long been criticised for its revolving door with the US government and its excessively disproportionate focus on designated enemies of Washington”. CHRD does not name its donors, but its tax forms reveal that it is funded almost entirely (99.4 per cent in 2015) by government grants. Which government(s) is unclear, Norton and Singh wrote, but “it appears likely that CHRD could be receiving funding from the US government-backed National Endowment for Democracy (NED)”, the supposedly independent foundation that funds dissidents and foments uprisings and “colour revolutions” in countries targeted for regime change. “A search of the NED’s grants database shows funding from 2014 and 2015 totalling approximately half a million dollars to ‘support the work of Chinese human rights defenders’”, they wrote. “It is not clear if this is a reference to the organisation specifically, but the description accompanying the grants matches that of CHRD.”

The CHRD, whose board of directors Norton and Singh describe as a Who’s Who of exiled Chinese anti-government activists, uses its lavish government funding to support similar characters back in China. Of particular note is its advocacy on behalf of anti-state ideologue Liu Xiaobo, from at least 2010 until his death from cancer in 2017. Whilst media promotion made Liu “a *cause célèbre* of the

Western liberal intelligentsia”, they reported, he was in fact a supporter of colonialism and staunch neoconservative who vociferously supported the illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003; and “a hard-core libertarian ... [who] led numerous US government-funded right-wing organisations that advocated mass privatisation and the Westernisation of China. ... ‘To choose Westernisation is to choose to be human’, Liu insisted.”

In a final twist, the CHRD report’s most-quoted source for accusations against Beijing is none other than Radio Free Asia (RFA)—an agency *created and run by the US government*, whose broadcasting standard is to be “consistent with the broad foreign policy objectives of the United States”. Norton and Singh wrote: “The near-total reliance on Washington-linked sources is characteristic of Western reporting on Uighurs Muslims in China, and the country in general, which regularly features sensational headlines and allegations.” Another common source, the World Uighur Congress, is also funded by the NED; in a recent interview with Grayzone editor Max Blumenthal, its chairman Omer Kanat took credit for feeding stories of internment camps to Western media.

### Legitimate concerns

Of greater immediate concern than Western-funded political agitators, there are at least 5,000 Uighur militants (some estimates range as high as 20,000) who have been fighting in Syria, mainly in the northern Idlib Governorate bordering Turkey, under the banners of separatist militia the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) and East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM). Chinese authorities state that the latter group has been allied with al-Qaeda since at least the 1990s; and they are determined that these men not be allowed to return, hardened by battle and trained in weapons and tactics, to wreak havoc at home in Xinjiang. Their intention to do just that was spelled out in an ISIS execution video in early 2017, in which a group of Uighur militants threatened China with “rivers of blood”, before another declared: “We didn’t care how the fighting went or who [Syrian President Bashar al-] Assad was. ... We just wanted to learn how to use the weapons and then go back to China.”

Small wonder, then, that Beijing has tightened security in Xinjiang. But Zhang Peilan, spokesman for the Chinese Consulate-General in New York, wrote in the 24 September *Wall Street Journal* that this has not come at the expense of religious freedom or other human rights. “There are 10 Muslim ethnic groups in Xinjiang with 24,400 mosques, and religious freedom is fully guaranteed”, he wrote. “The government has repaired and renovated many of the old mosques. The Chinese government promotes the bilingual teaching of Mandarin and minority ethnic groups’ spoken and written languages, respects minority folklore traditions and protects Xinjiang’s intangible cultural heritage.” And whilst tighter security is a necessity right now, China’s long-term solution is the same for Xinjiang as everywhere else: peace through economic development. “With the continuous development of China’s Belt and Road Initiative”, Zhang wrote, “Xinjiang has become China’s transportation hub and the trade, financial, cultural, science, education and medical-service centre for Central Asia. At present the China-Kazakh Horgos Border Cooperation Zone has attracted more than US\$4.5 billion. Xinjiang will strengthen import and export industries and all ethnic groups in Xinjiang will fully enjoy the dividends and unite to create a better life.”

2. “The City of London’s China pivot”, AAS 11 July 2018.

3. “Brits, Canberra plot ‘Empire 2.0’ at AUKMIN summit”, AAS 25 July 2018.





## ASPI doubles down on Xinjiang ‘detention centre’ fakery

By Richard Bardon

29 Sept.—The McCarthyites at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) and their US State Department paymasters must be running out of ideas for fresh horrors to attribute to China, and have instead revived the long since debunked accusations of a “cultural genocide” against the predominantly Muslim Uighur<sup>1</sup> people in the province of Xinjiang. Even more so than usual, however, their purported evidence is so comically flimsy and easily refuted that anyone who examines it objectively would only be led to doubt both the story it has been concocted to support, and the credibility of ASPI itself.

As regular readers of the *Australian Alert Service* will recall, ASPI styles itself an “independent, non-partisan think tank”, but in fact it is anything but.<sup>2</sup> Funded partly by an annual grant from the Department of Defence, it is otherwise sponsored by a Who’s Who of multinational weapons makers, including those involved in all of Australia’s current major defence procurement programs—which are themselves predicated upon the supposed need to be able to support a US-led war on China.<sup>3</sup> ASPI also does research funded by specific grants from the UK, US and other allied governments. Its latest attack on China, dubbed the “Xinjiang Data Project” (XJDP), is an example of the latter, thus illustrating the blatant hypocrisy with which ASPI screams “foreign interference” at any person or institution remotely connected to China, while itself advancing imported geopolitical agendas inimical to Australia’s national interest.

Launched 24 September on its own dedicated website, ASPI’s XJDP—which it acknowledges was funded by China basher-in-chief Mike Pompeo’s US State Department—claims to “[fill] an important information gap by bringing together *rigorously vetted and empirical* policy-relevant research on the human rights situation facing Uyghurs and other [minorities] ... in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in western China. It focuses on a core set of topics including mass internment camps, ... forced labour and supply chains, the ‘re-education’ campaign, deliberate cultural destruction and other human rights issues.” (Emphasis added.) Its main feature is an interactive map on which, it claims, “ASPI researchers have *identified and mapped over 380 sites in the detention network* across Xinjiang, counting only re-education camps, detention centres and prisons that were newly built or significantly expanded since 2017.” (Emphasis added.) Quite the definitive statement; yet in the accompanying report by project lead researcher Nathan Ruser, titled “Documenting Xinjiang’s detention system”, all certitude disappears in the very first sentence. What he and his colleagues have identified are in fact only “suspected” detention facilities, Ruser equivocates, in which “available evidence suggests that many extrajudicial detainees ... [have been] locked up”. And ASPI’s “*rigorously vetted and empirical*” evidence is nothing of the sort. Much of it consists of unverifiable “eyewitness accounts” and media reports sourced to US-based pseudo-NGOs like the pro-regime-change

Human Rights Watch, and to Adrian Zenz of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation—an evangelical Christian fanatic who has publicly stated he has a “mission from God” to overthrow the Chinese government. Zenz apparently originated the claim in 2018 that China had incarcerated one million Uighurs in concentration camps; but diplomats from many Muslim countries rejected his claims after visiting Xinjiang in 2019.<sup>4</sup> Otherwise, ASPI has identified its suspected detention facilities mainly via analysis of satellite imagery, based on ludicrously broad criteria.

### ‘Assumption’ begins with an ass

Under the sub-heading “What were we looking for?”, Ruser states that “At their simplest, detention facilities are large, residential and highly securitised [*sic*] areas from which free movement is prevented by a combination of walls, watchtowers and barbedwire fencing”, while “Lower security facilities can look superficially similar to public facilities such as schools or hospitals.” And sure enough, it turns out that is exactly what Ruser et al. had actually found—along with shopping centres, factories, various government offices, and the odd housing complex.

For example, two supposed detention facilities in the city of Turpan “turn out to be Gaochang District Bureau for Veterans Affairs and Gaochang District Bureau for Business & Industry Informationisation [*sic*] respectively”, Chengxin Pan, a professor of international relations at Melbourne’s Deakin University, wrote 27 September on Twitter. “The smoking gun is that they both have external walls!” And so, he noted, do most Chinese government compounds and work units, schools, universities and gated communities. He also noted that another supposed detention facility in Kashgar is clearly marked on both Google Maps and its Chinese counterpart, Baidu Maps, as a conjoined high school and technical college. “I know anything lining up in a row (plus external walls) in China is suspect”, he continued dryly. “So it’s fair game to speculate, but speculation has to have some factual foundations and be aware that anyone with relevant language skill, curiosity and time can fact-check.” Many Chinese Twitter users were quick to point out a multitude of similar instances, and even that some locations marked on the XJDP map have no buildings at all.

Wrote Pan, “Maybe all the other facilities in the report are real ... but the easily identified misinformation from the small samples [I looked at] doesn’t inspire confidence in the rigour of the APSI report. Yet, it has [been] and will get widely covered, cited as credible sources and blended into scholarly texts. New theses, papers and books on the topic will be written, a process of knowledge production, dare I say, not dissimilar to money-laundering: disinformation, via the power of mass media, turns into information, and via scholarly interest and publications, becomes scientific knowledge and objective truth.” And those who dare challenge it, he added, will be labelled “deniers, apologists, shills” and so on—a very apt description of just the climate of McCarthyite hysteria ASPI has worked for years to generate, but which the idiocy of its latest effort might well undermine.

4. “Muslim countries reject claims of ‘cultural genocide’ against Xinjiang Uighurs”, AAS, 24 July 2019.

1. Also spelled “Uyghur”.

2. “A tale of two think tanks: Canberra escalates McCarthyism, de-funds diplomacy”, AAS, 17 June 2020.

3. “Morrison’s indefensible Defence plan re-commits to Cold War with China”, AAS, 8 July 2020.

# ASPI propagandists' rank hypocrisy exposed!



12 Oct.—The nominally “Australian” think tank behind the

widely reported accusations that China is using its Uyghur Muslim minority as forced labour is itself sponsored by American and British arms companies that have profited from forced prison labour. This is according to an explosive report today by Marcus Reubenstein in APAC. news, Michael West Media and Pearls and Irritations, “ASPI’s forced labour links”.

The Citizens Party has exposed the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) as a foreign interference operation in Australia, funded by the US State Department and other foreign governments, NATO, and multinational weapons manufacturers, to force Australian foreign policy to follow the USA’s hostile turn against China to the detriment of Australia’s relationship with our biggest trading partner.

A recent five-part series published in the Citizens Party’s *Australian Alert Service*, “The China narrative”, by researcher Melissa Harrison, revealed ASPI’s central role alongside ASIO and a small gang of academics, journalists and politicians in relentlessly hyping accusations against China, including that China is persecuting Uyghur Muslims in concentration camps and as slave labour.

While those claims are unproven, this report by Marcus Reubenstein identifies 11 of ASPI’s funders which have used and continue to use forced prison labour in their supply chains, including BAE Systems, Lockheed Martin, and the US government itself, which owns the world’s largest prison labour company.

As Reubenstein reports, “US government-owned UNICOR has 110 factories in at least 65 Federal prisons across the United States. Inmates manufacture a wide array of products for both civilian and military applications, with

ASPI AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC POLICY INSTITUTE			ASPI FUNDERS' PRISON & FORCED LABOUR LINKS	
BAE Systems 2014-19	Military hardware & aerospace	-->>	Prison labour components in military vehicles	
Boeing 2008-18	Military aircraft	-->>	Prison labour components in F-15 jet fighters	
Cisco Systems 2019-	Networking hardware systems	-->>	Prisoner staffed marketing call centres	
KBR Inc 2004-09	Military engineering & logistics	-->>	Human trafficking lawsuit & \$US180m bribery	
Lockheed Martin 2004-	Aerospace & armaments	-->>	Prison labour in F-16 jets & Patriot missiles	
Microsoft 2018-	Computers software	-->>	Prisoner staffed marketing call centres	
Raytheon 2013-	Missiles & defence systems	-->>	Prison labour components in Patriot missiles	
Serco Group 2007-14	Defence, prisons & detention	-->>	Use of immigration detainee labour	
UAE Government 2017-18	Nation State	-->>	US State Dept cited human rights violations	
Unisys 2005-19	IT solutions & hardware	-->>	Provider of US prison phone systems	
US Government 2018-	Nation State	-->>	Owner of largest US prison labour company	

16 of its prison factories specialising in the manufacture of electronics. The company also supplies the US Military, whose government gives both direct and indirect financial support to ASPI.”

By contrast, when ASPI’s claims about Uyghur forced labour are examined in detail, there is little evidence of anything other than the Chinese government incentivising job placement agencies to find jobs for Uyghurs as part of its poverty-reduction and deradicalisation programs.

ASPI stands exposed as supremely hypocritical propagandists, a foreign-backed front for the war machine that has left mass death and destruction in its wake in the Middle East and is now targeting China with accusations that have the same credibility as the claims of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction. If Australians want to understand the motives and credibility of the organisations pushing us towards conflict with China, which they should, they must read “ASPI’s forced labour links” (excerpted p. 8).

## ASPI: forced labour hypocrites and academic fraudsters

By Melissa Harrison

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) published its dramatic allegations of Uyghur Muslim forced labour in a much-lauded 1 March 2020 report, *Uyghurs for Sale*. The report alleged “a new phase in China’s social re-engineering campaign targeting minority citizens”, claiming it had exposed “new evidence” that a number of factories were “using forced Uyghur labour under a state-sponsored labour transfer scheme that is tainting the global supply chain”. A 26 March 2020 *Grayzone* report nailed the agenda behind ASPI’s claims in its headline that charged forced labour allegations about Chinese Uyghurs are “brought to you by US, NATO, arms industry to drive Cold War PR blitz”.

### ASPI’s dubious sources

*Uyghurs for Sale* lead author, ASPI researcher Vicky Xu, told the ABC on 2 March: “Officials and private brokers receive money for every Uyghur person they manage to transfer. The recipient companies receive a cash inducement for every Uyghur they take. ... Everyone involved in this transfer scheme benefits except for Uyghur workers.”

Xu’s claims are repeated in ASPI’s report, which essentially alleges a bounty program to incentivise industrial-scale forced labour. However, ASPI’s supporting reference doesn’t back up the allegations. In fact, it reveals the subsidy is paid primarily to cover expenses incurred by labour hire companies and job placement agencies, while Xu’s “cash



inducement” is part of a regulated labour hire program, incentivised to *significantly increase the workers’ income* and achieve successful long-term employment.

This is a pattern. Tracing back ASPI’s references reveals that relevant information is ignored, and sources are interpreted in extreme bad faith, or are misrepresented in a manner so misleading it can only be described as academic fraud. References for some of ASPI’s most egregious allegations against the Chinese government come from dubious sources: the discredited far-right evangelical Adrian Zenz, a frequent ASPI source, who believes he is “led by God” on a “mission” against China; the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, an ASPI-like militaristic institution which is funded by the US and UK governments and arms manufacturers; or, conveniently, ASPI’s own staff, who are paid by Mike Pompeo’s US State Department to demonise China.

### Uyghurs for Sale: academic fraud

ASPI claims that “[in] the name of combating ‘religious extremism’, Chinese authorities have been actively remoulding the Muslim population in the image of China’s Han ethnic majority”. The article referenced includes key information that ASPI completely ignores: no terrorist incidents have occurred in Xinjiang in three years due to the counter-terrorism and deradicalisation efforts (after 800 deaths from dozens of terrorist attacks in the ten years to 2017); and foreign officials, diplomats, journalists and religious officials have visited and commended the program, saying it met the United Nations’ purposes and principles on defeating terrorism and protecting basic human rights.

Contradicting ASPI’s claims that the Xinjiang Muslim population is being “actively [remoulded]”, the article describes education subsidies for poor families; universal free health check-ups; improved government social security systems including medical insurance and pension schemes; and subsidised housing built for 212,700 rural families in that year alone. The article also reports Xinjiang’s GDP was up 6.1 per cent year on year, and was the highest in its history; since 2014, more than 2.38 million Xinjiang residents have been lifted out of poverty.

According to ASPI, “Uyghur workers who have been able to leave China and speak out describe the constant fear of being sent back to a detention camp in Xinjiang or even a traditional prison while working at the factories”. ASPI claims that all workers of a Uyghur labour transfer program in Fujian were former “re-education camp” detainees and were “threatened with further detention if they disobeyed the government’s work assignments”; and that “police regularly search their dormitories and check their phones for any religious content. If a Quran is found, the owner will be sent back to the ‘re-education camp’ for 3-5 years”.

The source for these claims is an article published in *Bitter Winter*, an online publication of CESNUR, a high-profile lobbying group for controversial religions, which has defended groups including the Church of Scientology, Falun Gong, the Order of the Solar Temple (which was responsible for the mass murder-suicide of 75 members in 1994-97), and Aum Shinrikyo (responsible for the 1995 Tokyo sarin gas attack). *Bitter Winter* has defended Eastern Lightning (a.k.a. Church of Almighty God), an apocalyptic group regarded as a cult in China, which believes the Chinese Communist Party is Satan incarnate. Eastern Lightning members have been convicted of multiple counts of cult-motivated murder, and once kidnapped 34 members of a Christian group, holding them for two months in attempted forced conversion. *Bitter Winter* has published reams of articles alleging the Chinese

government’s persecution of Uyghurs. On 24 June 2019 *Bitter Winter* co-hosted a conference campaigning for asylum rights of the Uyghur diaspora and Eastern Lightning, where representatives testified to the alleged torture and murder of their members by the Chinese government.

ASPI says, “Uyghur workers are often transported across China in special segregated trains, and in most cases are returned home by the same method after their contracts end a year or more later”; according to ASPI, this is isolation and a “relevant indicator” of forced labour. Yet ASPI’s referenced articles describe a poverty-alleviation program, where successful job applicants were travelling by train to a pre-job training course, with board, lodging and transportation expenses paid for. The apparent reference for ASPI’s “segregated trains” allegation is an article describing how, to accommodate peak travel periods, a railway company organised special additional trains for “returning workers to their hometowns” which had “also been upgraded from normal speed trains to fast trains, and they are replaced by green leather[-upholstered] cars. It is an air-conditioned car. Migrant workers can go home faster and have a more comfortable travel experience.”

Determined to present an impression of misery, ASPI says that “[in] factories far away from home” Uyghur workers “typically live in segregated dormitories”. This claim is cherry-picked from an article which describes a poverty alleviation program. In one example, in a program aimed at “employment for one person and poverty alleviation for the whole family”, there is a description of migrant employees’ study rooms, halal canteens and air-conditioned dormitories. ASPI ignores the reference’s description of government-funded health programs—a new local hospital and comprehensive screening for 40,000 children, which found a prevalence of congenital hand and foot disabilities, in response to which the government funded free surgery and rehabilitation for these children.

ASPI’s second reference documents a migrant vocational program where 1,300 graduates were accepted into new jobs at a company which manufactures high-tech hardware and semiconductors. Interviewees spoke of overcoming homesickness, adapting to their new environment and learning new skills. There are photos of birthday parties, social activities, company-organised excursions, and a new company-built canteen for Xinjiang migrant workers, where Xinjiang chefs were invited to cook. There is a photo of young female employees in their colourfully decorated dormitory, apparently ASPI’s evidence of “segregated dormitories”. (Does ASPI expect men and women, especially Muslims, to share dorm rooms?)

ASPI says that in these factories, migrant workers “undergo organised Mandarin and ideological training outside working hours”. Again ASPI misrepresents its references, which document poverty alleviation programs and the growing prosperity of local residents; applaud the achievements of factory workers-turned female entrepreneurs; profile mentorship programs; and describe a company which hired full-time language teachers to overcome communication barriers and hold language courses for their employees, which grew to be the largest national language training class in southern Xinjiang.

### UK MPs press for punitive sanctions

ASPI claims its research is “rigorously peer reviewed—internally and externally”. *Uyghurs for Sale* was peer-reviewed by unnamed “labour specialists”, “anonymous reviewers”, and Darren Byler, a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre for Asian Studies at the University of Colorado, who is a

member of the Washington DC-based Uighur Scholars Working Group, alongside Adrian Zenz and ASPI Senior Fellow James Leibold, a co-author of the report.

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office funded ASPI with £10,000 for *Uyghurs for Sale*. The report featured as supporting material, along with reports from Adrian Zenz, a highly publicised petition which was debated in the UK Parliament on 12 October 2020. On 9 September 2020, UK MPs debated “Detention of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang”, overwhelmingly demanding stronger action against the Chinese government and for sanctions to be levelled against Chinese individuals and companies in retaliation for alleged human

rights abuses and forced labour of Uyghurs.

Why the relentless push to justify sanctions specifically in the Xinjiang region? As a critical hub of the Chinese government’s “One Belt, One Road Initiative”, destroying Xinjiang’s industry and trade with sanctions furthers the Anglo-American agenda of economically damaging its strategic competitors: China and Russia. The misleading nature of *Uyghurs for Sale*, and ASPI’s own funding by benefactors that profit from forced prison labour in the USA and UK, reveals ASPI’s faux concern for human rights and its role as a government-funded propaganda outlet—forced labour hypocrites publishing academic fraud.

## Excerpt: ASPI’s forced labour links

*By Marcus Reubenstein, APAC News*

*Whereas Melissa Harrison is able to easily refute ASPI’s claims about Uyghurs being used as slave labour, just by quoting ASPI’s own sources, above, the following excerpt of “ASPI’s forced labour links” details just how heavily ASPI’s benefactors rely on actual forced labour, especially through the US prison system. Published with permission of the author. See [apac.news](http://apac.news) for the full article.*

### Patriot shames

ASPI sponsors, Raytheon and Lockheed Martin, directly benefit from prison labour which produces electronic components for the Patriot surface-to-air missile.

Costing around US\$5 million per missile, more than 10,000 Patriots have been produced with Raytheon reporting the missiles have been supplied to 16 US allies.

Prisoners make parts for the missiles for as little as 23 cents per hour. The factories’ operator discloses on its website that prison authorities can withhold some, or even all, of those wages from prisoners in order to pay fines and other debts.

Numerous reports state Lockheed Martin uses prison labour components. Independent news website Wired quotes a former civilian employee of prison labour operator UNICOR, as saying, “We make wiring harnesses for the military, this being one of them—the [Lockheed Martin assembled] Patriot missile.”

Since it was first revealed a decade ago these defence contractors were using prison labour Raytheon shares have risen by 430 per cent and Lockheed Martin stock has advanced by 500 per cent. Over that time their prison workers have not received a single pay rise.

### F-15 & F-16 jet fighters

Boeing gave cash to ASPI for a decade between 2008 and 2018, it jointly manufactures the F-15 jet fighter which uses components made by forced prison labour.

The Lockheed Martin F-16 jet fighters, jointly made by General Dynamics use similar prison labour components, sourced from the same company UNICOR.

Lockheed Martin is one of ASPI’s most loyal supporters having provided cash sponsorship to the think tank continually for the past 16 years.

Though ASPI has never disclosed the dollar amounts paid by all of its individual sponsors it was revealed through Senate Estimates that Lockheed Martin paid it \$135,909 in 2018-19.

In 2019 Lockheed Martin commenced negotiations which saw the Australian government purchase \$800 million of missiles from the US weapons giant.

### Tanks and £1 detainee labour

BAE Systems, which paid money to ASPI between 2014 and 2019 also has connections to forced prison labour. UNICOR, which controls prison labour across 110 factories housed in federal penitentiaries, supplies advanced electro-optical equipment for the BAE Systems Bradley Fighting Vehicle, also known as the Bradley tank.

UK multinational Serco Group, which operates immigration detention centres in Australia, paid ASPI sponsorship dollars for eight years between 2007 and 2015.

During the life of that sponsorship, an investigation revealed that Serco had replaced paid employees with detainees in two of its immigration detention centres in the UK. Those detainees were being paid as little as £1 per hour.

Independent British NGO, Corporate Watch has published dozens of reports highlighting questionable practices by the company.

### A 23 cents per hour workforce

US government owned UNICOR has 110 factories in at least 65 Federal prisons across the United States. Inmates manufacture a wide array of products for both civilian and military applications, with 16 of its prison factories specialising in the manufacture of electronics.

The company also supplies the US Military, whose government gives both direct and indirect financial support to ASPI. Prison workers supply body armour and, according to one report, all US military combat helmets. It also reportedly supplied the US with three-quarters of all uniforms used during the Iraq War.

Prisoners without a high school diploma can only make 23 cents (US) per hour, whilst high school graduates can make up to US\$1.15 per hour.

However, a significant proportion of the money they “earn” is withheld in order to pay court-imposed fines or financial restitution associated with their incarceration.

Federal convicts are amongst the highest paid in the US prison system, the national average wage of US prison workers is just 86 cents per day. In five states—Texas, Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia and Florida—prisoners are required to work without pay.

In a number of states prisoners who refuse to work are put in solitary confinement. This practice also extends to immigration detention centres with a report in 2018 of a Bangladeshi detainee being placed in solitary confinement over the refusal to participate in a forced work program.