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Internal Colonialism and the Uyghur Nationality: Chinese Nationalism and its Subaltern Subjects

Dru C. GLADNEY

The economic and political ascendancy of the People's Republic of China at the end of this century has made China's neighbors nervous. While China's intentions toward the recovery of Hong Kong and Taiwan are clear, much doubt remains about China's other expansionist goals. This article suggests that while China may not have expansionist designs on any of its neighboring territory that is already considered part of China, policy shifts toward China's subaltern groups indicate that a rise in Chinese nationalism will have important implications for China's internal colonialism.

Internal Colonialism in China

In an earlier essay (Gladney 1994), I suggested that the categorization and taxonomization of all levels of Chinese society, from political economy, to social class, to gender, to ethnicity and nationality represents a wide-ranging and on-going project of internal colonialism. Though now long subsided, the debate provoked by Michael Hechter's (1976) history, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966*, had an interesting history of its own. While a few articles had been written on the subject in the mid-1960's and early 1970's, which mainly concerned themselves with the continuing political-economic effects of former colonization in Mesoamerica, Hechter's book was the first to formulate a theoretical approach that had wide application to existing post-colonial Western urban societies. Hechter (1975:8) draws an important theoretical connection between Lenin's *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* and Gramsci's *The Southern Question*, arguing that international relations are tied to internal social relationships. In this regard, Hechter suggests that the channeling of certain peoples into "hierarchical cultural divisions of labor" under colonial administrations led to the development of ethnic identities which superseded class (Hechter and Levi 1979:263). This "internal colonialism" is predicated upon the

unequal rates of exchange between the urban power-centers and the peripheral, often ethnic, hinterlands. In his study of *The Celtic Fringe*, Hechter traces the national development of the post-colonial British state, *as though these areas were still under economic colonial exploitation*.

Hechter's elaboration of the theory of internal colonialism proved incredibly fruitful for studies outside Britain, particularly in post-colonial and socialist societies. An onslaught of over 40 articles and at least two books appeared in the mid-1970s with the phrase in their titles, culminating in a special issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies* devoted to internal colonialism in 1979. Internal colonialism was found to be applicable to South Africa, Thailand, Sudan, Wales, Brittany, Quebec, Austria-Hungary, Scotland, Bangladesh, Cherokee Native Americans, Chicanos in America, the Palestinians in Israel, and the original intent behind and reason for the success of Stalin's nationalities policy in the Soviet Union (Gouldner 1978 : 11-14). The majority of these examples stress the exploitation of the many ethnics, who are less culturally literate in the dominant tradition, by the few urban power elite who control access to and distribution of capital. Interestingly, though the theory was later criticized and generally abandoned for being too general and too widely applicable, it was never applied to China. Nevertheless, I would argue that recent shifts in China's policy makes the approach even more relevant for understanding China's colonial politics at the end of the twentieth century.

It is quite ironic that while the People's Republic was founded on an "anti-imperial nationalism" (Friedman 1994), in the current post-colonial world, at a time when most nations are losing territory rather than recovering them, China is busily making good its claims on Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Spratleys. In spite of Beijing's claims to the contrary, the removal of the British colonial administration from Hong Kong in 1997 does certainly not mean its liberation. There is something that rings true when one states that Tibet is literally a colony of China, despite any definitional problems with the theory of internal colonialism.

Uyghur Ethnogenesis and Internal Colonialism

The following statement was told to me by a Uyghur tour guide at the ancient Astana underground tombs outside of Turfan. First heard in 1985 (see Gladney 1992), this widely believed Uyghur historiography was repeated on subsequent trips in 1990, 1992, 1994 and 1996 : "The Uyghur people are the direct descendants of a high civilization of Central Asian nomadic people who had a kingdom based here in Turfan. The elegant paintings and wrapping in this tomb date to the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) and are comparable in beauty and sophistication. A mummy in the Xinjiang Provincial tombs also found in this area dates over 6 000 years old and proves the Uyghur people are even older than the Han Chinese" (Personal Interview, March 1985).

Chinese histories notwithstanding, every Uyghur firmly believes that their ancestors were the indigenous people of the Tarim basin, now known as Xinjiang. This land was "their" land. Nevertheless, I have argued elsewhere the constructed "ethnogenesis" of the Uyghur (Gladney, 1990). In his popular history of Xinjiang, Jack Chen (1997 : 100) noted the re-introduction of the term Uyghur to describe the Turkic inhabitants of Chinese Turkestan. While a collection of nomadic steppe peoples known as the "Uyghur" have existed since before the 8th century, this identity was lost from the 15th to 20th centuries. It is not until the fall of the Turkish Khanate (552-744 C.E.) to a people reported by the Chinese historians as *Hui-he* or *Hui-hu* that we find the beginnings of the Uyghur Empire described by Mackerras (1972). At this time the Uyghur were but

one collection of nine nomadic tribes, who initially in confederation with other Basmil and Karlukh nomads, defeated the Second Turkish Khanate and then dominated the federation under the leadership of Koli Beile in 742 (Sinor, 1969 : 113). Gradual sedentarization of the Uyghur, and their defeat of the Turkish Khanate, occurred precisely as trade with the unified Tang state became especially lucrative. Samolin (1964 : 74-5) argues that the stability of rule, trade with the Tang and ties to the imperial court, as well as the growing importance of establishing fixed Manichaean ritual centers, contributed to a settled way of life for the Uyghur tribes. Sedentarization and interaction with the Chinese state was accompanied by socioreligious change : the traditional shamanistic Turkic-speaking Uyghur came increasingly under the influence of Persian Manichaeism, Buddhism, and eventually, Nestorian Christianity (Sinor, 1969 : 114-15). Extensive trade and military alliances along the old Silk Road with the Chinese state developed to the extent that the Uyghur gradually adopted cultural, dress and even agricultural practices of the Chinese (Mackerras, 1972 : 37). Conquest of the Uyghur capital of Qarabalghasun in Mongolia by the nomadic Kyrgyz in 840, without rescue from the Tang who may have become by then intimidated by the wealthy Uyghur empire, led to further sedentarization and crystallization of Uyghur identity. Indeed, it is the Uyghur nationality of Gansu today, not the Uyghur, who fled the Kyrgyz to Central China who are thought to preserve much of the original Uyghur history in their contemporary religious, linguistic, and cultural expression. One branch that ended up in what is now Turfan, took advantage of the unique socioecology of the glacier fed oases surrounding the Taklamakan and were able to preserve their merchant and limited agrarian practices, gradually establishing Khocho or Gaochang, the great Uyghur city-state based in Turfan for four centuries (850-1250). Reflecting the earlier multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-religious traditions established in Qarabalghasun, this is "Uyghuristan" described by Oda (1978) to which contemporary Uyghur separatists refer today. Most of the Uyghur separatists who are devoutly Muslim would not wish to resurrect the wide variety of religious and ritual practices found in the former Uyghuristan.

The gradual Islamicization of the Uyghur from the 10th to as late as the 17th centuries in Hami, where according to Kahar Barat one could still find Uyghur Buddhists (Barat, personal communication), while displacing their Buddhist religion, did little to bridge these oasis-based loyalties. From that time on, the people of Uyghuristan centered in the Turfan depression who resisted Islamic conversion until the 17th century were the last to be known as Uyghur. The others were known only by their oasis or by the generic term of Muslims (Haneda, 1978 : 7). With the arrival of Islam, the ethnonym "Uyghur" fades from the historical record. Instead, we find the proliferation of such localisms as "yerlik" (persons of the land), "sart" (caravaneer), "taranchi" (agriculturalists from the Tarim basin transplanted to Ili under Qjan-long), and other oasis-based localisms. Under the Manchu Qjing dynasty (1644-1911), the region was first brought under direct control from Beijing due to Manchu efforts to defeat the Zunghars, and it was only in the late 18th century that it received the name "Xinjiang" (new border or new dominion) in Chinese.

During the Republican period, Uyghur identity was marked by factionalism along locality, religious and political lines. Forbes (1986), in his detailed analysis of the complex warlord politics of Republican Xinjiang, finds important continuing distinctions between the three macro-regions of Xinjiang : the northwestern Zungaria, southern Tarim basin, and eastern Kumul-Turfan ("Uyghuristan") areas. Rudelson

(1991 and 1992) confirms this persistent regional diversity along three, and the insightfully proposes that there are four macro-regions, dividing the southern Tarim into two district socio-ecological regions. The Uyghur were recognized as a nationality in the 1930s in Xinjiang under a Soviet-influenced policy of nationality recognition that contributed to a widespread acceptance today of continuity with the ancient Uyghur kingdom and their eventual "ethnogenesis" as a *bona fide* nationality (see Gladney, 1990; Rudleson, 1988). This nationality designation not only masks tremendous regional and linguistic diversity, it also includes groups such as the Loplyk and Dolans that had very little to do with the oasis-based Turkic Muslims that became known as the Uyghur (see Svanberg 1989b; Hoppe 1995). While rebellions by Yakub Beg in the late 19th century, and the short-lived establishments of the Eastern Turkestan Republics (TIRET) in Kashgar in 1933 and Yining in 1944 (Benson 1990), indicated Uyghur attempts at resisting expanding Chinese colonialism, these efforts failed just as those of the Uzbeks and Tadjiks in Czarist and Soviet Central Asia.

In the second half of the 20th Century, Xinjiang was occupied by the communist Chinese state in what was regarded as "peaceful liberation", in that, like Tibet, the People's Liberation Army did not have to fight its way into the province, but were welcomed by local leaders. "Minoritization" of the Uyghur became objectified when they were recognized by the Chinese state in 1950 as the Uyghur nationality (Gladney 1990), and the region was recognized as the Uyghur Autonomous Region in 1956. Chinese practices of "integration through immigration" has meant the in-migration of Han Chinese since the 1950s, with populations increasing from an estimated 5 percent in 1940 to 38 percent in 1990. The expropriation of Xinjiang's vast mineral and petrochemical resources, with processing of petroleum products in the interior, primarily Lanzhou, further fits the internal colonialism model (see Dorian, et al., forthcoming). Finally, the development of the tourist industry in the region as a "silk road" destination follows the line of touristic developments in the minority areas of the southwest that Oakes (1995) and Schein (1996) have analyzed as "internal colonialism" and "internal orientalism" respectively.

I argued earlier that the widespread diversity and factionalism found today among the Uyghur reflects a segmentary hierarchy of relationality common among all social groupings (see Gladney 1996b). Uyghur are divided from within by religious conflicts, in this case competing Sufi and non-Sufi factions, territorial loyalties (whether they be oases or places of origin), linguistic discrepancies, commoner-elite alienation, and competing political loyalties. In addition, it might be argued that resistance to the Chinese state has also contributed to factionalism among the Uyghur, particularly among exile communities, as Ortner (1995) has argued for the complex and internally contested nature of resistance movements elsewhere.

It is also important to note that Islam was only one of several unifying marks for Uyghur identity, depending on those with whom they were in significant opposition at the time. For example, to the Dungan (Hui), the Uyghur distinguish themselves as the legitimate autochthonous minority, since both share a belief in Sunni Islam. In contrast to the nomadic Muslim peoples (Kazakh or Kyrgyz), Uyghur might stress their attachment to the land and oasis of origin. In opposition to the Han Chinese, the Uyghur will generally emphasize their long history in the region.

The indigeneity of the Uyghur poses an alternative to Chinese historiographies of the region, which is consonant with "internal" colonizing regimes seeking to assert power in a region not previously their own. By moving the clock back far enough, any regime

can claim the land as inoccupied. Claims of indigeneity always transgress nation-states that are founded most often under the conditions of post-coloniality.

Sub-Altern Perspectives on the Chinese Geo-Body

As Thongchai Winichakul (1994: 15) has eloquently argued in his path-breaking work, *Siam Mapped*, modern nations become established through the imposition of borders, boundaries, and categories of configuration upon previously borderless, unbounded, or uncategorized regions, peoples, and spaces. The invention and "imagined community" (Anderson 1991) of the geo-body of Thailand, Winichakul argues, is effected through the state-sponsored definition of boundaries, peoples, centers, and peripheries. It is clear that parts of China considered to belong to its "geo-body", such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang will never be considered released from Chinese authority. To do so, most Chinese believe, would be to er one's limb. Recovery of Hong Kong and Taiwan is merely reconstructive surgery.

Taking inspiration from subaltern studies in South Asian scholarship and studies in cultural criticism, this article seeks to understand the implications of China's increasing internal colonialism and notions of the Chinese geo-body for its sub-altern subjects. Perhaps it is the recognition of and tolerance for heterogeneity that has led to the influential impact of sub-altern scholars in India (see Duara 1995: 6), producing almost no similar movement in China. The sub-altern studies movement has drawn together a diverse group of South Asian scholars, including Giyatri Chakrovorty Spivak, Ranajit Guha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Partha Chatterjee, Homi Bhabha, Gyanandra Pand Shaid Amin, and Akhil Gupta, to name just a few, who share a common commitment to writing post-colonialist studies of Indian society. As Edward Said notes in his introduction to the now classic 1988 Guha and Spivak collection, under the editorship of Rjit Guha, the first volume of *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society* appeared in 1982, with the claim that "hitherto Indian history had been written from a colonialist and elitist point of view, whereas a large part of Indian history had been made by the subaltern classes, and hence the need for a new historiography" (in Guha and Spivak 1988: v).

In China, a full-fledged "subaltern scholarship" has yet to emerge. While there is a growing dissident and women's literature, particularly from Chinese intellectuals living abroad, clearly there is very little written from the perspective of minorities or other disadvantaged and dispossessed groups. Women's studies and the study of women in Chinese society have begun to give voice to a wide range of opinion heretofore rarely heard (see Honig and Hershatter 1988). These studies have begun to look at Chinese society through a multitude of voices, many of which have been suppressed or ignored. The Gilmartin, Hershatter, Rofel and White 94) collection, *Engendering China*, has sought to open up a wide variety of perspectives on Chinese society, demonstrating that the internal colonialism in China of constructions of gender influence not only how engendered subjects act in that society, but also how we see them.

Yet there have been few studies giving voice to those subalterns who have independent histories and cultural memories that cry out for understanding on their own terms, rather than placed in a peripheral, sub-regional, or "sub-ethnic" position. This is why at the end of this century the plight of China's sub-alterns becomes increasingly important, both for understanding China's increasing nationalism but also the nature of modern internal colonialism. For this article, "subaltern subjects" are the very groups, individuals, and subjectivities that continue to be regarded as somehow less authentic, more peripheral, and farther removed from a core Chinese tradition

Chinese Nationalism and its Sub-Altern Implications

In a *Far Eastern Economic Review* (November 1995) interview, Liu Binyan, the former Xinhua journalist and now dissident Chinese writer living in exile in Princeton, clearly indicated that attention to China's ethnic "sub-alterns" is critical to our understanding of contemporary Chinese nationalism. "Nationalism and Han chauvinism are now the only effective instruments in the ideological arsenal of the CCP", Liu declared. "Any disruption in the relationship with foreign countries or among ethnic minorities can be used stir 'patriotic' sentiments of the people to support the communist authorities". The recent outpouring of reports over the last few months in the official Chinese media regarding separatist incidents in Xinjiang and elsewhere suggests that Liu Binyan was perhaps correct.

After denying them for decades and stressing instead China's "national unity", official reports have recently detailed Tibetan and Muslim conflicts activities in the border regions of Tibet, Yunnan, Xinjiang, Ningxia, and Inner Mongolia. With the March 7'1997 bus bombings in Beijing, widely attributed (though never verified) to Uyghur separatists, coupled with the Urumqi bus bombings on the day of Deng Xiaoping's memorial on February 25 (killing 9 people), Beijing can no longer keep them secret. The Yining uprising on February 7'1997 that left at least 9 dead and 100s injured, with 7 Uyghur suspects now arrested and most probably slated for execution, has been heavily covered by the world's media. This distinguishes the last few events from on-going problems in the region in the mid-1980s that have previously met with little media coverage. In the northwestern Uyghur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang, the *Xinjiang Daily* reported five serious incidents since February 1996, with a crackdown that rounded up 2,773 terrorist suspects, 6,000 pounds of explosives, and 31,000 rounds of ammunition. Overseas Uyghur groups have claimed that over 10,000 have been arrested in the round-up, with over 1,000 killed. On March 2 the pro-government mullah of Kashgar's Idgah mosque and his son were stabbed by knife-wielding Uyghur militants, on May 27 there was an attack on a senior government official, and September 1996 six Uyghur government officials were killed by other Uyghurs in Yecheng.

The government has responded with a host of random arrests and new policy announcements. On June 12 1996, the *Xinjiang Daily* reported "rampant activities by splittists inside and outside China", that contributed to the closure of 10 "unauthorized" places of worship, the punishment of mullahs who had preached illegally outside their mosques, and the execution of 13 people on 29th in Aksu county (an area that is 99 percent Uyghur) supposedly for murder, robbery, rape, and other violent crimes. Troop movements to the area have reportedly been the largest since the suppression of the Baren township insurrection in April 1990, perhaps related to the nationwide "Strike Hard" campaign. This campaign, launched in Beijing last April was originally intended to clamp down on crime and corruption, but has now been turned against "splittests" in Xinjiang, calling for the building of "great wall of steel" against them. The *Xinjiang Daily* on December 16 1996 contained the following declaration by Wang Lequan, the Region's First Party Secretary : "We must oppose separatism and illegal religious activities in a clear and comprehensive manner *striking hard* and effectively against our enemies".

Intra-Muslim conflicts and anti-government protests among the Hui have occurred since 1992 in Xi'an, Yunnan, and Ningxia, China's only Autonomous Region for its largest Muslim minority. In Southern Ningxia, an intra-Sufi Muslim factional struggle

in Xi in the Winter and Spring of 1992-93 led to the deaths of 49 Hui Muslims and the arrests of 4 local and provincial-level leaders, with 2 of them receiving life-sentences. Though reported only in November 1996 in the *New York Times*, the government's harsh response to this and other local disputes have angered Muslims throughout China. Madrassahs, or mosque-related schools, have been closed and a moratorium on mosque-building imposed. This Spring (1997), the National Peoples Congress passed a New Criminal Law that redefined "counter-revolutionary" crimes to be "crimes against the State", liable to severe prison terms and even execution. Included in "crimes against the state" were any actions considered to involve "ethnic discrimination" or "stirring up anti-ethnic sentiment". Many human rights activists have argued that this is a thinly veiled attempt to criminalize "political" actions and to make them appear as illegal as traffic violations, supporting China's claims that it holds "no political prisoners". Since any minority activity could be regarded as stirring "anti-ethnic feeling", many ethnic activists are concerned that the New Criminal Law will be easily turned against them. Remarkably early summer 1996 a new directive requiring all Party Secretaries down to the village level to be Han Chinese in Xinjiang indicates the lengths the government is willing to go to re-establish firm control over the region. There are few Han Chinese at thillage level in Southern Xinjiang.

While much is reported about the policy shifts and re-imposed hardline in Tibet, including the prohibition of all public displays of the Dalai Lama's picture and the political re-education of monks, less is known about the extent of the unrest and cacophony in Xinjiang. Unlike Tibet, intra-Muslim factionalism and religio-political killings make the situation in Muslim areas much more complex and volatile. Without a Dalai Lama to sort out disputes and impose a restraining hand, China's Muslims who are riven by political, religious, and local factionalisms, are more susceptible to local and widespread violence.

Muslims in China are distinguished from each other not only by linguistic, locality, and nationality distinctions, but also by a history of Islamic factionalism. Though predominantly Sunni, Muslims in China have divided, sometimes violently, over Sufi reform movements often attempting to make Islam less "Chinese" and more true to their updated versions of its Middle Eastern roots. Since the Ming dynasty, overly harsh government responses to these intra-Muslim conflicts have often led to a unification of formerly factionalized Muslims *against* the intervening State. PRC officials have increasingly tried to nip intra-Muslim conflicts in the bud or mediate local conflicts, with varying success. It is clear that domestic disputes may have international implications.

The People's Republic of China, as one of five permanent voting members of the U.N. Security Council, and as a significant exporter of military hardware to the Middle East, has become a recognized player in Middle Eastern affairs. With the decline in trade with most Western nations after the Tiananmen massacre in the early 1990s, the importance of China's Middle Eastern trading partners (all of them Muslim, since China did not have relations with Israel until recently), rose considerably. This may account for the fact that China established diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia in August 1990, with the first direct Sino-Saudi exchanges taking place since 1949 (Saudi Arabia canceled its long-standing diplomatic relationship with Taiwan and withdrew its ambassador, despite a lucrative trade history). In the face of a long-term friendship with Iraq, China went along with most of the UN resolutions in the war against Iraq. Although it abstained from Resolution 678 on supporting the ground-war, making it

unlikely that Chinese workers will be welcomed back into Kuwait, China enjoys a fairly "Teflon" reputation in the Middle East as an untarnished source of low-grade weaponry and cheap reliable labor. Recent press accounts have noted an increase in China's exportation of military hardware to the Middle East since the Gulf War, perhaps due to a need to balance its growing imports of gulf oil required to fuel its overheated economy (see Dorian, Wigdortz, and Gladney, forthcoming). Unlike Tibet, China can thus ill afford to ignore its Muslim problem.

Yet Chinese authorities are correct that increasing international attention to the plight of indigenous border peoples have put pressure on the regions, with even the German government calling for more human rights in Tibet following a June 15-17 1996 visit of the Dalai Lama. In Amsterdam, on June 2nd, Amnesty International supporters passed out fliers in Damme Square calling for the release of Kajikhumar Shabdan, a 72-year-old ethnic Kazakh, poet, writer, and radio broadcaster, who has been held in prison since July 1987. The fliers were printed on cards in English and Dutch with places for signatures to be mailed to Abdulahat Abdurixit, People's Government Chairman of Xinjiang in Ürümqi. In Munich, on November 11, a "Days of Uyghur Youth" conference attracted 100 delegates from Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East interested in what was termed the "plight" of the Uyghurs. Notably, the former chairman of the Unrepresented Nations and People's Organization (UNPO) based in Geneva is the Uyghur, Erkin Alptekin, son of the Uyghur Nationalist leader, Isa Yusuf Alptekin who died in Istanbul in December 1996 where there is now a park dedicated to his memory. There are at least five international organizations working for the independence of Xinjiang, known as Eastern Turkistan, and based in Amsterdam, Munich, Istanbul, Melbourne, and New York. Clearly, with Xinjiang representing the last Muslim region under communism, Chinese authorities have more to be concerned about than just international support for Tibetan independence.

The real question is, why call attention to these Tibetan and Muslim activities and external organizations now? The Istanbul-based groups have existed since the 1950s, and the Dalai Lama has been active since his exile in 1959. Separatist actions have taken place on a small but regular basis since the expansion of market and trade policies in China, and with the opening of six overland gateways to Xinjiang in addition to the trans-Eurasian railway since 1991, there seems to be no chance of closing up shop. In his 1994 visit to the newly independent nations of Central Asia, Li Peng called for the opening of a "new Silk Road". This was a clear attempt to calm fears in the newly established Central Asian States over Chinese expansionism, as was the April 1996 Shanghai communique that solidified existing Sino-Central Asian Borders. This was perhaps the most recent and clearest example of Chinese government efforts to finally keep hold and fully map its "geo-body".

Sub-Altern Separatism and Chinese Response

China's geo-body is not threatened by internal dismemberment. Such as they are, China's separatists are small in number, poorly equipped, loosely linked, and vastly out-gunned by the People's Liberation Army and People's Police. Local support for separatist activities, particularly in Xinjiang, is ambivalent and ambiguous at best, given the economic disparity between these regions and their foreign neighbors, which are generally much poorer and in some cases such as Tadjikistan, riven by civil war. Memories in the region are strong of mass starvation and widespread destruction during the Sino-Japanese and civil war in the first half of this century, not to mention the chaotic horrors of the Cultural Revolution. International support for Tibetan causes

has done little to shake Beijing's grip on the region. Many local activists are calling not for complete separatism or real independence, but more often issues express concerns over environmental degradation, anti-nuclear testing, religious freedom, over-taxation, and recently imposed limits on child-bearing. Many ethnic leaders are simply calling for "real" autonomy according to Chinese law for the five Autonomous Regions that are each led by First Party Secretaries who are all Han Chinese controlled by Beijing. Extending the "Strike Hard" campaign to Xinjiang, Wang Lequan, the Party Secretary for Xinjiang, recently declared: "there will be no compromise between us and the separatists".

Beijing's official publicization of the separatist issue may have more to do with domestic politics than any real internal or external threat. Recent moves suggest efforts to promote Chinese nationalism as a "unifying ideology" that will prove more attractive than communism and more manageable than capitalism. By highlighting separatist threats and external intervention, China can divert attention away from its own domestic instabilities of rising inflation, increased income disparity, displaced "floating populations", Hong Kong reunification, and the post-Deng succession. Perhaps nationalism will be the "unifying ideology" left to a Chinese nation that has begun to distance itself from Communism, as it has Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism in the past. As Bruce Kapferer has noted, nationalism "makes the political religious". This is perhaps why religiously-based nationalisms, like Islamic Fundamentalism and Tibetan Buddhism, are targeted by Beijing. At the same time, a firm lid on Muslim activism in China will send a message to foreign Muslim militant organizations to stay out of China's internal affairs. In a July 1994 interview with Iran's former ambassador to China in Tehran, I was told that Iran would never intervene in a Muslim crackdown in China, despite its support for the training of Kubrawiyyah Sufi Imams from Gansu and close foreign relations with China.

Any event, domestic and international, can be used as an excuse to promote nationalist goals, the building of a new unifying ideology. As Shen Guofan from the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation revealed in his statement concerning the most recent Sino-U.S. trade dispute: "If the U.S. goes so far as to implement its trade retaliation, China will, according to its foreign trade law, take countermeasures to safeguard its sovereignty and national esteem." Trade and separatism become obstacles not to economic and political development, but to preserving national esteem. Any action deemed by Beijing to be "unpatriotic" is quickly interpreted as an attempt to split the country, which runs counter to Chinese efforts at reunification of its entire geo-body. Hong Kong becomes the first example of the attainment of China's historic destiny, with islands such as the Spratleys and Diaoyutai, to say nothing of Taiwan, regarded as impediments to national development and physical reunion.

Conclusion: China's Expanding Internal Colonialism

In his recent visit to the U.S., Defense Minister Chi Haotian, declared: "We hope to see a peaceful settlement [regarding Taiwan] yet refuse to renounce the use of force.... The entire Chinese history shows that whoever splits the motherland will end up condemned by history". This follows the new Chinese History Project launched by Song Jian, Minister of Science and Technology, aimed at writing a new chronology of China. In a *Science and Technology Daily* editorial, published May 17 1996, Song Jian stated that the project's goal was to demonstrate its 6,000 year "unbroken, unilinear" development. "Unlike those in Egypt, Babylon and India", Song declared, "the Chinese civilization has lasted for 5,000 years without a break". The project, to be completed by October 1, 1999,

clearly will take a dim view of anyone accused of separatism. As long as Muslim activism is regarded as "separatism", it will be regarded not only as going against China's national destiny, but against history itself. It is through the writing and re-writing of history that colonial and sub-altern status most often becomes internalized, both among the minorities and among the majority. This "internalized colonialism" lead to self and other-perception as "minority", and subject only to definition by state categories and policies. It also displaces indigenous prior claims to land and voice in the administration of local affairs.

Future prospects for the Uyghur in the 21st century may be low considering the proclivity of Chinese historiographers to write histories from the perspective of their "idealized" view. The Uyghur are in danger of being written out! This scenario was already pre-figured by the science fiction novelist David Wingrove in his eight volume futuristic novel, *Chung Kuo* (The Middle Kingdom). Once the Chinese have taken over the globe in the later 21st century, they re-write history, dating back to the first Chinese "conquest" of Central Asia in the Han dynasty.

"Pan Chao! It sometimes seemed as if half the films ever made had been about Pan Chao! He was the great hero of Chung Kuo-the soldier turned diplomat turned conqueror. In A.D. 73 he had been sent, with thirty-six followers, as ambassador to the king of Shen Shen in Turkestan... bringing Shen Shen under Han control... Over the next twenty-four years, by bluff and cunning and sheer force of personality, Pan Chao had brought the whole of Asia under Han domination. In A.D.97 he has stood on the shore of the Caspian Sea, an army of seventy thousand vassals gathered behind him, facing the great *Ta Ts'in*,the Roman Empire. The rest was history, known to every schoolboy.

Rome had fallen. And not as Kim had portrayed it, to Alaric and the Goths in the fifth century, but to the Han in the first. There had been no break in order, no decline into darkness. No Dark Ages and no Christianity - of, and what lovely idea that was : organized religion! The thought of it...

In his version of events, Han science had stagnated by the fourth century A.D. and Chung Kuo had grown insular, until, in the nineteenth century, the Europeans - and what a strange ring that phrase had; not *Hung Mao*, but "Europeans" - had kicked the rotten door of China in.

Ah, and that too. Not *Chung Kuo*. Kim called it China. As if had been named after the First Emperor's people, the Ch'in. Ridiculous!

He struggled. "I suppose you might call it an alternative history of Chung Kuo. Chung Kuo as it might have been had the *Ta Ts'in* legions won the Battle of Kazatin" (Wingrove, 1990 : 439-54)".

The nationalist re-writing of history, Prasenjit Duara (1995) reminds us, is not unique to China, but accompanies nationalist projects around the globe. The threat of this re-writing is not to China's neighbors, for they do not belong to a nationalist history of China's past or future geo-body. Rather, the rise in nationalist rhetoric in China may have the greatest implications for its internal colonial others, its sub-altern subjects. And, one should not forget the ominous words contained in the Chinese national anthem : "The Chinese race is at a most crucial moment, we should stand up and build up a new Great Wall with our blood and flesh". As Franke and Twitchett note in the introduction to their sweeping *Alien Regimes and Border States (907-1368)* : "Traditional histories of China depict the Khitan, Jurchen, and Mongols as "outsiders", intrupting into "Chinese" territory. But this is a misleading oversimplification that

needs to be laid to rest forever. In spite of what is shown in modern historical atlases, the T'ang, like its predecessors, never had any clearly defined and demarcated northern frontier... There was never a continuous defensive line or a defined frontier. There was a line of fortified border prefectures and counties, a few fortresses in strategic places, and a scattering of military colonies, military stud farms, beacon signal towers, and military picket-outposts. It was a defense in depth..." (Franke and Twitchett 1994 : 7).

The real question is, what will happen to those Chinese citizens on its borders, should a nationalist movement rise up that sees them as more of a threat than as part of a China that is multi-national and multi-ethnic. If nationalist sentiments prevail during this time of transition, what will happen to those sub-altern subjects currently living in China, but beyond the Great Wall?

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