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ETHNIC DISCONTENT IN WESTERN CHINA:
CAN CHINA'S PROVINCIAL POLICY CONTAIN INSTABILITY?

by

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1. Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st Century, the rise of China as a peer competitor to the United States has become the dominant national security issue for US Pacific Command (USPACOM). US security interests with China are dominated by high profile issues including \$284B in annual trade,¹ tension over Taiwan, China's military build-up as well as its growing regional influence. Each issue has garnered significant attention, since they affect vital US national security interests. To effectively engage with China, USPACOM must understand China; how it acts and why it acts. Internal China security issues provide an insightful window into the People's Republic of China (PRC) policy and motivations. Analyzing the PRC's internal policies and their effects makes the inscrutable China Tiger more understandable. This paper examines one internal security issue; the PRC's provincial policy and its ability to contain instability in China's western autonomous regions, Xinjiang and Tibet.

While the PRC appears monolithic, the western provinces, Xinjiang and Tibet, have a unique context setting them apart from greater China. First these provinces do not have a continuous history of peaceful rule by Chinese regimes. In fact, both regions are considered potentially unstable with subversive elements desiring greater autonomy or even independence. Second, the autonomous regions contain majority "minority" ethnic populations that are not Han Chinese. For example in Xinjiang, ethnic minorities (predominantly Uyghur) account for 59.4% of the population versus 40.6% Han Chinese.² Tension between ethnic minorities and Han Chinese are at the root of western provincial instability. Third, the western province trade access, plentiful natural resources, and open lands contrast with greater China. This provides opportunity for immigration and economic development, which is critical to China's strategic

¹ US Census Bureau, Bureau of Statistics, Foreign Trade Statistics for 2005, <http://www.census.gov>, 2005.

² Stanley W. Toops, "Demography of Xinjiang," in *Xinjiang Chinas's Muslim Borderland* ed. by S. Frederick Starr (Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2004), p. 248. Derived from Chinese Census Bureau data.

domestic policy. Given these unique contextual factors, the PRC regime has shaped a unique approach toward the two western provinces.

The PRC policy in the western provinces emphasizes maintaining control and stability as the primary objective. To maintain control and stability, the PRC focuses on economic expansion and control of subversive influences. In parallel with these main efforts, the PRC has attempted to nurture long term stability through a conflicted policy of supporting minority diversity while forcing cultural assimilation. Despite a half century of adjustments in the diversity versus assimilation policy, the effect has been enduring minority discontent from the mid-1950s to present.

This paper examines the effectiveness of the PRC policy to suppress regional instability in Xinjiang and Tibet from 1949 to present. Across case studies, three variables (ethnic discontent, economic expansion, and control measures) have been found to be explanatory for the level instability. Of the three variables, discontent does not vary across case studies. Discontent is considered a necessary but not sufficient condition for instability. The findings suggest that instability was contained when the PRC policy achieved economic expansion while enforcing strict control measures. Despite economic growth, rising instability was found when control measures were eased. The highest levels of instability occurred when the economy was not expanding and control measures were erratic. The effectiveness of the dual-approach policy (economic growth and strict control) as well as the rising instability when control measures were eased explains China's steadfast commitment to human rights suppression in Tibet and Xinjiang since the mid-1990s.

The paper begins with a literature review of historical conflict, provincial opposition theory, PRC policy, discontent, and instability. Next a model explains the causal relationship

between the independent variables (discontent, economic expansion, and control measures), and the dependent variable (provincial instability). Detailed case studies are presented Xinjiang under PRC rule. Complementing case studies are also presented for Tibet, showing consistency across the western provinces. Finally US national security implications are presented along with areas for future investigation. This paper provides insight into why China persists with certain human rights policies that conflict with western principles. A better understanding of western China policy will help frame an effective US engagement policy with China.



Figure 1. Location of Xinjiang and Tibet within the People's Republic of China.³

2. Scope

This paper focuses on the ability of the PRC to contain instability in the minority provinces of western China. The paper explains PRC policy, its motivations, and effectiveness. At the

³ University of Texas, Austin, Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps>.

broadest level, this paper investigates the effectiveness of a large totalitarian regime to impose stability on discontented provinces with ethnic distinctions different from the central authority. Within this constraint, the paper identifies causal inferences between the implementation of economic and control policy on provincial stability.

The scope of the paper has been limited to maintain consistency across case studies. All the case studies involve the People's Republic of China (PRC) from 1949 to present. The PRC is unique due to its overwhelming security apparatus, size, and totalitarian centralized control. The consistency of PRC policy structure across Tibet and Xinjiang allows the observation of instability changes resulting from changes in economic expansion and control measures. The size and structure of the PRC regime is also significant because these factors facilitate the effective imposition of large-scale provincial initiatives such as massive security crackdowns, state farm programs, forced immigration, and border shutdowns. Case studies involving smaller, less-well resourced, or less politically centralized regimes are outside the scope of this paper.

The scope is also limited to case studies where discontent is grounded in provincial ethnic differences. While the central government is dominated by ethnic Han Chinese, ethnic Han Chinese is not the majority within the western provinces.⁴ Instability related to economic discontent in other areas of China is outside the scope of this study. Due to increased US national security interest in central Asia, Xinjiang is the primary study focus. Tibet case studies are included to show consistency across different western provinces.

Case studies from two additional Chinese provinces, Taiwan and Inner Mongolia, were examined but rejected. While there is discontent between Taiwan and the PRC, the lack of

⁴ The PRC defines minorities based on the PRC organic law established by the 1952 State Ethnic Affairs Commission establishing 56 ethnic groups subject to special recognition and control. Uyghurs and Tibetans are both classified as minorities despite being the dominant ethnic group in their respective provinces of Xinjiang and Tibet. Dru C. Gladney, "The Chinese Program of Development and Control 1978-2001," in *Xinjiang China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. by S. Frederick Starr (Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2004), p. 104.

Chinese provincial control over Taiwan places it outside the scope of this thesis. For Inner Mongolia, the PRC does have the level of influence, but the PRC-provincial relationship lacks the deeply embedded discontent of its neighbor provinces, Xinjiang and Tibet. Thus this paper and its thesis are explanatory for PRC provincial policy and its ability to contain instability within the discontented minority provinces.

3. Literature Review

a. Historical conflict

Discontent in western China is fueled by a conflicted history. In the past, there has been independent rule in Xinjiang and Tibet as well as Han Chinese imperialist and semi-autonomous rule. The most dominant Han empires ruled Xinjiang from 618-906 (Tang Empire) and 1750-1910 (Qing Empire).⁵ Similarly in Tibet, Han Chinese dynasties ruled from 1348-1640 (Ming) and 1750-1910 (Qing Empire).⁶ These dynasties dominated the western provinces with strong bureaucracies bringing Han migration, trade, and cultural integration. Yet there were equally long periods of independence. In Xinjiang, there is a recent history of independence with the 1st (1933-1934) and 2nd (1944-1949) Eastern Turkistan Republics (ETR).⁷ The ETR regimes left a strong memory of Xinjiang independence. Tibet also has a long history of self-rule under regimes formulated around the Dalai Lama.⁸

The writings of Gladneys, Benson, Starr, Bovingdon, Rudelson, and Toops discuss the importance of the contested histories which fuels the discontented separatist movements.⁹ In Xinjiang, both the PRC and the Uyghur separatists have crafted ethnic historical accounts which

⁵ James A. Millward and Peter C. Perdue, "Political and Cultural History of the Xinjiang Region through the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Xinjiang Chinas's Muslim Borderland*, ed. by S. Frederick Starr, (Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2004), pp. 35-62.

⁶ T. H. Moh, "A Short History of Tibet," Tibet Study Association, <http://cc.purdue.edu/~wtv/tibet/Welcome.html>, 2006.

⁷ Millward and Tursan, *Political History and Strategies*, pp 78-82.

⁸ T. H. Moh, "A Short History of Tibet," Tibet Study Association, <http://cc.purdue.edu/~wtv/tibet/Welcome.html>, 2006.

⁹ See bibliography for referenced works by author.

advance the benefits of their political agenda.¹⁰ In Tibet, ethnic historical independence is embodied with the Dalai Lama in exile, a constant reminder and focus for opposition.¹¹ Yet, the concept of a “contested” history has two sides. There are Han historical accounts emphasizing how Chinese dynasties have brought peace and prosperity to Tibet and Xinjiang. Thus, like many conflicted parts of the world (Israel/Palestine), there are conflicting and competing histories serving as a foundation for discontent.

b. Structure of ethnic-provincial opposition

To understand provincial instability, this section presents theoretical structures for provincial opposition to the state. One view of opposition is realist. Stephen Van Evera dissects nationalist movements in terms of individuals’ loyalty being greater to an ethnic group than to the state. If the opposition group (comprised of individuals with a shared interest) has the plausible strength to resist, then the group will strive for independence.¹² There are two necessary conditions, shared interest and capability for success. Thus Van Evera views nationalist opposition as a matter of ethnic-self interest vs. loyalty to the state tempered by the balance of power within the country.

In contrast to Van Evera, David Lake and Donald Rothchild describe ethnic opposition in terms of collective fear about the future. These authors consider the first of two contributors for conflict to be a group’s fear of losing “property rights, jobs, scholarships, educational

¹⁰ Gardner Bovingdon outlines the contradictions in the PRC and Uyghur historical texts Gardner in “Contested Histories” in *Xinjiang China’s Muslim Borderland* (with contributions by Nabijan Tursan, ed. by S. Frederick Starr, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute), pp. 353-354. Dru C. Gladneys (p. 101) and Linda Benson (p. 190) separately explain the linkage between the contested histories and provincial minority discontent in separate Chapters within *Xinjiang China’s Muslim Borderland*.

¹¹ Jane Caple, “Tibet: Still Searching for Solutions.” *In Searching for Peace in Asia Pacific, An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities*, (ed. by Annelies Heijmans, Nicola Simmonds, and Hans van de Veen, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), pp. 242-243.

¹² Van Evera, , “Hypothesis on Nationalism and War,” in *Theories of War and Peace*, (edited by Brown Michael E et al. The MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1998), p. 258.

admissions, language rights, government contracts, development allocations.”¹³ The second contributor is “ethnic activists and political entrepreneurs” who are capable of capitalizing on these fears to create a non-violent or violent opposition.¹⁴ The importance of elites is reinforced by Karen Mingst who highlights the role of “elites within ethno-nationalists movements...able to incite the masses to war.”¹⁵ Thus opposition leadership is a critical component focusing group fear.

With respect to containing the opposition, the reviewed authors focus on education to reduce fear as well as institutional change within the regime to address the underlying causes of ethnic discontent.¹⁶ These are liberalist prescriptions; focusing on aligning the state with societal interests to alleviate the conflict.¹⁷ This contrasts with a realist prescription which would achieve provincial stability by exercising the state’s instruments of power.¹⁸ Having established a theoretical basis for opposition, the following section explains the PRC provincial policy to address contain instability.

c. PRC Provincial Policy - Development and Control

From 1949 to present, the People’s Republic of China has executed a policy of development and control for the western provinces. The PRC links Tibet and Xinjiang to PRC sovereignty. The two provinces account for 30.1% of China’s total territory providing the majority of its strategic natural resources. The value of these provinces has only increased with China’s increased demand for oil and its program of oil development both in the western provinces and central Asia. Yet more than economics, Sharon Holmes identifies the concept of

¹³ David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, “Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict,” in *Theories of War and Peace*, (edited by Brown Michael E. et al. The MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1998), p. 295.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 292.

¹⁵ Karen A. Mingst, “Essentials of International Relations,” (3rd Edition, Norton and Co., 2004), p. 133.

¹⁶ Lake and Rothchild, p. 307.

¹⁷ Mingst, p. 104.

¹⁸ Mingst, p. 105.

sovereignty as the “foundation of every PRC political or economic negotiation.”¹⁹ In order to forward development and control in the western provinces, the PRC has employed five major policy initiatives with varying levels of emphasis over time.

First, the PRC has advanced the premise of autonomy and ethnic diversity in the provinces. By defining both Tibet and Xinjiang as autonomous regions, the PRC built a foundation for autonomy. The PRC has also allowed a limited amount of minority representation in the local governments. Yet autonomy has been more rhetoric than substance withholding true political autonomy to the provinces.

Second, the PRC has provided a disproportionate amount of central government funding for economic projects in the west. The programs have attempted to gain access and exploit the natural resources of the west and open trade with central Asia.

Third, the PRC has pursued both formal and informal immigration programs from eastern to western China. This Han Chinese immigration balances the national population density and also creates “favorable” demography in the western provinces. The most striking example of this immigration has been seen in Xinjiang with the Han Chinese accounting for 6% (300K) of the provincial population in 1953, rising to 40% (7.5M) in 2000.²⁰ The change in provincial demographics is perceived as a threat to minority economic opportunity and culture.

Fourth, the PRC engages in a strong campaign of assimilation. In varying degrees over time, the PRC has pursued cultural assimilation through education, control of religion, control of social gatherings, language and history.²¹

¹⁹ Major Sharon L.Holmes, “China’s PLAAF Power Projection in the 21st Century,” (School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army CGCS, Fort Leavenworth TX, May 2000), p. 21.

²⁰ Toops, pp. 244-249.

²¹ Justin Rudelson and William Jankowiak, “Acculturation and Resistance: Xinjiang Identities in Flux,” in *Xinjiang China’s Muslim Borderland*, (ed. by S. Frederick Starr, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2004).

Fifth, the PRC is forthright in its policies of provincial control. Internal and external suppression of opposition efforts is one of six acknowledged Chinese national security issues.²² China officially acknowledges its policies of control (arrests, capital punishment, freedom of speech limits, and illegality of opposition) are harsh, but they insist that the effectiveness of the policy is critical to maintaining stability and control in the west.²³ In policy addresses, government officials reaffirm the PRC commitment to “resolutely deal a blow to infiltration, subversion, and sabotage carried out by international and hostile domestic forces.”²⁴ The policy declarations and enforcement reflect a strong realist framework of imposing the national interest of the state, a unitary actor, onto the province.²⁵

d. Discontent

As described by Van Evera, Lake and Rothchild, discontent is a necessary ingredient for provincial / nationalistic resistance against the larger state. This section provides a summary of the discontent found in Xinjiang and Tibet. Based on the literature review, there were five different aspects of PRC policy that drive discontent.

First provincial economic opportunity disfavors the ethnic minorities in comparison to the Han Chinese. In Xinjiang, Calla Weimer and Linda Benson present unequal economic opportunity in terms of GDP per capita, percentages of employment in preferred state jobs (staff and worker designations), and business ownership.²⁶ Similarly Tibetan researchers agree that the majority of economic expansion has benefited recent Han migrants, and the high level of state

²² Holmes, p. 22.

²³ Rudelson and Jankowiak, p. 308.

²⁴ Chairman Tomur Dawamat, “Report on the Outline of the 10-year and the Eighth Five-Year Plan for the Regional Economic and Social Development at the Fourth Session of the Seventh Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Regional People’s Conference, May 1991” (translated and reprinted by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, June 1991).

²⁵ Mingst, p. 66.

²⁶ Calla Wiemer, “The Economy of Xinjiang,” pp. 176-181. Linda Benson “Education and Social Mobility among Minority Populations in Xinjiang,” pp. 212-214. Both works are found in *Xinjiang China’s Muslim Borderland*, (ed. by S. Frederick Starr, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2004).

investment has had muted impact on the quality of life of the Tibetan natives.²⁷ Thus despite rising economic indicators, unequal economic opportunity fuels discontent.

Second, the minorities in Xinjiang and Tibet consider the education and language policies an attack on their identity. In both provinces, Chinese education is required to better integrate the ethnic minorities. Often this has come at the expense of minority languages (an attack on culture) or English (an attack on economic opportunity).²⁸ A second hotly contested issue is the state control of history in provincial schools. Because of the aforementioned contested histories, ethnic minorities consider the state-sponsored history curriculum to be a direct attack on ethnic heritage.²⁹ Thus the educational and language policies contribute to discontent.

Third, contributing to the discontent over unequal economic opportunity, is the increased number of Han Chinese in Xinjiang (real increase) and Tibet (perceived increase). As described earlier, there has been a substantial state sponsored increase in ethnic Han in Xinjiang (rising from 6% to 40% in Xinjiang (1953-2000). The Han population growth has correlated with urban economic opportunities in Xinjiang and the overall high standard of living for Han Chinese. In Tibet, the popular perception is a similar campaign of “demographic annihilation through Han immigration.”³⁰ Yet a study of the best available census data by Barry Sautman, concludes that there has been a reduction in Han population since 1990 and no significant proportional increase since 1949.³¹ Yet the perception from both academic literature and popular writing is that Han

²⁷ June Dreyer, “Tibetan Economic Development under the PRC,” pp. 130-143. Dawa Norbu, “Economic Policy and Practice in Contemporary China,” pp. 153-164. Hu Xiaojiang and Miguel Salazar, “Market Formation and Transformation, Private Business in Lhasa,” pp. 166-190. 24. All three works are found in *Contemporary Tibet: politics, development, and society in a disputed region*, (ed Barry Sautman, and June T.Dreyer, M.E. Sharpe Inc, Armonk NY, 2006).

²⁸ Benson, pp. 194-202.

²⁹ Bovingdon, p. 372-374.

³⁰ Barry Sautman, “‘Demographic Annihilation’ and Tibet” in *Contemporary Tibet: politics, development, and society in a disputed region*, (ed Barry Sautman, and June T.Dreyer, M.E. Sharpe Inc, Armonk NY, 2006) pp. 230-230.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 230-257.

Chinese migration reduces Tibetan economic opportunity. Thus real and perceived immigration is a source of discontent in the western provinces.

Fourth, the quality of health care and public health are both contributors to discontent. Jay Dautcher provides a detailed description of how drugs, alcohol, and HIV/AIDS have had disproportionate impact on the ethnic minority communities in Xinjiang.³² Proportionally, the ethnic minorities are more susceptible to these negative influences than Han Chinese. The negative impact is exacerbated in the west by a relatively less developed public health infrastructure.³³ While the relative quality (with respect to eastern China) can be largely attributed to the remoteness and rural dominance in the west, there is a perception that the ethnic minorities are being systematically underserved (exterminated) by the PRC.³⁴

The final element of discontent is the repressive control policies that are enforced in the western provinces. These include token representation in local government, censorship, limitations on religious expression and gatherings, and widespread arrests of ethnic minorities based on suspicion of separatism or terrorism. While the size police and army presence is not disproportionate by Chinese-standards, their presence is a constant reminder of the limits of provincial autonomy.³⁵ Thus there is general agreement among the authors surveyed that the control measures employed to contain instability are contributing factors to ethnic discontent.

e. Instability in the western provinces

Based on the literature review, there are multiple factors (other than discontent) that cause instability. Different authors describe sets of factors to be causal for increased instability in the western provinces. Sean Roberts and Michael Clarke separately link increases of instability with

³² Jay Dautcher, "Public Health and Social Pathologies in Xinjiang," in *Xinjiang China's Muslim Borderland*, (ed. by S. Frederick Starr, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2004), pp. 281-293.

³³ Dautcher, 276-280.

³⁴ Dautcher, Conclusions, p. 294.

³⁵ Yitzhak Shichor, "The Great Wall of Steel: Military and Strategy in Xinjiang," in *Xinjiang China's Muslim Borderland*, (ed. by S. Frederick Starr, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2004), p. 123.

the independence of the central Asian states and increased trade contact between those states and western China.³⁶ Stanley Toops discusses demographic changes and their impact on stability.³⁷ Dru Gladney looked at the soft (economic) and hard (control measures) policy initiatives implemented by the government and their ability to suppress a broad population.³⁸ Graham Fuller and Jonathon Lipman examined and rejected the influence of radical Islam on instability.³⁹ Similarly Ziad Haider describes the influences of central Asia (Pakistan) on the Uyghurs rising separatism in the 1980s, but highlights the ability of the PRC to control this influence thereafter.⁴⁰ Jane Caple and Frederick Starr separately discuss the dominant role central authority plays in the western provinces, highlighting policy over other factors.⁴¹ Finally Col Ming Wong and a myriad of human rights organizations contend that ongoing discontent is unsustainable, promoting US policy changes to influence the PRC.⁴²

The following broad conclusions are drawn from the literature review. First Tibet and Xinjiang have a similar policy relationship with the PRC and can be considered together in this assessment. Second there is history of widespread discontent with PRC policies in these two provinces that spans the period of study (1949 to present). Third, while discontent is a necessary condition for instability, it is not sufficient. Other factors related to instability have been

³⁶ Sean R. Roberts, "A Land of Borderlands: Implications of Xinjiang's Trans-Border Interactions," in *Xinjiang China's Muslim Borderland*, (ed. by S. Frederick Starr, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2004), p. 235. Michael C. Clarke "Xinjiang and China's Relations with Central Asia, 1991-2001: Across the 'Domestic-Foreign Frontier?'" in *Asian Ethnicity*, (Volume 4 no 2, June 2003), pp. 223-224.

³⁷ Toops, pp. 262-263.

³⁸ Dru C. Gladney, "Response to Chinese Rule: Patterns of Cooperation and Opposition," in *Xinjiang China's Muslim Borderland*, (ed. by S. Frederick Starr, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2004) p. 375.

³⁹ Graham E. Fuller and Jonathan N. Lipman, "Islam in Xinjiang," in *Xinjiang China's Muslim Borderland*, (ed. by S. Frederick Starr, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2004), pp. 344-345.

⁴⁰ Zaid Haider, "Sino-Pakistan Relations and Xinjiang's Uyghurs," *Asian Survey*, (Volume XLV, No 4, July/August 2005) pp. 544-545. Caple, "Tibet" pp. 241-243.

⁴¹ Frederick Starr, author and editor *Xinjiang China's Muslim Borderland*, (ed. by S. Frederick Starr, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2004), pp. 21-22.

⁴² Col Ming Wong, "Xinjiang and China's National Security: Counter-Terrorism or Counter-Separatism?" (US Army War College, 2003) pp.8-9.

identified. Based on the literature, this paper presents the following model to explain which factors are causal of instability assuming a foundation of provincial discontent.

4. Model for PRC policy effectiveness in containing instability

Based on the historical context and literature available on China, the following model is proposed to explain how PRC policy is effective in containing instability in western Chinese provinces. The variables and their relationships are described below.

PRC provincial policy is defined as the main activities of the central government that have the greatest impact on provincial society. Provincial policy spans Han immigration, economic development, education, religious tolerance, suppression of local opposition, regulation of self-representation, and control of external influence. Across the case studies, policy elements vary to achieve the foundation objectives of maintaining provincial stability and encouraging economic development.⁴³ Based on this definition of provincial policy, three independent variables are explanatory for instability: discontent, economic expansion, and control measures. Figure 2 graphically portrays the interrelationship between the independent and dependent variables.

For this study, discontent is defined as the grievances held by provincial populations with respect to PRC policy. Discontent is measured qualitatively by looking at population behavior and sentiment. Discontented behavior results in migration from the area, organized protest, and the generation of popular opposition literature. Popular sentiment is also measured through available surveys.⁴⁴ Based on the literature review, discontent was not found to vary in Xinjiang

⁴³ Dawamat, Conference report..

⁴⁴ Herbert S. Yee, "Ethnic Relations in Xinjiang: a survey of Uyghur-Han Relations in Urumqi.", *Journal of Contemporary China*, August 2003. Herbert Yee notes that the survey results and conclusions are difficult to interpret because of state influence on individuals' willingness to honestly respond. However comparing responses between Han and non-Han provide qualitative insight into provincial discontent.

and Tibet across the period of study. Thus discontent is included as a necessary but not varying explanatory variable.

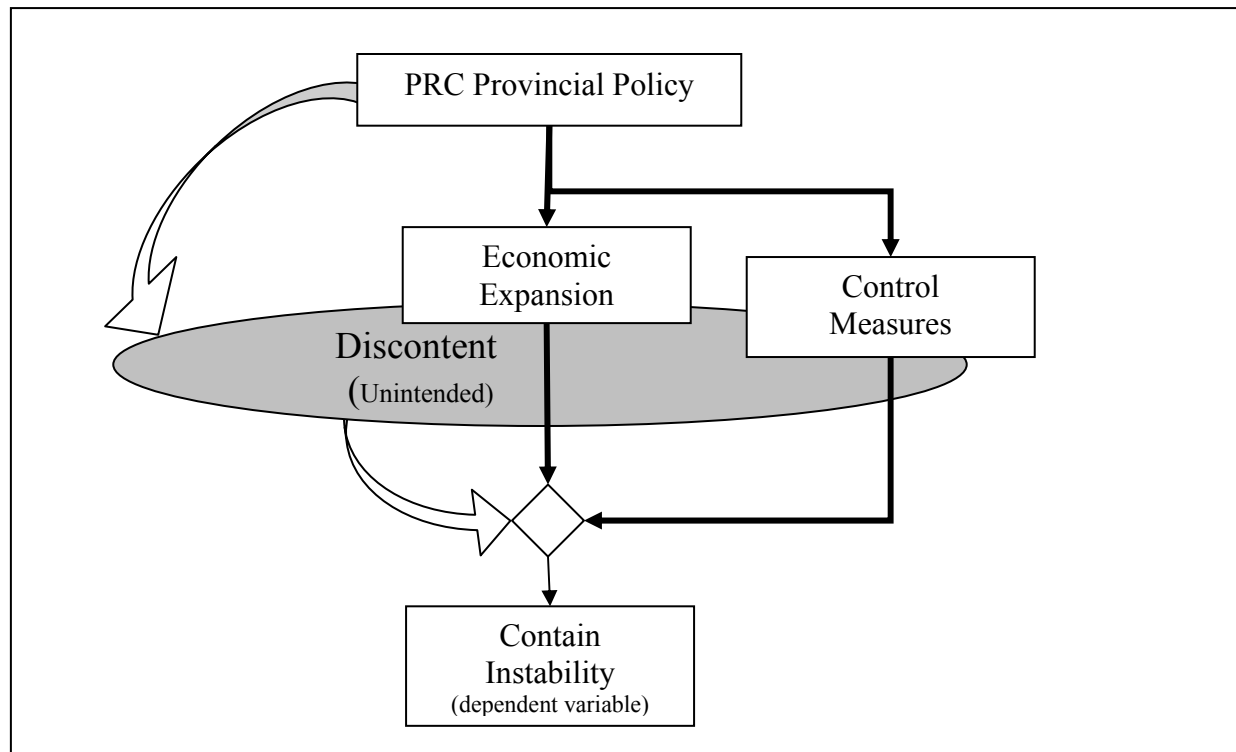


Figure 2. A model for PRC policy effectiveness for containing instability.

Economic expansion is the level of economic growth for the province over the time period of the case study. The following aggregate quantitative measures are used when available: changes in agriculture output, per capita gross domestic product (GDP), status of macro-economic projects, and land under development. The study recognizes that economic development is not homogenous across the province with urban/rural as well as Han/minority variances that contribute to discontent. Yet at the provincial level, aggregate economic indicators are explanatory for regional stability. For this study, provincial economies are defined as expanding or receding based on aggregate economic indicators.

PRC control measures are the internal and external efforts to prevent the establishment of leadership elites that can focus provincial discontent into opposition. Actions undertaken by the

government include imprisonment, capital punishment, police action, and information control. Opposition leadership can be either leadership elites within the province, or contact with expatriates outside of China such as the Tibetan Dalai Lama. Government and academic scholars agree that the PRC does not provide reliable statistics on control measures. This study uses a qualitative assessment formulated from multiple sources: academic literature, the PRC, as well as Human Rights and activists organizations. For this study, control measures are defined as relatively free, marginal, strict, and erratic. The designation of “erratic” is used for periods where internal PRC party turmoil results in control measures which radically vary across time and locality.⁴⁵ Periods of erratic control measures are atypical for the PRC regime.

Each of the explanatory independent variables affects provincial instability. Provincial instability is defined by the level of violent activity, protests, and/or riots directed against the legitimacy of authority. Instability increases with the increase in demonstrations as well as violence or government action in reaction to this activity. The level of instability is qualitatively assessed as low, marginal, or high. Low instability is relative peace with no trend of violent events that are linked. Marginal instability exists when there is a series of peaceful and violent linked events. In the PRC, marginal instability has been followed by government crackdowns involving substantial movement of military/police force. When the province has high instability, the level of violence prevents the local government from providing basic security. In the PRC, high instability involves a fracture in the government control mechanisms with rival party factions acting in opposition to one another.

For each case study, policy impacts on economic expansion and control measures are explained. Discontent is not presented by case study. The assessed instability is also described over the time period. Each case study provides insight into how the PRC policy and resultant

⁴⁵ See Xinjiang Case Study, 1958-1978 (Section 5b).

independent variables explain instability. Table 1 provides a summary of the results of all six case studies. The research was focused on Xinjiang with complementing Tibetan case studies included to show consistency across the western provinces.

Table 1. Independent variables affecting instability (dependent variable) in the western provinces.

	Xinjiang				Tibet	
	1949-1957	1958-1978	1979-1997	1998-Present	1959-1989	1989-Present
Discontent	Yes					
Economic Expansion	Expanding	Receding	Expanding	Expanding	Stagnant → Expanding	Expanding
Control	Strict	Erratic	Strict → Marginal	Marginal → Strict	Strict → Marginal	Strict
Instability	Low	High	Low → Marginal	Marginal → Low	Low → Marginal	Low

5. Case Studies

a. Xinjiang, early PRC rule (1949-1957)

From 1949 through the first decade, the PRC policy in Xinjiang led to an improved economy with increasingly strict control measures. While the minority population was initially receptive to PRC rule, discontent grew throughout this time period. Despite the growing level of discontent, the economic growth and control measures resulted in a low level of instability.

Contrasting with past fluctuations, the economy in Xinjiang had steady growth during the early years of PRC rule. Prior to 1949, the agrarian-based economy fluctuated dramatically. For example, the amount of cultivated land in 1918 was 802 thousand hectares. This dropped to 309 in 1933, rising to 996 in 1942 before plummeting back down to 373 in 1949.⁴⁶ The cyclic downturns were exacerbated by corruption, favoritism, and the 1940's nationalist-communist civil war.⁴⁷ In contrast, the 1950's economy grew steadily. Gross Domestic Product (per capita) rose from ¥170M in 1952 to ¥207M in 1955 peaking at ¥314M in 1960.⁴⁸ This growth was bolstered by state investment in collective agricultural programs. The PRC sponsored the

⁴⁶ Wiemer, p. 167.

⁴⁷ Wiemer, p. 167-168.

⁴⁸ Wiemer, p. 169. Table 6-2 PRC Output and Population, Selected Years

centrally administered Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (bingtuan farms) that absorbed discharged military in the western provinces. Lead by the bingtuan, cultivated land doubled in the 1950s rising from 1,542K hectares to 3,145K.⁴⁹ Overall economic growth was a key contributor to stabilizing PRC rule in the province.

In parallel with economic growth, the PRC moved away from a strong initial stance of provincial autonomy toward a more repressive centrally controlled regime. In 1949, the young regime consolidated power in the province by co-opting local leaders with the future promise of autonomy. Initially there were some tangible efforts in this direction, such as the official name change to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in 1955.⁵⁰ However the promise of autonomy evaporated toward the end of the decade. Suspect individuals with ties to the Soviets or the former Eastern Turkistan Republic were jailed. In 1951-52, 1,612 “local nationalist” Turkic leaders were jailed.⁵¹ The promise of autonomy was broken in 1956 when a “Maoist” policy shift eliminated provincial self-determination and potential independence.⁵² The period ended with a harsh crackdown resulting from the 1957 Hundred Flowers Campaign (HFC). While the HFC called for open criticism to improve the regime, the results were used to identify “local nationalists” and Soviet sympathizers.⁵³ These policies eliminated opposition leadership. After rampant arrests, minorities determined that being an intellectual was dangerous, and most sought safety in the identification as “poor peasants.”⁵⁴

Yet while discontent was on the rise throughout the 1950s, the PRC was very effective in maintaining stability up to 1958. Leading academics agree that there was little organized

⁴⁹ Wiemer, p. 169.

⁵⁰ James A. Millward and Tursan Nabijan, “Political History and Strategies of Control 1884-1978,” in *Xinjiang China’s Muslim Borderland*, (ed. by S. Frederick Starr, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2004), p. 91.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 93.

⁵² Ibid., p. 92.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 92.

⁵⁴ Benson, “Education and Social Mobility,” p. 212.

opposition, violence, or protests to PRC rule. Most Uyghur leaders, remnants of the former ETR, were jailed. Complementing the control measures was strong economic growth. Yet a foundation of minority discontent was established in the 1950s that continues through today. The strict control measures, immigration, cultural assimilation, and perceived economic inequality generated lasting minority discontent in the region.

b. Xinjiang, Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution (1958-1978)

The 1960s and 1970s in Xinjiang were dominated by the internal turmoil of the PRC party. Two holistic policy initiatives, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, were initiated but ultimately failed. The region experienced severe economic downturns with periods of famine and economic collapse. Control measures were erratic with periods of strict control followed by lenient policies which reverted to strict control based on local party power shifts. With economic recession, poor control, and continued discontent, Xinjiang experienced widespread instability over twenty years.

During the period, the economy of Xinjiang experienced multiple collapses generating 20 years of recession and stagnation. In contrast to the steady 1950s economic growth, the 1959-1961 Great Leap Forward, an accelerated program of collectivization, triggered an economic collapse in the early 1960s. Per capita GDP falls from ¥314M in 1960 to ¥217M in 1962 accompanied by regional famine.⁵⁵ The collapse is largely attributed to chaotic implementation of collectivization and widespread mismanagement.⁵⁶ Despite some recovery in the mid-1960s, the Cultural Revolution (1967-1975) pushed the economy back into recession. In 1975, per capita GDP remained at only 77% of the 1960 level. Additionally grain production remained flat

⁵⁵ Weimer, p. 168.

⁵⁶ Millward, p. 92.

from 1965-75, despite a 40% increase in population.⁵⁷ Specifically the largest agricultural production company, the bingtuan, saw a drop in production from ¥705M in 1971 to ¥356M in 1975.⁵⁸ These economic indicators identify Xinjiang economy in a recession with moments of near collapse.

While the economy of Xinjiang stagnated, the PRC was also unable to maintain effective control measures. Control in the province began to breakdown in the late 1950s. Problems began during the economic chaos of the Great Leap Forward. Dismayed by the economic chaos and harsh control measures, 80,000 Kazaks fled from hardship into the Soviet Union. In response the government called in the PLA and closed the border in 1963.⁵⁹ While border closure and policy moderation provided momentary control in the mid-1960s, this control was short-lived. Internal conflict within the communist party shattered the peace in the late 1960s. Competing factions warred against each other each other throughout the late 1960s. In 1966, students and youth responded to Mao's call and formed an anti-government 2nd Red Army in Xinjiang.⁶⁰ Separately a bingtuan rebel force of 50,000 (6,000 armed) marched against factories, colleges, and government offices. In 1967-68 alone, there were 1,300 violent clashes.⁶¹ The internal struggles resulted in multiple purges of provincial leadership and over 31,000 minority cadre removed from the party.⁶² Additionally the bingtuan corporations were disbanded in 1975 due to involvement in the violence and economic failure.⁶³

The key factor to the high level of instability in this time period is the dual failure of the economy and control apparatus. The economic chaos created opportunities for division within

⁵⁷ Millward and Tursan, p. 96.

⁵⁸ Wiemer, p. 170.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 168.

⁶⁰ Millward and Tursan, p. 95.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 95.

⁶² Benson, p. 211.

⁶³ Millward and Tursan, p. 96.

the provincial leadership based on competing agendas. The divisions prevented effective control which is the bedrock to PRC policy. Thus during the period of instability, the provincial government was unable to enforce a coherent control policy. In the end, instability was contained in the late 1970s with the eventual suppression of rebel forces and stabilization of economic policy resulting in economic expansion.

c. Xinjiang, moderation and rising instability (1979-1997)

Sustained economic expansion and moderate control policies were associated with the long period of stability in the 1980s and early 1990s. However toward the end of this period, instability events increased. The Chinese government considered the increased instability a result of opposition efforts induced by the moderate control policy. This case study looks at the economic expansion, control policies and instability of Xinjiang from 1980 to 1997. The key theme of this case study is the apparent linkage (from the PRC perspective) between the government moderation of control and the rise in instability.

The economic reforms triggered sustained economic growth from 1980 through the mid 1990s. The PRC instituted widespread economic reform with the devolution of the economy and the introduction of a market system.⁶⁴ These internal reforms were paralleled by an opening of trade with central Asia. Xinjiang trade with central Asia exploded from \$31M in 1980 to \$459M in 1991.⁶⁵ Similarly the removal of market restrictions enabled the number of companies engaging in trade to jump from 5 in 1991 to 346 in 1996.⁶⁶ The economic success of these policies is seen in the per capita GDP in Xinjiang, rising from 338M Yuan in 1980 to 574M in

⁶⁴ Wiemer, p. 170.

⁶⁵ Wiemer, p. 170.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 172.

1985, 810M in 1990, and 1,286M in 1995.⁶⁷ This sustained growth greatly contributed to the provincial stability over most of this period.

This period in Xinjiang also marked a period of moderation in control measures by the central government. The most significant factor was the opening of the borders allowing Xinjiang to interact and trade with central Asia. In 1985 Xinjiang was opened for trade and tourism.⁶⁸ In 1988, Xinjiang was granted local control of trade with central Asia.⁶⁹ This increased openness with central Asia provided “Xinjiang with extensive access to markets, cultures and ideas from outside China.”⁷⁰ Additionally restrictions were eased on traditional Uyghur ethnic focal points. From 1985-1988, the PRC allowed Mosque constructions, permitted religious leaders to travel to the Middle East, and eased censorship on Uyghur historical publications.⁷¹ Thus Xinjiang was exposed to external influences from the Middle East and the newly independent republics of central Asia. The suppression of Uyghurs within the province was lessened throughout this time period with a slow trend of improved human rights policies. Thus the PRC control of external influence is considered to be marginal by the late 1980’s.

The provincial reaction to the control measure moderation is of paramount importance. The 1980s were stable years in Xinjiang with no major uprisings or instability events reported. However, the 1990s began with an increasing trend of instability events. In April 1990, there was a major uprising in Kashgar, with officials claiming “nothing less than armed counterrevolutionary rebellion with a reported 22 deaths.”⁷² Separate reports claim as many as 3,000 Uyghurs died in the clash.⁷³ In the mid 1990s there was an increasing trend of instability

⁶⁷ Ibid., 171.

⁶⁸ Rudelson and Jankowiak, “Acculturation and Resistance”, p. 307.

⁶⁹ Wiemer, p. 170.

⁷⁰ Roberts, p. 218.

⁷¹ Rudelson and Jankowiak, p. 301.

⁷² Gladneys, “Response to Chinese Rule,” p. 379.

⁷³ Rudelson and Jankowiak, p. 316.

events, including the seizure of weapons caches (1995), five separate social uprisings (April 96), two police station bombings (1996), as well as two terrorist attacks in Beijing all claimed by Xinjiang separatists groups.⁷⁴ In 1994, there were open calls in Xinjiang for the establishment of “Uyghuristan” as the natural completion of central Asian independence.⁷⁵ The instability events peaked in 1997 with a large riot in Ili.⁷⁶ The PRC linked all these activities to forces challenging provincial stability and control. Officially the PRC acknowledges over 200 militant clashes from 1990-2001 with 162 deaths.⁷⁷ While this marginal level of rising instability never threatened sovereignty, the instability would justify a trigger a dramatic crackdown in PRC control policy.

d. Xinjiang, Strike Hard Campaign (1998 to Present)

The final Xinjiang case study examines the effectiveness of the most recent PRC policy changes on stability. In 1997, the PRC initiated a “Strike Hard” campaign with a crackdown on crime, terrorism, and separatist violence. In parallel, the central government continued to invest heavily and promote economic expansion in the western provinces with the “Develop the West” campaign of 2001. These two policy initiatives represent the PRC commitment to economic expansion and strict control to contain instability in the western minority provinces.

The PRC policy has been to stimulate the Xinjiang economy with large scale projects to fuel consistent economic expansion. First the PRC has continued to invest in petroleum industry both within Xinjiang and through Xinjiang to the central Asia nations. The 2001 Develop the West campaign included a 4,200 km oil pipeline linking Xinjiang and Shanghai. While the total investment in the pipeline is undefined, a 45% stake in the pipeline was sold to Royal Dutch Shell for \$18B. This makes the pipeline the largest foreign investment project in China.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Gladneys, *Response to Chinese Rule*, p. 379-380.

⁷⁵ Roberts, p. 229.

⁷⁶ Gladney, “*Response to Chinese Rule*,” p. 375.

⁷⁷ Rudelson and Jankowiak, p. 316.

⁷⁸ Weimer, p. 173.

Overall the central government has proportionally invested more in Xinjiang than any other province. The central government provides 59.7% of the capital investment in Xinjiang as opposed to 32% China-wide.⁷⁹ Another example of state investment in the Xinjiang economy is the daunting \$3.5B China-to-Kyrgyzstan railroad project that will link Kashgar with Jalalabad. China has reinforced these capital investments with more stabilized trade agreements with the central Asian republics. Beginning in 1996 and expanded in 2000, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has solidified both trade and security agreements between China, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia.⁸⁰ These efforts have yielded sustained economic growth in Xinjiang. The economy in Xinjiang as continued to grow from these policies with a 32% increase in per capita GDP from 1995 to 2000.⁸¹

Yet the PRC has balanced the carrot of economic growth with the control “stick,” suppressing all aspects of state opposition. The Strike Hard campaign against crime and violence included a full spectrum of initiatives designed to suppress the rising unrest perceived in the early 1990s. Beginning in 1994, the PRC banned the traditional Mäshrāp Muslim gatherings because they were perceived as fostering separatism.⁸² Additionally there has been a concerted campaign to minimize all “uncontrolled” forums in Xinjiang. From 1996 to 1999 the number of registered social groups reduced by 52%.⁸³ The Strike Hard campaign increased the number police actions in Xinjiang. From 1997-1999, 210 death sentences were recorded with ~1.8 Uyghurs executed per week in Xinjiang. This rate is considered high within China.⁸⁴ Since 2001, China acknowledges the severity of their campaign in Xinjiang, yet has framed the issue

⁷⁹ Wiemer p. 174.

⁸⁰ Roberts p. 233-234.

⁸¹ Wiemer p. 169.

⁸² Human Rights Watch, “China: Human Rights Concerns in Xinjiang” Background Paper, October 2001., p. 5.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 4.

⁸⁴ Gladneys, “Response to China Rule, Patterns of Cooperation and Opposition,” pp. 375,376.

internationally as an anti-terrorism campaign. Xinjiang has garnered regional support for this effort among the central Asian republics within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).⁸⁵ The SCO has effectively mitigated the central Asian influence in Xinjiang.⁸⁶ The PRC has even gained broad international support through the United Nations with the terrorist designation of the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement in 2002.⁸⁷ Thus the PRC has clearly pursued a policy of increased control measures to suppress instability in Xinjiang.

Since 1997, the economic expansion and control crackdown has resulted in a reduction of instability events. While there were instability events after 1998, none were of the scale prior to 1997. In 1998 a prison official was wounded and a prison attacked. In 1999 a police convoy was attacked. In 2000 a high-ranking police official was assassinated in Kashgar.⁸⁸ Despite these incidents, human rights groups, official PRC publications, and the US government agree that there has been a reduction of instability in Xinjiang.⁸⁹ This was confirmed in a recent state interview, in which a PRC official stated that “terrorist and separatists” are less active since 1998. This was credited to strict control measures such as the crackdown on 22 Uyghur groups in the first eight months of 2004.⁹⁰ Therefore the PRC policy is considered to have been effective in reducing instability events when contrasted with the early 1990s.

While the focus of this study is Xinjiang, PRC policy has been consistent across the western provinces. The following section highlights the parallels between Tibet and Xinjiang with respect to policy and stability.

⁸⁵ Roberts, p. 234.

⁸⁶ Roberts, p. 234.

⁸⁷ Gladneys, “Response to China Rule, Patterns of Cooperation and Opposition,” pp. 375,376.

⁸⁸ Human Rights Watch, p. 4

⁸⁹ It should be noted that while the PRC, human rights, and USG agree on the nature of Xinjiang instability, there are dramatically different perspectives on why. China views their policy of economic growth and stability as a success, while human rights groups and the US government consider the stability at the cost of human rights.

⁹⁰ David Lynch, USA Today Article, Sept 23, 2004. Excerpts from an interview with PRC party secretary Wang Lequan, p. 4.

e. Tibet, transition to moderation (1959 to 1989)

The PRC policies in Tibet are not different than those Xinjiang. The greatest contextual difference between Xinjiang and Tibet is the relatively homogenous Tibetan population compared to ethnically diverse Xinjiang population (Uyghur, Han, Hui, Kazak, etc). The common ethnicity, culture, and religion in Tibet provided a more unified opposition to PRC rule with the focus being the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama. This case study begins with the expulsion of the Dalai Lama in 1959 and the establishment of strict PRC control.⁹¹

Overcoming early economic stagnation, Tibet demonstrates steady economic growth over the case study. The Tibetan economy suffered from the unrest associated with the expulsion of the Dalai Lama and PRC-wide famine in 1961-62. Livestock herds dropped 14% before recovering to pre-1958 levels.⁹² After the initial turmoil, livestock herds continued to expand from 1962 (11.5M) to 1982 (23M).⁹³ After 1982, herds no longer expanded having reached the limit on what the austere Tibetan ecology can support. However the PRC continued to expand the Tibetan economy in other (non-traditional) directions. In the late 1980s, the introduction of tourism brought 30,000 tourists. There was also a 57% increase in per capita income as well as 12% increase in agriculture output.⁹⁴ Thus, Tibet sustained steady economic growth.

With respect to control measures, the period began with a harsh repression following the expulsion of the Dalai Lama. While 80,000 Tibetans followed the Dalai Lama into exile, tens of thousands of those that remained were sent to labor camps. The repression of the Tibetans included the destruction of most temples, the suppression of culture, and the injection of

⁹¹ Jane Caple, "Tibet Still Searching for Solutions," p. 241.

⁹² Dreyer, "Tibetan Economic Development under the PRC," p. 143. Livestock herds were the available economic measure in the traditional pastoral Tibetan society.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 144.

⁹⁴ Dreyer, p. 144-147, economic data is compiled from statistics reported in the late 1980s. Agriculture output is measured in harvest data measured in tons, rising from 483,500 tons in 1981 to ~541,000 tons in 1989. Per capita income increase is reported from 218 yuan (1979) rising to 343 yuan (1986). No additional increases in per capita income are reported until the early 1990s.

collectives which are antithetical to Tibetan culture.⁹⁵ Yet similar to Xinjiang, there was a lessening of control measures in the 1980s. A dialogue was opened with the Dalai Lama and restrictions were removed from religious worship. Increased expression was allowed in Tibet.⁹⁶ Thus following an initial harsh suppression of Tibet, the 1980s saw a PRC moderation in control that paralleled that of Xinjiang over the same period.

For the majority of the case study there were no signs of instability in Tibet. The overwhelming PRC presence in Tibet combined with immediate imprisonment kept all expressions of discontent suppressed. However in the late 1980s, increased contact with Tibetan expatriates led to three days of mass protests in 1989. Seventy Tibetans were killed and marshal law was imposed for over a year to contain the instability.⁹⁷ Again paralleling Xinjiang, the ethnic instability would be perceived by the PRC as resulting from the moderate control policy. This would justify the subsequent PRC control crackdown in Tibet.

f. Tibet, return to strict control (1990 – Present)

Tibet since 1990 mirrors contemporary Xinjiang after 1998. Tibet and Xinjiang have shared in the large scale economic development programs in the “Develop the West” campaign. Tibet has also seen no real reduction in security and control measures. The measures put in place in the 1989 crackdown are still in place. This case study reveals that the consistent enforcement of strict control measures and economic expansion are effective despite a high level of ethnic discontent created by PRC policy.

The economic expansion of the 1980s has continued in Tibet through the 1990s and the present decade. Gross domestic product, first reported in 1987 (¥1.77B) has risen at a high rate through 2002 (¥16.4B). The average rate of growth was reported as 12.4% adjusted for

⁹⁵ Caple, p. 242.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 242.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 242

inflation.⁹⁸ The rise in GDP is largely attributed to substantial PRC central government investment. These projects include aggressive railroad and road expansions as well numerous other projects. In 1993, 62 major projects were announced with ¥2.38B of central funding.⁹⁹ However it should not be overlooked that the economic expansion has not significantly reduced ethnic discontent. In Tibet, like Xinjiang, the economic advancement is perceived as Han-focused. Statistics about Tibetans living below the poverty line are repressed.¹⁰⁰ Yet at the aggregate provincial level, there is clear evidence of continued economic expansion across the period of the case study.

There has been little change in the strict control measures imposed by the PRC on Tibet. Perhaps the most visceral expression of these control measures was demonstrated with respect to Tibetan religion. In 1995, the in-exile Dalai Lama announced the reincarnation of the 11th Panchen Lama in Tibet. However the boy “disappeared” with the subsequent announcement of a new Beijing candidate. Within Tibet’s temples, worshippers were required to recognize China’s Panchen Lama and denounce the Dalai Lama.¹⁰¹ The 1990s also witnessed an “increase in security measures, harsh punishment for political prisoners, as well as the regulation of monasteries and political campaigns.”¹⁰² Thus despite widespread international condemnation, there has been no fundamental change in the strict control measures.

Since 1990 there has been no significant internal instability in Tibet. Academic, government, and official PRC sources agree that there has been little instability in Tibet since 1990. The disagreement between sources exists only in that the PRC does not acknowledge widespread Tibetan discontent. In addition to containing internal instability, the PRC has also

⁹⁸ Dryer, p. 147.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁰⁰ Drever, p. 141.

¹⁰¹ Caple, p. 242.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 242

been able to weaken the position of the in-exile Tibetans without concession. While the Dalai Lama has dropped calls for Tibetan independence, on-going talks between the PRC and the Dalai Lama have not yielded any significant progress on the side of the Tibetans.¹⁰³ Thus the policy on economic expansion and strict control has proven to be overwhelmingly successful in containing instability in Tibet.

Thus there are three conclusions drawn from the analysis of these six case studies spanning Tibet and Xinjiang. First, China can effectively contain instability, despite high levels of discontent, when economic expansion and strict control measures are maintained. Second, when China loosens control measures to marginal levels, instability increases, fueled by the latent discontent that exists in the minority provinces. There is some irony that the improvement of human rights conditions (loosening of control measures) releases instability, ensuring the worsening of human rights conditions. Third, the highest level of instability occurs when there is neither a viable economy nor effective control measures. In these conditions, the economic failure breaks down the fabric of state control requiring dramatic (local regime change) measures by the government to contain instability. During the single period identified, Xinjiang 1958-1978, the provincial government resembled a failing state unable to provide basic services. The following section will place these conclusions in a US national security context.

6. US National Security Implications

Based on this study, this section addresses the implications to US National Security with respect to China. The conclusions drawn from the case study will be assessed against the policies and objectives the 2002 US National Security Strategy. This section first outlines US policies and objectives for China relations and then analyzes each of this study's conclusions against them.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 243.

The foundation of the 2002 US National Security Strategy is the international promotion of US values: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise.”¹⁰⁴ With respect to China, the document specifies how we promote these values. First, the US has championed the inclusion of China into the World Trade Organization with the objective of integrating China into the international free market system.¹⁰⁵ Second, the US “promotes stable, peaceful, prosperous Asian democratic development,”¹⁰⁶ including China in countries that have room to democratically mature. While the document highlights joint cooperation with China on counter-terrorism, health, and environmental issues, the document identifies freedom of information, improving civil society and enhanced individual human rights as areas the US desires progress in China.¹⁰⁷ Thus it can be concluded that the US “China strategy” has made economic progress, but there is more hope than substance when engaging on freedom and democratic principles. The three conclusions from this study will now be assessed against the US national security strategy.

First, the PRC policy effectively contains instability through economic development and strict control measures. The western China policy has contributed to stability in central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan. As part of the policy, the economic and security agreements established in the 2001 Shanghai Cooperation Organization elevate the pillars of Chinese security objectives to the regional level. Cross-border trade has promoted growth in central Asian economies while the security partnerships helped legitimize the fledgling regimes. Regional stability and economic development are positive for US regional security interests. Chinese influence in the region balances the US presence creating a healthy competition for the political and economic development in central Asia. Unfortunately

¹⁰⁴ President George W. Bush, “National Security Strategy of the United States of America 2002,” (United States Government Document, September, 2002) p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 27.

for the Uyghurs and Tibetans who desire greater autonomy and potential independence, neither the central Asian republics nor the US will support their movement due to the overriding security and economic implications.

The second conclusion of the study identified the softening of Chinese control measures with an increase in instability, fueled by the latent discontent in the minority provinces. At the macro-level, there is a fundamental difference between US and Chinese security objectives. The US promotes freedom, democracy and free markets, while China promotes economic development, stability and control. In China, *democracy and freedom* are not aligned with *stability and control*. The PRC policies that advance stability and control, disregard the value of freedom and democracy as a prescription for provincial discontent. This paper identifies that lack of PRC concern in reducing discontent. China experienced rising instability when control measures were eased. Consequently the reintroduction of strict measures reduced instability. Thus China's lesson learned in the western provinces reinforces its emphasis on control over freedom and democracy. Based on this study, there is little reason to expect substantive change in China with respect to freedom and democracy.

The third conclusion highlighted economic failure combined with erratic control as the indicators for high levels of provincial instability. This conclusion reinforces the US national security interest in economic engagement with China despite a lack of progress with respect to freedom and democracy. Based on this study, an economically stable China is capable of containing internal instability. The US and China have parallel security objectives in the US *promoting free markets* and Sino *economic development*. This explains why the real progress in US-Sino relations has been in the economic arena, WTO accession. As China determines that free markets bring value to economic development, more progress can be expected in this venue.

US should continue to promote freedom and democracy. Yet a lack of progress on these principles should not affect our economic engagement. Economic engagement helps maintain Chinese stability which is in our US national interests.

Before dismissing western China as a dormant regional security issue, the ethnic discontent resident in Xinjiang and Tibet cannot be forgotten. The PRC policy contains instability; it does not make progress toward eliminating ethnic discontent. The provinces will always have the potential to destabilize if the PRC policy falters in maintaining economic expansions and strict control. Based on the literature and case study analysis the following are watch items for US national security interests.

- A local economic crisis in a western province district is likely to immediately trigger localized instability. This should be anticipated. There is no reason to believe China cannot contain these events.
- An environmental crisis, potentially triggered by “Develop the West overdevelopment,” has the potential to radically alter western China economic performance. Any macro change in China economic performance should increase US awareness of China internal stability.
- The PRC has maintained high levels of funding to both Tibet and Xinjiang for economic development. If PRC priorities shift (removing funding from the west), the economic repercussions in Tibet and Xinjiang should be closely watched.
- Currently the central Asian republics and China have stabilized relations based on security (which includes suppressing Xinjiang autonomy) and economic trade. If there is a radical shift in these relations, western China stability should be reassessed.
- Oil and gas development is the core of China’s “Develop the West” program. The oil and gas projects should be considered high-value targets for terrorists. The projects are

expensive, vast, remote, and difficult to harden, thus ripe for disruption by any brand of extremism. Attacks on these projects would have economic repercussions reaching outside central Asia and China.

7. Recommendations for further investigation

This study provides some insight into China through the examination of an internal security issue. There is great value in understanding China's motivation in international relations through this type of examination. To better understand China, the scope of this study can be expanded to account for issues beyond the western provinces. There are three areas recommended for additional study.

- **Disaggregate the economic variable.** Western China's foundation for discontent is its ethnic differences with the PRC regime. The majority of China lacks the ethnic difference as a foundation for discontent. However, there are other sources of discontent that could lead to instability. I recommend disaggregating the economic expansion variable to look at different aspects of China's economic development. The growing disparity in Chinese incomes, the rural/urban affluence division, and the negative fallout of economic development on localized communities are sources of varying Chinese discontent across the whole nation as opposed to just the western provinces. As identified in the Xinjiang case study (1958-1978), economic variables appear to have the greatest influence on dramatic breakdowns in stability.
- **Disaggregate the control variable.** Not all strict control measures are equal. There are likely some control measures that are important to containing stability while others policies are more abusive than effective. The identification and elimination of unnecessary control measures would improve conditions for ethnic minorities while engaging within the lanes of China's stability and control policy. The identification of these variables, within the context of western China, is of interest.

8. Conclusion

China appears monolithic and difficult to comprehend for US national security policy. The internal decision-making processes for the People's Republic of China are often opaque with the results being contrary to stated US national security policy objectives. This study attempts to shed light on China's policies and motivations through the explanation of an internal security issue, instability in China's western provinces.

The study examined the literature on the western provinces and instability. Xinjiang and Tibet were both examined with the determination that ethnic discontent was pervasive and essentially unchanging since the establishment of the People's Republic of China. The study focused on how China maintained stability despite the existence of ethnic discontent. The ability of the PRC to maintain economic expansion and strict control measures were identified as explanatory for low instability in the western provinces. Rising instability occurred when control measures were softened, thus triggering a backlash of stricter controls from the PRC regime. A high period of instability was identified when there was both economic recession and erratic control. Thus at the detriment of human rights, this study acknowledges the PRC has an effective policy for containing instability despite high levels of ethnic discontent in western China.

US National Security implications were forwarded based on the conclusions drawn from this study. Despite moments of instability, China has an effective partnership with central Asian countries in maintaining stability in its western provinces. The US will continue to make progress in bolstering economic ties with China while little progress is anticipated in terms of freedom and democracy. Unfortunately this study provides only clarity, not a solution, to the conflict between US values and Sino security objectives.

Finally based on the analysis of the case study, watch items are recommended for significant changes in western China stability. While there is no reason to believe stability conditions will change, the underlying discontent in the provinces remains a source for trouble. Recommendations are also provided to expand this study of how discontent, economic and control variables impact PRC internal stability.

In the end, understanding China is the most important precondition for an effective China security policy. Sun Tzu explains the importance of knowing your adversary, *“If you know the enemy and know yourself you need not fear the results of a hundred battles.”* This study provides some insights into how and why China acts. For the US, China is not an enemy but a rising peer competitor. Understanding our Sino competitor and how US foreign policy relates to their motivations will be the key to shared victory with the China Tiger in a hundred battles for a peaceful and prosperous Asian future.

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